

BUCKHURST HILL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF BUCKHURST HILL PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT 7.00pm on THURSDAY 31 MAY 2018 AT BUCKHURST HILL LIBRARY, 165 QUEENS ROAD

Before the formal start of the meeting Members observed a minutes silence in honour of former Parish Councillor and District Councillor Ron Braybrook of Epping Forest District Council.

PRESENT

Cllrs: Mr N Wright (Chairman)
Mr B Nagpal (Vice Chairman)
Mr S Clark
Mrs J Forker-Clark
Mrs S Patel
Mr S Neville
Mrs G Reynolds
Mr R Sparrowhawk
Miss S Watson

Also present:

Cllr V Metcalfe (Essex CC)
2 Members of public

In attendance:

Mr K O'Brien (Clerk)
Mrs V Evans (Deputy Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer)
Miss J Taylor (Deputy Clerk Designate)

001/18 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

- a) It was proposed by Cllr Nagpal, seconded by Cllr Reynolds and AGREED that Cllr Mr Neville Wright be elected as Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.
- b) Cllr Wright signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Chairman of the Council.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Members for electing him.

002/18 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Cllr Wright, seconded by Cllr Reynolds and unanimously AGREED that Cllr Mr Bobby Nagpal be elected as Vice Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

003/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllrs Mrs J Share-Bernia, and Mr K Williamson.

004/18 REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

It was noted that it is a legal requirement for Members to review their Registers of Interests and to complete and submit a new form to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of any change. For practical purposes the Registers are returned to the Parish Office and sent to the Monitoring Officer at Epping Forest District Council.

Cllr Watson under the impression 14 days was the legal requirement not 28. The Clerk was certain that it was actually 28 days but for the sake of clarity would confirm.

005/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman and Clerk reaffirmed the process and reasoning for the declarations of interests.

Cllr Watson stated that she would not participate in agenda item 18, as to do so might place her in a position of "Conflict of Interest". There were no other declarations of interest in any item on the agenda.

Cllr Mrs S Patel arrived at the beginning of this agenda item.

006/18 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Cllr Metcalfe briefly spoke about highways issues. She had also recently attended a meeting with Essex County Council regarding public highways and as a consequence there is to be another meeting with Highways (ECC), in the forthcoming week. Cllr Whitbread (EFDC Leader) will also be in attendance. Cllr Metcalfe informed the meeting that the contract for highways is due for renewal and is being challenged at the present time. She would like to see that responsibility for highways gets passed down to a more local level, so that issues are dealt with at a quicker pace.

A member of the public had advised of a recent incident near Chestnut Avenue, where it took police one hour to arrive by which time the perpetrators had long gone. The Clerk and Chairman both advised that we were already aware of the incident and had forwarded the information on to the police.

The Chairman, also advised that we have a PCSO who has just started, and more police presence will hopefully help to deter incidents.

007/18 MINUTES

The minutes of the parish council meeting held on 22 March were agreed as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign them.

008/18 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

The minutes of the following committee meetings were noted:

- **Planning & Environment:** 5 & 19 April, 10 and 24 May (draft).
- **Recreation & Community** 17 May (draft)

The Clerk advised that due to the pressure on the Parish Office at the moment (due to the prolonged sick leave of the Administration & Finance Assistant) the draft R&C minutes for 17 May have not yet been circulated but would be in the next few days.

009/18 CHAIRMAN'S AND CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Clerk advised of a letter of thanks from James Tibbitts (former Chair of BHLGA), regarding the return of £2000 for fencing works at the Monkams Allotments (FC 118/16).

010/18 COMMITTEES

- a) The Committees for the ensuing year would be Finance & Establishment, Recreation & Community, Planning & Environment, Neighbourhood Plan, Accommodation and Personnel.
- b) Members of Committees are detailed in Appendix A.
- c) Chairmen of Committees were elected and unanimously AGREED as follows:
Finance & Establishment
Cllr Nagpal: proposed Cllr Patel, seconded Cllr Reynolds.
Recreation & Community
Cllr Reynolds: proposed Cllr Patel, seconded Cllr Nagpal
Planning & Environment

Cllr Williamson: proposed Cllr S Clark, seconded Cllr Nagpal

Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Forker-Clark: proposed Cllr Nagpal, seconded Cllr Patel

Accommodation

Cllr Patel: proposed Cllr Reynolds, seconded Cllr Sparrowhawk

Personnel

Cllr Wright: unanimously AGREED

011/18 REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The appointment of Members to represent the Council at outside organisations was unanimously AGREED and is recorded at Appendix B.

