



Bulmer Parish Council



Bulmer Parish Council

Minutes for the Parish Council meeting
held at Bulmer Village Hall dated
15th July 2024 at 7.15pm





Bulmer Parish Council



Minutes of the Bulmer Parish Council meeting held at Bulmer Village Hall on Monday 15th July 2024 at 7.15pm.

Members of the press and public are welcome to attend.

Minutes

Present: Cllrs R Raymond, A Crawshay, R Burke, D Burke, P Paxton

In the Chair: Cllr R Raymond

Also in attendance: Lynsey Ritchie-Fagg (Parish Clerk & RFO), Cllr D Holland.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr P Schwier.
2. **Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests:** There were none highlighted.
3. **Minutes of previous meeting:** The minutes of the meeting dated 25th June 2024, having been previously circulated, were agreed by those present and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record and unanimously agreed by all.
4. **Co Option of Councillors:** Full Council agreed the Co Option of Jon Morris & Sam Rowe. The Parish Council Welcome Councillor Jon Morris & Councillor Sam Rowe. Both new Co-Options were not present at the meeting and have been sent the documents required to be completed to be sent to the Monitoring Officer at Braintree District Council.
5. **Public Questions:**
 - Allotments perimeter has not been cut: Cllr R Raymond chasing.
 - Cllr R Raymon is chasing up responses and updates from National Grid.
 - Allotment Tenants have received a letter to remind them to maintain their plots, alternatively, their tenancy will be revoked.
 - Water Standpipe: Awaiting quote to be received due to the Standpipe leaking and being faulty. The metal casing is also rotting away – Cllr R Raymond has stated if the repair is not within budget, will have to wait.
 - Cllr D Burke advised the Allotment Rental costs should be raised and 5% has been suggested, details of which, are to go out with the invoices. Water rates are also to be considered. Proposed: Cllr D Burke, Seconded: Cllr R Burke.
 - If Allotment plots are handed back, the plot needs to be covered.
 - No response has been received regarding the What's On request for an Editor – Mike Crome has stated he will deal with the editing on a quarterly basis.
 - Stones near to Griggs Farm (The Street) are in the road and has not been swept away. Cllr R Raymond advised would liaise with a local company if EHW do not clear.
 - Trees to be cut back at Bulmer Tye House/Jenkins Farm House: Cllr R Raymond to liaise with the farm.
6. **Report from District Councillor:**
 - Cllr D Holland has advised footpaths and verges, road safety issues and visual concerns at junctions have been reported to both Braintree District Council and Essex Highways.
 - Road Signs – Landowners are responsible for hedges and should maintain a clear sighting for road signs. Suggested using the reporting tool to request emergency cuts.
 - There are not enough resources for all work to be completed. We live in a world of deliverable, and Cllr D Holland will continue to try to help.
 - HS2 cancellation means funds have been redirected to help with repair of potholes.
 - Braintree District Council are responsible for refuse and planning and Essex County Council are responsible for Highways: Cllr D Holland has gone out to the portfolio holder to express concerns.
 - Bus Services in Bulmer have been removed and Cllr D Holland had advised that is the price we pay for living in the Countryside – Do not expect change.



