

Billinge Chapel End Parish Council

DRAFT Minutes of Council Meeting held on 16 May 2022

Present: Councillor S Gardner (Chair) Councillor S Wainwright (Vice Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, J Barnes, B Bates, C Betts, B Bradbury,
F Gill, S Murphy
H Broatch (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to the Council)

Annual General Meeting

No 1

Appointment of Chair

Resolved: Councillor S Gardner appointed Chair for 2022/23 municipal year. Moved by Cllr S Murphy Seconded by Cllr W. Bradbury

Cllr S Gardner signed the Declaration of Office.

D. McDonnell congratulated Cllr S Gardner. Cllr S Gardner recognised that D. McDonnell has served the community for the past 18 years in a voluntary capacity, noted his dedication and thanked him on behalf of the Parish Council.

D. McDonnell left the meeting.

No 2

Appointment of Vice Chair

Resolved: Councillor S Wainwright appointed Vice Chair for 2022/23 municipal year. Moved by Cllr Armstrong Seconded by Cllr Gill.

No 3

Acceptance of Office

Received Acceptance of Office Forms from all Councillors and Witnessed by Clerk/RFO.

No 4

Appointments

Resolved the following appointments:

Estimates Committee 16 January 2023 – all Members. Cllr Gardner informed that the budget setting meeting will be held next January and all need to be present.

Personnel Committee - Committee convened as and when required.

Has not met previously. 6 members have previously been required. Cllr Bradbury suggested that only 3 councillors are needed to hear the case and some can be on reserve.

Planning Advisory Group – Cllrs Armstrong, Betts and Gardner. The group is required to review planning applications prior to these being approved or rejected by St Helens Council. Cllr Gardner asked Cllr Bradbury if he wished to continue as a committee member.

Cllr Bradbury advised that he would prefer to discontinue in light of concerns he has about recent government proposals on planning permission. Cllr Armstrong enquired regarding the length of time available to councillors for reviewing applications and Cllr Gardner confirmed this would be approximately 2 weeks and applications can be viewed on the portal. Cllrs Gardner, Armstrong and Betts were confirmed as committee members. The Clerk highlighted that on occasions decisions have to be made outside the planning cycle.

Billinge Beacon (in Local Life) – Cllrs F Gill and S Wainwright

Press Officer – no appointment - to be reviewed over the next 12 months.

Resolved that press statements in the meantime be delivered by the Chairman.

Events Coordinators – Cllrs Armstrong, Betts, Gill and Wainwright

Merseyside ALC – Cllr Murphy stated that attendance at the Association was helpful for obtaining information from local councils. Cllrs Armstrong and Barnes

John Eddleston Trust – Cllr Betts volunteered and Cllr Gardner (who had been proposed by Cllr Murphy and seconded by Cllr Bradbury) stated that he would like to step aside for Cllr Betts, who was appointed.

Billinge Residents Association – Cllrs Barnes, Bates and Murphy

No 5

Delegation Arrangements for Urgent Decisions

Resolved: That if the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer believes an urgent matter arises between Council Meetings, it shall be determined by the Clerk/RFO in consultation with Chair and Vice Chair Any such matters will be reported to the next meeting.

No 6

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations 2022/23

Cllr Armstrong raised concerns regarding excessive governance in terms of public engagement and the need for far more public engagement with the Parish Council. She also raised regarding the minutes, the need to agree how to track and review actions at future meetings. The Chair agreed that there is a need for far greater public engagement. The Chair proposed to bring forward at the next meeting any amendments/additions to the Standing Orders. Cllr Murphy asked the Clerk to liaise with the clerk at Seneley Green Parish Council to obtain a copy of their standing orders as Seneley Green she said has much more public engagement in place. The Chair also suggested that it would be helpful to invite the public to make agenda item submissions for future Parish Council meetings and these can be prioritised and included accordingly.

Resolved: the Clerk to bring a report to the next meeting on the proposal that the public could make agenda item submissions.

Resolved: to approve the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations for 2022/22 and to review the Standing Orders at the next meeting particularly with regard to public participation. The Clerk was asked to circulate a copy of Seneley Green Parish Council's Standing Orders

No 7

Council Policies 2022/23

The Chair recommended approving all policies for now and implementing a rolling programme to review them over the next 12 months with an aim to capture best practice. There were no comments regarding the policies.

Resolved: to approve the policies for 2022/23 and to review them over the year and amend as appropriate.

No 8

Review of Financial Controls, Asset Register and Risk Assessment

8.1 Noted satisfactory review of the effectiveness of the Parish Council's system of internal financial control by the Internal Auditor.

8.2 Noted that the asset register was reviewed in January 2022 and was in-line with the current insurance policy.

8.3 Noted that the risk assessment was reviewed and approved in February 2022 for 2022/23.

No 9

Annual Return 2021/22 for Submission to External Auditors

9.1 Resolved: to approve the Internal Audit Report 2021/22

9.2 Resolved: to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

9.3 Resolved: to approve the Accounting Statements 2021/22

The Chair recommended that financial training for new members would be valuable. Cllr Murphy suggested requesting the Council to provide financial training for new Parish Councillors. The Clerk to contact St Helens Council to request provision of financial training for new Parish Councillors

No 10

Dates and Times for Ordinary Meetings of the Council and Committees 2022/23

Resolved: the proposed dates and times for 2022/23 were approved
Committees dates were not set.

Ordinary Parish Council Meeting

Public Session

Jonathan Mitchell-Chard, PCSO for Billinge And Seneley Green, Merseyside Police attended the meeting to provide an update and to respond to questions. Any issues with regard to policing matters can be reported to PCSO Mitchell- Chard. He verbally presented the reported crime statistics for last month and stated that there were no further burglaries and 3 calls for anti-social behaviour. In case of any increase there would be further police operations. There were issues with scrambler bikes and 1 drug notification.

In response to a question about dog fouling PCSO Mitchell-Chard clarified that this would be categorised as littering for which fines are applicable. St Helens Councillor Murphy advised that the St Helens Council only has one dog warden who is able to take cases to court. However she added that clear evidence is imperative. The need for visible signs stating "no dog fouling" was raised. A member of the public shared her experience as a dog owner of facing aggressive accusations from some of the public. Another local resident raised the need for a bin at the bottom of London Fields. The Parish Council would raise these matters with St Helens Borough Council on behalf of local residents.

PCSO Mitchell-Chard confirmed that there was a dedicated neighbourhood team comprising of a PCSO and a police constable. There is also a rapid response team based in St Helens. Any matters can be reported to PCSO by the public and the Parish Council and he will pass on to the relevant officers to investigate.

He advised that the two police officers on quad bikes in the village had been investigating a report about scrambler bike activity on Billinge Hill.

It was raised that the Parish Council had not been getting crime statistics consistently. PCSO Chard provided assurances that crime statistics would be available going forward.

It was raised that the CCTV not working at the SPAR. PCSO Mitchell-Chard offered to speak to the SPAR owners/manager about this. It was highlighted that there is a need to discuss whether there is a need for CCTV in the village, where it should be installed and how it should be funded. Cllr Murphy advised that Lisa Harris is the Environmental Department would be the point of contact in St Helens Council.

It was mentioned that signs displaying the current speed limit of a driver are helpful in making drivers aware of their speed.

It was requested that Jonathan investigate why the village has never had speed cameras.

It was suggested painting '20' miles on roads and Cllr Murphy stated that as far as she is aware such speed limits cannot be legally enforced. It was also suggested encouraging school children to create speed awareness posters.

It was enquired why broken speed cameras on North Road, etc have not been reported.

A member of the public enquired about speed checks. He advised that speed checks had been carried out on Main Street last week and that one individual had been issued with a warning letter. He also stated that as a PCSO, he will be receiving training soon on the usage of speed guns and once trained he will be happy to train volunteers.

The Chair thanked PCSO Mitchell-Chard for his input.

The meeting was then opened up to the general public:

A member of the public asked what the Parish Council would be doing to ensure that Parish Council funded committees do not allow discrimination on the basis of disability and other criteria. It was suggested reviewing this matter at some point through a working group. It was suggested that people/groups receiving public money from the Parish Council should be required to provide a report at the end of the year detailing their utilisation of the funds. It was suggested that those with expertise in relation to disability issues could get involved in arranging local events.

A member of the public asked if the Parish Council could be more vocal on social media as not everyone reads the notice boards in the village.

Another member of the public requested if the notice boards could be included on the agenda at the next meeting, as the one outside the shop is a mess. The Clerk advised that this notice board belongs to St Helens Council.

One of the flooding victims enquired if the expert officer was still on sick leave. It was suggested that the Council should be doing much more which was refuted by Borough Cllr Murphy. It was highlighted that the lead Councillor at St Helens Council has been sent a letter in March to which no response has been received to date. It was raised that under Section 19 an assessment should have been carried out which has not been done. It was agreed that Cllrs Murphy, Betts and Peers will look into the matter and feedback at the next meeting. It was raised that this item needs to be on the agenda for the next meeting to enable the Parish Council to record decisions. It was suggested inviting the relevant officer from the Council to attend the meeting.

No 11

Apologies: No apologies were received.

No 12

Declarations of Interest: No declarations were received.

No 13

13.1 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting 11 April 2022

Cllr Gardner raised issue regarding maintenance of footpaths and highways. The Clerk stated she has not received any feedback from the previous Chair .

Resolved: to approve and authorise the Chairman to sign.

13.2 Noted that Councillors would like an “action log” which identified what actions had been agreed in Minutes; progress; who was dealing with the matter; and any deadlines.

No 14

Financial Matters

14.1 Resolved to pay the accounts VN10 to VN19 totalling £4,076.85.

14.2 Cllrs Barnes, Gill, Bates, Betts and Wainwright agreed to undergo the Parish Councillor training.

Resolved: that the Clerk arrange training for the above new Councillors at an estimated cost of £210.00 funded from training budget with balance vired from Printing Budget.

No 15

Bank Signatories

Resolved: Cllrs Gardner, Barnes and Bradbury be signatories who could authorise electronic payments and cheques (both require two signatories) on bank account. Clerk to set up Cllr Barnes as soon as possible, and that this will take approximately 1-2 weeks, noting that Cllrs Gardner and Bradbury are already registered.

No 16

Billinge Beacon (in Local Life)

Resolved: that Cllrs Gill and Wainwright draft the content for the next edition of the Billinge Beacon and circulate it to all Parish Councillors and the Clerk for any comments. This has to be in time to enable the Council to supply content by the next deadline for copy – 15 June 2022.

No 17

Clerk’s Report: Noted

These draft minutes will go to the Parish Council Meeting on 20th June 2022 for approval.