

Minutes of the meeting of Birdingbury Parish Council
15th July 2014, held at The Birbury, Birdingbury

Present

Councillors: D Turner (Chair), I Tipton, G Davy, T Healey and D Preston

In Attendance

Joanna Bloomfield (Clerk) and one member of the public

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence.**

Councillor Turner opened the meeting and welcomed those present. County Councillor Roberts had sent his apologies.

2. **To accept apologies for absence.**

There were no apologies for absence from Parish Councillors to accept.

3. **Declarations of interest.**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Representations from the public.**

A member of the Birdingbury History Group reported on the work that the group has carried out for the War Memorial Rededication on 3rd August. Lots of research has taken place into the six who died and are named on the memorial as well as others who served and survived, including workers from Birdingbury Hall. Members of the group have spoken to relatives who live locally and it is hoped that they will attend the event. Details of the research, including a map of individual's postings and medals, will be on display in the Birbury.

5. **Reports from Borough and County Councillors.**

As neither County Councillor Roberts nor Borough Councillor Hazelton were in attendance, there were no reports.

6. **Minutes of the last meeting.**

The minutes of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 17th June 2014 were unanimously approved and signed as a true record.

7. **Underground Coal Gasification.**

There was nothing to report but Councillors agreed to keep the item on the standing agenda.

8. **War Memorial Restoration.**

The cleaning and conservation of the War Memorial has begun but not yet finished as removing of modern paint from the base has caused loose material to come away, which now requires filling with a suitable substance before the breathable paint is applied. The Council agreed that it looks good so far. The Council discussed details for the forthcoming rededication event and agreed to pay £150 for Bourton Bones to attend, and for teas to be provided in the Birbury. Councillor Tipton has arranged for the road closure but diversion signs need to be acquired. There is an obligation to let the residents know that the road will be closed, so the Chair agreed to add it to her Birdsong column. As the cleaning is not yet completed, the Council agreed to complete the Councillor's Grant monitoring form at the September meeting.

9. **The Recreation Field**
Councillor Healey reported that the hedge on the approach to the field has now been cut on the inside, allowing vehicle access to the playing area. Amongst other work done, the trimmings have been raked up, thistle has been chopped down and sealer has been applied to various pieces of equipment, but more is required. Councillor Davy volunteered to help out the following week. It has been arranged that the two benches recently donated by the Birdingbury Country Fair and the Birdingbury Parish Council will be placed on cement bases – the sand and cement needs to be supplied but the two people doing similar work at the stables will make the bases and at the same time secure the swing bolt. The Councillor's Grant monitoring form would also be completed at the September meeting.
10. **Mobile Phone Coverage.**
Councillor Tipton reported that he had researched the mobile phone coverage in the village, which is currently mostly 1g with some 3g waves. Councillor Healey expressed the opinion that as the government is promoting the use of Smart Meters which require 3g, hopefully this will create a lobby movement which will eventually mean all areas will receive 3g coverage at least. Mobile phone boosters for private houses are available but quite expensive. The Clerk was asked to put the matter on the agenda for the September meeting.
11. **Reports from Councillors** (other than Planning and Highway issues).
Councillor Davy, as the Parish Council representative on the Birbury Committee, reported on work carried out to the electrics within the Birbury and the Birdingbury Club in order to comply with insurance requirements. As trustees, the Birdingbury Parish Council is responsible for the Birbury and the Birdingbury Club, which leases the Birbury to the Parish Council, is responsible for the insurance of the entire building. Councillors discussed the issues and looked for solutions. Appointing an uninvolved mediator was discussed but not, at this point, required. The Councillors discussed that representation on the various committees would prevent a similar situation occurring, that it would be possible for a Club representative on the Birbury Committee not to be a named trustee and that as the Parish Council has the ultimate responsibility for the Birbury, it should be informed of all works to be carried out, with quotes. Various options for raising the money were discussed and Councillor Davy was asked to present these at the next Birbury Committee meeting and report back.
Councillor Turner reported on a WALC meeting on 14th July entitled 'Are Parish Councils Willing To Fill The Gap?' which gave examples of how parish councils could help to fill the gap left by the £92m/26% reduction in the County Council's budget over the next four years. Many smaller responsibilities may be delegated to the parish councils, with a small amount of money for commissioning the work. One idea was resurrecting the position of 'lengthsman' which would require the Parish Council to identify a local farmer or contractor who would cut hedges and clear ditches within the parish boundary, either as a single parish or within a consortia of parish councils. Councillors discussed the possibilities that this may offer in terms of prioritising work that needs to be done within the Parish and achieving greater value for money and/or quality of work when not using WCC contractors. It could also be possible to take on more responsibilities by raising the precept if villagers were asking for necessary work to be undertaken within a reasonable timescale. Councillors decided that it was an issue that should be brought to the village at the April Annual Village Meeting in order to hear feedback. The Clerk was asked to scan and circulate the 'Lengthsman Trial Scheme: Guidance Pack'.

12. **Correspondence requiring attention** (and not elsewhere on the Agenda).
- Rural Housing Policy Review. Councillors reviewed the questions and asked the Clerk to forward.

13. **Financial Issues**

13.1 The following cheques were approved:

- Clerk's fees and expenses – June: 000582 - £166.97
- MFM grass cutting: 000581 - £314.00
- Glasdon U.K. benches: 000580 - £1,148.49
- Recreation Field refurbishment: 000583 - £119.58
- Insurance: 000584 - £744.23
- Recreation Field hedge trimming: 000585 - £60.00
- Birbury Rent: 000586 - £40.00

13.2 The financial statement was circulated. Councillors commented on the marked improvement to the grass cutting around the bus shelter and asked to Clerk to pass this on to MFM Services. The notice relating to not using the rubbish bin for dog waste had made no difference – in fact the problem has increased.

14. **Planning Issues.**

There were no Planning Issues for discussion.

15. **Highways**

The new permanent WCC Locality Officer, Greg Lawrence, is now in place. The Clerk was asked to write to him, detailing the issues that were raised with his predecessor, with a copy to County Councillor Roberts. The Council stressed the need to pursue these, particularly the issue of mud on the roads, road edge ditches and potholes.

16. **Newcomers to the village**

There were several newcomers to the village who the Councillors agreed to visit. There are no more printed copies of the Parish Plans available.

17. **Business considered urgent by the Chair** (and not elsewhere on the Agenda)

There was no further business considered urgent by the Chair.

18. **Date of next meetings**

The next Birdingbury Parish Council will take place on **Tuesday 16th September 2014.**

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.15pm

Signed (Chair)

Date