

BIDBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE BIDBOROUGH VILLAGE HALL ON 26 FEBRUARY 2024 STARTING AT 7.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Vidler (Chairman) and Councillors Mrs Collins (Items 11 and 15 onwards), Eames, Hinds, Stevens, and Mrs Summers.

In Attendance –Neil Harris (Clerk) and Borough Councillor Curry

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Marriott and Borough Councillor Sankey

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Stevens and Mrs Vidler stated that they had been appointed as Trustees of the Friends of Bidborough Charity but that there was no interest to be disclosed in any of the items on the agenda.

Councillor Stevens disclosed an interest in Planning Application 23/00218/FULL and stated that he would not participate or vote on this application.

Councillor Mrs Summers stated that the applicant in respect of Planning Application 23/00218/FULL was a distant relative, but that she did not know them very well.

Councillor Mrs Vidler stated she was the Treasurer of the Bidborough Event Planners and that she would report on the request for the Council to take over as Data Controller of this organisation but would not vote on this matter.

Councillor Mrs Summers stated that she had an interest in the item relating to the Play Area Groundworks and Play Area Fencing as Excel Build and Fence, a Company of which she was a director, was undertaking the work at cost for the Council and with no labour charge and that she would only contribute to the discussion to give factual information on the delivery of the project. She would not be voting on these issues.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 29 January 2024

It was **Agreed** that the minutes, including the confidential minutes, of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024

There were no matters arising

5. Report of the Borough and County Councillors

Borough Councillor Curry reported that there was an opportunity for the Council to apply to West Kent Rural Grants Scheme for funding for capital projects to be funded up to £25k as long as the Council match funded the amount of grant given. The sum available to apply for was from a pot of £300k and administered by Sevenoaks District Council.

6. Public Participation

The public had an opportunity to raise questions with the Council and for Councillors and the Clerk to respond where appropriate: -

- A number of members of the public raised their concerns regarding the application on the Glen House which the Council was being consulted on this evening. The applicant was also present and responded to the comments made at the meeting.
- A member of the public raised an issue over drones being used in the village. The Chairman indicated that this was not an issue over which the Council had any authority and was also a very difficult matter to police.
- A member of the public indicated that someone was urinating in the bus stop and the Chairman stated that the Council would see what could be done.
- A member of the public asked a question about whether Councillors Eames and Stevens knew they were Trustees of the Arthur Nicholson Recreation Ground when they were Chairmen of the Council. In response to this question Councillor Eames stated that it was a strange question but which he intended to answer for himself as accurately as he could remember. He was co-opted onto the Council in 1999 on the death of Councillor John Webzell. At that time, he did not know that he was therefore a Trustee for the ANRG. However, subsequently in 2002, after the Council had been heavily involved in the Lease with the BSA, he was aware of the Trustee status. As with all such matters, his understanding of the implications developed over time. He hoped that this answered the question.
- In response to a question about safety on the Arthur Nicholson Recreation Ground the Chairman indicated that the Council and the Trust ensured that the place was safe and was as safe a place that it could be.
- In response to a question about Mrs Thornes expenses application The Chairman stated she would make a statement about this just before the completion of the open part of the meeting.

7. Payment List

It was **Agreed** that the Payment List as circulated at the meeting and as set out below be approved and that the income received be noted: -

Expenditure For Approval

Name	Reason for Invoice	Net	VAT	Gross
SSE Energy Solutions	Streetlights Energy Costs to end of December	431.00	27.39	458.39
Streetlights	Lighting Repair - Column 5 - High Street	41.25	8.25	49.50
Vision ICT Ltd	E Mail Hosting April 2024 – March 2025	144.00	28.80	172.80
Fox Managed Solutions	Road Signs	160.00	32.00	192.00
Councillor Stevens (Amazon)	Cable Ties for Road Signs	6.08	1.22	7.30
Thompson Tree Care	Pond Clearance Work	350.00	70.00	420.00
Neil Harris	Payroll for February – Paid in accordance with agreed procedure	932.85	0.00	932.85
HMRC	National Insurance and Tax Payment – Month 11	273.96	0.00	273.96
St John Ambulance	Adult Defibrillator Pads	53.95	10.79	64.74

Income Received since last meeting

Name	Reason for Income	Net	VAT	Gross
2 Allotment Holders	Allotment Rent	41.60	0.00	41.60
Newsletter	10 Newsletter payments	380.00	0.00	380.00
Bank	Interest – February	164.51	0.00	164.51

8. Budget Report

The Council considered the Financial Budget Comparison report detailing expenditure and income received by the Council as submitted by the Clerk.

It was **Agreed** that the report be noted.

9. 24/00218/FULL – The Glen House, High Street, Bidborough

It was **Agreed** to raise an objection to this application on the following grounds: -

- (1) This development due to its size will lead to a significant overlooking of adjoining properties leading to a loss of light, loss of privacy and the creation of overshadowing for these adjoining properties
- (2) There is a significant increase in the size of this property which is out of keeping with the adjoining properties

- (3) The increase in size of this development could exacerbate the existing problems with drainage at this location where there is already some flooding to adjoining properties, and could cause subsidence issues which could cause problems for adjoining local residents
- (4) This proposed development through its size and expected increase in traffic movements will cause significant access issues for all local residents using this shared location
- (5) This site is within the Conservation Area and the proposal does not seem to have taken this into account with the proposed development having a much larger footprint and significant increase in height
- (6) There is concern about a very closely located tree to the development in the garden of the property next door and the impact that this development would have on this neighbour's tree and also the impact this tree could have on the development.

10. 23/03500/FULL – Swaylands, Penshurst Road, Bidborough

It was **Agreed** to raise no objection to Planning Application 23/03500/FULL.

11. 23/03450/FULL - The Coach House, High Street, Bidborough

It was **Agreed** that the Council believes there are a number of technical issues within this application which will need to be determined by the Borough Council as Planning Authority, but the Council would comment that this application is within the Conservation Area and that it would support some of the concerns raised by the neighbours.

12. Village Related Event Terms of Use

It was **Agreed** that the Village Related Event Terms of Use Policy as circulated at the meeting and attached to these minutes be approved.

13. Training Statement

It was **Agreed** that the Training Statement attached to these minutes incorporating precept Training be approved.

14. Birch Wood Land – Summers Steps

The Clerk reported that he had that day spoken to Tim Mortlock regarding the lease of the Mortlock land and was going to send him a copy of the lease so this matter could be resolved.

It was **Agreed** that the Clerk, subject to liaising with Councillors Eames and Stevens, be given delegated authority to implement the decision to close down the entrance to the Summers Steps including obtaining a price for the work.

15. Use of Peter Roberts Field by School for School Fair

The Chairman reported that the Council had received a request from the Bidborough School PTA for the use of the Peter Roberts Field for the School's Spring Fair on 17 May.

It was **Agreed** that the Chairman set up a meeting for herself and Councillors Mrs Collins and Stevens with the School and the PTA to discuss this matter.

16. Churchyard Fence

Councillor Stevens reported to the Council that there could be a possible issue with the Churchyard fence that should be looked at.

It was **Agreed** that the Clerk ask the original supplier Chase Fencing to come and inspect the fence to advise on what was required and to repair if appropriate.

17. Bidborough Event Planners

Councillor Mrs Vidler reported to the Council that the Bidborough Event Planners had decided to not continue in its current form but still wished to continue to provide the information it had previously published. It was asking if the Council would take over as Data Controller.

During discussion it was highlighted to the Council that it could only take over as Data Controller if the organisation officially wound up and then reset itself up as a new body.

It was **Agreed** that Councillor Mrs Vidler take up with the Bidborough Event Planners whether they were happy to proceed on the basis set out above.

18. Bidborough HIP and School Parking

Councillor Stevens updated the Council on the current position with regard to the HIP and indicated that the main items currently included and being discussed in the HIP are:

1/ Require 30mph be imposed for the entire length of the B2176 - from the A26 junction to the village sign to the west of the village. This would do away with the current split speed of 40/30mph.

Kent Highways have agreed to change some of the 30mph roundels to a larger size in the hope that speeds will be reduced. However, on further investigation they cannot agree to the whole of the Ridge becoming a 30mph zone. They have promised to re-visit the matter in 6 months' time. The changes to the Roundels will be included in the Kent Highways budget so there will be no cost to the Parish.

2/ Require different colour road surface and/or rumble strips so vehicles are alerted to the speed restriction. This in turn will slow vehicles down.

Kent Highways have responded advising that different colour road surfaces are no longer used due to ongoing maintenance costs and contractors digging up the road and not replacing them. Also, as the Ridge is a B-road rumble strips are not possible.

3) Ideally the Council would like some sort of crossing point close to the village shop and pub to allow the safe transit of children and pedestrians.

Kent Highways have advised that there is no suitable location to install any type of crossing or island due to the lack of pavement or narrowness of the pavement. However, Kent Highways Engineers are going to see if there is anything else that can be done.

4) Require yellow lines for 10 meters down each side of the road from the following junctions: top of High Street, bottom of Rectory Drive, top of Glebelands.

This is because there are parking issues at school drop off and pick up times; concern over where vehicles park, the use of pavements and the positioning of vehicles on junctions which obscure vision to pedestrians especially children and parents with pushchairs.

However, the Council is aware that this may just be moving the problem somewhere else and will need to discuss this further with residents before any action is taken.

5) Yellow zigzags in Spring Lane outside the Old School House lay-by to stop parking during school hours of 08:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday.

This a particular narrow part of the road and large vehicles including emergency services could find it difficult to pass if vehicles are parked.

6) Add Yellow zig zags or double yellow lines to stop parking in the area as you face the village shop (Bidborough Stores) on the corner of 14 Bidborough Ridge.

There is an existing white dog bone for the Sub Station but anyone coming out from Gate Farm Cottages has their vision obscured by parked vehicles both on the pavement and the road. Also, this will allow access to the electricity Sub Station.

The HIP is a live document which is updated on a regularly basis and sent to our contact at Kent Highways.

Discussion also took place on the parking problems at the school at drop off and pick up times and how these measures could assist though different ideas would have to be considered in relation to this very difficult problem and this would be taken up at the meeting with the school.

It was **Agreed** to note the report.

19. Play Park Tender

The Chairman of the Council stated that at the last Council meeting it was reported that the groundworks were scheduled to start during w/c 11 March 2024. Then a site meeting was held on 9 February and the Kompan site manager advised that they could meet the timeline for everything other than groundworks and this was unlikely to start until mid-April. This would mean that the whole build would be pushed into May which the Council wanted to avoid so as not to interfere with summer sports on the recreation ground.

Kompan were asked if another firm could undertake the groundworks could we remain on track – weather permitting. Kompan confirmed yes and they would have no problem with this.

Excel were already installing the fencing for us at cost and therefore they were approached about undertaking the groundworks. They confirmed they could do it but due to other work commitments they would have to start Tuesday 13 February.

As with all things, there were additional issues over and above the Kompan quote which were identified, and Excel were asked to sort. These were (1) Issue with levels in the play park – which slopes by around 40cm from one corner to the other. Kompan were simply going to lay on the existing levels. Excel agreed to level the whole site to give a better foundation. (2) Kompan had advised that they would apply wet pour over the existing surfacing (as did the other contractors) but on further investigation there was concern that there was more than 1 level of wet pour on site which may undermine the integrity of any new surfacing. Excel therefore agreed to take up the whole of the surface and relay the foundations in full.

