

Billinge Chapel End Parish Council

Minutes of Council Meeting held on

19 February 2024

Present: Councillor Fiona Gill (Chair) Councillor B Bates (Vice Chair)
Councillors J Barnes, C Betts, B Bradbury, S Gardner, Frank Gill,
M Webster

H Broatch (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

PUBLIC SESSION

Four Members of the Public were present.

Merseyside Police were not present.

Billinge Medical Practice had to give their apologies and will attend the next meeting on 18 March 2024.

Proposals to Improve Bus Services

An officer from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) gave a presentation on the proposals for changes to the bus services in the Region. A bus reform survey (May-August 2023) had found that 81% agreed that the current bus system is not working well. The proposed changes would be implemented on a phased basis over a staggered period. This process would start in the St Helens area. The key proposal is to introduce a franchising scheme. LCRCA would specify what bus services were to be provided and bus operators would bid for the contracts to run the services. This is how buses are run in London and is the system Greater Manchester are currently rolling out. Bolton & Wigan became franchised bus areas in 2023.

LCRCA are going to hold a range of consultation events. They are starting in St Helens. These will include a survey to find out what the residents think. The survey will close at 2359 on Sunday 17 March 2024. There will also be several engagement events starting on 28/2/24. The Parish Council agreed to display details on its noticeboards and website.

50th Anniversary of the Founding of Parish Councils

Rainford Parish Councillor Danny Stockton-Pugh outlined proposals for local Parish Councils to do some joint events (as well as their own events) to celebrate this important anniversary. In Billinge the Parish Council was preceded by the Urban District of Billinge and Winstanley totalling 4,596 acres with a population of approximately 11,500. The Urban District of Billinge and Winstanley held its last meeting in March 1974.

Statements from Borough Councillors

Borough Councillor P Peers reported that he was continuing to promote the development of a community library hub in Billinge and that he has been in talks about this with Connor McGinn MP and others. He had written to David Baines Leader of St Helens Council who had asked an officer to respond. The officer's response advised that "the Council is considering a number of different options for the former Billinge library site". It went on to say that the Billinge Library" had not been declared surplus to requirements ". This meant the Community Transfer Asset process had not commenced. This process would commence "if the asset becomes surplus to all requirements and following assessment that the asset has the potential for transfer". Borough Councillor P Peers advised he had written back to the Officer stating that the building had been closed since 27 March 2020 (almost four years ago) and stating that he would like to start the process (on behalf of the residents) by expressing an interest in the building being a community asset transfer.

Borough Councillor C Betts advised that he had talked to the relevant officer at St Helens about the concerns raised with him regarding progress etc relating to flooding and had sent an email to local residents who had been affected. They advised that they had not received the email. He apologised and advised he would send again as a matter of urgency. He advised that he had been advised that GDPR meant that he was unable to give the names and/or the addresses of the 21 properties identified as being at risk of flooding.

Members of the Public

The concerns relating to action from Nugent Care Society and others continued to worry local residents who had been affected in the past by flooding in their home. They were advised this was a matter they needed to raise with St Helens Borough Council and that Borough Councillor Betts was their main contact.

The Public Session closed at 8.35pm.

No 90

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Murphy and the reasons for absence were approved.

No 91

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr B Bradbury declared interests as a Governor of Nugent School. He advised that Nugent School were in process changing their roles and he would advise about this change at a future meeting.

No 92

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2024

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024 were approved.
Noted the verbal report on progress on the Action Log from the Clerk.

No 93

BILLINGE MEDICAL PRACTICE

Resolved that the Chair would ask about the implications for Billinge Medical Practice following the imminent closure of the Orrell Surgery and report back.

No 94

PROPOSED CHANGES TO BUS SERVICES

Noted the presentation from the LCRCA officer and resolved to advertise the consultation process on noticeboards and on the website.

No 95

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MAY 2024

Resolved that Cllrs J Barnes, B Bates and M Webster would take on the task of being the Working Group that would lead on working on joint events with Rainford Parish Council and other Parish Councils. They would also work on proposals for the Parish Council to celebrate its own history and that of its predecessor the Urban District Council. The Working Group would report back to the next meeting.

Noted the concerns raised by Cllr S Murphy about ensuring the Parish Council was covered for any liabilities by its insurance. The Clerk would advise on request from the Working Group.

No 96

COMMUNITY FLOOD RESILIENCE

Resolved that a leaflet advising about the above be distributed around the households in the areas that are prone to flooding and asking them to express an interest (or otherwise) in joining the community flood resilience group.

No 97

HIGHWAYS ISSUES

Resolved that the Clerk in consultation with Cllr S Gardner organise an event for the residents of Billinge to come and advise the Parish Council about their concerns relating to roads, pavements, crossings, footpaths, parking, speed and any other highways matters to enable the Parish Council to then invite St Helens Borough Council's Highways Department to attend a public engagement event designed to engage with the public around those identified issues.

No 98

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Book Services

Noted updates from Cllrs M Webster and C Betts.

Cllr M Webster advised about his meetings with Book Cycle about installing a temporary structure in front of The Public Hall to provide book services. He advised about the quotes he had had for different sizes of buildings. The Clerk was asked to investigate if planning permission would be required and if so, what this would involve. In the meantime, Cllr M Webster would liaise with Cllr C Betts about the costs/implications of levelling the area and creating a ramp for the disabled.

Cllr C Betts reported on his progress with exploring the implications/potential for installing a permanent community facility (including book services) on the

site of The Public Hall.

No 99

PLANNING

Noted that the following applications had been granted approval by St Helens Borough Council (The Planning Authority):

P/2023/0672/CLP certificate of lawfulness for a proposed single storey rear extension

P/2023/0689/HHFP erection of a detached garage

No 100

FINANCIAL MATTERS

100.1 **Noted** that the Parish Council's insurers have agreed they will cover the cost of the damage to the wall that borders the pavement and front car park at The Public Hall. The other repairs to the stone wall at Dam Slacks and the concrete panels at the Millennium Garden will have to be borne by the Parish Council.

100.2 **Noted** that the playground inspectors have identified repairs are needed to the swing sets and that the Clerk is getting quotes and will report back to the next meeting. The inspectors have said that the swing set can remain open.

100.3 **Resolved** to award a S137 grant of Five Hundred Pounds to Billinge in Bloom towards the cost of purchasing summer plants, compost and plant food.

100.4 **Noted** that the garage doors needed to be replaced and **resolved** to instruct the Clerk/RFO to award the work to the company that had quoted. The quote is for £2000.00 plus VAT and includes supply and fitting.

100.5 **Resolved** that the Clerk/RFO should purchase a flipchart and accessories.

100.6 **Resolved** that the payments listed on the Schedule of Payments VN114 – VN120 totalling £2691.77 for February 24 be approved for payment.

100.7 **Noted** the Clerk/RFO report on the credit note issued by British Gas who had charged for gas usage based on previous usage over the winter months. The improvements to the insulation of the roof/repairs to tiles and other improvement works in The Public Hall meant that the actual usage so far this winter was reduced.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm