

STAGSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Parish Council

Held Monday 20 November 2023
in the Village Hall at 7:30pm

PRESENT: Peter Brown, Jim Watson, Esther Dickson, Dick Thompson, Cllr
Dylan Simmons, Cllr Robert Rigby

APOLOGIES: Co Di Credico, James Taylor

Action/Power

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr P Brown attending the meeting. Mr Brown said he had attended the Parish Council meeting in July 23 and none of the actions he had requested had been carried out.

Mr Brown had requested the following:

- that the gully pots be cleared out, this work had been done but there were still 2 drains to clear.
- Weed spraying be carried out entrances to Stagsden, work complete

Mr Brown did not approve of the contribution to the church wall repairs and said that the Parish Council should have consulted with the village. Details of the church wall project were on agendas and minutes.

Mr Brown requested details of the s106 agreement and the commuted sum for the Spring Lane Development. It was agreed to write to Mr Brown to confirm details of all his complaints.

The Public
Bodies
(Admission to
Meetings) Act
1960 as
amended by
s100, LGA
1972

56/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from James Taylor and Co Di Credico.

LGA 1972,
Sch 12 para
40

57/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

LGA 1972,
Sch 12, para
41

58/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As previously declared and as recorded in the minutes.

Signed (Chairman)

59/23 **REPORTS**

(a) Borough Councillor's Report

The Borough Councillor report was attached at **Appendix A.**

Noted

60/23 **UPDATES ON CURRENT ISSUES**

(a) Crime Statistics

Crime Statistics for Stagsden for October/November 2023 were circulated and are attached at **Appendix B.**

Noted

(b) Village Hall

Cllr Watson reported that there was an issue with tree roots from the tree to the front of the Village Hall. The tree may require removal.

Decorating work had been agreed and the committee would be trialling a new acoustic system in the village hall.

Cllr Watson tabled a copy of the Village Hall Accounts showing a profit of £2522.60 for year ended 31.3.23 and year end balance of £46,623.10.

(c) Allotments Report

The Allotments AGM would be held on 4 December 2023. Membership is up for renewal and looks to be around the same as the beginning of this year with 40 plots in total available, 34 are taken, 4 reserved for residents of Stagsden and 2 vacant.

The year had been a good growing year with all the rain, with plenty of produce, some of the surplus had been put on a stall in return for donations. The money raised from this had covered fuel costs for the year. A water tank had been installed and another is intended for Spring.

Finances had remained constant and balance would be the same as last year after a few improvements have been carried out. Full details would be available after the AGM.

64 attended the annual Apple lunch this event still remains the central fund raising event. Two new benches had been purchased for a new seating area in the orchard. The next social event would be the post Christmas curry.

(d) Vacancy

Vacancy had been advertised on website and a notice on noticeboard.

(e) Village Green/Spring Lane Development

Clerk had spoken with Bedford Borough Council about the commuted sum for the Village Green and had given a breakdown of land to be managed. Awaiting advice.

Note

Measurements below:

1. Grass – 141m²
2. Wildflower meadow – 464m²
3. Hedgeline in linear metres – 34m
4. Number of trees – Existing – 3, Proposed - 30
5. No. of benches (no bins) – 4 Phoenix Jubilee
6. Shrub borders (inc brambles) – 238m
7. Stone wall linear metres – 36m
8. Footpath (to adoptable standard, no immediate maintenance req.) – 168m²

The gate and the wooden fencing would be maintained by the developments Management Company and would not be needed to be included within the village green.

The stone wall maintenance would only require the mortar to be replaced (depending on weather conditions), approx.. every 80-100 years.

(f) St Leonards Church Wall

Work on the first 25% of the wall had begun. The wall had been stripped back and begun the rebuild, covering with hessian whilst lime mortar begins to set. New quarried stone would be used because the old wall had very weathered and crumbling stones. The area is being kept tidy and materials are stored within the churchyard.

(g) Speedwatch

No update.

(h) Application to Rural Grants

Bedford Borough Council (BBC) had recently launched funding support for rural communities.

The schemes had been made available from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) through UK Share Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPC). The maximum grant available was £20,000 and match funding from the Parish Council would be required.

