

Minutes of the Meeting of Broxton Parish Council on Thursday 13 April 2023 at 7.30pm at Broxton Village Hall

Present were:

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

The meeting opened at 7.30 pm.

23/04-1 Apologies for Absence

It was resolved to accept apologies and the reasons for absence from Cllr Wendy Adams who was attending a meeting in central London.

23/04-2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations except that Cllr Holt noted that if the council would be discussing planning application UTT/23/0698/OP, concerning Ivy Cottage, Brick End, she would declare an interest and leave the meeting.

23/04-3 Public Open Forum

No members of the public or press were present.

23/04-4 District and County Councillors' Reports

Cllr Foley had advised he was unable to attend and had sent written responses and reports. District Councillors were not attending in the pre-election purdah period.

The Highways defects referred to in Cllr Foley's email were discussed. Councillors confirmed that flooding (ref 2696759) in "Brick End Lane" had gone down but councillors were pleased it would be monitored. Drainage problems in Mill Road (ref 2696795) appeared to be outside the parish. Carriageway defects in Brick End Road (ref 2743253) – potholes – councillors agreed that these were correctly reported by Highways as filled. The clerk would go back to Cllr Foley accordingly.

23/04-5 Approval of minutes of the Meeting on 9 March 2023

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2023 were an accurate record and they were signed by the Chair.

23/04-6 Reports received.

23/04-6.1 Clerk's report

This had been circulated and placed on the website. It was taken as read and is annexed to the hard copy of these minutes.

23/04-6.2 Finance

23/04-6.2.1 Report on balances and bank reconciliation

The following report had been circulated and placed on the website:

Receipts and payments for the full year 1 April 2022 to 31 Mar 2023 and Balances to 31 March 2023 (Month 11)

Receipts and payments	£	Notes and total
Receipts (i.e. income) to 31 March 2023	£ 23,436.49	Precept £20,000. Interest £3.74. Compensation from bank £50. Grant for Interpretation Board £1,500. VAT refund £1,882.75 Balance carried forward from 2021-22 not included.
Expenditure to 31 March 2023	£ 19,972.49 including VAT	As recorded in cashbook
Receipts less expenditure in current year. Includes VAT.	£3,464.00	This is the increase in reserves since 1 April 2022
Reconciliation of cash book with bank account		
Current account as per bank statement 31 March 2023	£8,625.67	
<i>Less</i> cheques issued before 31 March 2023 but not yet presented (including VAT)	£100.00	Donation to Home-Start Essex. By cheque as bank details not verified.
Current account as per cash book at 31 March 2023	£8,525.67	
Deposit account as per bank statement and cash book at 31 March 2023	£1,455.99	Interest rate 0.8% p.a. from 9 March 23
Available funds	£8,525.67 + £1,455.99	£ 9,981.66

23/04-6.2.2 Payments under contractual and statutory obligations to note

A copy of the cashbooks (current and deposit accounts) for 1-31 March 2023 had been made available. Statutory and contractual payments made since the last meeting, and those due to be made before the next meeting, were noted as follows:

Made between 9 March and 13 April 2023:

Date	Purpose	£
24.03.23	K Rixson salary March (Feb hrs)	448.98
13.04.23	Information Commissioner's Office fee (direct debit)	35.00

To be made from 13 April to 11 May (next meeting) 2023:

Date	Purpose	
18.04.23	NEST pension contributions	10.88
25.04.23	K Rixson salary April (March hrs)	376.55

23/04-6.2.3 Comparison of actual spending and income with budget

An analysis had been circulated and placed on the website which showed an overall underspend of 4%. Income had been 17% more than expected, due to a large VAT rebate. Reserves had therefore increased over the year by £3,464. Councillors were glad to note that the council's finances were therefore within the recommended range for smaller councils - to cover 3-12 months' expenditure - at the end of the year.

23/04-6.3 Footpaths and highways

See also 23/04-4 above.

The parish council had been consulted on the diversion of footpath 43 at Woodgates End around the BT Lerson site and it was agreed that the diversion was suitable and should be supported. **Action: Clerk**

23/04-6.4 Planning

A note of progress on current matters had been circulated and placed on the website. For new applications see 23/04-7.6 below.

23/04-6.5 Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Isham now had further information about options and would liaise with Cllr Hume.

Action: Cllrs Isham and Hume

23/04-6.6 Vacancies on the parish council

Councillors Cousins, Hume, Isham, and Kesterton had been nominated and elected unopposed with effect from 9 May 2023. It was noted that their current terms would expire on 4 May 2023, the day of the election. On 9 May there will be three vacancies and there are two candidates for co-option. Once the council is properly constituted, with the election of a chairman, at the meeting on 11 May, the council will be able to co-opt to fill vacancies.

23/04-7 Decisions made

23/04-7.1 Payments approved:

To the Essex Assocn of Local Councils for EALC and National Association of Local Councils affiliation: £184.01

To S Smith for grasscutting, the first of the agreed 11 cuts per year: £135.

It was noted that only seven cuts had been necessary and carried out in 2022 due to the very dry conditions. In a normal year Mr Smith recommended 11 cuts (every 3 weeks).

It was confirmed that the same contractor as in 2022 should be engaged. An increased rate per cut, from £120 in 2022 to £135 in 2023, had been approved by the clerk under delegated powers as it was within the budgeted figure for 2023-24. **Action: Clerk**

23/04-7.2 To approve direct debits as a group

Variable direct debits to HMRC for PAYE on the clerk's salary (quarterly), to NEST pensions for pension contributions (monthly), and to the Information Commissioner's Office (annual in April) were approved.

23/04-7.3 To resolve to open a bank account for the Parish Council with Unity Trust Bank

After discussion of Unity Trust's banking services and the problems with service standards offered by the council's current bankers, it was agreed to apply for a current account at Unity Trust for the parish council. This would initially run alongside the Barclays current

and deposit accounts with a view to closing the Barclays accounts as soon as possible. Unity would apply a charge of £6 per month, which was approved.

The council resolved to appoint Cllr Isham, Cllr Kesterton, Cllr Cousins, Cllr Hume and Kate Rixson (as clerk/RFO) as signatories, on the basis that any two signatories may approve transactions and give instructions on the account. It was resolved also to approve Unity Trust Bank's terms and conditions and give other instructions and supply documents as the bank requested. These would include the standing orders.

A copy of the resolution was signed by two councillors and is annexed to the hard copy of these minutes. The clerk was authorised and requested to complete the application.

Action: Clerk

It was noted that when the forthcoming vacancies on the council had been filled, the council should consider adding new councillors as signatories but one councillor should remain a non-signatory so that they could carry out regular checks on the cashbook, bank accounts and financial procedures. Cllr Holt was thanked for carrying out this essential role during 2022-23.

23/04-7.4 To appoint solicitors to advise in relation to common land at Cherry Green

It was noted that the district council had not been able to assist and that a fee estimate of £400 plus VAT had been received for advice from Essex Legal Services, which provides advice also to Essex County Council. It was resolved to instruct Essex Legal Services to provide definitive advice on the council's obligations, rights and responsibilities in relation to Cherry Green common land specifically, to enable the council to respond confidently to current and future queries. **Action: Clerk**

23/04-7.5 To consider felling the pollarded willow tree at Cherry Green

It was decided that the clerk should ask the residents if their property showed any signs of movement which could indicate heave, such as cracking of plaster, and unless they said it did, quotes should be obtained for complete removal of the tree and stump to prevent regrowth. **Action: Clerk**

23/04-7.6 To consider planning applications

23/04-7.6.1 UTT/23/0821/FUL regarding The Carriage, Palegate Farm – replacement dwelling. There were no objections to this application

23/04-7.6.2 UTT/23/0698/OP regarding Ivy Cottage, Brick End – 2 dwellings – and **UTT/23/0919/HHF** regarding Fernleigh, 5 St Mary's Mews, Church End, rear and side extensions: The council had received notification today of these applications and councillors had not all had time to review the documents. There was therefore no discussion of the applications.

The deadline for the council's comments for both applications was 11 May 2023 which was the date of the next council meeting. It was therefore agreed to request a one-week extension of time and add these applications to the agenda for the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**

23/04-8 Matters to be noted and/or for future consideration

Cllr Kesterton passed on an offer from a volunteer to install the interpretation board. This was gratefully accepted by the council which expressed its appreciation.

Cllr Holt was retiring from the council and the council offered its thanks for her support and hard work as a councillor.

23/04-9 The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 11 May 2023 at 7.30pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.20pm.