

Minutes of a meeting of Bilsington Parish Council held at Bilsington Village Hall on Saturday 9th January 2016.

Present: Councillors S Hudson (Chairman), Mrs S Carrington (Vice-Chairman), R Corbett, B Delmage and G Russell.

In attendance: Peter Setterfield Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer.

Public gallery: M Drury, H Webb, N Evans and Ashford Borough Councillor J Martin.

332. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Kent County Councillor M Angell.

333. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

There were no declarations of interest.

334. PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS:

N Evans addressed the Parish Council with regard to the site at Stone Cross and the number of caravans there. She and a neighbour have been in communication with the planning department at Ashford Borough Council as a third caravan has arrived at the site which would appear to be in breach of the planning conditions imposed on the site. The response given was that they are not in breach of the conditions as the new caravan is a replacement and time needs to be allowed for the removal of the old unit. This has now been in excess of 6 weeks and the old unit is still in use. The Parish Council was requested to take up the matter with the Borough Council.

After debate it was agreed that the Parish Council would write to the planning department with regard to the matter but pointed out that the Parish Council has no control and is only a statutory consultee on planning applications. It was suggested that the matter be raised by residents with the Borough Council Ward member.

335. MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th November 2015 were submitted, agreed as true record and signed by the Chairman.

336. FINANCE:

Schedule of payments:

Date	Cheque No	Payee	Amount
7/12/15	000619	B T Payphones	£1.00
7/12/15	000620	Clerks salary	£168.54
7/12/15	000621	H M R C	£42.00
17/12/15	000622	S Hudson	£46.00
9/1/16	000623	Clerks Salary	£185.39
9/1/16	000624	H M R C	£46.20
9/1/16	000625	Clerks Expenses	£83.45

Proposed by Councillor S Hudson
Seconded by Councillor B Delmage and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To authorise the payment of the cheques in the schedule of payments.**
- 2. To confirm the level of precept for 2016/17 at £7,460 in accordance with the provisions in Sections 39, 41 and 50 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982.**
- 3. To authorise the Parish Clerk to sign the precept demand on the Borough Council.**

(Voting: For; 5, Against; 0, Abstentions; 0)

337. AUDIT:

REPORT: The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 requires that from 2017, smaller authorities will appoint auditors through a 'sector led body' or opt out of such arrangements and appoint auditors locally. As before every authority must have an auditor.

The Smaller Authority Regulations enabled the establishment of a sector-led, collective procurement body to appoint auditors and manage audit contracts. This approach acknowledges both the benefits of collective procurement and the important fact that smaller authorities may not have the resources or capacity to individually appoint auditors locally.

Audit of smaller authorities remains mandatory and the creation of the body is aimed at easing the administrative burden, reducing costs and ensuring quality, while maintaining the opportunity for a local approach to auditor appointment.

The audit regime remains unchanged with limited assurance engagements being required from all authorities except those smaller authorities with zero expenditure, who will continue to confirm this annually in response to auditor requests.

One important change is that from 2017 those smaller authorities with a turnover below £25,000 will still be required to complete and publish an Annual Return, but will no longer be required to submit it for audit.

Those smaller authorities who wish to participate in the sector Led Body do not need to do anything as all smaller authorities are opted into the new body and will have an auditor procured for them.

This is aimed at helping the transition to new arrangements in 2017 to be as seamless as possible and with no disruption to the Council's audit arrangements.

However, the Council is entitled to opt out of the new arrangements. The decision to opt out must be through a formal meeting of the Council. All authorities who wish to opt out must make their own arrangements with auditors, which will include but is not

limited to: establishing an Auditor Panel; following a statutory appointment process set out in regulations; appoint an auditor by 31 December 2016; provide the Sector Led Body with the contact details of the auditor.

Smaller authorities who 'opt out' but fail to appoint an auditor by the deadline will have an auditor appointed for them, as the appointment of an auditor is a legal requirement. Such an appointment may be at a considerably higher cost as the savings from the bulk procurement of auditors may not be available and there will be additional administrative charges.

These new arrangements do not remove the requirement to have an independent internal auditor. Smaller authorities with a turnover of less than £25,000 will be exempt from having to submit an annual financial return to the external auditor, but, will still need to have an auditor appointed in case there are questions from the electors to be resolved. The Sector Led Body will be the first point of contact in such a case.

Proposed by Councillor S Hudson
Seconded by Councillor G Russell and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To receive and note the report.**
- 2. To note the new audit requirements.**
- 3. To take no further action to allow the appointment of an auditor by the Sector Led Body.**

(Voting: For; 5 , Against; 0, Abstentions; 0)

338. WORKPLACE PENSIONS REGULATIONS:

REPORT: the government wants to encourage people to save for their retirement. Therefore, local councils, as employers, have a new legal duty to automatically enrol certain members of staff into a pension scheme and make contributions towards it. They also have to tell staff about the scheme and allow other staff to join if they request to do so.

By law local councils **must** implement an administrative procedure and **may** need to implement a pension scheme, or at least have a process in place to implement a suitable one in a timely manner when required.

The new employer duties for workplace pensions begin on each local council's 'staging date' but it is important that each council starts to prepare before this date and complete key tasks before the staging date, after and on an ongoing basis.

Non-compliance with the new workplace pension duties by a local council may result in enforcement by the Pensions Regulator, from informal action to statutory notices through to penalty notices (fixed penalty notice of £400, with an escalating penalty notice of £50 per day for employers with 1 – 4 workers). Local councils must act

lawfully but may also wish to use this as an opportunity to review the benefits package that they offer their staff and make decisions in a planned way.

If at the council's staging date it does not have any members of staff to be automatically enrolled, there is no need to have a pension scheme set up. However, while the council may not have any staff to automatically enrol at the staging date, they can still ask to join a pension scheme. If this happens, the council will need to set up a scheme at this point. While there is no time limit to establish a scheme, all contributions must be effective from the due date, i.e. 1st of month after the request is made. In addition to this, a local council will have the ongoing duty to assess its staff each pay period i.e. each time a member of staff is paid. If as a result of this assessment it is found that a member of staff has become eligible for automatic enrolment due to an increase in age or pay, the council must automatically enrol this member of staff into a qualifying pension scheme, it is for this reason that it is suggested that a local council 'may need to put a qualifying pension scheme in place, or at least have a process in place for implementing a suitable one in a timely manner when required'.

Proposed by Councillor G Russell
Seconded by Councillor B Delmage and

RESOLVED:

- 1. To receive and note the report.**
- 2. To authorise the Parish Clerk to establish a qualifying pension scheme under the 'NEST' scheme.**
- 3. To make provision for the Parish Clerk at the statutory minimum contributions for the employer with effect from the 1st April 2016.**

(Voting: For; 5, Against; 0, Abstentions; 0)

339. VILLAGE HALL:

Councillor Delmage reported that at the last meeting of the Village Hall Committee the Parish Council were thanked for the payment for the entertainment at the Christmas Party. A joint working group for future events is being established. The ongoing repairs to the village hall are progressing with work on the windows and toilets planned for this year.

It was agreed that the Parish Council meeting dates for the remainder of the year would be forwarded to Liz Webb, having agreed that the Parish Council would continue to meet bi-monthly on a Saturday.

340. PLANNING MATTERS:

15/01579/AS LAND AT COURTSIDE, NEWCHURCH ROAD, BILSINGTON-
Erection of a single dwelling.

Proposed by Councillor S Hudson
Seconded by Councillor S Carrington and

RESOLVED: To object to the application on the grounds that the proposals do not comply with current planning policy and there is no material change to the previous application.

(Voting: For; 5, Against; 0, Abstentions; 0)

341. TRAFFIC SURVEY:

The traffic survey on the crossroads was undertaken and the figures submitted to Aldington as part of the proposed protection policy, to date no feedback has been received. Borough Councillor Jane Martin advised that further evidence is still required before the proposals are submitted which needs to be done before the end of March.

The evidence gained from the survey has given a good base for future projects and it was agreed that surveys would be carried out on the other major junctions to complete the picture.

342. DEFIBRILLATOR:

The defibrillator has yet to be installed as it has been uncertain if it should be placed in an unlocked or a coded lock cabinet. Advice has been sought from the British Heart Foundation who prefer unlocked cabinets unless there is evidence of a high theft risk. It was agreed that as the unit would be insured and that the crime rate for the area is low then the Council would proceed with an unlocked cabinet.

A training session organised by the British Heart Foundation will be taking place in the Village Hall on Saturday 16th January 2016 at 2pm. Posters will be put up and leaflets will be delivered to the houses in the centre of Bilsington.

343. ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:

Councillor Martin thanked the Council for its input in the traffic survey which is an integral part of the proposed protection policy which is important to the area.

It was noted on route to the meeting that some of the direction signs had been rotated and were therefore pointing in the wrong direction, also they are covered in green algae.

Two residents have made complaints about standing water at the crossroads, this is already in hand having been reported by County Councillor M Angell, this will be followed up for a progress report.

There will be a meeting in Sellindge on the 11th January regarding the proposed lorry park to alleviate Operation Stack.

The consultation on Junction 10a needs to be studied and responded to the closing date for this being the 17th March 2016 and not as reported by the Borough Councillor.

344. KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:

The County Council member is on annual leave and submitted apologies for absence.

345. CONSULTATION ON THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK:

REPORT: The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has issued a consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

DCLG advise that the consultation is proposing changes in the following areas:

- Broadening the definition of affordable housing, to expand the range of low cost housing opportunities for those aspiring to own their new home.
- Increasing residential density around commuter hubs, to make more efficient use of land in suitable locations.
- Supporting sustainable new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites, and delivery of housing allocated in plans.
- Supporting delivery of starter homes.

The full consultation document can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-consultation-on-proposed-changes>

Given the complexity of the consultation document and the time constraints of the meeting it was agreed that the Clerk would forward the link to members to study and then submit their response to the Clerk for collation, placed before councillors to review prior to submission.

346. MANAGING FREIGHT VEHICLES THROUGH KENT:

REPORT: Highways England are consulting on a proposal to create a permanent lorry area adjacent to the M20 at Stamford. The consultation document was circulated to councillors prior to this agenda being produced, the document can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/management-of-freight-vehicles-through-kent> . The Council is asked to consider its response to the consultation and any comments that it wishes to submit to Highways England with regard to the proposals being put forward.

Given the complexity of the consultation document and the time constraints of the meeting it was agreed that the Clerk would forward the link to members to study and then submit their response to the Clerk for collation, placed before councillors to review prior to submission.

347. TELEPHONE BOX:

The Parish Council now owns the telephone box and the old telephone equipment has been removed. The Council will liaise with the Village Hall Management Committee regarding the refurbishment of the box and its future use as possible conversion to a library.

348. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

It was previously agreed that the Parish Council meetings would be of a two hour duration but lately it has been nearer three. The Village Hall committee have changed their meeting dates away from a Saturday. The Clerk is to liaise with Lesley regarding payments as it was felt that the Council should pay on a quarterly basis as opposed to an annual basis to assist cash flow.

It was reported that there have been two break ins over the course of the last month which are currently under investigation.