

Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council Meeting
Held on 5th July 2023 at 7:00pm
In Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

CLlr Trevor Bickers
CLlr Clive Lenton

CLlr David Brinkley (Chair)
CLlr Kathryn Roper

CLlr Rhea Gardner
CLlr Lynda Seagroatt

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

8 members of the public were present

1. Apologies for absence:

a. To receive apologies for absence.

There were none.

b. To accept apologies for absence.

There were none.

2. To receive any:

a. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest.

There were none.

b. Declarations of Non-Pecuniary Interest.

There were none.

c. Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items.

There were none.

d. Declarations of Gifts or Hospitality received over the value of £50.00

There were none.

e. Notification of Lobbying with reference to Planning Applications to be discussed.

There were none.

3. Public Participation – To receive:

a. Reports from County and District Councillors:

- Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy:

The Chair thanked Cllr Mulcahy for attending. Two reports for May and June 2023 had been sent to the Clerk on 4th July and these had been forwarded to all Councillors. Cllr Brinkley requested that in future Cllr Mulcahy send her reports in a more timely manner to allow Councillors enough opportunity to read and digest them. Cllr Brinkley remarked that it then allowed the possibility for a two-way dialogue between Cllr Mulcahy and the Council.

Cllr Mulcahy was asked about the ongoing Highways issue of the vegetation along the path on the road to the school not being cut, causing school children to have to walk in the road. Cllr Mulcahy reported that the Highways inspection team had visited the site and deemed the path too dangerous to work on without the complete closure of the road. The Clerk asked for verification of this matter to ensure that the correct information was minuted.

Chair's initials:

Cllr Mulcahy confirmed that what she said was correct; that the road was deemed too dangerous for the Highways maintenance workers to even be standing on the path while cutting back the vegetation, and that as a consequence of this decision the school children would have to walk in the road to avoid the overgrown brambles, stinging nettles and Hemlock.

Cllr Brinkley challenged the wisdom of that decision, voicing that he was incensed at the statement. Cllr Brinkley insisted that Cllr Mulcahy make it well known on behalf of the Council that they found this to be wholly unacceptable. Cllr Brinkley stated that this is an annual problem and that it should be on a permanent schedule of works, preventing this from happening year on year. Signs had been left on the village end of the path informing drivers that there were likely to be pedestrians in the road, but not at the school end of the path where the on-coming traffic would have to avoid the hazard of pedestrians. Cllr Mulcahy informed the Council that she noticed this herself when driving through the village.

Councillors asked for confirmation of the situation as they found it hard to believe. Cllr Mulcahy restated that the road was scheduled to be closed to allow for the works to be completed at an unspecified date. It was unclear why the road closure was deemed necessary this year when it never had been previously.

Cllr Mulcahy then informed the Council that she had been working on the problem of the speed limit on the Brightwell Road going past the school but that the road does not meet the criteria for reducing the speed limit to thirty miles per hour. Cllr Mulcahy did not elaborate on exactly what work she had been doing to solve the problem but stated that she felt the speed limit along the road would be reduced once the Brightwell Lakes development was completed.

Cllr Brinkley expressed his opinion that it was very unfortunate that this information had not been included in Cllr Mulcahy's monthly report as the Council were unaware that this was an issue she was willing to pursue. This was obviously something the Parish Council would be very keen to work with Cllr Mulcahy on.

Cllr Mulcahy informed the Council that the contract with the current providers of Highways maintenance was shortly coming to an end and that arrangements had not yet been made with the new providers, making the hand-over of contracts quite challenging. Cllr Brinkley once again expressed his dismay at this statement as he said he felt that with some forward planning this should all have been agreed, to avoid any such issues and ensure contracts overlapped.

Cllr Mulcahy was thanked for her attendance and Cllr Brinkley stated he hoped she would be able to attend more meetings in the future.

- East Suffolk District Cllr Ninnmey and Cllr Lee Reeves:

Councillors Ninnmey and Reeves both gave their apologies for absence as both were attending meetings elsewhere; Cllr Ninnmey was attending the Local Government Association Conference and Cllr Reeves was attending another Council meeting. Both had sent a monthly report which had been circulated to all Councillors.

Cllr Reeves informed the Clerk that both intended to be very proactive Councillors and that they considered the Parish Council to be the eyes and ears on the ground who could alert them to any issues which may otherwise go unnoticed. Cllr Reeves also stated they were happy to hear of any causes which the Council felt may be assisted by their Enabling Communities Budgets.

- b. Questions from any member of the public:

- There were none.

4. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 10th May 2023:

All Councillors agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Lenton proposed that the minutes should be signed, this was seconded by Cllr Roper and all Councillors agreed.

The minutes had already been published on the website in draft form in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Action: Clerk

5. To elect the Vice-Chair of the Council for 2023/24 and signing of the ‘Declaration of Acceptance of Office’.

Cllr Brinkley proposed Cllr Lenton be elected as Vice-Chair and Cllr Lenton accepted the nomination. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in favour. Cllr Lenton signed the ‘Declaration of Acceptance of Office’.

6. Clerk’s Report – To receive updates on matters not requiring debate or decision.

The Clerk had continued to inform the Councillors of ongoing issues via a weekly email. However, some specific points were highlighted:

- i. The Clerk thanked Councillors for ploughing through all Council Policies that were being sent in small manageable bundles each week ready for review at the September meeting. This is a task performed every four years to ensure all policies and documentation are relevant and up to date.
- ii. Cllr Bickers and Cllr Roper had both attended New Councillor Training via Zoom consisting of two 2 hour sessions. They both reported this had been very insightful.
- iii. Castlemore Homes had supplied a bowser full of water to enable volunteers to water the small trees on the Playing Field. The Chair had asked the Clerk to write to Gary Bareham thanking him for this help which enabled the Council and FOPs to continue to nurture the trees as they mature.

Chair’s initials:

- iv. A resident had informed the Clerk that she no longer had the time to devote to managing the small garden around the village sign. Another resident had volunteered to take this on in future. It had previously been agreed that any expenses occurred with regards to plants, bulbs and soil would be covered by the Council.
- v. The Clerk had been asked to share hints and tips of how to successfully bid for grants and funding from Claire Ling, a Community Support Officer working on behalf of all Suffolk Councils. An informal webinar was planned and the Clerk had adapted a previously used presentation to help others learn the tips and skills required.
- vi. The Clerk had been invited by the Suffolk Community Awards to nominate Bucklesham for the Suffolk Association of Local Councils' 'Small Village Of The Year Award'. They recognised the great work that had taken place in our community and the tremendous amount of grant application successes achieved (as well as sharing our knowledge with other villages) to improve the quality of life for our residents. Winners of the award will be invited to celebrate on Monday 25th September at the Food Museum, Stowmarket.

Action: Clerk

7. To discuss the Community Asset Transfer of the Bucklesham Allotments from East Suffolk Council.

A report had been compiled by the Clerk following the suggestion of the Community Asset Transfer of the Bucklesham Allotments from East Suffolk Council to the Parish Council (see appendix A).

A discussion took place as to the advantages and disadvantages of the Council agreeing to the CAT. The following points were made:

- What would happen if the Council did not agree to the CAT?
- A major concern has to be the net cost to the village.
- It would not be appropriate for the village to subsidise the allotments, especially as many plots were hired by non-residents.
- The allotments must pay for themselves and any costs must be covered by the income.
- If the Council agreed to the CAT the future of the site could be guaranteed.

Cllr Brinkley proposed that the Council agree to the CAT in principle with the proviso that no new information comes to light which might require the Council to reconsider. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in favour.

The Clerk was asked to find out the following information:

- The full costs involved in the management of the site.
- The full list of names of current tenants and those on a waiting list.
- The current charges, including the schedule of payments.
- If East Suffolk Council would agree to covering all legal fees encountered by both parties.

It was agreed that the CAT would be discussed again at the meeting in September when the Clerk has the answers to questions asked by Councillors.

