

BIRDBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2015 at the Community House, Birdbrook at 7.30pm.

Present: Mr T R Walker Mr P Smart
Mr S Rhenius Mr A Cook

Clerk: Mrs D Hilliard

15/65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

15/66 OTHER APOLOGIES

None.

15/67 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 2 July 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed.

It was noted that the end of the minutes the wording made it appear that Alan Cook was actually at the meeting.

15/68 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

15/69 COMMUNICATION AND REPORT OF THE CLERK

Laptop – Debbie will now look into obtaining a laptop and will visit STP in Haverhill when time permits.

Winter saltbag scheme 2015- Debbie reported that Birdbrook had been registered online for this scheme. No further communication had yet been received re delivery of the salt.

Register of Interest email– Will be circulated to councillors.

Bank Mandate – The form has been prepared and is ready for councillors to sign and take to the bank with relevant ID. This will be done at the end of the meeting.

15/70 DOCUMENTS ON DEPOSIT

Oil Club – Will be displayed on notice boards.

Broadband Booklets – Noted.

HAGS leaflet – Noted.

EALC – Noted.

Essex Air Ambulance – Noted.

Clerks and Councils Direct – Noted.

RCCE – Noted.

15/71 MEMBERS REPORTS

(a) *Pond* – The bushes have been cut back but the pond is very messy and silted. Debbie has emailed the Conservation Volunteers but has not yet received a reply with dates for a visit. Richard will contact Mr Rook again to try and trace a copy of the lease documents.

(b) *Parks* – Nothing to report

(c) *Chairman's* – The Chairman reported that the dog bins were being well used and asked if there was a need for any in Baythorne End. Steve will ask parishioners.

Richard reported a call from Mr Arnold of New England who had recently suffered a garage burglary. This will be put in the Birdbrook News.

Richard also made a suggestion in regard to solar panels for street lights and the possible acquisition of land locally to provide a solar farm as a means of income for the Parish Council. Steve will contact a Witham company which promotes this type of scheme for information as well as the energy efficiency personnel at Braintree District Council.

Village pub – There was some discussion as to whether the pub is actually closing and whether the Parish Council could become involved to avoid this happening, either as a community scheme or by way of becoming licencees. Richard will contact the RCCE for advice and Steve will forward information regarding a pub in Suffolk, the Layer Fox, which was helped in this way.

(d) *Highways* – Richard read out the response he had received from James Cleverly MP and Essex Highways which were not satisfactory. He will draft a reply. The LHP agenda had been issued today but there had been no time to look at it and see if Birdbrook's request was on the agenda. The pothole by the green has been filled in.

Debbie reported that she had made a request to the Footpaths Officer at ECC regarding the footbridge on the footpath near Finkle Green which was in a dangerous state. The bridge had recently been replaced

15/72 NETWORK 5 MEETINGS

It was agreed to withdraw from the Network 5 group consisting of Stambourne, Ridgewell, Toppesfield and Great Yeldham. Instead Debbie will make contact with the new ward members of Steeple Bumpstead, Helions Bumpstead, Sturmer and Birdbrook to see if they would be interested in starting a similar group.

15/73 BT TELEPHONE BOXES

Alan was thanked for the work he has done in renovating the telephone box in Birdbrook. An article will be put in the Birdbrook News. The work is now complete apart from whether it should be reglazed. Alan has established that a reglazing kit can be bought at a cost of £234.00 inc VAT with window rivets and clips (100 pack) at £33.83, giving a total cost of £267.83. Steve proposed and Peter seconded to proceed with the reglazing. All in favour.

Total costs of renovation to date £121.40 to be reimbursed to Alan Cook.

Village pump – Richard will speak to Mr Rook re fencing around the pump. Alan is happy to repaint the pump if necessary.

15/74 GRASS CUTTING (OTHER AREAS)

Re-agenda for November.

15/75 BIRDBROOK NEWS

Richard reported he was able to confirm that the Webbs are moving and will no longer be able to edit and produce the newsletter. Richard will put a request in the Birdbrook News to see if someone else will volunteer. Report back in November.

15/76 BIRDBROOK COMMUNITY HOUSE

Richard reported that the next meeting of the Trustees will take place on 24th September 2015.

15/77 VILLAGE SIGN PROPOSAL

Debbie has to ring the Parish Council in Sturmer to get information about their new village sign. Report back in November.

Some discussion took place about financing this proposed project and it was noted that the CIF fund might be a source of grant funding.

15/78 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

These had been previously circulated to councillors and noted.

15/79 EMERGENCY PLAN

Debbie will find the current plan and circulate to councillors. Agenda for November.

15/80 STREET CLEANSING AGREEMENT 2015

Agreed and signed. Debbie will return to Braintree District Council.

15/81 PLANNING

Nothing to report.

15/82 FINANCE

The financial report was agreed. Alan proposed and Steve seconded all in favour.

VAT – Debbie reported a problem regarding VAT repayments. She is also Clerk to Stambourne Parish Council and had recently made a VAT reclaim for Stambourne Parish Council. However, when she opened the most recent bank statement for Birdbrook she found that the VAT reclaim for Stambourne of £1,599.12 had been paid into Birdbrook's bank account. Firstly, she thought she had given the wrong bank account information to HMRC when this claim was made. However, on investigating further it became clear that HMRC had

somehow mixed the reference numbers for Stambourne and Birdbrook. Debbie reported she had contact HMRC and they had established that the error had occurred at their office. This was due to Parish Council affairs being moved to another department and staff still being trained in dealing with this area. Debbie has pointed out the implications of this type of error to HMRC – eg., for audits, time spent tracing the error and correcting it and the fact that it reflects badly on Clerks who have more than one parish.

It was agreed the easiest way to correct the error would be for Birdbrook to pay a cheque for the amount directly to Stambourne as reimbursement and all records for both parishes be noted accordingly. This was agreed.

15/83 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

Not applicable as no confidential items to discuss.

15/84 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

None

15/64 TIME, DAY AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 5 November 2015 at 7.30pm in the Community House, Birdbrook.

Superfast Broadband – A brief discussion took place about the situation and the continuing poor speeds in rural areas. Richard will place an item in the Birdbrook News for parishioners re Essex Superfast, County Broadband and Buz.com. Debbie will draft a letter to BT regarding the problems with copies to James Cleverly and Cllr Finch.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at approximately 9.55pm.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 5th November at 7.30pm in the Community House.

Signed: Dated: