

Meeting:	Stevington Parish Council – Parish Council Meeting 27 th September 2023 at 7.30pm
Council Members in attendance:	Cllr. Janet Day (JD), Chair Cllr. Richard Taylor (RT) Cllr. Mouritz Botha (MB) - left the meeting at 20:05hrs Cllr. James Surtees (JS) - co-option at this meeting Cllr. Gareth King (GK) - co-option at this meeting
Apologies received:	Cllr. John Strutt (JS)
Non-attendance:	
Borough Council Member:	Cllr Robert Rigby Cllr Dylan Simmons
Clerk to the Council:	Rosemary Plum (RP)
Public Attendance	Simon Fisher – Forest Creation Officer, Forest of Marston Vale 2 members of public 2 prospective councillors
MINUTES OF MEETING	

1. Welcome

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr John Strutt

3. Declarations of Interest

a) Annual Declarations

Distribute forms

James Surtees declared an interested in Item 11, Planning Update

4. Co-Option of Councillors (moved from Item 9 on published Agenda)

a) Proposal of candidates

Statements have been received from both candidates considered for co-option. All standing Councillors feel both candidates have skills and enthusiasm suitable for the post of parish councillor. Accordingly, both have been viewed positively.

b) Confirmation of co-option

PROPOSAL: to go ahead with the co-option of Stevington residents James Surtees and Gareth King to the position of Stevington Parish Councillor.

Proposed: Cllr. Mouritz Botha

Seconded: Cllr Richard Taylor

Vote: Unanimous

5. **Open Forum** (15 mins)

b) Presentation by guest speaker Simon Fisher – Forest Creation Officer at Forest of Marston Vale.

- A potential environmental project for the village was introduced.
- Forest of Marston Vale has been charged by Defra with access to a 'tree fund' to encourage extended scope into "Halo Areas" for tree planting up to 10 miles beyond the boundary of these areas.
- Simon is currently working with Oakapple Estates in Carlton on 3 sites which extends to West End site in Stevington.
- Trying to improve biodiversity.
- Intended plans and areas were indicated on a map.
- Simon is working with Borough Archaeology team who are happy with proposals and mindful of public rights of way.
- The aim to complete an ambitious 44 hectare scheme with a transformative effect.
- Looking to work with neighbouring Picts Hill site.
- All materials being used will be biodegradable with minimal use of and fertilisers and other agricultural products.

Question raised by Councillors: What would you like from us?

- Marston Vale want to ensure they're getting the project right from the Parish perspective and respecting rights of way etc.
- There are no planning implication but an Environmental Impact Assessment will be submitted to the Forestry Commission.
- Project leaders would like to secure local community buy-in.
- The landowner has ambitious plans to get more trees planted and increase biodiversity.
- If there's enthusiasm for local help to plant trees, Simon will engage with volunteers directly or will engage with Stevington Environmental Group, whichever is more appropriate.
- Minimum period of obligation is 15 years for trees.

It was agreed that Simon would be put in contact with the Stevington Environment Group. Councillors felt Stevington is aware of its biodiversity and green agendas and this project will help to enhance these.

JD

6. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

PROPOSED: Cllr Richard Taylor

SECONDED: Cllr Mouritz Botha

7. Matters Arising from Minutes of previous meeting (for information only)

a) Barringer Trust – update

Item to be taken forward to next meeting.

b) Village Hall – update

Item later on this Agenda.

c) Windmill – update

- Borough Council representative has visited the site to get a full picture of damage to the pitched roof and will:
 - Engage Borough Building Works team to attend site as soon as possible to make the repairs.
 - Ensure the damaged fire extinguisher is replaced as part of the servicing which is taking place this month.
- It's currently unsafe to allow unaccompanied access into the windmill.
- Boarding / timber battens still on the doors due to unauthorised access. This has been discussed with the Friends of Steveston Windmill.
- Borough is in discussion with the Friend committee to start increasing access to the windmill.
- Access had been paused for further work following vandalism but repairs now complete.
- Last meeting of the Friends of Steveston Windmill was in 2021. Borough would be very happy to restart these discussions if the Friends group are able to reconvene.

RP to approach current Parish Representative, Andy Lockwood who leads on the Friends group to initiate conversations.

RP

d) Lottery funding application – update

Nothing to report.

8. Co-Option of Councillors – moved to Item 4 on this Agenda.

c) *Proposal of candidates*

d) *Confirmation of co-option*

9. Clerk's Report (for information only)

- a) RP advised of following email received from the Highways Manager at Bedford Borough Council with regard to the current siting of the Bottle Bank: *"I understand from the ward councillors that your Council are concerned about the bottle banks on the Oakley Road.*

We have looked at this site and many more people visit the area to walk than visit the bottle bank. We have not received any complaints from these users about ingress or egress from the "parking area". We therefore do not consider that the bottle bank requires re-siting at this time.

- b) RP called for Cllrs to highlight topics of particular interest to Stevington Parish in preparation for future attendance of the Mayor of Bedford at a Parish Council meeting.