Cllr Thompson proposed that an application be made to this fund for a cycle track between Stagsden and Astwood. Cllr Thompson would contact the solar panel development to request a contribution to the project.

RESOLVED

That Stagsden Parish Council make an application to the Rural Grants Scheme for a cycle pathway from Stagsden to Astwood.

Dick
Thompson

61/23 **PLANNING**

(a) To Consider Planning Applications

Town &
Country
Planning Act
1990

23/02504/FUL, 36A Bedford Road, Stagsden Replacement rear conservatory and erection of single storey side extension.

RESOLVED

No Objections

Signed (Chairman)

(b) Report of Planning Applications: No update

- 23/02086/FUL, Southwell 41 High Street, Single Storey rear extension and single storey attached replacement garage to side – GRANTED
- 23/01195/FUL, Bakers Byre West End, Single Storey extension to existing granny annexe to create a separate room. GRANTED
- 23/00809/FUL, Bedfordshire Golf Club, Spring Lane, Replacement maintenance building with 3 water harvesting tanks and one water storage - REFUSED

62/23 **FINANCE**

(a) Schedule of Receipts and Payments – October/November 2023, APPENDIX C.

The Council received the schedule of receipts and payments made during October/November 2023.

LGA 1972,
s150 (6)

RESOLVED

That the schedule of receipts and payments made during October/November 2023, and as circulated, be approved.

(b) Budget Update 2024-2025

The meeting considered and noted the budget update, attached at **APPENDIX D**. There were no concerns noted.

(c) Budget Setting & Precept 2024-2025

The Meeting considered the proposed budget attached at **APPENDIX E**. Councillors agreed there should be no increase in the precept demand for 2024-2025.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the detailed 2024-2025 Budget, summarised at **Appendix E** be agreed.

(ii) That based on the detailed Budget a precept of £10,000 be requested from Bedford Borough Council.

(iii) That the reserves identified at Appendix E be approved.

(d) National Joint Council Salary Award

Agreement had been reached to increase rates of pay by £1,925 on all pay scales up to SPC 43 applicable from 1 April 2023 (covering the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024). The national pay award would apply to the post of Parish Clerk.

The pay award to the year 2022-2023 had not been paid to the Clerk and had been added to the November payslip.

(e) CIL Monies

CIL Monies received from Bedford Borough Council were as follows:

- North End Farm, North End Road, Stagsden £4268.85
- Land West of Village Farm, Spring Lane, Stagsden £8820.65
- Land West of Village Farm, Spring Lane, Stagsden £8820.65

Total received £21,910.15.

Note there would be 2 more payments from Land West of Village Farm, Spring Lane, Stagsden. These would be paid April 2024.

The neighbourhood portion of the levy can be spent on a wider range of things than the rest of the levy, provided that it meets the requirement to support the development of the area by funding;

- a. The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- b. Anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.

This levy should be spent within 5 years of receipt. If not the regulations allow Bedford Borough Council to serve notice requiring the funds to be repaid to Bedford Borough Council.

Councillors agreed to consider projects for the CIL monies received. It was agreed to highlight the receipt in the village newsletter in order to give residents a chance to suggest projects to be considered.

Internal Auditor

The meeting considered the need to appoint an Internal Auditor in advance of financial year end and, in this regard, the existing Auditor had agreed to undertake the role for the 2023/2024 financial statements for the sum of £170.00. Mrs Carol Carter had performed the role exceptionally well in previous years and had the necessary experience and competencies.

The meeting considered the proposed terms of reference for the audit, attached at **Appendix F**, and these would form part of the letter of engagement of the Internal Auditor. The letter of engagement would set out the expectations of the Parish Council in respect of the Internal Audit, including a proposed plan of work.

RESOLVED

That in respect of the Internal Audit process:

1. **Mrs Carol Carter be retained as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the 2024/2025 financial statements at a fee of £165.00.**
2. **That the Terms of Reference for the Internal Audit of the 2024/2025 financial statements be approved.**

63/23 **Amenities**

(a) Play Areas

Cllr Dickson

Play areas continue to be well used. Cllr Dickson agreed to purchase a new container for play equipment.

Community Flower/Herb Box

Cllr Dickson

Community planters were looking good and had been well received. Spinach growing well and spring bulbs had been planted. Thank you to residents for helping maintain the planters.

Clerk

It was agreed to purchase a plaque for the planters asking residents to help themselves.

(b) Rights of Way/Footpaths

No update.

(c) Highways

It was agreed that Cllr Thompson would be the Highways representative.

Roadside Verges Update

There had been no midsummer cut and this had helped. The preference would be to have a cut and collect but Bedford Borough Council were unable to do this.

The nature reserve area at Dropshot Farm was looking impressive.

Request to Reduce Speed Limit

Councillors discussed correspondence from a resident who had requested that the speed be reduced on Wick End/Bury End to 20mph.

This situation had got worse due to more companies based at the industrial estate therefore increasing traffic.

RESOLVED

To request Bedford Borough Council consider traffic movements on Wick End/Bury End with a view to reducing the speed limit to 20mph.

64/23

NEW MATTERS FROM COUNCILLORS FOR DISCUSSION AT NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

- Standing Orders

Signed (Chairman)

65/23 **CORRESPONDENCE, APPENDIX F**

See Correspondence List attached.

66/23 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Meeting closed at 21.08. The next Parish Council meeting will be held on
Monday 15 January 2023, at 7.30pm.

MINUTES AGREED: _____ **Date:** _____ **2023**

Signed (Chairman)

Monthly Borough Report October 2023

- **Bedford Council secures and additional £6.3 million in funding**

This funding will support Bedford Borough Council to test and refine recommendations within the Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities system that are likely to come into legislation in 2025.

Bedford Borough Council has been appointed as the Lead for the CPP partnering with, Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council. Through accepting the grant the Bedford Council will be well prepared to implement these reforms without negatively impacting on the day to day services within SEND.

- **New Leisure Service Partnership**

The Council has now signed a new 2-year contact with the charitable social enterprise Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) to manage and operate leisure facilities across the Borough, ending the 10-year fusion contract.

The Council will be working with provider to ensure our leisure facilities to modernise our leisure facilities.

- **Council Financial Overspend**

The Council facing significant financial challenges with a £12.188 million overspend that occurred before the 2023 local elections.

The Council is working to respond to this position and there has been some improvement. The latest budget monitoring information available, to 30 September 2023, identified that the gap is now £8,518 million.

An improvement, but still much work to do. The Executive is responding by committing to a 4-year Efficiency Plan that seeks to protect services, transform service quality, improve organisational and process efficiencies, and improve customer service. This will be reported to the Executive in November 2023.

- **Council Executive agree new Capital Programme**

The Executive recently agreed a new Capital Programme to address the lack of GP provisions in some communities, poorly maintained leisure facilities, Town Centre regeneration and deliver on the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Canal to name a few aspects.

A list of these priorities are below:

1. **Primary Care Estate** – Funding to support the delivery of new and improved health estate/GP surgeries across Bedford Borough.
2. **Town Centres Regeneration** – Funding to support the delivery of a series of short, medium and long term to stimulate town centre regeneration and economic investment. This includes funding for the Prebend Street Relief Road which represents a critical component of an emerging comprehensive residential-led development of the Prebend Street Quarter, to provide significant highway network benefit, help strengthen the link to the Railway Station Quarter, and improve the overall amenity, future vitality and connection to the town centre.
3. **Leisure Sites** – Almost £4 million essential health and safety work in our leisure centres that have really suffered from lack of investment over the past few years. This is funding for essential investment to ensure that leisure sites can function safely.
4. **Leisure Complex & Asset Refurbishment** – Funding for the refurbishment of existing leisure assets, including the development of a new Leisure Village incorporating a new purpose-built leisure facility.

Signed (Chairman)

5. **Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Canal Link** – To profile the earmarked financial contribution to enable commencement of this ambitious project.
6. **Sharnbrook (Primary) School** – Funding to enable education to be provided on one site in the new development in the village, rather than separated over two sites.
7. **A6 Paula Radcliffe Way Highway Corridor** – Funding for the replacement of existing crash barrier posts have rusted beyond serviceable expectation due to water damage.

- **Town Centre new shops and footfall up**

In the last 3 months 8 unique stores have opened in Bedford Town Centre, additionally, footfall has increased in the last 3 months by an average of roughly 30.7% when compared to last year alongside a number of new stores.

- Kokoro
- Zebra
- Tops Pizza
- Ruby's Aesthetics
- FAD3D Studio
- ADORN
- Squires Barbershop
- Mercy In Action
- Edinburgh Woollen Mill

- **£26 Million SEN school underway**

Construction is underway on the £26 million SEN school being built on the former Robert Bruce Middle School site. The school will have places for 200 children and young people across the Borough and provide much needed education for SEND students. It is due to open in phases from September 2024.

- **Christmas 2023**

There will be a few new elements to the Christmas celebrations this year – a new tree and lights will be up in the Town Centre with music now being played in the area.

There will be an array of live performances taking place in Harpur Square and Saxon Square over the Christmas period. There will be other events and activities such as Christmas Crazy Golf and family photos to be taken in the Christmas Snow Globe

Wider Borough Items

- **Paula Radcliffe Way**

Works are continuing to progress on Paula Radcliffe Way and the Council expect the majority of the project to be completed as expected.

Testing and inspection of the crash barrier system has been carried out and it has become apparent that the entire system needs to be replaced. The original scope of the work allowed for replacing some damaged sections of barrier however, the damage was far more extensive than expected. This is a major safety concern and the entire system will be replaced. During this period the road will still be open in each direction but a lane of the dual carriageway will be closed in each direction to allow the works to be completed. The new barrier being installed has additional protection to prevent corrosion of the posts.

This is an unforeseen delay and these additional works are planned to be completed by 15 December 2023 at the latest, and we hope they will be finished before this date.

Signed (Chairman)

APPENDIX B

Crim Stats 1-14 November 2023

Police UK Category	Crime Category	Crime Sub Category	Offence Start Date	Recorded Date	Offence	Address 1
Violence and Sexual Offences	VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON	VIOLENCE WITH INJURY	13/11/2023	14/11/2023	ASSAULT WITH INJURY	Newport Pagnell Road

APPENDIX C

Income & Expenditure October/November 2023

38.89	Nat West	Interest
38.48	Nat West	Interest September
48.84	Nat West	Interest October
	179.47 J Betts	Oct Salary
	45.00 HMRC	Oct Salary
21910.15	Bedford Borough Council	CIL Monies, North End Farm/Spring Lane
	401.43 J Betts	Nov 23 salary + backpay
	100.40 HMRC	Nov 23 salary
	45.73 Bedford Borough Council	election charges
	540.00 St Leonards Church	Grass Cut
22036.36	475.03	

Balance carried forward £58,915.56.

APPENDIX D

Budget Update

Stagsden Parish Council

Brought forward

31250.06

Budget Update as at 20.11.23

Budget

Actual

Receipts		
VAT		161.11
CIL		21,910.15
Interest	10	261.08
Precept	10000	10,000.00
Grants		0.00
Councillor funding		0.00
Allotments	600	600.00
Total Receipts	10610	32,932.34

Signed (Chairman)

Payments		
VAT		353.97
Election Costs	300	45.73
Staff costs (Salary/Expenses)	3580	2,342.52
Admin (Stationery & Postage)	210	0.00
Councillor expenses	100	0.00
Training	50	0.00
Subscriptions	250	0.00
Hall Hire	100	0.00
Village Hall	750	50.00
Grass Cut	500	540.00
S137/Community Action	250	0.00
Allotments	600	0.00
Bank Charges	50	0.00
Legal Fees	120	35.00
Audit	400	355.00
Insurance	700	801.31
Play Areas	1000	0.00
Open Space	400	1,476.99
Maintenance of village furniture	200	0.00
Defibrillator	150	0.00
Stagsden Historical Society	400	0.00
Councillor grants	200	0.00
Website	300	110.00
Total Payments	10610	5,570.52
End year		58,071.88
		400.00
		59,471.88

APPENDIX E

Budget Setting

Stagsden Parish Council - Budget Setting 20 November 2023

2024-2025						
	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2023-24	2024-2025	Comments
Receipts	Budget	Actual	Nov-Mar	Total	Proposed	
Interest	10	261.08	200	461.08	450	
Precept	10000			0	10000	
Grants		0		0		
Councillor funding		0		0		
Allotments	600	0	600	600	600	
Total Receipts	10610	10601.24		1061.08	11050	
Payments						

Signed (Chairman)

Election Costs	300	45.73			300	
Staff costs (Salary/Expenses)	3580	2342	1950	4292	4200	NALC increase £1.00 per hour on all salary scales
Admin (Stationery & Postage)	210	0		0	210	
Councillor expenses	100			0	0	remove?
Training	50	0		0	80	
Subscriptions	250	212.9		212.9	250	
Hall Hire	100	50			100	
Village Hall	750		750	750	750	
Grass Cut	500	540		540	600	
S137/Community Action	250	0		0	460	
Allotments	600	0	600	600	600	
Bank Charges	50	0	50	50	50	
Legal Fees	120	35		35	100	
Audit	400	355		355	400	
Insurance	700	801.31		801.31	850	
Play Areas	1000	714.66		714.66	500	
Open Space	400	1476.99		1476.99	500	
Maintenance of village furniture	200	0		0	200	
Defibrillator	150	200		200	200	
Xmas lunch	400	0	400	400	400	
Stagsden Historical Society	200	0	200	200	0	removed
Website/hosting/domain	300	110	150	260	300	year 1 £180 year 2 £270
Total Payments	10610	4986.73	3950	10627.86	11050	

Notes:

Clerk Salary	3000	per month Julie paid £176.64 + HMRC £44.20
Salary provision 12 x £50	600	
Agreed Gratuity March 2011	84.55	never paid
Allowance for office	250	
Total salary	<u>3934.55</u>	

Gratuity unpaid

840.55

11x 84.55 =
930.05

Agreed reserves 2022/23

Pension	1000
Play equipment	5000
St owens wall	11000
Public open space	5000
	<u>22000</u>

Signed (Chairman)

INTERNAL AUDIT: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Appointment of Internal Auditor

Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended, imposes a duty on local councils to 'maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with the proper practices in relation to internal control'.

Internal Audit is a key component of the system of internal control. The purpose of internal audit is to review whether the systems of financial and other controls over a Councils activities and operating procedures are effective. It is essential that the internal audit function is sufficiently independent of the other financial controls and procedures of the Council which are the subject of review. The person carrying out internal audit must also be competent to carry out the role in a way that will meet the business needs of the Council.

The Parish Council intends to appoint an internal auditor and to base its decision to engage on experience, competency, independence and price quoted. In particular:

1. Whilst there is no requirement for a person providing the internal audit role to be professionally qualified, essential competencies to be sought in any internal audit service are an:
 - Understanding of basis accounting processes.
 - Understanding of the role of internal audit in reviewing systems rather than undertaking a detailed check that are more appropriately the responsibility of the management.
 - Awareness of risk management.
 - Understanding of the legal framework and powers of local Councils.
2. The Council will approve the appointment of an Internal Auditor at Full Council meeting and minute its decision.
3. Once appointed, the work of the internal Auditor will be subject to an Engagement Letter setting out the terms of the appointment, including a plan of work. Engagement terms will include roles and responsibilities, audit planning, reporting requirements, assurances around independence and competence, access to information, members and officers, period of engagement and remuneration.
4. The Internal Auditor shall carry out the audit in accordance with the internal control objectives listed on Section 4 of the Local Councils in England Annual Return and as per Appendix 9 of the SLCC Governance and Accountability for Local Councils Practitioners Guide entitled "An Approach to internal audit testing".
5. The Internal Auditor's report shall be submitted to the Parish Council with:
 - An objective and independent view on whether the internal systems and controls meet the needs of the Council.
 - Advice on any external risks facing the Parish Council.
 - Advice on any changes required to procedures/systems required to meet forthcoming changes in legislation or good governance.

Signed (Chairman)