

These Minutes are subject to verification at the next meeting of the Parish Council

Bagnall Parish Council

Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 9th February 2010 Moorlands Village Hall, Bagnall

Present

Cllr Peter Adams, Cllr Andrew Batson, Cllr Frank Hayes, Cllr Peter Lawley, Cllr Dave Pearson, Cllr Sybil Ralphs, Cllr Ken Simpson
In Attendance Roger Miller (Clerk) and 7 members of the public

10.10 Apologies

All members were present.

10.11 Minutes

Minutes of the 12th January meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record.

10.12 Matters Arising not on the Agenda

06.49 Well

It was noted that no progress had been made in dealing with the trees by the well since the matter was last discussed with Mr Bettany in May 2009. The chairman would remind him.

08.120 Playing Field

An informal briefing by a local solicitor on 28th January had identified ways of using the law, notably by asking the vendor to establish restrictive covenants, to safeguard both the nature of the Bagnall playing field and its long term availability for public use. These would then apply irrespective of changes of ownership. The Village Hall committee had accepted that any charity, established or newly formed, could fail but was confident that provisions of that kind could safeguard the playing field from any creditors in that unlikely event. It was desirable to establish whether Staffs County Council, prospective vendor, would consider selling to any body other than the Parish Council. Since Cllr Hayes had still received no response to his enquiries it was resolved to seek an interview with the responsible County Council cabinet member for a delegation of two Parish Councillors and the solicitor who had provided advice. A note would be prepared for inclusion in the second issue of the recently revived parish newsletter.

09.56 Trees on the Green

The Clerk had received three tenders for work on trees on the green. He had noticed that the lowest, at £250, specified only three chestnuts and one sycamore, not the four chestnuts set out in the invitation to tender. The Clerk was asked to establish whether that had been only a typographical error or the true figure would be higher. Depending on the answer, to avoid another month's delay the chairman was authorised to accept either that tender or the next highest, at £375. Cllr Simpson declared an interest and abstained from this discussion.

09.66 Survey

Ruth Reeves, Locality Partnership Officer at SMDC, attended with a colleague to present the results of the local survey, previously circulated. Based on responses from 33 adults, major concerns were conserving parish heritage and character and securing the future of the playing field, with activities for children and young people not far behind. There was also a small response from young people. Ruth suggested that the survey results be published to encourage more responses. It was agreed that they be published in the next edition of the parish newsletter. She also suggested calling on residents to conduct face to face interviews and offered to work with local schools to get a significant input from young people. It was noted that Bagnall had no school of its own but the offer to see what might be done in the two

schools to which the majority of Bagnall children go was accepted. Since some respondents had supplied contact details it was agreed that they be invited to a meeting at which their help in bringing about desired outcomes might be sought. Ruth advocated the creation of a parish action plan both to show that notice had been taken of opinions expressed and as a means of getting wider support for action.

10.13 Finance

10.4(i) External Audit

An external audit report for the year 2008-09 was tabled. As agreed in January, these accounts had been put on the village hall website so as to be easily accessible to all parishioners.

10.4(iii) Budget

A request for an increased precept had been submitted. It had not been possible to establish any link between new housing and the household impact of Council Tax but Cllr Adams had undertaken an analysis of precepts and Council Tax in recent years based on limited information available to him and discovered that parish precept increases had been imperceptible in the charge advised by the County to cover all levels of Local Authority.

Payments

Payments due to the lengthsman, for village hall hire and to the external auditor were agreed.

10.14 Planning Applications

There were no new applications for consideration

10.15 Footpaths, Highways and Maintenance

09.110 Memorial

The Clerk had established that minutes for 1992 were now archived in the County Record Office.

09.112 Parish Online Maps

No further news had been received from the responsible officer at SMDC whether the parish online map scheme would proceed or not.

10.6(i) Snow

The Clerk had written as requested to the highways liaison officer about grit bins and clearing the bus route.

Gritting policy was again discussed since open main roads were only useful if accessible from side roads. Assuming that County could do little or no more, what local preparation might be made? Cllr Ralphs offered to collate suggestions and investigate whether a local store of grit, in excess of ordinary grit bins, could be supplied. Were this possible it would be necessary to find a secure place to store it and a means to distribute it if needed. Engaging the services of the Lengthsman could be explored.

10.6(ii) Notice Board

Cllr Simpson had arranged for repair of the damaged notice board door and rehung it himself. He recommended recompense to the repairer of up to £12, which was agreed.

(i) Footpath Repairs

It was noted that some repairs had been made to the footpath close to the church gate but not elsewhere although other areas had been marked up for attention. This was a commitment in an SMDC 5 year plan almost 5 years ago and was now urgent. Cllr Ralphs offered to contact the Highways Department again and see what could be done.

(ii) Bus Service

A proposal to reduce the bus service to Bagnall was noted. A similar proposal some time ago was defeated and this one would be strenuously resisted. Cllr Ralphs advised that preliminary discussions were still going on and reaction to a final proposal would be appropriate. She would keep the Council apprised of developments.

10.16 Environment

(i) Fly Tipping

Cllr Simpson had recently arranged for collection of 15 fly tipped tyres and a wheel dumped in much the same place as earlier loads whose removal he had arranged on seven or eight earlier occasions in the past year. CCTV had been refused on the grounds that it simply displaced rather than checking such behaviour. Cllr Ralphs undertook to ask again. Cllr Simpson had also cleared up some general litter. It was agreed that involving more people in keeping the village tidy would be desirable and that this should be added to the matters to be raised in the newsletter. Any help available from one of the groups organised by SMDC would also be welcome

(ii) Stony Edge Quarry

It was noted that a pile of (foreign) stone had been added to Stony Edge quarry. The chairman had spoken to the depositor, to no effect. It was resolved that three councillors seek a meeting with the owner of the stone pile. Cllr Ralphs declared an interest and did not participate in this discussion.

10.17 Correspondence

Group manager community highway liaison, to describe the County approach to highway repairs after snow and ice damage.

Mr Houston Brown, to suggest a number of matters to which the Parish Council might consider giving more attention in its discussions. The Clerk was asked to circulate a copy of the letter with the minutes so that it could be taken as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Minutes of Parish Assembly meeting 3rd December together with notice of 4th March meeting and questionnaire, designed to elicit information about possible reasons why attendance is dropping and suggested improvements.

Electoral register in electronic form.

10.18 Other Business

The Clerk reported that he had been invited to and had attended on 1st February an information meeting about a North Staffs sustainable transport plan but had nothing relevant to report.

There were a number of observations and questions from members of the public.

Mrs Houston-Brown noted that Betley was very successful in collective funding, for a bonfire for example. She was also concerned to know to whom to turn should a footpath be found impassable and was advised that the County Council had a duty to keep public footpaths open.

Mr Houston-Brown asked, prompted by recent debate about parliamentary expenses and related matters, what code of conduct bound parish councillors. It was explained that all signed a very restrictive code on appointment.

Mr Dee asked about possible alterations to the bus service.

Mrs Higginson asked with whom she should take up matters concerning the churchyard and was referred in the first instance to the churchwardens. She also noted that traffic on the road past the church could be hazardous, especially when the road became very busy after services and funerals and a mirror to allow a clear view of the road from her driveway would be desirable on safety grounds. She was advised that was a planning matter. Cllr Ralphs offered to take it up.

Mr Moulton observed that motor vehicles seemed to him whilst on horseback often to be discourteously and dangerously driven and he wondered what could be done about it. He also lamented the closure of old roads that had become bridleways, thus forcing him onto the dangerous motor roads.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....