



BENWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Benwick Parish Council meeting on Monday 4 March 2024 at Benwick Village Hall

Present	Cllrs M Chapman, L Keppel-Spoor, R Few, R Emmitt, J Ablewhite, R Taylor and S Lowry. Fenland District Council (FDC) Cllr T Taylor. Clerk A Barnes and two members of the public.	
239/23-24	Apologies for absence None.	
240/23-24	Declarations of Interest Cllrs Ablewhite and Keppel-Spoor declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in items 250/23-24 and 257/23-24 in relation to the village hall. Cllr Lowry declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in item 257/23-24 in relation to reimbursement of expenses.	
241/23-24	Public time Public time was opened at 19:32 It was enquired when the wood be cleared from the Pound. Cllr Few will arrange for this to be cleared. It was raised whether the parish council could run entertainment events for the village. Cllr Chapman expressed that we need to ensure we're spending money on things that the majority of the village would want and it also needs to be budgeted. Cllr Keppel-Spoor agreed it should be agreed at the time of budget setting. Cllr Emmitt stated that precept raised is a tax. A member of the public volunteered to do a comedy routine for free. Cllr Chapman thanked them for this offer, adding that entertainment should be expected to be charged for. Cllr Ablewhite said we could look to budget money to help subsidise the cost of events for villages. Cllr Chapman queried whether grant funding could be available for something like this. Clerk to look at grant funding options if parish council support the events. Public time was closed at 19:45	Clerk
242/23-24	Confirmation of Minutes It was proposed by Cllr Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ablewhite and AGREED to approve and sign the minutes of the council meeting held on Monday 5 February 2024.	Agreed
243/23-24	Action Log The Cllrs and Clerk provided an update on actions assigned to them in the action log, details are included within the minutes under the relevant items. Cllr Chapman also updated that he has checked the flood defences along Nene Parade and repairs have been made to the wall.	
244/23-24	County & District Councillors Reports Cllr T Taylor updated the council on the following. Cllr Taylor is now looking after Farmers and farm related industry across the county. He has been working to change ragwort policy with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). He has also been working to overrule a proposal for CCC to serve only meat and dairy free based food options at council premises. Planning and drainage issues now come through farmers committee for consultation. To assist farmers, he is working on national policy in relation to TB and bluetongue as well as proposing a different outlook on religious slaughter and food labelling. In relation to Benwick the issue with sewerage back up behind the school was reported to Anglian Water. He asked Cllrs to note that Anglian Water are not allowed to object to any planning applications, even if the water / sewerage network is at capacity.	
245/23-24	Cambridgeshire County Council Youth Coordinator The youth coordinator was unable to attend due to illness. Cllr Lowry is happy to collate ideas to forward on. We will reschedule the visit.	
246/23-24	Telephone Box To council did not have any ideas of how a redundant BT phone box could be utilised in the village. A book swap was suggested, but the village has recently got a new shed for this purpose.	

247/23-24	Portrait of King Charles III It was proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED to apply for a free portrait of His Majesty King Charles III.	Agreed
248/23-24	Email addresses and web domain Following recent Councillor training Cllr Lowry has concerns about using personal email accounts for correspondence. Cllr Ablewhite proposed, Cllr Chapman seconded and it was AGREED that we sign up to the advisory service for switching over to '.gov.uk'. This will give us further information as to what is involved and the costs. Clerk to speak to FDC to see if there is an opportunity to do this via the district council.	Agreed Clerk
249/23-24	Social media communications Cllr Lowry felt that with more events going on in the village a social media presence would be good. It is also beneficial to be able to send information immediately. Cllr Chapman highlighted that we need to make sure it is set up correctly and that we have a social media policy. Cllr Ablewhite proposed, Cllr Chapman seconded and it was AGREED that a Benwick Parish Council Facebook page to be set up, with comments turned off on all posts, to signpost information to the village. A social media policy to also be implemented. Cllr Lowry volunteered to be a social media champion on behalf of the Council, supporting the Clerk in the administration of the account.	Agreed
250/23-24	Village Hall Cllr Ablewhite updated that once the draft lease has been provided by Cambridgeshire Couty Council it will then be presented to the parish council.	
251/23-24	War memorial Cllr Chapman updated that the project will be taken forward this year, with options to be sought from architects. Cllr Ablewhite highlighted that we need to ensure plans are compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1999.	
252/23-24	Warm hubs/ Community lounge Cllr Lowry reported meeting with the team now running the hubs and there has been an increase in numbers. The hub us open at 09:00 on a Wednesday morning to try and attract in some school parents. A ping pong table has been purchased as another facility to be utilised. Cllr Ablewhite added that they are looking to book armchair exercises to take place on alternate weeks with the Living Sport sessions.	
253/23-24	Hedge trimming The council discussed a report of overgrown hedging obscuring the view of the road turning from the allotments onto Whittlesey Road. It was proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED that the Clerk should contact a hedging contractor to get the work carried out, nesting birds dependant.	Agreed
254/23-24	Cemetery and September Gardens The council discussed the recent rainfall making the access track to the allotments and parking area difficult to use and several plots under water. This is unfortunate and something we need to keep a watching brief on to see how frequently it happens in the future. Cllr Chapman proposed and it was AGREED that the allotment holders are invited to a meeting to discuss the allotments including maintenance, the access track and suggestions for improvements. Historically the parish council has wanted an allotment association so that allotment holders can work closely with the parish council. Cllr Ablewhite stated that we have a statutory obligation regarding the allotments, so we should carry out activities when we need to on behalf of the village. Cllr Lowry raised that he is hoping to start a community allotment on vacant plots. Clerk to enquire with FACT about if they would get involved. Hedge planting will take place on Saturday 9 March, meeting at the allotments at 10:00. The council discussed the renewal of the cemetery maintenance contract for a further 3 years. Cllr Chapman proposed and it was AGREED that the current contractor be used for a further 12 month period, with the contract to be re-tendered in 2025.	Agreed Clerk Agreed
255/23-24	Clerk's report and requests a) Cllrs Keppel-Spoor and Chapman volunteered to assist with the renewal of the Parish Council insurance b) Cllr Ablewhite volunteered to assist with the review of standing orders prior to council review in May 2024. c) Cllr Taylor to see if the defibrillator cabinet locks can be disabled. Clerk to determine why the provider insists locks must be fitted.	Cllr Taylor Clerk

