

# BETLEY, BALTERLEY AND WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

26th September 2024

Commenced: 7.30 pm Terminated: 9.30 pm

Present: Councillor Bettley-Smith (Chair)  
Councillors Berrisford, Bullock, Drakakis-Smith, Ecclestone, Head,  
Karling, Owen, Speed and Watkin

There were 11 Members of the Public in attendance

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Daly and Hales submitted their apologies for absence at the meeting.

### RESOLVED

**That the apologies of Councillors Daly and Hales be accepted as approved absences.**

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests from Members of the Parish Council.

## 3. STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE

There was no representative of Staffordshire Police at the meeting.

## 4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of "the Accounting Statements *and the Internal Audit Reports*" in Minute 6(iv).

Councillor Drakakis-Smith objected to Minutes 5; 6.3; 7; 8; 10; 12.3; 14.7; 16.1; 18. Councillors Owen and Ecclestone enquired about the nature of her objections, and made particular reference to Minute 6.3, which referred to a statement made by the former Clerk. As the former Clerk was present at the meeting, he confirmed that the Minute was an accurate record of the statement that he made. The Chair therefore sought clarification on the nature of the objection. Councillor Drakakis-Smith confirmed that she objected to Minute 6.3 because she considered the offer made by the former Clerk to be procedurally incorrect. She therefore wished the Minutes to record her interpretation of the correct procedure, despite this not being discussed. As the procedures were not discussed at the meeting, the Clerk clarified that the purpose of the Minutes was to record, in summary, the discussion that took place at a meeting.

### RESOLVED

**That Councillor Drakakis-Smith, provides a written schedule to the Clerk, detailing the reasons for her objections to the individual Minutes listed above, within 14 calendar days, which will then be circulated to Members. This schedule will also be added to the November Agenda, when a decision will be taken on the way forward. (For the purpose of these Minutes, this Resolution was unanimously approved).**

## 5. MINUTES – FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

### RESOLVED

- (i) That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024, be approved as a correct record;
- (ii) The Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be received;
- (iii) That there were no recommendations for the Parish Council to consider arising from the Minutes.

## **6. MINUTES – PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024, be approved as a correct record;**
- (ii) The Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be received;**
- (iii) That there were no recommendations for the Parish Council to consider arising from the Minutes.**

## **6. PUBLIC FORUM**

The Chair advised Members of the Public that they should note that Councillor Drakakis-Smith had stated that The Wrinehill Blog was a personal communication and not a Parish Council matter. He added, that the solicitor who investigated the conduct of Councillor Drakakis-Smith concluded that The Wrinehill Blog was independent of the Parish Council [*I was not persuaded that Councillor Drakakis-Smith was acting in an official capacity when posting on her personal blog.*] Therefore, this issue could not be discussed in the Public Forum. The Chair then directed any queries or concerns about the content of the blog to Dr Drakakis-Smith, personally.

The Chair further reported that there had been additional complaints to the Monitoring Officer about the content of the blog, particularly as the commentary on the blog was associated with the Parish Council.

Mr Ball enquired about the absence of the Agenda Item, which was agreed at the last meeting (Minute 6(viii) refers). The Clerk confirmed that a document received from the Councillor did not answer the questions raised, and she considered the statement that was produced to be inappropriate for discussion at a Parish Council. Consequently, in her role as Proper Officer with the responsibility of the Agenda, a decision had been made to not circulate the document. Mr Ball asked the Parish Council to record that as the responses to his questions remained unanswered by the Councillor, the Councillor's allegations had been made without foundation. This request was unchallenged.

Mr Ball concluded by enquiring about the nature of the complaint received by the External Auditor, and the Clerk replied that she had not received any further information on the matter.

Mr Griffiths referred to the objections raised by a Councillor to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (Minute 4 of these Minutes refers). He made particular reference to Minute 6.3 (27<sup>th</sup> June 2024) and confirmed that this was an accurate record of his statement.

The Chair proposed that the Clerk should write a letter to the Councillor explaining the purpose of the Minutes, and the nature in which they must reflect the matters under discussion, and not contain supplementary interpretations, that had not been discussed at the meeting.

### **RESOLVED**

**That the Clerk writes to the Councillor as detailed above, and that the letter be appended to these Minutes.**

Mr Griffiths congratulated the excellent ongoing work undertaken by the Footpath Working Party.

Mr Griffiths concluded by referring to the Councillor's objections to the Accounting Statement and the Internal Auditor's Report. In response, the Councillor referred to her understanding of the Guide produced by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance. Concerned that the Councillor did not answer his question, Mr Griffiths stated that he would send a letter to the Clerk

in which his concerns would be detailed. The Chair agreed that the letter would be circulated to Members and placed on November Agenda.

Mrs Ball reported of the affect on her mental health as a result of the allegations made by the Parish Councillor who published that some statements made by Mrs Ball were far from accurate or correct. As the Parish Councillor, had not provided evidence to support the comments that she had publicly made, Mrs Ball wished to place on record that she felt she was being bullied, harassed, intimidated and potentially defamed and potentially libelled. Mrs Ball also felt that the Parish Councillor's actions had caused her immense distress and anxiety.

In addition, Mrs Ball stated that after the Parish Councillor had been requested to provide the evidence, the Parish Councillor continued to target Mrs Ball by making further written statements ie another reference to the meeting appendix 'contained inaccuracies' and referred to the 3 residents actions as 'scurrilous'.

The Chair agreed that the Clerk would speak to Mrs Ball, to ensure that her concerns were recorded in the Minutes.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That Councillor Drakakis-Smith provides written evidence to support the allegations made against Mrs Ball in writing to the Clerk within 14 calendar days from the date of this meeting. For the purpose of these Minutes, this Resolution was unanimously approved. (The Clerk verified with Councillor Drakakis-Smith that she too approved this resolution, and Councillor Drakakis-Smith confirmed that she did).**
- (ii) That when written evidence is received, a meeting will take place with the Chair, Clerk and Mrs Ball.**
- (iii) That the Parish Council deeply regrets the affect that Councillor Drakakis-Smith has had on a member of the community and wishes to place on record that it disassociates itself from the comments that have been made by the Councillor, that have caused such distress.**

The Chair wished to place on record that he offered his personal apologies as well as his apologies as Chair of the Parish Council to Mrs Ball, for the events that had been described and the pain suffered. Mrs Ball responded that an apology was not required from the Chair, and the Chair requested that this statement too, be recorded.

#### **7. PLANNING MATTERS**

- **New Planning Applications**

Councillor Berrisford, the Deputy Chair of the Planning Committee, reported on the following planning application:-

- (i) Reference: 24/00487/FUL**

Location: Heppenstalls Old Road Wrinehill Crewe Cheshire CW3 9BW.

Proposal - Alterations and refurbishment of existing property including two storey front extension, single storey rear and side extension. A new double garage was also proposed.

#### **RESOLVED**

**The Parish Council raises no objections to this proposal, but wishes to see a planning condition attached that the proposed new double garage which states that it cannot be converted to residential accommodation, at a later date.**

**Furthermore, the Borough Council needs to satisfy itself that the design features of the proposal, are consistent with the Neighbourhood Plan. For the purpose of these Minutes, this Resolution was unanimously approved.**

The Clerk reported on the following Decision Notice that had been received:-

**(ii) Reference: 24/00571/AGR**

Location: Rose Hill Farm Newcastle Road Balterley

Proposal: End extension to an existing straw and implements storage building

Decision: Approved with conditions

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

**• Ongoing Planning Matters**

The Clerk reported on the following ongoing planning matters:-

**(iii) Land at Doddlespool, Betley. Reference 17/00186/207C2**

An update from the Borough Council had been received that reported, works to the track were largely complete and the landowner now needed to carry out the approved landscaping works. Officers were progressing the appropriate enforcement action against the landowner to ensure that the landscaping works, as required by condition 4 of planning permission 21/00286/FUL.

Members discussed another issue on the site relating to the waste, which had been required to be removed in accordance with a Crown Court deadline.

**RESOLVED**

**That the Clerk contacts the Environment Agency and any other relevant Authority to confirm that the waste was removed by the Crown Court deadline.**

**(iv) Malt Kiln Farm – Hedgerow. Reference 21/01019/FUL**

The removal of the hedgerow in August 2024, was brought to the attention of the Parish Council. Following correspondence between the Clerk and the Local Planning Authority, the Borough Council reported that despite being sent an email as a consultee, the Parish Council did not respond, therefore the Planning Officer's report stated "No representations have been received by Betley, Balterley and Wrinehill Parish Council within the statutory period of consultation and it is therefore presumed that they have no objections to the proposal".

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

**(v) Planning Inspectorate ROW/3334566 – S14 Appeal, Upgrading of Public Footpath 20 Betley Parish to Bridleway**

Correspondence had been received stating that the exchange period had now ended and the file had been sent to an Inspector for a decision.

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

**8. BUDGET AND FINANCE 2024-2025**

Members considered a report of the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer on the following matters:-

**(i) Applications for Financial Assistance**

The Clerk confirmed that there were no applications for financial assistance.

**(ii) Unity Trust Bank**

**RESOLVED**

That the sum of £2,000 be transferred from the Co-op Bank to the Unity Trust Bank.

**(iii) Transactions – Unity Trust Bank**

**RESOLVED**

That the following transactions in the Unity Trust Bank account, since the last meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee, be approved:- (For the purpose of these Minutes, this Resolution was unanimously approved).

DATE	DETAILS	RECEIPTS	PAYMENTS
30/07/2024	Transfer from Co-op	£6,000.00	
30/07/2024	Additional insurance premium		£92.78
30/07/2024	Annual insurance renewal		£806.14
31/07/2024	Invoice 487 - June Maintenance		£135.00
31/07/2024	July Pension		£158.27
31/07/2024	PAYE July 2024		£114.80
31/07/2024	July Salary		£435.02
31/07/2024	Gates		£2,448.00
09/08/2024	Anonymous donation for Footpaths Project	£160.00	
14/08/2024	Luke Rimmer Invoice 489 - July Maintenance		£180.00
20/08/2024	Footpath Clearing (including VAT)		£600.00
30/08/2024	August Salary		£427.15
30/08/2024	PAYE August 2024		£113.20
30/08/2024	August Pension		£158.27

**(iv) Transaction – CO-OP Bank**

**RESOLVED**

That the following transaction in the Co-op Bank account, since the last meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee, be approved:- (For the purpose of these Minutes, this Resolution was unanimously approved).

DATE	DETAILS	RECEIPTS	PAYMENTS
30/07/2024	Transfer to Unity Trust Bank		£6,000.00

**(v) Payment of Invoices and Reimbursements**

**RESOLVED** That the following payments be approved:- (For the purpose of these Minutes, this Resolution was unanimously approved).

Luke Rimmer	August Maintenance - Invoice 500	£135.00
M Clough	September 2024 Salary	Approx. £428.00
HMRC	September 2024 PAYE	Approx. £114.80
Staffordshire Pension	September 2024 Pension	Approx. £158.27

(vi) Budget Expenditure to 18th September 2024 – Unity Trust Bank

RESOLVED

That the following Unity Trust Bank Budget Head expenditure to 18th September 2024, be approved:-

Budget Head	Total	Budget Allocated	£ Difference
Salary	£3,215.33	£7,200.00	£3,984.67
Pension	£944.58	£1,660.00	£715.42
Admin - Insurance	£898.92	£850.00	-£48.92
Admin - Audit Fees	£250.00	£40.00	-£210.00
Admin - Venue Hire	£125.00	£450.00	£325.00
Admin - Subscriptions	£313.45	£330.00	£16.55
Admin - Website	£0.00	£135.00	£135.00
Admin - Other	£488.92	£500.00	£11.08
Highways	£600.00	£1,500.00	£900.00
* Footpaths	£2,448.00	£1,745.00	-£703.00
Grants	£0.00	£1,200.00	£1,200.00
Miscellaneous	£135.98	£270.00	£134.02
Sandy Croft	£0.00	£1,100.00	£1,100.00
Memorial Garden	£1,505.00	£4,000.00	£2,495.00
Neighbourhood Plan	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Chair's Expenses	£0.00	£250.00	£250.00
	£10,925.18	£21,230.00	£10,304.82
* Footpath Budget increased from £1000 to £1,095 due to donation £95.00 on 12/04/24			
* Footpath Budget increased from £1095 to £1,585 due to donation £490.00 on 05/06/24			
* Footpath Budget increased from £1585 to £1,745 due to donation £160.00 on 09/08/2024			

(vii) EXPLANATION OF VARIANCES

Members were asked to approve the allocation of the majority of the VAT Refund in the sum of £1,344 (rounded up), to the following Budget Heads detailed below:-