Chair's initials:

8. Playing Field:

a. To discuss Hemlock discovered on the Field.

A resident had informed the Clerk of a large amount of Hemlock around the edge of the Playing Field. This had been removed by Cllr Lenton. It was agreed that the Council would continue to monitor the long grass around the edge of the Field and remove any further plants should they grow up again in the future.

b. To discuss the idea of a wild flower meadow on the Field.

A resident had suggested sowing some wild flower seeds around the small trees on the edges of the Field. This would add year round colour and was considered vital for wildlife. The Clerk was asked to investigate what would be involved, the initial cost and the implications of the ongoing management.

c. To discuss the Safety Inspection of the Field facilities.

The Clerk had forwarded the first inspection undertaken by David Bracey. He reported that there were no major problems with the safety of the equipment other than a few caps missing on various items. He also suggested all equipment and benches could benefit from a clean, removing the bird mess and the removal of the moss to prevent there being a slippery surface when wet.

David had recommended that the sign on the Gym Equipment be changed from an age restriction to a height restriction. He also noted that there needed to be a sign at the basketball hoop informing people not to climb on the nets. The Clerk was asked to investigate the cost of replacing the gym equipment sign and purchasing a further sign for the basket ball hoop and goal combination. David also recommended the repair of and removal of algae and moss from the wooden bench.

The Clerk was asked to enquire as to whether Kevin Coe would be willing to take on these minor repairs and the cleaning, and to obtain a quote for the works.

Action: Clerk

9. Documentation:

a. To adopt the Code Of Conduct (2020).

Councillors had all read the Code of Conduct (2020) and informed the Clerk that they had understood the requirements.

10. Highways:

a. To discuss the 20's Plenty Campaign.

Cllr Bickers and the Clerk had attended a meeting on 22nd June 2023 to discuss the nationwide campaign to persuade Parish Councils to adopt a motion requesting Suffolk Highways reduce the speed limit in rural areas from 30mph to 20mph. The Welsh Assembly have adopted the policy and the speed limit in all rural areas of Wales will change to 20mph in September 2023. Other counties who have already adopted the idea are Cornwall, Kent, Surrey, West Sussex and Oxfordshire.

Cllr Bickers proposed that the Council survey the opinions of the residents to see what the majority view was within the village. This would be in the form of a letter delivered to every household along with a Bugle Bulletin Email Alert. The Clerk was asked to organise a Survey Monkey to allow participants to give their opinion online. There would also be an opportunity for residents to complete a paper copy of the survey if preferred. This was seconded by Cllr Brinkley with all in favour. The results of the survey would be discussed at the November meeting and a way forward decided depending on the majority view.

b. To discuss overgrown path on the way to school

The Clerk had been contacted by Bucklesham Primary School Head Teacher, Rachael Rudge, and several residents with regards to the overgrown path on the way to school, particularly as it was full of poisonous Hemlock. The Clerk had reported the issue to Cllr Mulcahy and on Suffolk Highways 'Report it' tool, but had informed those residents that reporting did not have to be done by the Parish Council as there is a quick and easy process in place which can be done directly by residents. Complainants had been signposted to the village website for the link to the 'Report it' tool. The Clerk was asked to add an article in the next Bugle, once again informing residents of the ability to contact Highways directly with any such issues. The Clerk was also asked to inform residents of the decision to close the road to carry out the works via a Bugle Bulletin.

c. To discuss the purchase of further Grit Bins for Levington Lane and Field View

Following a suggestion from a resident the Clerk had once again requested a Grit Bin for the entrance of Field View, and made a new request for a Grit Bin at the end of Levington Lane. Although the original request in 2021 was unsuccessful as Highways deemed the Grit Bin outside number 40 Levington Lane to be enough to cover both areas, this second request had been granted. Suffolk County Council Highways will not supply the Bins and these must be purchased by the Council. Once the Parish Council have purchased the Grit Bins and they are in situ, Suffolk County Council Highways will fill them.

