

# **BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

**25th January 2024**

**Commenced: 7.30 pm**

**Terminated: 9.35 pm**

**Present:** Councillor Bettley-Smith (Chair)  
Councillors Berrisford, Bullock, Drakakis-Smith, Hales, Head, Karling, Owen,  
Speed and Watkin

PCSO Colin Hodgkinson  
Mrs M Clough - Clerk

**There were 8 Members of the Public in attendance.**

## **282/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillors Daly and Ecclestone, County Councillor Northcott and Borough Councillors Gary White and Simon White.

## **283/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no interests of interest declared at the meeting

## **284/24 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the Parish Council.

Councillor Drakakis-Smith wished to record her objections to Minutes 265; 270; 272; 277; 278; 279 and 281.

## **285/24 UPDATE ON THE INVESTIGATION BY THE MONITORING OFFICER OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST A MEMBER**

In response to an enquiry received from a Member of the Public, the Chair presented a statement on this matter, adding that there was to be no further discussion.

## **286/24 PUBLIC FORUM**

The Chair reported that any matters relating to the flooding on Checkley Lane, would first be discussed under his Chair's Report, following which, he would offer an opportunity for the residents to raise any matters.

A member of public asked the Parish Council to consider promoting the introduction of ultra-fast broadband into Betley.

## **RESOLVED**

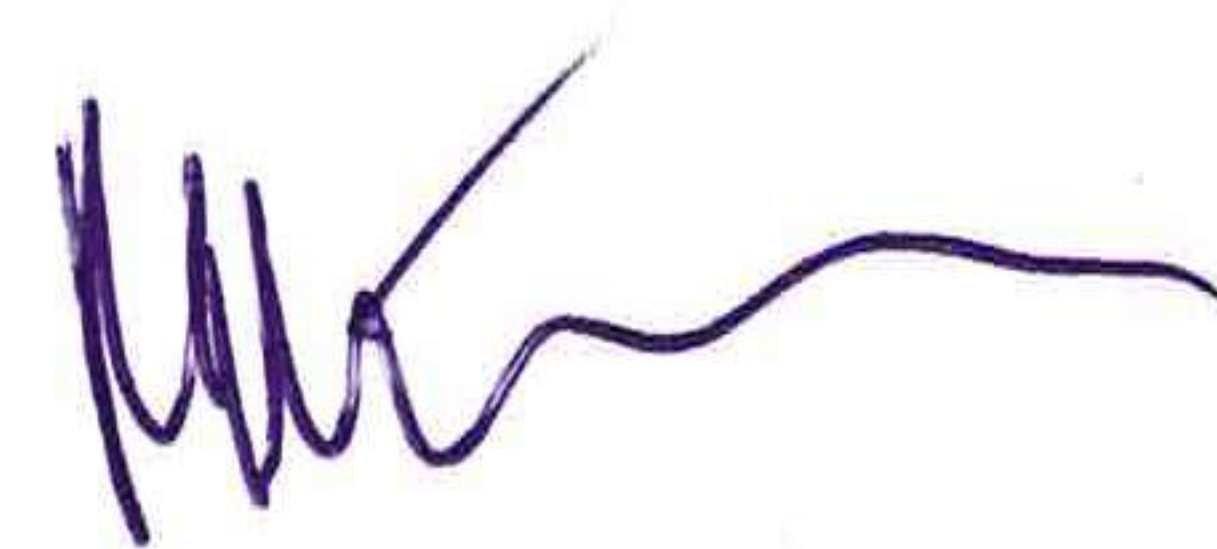
**That the member of public provides written briefing document to the Clerk so that this matter can be considered in further detail at the February meeting of the Parish Council.**

At this juncture, the Public Forum was adjourned to enable the Police representative make his report and then be excused from the remaining transactions of business.

## **287/24 STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE**

PCSO Hodgkinson reported on the following matters:-

- (i) Metal gates and a manhole cover of historic significance had been stolen from Betley Court to the value of £10,000;





- (ii) A significant number of cannabis plants had been removed from a property on Knowle Bank;
- (iii) Pavement parking continued to be a concern within the village, and was being monitored.

The Chair returned to the Item 'Public Forum'.