256/23-24	Highways matters Cllr Ablewhite is collecting the MVAS units this week.		
257/23-24	Income & Expenditure a) It was proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED to approve the following accounts for payment.		Agreed
	Npower	Electricity Invoice for December 2023 - DD paid 17/02/2024 (inc. VAT) Sub-total pre-authorised by Council	£ 179.71 £ 179.71
	HHA Grounds Maint. A Barnes S Lowry JT Seeds Benwick Village Hall Benwick Village Hall	February Cemetery (inc. VAT) Expenses & salary Community Lounge Reimbursement Wildflower seeds and sand Community Hub hall hire - January Community Hub hall Hire - December Subtotal to authorise for payment now	£ 392.40 £ 469.77 £ 228.71 £ 400.00 £ 80.00 £ 120.00 £ 1690.88
		TOTAL EXPENDITURE AUTHORISED	£ 1870.59
	b) The Clerk's report on the February Bank Balances is at Appendix 1.		
258/23-24	Correspondence a) Rural Services Network Bulletin (email 08/02/24, 13/02/24, 20/02/24, 27/02/24) b) FDC Press release (emails 08/02/24, 13/02/24, 13/02/24, 22/02/24, 22/02/2024) c) FDC Community Safety Survey (email 22/02/2024) d) FDC Planning Meeting Agenda (email 27/02/24) e) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin (emails 08/02/2024, 22/02/24, 22/02/24) f) CAPALC Public Health Campaign (email 08/02/24) g) CCC Traffic Management Centre (email 13/02/24) h) CCC Cambridgeshire Matters (email 13/02/24) i) CCC Online Directory Update (email 22/02/24) j) BBC Radio Cambridgeshire (e-mail 26/02/24) Cllr Ablewhite to submit a nomination for an individual heavily involved in the Christmas lights and Benwick in Bloom.		
259/23-24	Planning Planning application F/YR24/0077/O - Land East Of 28 Doddington Road, Benwick Cambridgeshire. Cllr Chapman noted the absence of detail regarding access and parking. Cllr Ablewhite raised that the plot lies in floodzone 3a, so has concerns about flood risk. It was proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED that without detailed plans the parish council are unable to make comment and reserve the right to comment on detailed proposal.		Agreed
260/23-24	Biodiversity and Habitat Initiatives Wildflower seed planting will take place on Saturday 23 March, with the community lounge being open from 09:30. Cllrs Ablewhite, Taylor, Emmitt and Chapman are planning to attend. FACT are providing refreshments using their bus. They are also organising an Easter egg hunt around car park and pound. Cllr Chapman proposed and it was AGREED for hi-vis jackets for volunteers to be ordered. Benwick. Cllr Lowry to complete risk assessment which includes working at the roadside.		
261/23-24	Agenda Items/Next Meeting – the date of the next Parish Council meeting is Monday 8 April 2024. Items to be included on agenda should be with the Clerk by Monday 1 April 2024.		

Meeting closed at 21:38