Cllr Bickers proposed that the Clerk request a quote for the purchase of two Grit Bins. This was seconded by Cllr Seagroatt and all were in favour. The Clerk had pre-empted this request and a quote had already been sought. This was to be discussed in item 12.e

Action: Clerk

Chair's initials:

11. Planning:

- a. To discuss the progress of the Castlemore Homes Oak Tree Farm, Levington Lane development.

Work had continued at a rapid pace with the first phase of houses well underway. The Clerk had been in continual contact with Gary Bareham, Construction Manager from Castlemore Homes, to ensure there was always a good working relationship and that there was no animosity with neighbours closest to the site. Gary had sent a very comprehensive report on the progress of the site and all Councillors agreed this was very useful. The Clerk was asked to thank Gary very much for this.

The allocation of the contract to manage the Social Housing had still not been agreed. Any villager wishing to take advantage of the residents' discount for either of the two available properties should contact Castlemore Homes directly.

As a Considerate Contractor, Castlemore Homes wished the Parish Council to advertise that they have a defibrillator on site should there be an emergency in the village. The Clerk thanked Gary and explained that there was a defib at the Village Hall for emergency use. Gary had offered a site visit to the Councillors once the main entrance road way is complete. There will also be a visit from the older children from Bucklesham Primary School in September.

- b. To discuss the meeting with Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council (LSHPC) and representatives from EDF Energy

Cllr Brinkley and Cllr Lenton attended the meeting following an invitation from LSHPC to discuss various aspects about the development of Sizewell which affects both Parishes. Answers were given to the following concerns:

1) Guarantee of Water Supply to Levington Residents and the Wider Community.

EDF gave an absolute guarantee that Anglian Water could provide the required amount for up to 2 years, after this time Sizewell/EDF will have constructed a desalination plant to satisfy their needs for the remaining 8 years of construction.

2) Traffic Management.

At peak times there would be up to 80 truck/tanker movements per day, all joining the old A45 opposite the Crematorium. Suffolk Highways have modelled this and have found there to be no problems with this. We were assured by EDF that under no circumstances would tankers take diversions of any sort through Bucklesham. This would be a clause in the contracts of the hauliers agreement.

3) Noise Levels.

EDF again assured that the operation would not be 24/7, and was likely to be 0700 to 1900 Monday to Friday, 0700 to 1300 on Saturday, and that noise levels would be minimal at all times.

4) Bunding and screening.

The soil used for bunding would be the excavation material from the site development and would be placed around the site to provide the maximum protection, both visual and sound, to any residents living close to the site.

5) Reverting back to original use once project is complete.

Assurances were given that EDF are contractually obliged to return the site to its original use. It is estimated to be in use as a logistics park by EDF for 10 years.

- c. To discuss the meeting with Boyer Planning on 6th July 2023 with regards to the proposed Business Park at Felixstowe Road.

The Parish Council had been invited to attend an information sharing event with regards to future development of a Business Park on Felixstowe Road. Cllr Brinkley, Cllr Lenton and Cllr Bickers will be in attendance at this meeting and will report back at a later date.

- d. DC/23/2433/P3MA Prior Approval application for the change of use of a light industrial barn: Barn, Tenth Road, Bucklesham, IP10 0BP.

Councillors made the following comments:

- No objections

Cllr Seagroatt proposed the Clerk register a comment of 'No Objection' on the East Suffolk Planning Portal. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

- e. DC/23/2507/FUL Removal and replacement of garage, Merlin Cottage, Newbourne Rd Bucklesham, IP10 0BX.

Councillors made the following comments:

- No objections

Cllr Lenton proposed the Clerk register a comment of 'No Objection' on the East Suffolk Planning Portal. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in favour.

Action: Clerk

12. Finance Matters:

- a. To review accounts as at 30th June 2023 and review Bank Statements.

The accounts for 30th June 2023 had been sent to all councillors and there were no questions.

- b. To discuss the General Reserves

Trevor Brown, the Auditor, had highlighted the Council's lack of Reserves at the Annual Audit. The Council has a Reserves Policy which states the Council should hold between 9 and 12 months' expenditure in General Reserves. This would equate to £9,600.

Councillors all expressed concern that the General Reserves were very low. Cllr Bickers proposed that any spending not possible to be aligned to CIL funds was put on hold. Cllr Brinkley agreed the Council must be prudent and seconded this proposal and all were in favour.

The timetable for the budget was confirmed by the Clerk. Cllr Brinkley noted that the Council had not increased the precept for four of the past five years due to awareness of the cost of living and the financial difficulties some residents faced. Councillors agreed that careful consideration with regards to increasing the precept would need to be given for the financial year 2024/25.

Chair's initials:

c. To discuss the ideas and suggestions for the allocation of CIL money.

The Clerk had compiled a list of proposed projects for CIL spend (See Appendix B). A lengthy discussion took place with regards to the merits of each project. Cllr Brinkley suggested that although there was £29,000 of CIL money to spend, the Council should not undertake all suitable projects in one go as this would be a lot more work for the Clerk all at once, but rather spread the project out over the coming months.

The Clerk's suggestion of the prioritisation of projects were agreed by all.

Cllr Seagroatt proposed the first projects should be:

- The purchase of the new Grit Bins on Levington Lane and Field View.
- The replacement of the wooden benches on the Playing Field.
- Repainting the interior of the Village Hall and the installation of exterior lights.
- Repainting the white lines in the Village Hall Car park.
- Renovation of the bus shelter.

This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

d. To discuss the payment of £406.79, the remaining money from the Coronation Celebrations, into the Community Council Account.

There remains £406.79 from the grant awarded from the National Lottery Fund. The rules state any remaining money under the sum of £1,000 can be distributed by the Parish Council to spend on 'good causes' in the village. Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the money be paid in to the Community Council Account to act as a float for any forthcoming village events. This would prevent the necessity for volunteers to have to pay expenses upfront and wait to be reimbursed after the event. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

e. To discuss the purchase of two Grit Bins for Field View and Levington Lane

To save time the Clerk had already requested a provisional quote from Glasdons for the purchase of two Grit Bins at a cost of £359.44 excluding VAT (reclaimable). Cllr Lenton proposed the Council accept the quote for the two bins which was seconded by Cllr Seagroatt and all were in favour. This purchase can come from the CIL funds.

f. To discuss the renovation of the bus shelter.

The Quote for the renovation of the bus shelter from Kevin Coe was £500. This included the render of the ceiling, painting the interior walls, and the installation of a wooden bench. Cllr Bickers proposed the quote be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all were in favour. This renovation can come out of CIL funds.

g. To discuss taking part in the Hedgehog Highway Project

Although this was considered a nice idea, the £150 purchase price for 50 plastic ‘Hedgehog Highway’ hole surrounds was considered quite unnecessary and expensive. This could not come out of CIL funds as CIL supports infrastructure for villagers but excludes hedgehogs.

It was felt by all Councillors that although urban hedgehogs may need help in this area, Bucklesham hedgehogs were able to navigate the holes in hedges and fences perfectly well without plastic archway access points.

h. To authorise the following invoices for payment

i. SALC New Councillor Training	£72.00
ii. Print For You (Summer Bugles)	£128.00
iii. R Johnson (expenses)	£67.93
iv. Suffolk Coastal Norse (grass Cutting)	£308.54

i. To note payments made since last meeting:

i. L Seagroatt (Coronation celebrations)	£336.68
ii. A Hall (Coronation celebrations)	£83.31
iii. J Brunning (Coronation celebrations)	£375.93
iv. S Voelcker (Coronation celebrations)	£293.31
v. N Lord (Coronation celebrations)	£16.98
vi. R Johnson (retirement gift for Cllr)	£29.50
vii. Clerk’s Salary and expenses (Apr/May/Jun)	£1,131.45
viii. HMRC (Clerk’s PAYE)	£237.60
ix. Triple F (First Aid Course)	£50.00

j. To note payments received since last meeting:

- i. None

k. To note Bank Balances as at 30th June 2023:

i. Current Account	£8,928.87
ii. Savings Account	£35,000.06

The Clerk informed the Council that she had transferred £35,000 into the Savings Account from the Current Account in order for the Council to benefit from the current high interest rates.