All

10. Borough Council Report

- a) Cllrs. Robert Rigby and Dylan Simmons – Update

Bottle Bank: Met with Andrew Prigmore at the Borough at start of the summer. He had suggestions for alternative sites and would look into whether it needed to move. If the site is declared unsafe for a bottle bank, it has to be declared unsafe for a walking site and the car park would then be closed. Mr Prigmore feels it's not worth losing the Right of Way to reposition the Bottle Bank in Bromham.

Rural support grant funding: This has now opened for applications.

Local Transport: DS has spoken to Deputy Mayor about Grant Palmer. They are not providing a good service and the Borough has missed out on approx. £20m Government funding due to "lack of political leadership and willingness to pursue" the situation until now. Bus usage is down considerably. Grant Palmer claim to have had a staff flu outbreak which has caused the current problems. Grant Palmer failed to undertake correct procedures in the closure of their services in Brickhill and the Borough are pursuing them over this matter. Bus minister came to Bedford recently and met with Mayor – new administration is much more eager to secure the necessary funding for local transport with the Borough looking at a new scheme. DS and RR will hold the executives to account.

20:06 – MB gave apologies and left the meeting.

Traffic -7.5tonne speed limit in Silver St and 20mph speed limit: Initial Borough Council view is that contraventions have reduced in number as restrictions have bedded in. 20mph limit has reduced speeds and should remain but the Borough does not consider the speed limit should be extended.

A review in August 2023 was agreed in May 2022 but nothing has been forthcoming from the Borough to date. The Parish Council wants to know what are the criteria, methodology, outcomes and timescale. How are Borough Highways measuring success? Do they need evidence from Stevington Parish Council?

There has been discussion about the Borough installing automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) camera(s) at the top of Silver Street. General feeling at the Borough is that matters have improved, but as the restrictions are not physically enforced, there will always be some vehicles entering.

RP to consolidate the traffic incident log up to Aug 2023 and send to Andrew Prigmore at Borough Highways Department. RP

Long running discussions about installation of a bollard on the paved area at the crossroads to keep vehicles away was going to be looked at by the Borough. One of the Cross's wooden posts has been hit again but Mr Prigmore maintains the pavement isn't wide enough for a bollard and any such installation would furthermore be in contravention to various standards and equalities acts. The Parish Council feels this statement needs to be challenged as the path isn't wide enough in the first place, as evidenced by wheelchair users and people pushing child buggies who have to cross the road due to the narrow path.

Many residents feel the restrictions should be about length and not just the weight of vehicles.

Gate and dragons teeth village entry gates: Andrew Prigmore at Borough Highways is aware of the request. The dragons teeth are however on hold pending a potential extension of the speed limit and Mr Prigmore said he is not aware of request for a gate despite ward funds having been previously allocated in early 2023. RP will engage directly with Mr Prigmore about this. RP

Silver Street sign at the Cross junction will be replaced within the next 3 months. This is being dealt with by the Highways Team. Farley Way sign is insecure and the one at the top of Silver Street has now gone missing.

Litter Bin

Paul Paice at Borough Environment Department will contract Stevington Parish Council directly about this.

11. Planning Update

- 4 Farley Way – this is a second application after the first was refused.
- RP to contact Borough Planning Department once again to change Clerks' details and ensure all documents are sent from Borough Planning to Stevington Parish Council. RP

c) Highways & Traffic Management Update

a) Update from Cllr Richard Taylor

Report with highlighted actions was distributed to councillors prior to this meeting and is attached at the end of these minutes.

b) Speed signs – update

- I. SID Park Road – we have a battery powered version, which has meant RT regularly scaling a ladder, because the battery power hasn't lasted more that 4 weeks on each occasion. The SID is in a

difficult position on the road in terms of access and is 3.6m high. If battery is left discharged in the device for c.2 weeks, it will deplete to the point of being permanently unuseable.

- II. JS who is qualified in risk assessment, attended battery changeover and sent an email to Borough raising safety concerns.
- III. RT suggests we invest in maintenance free solar power for the unit which for safety reasons and vehicle volumes will remain at the Park Road location.
- IV. As soon as suitable funding is available, we will buy another SID unit, with solar power, for Silver Street.
- V. Cllrs Rigby and Simmons generously offered to pay 50% of the cost of the additional SID for Silver Street from Ward Funds.
- VI. Speed limits in West End (30mph) and Park Road are supposed to be extended further with the introduction of 40mph in Park Road. RR will invite Mr Prigmore to a site meeting because he agreed this expansion and there was never any debate. RR
- VII. Bottle Bank – RT is not entirely convinced by the line being taken by Mr Prigmore at the Borough which does not appear to align with Highways road safety protocols e.g. was a road safety audit carried out prior to deployment.
- VIII. Speedwatch is being run as part of STAG and is still up and running and achieving objectives with roadside speed monitoring sessions. RP

- c) Incident Log & Reporting Form – shared drive
RP to create a report and make available on a shared drive.

