Minutes of the meeting of Bucklebury Parish Council held in The Oak Room, Bucklebury Memorial Hall, Upper Bucklebury on Monday 9th December 2024 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr. B. Dickens (Chairman); Cllr. J. Allum; Cllr. G. Loader; Cllr. G. Pask; Cllr. D. Southgate; Cllr. P. Spours; Cllr. P. Teal; Cllr. L. Windmill; District Cllr. C. Read; Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).
Five members of the public were present.

1 **Apologies**.
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr. Morgan, Cllr. Woods and Cllr. Willett.

2 **Declarations of Interest.**

2.1 Register of Interests.
There were no changes to the register of interests.

2.2 Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items.
Cllr. Windmill declared an interest in planning applications 24/02465/HOUSE and 24/02474/HOUSE for Shepherds Heath, Chapel Row.

3 **Public Session.**

3.1 Rob Carpenter – Celebration of D-Day 80 book.
Members of Newbury Photographic Society decided that the local celebrations of the 80th Anniversary of D-Day should be recorded. In order to raise funds to carry out this project a Greenham Trust grant of £1,500 was obtained plus other smaller donations. During the celebrations 12 photographers went out to photograph celebrations and a book was compiled. Organisers of the events photographed (including the beacon lighting at Chapel Row) were presented with a copy of the book, including Bucklebury Parish Council.
Cllr. Dickens thanked Newbury Photographic Society for the book and specifically Rob Carpenter for making the time to come to Bucklebury to present the book.

3.2 Bucklebury Community Bus.
Trustees of Bucklebury Community Bus commented that over the last couple of years, four local charities, four private individuals and Bucklebury Primary School have used the bus when it is not in use to transport pupils between Upper Bucklebury and Thatcham.
The trustees were not aware of any enquiries not resulting in use of the bus.
The cost per pupil, per term for transport from Upper Bucklebury to the Blue Coat carpark (on the A4) and back is £81. Transport to the Downs School (in Compton) is between £300 and £400 per term. If the trustees increase the price too much, parents who can, will simply drive their children to school themselves.
The number of pupils requiring transport from Upper Bucklebury to Thatcham has reduced from 35 to 25, resulting in the number of runs each morning and evening being reduced from three to two.
Further questions by councillors revealed the following points:

- If the service being provided is being paid for, a Section 19 permit needs to be in place.
- The Community Bus Charity cannot request a donation in return for the bus being borrowed, although they may receive a donation.
- Use of the bus by individuals may not be within the charitable status of the charity.

The trustees defer to the Community Transport Organisation when there is uncertainty over a use, or what paperwork needs to be in place.
The Chairty is trying to build up funds for a new bus, when it is needed, but running a bus is expensive.
The Chairty currently employs two drivers (a husband and wife team) and has at least two volunteer drivers.

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

4.1 Minutes of meeting on the 11th November 2024.
The minutes of the meeting of BPC held on Monday 11th November 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Minutes of Extraordinary meeting on the 25th November 2024.
The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on the 25th November 2024 were approved as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

5 **Chair's Report.**

5.1 Contribution to Bucklebury Community Bus.
It was unanimously agreed that BPC support the Bucklebury Community Bus Chairty with a donation of £500.

5.2 Hybird Meetings and Proxy Voting.
Cllr. Morgan circulated a response on the consultation on hybrid meetings and proxy voting which is currently taken place. It was agreed that this be submitted.

6 **Clerk's Report.**

6.1 Website.
The Clerk reported that Hugofox are now offering ".gov.uk" domains as part of their website package. It was agreed that the Clerk should apply for "buckleburypc.gov.uk". The planning application app on the website is still not working, although it was reported to Hugofox some time ago. The website is missing a security certificate, Hugofox are waiting on BPC to make a change elsewhere in order for them to resolve the issue. HP

Planning.

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

6.2.1 **24/02120/FUL – Sewage Treatment Works, Paradise Way. PT/PS**
Extension and upgrade of Chapel Row Sewage Treatment Works (STW) onto land to the west of the existing operational STW site with associated fencing and landscaping works.
It was agreed that subject to conditions on screening, access and lighting, BPC **supports** this application.

6.2.2 **24/02465/HOUSE – Shepherds Heath, Chapel Row. JA/GW**
Erection of 1 ½ storey side extension, upward side extension and new front porch; with associated internal and external alterations.
It was agreed that BPC has **no objection** to this application.

6.2.3 **24/02474/HOUSE – Shepherds Heath, Chapel Row. JA/GW**
New storage shed.
It was agreed that BPC has **no objection** to this application.

6.2.4 **24/02401/HOUSE – Butlers Orchard, Bucklebury. GP/GL/CW**
Side extension.
It was agreed that BPC has **no objection** to this application.

6.3 Planning Decisions made by WBC:

6.3.1 **24/01506/HOUSE – Heathgate, The Avenue.**
Erection of annexe.
BPC had **no objection** to this application which has been **approved** by WBC.

6.3.2 **24/01264/HOUSE – Red Hill House, Briff Lane.**
Erection of a swimming pool, plant and changing rooms and associated works.
BPC had **no objection** to this application which has been **withdrawn.**

6.3.3 **24/01430/PACOU – Boars Hole Farm, Marlston (Hermitage Parish).**
Application to determine if prior approval is required for a Proposed: change of use of a barn on the site from its current agricultural use to a commercial/storage/distribution/business (Class B8/Class E) use.
BPC raised concerns about the potential increase in traffic on Marlston Road. The application has been **withdrawn.**

6.3.4 **Old Hawkridge Cottage.**
Side and rear extensions and alterations to existing property.
BPC had **no objection** to this application which has been **approved** by WBC**.**

6.4 Appeals which have been made since the last meeting:

6.4.1 **Westfield Stables, Tylers Lane.**
Part Retrospective: Conversion of redundant stable to form one dwelling, car parking, landscaping and associated works.
BPC **objected** to this application which was **refused** by WBC. The applicant has submitted an appeal to this decision which is to be considered based on written representations.

6.5 Adjacent Parish Applications.
There have been no applications submitted within 200m of the parish boundary.

6.6 Update on the Local Plan.
At the extraordinary BPC meeting on the 25th November, no decision was reached on the next steps with the local plan process.
Consultation on the modified Local Plan has now started and runs until the end of January 2025. BPC will respond to this consultation, and plans to give input to the master planning process in order to reduce the impact on Bucklebury Parish as much as possible.
Councillors have been briefed to ensure they are all aware of the possible consequences of the different options open to BPC.
The consultation is only on the modifications to the Local Plan. At the public meeting, to be held on the 17th December, parishioners need to be encouraged to submit comments to WBC, and to lobby MPs and District Councillors.
It is expected that the local plan process will go to the next phase; master planning. This will be carried out by WBC and the developer. BPC must urge that infrastructure is developed before development of homes. BPC needs to budget for input to the master planning process.

6.6.1 **BPC's plan of action.**
It was questioned whether there is value in launching litigation and whether it is in parishioners' best interests to halt the Local Plan. If the Local Plan is halted, WBC will have no Local Plan from 2026.
The worst-case scenario of seeking a Judicial Review (JR) is that it is lost, resulting in halting of the Local Plan and costs running to six figures plus costs (which are capped at approximately £20,000 for local authorities). BPC does not have the funds to take this option.
If BPC doesn't plan to seek a JR, obtaining a King's Counsel (KC) opinion would only raise expectation of parishioners.
If WBC has to start the Local Plan process again, it would cost WBC at least £1,500,000 plus appeal costs from developers submitting applications. WBC is already struggling financially. Developers have already indicated that they would submit applications for 2,500 homes within a year. Central Government have stated that the house numbers are non-negotiable.
No other local Parish or Town Council has carried out any crowd funding or used precept to fund opposing the Local Plan (note that Cold Ash Parish Council has carried out some traffic consultation).
BPC's view was always to oppose for as long as possible and then move to a mitigation position (which could mean delaying the development).
Cllr. Spours proposed that BPC does not seek a KC opinion; this was seconded by Cllr. Southgate and carried with six votes in favour and two abstentions.
It was noted that the decision of BPC does not prevent any parishioners contributing individually towards a KC which might be sought either by a group of parishioners or another Parish Council.

6.6.2 **Expenditure on consultation response to modifications to the Local Plan.**
Following a quote from Andrew Black for responding to the current consultation, it was agreed to spend up to £3,500 on Andrew Black's fees and any additional consultants work (including traffic).

6.6.3 **Arrangements for the Public Meeting on the 17th December.**
There was a discussion about the public meeting on the 17th December. It was agreed that Cllr. Dickens, Cllr. Spours, Cllr. Southgate, Cllr. Pask and Cllr. Windmill would work together on the content of the meeting.

7 **District Councillor's Report.**
District Cllr. Read circulated a report prior to the meeting. The key points being:

- The next full council meeting is scheduled for the 27th March, although there is likely to be an extraordinary meeting to approve the amendments to the Local Plan.
- The consultation on the WBC budget runs until the 23rd December 2024.
- WBC is expanding its community connect on-demand bus service to cover local villages to the A4 and Thatcham, replacing the numbers 41 and 44 bus services.
- Green Machine Computers recycle and refurbishes old laptops, tablets and other electrical devices with approximately 50% being distributed to schools and charities free of charge. WBC uses Green Machine Computers to recycle old equipment.
- WBC is offering free bus services across West Berkshire on the 14th and 21st December. All journeys starting or ending in West Berkshire are free.
- The consultation on the proposed main modifications to the Local Plan including NE Thatcham runs until the 31st January. Comments should be submitted on the representation form; it was queried whether comments not on the form would be considered.

8 **Finances.**

8.1 Payments to be authorised by Councillors:

2 X Sumup devices	£93.60	
Tree planting expenses	£178.64	
Lorna McCurdy	£360.00	Rebinding Burial Register
Bibby Commercial Finance Ltd	£116.64	Dog waste bin emptying (November) and quarterly bus shelter cleaning.
The Victory Room – Bucklebury	£62.10	Rent July – September '24
Bucklebury Memorial Hall	£102.70	Rent October – December '24
Crescent Signs Ltd	£247.20	Plaque for tree on Recreation Ground
Defibrillator battery & two sets of pads	£380.40	
Lenovo laptop	£365.49	
Various expenses	£33.09	Cemetery plan stationary & Meadows gate spring.
Salaries, pension & PAYE/NI	£1,400.83	For November '24 & includes backpay as agreed by the LGA pay agreement.

8.2 To review current balances.

Lloyds Current Account balance after all cheques cleared and lodgements received:	£23,807.33	
Lloyds Current Account:	£28,129.05	
Lloyds Business Instant Account for meadows:	£32,996.05	
Scottish Widows Reserve Account:	£33,313.35	8th April 2024
Scottish Widows Gilroy Account:	£4,658.72	8th April 2024

8.3	Draft budget for FY25/26. The Clerk circulated a draft budget prior to the meeting showing a general increase of 3% for inflation. It was agreed that this figure should be increased to 5%. The budget will be finalised at the January meeting.	HP
8.4	Response to the WBC Budget. Cllr. Pask and Cllr. Southgate are working on a response to the WBC budget consultation.	GP DS
9	**Fred Dawson Play area and Pump Track.** There was no update on the possibility of resurfacing the pump track with tarmac.	
10	**Cemetery.**	
10.1	Cemetery Carols - Monday 23rd December. It was agreed that Cllr. Southgate, Cllr. Pask, Cllr. Woods and Cllr. Dickens would make mince pies for the event. Decoration of the Chapel will take place at 10am on Monday 23rd December. Tidying up the Chapel will take place from 9.30am on Tuesday 24th December. All councillors who are available are encouraged to come and help make it a successful community event.	
10.2	Cemetery Working Party. The working party on the 16th November was well attended and the Cemetery looked much better after being tidied up. The possibility of a working party in late January or early February was favourably received.	HP
11	**Meadows.** Cllr. Pask reported that the estimate for the work on the trees in the meadow has been accepted and it is anticipated that the work will take place at the end of January / beginning of February. Someone is putting gravel down from the kissing gate by Byles Green Farm southwards across the meadow. Whilst this was beneficial immediately around the kissing gate, it is not wanted across the meadows. Notices have been put up, requesting that who ever is doing it please stop.	GP
12	**Highways.**	
12.1	Speed Indicator Device (SID). Data on over 750,000 vehicle movements past SID has been recorded and sent to WBC and Thames Valley Police. It continues to work in reducing the speed of those doing just over the speed limit, but has no impact on those who are blatantly exceeding the limit.	
12.2	Thames Valley Police (TVP) Community Speed Watch (CSW). All of the proposed sites where the CSW will be used have now been uploaded and set up. It is planned to start operating CSW in the parish from January 2025.	DS
12.3	Grit/Salt. Grit has been ordered and should be delivered later this week. Cllr. Southgate will organise distribution of the grit.	DS
13	**Environment.**	
13.1	Sustainable Bucklebury. The Sustainable Bucklebury group has met and plans are being formed for a Repair Café, possibly operating on a quarterly basis. There is interest in a home energy group and a community orchard.	GL
13.2	Works on the Common. Cllr. Allum reported that work continues on the Common. Most of the timber has now been removed from the cleared gulleys, but much of it still needs to be collected by road vehicles. Work will begin around Christmas time on the south side of the Lower Common to remove large areas of birch. Holly is being removed west of Holly Lane, towards Westrop Green, which has made a huge improvement, but impeded a number of paths and	

	tracks. There are a limited number of days funding for the removal of holly, but it is hoped to clear holly from other areas too. Birch between Briff Lane and Fanny's Lane is being thinned. There has been some issues about the signage which indicates that 25% of trees are being removed, but this only covers trees which are 50mm at 2m and until a tree reaches this size, it is not considered a tree. It is thought that as many as 80% of trees have actually been removed. Ponds need to be reinstated in the gulley between Fanny's Lane and Briff Lane. The perforated pipe on Spring Path was broken by the contractors and needs to be repaired. Concern was raised about when the damage on the haul roads will be repaired as a number of people have fallen over and one lady needed to call for help having got stuck in the mud. Cllr. Allum has requested a meeting with Pascale Nicolet from the Newt Conservation Partnership to look at ponds at Ramsbury Corner and near Fireside Cottage.	
14	**Round Table Comments.**	
14.1	Local Plan. There is mention of an extension to Colthrop in the proposals for NE Thatcham. It is unclear what this refers to, but is thought to be an extension to Colthrop Industrial Estate.	
14.2	Permanent SIDs. There has been a request for a permanent SID at Chapel Row. There could be a further three requests when the whole parish is considered. There is the initial capital cost and then maintenance costs. WBC Members bids could be used to cover up to 50% of the initial cost. Cllr. Southgate is exploring the options.	DS
14.3	PAT testing. For the Repair Café, equipment is needed to carry out PAT testing of electrical good prior to and after repair. All of the BPC owned and used equipment should be PAT tested to comply with regulations.	
14.4	Christmas Tractor Run. Cllr. Southgate commented that it would be good if there was a Bucklebury Christmas Tractor Run.	
14.5	Play Equipment at Chapel Row. Cllr. Loader asked whether it might be possible to put play equipment on the Green at Chapel Row. The Green at Chapel Row belongs to Bucklebury Estate and is registered Common Land (meaning that it can't easily be fenced). Cost of equipment, installation and maintenance would also need to be considered.	
14.6	Permissive Path at the top of Harts Hill Road. Whilst there is a permissive path from the track to the Wimbles, to Floral Way in Thatcham, there is no safe path from Upper Bucklebury to the track to the Wimbles. It was questioned whether a 200m strip of land belonging to Highlands might be made into a permissive path to make a safer route for pedestrians.	

The meeting concluded at 9.35pm.

Date of next meetings:

BPC meeting: Monday 13th January at 7.45pm – The Oak Room, Bucklebury Memorial Hall.

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