

BIRDBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**HELD ON TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 7.00PM
AT THE COMMUNITY HOUSE, BIRDBROOK**

PRESENT: Mr Steve Rhenius (Chair)
Mr Alan Cook
Mrs Anita Chadney

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr Diana Garrod (BDC)
Mrs Debbie Hilliard (Clerk)
14 Members of the public

Mr Rhenius welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Questions were invited from the members of the public.

Braintree District Council Local Plan Review:-

Questions submitted related to concerns regarding the Braintree Local Plan review and 'call for sites', in particular the site submitted to the east side of Birdbrook behind the church:-

- The proposal on the plan, was that to do now or later?
- Can the Parish Council give opinions about it?
- There is an area on the other side of Sturmer and an area in Toppesfield – they were both large areas – will they have an impact on the decision regarding Birdbrook?
- How likely was it that the planning here (Birdbrook) will be agreed?
- How much input and ability to sway the decision does the population in Birdbrook have?
- Everyone recognises there was a need for housing, the concern is if a housing estate was to be built, that needed to be supported by facilities, the developers promise a great deal but under-deliver. Affordability was an issue as well (noting that new housing developments in Finchingfield and Steeple Bumpstead remain unsold, likely due to how expensive they were). A concern is if it was put forward and prejudged by BDC but sold privately and sold for housing which was then unaffordable.
- When the local plan deadline of 16 August no one in Birdbrook knew about it or the short deadline for responses. Why didn't the Parish Council notify us?
- Is there a number indicated for that plot?
- What about using empty properties, Haverhill High Street has many empty properties?

Cllr Diana Garrod (BDC) was present and explained the situation. Points noted were:-

- The land near Sturmer had been on the developer's website for several years. Initially BDC refused that area but now that may have changed.
- The pressure was on from Government that local authorities have to meet house building targets. The Government have said that they want to build new communities and those sites, if appropriately located would more likely be used than some of the smaller sites in villages. Having said that some of the sites will go through. They are looking for villages that have amenities. It is not possible to say for certain that that site would be attractive to the LA. Everybody was able to put forward the sites that they thought would be appropriate for housing. When the call for sites came through residents were invited to say what they wanted in their area but there was not a great deal of response.

- The planning committee will take every comment into account but also have to consider what Government targets.
- Officers at BDC were looking at all 300 sites which were put forward.
- Haverhill is part of West Suffolk Council and should be taken up with them.
- Braintree District Council acknowledged that the deadline of 16 August was very short and did accept comments after this date. Residents are encouraged to be involved in the review process which is available on the BDC website.
- The Clerk advised that the admin for Birdbrook's Facebook page should like and follow both the District and County Council FB pages which would then automatically receive any posts which might help with communication.

Highways Issues – Clare Bridge

- Regarding a conversation which a resident had with a Suffolk CC engineer. The engineer commented that when they had visited the bridge, they were scared crossing it due to traffic. They also made the comment that the designated owner of the bridge was also responsible for the road for 100m each side of the bridge. Noted this legislation would need to be confirmed.
- Unable to get Essex and Suffolk Highway authorities to communicate with each other.

Cllr Garrod advised that she thought the installation of a proper pedestrian pavement across the bridge would help to improve the situation. A raised kerb would give pedestrians greater protection and help with traffic flow.

Speed campaign – New England

The resident advised they had got a letter of support from the Headteacher of Steeple Bumpstead Primary school and were going to attend Steeple Parish Council's next meeting. Can we get support from Sturmer Parish Council?

- Cllr Garrod advised she was no longer a Sturmer Parish Councillor but was happy to put that forward. She suggested that the resident contact the Sturmer Clerk as well.

Parish councillors also pointed out that there were currently 3 vacancies on Birdbrook Parish Council and, as volunteers there was only so much they could do and invited anyone who might be interested in joining the parish council to have an informal conversation after the meeting.

Cllr Garrod was invited to present her report. Points noted were:-

- Sturmer solar farm application.
- Road closure – Haverhill Road, Steeple Bumpstead – noted that Anglian Water were meeting on 13 September to consider phase 3 and re-assess plans to try and help traffic flow. However, this could mean that the road would stay closed until October.
- Steeple Bumpstead neighbourhood plan due to be published.
- BDC have £100,000 available for local groups for carbon reduction projects. It was noted that Birdbrook Community House Trustees have been awarded £5,345.00 of this towards window replacement for energy efficiency.
- Garden waste – it was confirmed that the cost of this would remain at £55 for the first green bin and £30 for the second bin for the next financial year.
- Local Plan sub-Committee – it was anticipated that the minimum target for housing would be 7093, however, the government was consulting which could increase the housing target for the district. Density noted as 25 houses per hectare.
- New schedule for the local plan review will be published on 16 September 2024.

24/63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Tim Chadney and Cllr Peter Schwier.

24/64 OTHER ABSENCES

Cllr Peter Schwier.

24/65 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Anita Chadney proposed, and Alan Cook seconded with all in favour that the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

Question tabled from member of the public regarding minutes noting that at the July meeting an attendee had volunteered for the newsletter, but this did not appear in the minutes. The clerk advised that minutes were not verbatim but a record of key points. It was agreed that the clerk would contact the attendee if she could be provided with contact details.

Action List

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Outcome
24/57	Safeguarding Policy – Clerk/Anita to explore templates	Clerk/Anita	Completed

24/66 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made relating to the meeting agenda items.

24/67 REPORT OF DISTRICT COUNCILLOR/COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Noted above.

24/68 MEMBERS' REPORTS

(a) Pond – Anita Chadney reported on behalf of Tim Chadney.

- Email from Rook family 30/8 – The email was considered. It was noted that the ownership of the land remained unresolved. Historically, the Rook family advised that they owned the land, and the Parish Council owned the water. However, no documentary evidence of this had been found. It was noted that the Parish Council could not commit funds or apply for grants until this was resolved. It was noted that one way forward would be to have a new agreement regarding the area, eg., a leasehold at a peppercorn rent. It was agreed that the Clerk would draft a response to the email. **Action.**
- Wall by the pond – in response to questions it was confirmed that the wall was the responsibility of ECC Highways, and they had been notified that it needed maintenance/repair.

(b) Parks – Anita reported.

- It was noted that Anita had applied for 2 funding streams, one was unsuccessful and the other was specific funding for a community orchard the deadline of which was 13 September 2024. The CIF fund was now open, and Anita was exploring this fund with a view to completing an application. Parish Councillors thanked Anita for her work on the applications.
- Play Equipment Inspection reports –
 - It was noted that Birdbrook play area was all low-risk items mostly related to green algae present on equipment due to the wet weather. One member of the public volunteered to help with cleaning this and it was agreed this would be discussed outside of the meeting.

- Springs on 2 items of equipment were rusty and in need of attention. It was agreed that the clerk would get a quote for this. **Action.**
- Baythorne End play area – It was noted that the report identified that equipment needed cleaning as green algae was present. Anita advised that she had done this.

(c) Chair's Report – Steve Rhenius advised that most points had been covered at the start of the meeting. However, he did raise that Braintree Community Transport were in need of volunteer drivers and if anyone were interested they should contact the Community Transport team.

(d) Highways – Alan Cook reported noting that the main areas of concern had been discussed at the start of the meeting. It was further noted that Mr Cook was in contact with the Community Police team and had asked them to visit Birdbrook with the speed gun to monitor traffic speed.

(e) Footpaths – Nothing to report.

(f) Media – Nothing to report.

Cllr Garrod left the meeting.

24/69 PLANNING

- BDC Local Plan – Considered above.
- Application No – 24/01756/COUPA – land northwest of Whitehouse Farm – noted.

24/70 FINANCE

The finance report was considered and accepted with no questions.

24/71 POLICIES

Safeguarding Policy - Ratified

24/72 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

None.

24/73 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

None.

24/74 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 12 November 2024

It was noted that dates of meetings for 2025 would be considered at the November meeting.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at approximately 8.30pm.

Signed: .....

Dated: 12/11/2024

Action List

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Outcome
24/68	Pond – Clerk to draft response to the Rook's email.	Clerk	Response sent 24 Sept
24/68	Play equipment – Cleaning of algae – one volunteer came forward from the public and agreed to discuss this outside of meeting - AC Rusty Springs – Clerk to get quote for these	AC/AC Clerk	 Emailed 13/9 and DA 30/10