- d) Traffic enforcement review
See notes at Item 10

- e) Morelock signs – risk assessment
No further update.

d) Environment & Footpaths

- a) Report from Cllr. John Strutt
Nothing to report as JS sent apologies for this meeting.
- b) Storage of Flood Equipment
Progress has been made and shed will be ordered. RP
- c) Stevington Country Walk – request to use as Bridleway
 - I. A resident has requested whether Stevington Country Way may be used as a bridleway. RP contacted the Borough Rights of Way Inspector who advised as follows: *“As far as I know, the Stevington Country Way is only for walkers but it isn’t recorded as a right of way, so I am not sure of that. I have copied in Ed Green who manages the site and can advise further.”*

RP

- II. RP to update resident and also make her aware of the broken glass at the bottlebank.

d) Access to FP19 behind Stevington Church

- I. The senior footpaths maintenance officer from Bedford Borough met with JD to discuss. Borough lawnmowers will be able to access Footpath 19 in future by prior arrangement and in agreement with the resident landowner.

e) Grass cutting and footpath clearing plans

RP

- I. Awaiting response from Borough. Bad cutting conditions due to water and contractor difficulties.

e) **Police Matters**

a) Crime Report & Update from Cllr Mouritz Botha

Nothing to report as MB gave apologies for absence.

b) Police & Crime Commission attendance

RP advised of open invitation to all councillors to attend this event.

f) **Community Matters**

a) Report from Cllr Janet Day

Report was distributed to councillors prior to this meeting and is attached at the end of these minutes

b) Playing Field fence – update

Formal thanks given to Cllr Rigby and Simmons for their generous contribution of £1,500 from Ward Funds to support the repair of the fencing around the play area.

c) Playing field hedges – maintenance strategy

- I. 3year maintenance cycle to be established. All three side will be pruned this year and one side per year thereafter.
- II. RP to engage with contractor about roadside hedge and ditch clearance.

d) Cherry tree in play area – update

A Contractor has now been engaged to carry out removal of this tree.

e) Litter picking

- I. Volunteers with the Good Neighbours Scheme may volunteer as litter pickers.
- II. Borough Council needs to know the date of the litter pick and prior to this they would drop off (at an agreed point in the village)

Litter picks, Hi Vis jackets, Sacks and hoops, Registration forms, H&S information, Risk assessment

- III. Currently availability weekend 14th and 23rd October and most weekdays from 16th October.

f) Defibrillator training

- I. This will be made available all residents.
- II. Preferred training day is Saturday morning.
- III. 50-60 people expected to attend.

g) Playground checks & maintenance

- I. RoSPA Annual Inspection Report was distributed to councillors prior to this meeting.
- II. JS will review the report and compare to the equipment.
- III. Playground well used and generally fine.

g) **Communications**

a) Communications & Social Media Policy – review

RP will create draft policy and distribute to all councillors.

h) **Village Hall**

- I. Bedford Borough's in-house legal team has advised it's not able to provide the Parish Council with legal advice. This would have to be commissioned directly by the Parish Council with external solicitors.
- II. RP to speak to Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councillors for advice on sourcing legal representation.
- III. JS to catch up with Roger Penney and update.
- IV. Need to appoint a Stevington Parish Council representative to lead on Village Hall matters.

a) **Finance**

b) Financial Report & payment of accounts

The report was presented to the Councillors and is attached at the end of these minutes. The Following expenditure was presented for ratification:

- Spray paint – £26.98
- Paint for defibrillator – £24
- SID Solar Power Unit & on-site installation by Morelock c.£700
- Office & storage facility - £360 (1/2/23 to 31/1/24)
- Playground fencing £2,900 + VAT |(of which £1,500 from Ward Funds)
- Cherry Tree removal – £550
- Mower repairs - £2,500
- Hedge pruning around playing field £535

c) Insurance renewal

Payment of £1,247.10 for renewal of the Parish Council Insurance policy was ratified.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Janet Day

SECONDED: Cllr. Richard Taylor

d) Grant request for new goal posts

The Village Hall needs new goal posts which also contribute to the generation of income through use of the field by Oakley FC. New costs £1,400

PROPOSAL: A one-off grant of the sum of £200 as a contribution to the purchase of new goal posts.

PROPOSED: Cllr. Janet Day

SECONDED: Cllr James Surtees

e) Review of annual budget

The budget was reviewed by all Councillors.

i) **Correspondence**

Correspondence list will be circulated to Councillors.

j) **Any other Business** *(for information only)*

- I. Mayor's EWR meeting in Clapham will be attended by a Stevington Councillor.
- II. The Clerks hours of office were confirmed as follows:
 - Monday to Friday: 1hr per day to deal with correspondence
 - Wednesday: 3hrs to deal with Parish matters.
 - It was confirmed that the Clerks post is a part-time role for 8hrs per week.

k) **Date of Next Meeting**

22nd November 2023 in Stevington Village Hall

Schedule of 2023-24 Meetings

- 24th January 2024 in the Church Rooms
- 20th March 2024 in Stevington Village Hall

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9.30 pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	22 nd November 2023

Chair