

Billinge Chapel End Parish Council

DRAFT Minutes of Council Meeting held on 20 June 2022

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

PUBLIC SESSION

26 Members of the Public were in attendance.

PCSO Jonathan Mitchell-Chard reported on the crime statistics, reporting 4 burglaries on 6th June last month and 4 vehicle thefts on 16th and 18th May; that the Highways Authority had confirmed that the 20mph speed limit from the mini roundabout on Rainford Road to the bottom end of Main Street was enforceable, and can be subject to prosecution or warning letters; no speed cameras are installed in St Helens (other than at Carr Mill Dam), due to funding issues; and that he had completed his speed gun training and would be in a position soon to issue warning letters and to train volunteers. He will report back to the next meeting on the cost of installing speed cameras. He also reported that Merseyside Police were continuing to respond to reports of scrambler bikes etc. at Billinge Hill. A member of the public requested that hate crime statistics be added to the report. PCSO agreed to add this category to the crime statistics report. There is a Police Surgery on Sunday 26th June 4-6 pm at Billinge Police Station

Borough Councillors Betts, Murphy and Peers were in attendance. Borough Cllr Peers advised that he had nothing to add to the report on the Library Service. Cllrs Betts and Murphy reported on their discussions with Officers at St Helens Borough Council about flooding in Billinge. They advised that a meeting was being set up by St Helens BC and would include Nugent Care Society, St Helens BC, other stakeholders and residents affected by the flooding. They noted the comments that the flooding had affected the footpath which was the responsibility of St Helens BC.

The Chair took his verbal report on Flooding into the public meeting.

A member of the public asked why a statutory duty i.e. a section 19 report, had not been completed yet. Cllr Murphy raised the issue of the possible detrimental impact of house values of such a report. However, residents present raised that they have not been consulted regarding this matter. This matter has been discussed at Parish Council meetings for 6 months, so the question was raised about moving to enforcement measures as Nugent Care Society appears not to have addressed residents concerns, over a large number of years. Residents said that they wished to see Section 19 report go

ahead and Borough Cllrs Betts and Murphy said they would report this back to the Officers at St Helens BC, and ensure there is a clear action plan with dates and responsibilities identified. Chair and Clerk have written to Nugent Care Society but have had no response

Issues were raised about poor communications regarding public transport (especially buses) and Borough Cllr Murphy said she would report to the relevant department. She also advised that meetings were being held to seek improvements to the Railway Station at Garswood especially around access issues.

The session was then opened up to the members of the public in attendance. A member of the public raised her concerns about noise and nuisance being caused to residents by Billinge Arms. Borough Cllr S Murphy said she would report to the licensing officers at St Helens BC and the Parish Council would do so too.

A member of the public raised concerns about gunshots (randomly throughout the day), allegedly by a farmer getting birds off his crops. This is affecting elderly residents and dogs on the estate. Clerk to write to farmer to raise these concerns

Key issues were raised about the future of the Library Service in Billinge, with one question being why has the Library roof not been fixed? Parish Cllr S Gardner (Chair) decided to share his report on the Library Service with the public. This report included a meeting with Dave Boocock, who is responsible for the Library Service at St Helens BC. The Public Meeting (held by Borough Councillors Betts and Peers on 9th June 2022) discussed the proposals for an extension to the Public Hall in light of the advice from St Helens BC that it was economically unviable to repair the existing building. That Public Meeting also highlighted that an interim provision is needed. The public (although many were in support of an extension to The Public Hall) were concerned to ensure that all the potential options for ensuring a library service is retained in Billinge were being explored. Cllr Gardner advised that the decision due to be taken by St Helens BC on the future of library services across the Borough would not now be taken on 22 June 2022 but on 13 July 2022.

The Clerk read out a letter from a resident addressed to Parish Councillor S Gardner which she had just received before the meeting started. The letter related to press coverage regarding Parish Councillor Betts. Parish Councillor Gardner (Chair) stated that the comments that came to light in that press coverage were not acceptable; that he only became aware of the comments after the elections; and that Parish Councillor Betts had apologised for the comments. He also advised that the Code of Conduct did not apply as the comments had been made long before Parish Councillor Betts took up office as a Parish Councillor.

The Public Session closed at 8.50pm. The Chair called a recess to enable Members of the Public who wanted to leave to do so safely.

The meeting restarted at 8.55pm

No 18

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs F Gill and S Wainwright and the reasons for absence were approved.

The Clerk read out a statement from Cllr S Wainwright advising that he had left the Billinge Independent Group. He went on to say in his statement that he

had been elected as an independent Parish Councillor and he felt that his decision was best to be able to carry out his role as just that, independently. Cllr A Armstrong also advised that she had left the Billinge Independent Group.

No 19

Declarations of Interest: no declarations were received.

No 20

Minutes of Last Meetings

Resolved that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting and the Ordinary Meeting held on 11 April 2022 were confirmed as a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

Noted the Clerk's verbal report on progress with the Action Log. Clerk to finalise bank signatory processes with Cllr Barnes at the end of the meeting

No 21

Review of Policies

1. Resolved not to change the Standing Orders.
2. Resolved to put together a draft priority schedule for reviewing other policies for discussion at the next meeting.
3. Resolved to set up a Working Group to review the policies relating to Disabilities and other Protected Characteristics of groups/organisations funded by the Parish Council. Clerk to progress

No 22

Parish Council Surgeries

Resolved to hold Parish Council surgeries fortnightly (starting Saturday 25 June 2022) and for the Clerk (in consultation with the Chair) to consult Members and draw up a Rota. Cllrs to advise of their availability. Two Parish Councillors would be needed for each surgery. The surgeries would be publicised and members of the public could raise issues and concerns which would be reported to the next Parish Council meeting. If the issue/concern was not relevant to the Parish Council's duties and powers advice would be given on who would be able to help. The surgeries would be trialed and their success or otherwise reviewed at the Parish Council Meeting on 19 September 2022.

No 23

Flooding

Noted that the Parish Council had written to Nugent Care Society Trustees asking for evidence of their actions to improve maintenance on two occasions and, regrettably, had not received a response and that the Chair reported that he was considering escalating this up.

The Chair also advised that St Helens BC had been asked if an Officer would attend the Parish Council Meeting but had not been able to send anyone.

No 24

Billinge Medical Practice

Cllr Gardner (Chair) gave a verbal update on his discussions with the officers at the Clinical Commissioning Group, and the information he has requested to be shared with the Parish Council. The CCG has declined to provide this information.

Noted that the Parish Council was meeting with Clinical Commissioning Group on Tuesday, 12 July 2022.

Resolved that the Chair would be joined by Councillors Armstrong, Bradbury and Murphy and that if any other Councillor was interested in joining them to contact the Clerk.

No 25

Library Service

Noted the report presented by the Chair and that the date on which the Cabinet of St Helens Borough Council has been changed to 13 July 2022.

Resolved to set up an Extraordinary Meeting to discuss the options for the future.

Resolved that the Chair would write to St Helens Borough Council to ask them for an urgent response to the request for an interim physical location in Billinge to be made operational as a library service as quickly as possible. Two possible locations were identified – Eddleston Centre and Chapel End Primary School.

No 26

Dog Fouling

Noted that Cllr Armstrong had spoken with the dog warden and that signage was no longer available. She also advised that there was a spare dog fouling bin on the Eddleston Fields and that a request would be made to have it relocated at London Fields.

No 27

Financial Matters

1. Resolved to pay the accounts payable totaling £7060.83 (voucher nos 20-29)
2. Noted the cost of repairing stone walls and that they would be the subject of an insurance claim
3. Noted the cost of installing CCTV at The Public Hall and resolved to come back to this as part of the development of The Public Hall site.
4. Noted the quote from St Helens Council for maintaining four planters and resolved that the Clerk should go out and get alternative quotes and report back to the next meeting.
5. Resolved that the Clerk should get quotes for the grounds maintenance at The Public Hall and report back to the next meeting.
6. Resolved that the Clerk get quotes for purchase and installation of a new noticeboard at the top of the village and explore the possibility of sharing/using the St Helens Council noticeboard at Bankes Park and report back to the next meeting.

Cllr Murphy asked for thanks to Mr Pate and his grandson for their work in maintaining the remembrance garden to be noted in the minutes

No 28

Social Media

Resolved to set up a Working Group to report back on if and how social media could be used to improve communication with the public.

Noted that a Parish Council is a corporate decision-making body with strict rules laid down in law about how decisions are made. Cllrs Gill and Wainwright had asked that the Clerk report that they did not support the use of Social Media by the Parish Council.

No 29

Event Update

Noted Cllr Armstrong's report on behalf of the Events Group.

Resolved that the Events Group would meet with the Billinge Residents Association to discuss how they could work together and some of the ideas being discussed in the Events Group.

Resolved that the Events Group would report back to the next meeting with a calendar/programme of proposed events.

No 30

Footpath Gayt Valley

Noted Cllr Armstrong's report on progress with getting the footpath reinstated and fit for purpose.

No 31

Clerk's Report

Noted the report.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