Cllr Brinkley proposed that finance matters *h* to *k* were accepted, seconded by Cllr Bickers with all in favour.

Action: Clerk

Chair’s initials:

13. To discuss Clerk’s Review and approve recommendations arising from it.

Cllr Brinkley and Cllr Gardner met with the Clerk on 27th June 2023 to review the last twelve months. The minutes of this meeting had previously been shared with the Council.

It was recognised by both Cllr Brinkley and Cllr Gardner that the Clerk had achieved everything she had set out to do, including gaining the CiLCA qualification in record time. It was agreed that the Clerk and the Council are an excellent team and work very well together. It was also noted that once again the Clerk had taken on more work than previously and that this was likely to increase with the CAT of the Allotments.

The Clerk stated she was very happy in her role and was very thankful for the support and encouragement received from Councillors during the year.

It was agreed by the Council last year that the Clerk would be awarded a pay increment upon successful completion of the CiLCA qualification. Cllr Brinkley proposed that the Clerk be paid on NALC pay scale 17 and also that the Clerk’s hours be increased by 2 per month (from 30 to 32) as recompense for the extra workload. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all were in favour.

Action: Clerk

14. To discuss the lack of engagement from Suffolk County Councillor, Cllr Mulcahy, and discuss possible ways forward.

The Chair remarked that it was unfortunate that this very item had also been on the agenda in July 2022, which meant that a full year later the Council were still no further forward with their efforts to ensure Cllr Mulcahy was proactive on behalf of Bucklesham Parish.

Following the meeting in May the Clerk had written to all other Parish Councils in Cllr Mulcahy’s ward, asking if they had similar experiences of Cllr Mulcahy not being in attendance at meetings or not sending any reports. Waldringfield Parish Council Clerk stated that they had not had a similar experience. Nacton Parish Council Clerk reported that although initially they had input from Cllr Mulcahy, since October 2022 they had received nothing.

The Clerk reminded the Council that Cllr Mulcahy had only attended one meeting (which was in July 2021) and had only sent 5 monthly reports in the last two years. The majority of the reports were sent on the day of the meeting sometimes within 2 hours of the meeting starting allowing Councillors no time to read or digest the contents.

A lengthy discussion took place with Councillors asking exactly what they should be expecting of Cllr Mulcahy and exactly what her responsibilities to the parish are. The Clerk reiterated that Cllr Mulcahy was a link to the County Council and previous County Councillors had been very proactive on Bucklesham’s behalf with regards to Highways issues.

It was felt that Cllr Mulcahy’s comments with regards to the path on the way to the school were not helpful. It was agreed that the Council would allow Cllr Mulcahy a final opportunity to engage with them and send regular reports in a more timely manner before taking the matter any further.

The Clerk was asked to liaise with Rachael Rudge, the Head Teacher of Bucklesham Primary School, with regards to speaking to the East Anglian Daily Times and Radio Suffolk about the ongoing issue with the overgrown path. If the press were to be contacted, the Clerk was asked to inform Cllr Mulcahy as a matter of courtesy.

Action: Clerk

15. To Co-opt Parish Councillor and signing of ‘Declaration of acceptance of Office’.

Although the vacancy had been advertised in the Bugle, there were no villagers who had come forward to stand as a Parish Councillor at this time. The Councillors agreed to continue to promote the work of the Council in the hope that someone would be willing to take on the role.

Action: Clerk

16. To receive agenda items for next meeting (Wednesday 6th September 2023).

Continuing discussions for allocating the CIL money to various projects would be included in the next agenda along with the progress of the CAT of the Bucklesham Allotments.

There were no other agenda items as at the meeting from the Councillors, but the Clerk reminded them that all projects going forward would be included and that any new items should be notified to her at least one week before the meeting.

Action: Clerk

The meeting closed at 8:40pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date:

Ruth Johnson
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair’s initials: