

BODENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING AT THE SIWARD JAMES CENTRE AT 7.30 PM ON MONDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY 2012

Attendance

Cllr Derek Ling (Chair)
Cllr Bob Clarke
Cllr Stan Davis
Cllr Pam James-Moore
Cllr Robin Knott
Cllr Tony Mitcheson
Cllr Jeff Pollard
Cllr Katy Wrathall

Cllr Jeremy Millar (District Councillor)

Mr Chris Smith (Clerk)

10 members of the public were present.

ITEM	ACTION
<p><u>AGENDA ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>1. Apologies were received from Cllrs Jackson and Powell.</p> <p><u>AGENDA ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>2. No declarations of interest were received.</p> <p><u>AGENDA ITEM 3 – MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</u></p> <p>3. Cllr Wrathall corrected Minute 21. There had been no agreement to form a sub-group to coordinate a Parish Council response to the Cultural Services consultation. Cllr Clarke then proposed and Cllr James-Moore seconded that the Minutes be approved. The Minutes were then approved unanimously.</p> <p><u>AGENDA ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</u></p> <p>4. Minute 5: Parish Walk. The Clerk reported that the parish walk had been arranged for Thursday 9th February.</p> <p>5. Minute 9: Churchyard Grant. Cllr Davis reported that an invoice had been received for the churchyard grant. (See Item 10 below).</p> <p>6. Minute 12: Modifying the Rail by the Village Green. The Clerk reported that a quotation had been received from Mr Derek Pritchard. It was agreed that Mr Pritchard should be asked to liaise with Mrs Iris Evans as to the exact height for setting the new rail.</p> <p>7. Minute 13: Overgrown Hedge. The Clerk reported that he had written to the owners of 33, Brockington Road about the hedge at the rear of their property, which borders on the pavement near the village green. Cllr Davis asked about the hedge near the bus stop on the other side of the road, which obscures the view from the bus stop. The Clerk was instructed to write to the owners of the adjacent property about this.</p> <p>8. Grit Bins. The Clerk reported that he had requested a replacement grit bin near the Railway Inn. Cllr James-Moore asked about the request for a grit bin near the</p>	<p>TM</p> <p>CS</p>

Siward James Centre and the Surgery. The Clerk was instructed to check all the requests for grit bins and to contact Amey about these requests.

CS

9. **Work Being Undertaken near 2 Railway Cottages and on the Construction of a New Slurry Pit.** The Clerk reported that the Herefordshire Council Enforcement Officer and the Environment Agency had been contacted about both sites. Cllr Millar reported that the Enforcement Officer had spoken to the owner of the land near 2, Railway Cottages, who said that it is his intention to replace the static caravan with a log cabin which, he claimed, would meet the definition of a caravan and would therefore accord with the Certificate of Lawfulness which was granted in 2008. The owner said that the log cabin would be used for leisure purposes as per the Certificate. Cllr Millar also reported that the Enforcement Officer had told the owner that planning permission was likely to be required for the alterations to the access, and that a view from the Transportation Officer regarding its acceptability was being obtained. Mr Rod Hawnt reported that the Environment Agency had advised the owner of the slurry pit site that the pit must be lined. Mr Hawnt also reported that planning permission had not been obtained and that various regulations – with respect to the surrounding archaeology, for example – had not been met. Mr Hawnt said that he was also concerned about the method of treatment of the slurry and the subsequent smell, and about landscaping the site. Cllr Millar said that the site is on the boundary between Bodenham and Marden and that he would speak to Ms Kema Guthrie, the Sutton Walls District Councillor. The Clerk was instructed to check whether planning permission for the slurry pit had been sought.

CS

10. **Quotations for Playground Maintenance.** The Clerk reported that quotations had been requested from two contractors, but no replies had been received.

11. **Dog Fouling.** The Clerk reported that the North Herefordshire Hunt had been contacted and had agreed that the hounds would not use Bowley Lane. Mr David Tilford reported that the dog wardens had been seen in Bowley Lane early one morning, but that the hounds had subsequently used Bowley Lane again. The Clerk was instructed to contact the Hunt again.

CS

12. **Litter Pick.** The Clerk reported that the litter pick had been arranged for Saturday 10th March from 10.00am -12.30pm and that Amey had agreed to provide kits.

13. **Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.** The Clerk reported that no replies had been received to the request for information from interested groups in Bodenham. Cllr Millar reported that Herefordshire Council are holding a celebratory event on 11th July.

AGENDA ITEM 5: OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE PARISH COUNCIL

14. Mrs Betty Tilford asked why the Community-Led Plan (henceforth the Parish Plan) had been sent to Herefordshire Council before being made available to the community. Cllr Ling said that the final draft had been made available first to the community *via* an open day in July, but that the formal procedure before publishing the report required Bodenham Parish Council to send the final draft to Herefordshire Council for comments to be obtained from Council departments and other service providers. Cllr Ling added that the final report would be published after the comments had been received.

15. Mr Tony Clark reported that the damaged bus stop at Chapel Lane had not been repaired. Mr Clark also reported that the 'Road Narrows' sign in Millcroft Road and the new bridleway sign on the C1125 both point the wrong way and that large milk tankers and an S&A Produce (UK) Ltd lorry had been seen using the lower half of Chapel Lane. The Clerk was instructed to contact relevant organizations on all these matters.

CS

AGENDA ITEM 6: LOCALISM UPDATE

16. Cllr Wrathall had produced a report, which the Clerk was instructed to circulate.

CS

AGENDA ITEM 7: DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

17. Cllr Millar remarked that he normally produced his reports midway through each month, which unfortunately did not fit well with Bodenham Parish Council's programme of meetings early in the month. His January Report had been included in the Minutes of the Council's January Meeting and he would be producing his Report for February shortly. Meanwhile, although he had no written report to offer, he noted that he had attended a conference on localism, where he had learned that there will be an election for the post of West Mercia Police Commissioner in October. Cllr Millar also reported that Herefordshire Council had agreed its 2012-13 budget and that there would be no increase in council tax in 2012-13.

AGENDA ITEM 8: PROPOSED CHANGES TO CULTURAL SERVICES

18. Cllr Wrathall reported that a public consultation was to be held into the future of Cultural Services departments at Herefordshire Council, which include Library Services. Responses to the consultation are required by 16th March. Cllr Wrathall had produced a report on options for changes to Cultural Services departments, which is attached as Annex A. Cllr Millar reported that local libraries are seeing a 25% increase in usage following withdrawal of the mobile library service.

AGENDA ITEM 9: THE 'GET WARM STAY WARM' PROJECT

19. Cllr Ling reported that details of the 'Get Warm Stay Warm' project had been circulated following a grant received by Herefordshire Council, which has to be spent by 31st March. It was agreed that the Clerk should post the details on noticeboards and in the *Newsletter*.

CS

AGENDA ITEM 10: FINANCE

20. Cllr Ling presented the monthly accounts, which are attached as Annex B. Cllr Davis proposed and Cllr Clark seconded that the accounts be accepted. This was agreed unanimously.

21. Cheques amounting to £205 for *Newsletter* advertising and £430 for BFPG receipts were passed to the Clerk.

22. Cheques were raised for the following amounts:

- £182.50 for Newsletter printing
- £1050.00 for the Churchyard grant for 2010-11 and 2011-12
- £26.48 for the Clerk's expenses

AGENDA ITEM 11: UPDATES

23. **Parish Plan.** This was covered in Item 5 above.

24. **Bodenham Flood Protection Group.** Cllr Mitcheson gave a report on the activities of the Bodenham Flood Protection Group over the past month which is attached at Annex C. He drew attention to the relatively small annual cost of the flood warning telemetry system due to be installed in the Village shortly and asked that, since this would benefit the whole community, it should be met by the Parish Council.

25. **Parish Hall.** In giving his apologies for his absence Cllr Jackson had said that there was no Parish Hall report, because no meeting had been held since the last Parish Council meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 12: CORRESPONDENCE NOT PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED

26. The Clerk reported that no items of correspondence had received, which had not

been circulated previously.

AGENDA ITEM 13: ANY OTHER

27. Cllr Mitcheson reported that the moving of the sandbags at the Parish Hall would cost £20. It was agreed that Bodenham Parish Council would pay for this.

28. Cllr Ling reported that a quotation of £29.99 each (including VAT) had been received for noticeboards suitable for placing in the bus shelters. It was agreed unanimously that two noticeboards be purchased.

AGENDA ITEM 14: DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

29. The next Meeting will be held in the Siward James Centre at 7.30pm on Monday, 5th March 2012.

The Meeting ended at 9.10pm.

Options for future management of Cultural Services in Herefordshire

Option 1:

Disparate services being managed via a Trust (charity) or private company with development and commissioning kept as Council options.

Trust:

Trusts generally have paid rather than volunteer staff but the provision of services is no longer within Council control and the Trusts are not answerable to the local electorate.

<http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/p/trusts.html> gives a list of known Trusts and a summary of their performance so far.

The one most closely similar to this proposal appears to be Peterborough, and according to Public Library News “this Trust, [Vivacity](#), has merged museums, art galleries, libraries, sports and leisure into one organisation (most of its trustees are from private enterprise). It is run by 300 staff augmented by 190 volunteers. Already affected by a £171k cut in council funding in 2011, fears of library closures have been raised by a further cut of £100k in 2012.”

Benefits include:

Tax concessions (currently)

Able to apply for grants which are not available to Councils

Not tied to local government pay agreements so can cut wages and change conditions

Less bureaucracy

Issues include:

Concerns about legality (see Gloucestershire NHS)

Lack of accountability

Income and funding difficulties

Current tax exemptions are obviously not guaranteed to continue

Need high caliber Trustees with an understanding of the issues of all the services covered

Profits (if any) do not necessarily have to go back into services

Private sector

All the same issues as Trusts with fewer benefits to the electorate

Option 2:

Customer based, lumping services together according to who needs them or uses them.

This seems to be leading to some strange associations, in particular Libraries Stock, Rights of Way and Archives all being together. That said, and provided such issues were recognized and addressed, there are advantages to this option.

Benefits include:

Specialisms are maintained

May promote better cross service collaboration and integration

Retains more accountability to electorate

Retains control of sensitive information

Issues include:

Does not preclude hiving off some services

Is unclear as to how it can be achieved whilst maintaining integrity of individual services

Shows a lack of understanding of some areas, although this may be more the wording used than actual misunderstanding

Option 3: Status quo

Interestingly this is not true status quo, but a gradual move towards hiving off services.

“some services can proceed with a procurement route (specifically Outdoor Education and Positive Activities for Young People) with other services generating more income and in becoming traded services”

“where individual services are commissioned or contracted over time using various routes and mechanisms, including smaller trust/social enterprises/businesses to deliver specialist services”

Whether such commissions and contracts would be subject to further consultation is unclear and gives some concern.

My thoughts:

Currently Option 2 appears to offer the greatest long-term security for services as both Option 1 and Option 3 are in reality advocating moving services out of Council (and therefore electorate) control. I do not find this an easy document to understand and have concerns about the vagueness of the wording, the lack of apparent understanding of the differences between services which have been grouped together and the fact that what is called Status Quo is not as it is clear it is just a slower hiving off of services. That gives me concern because people may read the heading and be misled into thinking there will be no changes.

PARISH ACCOUNTS

BALANCE AT 5 APRIL	05-Apr-11	BALANCE AT 16 DECEMBER
LLOYDS	4147	9277
TOTAL BALANCE	4147	9277
INCOME		
ADVERTISING	1851	179
VAT REFUND	1686	0
CAR PARK LOAN	750	0
COMMUNITY PLAN	0	0
PRECEPT	8150	0
FLOOD GROUP	729	0
TOTAL INCOME	13166	179
EXPENSES		
CAR PARK LOAN	1500	750
COMMUNITY PLAN	551	68
CHURCH GRANT	0	
CLERK SALARY	1363	152
CLERK EXPENSES	290	0
CAR PARK	1020	0
INSURANCE	610	0
WEBSITE	240	0
NEWSLETTER	1283	0
FLOOD GROUP	321	0
ADVERT	0	
HALL RENTAL	196	83
SOCIETY OF COUNCIL CLERKS	0	
PLAYGROUND INSPECTION	53	0
AUDIT	504	0
PARISH HALL GRANT	800	800
BUNTING	26	
GRASS CUTTING	0	
OAK POSTS	842	
BRITISH LEGION GRANT	50	0
ELECTION EXPENSES	61	0
SID	22	22
TOTAL EXPENSES	9732	1875
BALANCE AT 10 JANUARY	7581	7581

CHEQUES RAISED NOT BANKED	
	0
TOTAL	0
CHEQUES/INCOME NOT BANKED	
	0
TOTAL	0
BALANCE	7581
INVOICES AWAITING APPROVAL	
NEWSLETTER	183
TOTAL	183
BALANCE	7398
REPRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS	
LADYCLOSE ORCHARD	158
FLOOD GROUP	2087
COMMUNITY PLAN	16
PARISH COUNCIL	5137
FUTURE COMMITTED EXPENDITURE	
CHURCH GRANT	1050
COMMUNITY PLAN	750
GRASS CUTTING	625
CLERK SALARY	456
COMMUNITY PLAN PROJECTS	0
TOTAL	2881
FUTURE INCOME	
COMMUNITY PLAN	750
TOTAL	750
REMAINING FUNDS	3006

BFPG REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

'Project Bodenham'

Of the 36 properties which have been involved in the Project, 26 have now been completed. There are 4 properties which are waiting for barriers to be manufactured and fitted and a further 2 which have had to be re-surveyed because of concerns over the initial recommendations. We understand that the Environment Agency have now released some additional funds and that these two properties will be given some further equipment which had been previously overlooked.

Of the remaining 4 properties, there are two where the owners are still in discussion with Amey over specific issues and where we have been trying to facilitate this process. Finally, there are two additional properties which were originally assessed as being just outside the scheme, but for which we are hoping sufficient funds may be found for them to be included.

In summary, the Project is still on track to meet the 31 March deadline, but the problems which have arisen with these few properties mean that fully completing it in time is likely to be a close call.

Flood Warning Telemetry System.

The Group had a very good Meeting on 31 January attended by some 34 members, at which Mr Rod Hawnt of Hydro-Logic Limited, assisted by a member of his staff, Mr Martin Turner, gave a very interesting description of the *Isodaq* flood warning telemetry system which he is generously donating to the Village.

The equipment will be positioned at the bridge over the Millcroft Brook next to 23, Brockington Road. A depth level pressure sensor will be in the water and cabling, protected by trunking, will lead up to a telemetry box. Although not yet confirmed, there may also be a light which will only be switched on when there is a serious risk of flooding, but which will then give a visual warning by flashing with increasing frequency as the danger increases.

The telemetry system will send water level data using GPRS mobile phone technology to Hydro-Logic's headquarters at Stirling where the information will be stored and analysed. When water levels are low these data transfers will be infrequent, perhaps only a few times a day, but they will automatically increase in frequency, perhaps to every few minutes, when water levels are changing. When it is assessed that there is an imminent risk of flooding, warning messages will be automatically sent by text to the mobile phones of key members of the BFPG or to their e-mail addresses. This will allow them to alert other members of the Group and those most at risk in the community generally.

It is hoped that the system will be installed within the next few weeks, once the relevant permissions have been obtained. It will then have to be calibrated, so that warnings are only triggered when there is a genuine emergency, and not when the rising water level in the Brook will eventually peak without overtopping its banks. No historical data are available for the Brook, so this calibration will be a matter of trial and error and there may be a number of false alarms initially before the most appropriate settings are achieved.

Flash flooding is not created simply by relatively short periods of intense rainfall; it is also dependent on the nature of the local soil and by the degree to which it has become saturated by earlier prolonged

rainfall. In 2007, for example, the ground was already waterlogged by previous bad weather with the result that, when there was a storm on 20 July, the rain ran straight off into the local watercourses. For that reason Mr Hawnt will be installing rainfall measuring equipment at his own home and will be using this to build up data about local soil conditions. In due course this will allow predictions to be made that will be more accurate than those based on water levels in the Brook alone.

The *Isodaq* system also includes the company's *Timeview Telemetry* software package which will allow key BFPG members to log on to the central servers from their own PCs and see graphs of current water levels, past trends and other information.

Once the system is fully established, it should be able to give the local community about an hour, or perhaps more, advance warning that a flash flood is imminent. This will be invaluable in helping local residents to get flood protection equipment in place and take other precautions before the emergency occurs. It will also provide time for members of the Group to warn and help vulnerable members of the community who are not able to carry out the precautionary actions for themselves. Perhaps almost as important, the system should provide re-assurance when there is heavy rainfall, which will not result in flooding, thus allaying anxiety and meaning that residents do not go to all the trouble of taking precautions when none are actually necessary.

Mr Hawnt has generously said that the system will be maintained free of charge for at least five years. During this period the only costs to the Parish will be those of the GPRS messaging system between the sensor and the company's headquarters and of the mobile phone alert messages to BFPG members when an emergency situation arises. These are likely to total about £70 *per annum*.

Defra Steering Group Meeting.

The Secretary was invited to attend a meeting at Defra Headquarters in London on Tuesday 10th January at which the draft Report on the first two tranches of funding for property-level flood protection across the country was discussed. She had been asked to attend as the "Communities" Representative on the Steering Group evaluating the success of the grants, even though Bodenham's own grant is in the third tranche and therefore not covered by the Report.

While the Report is still in its committee stage it is a confidential document and cannot be discussed until it is published later this year. However, the Secretary was able to report back to the BFPG that she felt her experience with 'Project Bodenham' enabled her to make a worthwhile contribution to the discussion since many of the issues raised were familiar.

The main points she made were:

- a. **The Timescale for Implementation is too Short.** Bodenham was told in May 2011 that it had received a Grant and that the work had to be completed by the end of March 2012. This was far too short a timescale in which to implement a project which required 40 properties to be surveyed and the 34 then selected for funding to have equipment procured and installed. As a result it is felt that the initial surveys were done with such speed that points were missed, which were then pointed out later, by which time all the available money had been committed. Confusion then ensued over what (if any) corrective measures should be taken, leading in turn to the need for additional funding to be found by the Environment Agency, all of this without enough time in the programme to discuss issues properly.
- b. **"Whole House Protection".** Those who were to take part in the Scheme were told by Amey Herefordshire that their entire properties would be protected. It was on this understanding that those householders nominated for the Scheme agreed to take part. There was, therefore,

considerable concern when the recommendations of the initial surveys left some properties with incomplete protection. This led to lengthy, and therefore expensive, discussions and caused the householders in question much anxiety before agreement was reached that the omissions had to be made good and the necessary money was found to fund this.

c. **Insurance for PPL Properties.** Insurance companies ought to be required to take account of the reduction in risk to those properties which had taken part in the Scheme. This might include some kind of system similar to the no claims discount (NCD) applied in car insurance. Also the Scheme should end with householders being given a document which they could show to insurance companies to prove that flood protection equipment has been professionally fitted.

d. **PPL in the Wider Village Context.** The Evaluation Steering Group was reminded that PPL schemes were only a partial solution, since they benefitted a few, but left the remainder of communities at significant risk. In Bodenham's case, while the protection provided under the Grant is very much welcomed, the community at large is still potentially exposed to substantial damage and the real solution, confirmed now in two independent hydrology reports, can only lie in much improved maintenance of watercourses, ditches, storm drains, etc. by the local authority and by the provision of a new box culvert at the Millcroft Road/ Ketch Lane junction to replace the undersized ones there at present.

Coffee Morning.

The Group had a highly successful Coffee Morning at Siward James on Saturday (4 February) which, despite the snow which started falling as it began, was very well attended. It raised a total of £430, which will go a long way towards paying for the brushcutter and other tools which the Group need for the approaching season. All this equipment will, of course, be, and remain, the property of the Parish Council.