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- Local Nature Recovery Scheme is currently underway and has advised to embrace the future – we can shape change but not stop it.
 - Pedestrians and Cyclists are at danger using the country lanes and speed limits are concerning. Residents want to use the roads for their wellbeing and activities, it is a place for people to move. Cllr D Holland has suggested the Parish Council liaise with Braintree District Council and other local councils to make policies work, for all.
 - A131 is overgrown as advised by a MOP and Cllr D Holland has advised this has been reported.
7. **Report from the County Councillor:** There were none highlighted.
8. **Co- Option Councillor(s) Declaration of Acceptance to Office:** Declaration of Acceptance to Office for the Municipal year 2024/2025 by Cllr J Morris & Cllr S Rowe.
Item moved to September Agenda.
9. **Internal Audit:**
- a) The Parish Clerk/RFO had advised the Full Parish Council of the full report of the Internal Audit and advised all recommendations must be considered within the new financial year. The Internal Audit Report includes the following reports:
- The Parish Council did not undertake a risk assessment during the year under review 2022/2023, but this will be dealt with as soon as possible in the new financial year. The Risk assessment should include reference to Data Protection legislation
 - The Parish Council did not declare itself exempt as it is over the £25,000 threshold
 - The Parish Council has not published the Notice of Public Rights for the 2022/2023 on its website.
 - All the issues need to be addressed by the Council as soon as possible.
 - I found the record keeping to be of a very good standard.
 - I would like to record my appreciation to the Clerk of the Council, Lynsey Ritchie-Fagg for her invaluable assistance during the Internal Audit.
 - The current Clerk took on the role on 4th March 2024 and there is specific mention of the appointment as RFO in the contract. The Clerk is the only employee and a draft contract of employment has been seen. The contract was issued in February 2024 but at the time of the Internal Audit had not been signed by the Chairman of the Council. The contract is legally binding and the Council should have checked before issuing it, that it could honour the terms and conditions contained in it. This should be addressed by the Council as a matter of urgency.
 - The Council's general and earmarked reserves do not add up to the amount on the AGAR and are not clearly identified. The earmarked reserves should be clearly identified.
- b) Parish Clerk has advised the Audit documents have been sent to PFK Littlejohn following completion of the Internal Audit dated 27th June 2024.
10. **Public Rights:** 1st July to 9th August 2024 inclusive are the dates that can be used by members of the public to contact the RFO/Parish Clerk to discuss accounts and the audit.
11. **Approval of Documents:**
Council has reviewed the below updated documents:
Emergency Plan: Current Emergency Plan to be updated by Council and does not include the Parish Clerk/RFO due to location of residence being too far away. Parish Clerk has advised can be contacted and be at Bulmer Village Hall within 1 hour.
Code of Conduct: Code of Conduct has been signed by Cllr R Raymond.



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12. Finance: Financial Regulations

Council to confirm additional reserves: This is a requirement of the Internal Audit as there is over £20,000 not accounted for within the reserves. Parish Council want to have more control over maintenance budgets and therefore, want to consult with Braintree District Council.

Item moved to September Agenda.

13. Code of Conduct Training: Parish Clerk has again requested the Full Council to confirm by email they have read and understand the new Code of Conduct document and has advised there is training that has been provided by Braintree District Council.

Item moved to September Agenda.

14. EALC Councillor Training:

Parish Clerk has advised Cllr P Paxton has been signed up for the new Councillor Training planned for September. Proposed: Cllr D Burke, Seconded: Cllr R Burke.

Parish Clerk has advised how useful the EALC have been with their training and suggests all Councillors attend either new Councillor Training or refresher courses.

Item moved to September Agenda.

15. Tree on Boundary of 3 Park Lane:

Cllr R Raymond had advised that if the tree is not affected by a TPO and the resident follows all legalities, it is fine for the tree to be removed. Any impact after the removal of the tree and ground changes are not the responsibility of the Parish Council.

16. Street Cleaning Agreement:

Parish Clerk has advised that the documents have been sent to Braintree District Council for funds to be released.

17. Allotment Standpipe:

Cllr R Raymond had advised that she is chasing up communications with National Grid. Parish Clerk has forwarded all contact details to Cllr R Raymond.

Item moved to September Agenda.

18. Defibrillator Training:

Council to discuss.

Item moved to September Agenda.

19. Accounts: Payments for approval and signatures:

a) Payments presented for approval and to be signed by two signatories at the Parish meeting dated 15th July 2024. Proposed: Cllr P Paxton, Seconded: Cllr D Burke.

b) Bank Reconciliations dated May & June 2024 to be approved and signed by two signatories at the Parish Meeting dated 15th July 2024. Proposed: Cllr P Paxton, Seconded: Cllr D Burke.

20. Clerk's Report:

- I have felt unsupported by the Parish Council, particularly by the Chairman. The email communications I have received from the Chairman have been disrespectful and rude, showing a lack of respect towards my position as Parish Clerk.
- The six-month delay in obtaining a signed contract is unacceptable and constitutes a breach of the terms and conditions within the offered contract, as detailed in the Internal Auditor's full report.
- The delay in finalising the pension agreement and related paperwork is also unacceptable and a further breach of the offered contract. Failure to submit the documents resulted with the Parish Council being reported to The Pensions Regulator.



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- The Parish Clerk has reiterated the necessity of adhering to legislation, compliance, and regulations due to the nature of working for a Parish Council. All councils, including Bulmer Parish Council, must comply with legal requirements, irrespective of their size.
- The Parish Council need to ensure they attend Councillor training and understand and confirm they have read and accept the dialogue within the Code of Conduct.

21. Councillor's Reports:

- Cllr R Raymond has advised a Community What's App will be created for Bulmer Residents and has suggested a MOP to be the Admin. This will not have anything to do with the Parish Council.
- Full Council to communicate via social media, What's On, Website, Church Magazine re the What's App group.

Private & Confidential:

22. **Parish Clerk & RFO Contract:** Parish Clerk's contract was signed by Cllr R Raymond dated 6th July 2024. Parish Clerk was unable to sign the original document due to the Chairman not providing the original hard copy signed document.
23. **Essex Pension Scheme:** The Parish Clerk had completed the TCP1 form to be signed by the Chairman and was signed by Cllr R Ramond and passed as a resolution specifying 'the post of clerk' is to become pensionable. 7 days' notice of intention was required to pass such a resolution, usually by public display on the council notice board. The date the resolution ended dated 22nd July 2024 and this is the date that will be shown on the TCP1 form.
Parish Clerk has chased via email numerous times for the original copy of the document and a photograph of the signed TCP1 form, for the Pension to be activated. The Council are currently in breach of contract by not providing the LGPS from when the Parish Clerk started employment with the Parish Council dated 1st March 2024.
Item moved to September Agenda.
24. **Automated Standing Order Payments:** Parish Clerk has advised why it would be beneficial for the Parish Council to set up automated Standing Order Payments which, require minuted authorisation which, will allow agreement for one year without the Salary and usual regular payments being authorised at the monthly meetings to ensure payments are made on the correct date. Parish Clerk has advised that Salary and expenses have been paid late for June and this again occurred in July 2024.
Item moved to September Agenda.

Closure

Lynsey Ritchie-Fagg: Parish Clerk & RFO
7th August 2024



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Appendix 1:

Payment Schedule:

Date	Payee	Amount	Payment Details
15/07/2024	Staff	£ 852.20	(Salary July)
15/07/2024	Staff	£ 33.77	(Mileage July)
15/07/2024	Staff	£ 478.50	(Pension Payment)
15/07/2024	Staff: Amazon	£ 130.46	Expenses July)
15/07/2024	JPB Landscapes Ltd	£ 473.90	Invoice 1590
15/07/2024	Letchwood Audit	£ 125.00	Internal Audit Fee
15/07/2024	E Bones	£50.00	Allotment Refund
	Total Online Payments	£2,143.83	

Banking Reconciliation:

Date	Payee	Description	Amount Paid	Account Balance
04/06/2024	CCLA Investment Management Limited	PS3078566, Bulmer	£138.15	£27,940.21
30/06/2024	Credit Interest		£189.27	£27,750.94
			£138.15	
Account				
BPC Unity Trust				
Allotment Account				
Date	Payee	Description	Amount Paid	Account Balance
30-Jun-24	Credit Interest		£3.02	£443.51
			£3.02	
Account				
Laurence Coe				
Recreational Trust				
Account				
Date	Payee	Description	Amount Paid	Account Balance
30-Jun-24	Service Charge - Unity Trust		-£18.00	£2,502.60
			-£18.00	