012/18 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2017/2018

The draft calendar of the Council's meetings for the forthcoming year, circulated, was reviewed. Following a brief discussion around the date of the July Full Council, it was subsequently unanimously AGREED to adopt the draft calendar unamended. It was noted that the dates of individual meetings may change if necessary.

013/18 FINANCE

- a) The Council's financial position as at 31 March, circulated, was noted.
- b) To agree carry overs from 2017/18 to 2018/19, details circulated. It was unanimously AGREED to accept the suggested carry overs and revised budget.
- c) To note Earmarked Reserves (EMR) for 2018/19 details circulated, was noted.

014/18 AUDIT REPORT

Report from internal auditor circulated, and noted.

The RFO explained that she had no concerns regarding Personnel budget, as was in budget overall. The internal auditor RFO welcomed any questions.

The RFO informed the Members that the verbal report from the Auditor was extremely complimentary.

The Clerk added that the Parish Office had been praised by the Auditor for the high levels of Governance and Financial Management. The Clerk wished to publically thank the RFO for her hard work in securing such a positive outcome. The Chairman and Members also wished to record their appreciation to the RFO and Clerk.

015/18 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR)

- a) The Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2017, Section 1, had been circulated. The Chairman read out each of the internal control statements for councillors' consideration and response. It was unanimously AGREED to respond with a 'Yes to statements 1 - 8 and 'N/A' for statement 9 as the Council does not have any trust funds. The Annual Governance Statement was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.
- b) The Accounting Statements of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2018, Section 2, had been circulated and were unanimously AGREED and signed by the Chairman.

The RFO advised the Annual Return is now called Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

The RFO advised that the notice of Public Rights together with the unaudited Annual Return would be on the Council's website and notice boards; the inspection for a period of 30 working days that would run from Monday 4 June until Friday 16 July inclusive.

016/18 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

RFO stated that the changes were minimal, and were reported and minute (FE 017/17). Unanimously agreed the adoption of the revised Risk Management Assessments.

017/18 **INTERNAL AUDITOR**

The performance of the internal auditor was discussed and considered. The Clerk and RFO both affirmed that the internal auditor had performed well throughout the year. It was also noted that the current internal auditors, Auditing Solutions, were very experienced at carrying out internal audits in the sector and were utilised by several local councils in the district. It is acknowledged to be a specialist field with very few other potential competitors as alternative options.

Discussed that we should consider changing auditor every three years, or have a different individual from the same company, would be considered appropriate. It was subsequently unanimously AGREED to appoint Auditing Solutions as the internal auditors for the financial year 2018/2019.

018/18 **INVESTMENT POLICY**

A new Investment policy draft had been circulated by the RFO. There is now a requirement for us to have such a policy. There was a brief discussion in this regard, including some thoughts around a strategy for any future investment. It was subsequently unanimously AGREED the adoption of the revised Investment policy.

019/18 **STAFF SALARIES**

Noted, that the staff salaries were adjusted in line with negotiated NJC pay scales this April. Provision for these are include in the Budgets agrees by Full Council.

020/18 **PAYROLL SUPPORT**

To note payroll support has been transferred from Acumen, our current provider, to Messrs James Todd & Co.

RFO advised that the Council had essentially no choice in the matter. Acumen had transferred the work without consultation. The new company has been researched and are fundamentally accountants who had previously worked closely with Acumen. Following discussions between the RFO and Clerk, they had concluded that it would be unwise to commence a tender process at this stage of the financial year; as they felt that to change companies twice in a just a relative few weeks would be a recipe for disaster. Instead they recommend staying with Messrs James Todd & Co in the short-term and monitor their performance. A decision would be made later in the year as to whether to carry-out a proper tender exercise for 2019/20. Members unanimously supported this recommendation.

021/18 **IT UPGRADE**

RFO advised Councillors of the quote for the upgrade for three computers and for office laptop as previously agreed (FC 034/17). The cost includes consultancy fee, licences, back up and installation. The computers have not been upgraded for five years and the Parish Office Team are experiencing an increasing volume of IT problems of varying magnitudes. RFO stated that she felt the cost of the equipment was reasonable but the consultancy fee needs to be challenged if Councillors agree.

It was subsequently unanimously AGREED to upgrade the IT, at the cost quoted but to challenge cost for consultancy.

022/18 **RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER (RFO) –TRANSITION PLANS**

Noted that from June 1st 2018, Miss Julie Taylor assumes the role of RFO/Deputy Clerk and that Mrs Val Evans assumes the role of Assistant Parish Clerk until her

official final working date of June 29th, there are tasks that RFO said that will complete and a good resource for new RFO.

Chairman thanked RFO for all her hard work over the years and wished her the best for the future.

023/18 FORWARD PLAN

Forward Plan previously circulated.

The Clerk drew Councillors attention to the PCSO/Special Constable heading, as he had been advised in the last few days that a recruit had been appointed and his training will commence in July. A second candidate was half-way through the vetting process and if successful would commence training around Christmas 2018.

024/18 CHAIRMANS CHARITY

The Chairman stated that after two consecutive years supporting Carers UK, he was considering adopting a different charity for the forthcoming year. He is deliberating between two charities and is awaiting some more information requested from one of these charities before making his final decision. He will inform Councillors of his decision through the Clerk and it will also be properly recorded at the July Full Council.

025/18 HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

Councillors discussed a recommendation from the Recreation and Community Committee (RC 057/17c), that Stacey Gardens be considered as the site for a Holocaust Memorial and which sought Full Council's agreement to (a) enable representatives to liaise with the Jewish Community in this regard and (b) give consent to the tabling of a proposal to the next EFDC Council meeting, in turn seeking their support and backing for this recommendation.

There was a lengthy discussion, during which it became evident that some Councillors had reflected on the discussion held at R&C and had become more circumspect, whilst others had some reservations. There was also a general feeling that perhaps the project should be led more by the Jewish Community.

Councillors had particular concerns around the actual level of support from the whole Jewish community; security/vandalism; on-going maintenance and who would be responsible for it; overall costs and sources of funding. It was therefore decided that much more information was needed for Councillors to be able to make a decision one way or the other.

Consequently, it was unanimously AGREED that the R&C Chair, Clerk and Council representatives liaise as broadly as possible with the whole Jewish Community in order to ascertain a consensus view that could be reported to a future meeting; along with more details addressing Councillors particular areas of concern. Councillors unanimously did not accept the recommendation for a proposal to go forward to the next EFDC Council meeting. They feel it would be premature and want to wait for the report of Council representatives to a future meeting of Full Council, before giving their consent.

026/18 GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

Clerk updated members on the GDPR compliance process. One of the primary tasks being to consider the appointment of an independent Data Protection Officer. The Clerk and RFO are confident that whilst the internal audit process is not completed, we can confidently demonstrate to the ICO that we are making full progress towards full compliance.

This process is on-going at the moment and the Clerk will provide further updates to forthcoming meetings.

The committee moved into private session for the remainder of the items to be discussed (Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960.

027/18 APPOINTMENT OF A DATA PROTECTION OFFICER(DPO)

The Clerk informed Councillors that some uncertainty still prevails around who can or cannot fulfil the role of DPO. Notwithstanding, he felt it to be appropriate from a transparency perspective that the Parish Council be seen to appoint an “independent” DPO. Whilst, there are numerous commercial concerns offering their services, often at significant cost, the Clerk recommended appointing Mrs V Evans as the DPO. Mrs Evans has been instrumental in overseeing the Parish Councils existing compliance with the previous Data Protection Act and therefore is well placed to oversee the Councils audit and pathway to full compliance once she has left the employ of the Council.

Following a discussion on the Clerks recommendation, Councillors Unanimously AGREED to appoint Mrs V Evans as the new DPO.

028/18 LIBRARY SUPERVISOR

The Clerk advised Councillors on a recommendation from the Personnel Committee (PER 024/17) for the appointment of a Library Supervisor. The Library Volunteers scheme had been very successful; possibly too successful because as some volunteers had moved on to paid employment, we had only succeeded in replacing one for one. The result being that the overall number of volunteers had not increased as had been envisaged. Combined with the need to ensure that two persons were always in the Library at any given time, the Parish Office Team were frequently having to fill gaps. This in turn means that they are being kept away from their daily responsibilities, thereby returning us to the position we found ourselves in a couple of years ago before the introduction of the volunteers’ scheme.

The Clerk, with the Personnel Committee’s agreement, sounded-out Essex Libraries about the possibility of the Parish Council (subject to Full Council agreement) sponsoring an Essex Libraries employee for our two days of the week. Although, Essex Libraries management were very enthusiastic, they were unable to interest a single staff member in the role. Essex Libraries also completely rejected an alternative proposal of operating the Library with volunteers and a single Librarian on each day of the week.

The Personnel Committee had also agreed, in such a circumstance, for a recommendation to Full Council for a Library Supervisor to be employed. Their role would be to be responsible for the oversight of the library and the volunteers on Mondays and Wednesdays, interspersed with some basic administrative duties.

Following a brief discussion it was unanimously AGREED to employ a library supervisor.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.43pm.

Chairman

Date

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

FINANCE & ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Mr B Nagpal (Chairman)
To be elected (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Mr S Clark
Cllr Mr S Neville
Cllr Mrs S Patel
Cllr Mrs G Reynolds
Cllr Mrs J Share-Bernia
Cllr Mr R Sparrowhawk
Cllr Miss S Watson

RECREATION & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Cllr Mrs G Reynolds (Chairman)
To be elected (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Mrs J Forker-Clark
Cllr Mr B Nagpal
Cllr Mr S Neville
Cllr Mrs J Share-Bernia
Cllr Mr K Williamson
Cllr Mr N Wright

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Mr K Williamson (Chairman)
To be elected (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Mr S Clark
Cllr Mrs J Forker-Clark
Cllr Mr B Nagpal
Cllr Mr S Neville
Cllr Mrs S Patel
Cllr Mrs G Reynolds
Cllr Mr N Wright

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN COMMITTEE

Cllr Mrs J Forker-Clark (Chairman)
To be elected (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Mr S Clark
Cllr Mr B Nagpal
Cllr Mr S Neville
Cllr Mrs S Patel
Cllr Mr K Williamson

ACCOMMODATION COMMITTEE

Cllr Mrs S Patel (Chairman)
To be elected (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Mr S Clark
Cllr Mrs J Forker-Clark
Cllr Mr B Nagpal
Cllr Mrs G Reynolds
Cllr Mrs J Share-Bernia
Cllr Mr K Williamson
Cllr Mr N Wright
Cllr Mr R Sparrowhawk
Cllr Miss S Watson

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Cllr Mr N Wright (Chairman)
Cllr Mr B Nagpal
Cllr Mrs S Patel
Cllr Mrs G Reynolds

PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2017/2018

ORGANISATION	REPRESENTATIVE(s)
Larger Local Councils' Forum	Chairman Parish Clerk
Local Councils' Liaison Committee and Essex Association of Local Councils' (Epping Forest)	Chairman Parish Clerk Cllr Mrs J Share-Bernia
Buckhurst Hill Community Association	Cllr Mr K Williamson
Buckhurst Hill Village Forum	Cllr Mr S Neville Cllr Mrs S Patel Cllr Mrs J Share-Bernia
Passenger Transport	Cllr Mr S Clark Cllr Mr N Wright
Police Liaison	Cllr Mr S Neville Cllr Mr S Clark Cllr Mr N Wright
Roding Valley Nature Reserve	Cllr Mrs J Forker-Clark
Rural Community Council of Essex (AGM)	Cllr Mr B Nagpal
EFDC Standards Committee	Cllr Mr N Wright