

# **Minutes of the Meeting of Broxted Parish Council on Thursday 11 January 2024 at 7.30pm at Broxted Village Hall**

*Present were:*

Cllr Vere Isham (Chair), Cllr Andy Cousins, Cllr Adam Hume and Cllr Van Haaren.  
Kate Rixson (Clerk).

The meeting opened at 7.30pm.

## **24/01-1 Apologies for absence**

It was resolved to accept apologies and the reasons for absence from Cllr Tony Adams, Cllr Wendy Adams and Cllr Rachel Kesterton.

## **24/01-2 Declarations of interest in matters on the agenda and declaration of acceptance of office**

No declarations of interest were made. Cllr Van Haaren signed his declaration of acceptance of office.

## **24/01-3 Public open forum**

Four members of the public attended including County Councillor Martin Foley. Serious problems with the condition of Brick End Road/Pledgdon Green Lane (protected lane ref UTTLANE98) were raised by residents. Deep potholes, damaged verges, flooding and mud coating the road were described as very dangerous and needing urgent attention.

Similar problems were described along Church End Lane with eroded verges, destruction of road-edge reflectors, potholes and overflowing ditches.

Cllr Foley was aware that problems had been reported to Highways some time ago. He has details of complaints in both locations and expressed his concern and sympathy with residents' frustration at lack of any progress.

He advised that a highways inspector had already visited the sites in Brick End and a senior officer was meeting Cllr Foley at Brick End Road/Pledgdon Green Lane on 24 January. Cllr Foley hoped to persuade Highways to give the repairs higher priority. Lack of funding for Essex Highways made it difficult to get work done. It was unlikely that road surfaces would be cleaned.

## **24/01-4 District and County Councillors' Reports**

Cllr Foley was thanked for his detailed written report on county council matters which had been circulated to councillors.

## **24/01-5 Approval of minutes of the previous Parish Council Meeting**

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

## **24/01-6 Reports received**

### **24/01-6.1 Clerk's Report**

This had been circulated and made available on the website so was taken as read. A copy is annexed to the hard copy of these minutes. No questions were raised. It was noted that

the Broxted and District Community Association had arranged that UCAN (volunteer/advice and information service) would visit the monthly coffee mornings at the Hall. UCAN had contacted the clerk and offered to bring its information van to the parish.

## 24/01-6.2 Financial Reports

These had been circulated and made available on the website.

### 24/01-6.2.1

#### Bank balances and reconciliation between the cash books and bank statements:

Receipts and payments	£	Notes and total
Receipts (i.e. income) to 31 December 2023	£20,386.01	Precept £20,250 paid in full. £66.01 interest, £70 expenditure on hall reimbursed.
Expenditure* to 31 December 2023 *not including transfers between bank accounts.	£ 8,576.41 plus 260.80 VAT £ 8,837.21	As recorded in cashbook.
Receipts less expenditure in current year. Includes VAT.	£11,548.80	This is the increase in reserves since 1 April 2023.
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<b>Reconciliation of cash book with bank account</b>		
<b>Unity Current</b> account as per bank statement 31 December 2023	<b>£21,530.46</b>	Matches cash book – no unprocessed payments or receipts
<b>Unity Current</b> account as per cash book at 31 December 2023	<b>£21,530.46</b>	Matches bank account
<b>Barclays Deposit</b> account as per bank statement and cash book at 31 December 2023	<b>£0</b>	Closed, balance and interest transferred to Unity Current account on 12 December 2023
<b>Available funds</b>	<b>£21,530.46</b>	Includes £9,981.66 reserves brought forward from 2022-23.

### 24/01-6.2.2

#### Quarterly report on income and spending compared with budget (third quarter)

A written report had been circulated and was on the website.

In summary, actual income received in the current financial year (to the end of third quarter, 31 December 2023) was £20,386 (rounded) against a budget of £20,627 for the full year. Actual expenditure to 31 December was £8,838 compared to the budget for the full year of £20,616.

Further expenditure of £5,000 to £7,000 is expected before the end of the financial year on 31 March 2024. This spending would probably be in the budget categories of grants, staff costs, contribution to village hall costs, professional fees and grass-cutting and was expected to be within budget. This would take the total expenditure to approximately £16,000 by the end of the year, which would be a significant underspend against the budget of £20,616.

Provision had also been made in the budget for contingencies in the current financial year.

#### **24/01-6.2.3 Payments made since last meeting and those due under contractual or statutory obligations**

The clerk reported contractual and approved payments made since 9 November:

The clerk's salary for November (October hours) and December (November hours) totalling £893.95.

Society of Local Council Clerks membership for 2024: £67.68

Pension contributions including employee's: £11.32

Postage expenses: £2.60

Contribution to purchase of toner for printer: £67.08

It was noted that the balance and interest on the Barclays deposit account had been transferred to the Unity current account on 11 December 2023. The Barclays accounts were both now closed.

#### **24/01-6.3 Planning update**

The clerk reported that a local Henham parish councillor was canvassing views of local residents on whether Pledgdon Green should be included in a conservation area, for Henham Parish Council to consider at their next meeting. The council would then decide whether they wished to contact Place Services jointly with Broxted to request an assessment.

A schedule of outstanding and decided planning applications had been circulated and put on the website so was taken as read.

#### **24/01-6.4 Footpaths and highways issues**

There had been no recent issues save for those raised in the public participation session above. See 24/01-7.5 below.

### **24/01-7 Decisions made**

#### **24/01-7.1 Payments approved**

Details	£	Budget heading
Website and email hosting, renewal of domain name – Mythic Beasts Ltd. Three invoices (total includes VAT)	194.27	Office expenses
Hundred Parishes Society membership 2024	10.00	Subs and memberships

Society of Local Council Clerks membership 2024 (paid Dec)	67.68	Subs and memberships
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It was noted that a national agreement between NALC and the NJC on local council pay had resulted in an increase in the hourly rate of pay for the clerk, backdated to 1 April 2023. The council confirmed that the clerk's rate was thereby increased and approved backpay. **Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-7.2 To decide the precept demand for 2024-25**

Councillors considered the effect of various levels of precept on the council tax payable by residents in respect of parish council expenditure. It was noted that a healthy reserve was likely to be carried forward into 2024-25. Although expenditure in 2024-25 was expected to be higher than in 2023-24, councillors concluded after discussion that the precept should remain the same at £20,250.

This would result in a 1.8% reduction in the amount of council tax paid by residents for parish council services. For a Band D property this would be £78.74 for the year 2024-25 compared with £80.15 in the current year.

It was noted that advice on whether the council owns the common land in the parish was still outstanding and that expenditure could be affected by this issue. However the solicitors have advised that it is unlikely that the parish council have become the legal owners. A definite answer is still awaited. Liability for maintenance of the common was therefore not in the current budget. It was included within an allowance for unexpected spending.

The precept demand was duly signed by the chairman and clerk for delivery by 19 January 2024. **Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-7.3 To meet fees and expenses on behalf of the Village Hall charity**

After discussion it was agreed to meet:

- Wellers Hedleys fees for dealing with first registration of the hall and its surrounding plot of land in the sum of £950 plus VAT to date and a further Land Registry fee to be notified (likely to be £45)
- Out of pocket expenses on travel, postage and the oath fee incurred by the clerk in the sum of £50.64

to support the village hall. **Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-7.4 To consider opening an interest-bearing account with Unity Trust Bank**

It was noted that the interest rate was about 2.9%. It was agreed to open the account.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-7.5 Action in relation to the condition of Brick End Lane and Church End Lane**

It was agreed that although the parish council lacked powers to intervene or carry out work it would continue to support residents and Cllr Foley in pressing for action.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-7.6 To choose grass-cutting contractor**

After discussion, Steve's Gardening Services' quotation was accepted. **Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-7.7 To respond to new planning application**

**23/2882/FUL – proposed metal-frame barn on land at Garrolds Farm (Elsenham parish)** – it was noted that the site was landlocked and assumed that access was possible along public footpaths Broxted 41 and 40 and across a field where there seemed to be no existing track or right of way. After discussion it was decided to object (deadline for comments 5 February 2024). **Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-7.8 Review of report on assets and actions**

Cllr Hume would attend to the bench opposite the Old Vicarage if it could be brought to his workshop. He would also look at the noticeboards and advise on maintenance/repair.

**Action: Clerk**

The clerk was asked to contact Cllr Kesterton about attention to the steel bench and a possible working party for repairs identified on the schedule. **Action: Clerk**

#### **24/01-8 Matters to be noted and/or for future consideration**

It was noted that the sign indicating the 30mph limit on the approach to Brick End from Woodgates End was very faded. This would be reported to Highways.

#### **24/01-9 The date of meetings in 2024**

It was agreed that the council would continue to meet on the second Thursday of each month except August and December at 7.30pm although this could be reviewed. The Annual Assembly would be arranged for the April meeting date and the Annual Parish Council meeting on the May meeting date.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.30pm.