

Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 11th September 2024 at 7:00pm
In Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

Cllr Trevor Bickers
Cllr Gemma Marriage

Cllr Rhea Gardner
Cllr Kathryn Roper

Cllr Clive Lenton (Chair)
Cllr Lynda Seagroatt

Cllr Lee Reeves (ESC)

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

6 members of the public were present

1. To elect the Chair of the Parish Council.

Following the resignation of Cllr David Brinkley, Cllr Bickers proposed Cllr Lenton assume the role of Chair. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in agreement. Cllr Lenton agreed to stand as Chair and paid tribute to Cllr Brinkley's long service on the Council, acknowledging they were big shoes to fill. Councillors all expressed their sadness at Cllr Brinkley's resignation and praised his commitment to the Council, professionalism, and kindness.

2. Apologies for absence:

a. To receive apologies for absence.

There were none.

b. To accept apologies for absence.

There were none.

3. To receive any:

a. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest.

Cllr Seagroatt declared a pecuniary interest in item 8.e.ii. as her husband, Terry Seagroatt, had submitted a quote to the Council for village maintenance.

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.

4. Public Participation – To receive:

a. Reports from County and District Councillors:

• Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy:

Cllr Mulcahy sent her apologies stating she was unable to attend due to medical reasons. A report on County Council projects had been sent and circulated to Councillors.

Chair's initials:

- East Suffolk District Cllr Mike Ninnmey and Cllr Lee Reeves:

The Chair thanked Cllr Reeves for his attendance, especially as Cllr Reeves had been on annual leave and this was his first day back to work. Detailed monthly reports had been sent by Cllrs Ninnmey and Reeves and these had been circulated.

Cllr Reeves was thanked for his speedy reply to the Clerk's query about the future of bin collections following concerns from residents, and for his comprehensive answer which was relayed to those concerned.

- b. Questions from any member of the public:

A member of the public asked if the proposed bike jumps on the Playing Field would cost residents an increase in Council Tax payments to cover insurance and maintenance. The Chair reassured the resident that any increase on the insurance would be minimal and had been budgeted for, and that any necessary maintenance is expected to be minimal due to the materials used in construction.

A member of the public asked if Highways had been contacted with regards to replacing the 30mph sign and attaching the replacement dog waste bin by The Forge, both of which had been damaged in a road collision. The Clerk reassured the resident that this issue is being reported to Suffolk Highways on a weekly basis and that the Council has purchased a new dog waste bin. However, this cannot be attached until the pole is replaced by Highways. The Parish Council are not legally allowed to work on the highway and replace the pole themselves.

A member of the public asked if the loss of the bus service had been reported to the new MP. The Clerk stated that she had written to Jenny Riddell-Carpenter, MP for Suffolk Coastal, about this issue but had not yet received a reply.

A member of the Village Hall Committee requested some money from CIL funds to cover urgent repairs at the Village Hall. This was on the agenda (item 8.e.iii).

5. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 10th July 2024:

All Councillors agreed that the Minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the Minutes should be signed, this was seconded by Cllr Gardner 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

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. Much of the work that the Clerk had been involved with was on the agenda, however some specific points were highlighted:

Chair's initials:

- i. The Clerk reported that there had been an incident of criminal damage on Saturday 13th July at 2pm when 3 men entered the Playing Field with an angle grinder and proceeded to cut the chain on the football goals. They were then stopped by a member of the public and the Police were called. The men were ordered to write a letter of apology to the Parish Council and replace the chain. The Clerk had circulated the letter but reported that the chain had not yet been replaced. The Police had been made aware and were following this up.

- ii. The Clerk had reported a number of Highways issues to Suffolk Highways and had requested a meeting with Suffolk County Cllr Paul West, who has responsibility for Highways, to talk through the many village issues that never get resolved. These included the perpetual problem of the overgrown footpath to school, the faded and twisted road signs, potholes, the broken signpost opposite The Forge (meaning that the dog waste bin is on the floor), faded white lines, and the 'Report-it' tool ignoring or deleting requests for action. A reply had been received 7 weeks later making the following points:
 - a. The footpath between the pumping station and the school has been logged to be considered for footway skirting. This will be ranked along with all other issues in the county for prioritisation if and when resources allow.

 - b. All signs that meet Suffolk County Council's Highways Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) criteria are ordered for repair or replacement. Some 30mph repeater signs along Main Road have been added to the list for potential future works, depending on urgency and if and when resources allow.

 - c. The defect intervention criteria set out in HMOP shows that carriageway defects (potholes) will only be ordered for repair if 40mm or more in depth regardless of the road type. Deeper defects on higher category roads will be responded to earlier than shallower defects (over 40mm) on lower category roads. This is in line with Suffolk's risk- based approach.