#### **288/24 PUBLIC FORUM**

The Chair of the Betley Bonfire Committee, Mr Morris, reported on his disappointment of a Member of the Parish Council publicising the sum of money granted to the Parish Council in 2023, despite a historic agreement that recipients of funding did not publicise the sums granted, together with numerous requests to the Councillor to refrain from doing so. Councillor Bettley-Smith stressed that the publicising of this information was done entirely in the Councillor's personal capacity and without the knowledge or involvement of the Parish Council.

The Chair of the Betley Bonfire Committee added that as a result of this incident, the provision of future grant funding to the Parish Council was likely to be refused. Furthermore, the Parish Council was not invited to submit an application for grant funding this year.

The Chair of the Betley Trust, Mr Ball, reported that an Annual Report had been completed which detailed the work of the Trust over the last 12 months.

He stated that together with Councillor Hales, he was working to repair the sheds at Betley School, and he thanked the Parish Council for its financial support in this matter.

In relation to the Item on the Agenda regarding the poor condition of the Hand and Trumpet Notice Board, Mr Ball reported that such a repair would be ordinarily be undertaken by a Member of the Parish Council without any hesitation, in the spirit of community cohesion and at a significant cost saving to the electorate. The Chair replied that due to ongoing derogatory comments made and opinions expressed by an individual Parish Councillor, the goodwill from Members of the Parish Council was no longer forthcoming and unfortunately, a contractor would have to be appointed, which was why the matter was included on the Agenda.

Mr Ball enquired whether the Monitoring Officer's report in relation to a number of complaints regarding the Parish Councillor would be published, and Councillor Bettley-Smith reported that this was purely a decision of the Monitoring Officer. He added that the final report was expected in the next few weeks, but he was unsure whether the report would be made a public record.

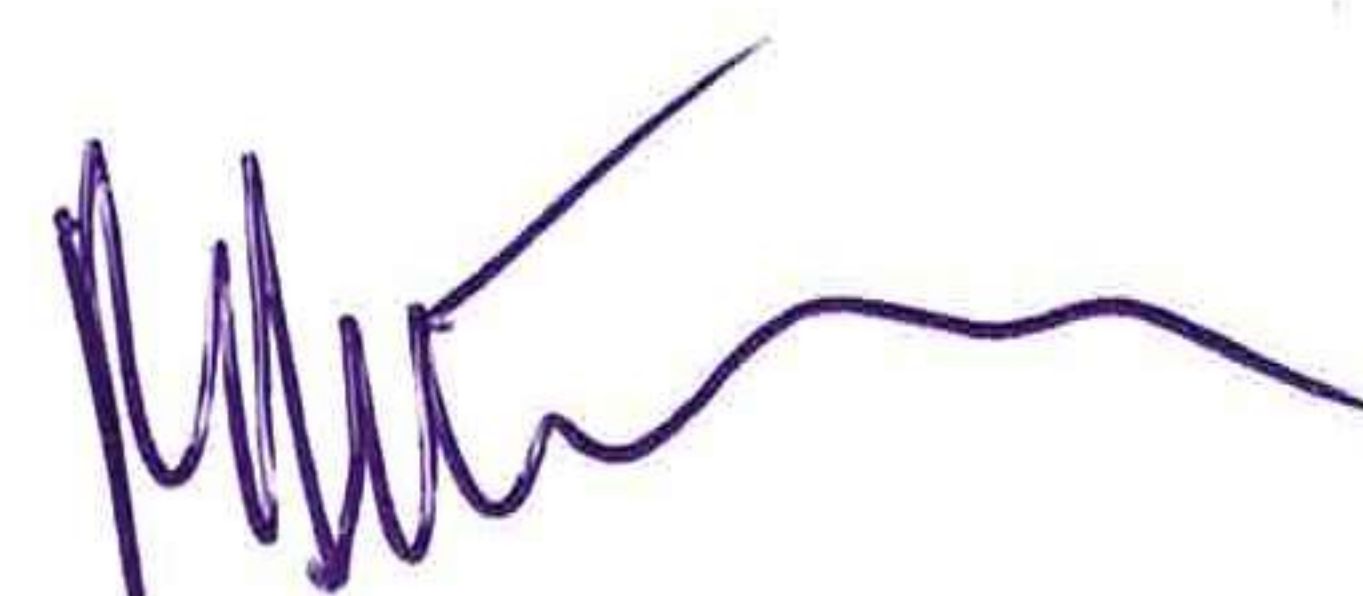
Mr Berman reported that as a resident of many years, he had observed that since the appointment of one Councillor to the Parish Council, there had been constant and unnecessary discord, which was causing ongoing disruption and preventing the efficient transaction of business. He added that the views expressed by this particular Parish Councillor were entirely personal and were not representative of the views of the electorate. He requested that the Member of the Parish Council in question considers her position on the Parish Council. This proposal was seconded by the Chair of Betley Trust.

#### **289/24 HIGHWAY MATTERS**

##### **Road Traffic Collision – A531**

##### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Bullock asks the PCSO to attend the next meeting with an update on unsafe trees in the Parish.





## 290/24 REPORTS

The following reports were considered:-

### (i) The Chair

- **Warmer Homes Project**

The Chair reported on the Residential Services 'Warmer Homes Project' that he attended on Monday 4 December and circulated a booklet and a leaflet. The Project facilitators had enquired about a stand at the Betley Show.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Clerk writes to the Chair of Betley Show Committee with this request and then contacts the Warmer Homes Project with the outcome.**

- **Flooding issues on Checkley Lane**

The Chair updated Members on ongoing concerns. It was noted that the Clerk had already submitted a request to the Borough Council requesting that the work to resolve this matter be expedited.

The three areas of flooding were discussed in detail and it was noted that the flooding under the railway bridge was originating from land situated within the Cheshire East Council area (the Checkley side of the railway bridge).

The Chair added that he was in discussions with the Borough Council and the County Council regarding the flooding in the vicinity of the new communications mast.

The flooding caused by blocking of drainage channels by the owner of Malt Kiln Farm was also subject to in depth discussions with the Borough Council. He added that in order to support their own complaints on this matter, the public could obtain historic photographic evidence from Google (street view) by 'dropping a pin', which they could refer to the Borough Council to support their reports.

Members of the public expressed their serious ongoing concerns over the flooding, which was having a huge impact on their lives, and the Chair assured them that he was doing everything possible to support their concerns with the appropriate bodies.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted and an update on flooding on Checkley Lane be considered at the February meeting.**

### **The Vice Chair**

There were no matters to report from the Vice Chair.

### (ii) The Clerk

- **Historic Minutes**

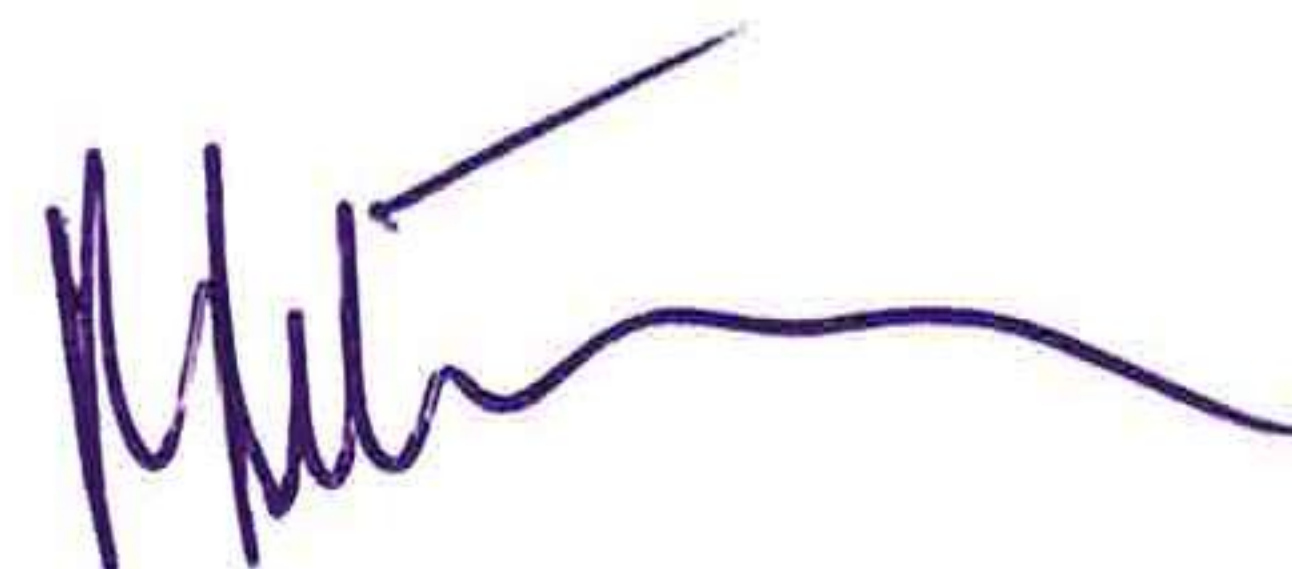
The Clerk advised Members that the historic Minutes were still held in safe storage pending transfer to the County Archives.

- **Best Kept Village Community Competition 2024**

Members considered the flyer circulated and agreed that despite the close of deadline for expressions of interest, the Clerk should enquire if an entry was still possible.

- **Memorial Garden Maintenance**

Members authorised the Clerk to negotiate the 2024 arrangements with the contractor and report back to the next meeting.





- **Future Grant Provision**

The Clerk advised Members that she had received correspondence from the Betley Bonfire Committee regarding future grant provision to the Parish Council. She requested that this correspondence be considered under Exempt Information, due to the nature of its contents.

- **Notice Board**

This matter had been previously raised by Mr Ball and discussed earlier in the meeting under Item 288/24 above.

**RESOLVED**

**That further consideration to the Notice Board be given at the meeting in February.**

- **Procurement Thresholds**

The Clerk reported that she had been notified that the thresholds for public procurement had changed from 1 January 2024.

- **HS2 Phase 2a – Safeguarding Directions**

The Clerk reported that she had been notified that on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024 the Secretary of State removed the majority of the Safeguarding Directions for HS2 Phase 2a (between the West Midlands and Crewe).

- **Email Correspondence**

The Clerk reported that she would like to raise a matter over email correspondence and requested that this be considered under Exempt Information due to the nature of its content.

**(iii) County Councillor and Borough Councillors**

The Chair advised that a report had been received that evening from the County Councillor, which would be circulated separately. He added that there was nothing further to add from the Borough Councillors as he had already reported on matters under his Chair's Report.

**(iv) Representatives on Outside Bodies**

- Councillor Bullock reported on anti social parking in the village;
- Councillor Head reported that the Village Hall Committee had been in touch with United Utilities regarding the dead horse chestnut tree. United Utilities had agreed to resolve this matter, but action had not yet been taken. Councillor Head would continue to pursue this with United Utilities.

**(v) Correspondence**

Members noted that the Clerk had received correspondence relating to the tree at the top of The Butts, Betley to which she had responded.

**291/24 PRECEPT 2024-2025**

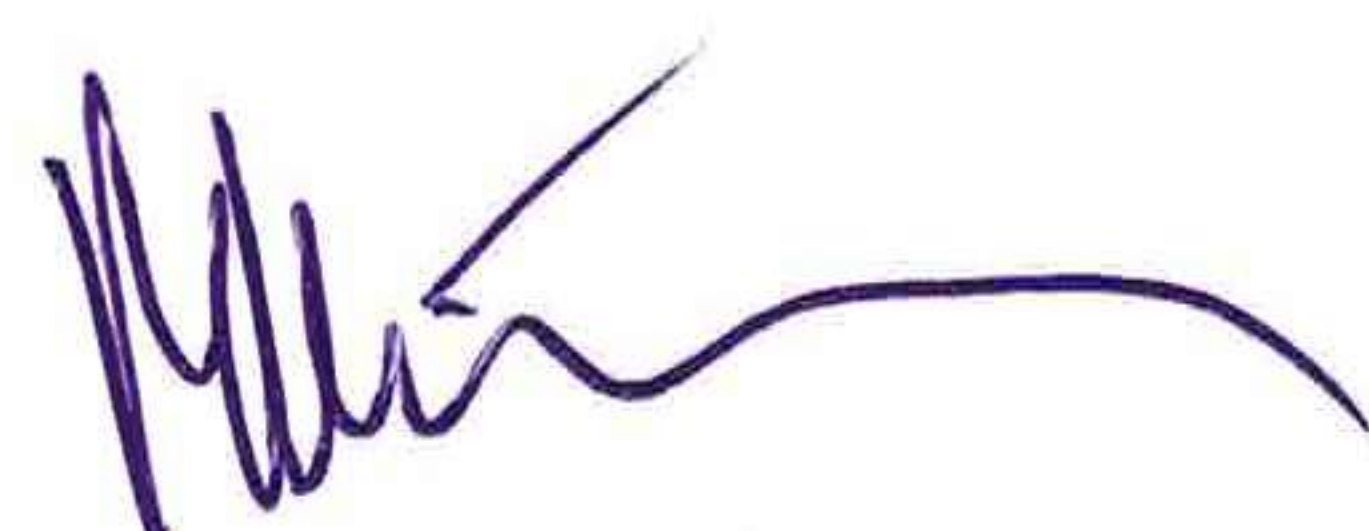
Members considered a report on the 2024-2025 Precept.

In determining the most appropriate Precept, consideration was given to the following:-

- (i) The withdrawal of grant funding and its detrimental effect on the Parish;
- (ii) The requirement to take funds from the financial reserves;
- (iii) The possibility of a future Freedom of Information request, and its associated costs in staff time.

**RESOLVED**

1. **That the 2024-2025 Parish Council Precept request in the sum of £20,485.00, be approved;**





2. That any persons making Freedom of Information requests which are excessive in staff time, be charged in accordance with the fees stated by the Information Commissioner.

At this juncture, Councillor Head left the meeting

#### **292/24 MEMORIAL GARDEN: REVIEW OF REMEMBRANCE AND CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENT**

Members considered a report of the Chair in which he detailed the Remembrance and Christmas arrangements and sought approval in principle to this year's events.

To enable the silhouette and poppy scheme to be extended, the Parish Council would need approximately £1,500 from external sources, otherwise the scheme could not proceed. Members agreed that given the significant increase in the Precept for 2024-25 it would not be appropriate to fund this scheme from Parish Council funds.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the report be received;
2. That the silhouette scheme be extended, as previously agreed, subject to external funding being recruited;
3. That the Remembrance and Christmas arrangements detailed in the report be agreed in principle for 2024;
4. That an appropriate display during the month of June on the Memorial Garden be approved.

#### **293/24 PLANNING MATTERS**

The Chair updated the Parish Council on the following planning matters:-

At this juncture, Councillor Head returned to the meeting.

##### **(i) New Planning Application/s**

- Application Ref No: 24/00027/FUL Site of Former Wrinehill Garage Main Road Betley Crewe Cheshire CW3 9BZ. Proposal - Variation of condition 1 of planning permission 19/00875/FUL to substitute the approved site layout Drg No. 696-SL-01 with Drg. 2320.00.002 to amend the site layout due to existing site constraints. Councillor Hales agreed look into this application as it was a technical matter, and Councillor Drakakis-Smith stated that she too would examine the proposal.

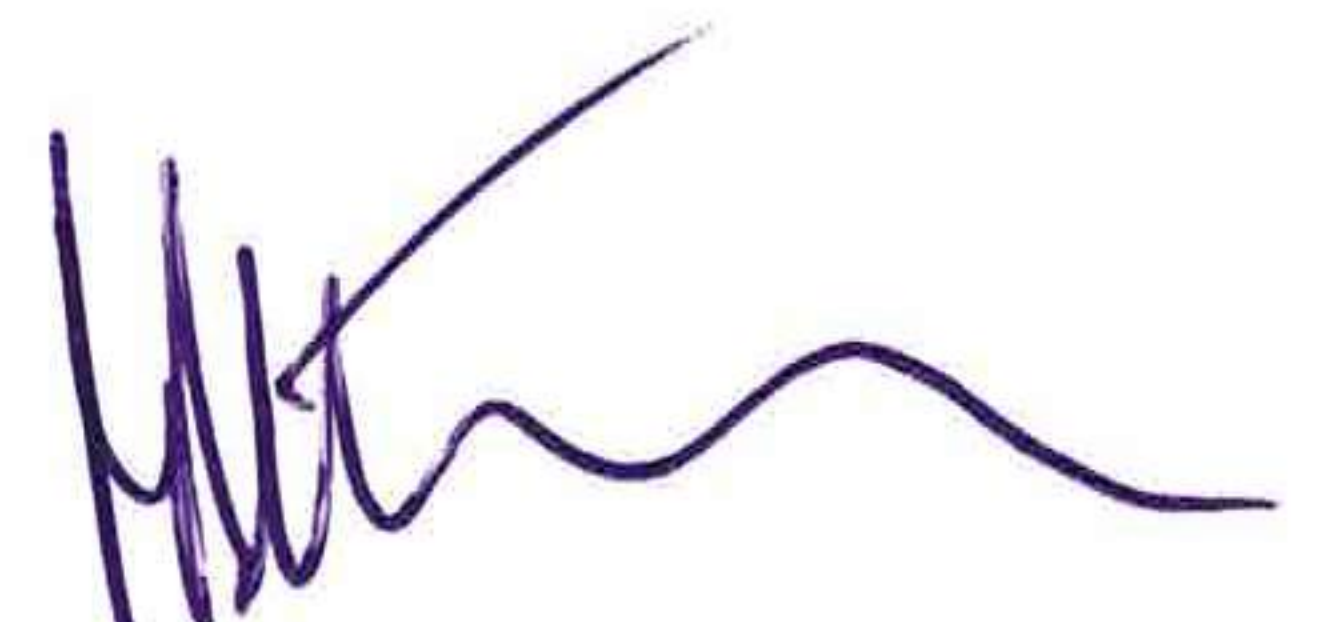
#### **RESOLVED**

That as this application had only just been received by the Clerk earlier in the day, an extension to the comment deadline was to be requested so that detailed consideration could be given at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

- Application Ref No: 23/00977/FUL The Old Stables, Balterley Green Road, Balterley, Crewe, Cheshire. CW2 5QE. Proposal – The erection of a garden outbuilding to be used as a work studio. Councillor Watkin had examined this application with Councillor Hales. They did not foresee any concerns with the proposal, and the outbuilding was easily accommodated in the footprint of the land.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Parish Council raises no objections to this proposal.





**(ii) Ongoing Planning Applications (including appeals/enforcement issues and other planning matters)**

- **Application Number: 17/00968/FUL - Site of former Wrinehill Garage, Main Road, Betley** – The Clerk advised that she had been copied into correspondence from Councillor Gary White, in which he was requesting intervention from the Head of Planning, to ensure a timely response was given to the previous Clerk's queries on this matter.
- **Work taking place at Balterley Chapel** – Members noted that the property history for this site showed planning permission and listed building consent were granted subject to conditions on 08 September 2022 for change of use to office (Use Class E(g)(i)) including the creation of a new access point, car parking area and associated landscaping works.
- **Application Ref No: 23/00751/COU Proposal: Change of use from an agricultural grassland to a dog exercise pen. Location: Land At Fields Farm Church Lane Betley.** The Chair reported that Parish Council had submitted its comments relating to this application and that this application was still under consideration
- **Application Ref No: 23/00888/LBC Proposal: Rear porch extension. Location: Old Post Office Main Road Betley.** The Chair reported that the Parish Council had submitted its comments relating to this application and that this application was still under consideration.

At this juncture Councillor Karling left the meeting.

**294/24 FOOTPATHS WORKING PARTY**

Councillor Karling returned to the meeting during consideration of this item.

Members received a report from the Footpaths Working Party and Councillor Berrisford explained the huge progress and successes to date of the scheme. She added that landowners had been particularly supportive and that the condition of the stiles continued to be monitored.

To summarise, Councillor Berrisford was delighted to report the Parish Council's success in a grant application, and had been awarded £500.00 for a signage/information board. This sum would be match funded by the Parish Council.

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

**295/24 SCOUTS/CUBS ACTIVITIES**

Councillor Bullock reported that he had received a request for suitable activities that could be completed by the scouts and cubs.

**RESOLVED**

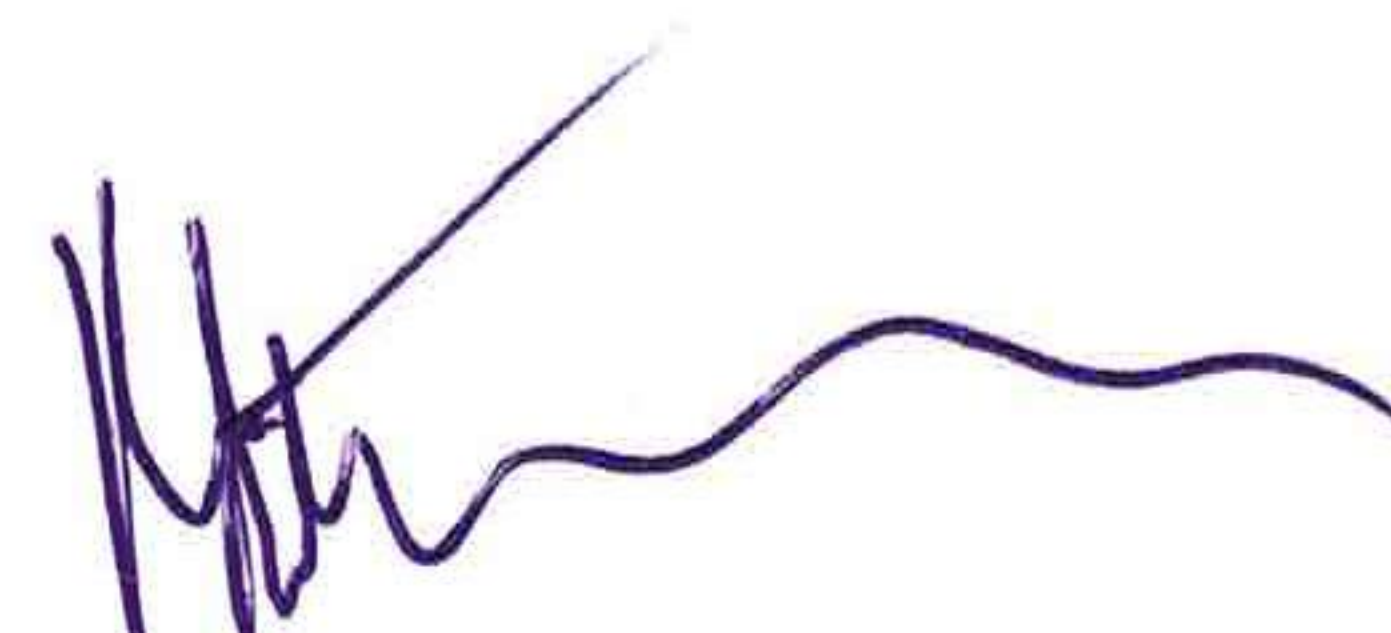
**That further consideration be given to this request at the next meeting.**

**296/24 KIND MINDS**

Members considered a Newsletter from Kind Minds relating to the mental health of children and young people. The Chair reported that a copy of newsletter had been provided to the head teacher of the school.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Newsletter be received.**





**297/24 UNITED UTILITIES – C2V+ BETLEY WwTW PROJECT**

The Chair reported that the Project appeared to be progressing and that an invitation had been extended to the Parish Council and Village Hall Trustees, to visit the site in the summer.

**RESOLVED**

That further consideration be given to this matter at the April meeting of the Parish Council.

**298/24 BUDGET AND FINANCE 2023-2024**

The Clerk reported on the following matters:-

**(i) Applications for financial assistance**

Members noted that there were no applications for financial assistance.

**(ii) Approval of the payment of invoices, including necessary reimbursements**

Members approved the following payments:-

1649	WaterPlus	Water supply	£53.45
1650	WaterPlus	Water supply Blank for January's invoice	£66.97
1451	Lumalite	Christmas lights	£368.40
1452	PQR Shires	Administration fees 4 weekly to monthly	£120.00
1453	R Bettley-Smith	Reimbursement for Christmas Sweets	£71.88
1454	M Clough	January Salary	£420.29
1455	HMRC	PAYE (January)	£111.00
1456	Staffordshire Pension	Pension Contribution (January)	£161.18
1457	Denmor Building	3 x Kissing Gates	£708.00
1458	Steven Ball	Reimbursement of Materials for Shed Repairs	£176.75
1459	Luke Rimmer	Memorial Garden Ground Maintenance	£70.00

**(iii) Budget Expenditure to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Members approved the following Budget Expenditure to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (the figures below excluded additional payments approved at the Meeting):-

Budget Head	Total	BUDGET ALLOCATED 2023- 2024	DIFFERENCE
Salary	£6,361.47	£6,500.00	97.87%
Admin - Insurance	£783.67	£725.00	108.09%
Admin - Audit Fees	£40.00	£320.00	12.50%
Admin - Venue Hire	£300.00	£520.00	57.69%
Admin - Subscriptions	£0.00	£330.00	0.00%
Admin - Website	£122.28	£100.00	122.28%
Admin - Other	£967.30	£500.00	193.46%
Highways	£8,070.00	£1,500.00	538.00%
Footpaths	£2,911.20	£1,000.00	291.12%
Grants	£1,212.50	£1,150.00	105.43%
Miscellaneous	£263.00	£250.00	105.20%
Sandy Croft	£2,174.72	£1,100.00	197.70%
Memorial Garden	£5,649.75	£4,170.00	135.49%
Neighbourhood Plan	£0.00	£300.00	0.00%
Contingency	£0.00	£1,200.00	0.00%
	<b>£28,855.89</b>	<b>£19,665.00</b>	



**(iv) Bank Statement as at 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

The Chair signed the Bank Statement dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and confirmed that it reconciled with the Bank Reconciliation Statement as at 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. He enquired whether any other Members wished to verify the reconciliation, but they declined.

**(v) Unity Trust Bank**

The Clerk circulated a report seeking approval to transfer the Parish Council banking to the Unity Trust Bank.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Clerk makes the necessary arrangements to open a new bank account with the Unity Trust Bank for the Parish Council banking, and if possible, the signatories on the new bank remain the same as with the present Co-op Bank account.**

**299/24 AREA MATTERS**

**RESOLVED**

**That consideration of this matter be deferred to the February meeting, when potholes on Post Office Lane will be discussed.**

**300/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 22nd February 2024 at 7.30 pm at Betley Village Hall.

**301/24 URGENT ITEMS**

The Chair of Council Business considered the following matters required consideration as a matter of urgency, due to increasing and widening concerns over the detrimental impact on the Parish Council.

**302/24 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT – EXEMPT BUSINESS**

**RESOLVED**

**That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as they involved matters relating to an individual.**

**303/24 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED RELATING TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF GRANT FUNDING**

Councillor Bettley-Smith reported that correspondence had been received from the Vice Chairman of an organisation, stating that due to recent events, grant funding to the Parish Council was to be refused. The refusal of grant funding would have a significant detrimental impact on the Parish Council finances, which ultimately affected the Parish.

The Chair asked the Clerk to read the contents of the correspondence, which she did.

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

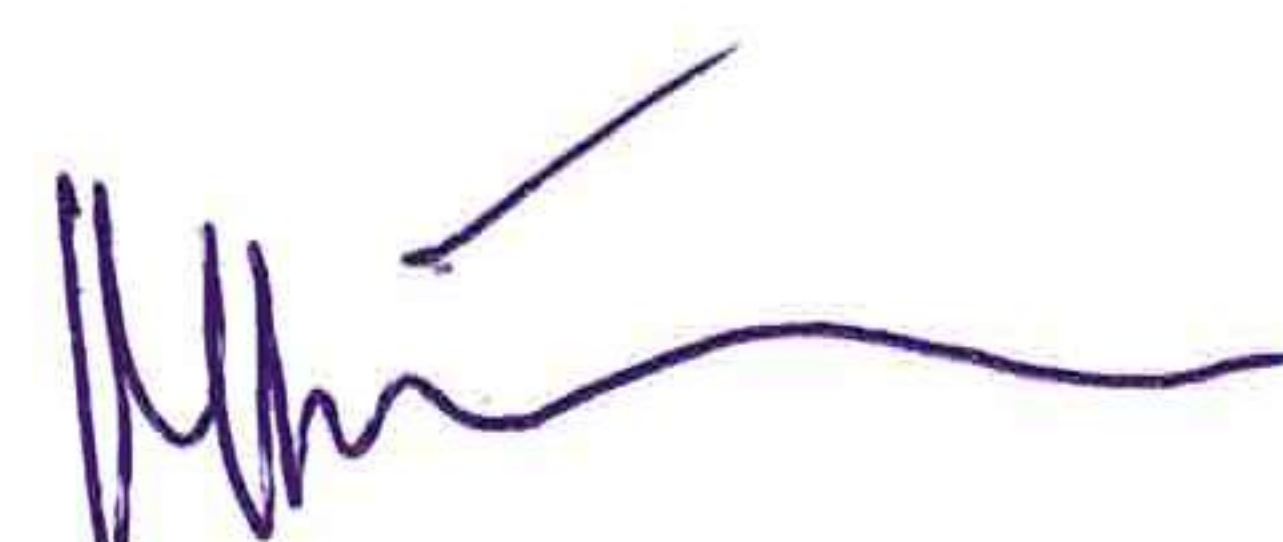
**304/24 INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE**

The Clerk reported concerns over the content of emails sent by a Parish Councillor, which had been widely circulated to all Members of the Parish Council.

The Councillor responsible for sending the email, apologised for her actions.

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

  
22/2/2024