

Little Bardfield Parish Council



www.littlebardfieldparish.org.uk

Meeting of the Parish Council
Wednesday 8 February 2023 at 7pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Cllr Andrew Davies (Chair), Cllr Terry Cutmore, Cllr Juliet O'Brien and Cllr Colin Simpson. Clerk: Kate Rixson

District Councillor George Smith, County Councillor Martin Foley and three other members of the public attended.

1. **Chair's Welcome:** The Chair welcomed all present and opened the meeting at 7 pm.
2. **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies for absence from Cllr Warren were accepted.
3. **Declarations of Interest in matters on the agenda:** None.
4. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 November 2022:** The minutes were signed as a true record by the Chairman Cllr Davies.
5. **Reports on Matters Arising from the Minutes which are not on the agenda**
 - Styles' road repairs** – see district councillor report below.
 - Donation to Alms Houses charity for roof repairs** – the trustees had been advised of the parish council's decision. Quotes are awaited and the trustees will request the agreed donation when payment is required.
 - Issues relating to work next to the River Pant** – the council had received an update but no action had been taken by the authorities
 - Bank change of address** – Cllr Cutmore had requested a change and was waiting for this to be completed.
6. **Public Forum**

A number of local issues were raised with the parish council and discussed with the district and county councillors.
7. **Date of Annual Parish Council meeting and Annual Parish Meeting:** this will be on Wednesday 10 May 2023
8. **District Councillor and County Councillor reports**
 - 8.1** Councillor Smith will provide a written report which will be on the website. In the meantime, he reported on district council matters as follows:
 - a) **Styles road resurfacing:** The district council is following the statutory process of obtaining quotes and consulting those residents who will be expected to contribute to the cost under the terms of their property deeds. After the initial consultation, a lower quote was obtained. Work cannot start until consultation on the lower quote has been completed. Some residents have not accepted the repayment terms offered by the council and it is also argued that UDC refuse trucks and vehicles servicing the sewage plant, passing along the

road, have contributed to the potholes and damage. Cllr Smith has asked for assurances about the adequacy of work covered by the new costings and will update the parish council in due course.

b) The District Council budget will be set in two weeks' time and an increase in council tax is expected. Funds will be set aside to support local people with meeting increases in the cost of living. To respond to reduced income and increased costs the council will be reducing its size by about 20% and funding some items from reserves in 2023-24.

c) The council's housing stock is being surveyed for damp by Savills under contract to the district council.

8.2 Councillor Foley has provided a written report which is on the website. He reported on county council developments:

a) the council is introducing (on 13 March) a booking system for using recycling centres/waste tips including the Saffron Walden site (see below).

b) there is a residents' campaign to apply a 20mph speed limit in some roads. This had been popular and worked well in some areas.

c) the county council budget would be set this week and severe reductions in services were expected.

d) the plan to replace the bridge at Finchingfield which, although it is outside Cllr Foley's area of the county, would affect local residents. He understood that it was essential to replace the bridge but there were many concerns about the effect on the local area.

The Parish Council agreed the clerk should write to the county council member in charge of waste and recycling, objecting strongly to the imposition of a booking system for recycling centres, on the grounds that it was impractical and would reduce recycling and increase fly-tipping. **Action: Clerk**

The Parish Council also expressed concerns about the effect of replacing the bridge at Finchingfield on the local area through diversions and general disruption. It was noted that the public consultation was continuing and comments could be made on the plans until 28 February on the Essex Highways website.

9. Clerk's report including note on data protection issues

The clerk had circulated a summary of data protection rules which was endorsed by the council.

Both defibrillators (in Little Bardfield at the entrance to the Cricket Club, and in Hawkspur Green) now have new batteries and pads. Other actions to be taken following the last meeting have been completed.

The clerk will prepare an article reporting on this council meeting for the Bardfield Times' March edition.

10. Procedures and nominations for May elections

The clerk reported that nomination packs could be downloaded from the Uttlesford District Council website from 22 February when there would be a candidates' briefing via Zoom at 7pm (and another briefing on 13 March). The nomination paper for each candidate needed to be hand-delivered to UDC offices in Saffron Walden by 4pm on Tuesday 4 April. An appointment should be made and one councillor could deliver papers on behalf of others. It was noted that the council offices car park could be used. A note with details will be circulated to councillors by the clerk. **Action: Clerk**

11. Finance Reports

a) From the bank statements dated 31 January 2023 the balances were:

Treasurer's account £12,111.78; Community Fund £7,731.09.

b) Payments made from 2 November 2022 to 8 February 2023 (previously approved or made under contractual or statutory obligations), including salary, were reported. A schedule is annexed to the hard copy of these minutes.

c) It was noted that Cllr Cutmore had compared the cash book entries with the bank statements was satisfied with the accuracy of the council's accounts.

d) The district council had issued a "ready-reckoner" in December 2022 so that the council could check the effect of its proposed level of expenditure/precept on local council tax. The decided precept of £3,150 for the parish council's expenditure in 2023-24 would mean that a Band D household would pay £24.62

for the year, an increase of 0.4% or 11p compared with 2022-23. This would be collected as part of council tax by Uttlesford District Council.

12. Planning applications and update on planning matters

A schedule of decisions and outstanding applications had been circulated. New applications were discussed as follows:

UTT/22/3468/FUL – Paul’s Farm. Little Bardfield – erection of light commercial buildings. After discussion it was decided to inform the planning authority that the parish council had no objection to the application.
UTT/23/0019/LB – Coft Hall, Oxen End – retention of internal re-plastering. After consideration it was decided not to comment on this application.

13. Decisions to be taken

a) Approve the revised budget

Cllr Cutmore had circulated a revised calculation to councillors with a note of assumptions and this was approved. It was noted that further amendments could be made, that expenditure was increasing but reserves were substantial, at more than one year’s expenditure, and should be used.

b) Code of Conduct for councillors as recommended by Uttlesford District Council

This was formally adopted by the Parish Council.

c) Donations under s137 of the Local Government Act and from the Community Fund

It was agreed that grants would be considered at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May.

The cricket club had now chosen a contractor for a new pitch surface and obtained comparative quotes. It was agreed to reclaim VAT on the cost if possible. The clerk should contact the club to arrange invoicing and payment. **Action: Clerk**

d) Appointment of auditor

It was agreed to engage Mike Letch as the internally-appointed auditor for 2023 at a fee of £125.

e) To approve payments

The following payments were approved:

To Intermedical UK Ltd for defibrillator battery and pads: £426 including £71 VAT

To K Rixson to reimburse expenditure on a defibrillator battery and pads (from St John Ambulance): £298.80 including £49.80 VAT.

Salary (to be calculated) which would be due in April 2023 for January to March 2023. This would be reported at the next meeting.

f) Attendance at the Thaxted area Parish Councils/Uttlesford DC liaison meeting at 7 pm on 20 February 2023

Cllr Davies agreed to attend. The clerk would forward Zoom joining links when received from the organiser. **Action: Clerk**

g) To decide on aspects of the clerk’s employment

As only councillors and clerk were present at the meeting, it was not necessary to resolve to exclude the public and press.

It was agreed to approve the clerk’s contract as amended and circulated to councillors. This was duly signed on behalf of the council by Cllr Simpson.

It was also agreed to implement the national pay award agreed and recommended by NALC with effect from 1 April 2022, including back-pay due to the former clerk.

The clerk was asked to rectify any underpayment to the former clerk from the date of the change of NJC spinal column point for the role, and to ensure that the correct reports to HMRC were made. **Action: Clerk**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00pm.