 - d. An order has been placed to refresh the degraded centre warning lines (white lines) along Main Road, Bucklesham. The order was placed 29th July and works will be undertaken in the next 14 weeks.

Despite the Clerk making repeated requests for a site visit with County Councillors, nothing has been arranged. The Clerk reported that the white lines had now been painted, but none of the other jobs had been actioned, including the replacement of the pole opposite The Forge, which means the newly purchased dog bin cannot be installed. The Clerk will continue to badger Highways until these issues are resolved.

- iii. The Council had been successful in its application for a grant from East Suffolk Council to celebrate the Tour of Britian passing through the village. The Community Council had organised a Community Picnic, which was very well attended and enjoyed by many residents. £470 had been awarded from ESC and had been spent on flags and bunting to wave at the cyclists, and bicycle stands for the Village Hall as a lasting legacy of the event. Bucklesham had been used by ESC as an example to other villages on how to apply for the funds and how use the money available in an appropriate way.

Chair's initials:

- iv. The Clerk had been contacted by Finding Fitness (who supplied the Monkey Challenge Wall) to see if the Council were interested in applying for funds for a new Ninja Trail for the Playing Field. This proposal will be added to November's agenda and the Clerk will research the idea in the meantime.
- v. Two new tenants have taken up plots on the Allotments, and an existing tenant has been granted a second plot (second plots are only granted if there is no one else on the waiting list). This means all plots are currently taken with one non-resident on the waiting list (non-residents are only granted a plot if no villagers are on the waiting list). The Clerk will send out invoices for the annual rent to all tenants on 1st October. Residents who have gardens backing onto the Allotments were written to, asking them not to dump their garden waste in the pit. One tenant has requested that a water supply is connected. The Clerk is investigating the idea and will report back at the next meeting.
- vi. Despite three emails to Novus enquiring about the progress of the Solar Farm, no reply has been received.
- vii. Jake Nichols from TRU7 has been informed that the Bike Jumps have been marked out on the Playing Field by James Perks from Twisted Oaks and the site is ready for delivery. James has designed a plan for the jumps and will gather a group of volunteers to sculpt the soil once it is in situ.
- viii. As requested by a resident, the Clerk reported that she has contacted Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP with regards to the loss of the local bus service. No reply has yet been received.

7. Documentation:

- a) To review the 'Standing Orders – 2024' (as previously sent to Councillors on 06/09/24).

The Clerk reminded Councillors that the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations needed to be reviewed and re-adopted annually. The updated Financial Regulations had been adopted at the July meeting. The Clerk assured the Council that the policies continue to use the current National Association of Local Councils (NALC) templates and so were completely correct and up to date. As with previous years, Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) advise that it is not necessary to print off hard copies but that publishing them on the website is still required. All Councillors confirmed the Standing Orders had been reviewed. Cllr Roper proposed they be adopted, which was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all were in favour.

- b) To review the 'Risk Assessment (Financial)' and 'Risk Assessment (Non-Financial)' (as sent to Councillors on 06/09/24).

The Risk Assessments, both Financial and Non-Financial, also need to be reviewed and re-adopted annually. All Councillors confirmed these documents had been reviewed. Cllr Roper noted that the newly acquired Allotments had not been included on the Non-Financial Risk Assessment. The Clerk agreed to amend the document and re-send to Councillors for review in the November meeting.

- c) To review 'Asset Register' and approve revised document (as previously sent to Councillors on 06/09/24).

The Clerk reminded the Council that the Asset Register needed to be reviewed and adopted annually, or each time a new asset is included. The new dog waste bin and the bicycle stands had been added. Cllr Marriage noted that the Allotments also needed to be added. The Clerk agreed to add the Allotments and re-send to Councillors for review in the November meeting.

Action: Clerk

8. Finance Matters:

- a. To review Accounts as at 31st August 2024 and review Bank Statements.

The Accounts for 31st August 2024 had been sent to all Councillors and there were no questions. The Clerk asked Cllr Lenton to sign the Bank Statements and Accounts Sheets.

- b. To set Budget timetable.

The Clerk set out the following timetable for the Budget and this was agreed:

- 1st November – Draft Budget established and sent to Councillors
- 13th November – Draft Budget discussed at full Council meeting
- January 2025 meeting – Budget agreed by full Council

- c. To agree Reserve Allocations.

The Reserve Allocations had been revised due to recent expenditure and income changes. After discussion, Councillors agreed the following Earmarked Reserves:

- Office Equipment - £500.00
- Election Expenses - £1,000.00
- Staff Costs Emergency Fund - £500.00

The total held in Earmarked Reserves was agreed at £2,000.00

- d. To discuss investment with CCLA Investment Funders.

The Clerk reported that the CCLA account was now up and running and the Council would be receiving the interest into the current account on a monthly basis.

