

## BELCHAMP WALTER PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council meeting was held on **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2016** at 7:30pm at Belchamp Walter Village Hall.

### **Present:**

Cllr J Walker (Chair), Cllr A Hogsbjerg, Cllr S Hogsbjerg, Cllr E Poels, Cllr R Teverson

Mr Raybould (Facilitator), Ms J Munro (Parish Clerk)

#### **1. Apologies**

County Cllr D Finch, Dist Cllr I Parker

#### **2. Appointment of Clerk**

Ms Jan Munro, a resident of the village, was welcomed to the meeting as an applicant for the position of Parish Clerk. Ms Munro retired from the meeting for a short period of time while the members approved the application. Ms Munro returned to the meeting.

#### **3. Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes of the last meeting, held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015, were confirmed as accurate and signed.

#### **4. Parishioner Statements**

Mr R Llewellyn, Village Hall Committee Chair and Mr C Doman, Village Hall Committee treasurer, attended the meeting. They reported that the Village Hall Committee (“VHC”) had canvassed village residents for their opinions on the village hall. There was a substantial response to the questionnaire and the key findings were:

- The village hall is an important facility for the village;
- The existing heating system is inadequate – with two of the heaters inoperable;
- The lighting is inadequate; and
- The external lighting is very poor.

The VHC had obtained advice on suitable upgrades and contacted a contractor for a quotation. With respect to the heaters, it was advised that infra-red heaters were more efficient, more economical to run and more environmentally friendly. The village hall wiring needed to be replaced and the recommendation was to install 3 phase wiring as this would be more suitable for the expected load.

The VHC requested the parish council contribute to the upgrades by covering the cost of 10 heaters, which would total £3,600 – the net cost to the council would be £3,000 (after claiming VAT).

#### **5. Matter Arising**

##### **(a) Playing Field Lease**

Cllr Walker reported that she had canvassed villagers concerning the purchase and installation of a low level, low risk wooden play station. She had also recently contacted Mr Raymond to see if it would be possible to enter into a peppercorn lease for the playfield. Such a lease would facilitate the application of a grant for some playground equipment.

*Action Cllr Walker to research cost of appropriate playground equipment, obtain a response from Mr Raymond and investigate grant opportunities for equipment*

(b) Transparency Code

Ms Munro reported that the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities requires parish councils with turnover less than £25,000, such as Belchamp Walter, to publish certain items on a publically accessible website. Some information needs to be published annually and some more frequently.

Annual requirements

- Items of expenditure over £100
- Year-end accounts
  - Copy of the bank reconciliation for that year
  - Explanation of any significant variances
  - Explanation of differences between balances carried forward and total cash and short term investments (if applicable)
- Annual governance statement
- Internal audit report
- List of councillor responsibilities
- Details of public land and building assets

More frequent information

- Draft minutes from all meetings – not later than one month after the meeting
- Agenda – not later than three days after the meeting.

This information should have been published no later than July 1, 2015.

Ms Munro reported that a grant is available for developing the website. The deadline for the application was Monday February 16, 2016, so she had submitted the completed application with the proviso that it would be approved by the council at this meeting. The application form had been completed based on two quotes received for website design. The grant request was for £725 (£500 website design, £125 annual website cost and £100 staff training). The council approved the grant application as submitted.

Ms Munro reported that EssexInfo.net is a website for parish and town councils, and community and voluntary groups to have a free website. It appeared to be a user friendly site and several local villages have developed sites using its content management system.

*Action: Ms Munro to register as a user on Essexinfo.net, request a website for the parish council, develop content as applicable and determine the extent of external assistance that will be needed, with the view to obtaining compliance with the Code on a timely basis.*

(c) Report on Village Cat Situation

Cllr Walker reported that she had distributed a letter to village residents regarding pet issues. She has raised the issue of the reoccurrence of missing or injured cats

with the Braintree police, the RSPCA and the Cat Protection League. Residents have been advised to report any incidents to the RSPCA.

The letter also addressed the issue of some dog owners failing to pick up after their dogs resulting in fouling of the middle of the playfield. Some extra bags have been put in the bin by the gate and residents have been urged to use these bags for their dog's mess.

## **6. Finance Report**

(a) Bank balances @29/01/2016

(b) The cheques were approved as per the list attached.

(c) The bank mandate authorizing Jan Munro to have electronic access to review the bank balances and transfer funds between the accounts was approved as presented.

(d) Playing field gate and fence repairs

One of the gates to the playing field needs to be repaired and some slats are broken in the fence.

*Action Ms Munro to contact David Smith at Greenacres for a quote*

## **7. Reports**

(a) District Council

The Council received a written report from Cllr Parker:

- (i) BDC is proceeding with the development of a new local plan for Braintree district. Most of the large sites are in the A120 corridor near Witham. The Council has recently agreed the revised planning policies and in February/March the Local Plan Committee will start to consider individual sites. The Plan (sites and policies) will go out for consultation in June.
- (ii) Work has begun on a feasibility study for improvements to the A120 between Braintree and the A12. The study will lead to a range of options for the alignment of a new dual carriageway route. The final recommended option will be completed in the autumn of 2017 so the plans can be included in the Highways England road investment strategy for 2020-2025.
- (iii) For the last 5 years BDC has either kept its element of Council tax the same or has reduced it. Government funding for local authorities has recently been reduced and there is likely going to be a small increase in this element of Council tax this year in order for BDC to maintain a balanced budget.

(b) County Council

No report received

(c) Village Hall

The Council discussed the VHC funding request for 10 infrared heaters for the village hall. The request was approved.

(d) Footpaths

Cllr S Hogsbjerg reported that there were no issues with the footpaths or any of the bridges on the footpaths.

## **8. Defibrillator**

The matter was tabled for the next meeting.

## **9. Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration**

The council discussed the proposed Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. The Council agreed that it would support the celebration by contributing £300 for fireworks.

**10. Correspondence**

- (a) Letter of appreciation from Essex Air Ambulance for the £75 donation
- (b) Notice of road closures

**11. Items for next meeting Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

- Playing Field Lease
- Transparency Code
- Defibrillator in Village phone box
- Village Parking

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8:25pm.