

FAIRFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of **FAIRFIELD PARISH COUNCIL** held in Fairfield Community Hall, Kipling Crescent, Fairfield on Thursday, 13 June 2013 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor B E Dack (Chairman)
P Daffarn (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs V C Batten
C Bidwell
N P Hanks

Cllrs P Mitchinson
G H Smith

Ward Members in Attendance:	Cllr G Clarke	– Ward Member (Central Bedfordshire Council)
Officers in Attendance:	Mr L Manning	– Interim Parish Clerk (Central Bedfordshire Council)
Others in Attendance:	Sgt G Kidd	– Biggleswade and Shefford Area Local Policing Community Team (Bedfordshire Police)
	Mr D Lamb	– Planning Manager East (Central Bedfordshire Council)
	Mr N Smith	– Principal Planning Officer (Central Bedfordshire Council)

FPC/13/16 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Saunders and Councillor J Saunders. The meeting noted that Councillor G Clarke was currently attending the meeting of Central Bedfordshire Council and would join the Parish Council meeting in due course.

FPC/13/17 Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures of interest were received.

FPC/13/18 **Council Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of Fairfield Parish Council held on 13 May 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Minute FPC/13/14 - Members' Questions

paragraph four, line three – delete 'Hockliffe Investments' and insert 'Hotbed Investments'.

FPC/13/19 **Police Report**

Sergeant Gary Kidd of Bedfordshire Police introduced himself to the meeting. He explained that he would submit a parish crime update to every meeting and would try to attend every third meeting of the Parish Council in person. He then circulated the parish crime update covering the 28 day period up to and including the day of the meeting. The officer introduced the update, which provided both a summary of reported crime in the Parish and an outline of PCSO roles and responsibilities. He stated that the format of the update would be amended in time for the next Council meeting to fully reflect the division of Fairfield from Stotfold and its existence as a separate Parish. In addition, future updates would include a comparison with the same period from the previous year.

Sergeant Kidd stated that he was responsible for a team of eight PCSOs. He explained how the role of PCSOs had changed since their introduction and how they had taken on tasks which had formally been undertaken by police officers. The meeting was advised that Bedfordshire Police hoped to recruit additional PCSOs during the future.

Last, Sergeant Kidd referred to two separate issues affecting Fairfield and which involved motorcyclists and drug use. He explained the action which had been taken, or was due to be taken, by the police regarding these matters. The officer urged members of the public to telephone the police or contact himself or PCSO Antoine directly and inform them of any information they might have. He undertook to send PCSO Antoine's email address to the Chairman for circulation.

NOTED

the Bedfordshire Police report.

FPC/13/20 **Planning Awareness Training**

Councillors received a presentation by David Lamb and Nik Smith of the Development Management Team at Central Bedfordshire Council. The presentation set out the planning application process from pre-application

advice to determination.

Following the presentation Members raised a number of questions regarding the impact of planning applications for existing dwellings on the Fairfield Park development, especially with regard to density and parking, and how the character of the area could be maintained.

In conclusion the Council thanked Mr Lamb and Mr Smith for their attendance.

NOTED

the planning awareness training.

FPC/13/21 Public Participation at Council and Committee Meetings

Members considered a draft policy for public participation at Council and committee meetings. The Chairman advised the meeting that the eighth paragraph of the draft policy document was unnecessary because the second paragraph already set out a procedure regarding the order of public speaking.

A query was raised on how the public would be aware of the procedures adopted by the Council. In response the Chairman suggested that copies of all related documents be made available on the Council's website.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the draft policy on public participation at Fairfield Parish Council and committee meetings be approved and adopted subject to deleting the eighth paragraph;**
- 2 that all governance documents, including the amended public participation policy, be publicised by being published on the Council's website.**

FPC/13/22 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Councillors considered the adoption of Standing Orders for the Council which were based on the NALC model version. A list of suggested amendments had been circulated.

The meeting also had before it the NALC model Financial Regulations and consideration was given to their adoption.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the NALC model Standing Orders for Local Councils (revised first edition published 2010) be adopted subject to the inclusion of the suggested amendments as listed on the sheet circulated separately and to the following:**

- In standing orders 30(a)(v) and (b) the appropriate sum for procurement/contracts be £50,000 not £60,000 so that the figure is consistent with that set out in paragraph 11(b) of the model Financial Regulations;
 - That standing order 30(c)(i) be deleted so that it is consistent with the absence of a similar requirement in the model Financial Regulations.
- 2 that the NALC model Financial Regulations (Model 2 (England)) be adopted subject to deleting paragraph 6.5 and inserting the alternative paragraph 6.5 as set out in the draft text which would permit the operation of a petty cash float by the Responsible Financial Officer and to the following:
- That the Responsible Financial Officer be authorised to maintain a petty cash float of £100 and not £250 as is set out in alternative paragraph 6.5(a) of the model Regulations.

FPC/13/23 **Appointment of Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer**

a. Advert

Members' approval was sought for the Chairman's action in authorising the publication of an advert for the position of Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer. A copy of the advert was attached to the agenda. The Chairman reported that several expressions of interest in the post had been forthcoming but no applications had yet been received. The closing date was 30 June 2013.

RESOLVED

that the action of the Chairman in authorising the publication of an advert for the position of Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer in the 'Biggleswade Chronicle' and 'The Comet' (at a total cost of £554.44) and with the Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils be approved.

b. Shortlisting and Interviews

Councillors considered the arrangements for the shortlisting and interviewing of candidates for the position of Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer. The Chairman advised the meeting that the intention was to have a Clerk in place by 1 August and to allow a short overlap period with the current Interim Clerk.

The Chairman referred to Central Bedfordshire Councillor Clarke's long experience as the Clerk to a local parish council and suggested that, in view of her highly relevant background, she be involved in the

shortlisting and interviewing process. The meeting concurred with this suggestion.

The Chairman stated that whilst he would prefer to appoint a qualified candidate the option existed to appoint an unqualified person who could be shadowed and assisted by an experienced local Clerk.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the shortlisting of candidates for the post of Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer be undertaken by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council and Central Bedfordshire Councillor Clarke;**
- 2 that the Chairman forward copies of the applications for the post of Clerk to the Vice-Chairman of the Council and Councillor Clarke;**
- 3 that the shortlisted candidates be interviewed by the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and Councillor Clarke; any appointment to be ratified by the full Council at its August meeting.**

FPC/13/24 **Financial Matters**

a. Banking Arrangements – Update by Chairman

Further to minute FPC/13/13 b) the Chairman reported that he had approached the HSBC with the aim of opening a bank account on behalf of the Council. However, this had proved unsuccessful as the HSBC failed to offer the level of service expected. He had therefore made enquiries elsewhere and had opened a current account on behalf of the Council with the Unity Trust Bank, a specialist financial institution dealing in the provision of banking services to social enterprises, charities, trade unions and councils. The Chairman sought Members' approval of this action.

The Chairman further reported that the Unity Trust Bank offered a corporate MasterCard prepaid card and suggested that such a card could be obtained for use by the Clerk once appointed.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Chairman's action in opening a current account with Unity Trust Bank on behalf of Fairfield Parish Council be approved;**
- 2 that consideration be given to applying for a corporate ALTO MasterCard prepaid card from Unity Trust Bank for use by the Parish Clerk when this post has been filled.**

b. Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2013/14

The Chairman reported that he had been supplied with a list of internal auditors and he would approach one based in Stotfold to establish suitability and interest.

RESOLVED

that further consideration of this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Council.

c. Appointment of External Auditor

NOTED

that the Audit Commission has confirmed the appointment of BDO LLP as the Council's external auditor for four years from 2013/14.

FPC/13/25 Planning Committee

The meeting considered the proposed creation of a Planning Committee and its associated Terms of Reference and membership.

RESOLVED

- 1 that a Planning Committee be formed with executive powers;**
- 2 that the Committee be composed of the following Members:

Councillors Bidwell, Mitchinson and Hanks together with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (both ex officio);**
- 3 that the proposed Terms of Reference for the Committee, as attached to the agenda, be approved and adopted.**

FPC/13/26 Communications

Councillors considered a report by the Chairman regarding the suggested way forward in the creation of a Council website. The meeting noted that technical support would be available when required.

RESOLVED

that a Sub-Committee composed of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Mitchinson be formed to write a storybook and prepare copy for inclusion in the existing framework for the proposed Fairfield Parish Council website.

FPC/13/27 Traffic Issues

a. 20 mph Speed Limit

The Council considered the suggested introduction of a 20 mph speed limit throughout Fairfield. To assist Members in their discussion they had before them an extract from the Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 entitled 'Setting Local Speed Limits' which contained guidance on 20 mph speed limits and zones. Prior to the meeting Councillors had also been referred to Central Bedfordshire Council's website which contained advice on how to get a speed limit lowered.

The Chairman reported on the process to obtain a lowering of the speed limit and the requirement for proof that it was the wish of the local people. He therefore suggested a petition be organised to provide the necessary evidence for presentation to Central Bedfordshire Council.

RESOLVED

- 1 that support be given to the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit throughout Fairfield Parish;**
- 2 that Councillor Hanks be authorised to progress this matter further with the relevant Central Bedfordshire Council officer(s);**
- 3 that a petition seeking support for a 20 mph speed limit throughout Fairfield Parish be circulated in 'Fairfield Matters'.**

b. Parking on Roads

The Chairman reported on complaints received from a resident regarding obstructions caused by on road, nuisance parking within Fairfield by visitors to the nearby Green Lagoon and Fairfield's children's play area. The meeting was fully aware of the problems caused to both other road users and pedestrians by such parking. The Chairman commented that the absence of a realistic parking space requirement for the estate in its planning stage had helped to generate the widespread parking problems that were currently being experienced.

Councillors considered possible action but acknowledged that to obtain and enforce the necessary parking restrictions would be both expensive and difficult. The Chairman undertook to ask van drivers to leave their vehicles at their place of employment at weekends rather than park them in Dickens Boulevard.

RESOLVED

that an item be included in 'Fairfield Matters' on the problems generated by on road parking and seek reasonable suggestions from residents on how this problem could be addressed.

FPC/13/28 **Fairfield Community Centre – Meeting With Heating Engineer**

The Chairman reported on the heating problem experienced at the Community Centre and the resulting commissioning of a report by the Centre's Trustees. Because responsibility for the Centre would eventually transfer to the Parish Council two councillors had been invited to attend a meeting between the Trustees and the heating engineer to discuss the findings of the report. As both the Chairman and Councillor Smith were also Trustees the Chairman asked if two other councillors would attend the meeting. It was noted that the date of the meeting had yet to be agreed.

RESOLVED

that, subject to the choice of a suitable date, Councillors Bidwell and Mitchinson represent the Parish Council at the forthcoming meeting between the Community Centre's Trustees and the heating engineer.

FPC/13/29 **Section 106 Agreement**

Councillors considered a report by the Chairman on issues relating to the implementation of the Section 106 Agreement. Full discussion took place on the longstanding uncertainty regarding the ownership of some parcels of land and the associated problems relating to maintenance. It was noted that, in an attempt to clarify the situation, Central Bedfordshire Council was to undertake investigative work over a two month period and then meet with the Parish Council to discuss its findings.

Reference was made to areas of land designated as open space and believed to be owned by Hotbed Investments and the PJ Livesey Group. It was stated that these areas could not gain planning permission for development and that, as such, were a cost burden on their current owners. It was therefore suggested that these companies be approached and asked to consider the transfer of the ownership of the land to the Parish Council. It was also felt that this would represent a means of partly circumventing the possible lengthy investigative and other action to be undertaken by Central Bedfordshire.

The resulting cost of maintenance to the Parish Council should such a transfer take place was raised. In response, and with regard to the area known as the Orchard, it was noted that experts, a local horticultural nursery and local enthusiasts were willing to provide assistance without charge.

RESOLVED

that Hotbed Investments and the PJ Livesey Group be asked to consider the transfer of ownership without charge of those areas of land designated as open space to Fairfield Parish Council.

FPC/13/30 **Grass Cutting and Gritting**

Members considered a report by the Chairman on the possibility of the Parish Council assuming responsibility for grass cutting and the gritting of roads following their adoption by the Central Bedfordshire Council. Comment was passed on the high standard of work currently provided by the residential companies and the possibility of using them should the Parish Council gain responsibility for this service was raised.

RESOLVED

- 1 that Councillor Hanks contact Central Bedfordshire Council to establish the level of service it intends to provide regarding grass cutting and gritting following its adoption of roads within Fairfield Parish;**
- 2 that Councillor Hanks also seek to establish the level of support Central Bedfordshire Council would be willing to provide to Fairfield Parish Council should the latter assume responsibility for the provision of grass cutting and gritting.**

FPC/13/31 **Allotments and Recreation Open Space**

Councillors gave consideration to a report by the Chairman on the opening of discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council on the possible provision of land for allotments and other recreational purposes given that Fairfield Parish was surrounded by land owned by Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED

that the Central Bedfordshire Council ward Members be requested to establish which officer(s) within that Council should be approached regarding the provision of allotments and other recreational open space for the residents of Fairfield Parish.

FPC/13/32 **Central Bedfordshire's Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan**

Councillors were aware that Barton-le-Clay Parish Council was currently considering the merits of embarking on Judicial Review in response to Central Bedfordshire Council's production of a Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and had enquired as to whether Fairfield Parish Council wished to consider this option. The meeting concurred with the view that this course of action was inappropriate at this time in addition to being extremely costly and with little guarantee of success. Members felt that a Judicial Review could be considered further should the Planning Inspector reach an unfavourable decision.

Councillor Hanks advised the meeting of the professional reports which had been prepared on behalf of the Fairfield Park Residents' Association and which set out the reasons why the proposed site on land south of Fairfield and west of

Stotfold Road (Site 76) was unsuitable. The reports would be submitted in full to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration and would not first be summarised by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Councillor Hanks then stated that, in addition to himself, one or two other Parish Councillors were required to speak at the related hearing in opposition to the proposed scheme by reading out summaries of the case against the site at the hearing.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Hanks represent Fairfield Parish Council at the Planning Inspector's hearing into the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site south of Fairfield;**
- 2 that the relevant reports and other documents be circulated to all members of the Parish Council for comment prior to the Planning Inspector's hearing;**
- 3 that the Fairfield Park Resident's Association continue in the preparation of its case against the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site but that it be submitted to the Planning Inspector as a joint submission with Fairfield Parish Council;**
- 4 that Barton-le-Clay Parish Council be informed that Fairfield Parish Council does not, at this time, wish to explore the possibility of embarking on a Judicial Review in respect of Central Bedfordshire Council's Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan.**

FPC/13/33 Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Member Report

The Chairman invited the Central Bedfordshire Council ward Member to speak. In response Councillor Clarke congratulated Members on the formation of the Parish Council. As a former, longstanding Clerk to Arlesey Parish Council Councillor Clarke offered her assistance to the new Parish should it be required.

Councillor Clarke reported that she would be attending a meeting on upgrading the West Drive Bridleway, which formed part of the 'Green Wheel' project, on Monday, 17 June. She referred to the issue of a questionnaire on this matter.

In response the Chairman stated that the questionnaire had been emailed to all 700 persons listed on the distribution list and a large number of responses had been received. He added that, unfortunately, there had not been sufficient time to include the questionnaire in 'Fairfield Matters'.

The Chairman explained that he had met with Arlesey Parish Council which was enthusiastic regarding the Green Wheel project to link existing or proposed continuous green spaces around the outside of Fairfield, Stotfold, Arlesey and Letchworth.

NOTED

the Central Bedfordshire Council ward Member's report.

RESOLVED

that the Central Bedfordshire Council ward Members' report be placed towards the beginning of future Parish Council agendas.

FPC/13/34 **Correspondence and Other Matters**

a Red Bear Children's Centre

The Chairman reported that he had received correspondence from Jess Milne, manager of the Red Bear Children's Centre in Stotfold. It was noted that Ms Milne was due to attend the next meeting of the Council together with Colin Phelps, the Strategic Lead and Head Teacher of St Mary's CE Academy at which the Centre was based, to present their proposals for service provision and community partnership.

RESOLVED

that the correspondence from Jess Milne of the Red Bear Children's Centre, Stotfold be received and consideration of this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Council on 11 July 2013.

b Areas of Responsibility for Councillors

The Chairman stated that he wished to see each councillor allocated their own individual areas of responsibility. He then referred to the need for Fairfield Parish Council representation at a joint meeting to consider the 'Green Wheel' project (minute FPC/13/33 above also refers).

c Map of Fairfield

The Chairman reported that the emergency services had requested a map of Fairfield. He also referred to requests for directions from delivery drivers. The Chairman suggested that the Council make use of the Ordnance Survey mapping service to obtain maps of the area.

RESOLVED

that Councillor Daffarn take action so that the Council can join the Ordnance Survey's Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA) and obtain maps of Fairfield.

d Notice Boards and Maps

The Chairman referred to the flyposting in the Parish and suggested the provision of notice boards be investigated. The notice boards could also be used to house large maps of the area.

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mitchinson investigate the possible siting of notice boards to house large maps of Fairfield and other information at the main entrances to the Parish, including their cost and size.

e Representation at Development Management Committee

RESOLVED

that either the Chairman or Councillor Bidwell present the Parish Council's objections to the planning application for 6 Shaftesbury Drive, Stotfold (ref CB/12/03287/FULL) at the meeting of Central Bedfordshire Council's Development Management Committee on 19 June 2013.

FPC/13/35 **Date of Next Meeting**

NOTED

that the next meeting of Fairfield Parish Council will be held on 11 July 2013.

Meeting finished at 9.35 p.m.