- e. To discuss quotes for CIL fund projects.

i. **Gazebo/shelter**

The Clerk had obtained three quotes for this, as requested at the previous meeting. A lengthy discussion took place with regards to the proposal of a gazebo. It was agreed to defer the decision until April 2025 to allow further investigation of the options, and to wait for the better weather in the Spring before pursuing this project further.

ii. **Management of trees on Playing Field and village maintenance**

(Cllr Seagroatt left the meeting – see item 3.a.)

The Clerk had investigated the services of three handymen for the various village maintenance tasks that needed attention (refurb of notice boards, installation and maintenance of numerous signs, replacement of dog waste bin, installation of bike stands) as well as tasks on the Playing Field (attending to the saplings, strimming around trees, replacing protectors and canes where needed etc.). The Clerk had sought advice with regards to the Council employing the services of Terry Seagroatt, as he is married to Cllr Lynda Seagroatt, and the Council wished to be transparent and fair when awarding the contract. The advice given was that in a small village such as Bucklesham it is often unavoidable to employ friends or relatives of the Council, but that the focus of the Council's decision must be on ensuring they get good value for money. Cllr Bickers proposed Terry Seagroatt's quote be accepted as his hourly rate was very reasonable, he would not need to charge travel expenses, and he had come highly recommended by the Village Hall Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all agreed.

(Cllr Seagroatt re-entered the meeting)

iii. **Village Hall maintenance**

A letter had been received from the Village Hall Committee requesting CIL funds for much needed maintenance and repair of the Hall. Cllr Seagroatt, as Village Hall representative, explained that hire charges cover the day-to-day running of the Hall but that there was very little spare funding for maintenance and repair without increasing the costs to groups. Any increase in hire charge to already struggling groups may result in the groups folding. Cllr Bickers proposed that the Village Hall be awarded £1,500 to cover these costs, and reminded Councillors that the purpose of CIL is to maintain village assets as well as providing new infrastructure. This was seconded by Cllr Seagroatt, with five votes in favour and one against.

iv. **Fence around Play Equipment on Playing Field**

Goddard Fencing quoted £18,300 to erect bow top fencing around the play area. It was agreed that dog mess is sometimes found on other areas of the Playing Field (football pitch, woodland walk) and therefore the huge cost to fence in the play area was unjustified as the problem would still persist elsewhere on the field. Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the idea of fencing in the Play Area be disregarded. This was seconded by Cllr Lenton and all were in favour.

v. **Village Map Sign**

A resident of the village had suggested a bespoke, hand-painted map of the village be commissioned and installed on the grass verge by The Shannon pub. Councillors thought it was a lovely idea and very much liked the look of the example sent. However, it was acknowledged that the land opposite the pub did not belong to the Council and therefore a licence would be needed.

Councillors also agreed that Bucklesham had far fewer ‘points of interest’ than the map in the example, and that it would not be desirable to advertise the Playing Field to passers by as it is a private field for residents of the village and their guests only. Reluctantly, Councillors agreed they would not pursue this.

- f. To acknowledge receipt of Section 3 of Part 3 of the 2023/24 AGAR and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit from PKF Littlejohn.

The Clerk advised that Section 3 of Part 3 of the AGAR 2023/24 had been returned by PKF Littlejohn with no comments.

Receipt of Section 3 of Part 3 of the AGAR and Notice Of Conclusion of Audit were acknowledged by the Council.

The Clerk was thanked by the Chair for all her hard work in getting the audit through to conclusion.

- g. To acknowledge receipt of insurance renewal documentation from Gallagher of £675.21

The insurance renewal documentation included the proposed bike jumps that were soon to be installed on the Playing Field. The Clerk reminded Councillors that they chose to lock in to a 3 year deal with Gallagher last year. Cllr Roper proposed the quote from Gallagher be accepted, seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour.

- h. To discuss the request for funding from Citizens Advice and SARS, and a date for future grants to be decided upon annually.

The Council had received two separate requests from Citizens Advice and SARS (Suffolk Accident and Rescue Service) asking for a contribution to help keep their services open. The Clerk reminded the Council that they had only budgeted £50 for grants to outside organisations, and this had been earmarked for the Royal British Legion’s Annual Poppy Appeal. She also advised the Council that any such donation could not come from CIL funds. Excluding CIL funds, the Council had very little in the way of Reserves, which it was trying to build up.

Cllr Roper proposed that grant requests only be discussed once a year in future to streamline meetings, and to prevent the Council from repeating discussions. It was agreed that any requests for funding should be submitted to the Council by 1st October each year, in order for the Council to make a decision in their budgeting discussions in November’s meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour.

Cllr Roper proposed that the Council did not make a donation to Citizens Advice or SARS. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all were in favour. It was suggested that any resident of the village who wished to do so could make a personal donation. The Chair asked the Clerk to write to Citizens Advice and SARS explaining the Council’s financial situation and to thank them very much for any support they have given to Bucklesham residents.

- i. To authorise the following invoices for payment:
 - i. None £0.00

- j. To note payments made since last meeting:
 - i. Bucklesham Community Council (remainder of grant for D-Day Beacon from Castlemore Homes) £615.11
 - ii. CCLA investments (deposit of CIL funds) £57,000.00
 - iii. Glasdon UK (dog waste bin) £153.82
 - iv. R Johnson (bunting and flags for Tour of Britian Community Picnic) £130.73
 - v. Bike Storage Co (Village Hall bike racks) £309.60
 - vi. Print 4 U (Autumn Bugles) £108.00

- k. To note payments received since last meeting:
 - i. HMRC (VAT refund) £517.95
 - ii. ESC (grant for Tour of Britian picnic and Village Hall bike stands) £479.90

- l. To note Bank Balances as at 31st August 2024:
 - i. Current Account (No. 80152285) £8,778.87
 - ii. Savings Account (No. 00605875) £0.00
 - iii. CCLA investment Account (PS1007890-001) £57,000.00

Cllr Lenton proposed that finance matters *i* to *j* were accepted, seconded by Cllr Bickers, with all in favour.

9. To discuss signing up to the Civility and Respect Pledge.

The Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) are encouraging all Parish Councils to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge. The Clerk had sent a link to SALC’s dedicated webpage to all Councillors, which fully explained the reasons for the pledge and the requirements and expectations of Councils.

The Chair acknowledged there are growing concerns about the impact bullying, harassment and intimidation are having on Parish Councils, Councillors and Clerks, and the resulting effectiveness of local Councils.

All Councillors agreed that they were committed to stand up to poor behaviour across the sector and that signing up to the Pledge showed the Council were committed to civil and respectful conduct.

Cllr Seagroatt proposed that the Council sign up to SALC’s Civility and Respect Pledge. This was seconded by Cllr Roper and all were in favour.

Action: Clerk

Chair’s initials:

10. To discuss moving to a gov.uk domain name.

The Clerk had attended a meeting explaining the process needed for Councils to adopt a gov.uk domain name, and the benefits, costs and implications, and had reported back to the Council. In anticipation of the Council agreeing to this change, to speed the whole process up, and to avoid missing out on funds, the Clerk had applied for the one-off grant of £120 to assist with the costs. If the Council did not agree to the move, the grant need not be accepted. The Clerk had been successful with this application.

The Council's website provider, Suffolk.Cloud, could arrange to register, administer and renew the gov.uk domain name and the Clerk's email address for a fee of £150 for two years. With the grant of £120, this would cost the Council £30. If the Council wished to register a gov.uk email address for each Councillor there would be additional charges.

It was proposed by Cllr Bickers that the Council adopt a gov.uk domain name for the Parish Council website and Clerk's email address, but that it was unnecessary for individual Councillors to change from using initial.surname.bpc@gmail.com as these were not used for corresponding with the public, and merely used between Councillors and the Clerk. This was seconded by Cllr Marriage and all were in favour.

11. To receive updates on the formal complaint made towards Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy.

Following the previous meeting, the Clerk had submitted a formal complaint to Suffolk County Council's Monitoring Officer, citing four examples of where the Council felt that Cllr Mulcahy had broken the Code Of Conduct. This matter was still under investigation and the Clerk had nothing further to report.

The Chair noted that Cllr Mulcahy could have been helping the Council with the many Highways issues in Bucklesham if she had been in attendance.

Action: Clerk

12. To elect a Parish Council representative of the Archer Cartwright Bucklesham Charity.

Two members of the Council stand as Trustees for this village charity; usually the Chair plus one other (currently Cllr Gardner). As the previous Chair, David Brinkley, had resigned from the Council it was necessary to elect another Trustee. The new Chair, Cllr Clive Lenton, expressed his willingness to stand. Cllr Roper proposed Cllr Lenton be the Parish Council rep on the charity. This was seconded by Cllr Seagroatt and all were in favour.

13. To co-opt a Parish Councillor and signing of 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office'.

As there had not been ten or more residents of the village requesting an election following the resignation of Cllr Brinkley, the Council were now able to co-opt a Councillor.

The Clerk was asked to advertise the role in a one-off flyer to be circulated around the village in the hope that a resident would come forward.

14. To receive agenda items for the next Parish Council meeting (Wednesday 13th November 2024).

The Clerk was asked to include the Felixstowe Peninsular Community Partnership meeting by Cllr Gardner, and the SALC Forum by Cllr Roper. Cllr Lenton also reminded the Clerk that the election of a Vice Chair should be placed on the agenda as he had now taken the role of Chair.

There were no other agenda items as at the meeting from 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 8:32 pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date:

Ruth Johnson
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair's initials: