Minutes of the meeting of Bucklebury Parish Council held in The Victory Room, Bucklebury on Monday 8th July 2024 at 7.45pm

Present: Cllr. B. Dickens (Chairman); Cllr. J. Allum; Cllr. L. Clarke; Cllr. G. Loader; Cllr. M. Morgan; Cllr. D. Southgate; Cllr. P. Teal; Cllr. C. Willett; Cllr. L. Windmill; Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).
Two members of the public were present.

1 **Apologies**.
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Spours, Cllr. Woods and District Cllr. Read.

2 **Declarations of Interest.**

2.1 Register of Interests.
The Clerk circulated the Register of Interests forms; some remain outstanding. Councillors were reminded that it is a legal requirement.

2.2 Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items.
There were no other declarations of interest in any agenda items.

3 **Public Session.**

3.1 Update from Piers Allison on the swale, the level of the River Pang and flood risk.
BPC was updated on the plans to construct three ponds at the top of the field to the west of Waven and a bund at the bottom of the same field to reduce the flow of water from Red Hill Copse towards Bucklebury Village. Water in the ponds and behind the bund will drain naturally into the chalk aquifer.
If flooding does occur, there is no duty on anybody, however there is a civil liability if landowners don't maintain their ditches/streams/rivers. Between the road ford and the byway ford, the north side of the river is owned by WBC and the south side by a private landowner.
The river level is determined by the ground water level, rain events, the weed level and Thames Water clean discharges (but this is only when the river is low).
The Bucklebury flood channel is designed for 10m³ of water to flow in the river and swale combined per second. This is enough capacity for the predicted 100 year flood event. The flood channel operates when the Bucklebury gauge (downstream of the swale) is at 39cm, or lower if there is a high level of weed.
This year, water has been flowing in the flood channel continuously from January until the end of June. This has been caused by twelve months of above average rainfall to April 2024 and high ground water levels for a prolonged period of time. Where water has been running in the swale over the road in sunny, warm weather, algae has formed making the road surface slippery.
Breeze blocks have been put in place to act as stepping stones, allowing pedestrians to cross the swale without getting wet feet or slipping.
The flood channel is owned by Bucklebury Estate and New Barn Farm, but it is an asset of the Environment Agency (EA). WBC lowered the level of the road in the swale when it was constructed, and being part of the highway it is their responsibility.
Climate change is predicted to bring bigger summer rain events, but less rain in total over the summer so will not impact ground water levels. However, winters are expected to get wetter.
A potential solution to the slipperiness of the swale is to paint it with anti-fouling paint as used on boats. Issues were raised about the potential danger caused by ice if water is flowing in swale during the during cold periods in winter.

Cllr. Dickens thanked Piers Allison for coming to talk to BPC, for sharing his knowledge on the river and for how his knowledge helps the community.

4 **Minutes of meetings of Bucklebury Parish Council.**

The minutes of the meeting of BPC held on Monday 10th June 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the chairman.

5 **Chair's Report.**

5.1 Mike Scholl.

Cllr. Dickens commented that Mike Scholl, former chairman of the Memorial Hall Committee, has recently passed away. Mike made a significant contribution to the community in all he did for the Memorial Hall over many years, benefiting local people. As well as being Chairman and bookings secretary, he carried out a lot of the maintenance and oversaw the development of the Oak Room.

5.2 Olivia Bailey MP.

Cllr. Dickens reported that he has invited Olivia Bailey MP to a Bucklebury Planning meeting in the Autumn. This will allow BPC to engage with her and discuss the issues which are important in rural Bucklebury.

5.3 Burnt Out Vehicles and 4x4s.

The abuse of the Common by 4x4s is the matter of the moment. District Cllr. Read has contacted Daniel Londs (TVP) about what can be done; if you see anything actually taking place, you are encouraged to report it on 999.

The Estate has plans to use holly brash to infill some of the holes created by mud plugging and to build holly bunds to attempt to keep 4x4s on the byways.

The Common Interest Group has organised a site meeting for later this week with WBC to view the damage and discuss options. It was questioned whether CCTV warning signs could be erected, even if there are no cameras actually in use.

5.4 Condition of roads, missing and defaced signage.

Some reports on the condition of the road or signage are not being responded to by WBC. This is particularly the case with almost non-existent road markings at junctions.

6 **Clerk's Report.**

6.1 SLCC Planning Virtual Summit – Wednesday 10th July.

It was agreed that the Clerk could attend the SLCC virtual planning summit at a cost of £65.00.

6.2 The Oaks.

The Summer edition of The Oaks was collected from the printers this morning. There are a number of delivery rounds for which it is difficult to find volunteers willing to deliver: Carbinswood Lane area and the East end of The Avenue in particular.

By the end of the meeting, all rounds had been allocated.

7 **Planning.**

7.1 Planning applications on which BPC has been consulted by WBC:

WBC has not sent details of any planning applications for consultation.