- Insurance – Budget to be increased from £850.00 to £900.00 (ie. £50.00)
- Audit Fees – Budget to be increased from £40.00 to £625.00 (ie. £585.00). Internal Auditor fees were higher this year, as we used a Chartered Accountant.  
Members were advised that there had been a complaint to the External Auditor, which had led to further investigations, and would likely cause an increased External Auditor fee, resulting in a further overspend in the Audit Fees budget. The Chair reported that the consequences of an increased bill for the costs of investigating the challenge by the External Auditor would be an increase to the Precept in 2025-2026.
- Footpaths – Budget to be increased from £1,745.00 to £2,448.00 (ie. £703.00)  
Members noted that the expenditure for the footpaths project had been calculated and formerly approved on a rolling programme of funding, which carried forward balances from year to year. The Parish Council Budget Head for 2024-2025 therefore, would have to be increased, in line with this expenditure.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) That the Insurance Budget be increased from £850.00 to £900.00;
- (ii) That the Audit Fees Budget be increased from £40.00 to £625.00;
- (iii) That the Footpaths Budget be increased from £1,745.00 to £2,448.00

(viii) Bank Reconciliation as at 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**RESOLVED**

That the Bank Reconciliation for Royal Bank of Scotland and Unity Trust Bank as at 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024, detailed below, be approved:-

<b>Bank Reconciliation 18th September 2024</b>	
<b>BETLEY BALTERLEY AND WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL</b>	
<b>Financial year ending 31 March 2025</b>	
<b>Prepared by: Muna Clough, Parish Clerk &amp; RFO</b>	
<b>Balance per bank statements as at</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Current Account UNITY (20500409) - 18th September 2024</b>	<b>£3,584.43</b>
<b>Reserve Account CO-OP (49148300) - 2nd August 2024</b>	<b>£31,965.25</b>
<b>Less: any unpresented cheques</b>	
<b>Current Account UNITY (20500409)</b>	
<b>Reserve Account CO-OP (49148300)</b>	
<b>Add: any unbanked cash - Unity</b>	
<b>Net bank balances as at 18th September 2024</b>	<b>£35,549.68</b>
<b>The net balances reconcile to the Cash Book (receipts and payments account) for the year, as follows</b>	
<b><u>CASH BOOK</u></b>	
<b>Opening Balance</b>	
<b>Unity Trust Bank @ 1st April 2024</b>	<b>£420.69</b>
<b>Co-op Bank @ 1st April 2024</b>	<b>£23,099.25</b>
<b>Add: Receipts in the year</b>	
<b>Unity Trust Bank</b>	<b>£2,088.92</b>
<b>Co-op Bank</b>	<b>£20,866.00</b>
<b>Less: Payments in the year</b>	
<b>Unity Trust Bank</b>	<b>£10,925.18</b>
<b>Co-op Bank</b>	
<b>Closing balance per cash book [receipts and payments book] must equal net bank balances above</b>	<b>£35,549.68</b>

**(ix) Unity Trust Bank – Bank Statements**

**RESOLVED**

**That the Unity Trust Bank Statements dated 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024; 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024, as included in the report submitted, be approved.**

**9. REPORTS**

Members considered the following reports:-

**(i) The Chair**

The Chair reported that he was concerned that the Clerk was being asked to provide substantial information for a Councillor in response to matters that had already been addressed, which was having an impact on the Clerk's day to day duties. He added that if additional hours were sought, which at the moment, the Clerk had indicated she was not in favour of increasing, then the precept would also have to be increased. The Clerk had sought advice on this matter, and the situation was being contained at the moment.

**(ii) The Vice Chair**

The Chair advised that Vice Chair did not wish to report on any matters.

**(iii) The Clerk**

The Clerk reported on the following receipts of correspondence:-

The External Auditor had advised that he had received a complaint relating to donations paid to the Parish Council. There were no further details at this stage.

The Clerk had received a complaint from a resident relating to the ongoing conduct of a Councillor, in which she stated the Councillor was using a blog to subject the resident to harassment, bullying, intimidation, libel and defamation.

A resident had forwarded to the Clerk, a letter that he had sent to the County Council, in support of the Councillor accused of breaches to the Councillor Code of Conduct.

**County Councillor and Borough Councillors**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Whitmore to the meeting who reported that since her appointment, she had been involved in a number of matters including supporting an elderly lady; involvement in planning matters; attending Council Committees.

Councillor Berrisford reported that she had been appointed to the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee, had already attended two Borough Council meetings, and had contacted all landowners from Wrinehill to Madeley, requesting that they maintain the footpath.

**(iv) Representatives on Outside Bodies**

Members on Outside Bodies confirmed that there were no reports for consideration.

**10. SANDY CROFT**

Further to Minute 11 of the last meeting, the Chair reported that the matter was now resolved and that Sandy Croft was not being used for commercial purposes.

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

**11. BROADBAND**

Councillor Berrisford reported that due to the involvement of County Councillor Paul Northcott, this matter would now progress and that superfast broadband in Betley would be introduced. As the project was currently open to tender, any updates were confidential.



## **RESOLVED**

**That Councillor Berrisford provides an update at the November meeting of the Parish Council.**

## **12. FOOTPATH WORKING PARTY**

Members considered a comprehensive report of the Footpaths Working Party which was summarised verbally at the meeting by Councillor Berrisford.

Councillor Berrisford highlighted the tremendously productive summer, and particularly thanked the hard work of Nigel, from Staffordshire County Council. Councillor Berrisford added that the school competition had been a huge success. The logos drawn by the school children had been reproduced into Way Markers, and the winning logo would be used as the Footpath Working Party official branding.

Funding would be sought from Severn Trent Water, for more gates for the Balterley route.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the application for funding from Severn Trent Water, be submitted by the deadline and reported to the November meeting.**

## **13. AREA MATTERS**

Councillor Drakakis-Smith reported that Checkley Lane was still flooding.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Clerk refers this matter to the Borough Councillor.**

## **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted the dates of the following meetings:-

A Special Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on **Wednesday, 2nd October 2024 at 7.30 pm at Betley Village Hall to consider the Local Plan;**

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on **Thursday, 28th November 2024 at 7.30 pm at Betley Village Hall.**

## **15. URGENT ITEMS**

The Chair was of the opinion that the following item of business should be considered as a matter of urgency due to time constraints.

## **17. REMEMBRANCE DAY AND CHRISTMAS TREE**

Members noted that the Remembrance Service would be held on Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at the Church. There would also be a Service for the children from the school at the Memorial Garden at 11.00 am on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

With regard to Christmas celebrations, Councillor Bullock had a Christmas Tree that might be suitable.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That Councillor Karling makes arrangements to erect the poppies and statues for Remembrance Day;**
- (ii) That if the Christmas Tree available from Councillor Bullock is unsuitable, then approval was given to purchase a new Christmas Tree to a sum of £250.00.**

**BETLEY, BALTERLEY AND WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

Mrs M Clough  
Parish Clerk and RFO  
Peach Tree House  
Calveley Hall Lane  
Calveley  
TARPORLEY  
CW6 9LG

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

Councillor Drakakis-Smith

Dear Councillor Drakakis-Smith

**Clarification on the Purpose of Minutes**

Further to the resolution of the Parish Council held on 26th September 2024, I write to clarify the purpose of Minutes.

I note that at the meeting held on 26th September 2024, you confirmed that your objection to Minute 6.3, was made on the basis that you considered the offer made by the former Clerk to be procedurally incorrect. You therefore wished the Minutes to be amended to record your interpretation of the correct procedure. You requested that this should be recorded, eventhough this was not discussed at the meeting.

Minutes serve as the formal record of Parish Council meetings. They are intended to capture key points of discussions, and most importantly, the decisions taken. When the proposal is made to approve the Minutes of the previous meeting, the decision must be made on the factual accuracy of the record of the discussion that took place. Therefore, if the Minutes were to include supplementary information that was not discussed at a meeting as you suggested, they would not be a true and accurate record.

Disagreeing with a decision made, or conclusion reached, is not a valid reason to object to the Minute recording that decision or conclusion, if what is recorded is factually correct; as was the case with Minute 6.3 (which was confirmed by Mr Griffiths as being accurate and correct, and having been agreed as an accurate and true record by all the other Members of the Parish Council who were present at the meeting).

I trust this explanation will assist you in your decision making, but if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Muna Clough

Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer  
(on behalf of Betley, Balterley and Wrinehill Parish Council)

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