There were a couple of additional points that have come out since the work commenced. (1) the path running down through the rec was disintegrating near the play park as the wooden rail sleeper was exposed and going rotten. Excel agreed to remove the sleeper foundations and shore up the whole length of the path properly. This work has now been started (2) the existing gate access is on a slight hill which makes wheeled access difficult. Excel are looking to resite the entrance and relay a flat path from the school side of the park. This also meets the council's inclusive play objective. (3) the grass on the far side of the play park nearest the cricket pitch dips down to meet the fencing. For safety, this will be built up and the dip removed.

To date the site has been cleared, and both the fencing and the sleepers that were in good enough condition were taken by members of the community.

This week foundations for the wet pour will be laid and the ground prepared for the fencing posts to go in.

Kompan have confirmed that the equipment will start to be laid during the first week of April and should complete by 2nd or 3rd week.

Additionally, ratification of the decision made by the Clerk, to appoint Excel Build and Fence Ltd to undertake the groundworks to the Play Park, in accordance with the delegation given by the Council was also sought. The Clerk had made this decision because the Council had been informed that Kompan could not meet the agreed timetable if they had to undertake the groundworks and, therefore, to maintain the timetable and with the agreement of Kompan arrangements were put in place for Excel Build and Fence Ltd to undertake the groundworks for the Play Park site which will be to remove the existing tarmac and surfacing, put in a proper aggregate base and prepare the ground level ready for Kompan to instal the equipment. Excel will do this work at the same cost as included in the quotation received from Kompan meaning that there will be no increase in cost for the Council.

It was **Agreed**

(1) To note the report

(2) that the action of the Clerk, acting in accord with the delegation given to him at the last meeting of the Council, to appoint Excel Build and Fence Ltd to undertake the groundworks to the Play Park on the basis detailed above be confirmed.

20. Play Park – Fencing Contract

The Chairman of the Council updated the Council on the current position and that in respect of the possible padding to be applied to the fencing to allow protection to the users of the Recreation Ground when cricket and sport is being played the Council would continue to liaise with the Cricket Club and reiterated that it would fund the padding if there was sufficient funding available in the budget after completion and payment for the Play Park.

It was **Agreed** to note the report

21. Churchyard and Cemetery – Weed Control

The Clerk reported that he had received a quote from its regular contractor for weed control at the cemetery/churchyard at a cost of £1185 for 3 applications during 2024.

It was **Agreed** that the quote from Complete Weed Control at a cost of £1185 for 3 applications of weed control during 2024 be approved.

22. Mrs K Thorne Expenses Claim

The Chairman stated following the last Council meeting on 29 January 2024, the Clerk wrote to Kerry on 7 February again requesting the missing correspondence and unredacted copies of items already sent. As Kerry had previously advised she could not find certain items, he asked for a letter of authority to obtain the items direct from the solicitors.

Kerry had written that the Parish Council are the client of People Law Ltd. As the client of People Law Ltd, the Parish Council had every right to contact them. However, the information we want relates to the period prior to January 2022 when Kerry was the client in her personal capacity. Back in 2022, in sharing certain information with the then Council she had advised 'I am not waiving legal professional privilege in this material, I am sharing it with Bidborough Parish Council' in other words the material remains her legal property and does not revert to the council. To my knowledge this basis has never changed. This is the reason we need authority from Kerry.

Why is this important? Well on the face of it the majority of the correspondence has been received however certain important items are missing and some of it is light.

On 20 February Kerry wrote advising that she had spoken to the solicitors herself and the Council may determine that this means that she's verbally given consent. The Council will decide how it progresses this matter. The Council has another confidential meeting at the end of this public meeting to decide how it goes forward and what items of correspondence is needed.

It was **Agreed** to note the report

23. Policy on Green Spaces

The Council discussed the possibility of introducing a Policy for Green Spaces within the village including those not under the direct control of the Council.

It was **Agreed** that the Council consider this matter further at its next meeting.

24. Exclusion of the Press and Public – Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

It was **Agreed** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting in accordance with the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to enable the Council to consider confidential information.

25. Duration of Meeting

7.00pm to 9.45pm