7.2 Representation at Planning Committee.

7.2.1 **Eastern Area Planning Committee (EAP) – Wednesday 10th July.**

Planning applications 23/02603/FUL and 23/02604/LBC for the Barn at Hawkridge Farm will be considered by the EAP on Wednesday 10th July. BPC objected to these applications, for which there have been a number of amendments. Cllr. Southgate agreed to attend the Committee meeting because, whilst Cllr. Clarke attended the site meeting she is unavailable on Wednesday evening. The Clerk will advise WBC. HP

7.2.2 **Western Area Planning Committee (WAP).**

Planning application 24/00571/HOUSE for Mallards Haven, Frilsham (Frilsham Parish), in close proximity to Bucklebury Parish, will be considered by the WAP. A site visit is planned for Wednesday 10th July at 1.30pm.

7.3 Planning Decisions made by WBC:

7.3.1 **24/00146/HOUSE – Connemara, Drove Lane (Cold Ash Parish).**
Section 73 application to vary condition 2 (Approved Plans) of approved 23/02190/HOUSE – First floor roof extension to create 4 no. bedrooms and detached car port over existing parking area.
BPC had **no comments** on this application which has been **approved** by WBC.

7.3.2 **24/00175/FUL – Western and Eastern Car Parks, Broad Lane.**
Proposed extension and resurfacing works of car parks.
BPC **supported** this application which has been **approved** by WBC.

7.3.3 **24/00421/HOUSE – Corner Croft, Hatch Lane.**
Proposed dormer window to first floor bathroom.
BPC had **no objection** to this application which has been **approved** by WBC.

7.3.4 **24/00877/HOUSE – Glencoe, Chapel Row.**
S73 Variation of conditions to vary condition 3-materials, 4-EPS license, 5-lighting design strategy, 6-bat mitigation strategy and 7-ecological enhancements. Previously approved application 2302773/HOUSE: Erection of single storey rear extension and external alterations to existing dwelling. Erection of single storey detached garage.
BPC **objected** to this application on the basis of the increase in lighting, however it transpires that the increase in lighting was approved under a COND application prior to this application being submitted. WBC has **approved** this application.

7.4 Adjacent Parish Applications.
There are no new applications within 200m of the parish boundary.

7.5 Update on the Local Plan.
A report of the Planning Inspector's extra day of hearing on the 26th June is contained in the most recent edition of The Oaks. There is a major difference in the approach that WBC and the developers are proposing about the development of NE Thatcham. WBC are saying that a master planning exercise must take place before any planning applications, whereas the developer is saying that planning applications should be submitted as soon as possible. Both WBC and the developers are ignoring the issues around transport. Both oil and gas pipelines run across the site, which will have an impact.
It is possible there will be another day of hearing in the next few weeks.

8 **District Councillor's Report.**
District Cllr. Read submitted a written report prior to the meeting. It was suggested that information specific to issues in Bucklebury would be helpful.

9 **Finances.**

9.1.1 Payments to be authorised by Councillors:

OJM Farm Contracting	£120.00	Installation of the beacon.
Westcot Limited	£2,880.00	Fabrication of the beacon.
Andrew Black Consulting	£1,980.00	Planning Consultant for Local Plan hearing on 26th June 2024.
Bibby Commercial Finance	£32.64	June '24 emptying of 2 dog bins.
Odin Manners	£1,568.71	Work on the surface of the BMX track.
Bucklebury Memorial Hall	£160.00	Grass cutting at the Playpark – 25th April to 13th June 2024.
Salary, pension and expenses, including 4 defibrillator pads	£1,353.84	

An invoice for £430 has been sent in respect of interments in the Cemetery.

9.2 To review current balances.
Lloyds Current Account balance after all cheques cleared and lodgements received: £16,894.92

	Lloyds Current Account:	£30,714.41	20th June 2024	
	Lloyds Business Instant Account for meadows:	£32,844.78	20th June 2024	
	Scottish Widows Reserve Account:	£33,313.35	8th April 2024	
	Scottish Widows Gilroy Account:	£4,658.72	8th April 2024	

The Clerk circulated a bank reconciliation to the 8th July 2024.

9.3 Bank Mandate.

The Clerk advised that additional signatories should be added to the bank mandate. It was agreed to add Cllr. Allum, Cllr. Morgan and Cllr. Teal. HP

In light of recommendations made by the Internal Auditor of neighbouring parishes, the Clerk recommended applying for online banking. HP

10 **The Beacon.**

The Lord of the Manor has given permission for the beacon to remain on Chapel Row Green for as long as necessary.

The second socket is currently being stored locally in the dry.

11 **Fred Dawson Play area and Pump Track.**

Repairs have now been carried out on the surface of the pump track. The grass around the track does need cutting. Rubbish around the area has generally been at a low level, although it is worse around the bins.

A number of repairs have been carried out in the playpark with the exception of:

- The landing area of the multi-play
- Whilst the foot holdings on the multi-play have been replaced, wear of them needs to be monitored.
- The gate closure mechanism is completely seized up. It was suggested that manual closing with a latch would be better. Quotes will be obtained from a fencing contractor.
- Additional litter bin signs are needed.

12 **Cemetery.**

No date was confirmed for Cemetery Carols. The possibility of holding it on a different day was considered.

It was agreed that a Cemetery working party should be organised during November. HP

13 **Highways.**

13.1 Speed Indicator Device (SID).

Over half a million vehicle speeds have now been recorded in the parish. Data has to be downloaded every two weeks.

The data shows that deployment of SID results in a reduction in speed. DS

13.2 Thames Valley Police (TVP) Community Speed Watch (CSW).

CSW signage is now up across the parish. Requests will be sent out shortly to volunteers asking them to undertake the online training. Once four or five individuals are trained, TVP will inspect the proposed site and distribute the necessary equipment. DS

13.3 Swale in Bucklebury.

The Clerk will contact Piers Allison to clarify who is contacting WBC about painting anti-fouling paint on the swale. HP

Post meeting note: *WBC Highways will be contacted about the swale road surface.*

14 **Environment.**

14.1 Works on the Common.

The Common entered a stewardship scheme on the 1st January 2024. Coombe Forestry will be starting work in the autumn on creating space and diversity in the gullies, and increasing the amount of heathland on the Common. A minimum 15m barrier of trees will be maintained on either side of the Common Road.

	A full time, fully qualified ranger is to be employed to work on the common and manage interaction with the public. It is proposed to have a meeting to introduce the ranger and explain work on Saturday 5th October in combination with Common Clearing.	
14.2	Peaches Noticeboard. The support for the noticeboard has been fabricated and is due to be delivered early next week. It was agreed that Cllr. Allum would investigate the cost of a CAT scanner before installing the support and noticeboard.	JA
14.3	Coffee Mornings and how them might be further utilised. It was suggested that the coffee mornings could be utilised as "Meet the councillor" sessions. There is generally at least one councillor present. The Clerk will explore badges for helpers and councillors.	HP
	It was noted that utilising the coffee mornings in this way will only reach a small part of the community. Interaction which parents of the primary school was discussed.	
15	**Correspondence.**	
15.1	Celebrating VE Day – Thursday 8th May 2025. There was a general a discussion about an event involving the beacon. Outside caterers were suggested. It was agreed that a little bit more discussion is needed with the Events Committee.	GW
15.2	Designation of Thatcham Neighbourhood Plan Area. Notification of the area for the Thatcham Neighbourhood Plan has been received.	
15.3	New Bus Shelters – funded by WBC. Information has been received about WBC funding new bus shelters and the maintenance of those shelters for a number of years, prior to them being handed over to the PC. Once the laurel has been cut back, it was suggested that the Broad Lane bus shelter would benefit from some maintenance. The Clerk will investigate if WBC funding could be employed for this.	HP
16	**Reports from any other meetings.**	
16.1	West Berkshire Heritage Forum. Cllr. Southgate and Cllr. Clarke attended the WB Heritage Forum AGM and listened to a talk on Victorian post boxes; Bucklebury boasts two, one in Paradise Lane and one in Turners Green. WBC currently has only one conservation officer, although they are trying to appoint two further officers. Conservation area appraisals have not been progressed.	
17	**Round Table Comments.**	
17.1	Card machine. Cllr. Loader has identified card machines with wifi and data for £69 each plus VAT. This comes within the agreed budget of £150.	
17.2	Environmental Action Group. Cllr. Loader is meeting with a parishioner interested in starting a Bucklebury based Environmental Action Group on 24th July.	
17.3	Sandbags to raise the level of the "squeeze". Sandbags were put at the "squeeze" to increase the level at which water flows from the Pang into the flood channel. Following concern from parishioners about potential flooding following the forecast for heavy rain over the weekend, the sandbags were removed.	
17.4	Police. A request was made that BPC and TVP engage more.	
17.5	Dash Cam video of Cornerpiece. Cllr. Allum raised concerns about builders' vehicles being parked at the Cornerpiece and causing gridlock. The footage will be sent to Gareth Dowding.	JA

17.6	Grit Bins. Cllr. Southgate reported that he has inspected all of the grit bins. He has observed that full grit bins don't attract so much litter/rubbish. Ten bags of grit are estimated to be needed to fill up the bins. Trees and brambles block the access to some of the bins. Rodents are thought to be living in the Paradise Way grit bin. It was suggested that a grit bin be positioned on the north side of the swale, above the entrance to the stables. The Clerk will look at putting the application together.	DS HP
17.7	WhatsApp Group. It has been proposed that there is a WhatsApp group to ensure anyone on their own who witnesses 4x4s can easily contact a group of people who may be able to offer physical support. Guidelines for this group need to be clarified.	

The meeting concluded at 9.50pm.

Date of next meetings:

BPC Planning meeting: Monday 22nd July 2024 at 7.45pm – The Victory Room.
BPC meeting: Monday 12th August 2024 at 7.45pm – The Victory Room.
Common Clearing: Saturday 5th October 2024, 2pm at the Memorial Hall

Signed . . . . . Date . . . . . .