

# **Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Broxton Parish Council**

## **Thursday 6 May 2021 at 8pm via video-conferencing**

*Present were:*

Cllr Andy Cousins, Cllr Lesley Holt, Cllr Adam Hume, Cllr Vere Isham (Chair), Cllr Rachel Kesterton, Cllr Olivia Smith, and Kate Rixson (Clerk).

### **Minutes of 2021 Annual Parish Council meeting**

#### **21/5-A1 Election of Chairman**

Cllr Isham was duly elected. He signed the declaration of acceptance of office and displayed this to the council on his webcam. The witness signature will be added at the soonest opportunity. **Action: Clerk**

#### **21/5-A2**

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Adams who was attending an earlier meeting. County Councillor Simon Walsh who could not attend was thanked for his emailed report.

#### **21/5-A3 Election of Vice-chairman**

Cllr Kesterton was duly elected.

#### **21/5-A4 Presentation of Parish Council's annual accounts**

The annual accounts and supporting documents had been circulated and considered. They were approved.

### **Minutes of Ordinary Parish Council meeting 6 May 2021**

#### **21/5-1 Apologies**

Cllr Adams was attending an earlier meeting and her apologies were accepted.

#### **21/5-2 Public Open Forum**

No members of the public were in attendance.

#### **21/5-3 Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 April 2021**

The minutes had been circulated and were approved as accurate. They would be delivered to the Chair for signature. **Action: Clerk**

#### **21/5-4 Willow Tree at Cherry Green**

The Council confirmed the decision to fell the willow tree (this decision having previously been made provisionally pending the insurers' advice). It was agreed that residents of Cherry Green would be contacted about this plan. **Action: Clerk**

A professional and insured tree surgeon would be needed, to advise on the process and start work as soon as possible. Councillors will forward tree surgeons' details to the clerk.

**Action: Cllrs Isham and Hume; Clerk**

The council agreed to plant a suitable tree or trees on the common to replace the willow, in the interests of improving and maintaining the natural environment.

#### **21/5-5 Clerk's Report**

A written report had been circulated and uploaded to the website.

## 21/5-6 Finance

### 21/5-6.1 Reports on balances and bank reconciliation.

Bank statements having been circulated, balances and the bank reconciliation were presented and approved as follows:

Receipts and payments for year to date (1 April 2021 – 30 April 2021)

Receipts to 30.04.2021	£ 6,625.00	
Expenditure to 30.04.2021	£2,355.23	Including cheques written but not yet presented
Receipts less expenditure (= increase or (decrease) in funds)	£4,269.77	
<b>Balances</b>		
<b>Current</b> account 30.04.2021	£ 9,865.94	
<i>Less</i> unpresented cheques	(1,386.29)	
<b>Current account available balance</b>	<b>£8,479.65</b>	
<b>Deposit</b> account 30.04.2021	<b>£3,451.77</b>	
Available funds	£8,479.65 + £3,451.77	<b>£11,931.42</b>

### 21/5-6.2 Verification of cashbook

Entries were noted, having been circulated to councillors.

### 21/5-6.3 A payment was approved as follows:

Payee and purpose	Amount £
K Rixson for Clerk's salary (net) for 49.58 hours worked in April 2021	543.64
Total payments to be authorised	543.64

## 21/5-7 Village Hall (the parish council meeting as Trustee)

21/5-7.1 Broadband – no further developments. It was noted that Gigaclear had not yet responded to the application for the Hall to be the “community hub” and qualify for free broadband for a year. **Action: Clerk**

21/5-7.2 The hall remained closed due to Covid-19 restrictions but was understood to be re-opening on 21 June unless government plans changed.

21/5-7.3 The audited annual accounts for 2021-21 were approved by the Parish Council as trustee and Mrs Clark would be lodging them with the Charity Commission.

## **21/5-8 Airport**

It was noted that SSE has told the Planning Inspectors they wish to put forward more evidence, as has the planning authority Uttlesford District Council.

## **21/5-9 Footpaths, roads and other rights of way**

21/5-9.1 The road sign “unsuitable for HGVs” at the Brick End Road/Browns End Road /Prince of Wales junction had been knocked over. It was not clear whether this had been reported to Essex Highways. **Action: Clerk**

21/5-9.2 The Highways Rangers were needed to clean street and road signs. Contact needed to be made via Uttlesford DC but they had not responded to the clerk’s email. Cllr Isham would check with other district councillors how a request could be submitted.

**Action: Cllr Isham**

## **21/5-10 Planning**

### **21/5-10.1 Applications, appeals and enforcement**

Progress on outstanding applications was shown on the Planning Tracker which had been circulated and added to the website.

There had been no response to the Clerk’s emails to the planning authority regarding progress on the enforcement and planning applications issues relating to Elmswood. It was noted that drainage problems were still unresolved and affecting other properties. **Action: Clerk**

21/5-10.2 **Solar Farm at Cutlers Green pre-application presentation 11 May 2021**  
Cllr Isham will attend if other commitments allow. **Action: Clerk**

### **21/5-10.3 Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan**

Peter Hewitt, former Takeley Parish councillor, was fixing a meeting to discuss a combined Neighbourhood Plan involving three adjoining parishes. Mr Hewitt has been made aware that Broxted PC is in favour of exploring this idea. Cllr Isham will supply links to relevant information and advise councillors when dates are proposed. **Action: Cllr Isham**

## **21/5-11 Parish Council Assets – Jenny’s Bench**

Cllr Hume had previously reported that the bench needed repairs or replacement. It was agreed that Cllr Isham would inspect it and advise what could be done. **Action: Cllr Isham, Clerk.**

## **21/5-12 Next Parish Council Meeting**

The High Court’s judgment on the NALC’s application for a declaration as to the legal effectiveness of virtual/remote meetings after 6 May 2021 had been announced. The judgment confirmed that the council will be unable to take binding decisions after 6 May 2021 unless councillors are together in person in one physical place.

The Court had also ruled that although the public and press were entitled to attend council meetings, this right was subject to the limits on numbers and other public safety and health rules imposed for public protection in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council must therefore ensure that the number of attendees did not breach the regulations.

Under current regulations, until 21 June at the earliest, indoor venues could not admit more than 50% of their usual capacity, whether councillors, public or press. Whilst a council meeting was a “work” meeting and therefore there was no limit on the number of councillors meeting as a group, except the overall safe occupancy limit for the venue, the number of members of the public at the meeting would have to be controlled to comply with the law limiting the total number in the venue.

The council’s usual venue, the Village Hall, was closed to the public until at least 21 June and nowhere else was convenient for the meeting scheduled for 10 June 2021. If the Village Hall were used before 21 June the public’s right to attend would be limited and an outdoor meeting was not a practical alternative.

It was therefore agreed to defer the meeting until Thursday 24 June at 7pm and to meet in person in the main room of the Village Hall, to provide the best achievable opportunity for public participation. This would ensure that the Annual Report on Governance and Accounting could be considered before the deadline for submission of the paperwork to the external auditors. It was hoped that regulations would be relaxed on 21 June as planned, but even under current rules there would be some opportunity for public participation, taking into account the size of the room, and the meeting would be legally valid. A risk assessment would be carried out by the clerk beforehand. **Action: Clerk**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.40pm.