

Billinge Chapel End Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting held on 18 July 2022

Present: Councillors S Gardner (Chair) and S Wainwright (Vice Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, C Betts, B Bradbury, and F Gill
C Bolton (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to the Council)

PUBLIC SESSION

There was no statement from Merseyside Police.

Borough Councillors Betts and Peers were in attendance. Borough Cllr Peers reported that he had contacted every Member of St Helens Council re the (at the time) pending decision on Libraries and he read his email to the meeting. He further commented the closure of Billinge Library was subsequently agreed by St Helens Council.

The session was then opened up to residents and comments were made re the difficult choices available to St Helens Council in considering library provision against other budgetary demands for children/vulnerable adults. Queries were then made to Parish Council and at this point Cllr Gardner invited Cllr Armstrong to give a synopsis of working group options and these included: fight to save library building/provision; investigate Community Asset transfer of current building but with necessary repairs carried out; If first two options were unsuccessful then there would be a need to identify what kind of a service residents would like – simple book swap with basic training for volunteer duties or for more extensive training for volunteers to provide the same service as St Helens Library Service providing IT equipment, support and printing. The Working Group would be bringing their report to the Agenda to ask guidance on which avenue to pursue but was very aware residents as well as councillors need to be consulted. Residents' queries included what would happen to the proceeds of any sale of the current library building/land if attempts to save were unsuccessful. A suggestion to apply for levelling-up funding to support was made; Cllr Armstrong commented this type of funding needs a business case to access and this is not a short procedure. She also commented that other funding could be accessed more quickly by a constituted group.

A resident presented complaints re Nugent House access/egress and commented it has been operating since 2019 as the main access/egress to the school with no road markings and no safety signage or indication that there is a concealed entrance. This issue is with Planning Enforcement at the moment. Resident expressed concern over the crime rate increase in Greenfield View. A query was made over why the main entrance had been moved. Cllr Bradbury commented on an OFSTED report that had stated segregation of pedestrians and vehicles on site had to be instigated and that this had led to the change.

Flooding: resident spoke about a significant number of officers attended a meeting intended to find a resolution for the problem. Concern was expressed over the lack of information/notice of the meeting that was held so residents were unaware of it. Cllr Bradbury reported regular inspection of culvert is being carried out and had inspection records with him. Cllr Betts commented on the Section 19 procedure which is in process. He also commented gates are to be installed to prevent blockage.

The Public Session closed at 8.30pm. The Chair called a recess to enable Members of the Public who wanted to leave to do so safely.

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 Councilor 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.

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.

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. 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 trialled 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**

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 should be made to have it relocated at London Fields.

No 27

Financial Matters

1. Resolved to pay the accounts payable totalling £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.

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.

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.