

BIRCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Full Council on Wednesday 6th March 2024. The Meeting was held at 7.30 in Bircham Social Club.

Present: Cllrs G Daniels (Chairman), T Clark, D French (p/t), R Hutchinson, C Morley, L Palmer, H Rayner, P Spake, C Wright-Thompson

Also present, Simon Bower (Clerk) and approximately 12 Members of the Public.

1. Declarations of Interest (24/015)

- a) There were no declarations of interest.

2. Apologies for Absence (24/016)

- a) There were apologies for absence from Cllr Noon and Cllr French who noted he would be slightly late.

3. Chairman's welcome and announcements (24/017)

- a) Cllr Daniels welcomed Robert Timmins from the Sandringham Estate. She noted that she had attended a meeting hosted by the Leader of the Borough Council, referring to changes in Council Tax rates on unoccupied (shorter waiting time) and second (double tax) homes. This would lead to possible increased income to the PC of c.£180 and c.£3,000 respectively. There were also plans for biodiversity credits elsewhere on new developments, where space could not be set aside in the plans locally. She also thanked Clerk for arranging training.

4. Minutes (24/018)

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2024, having been previously circulated, were accepted as a true record and duly signed.
- b) No matters arising from the above minutes.

5. Highways (24/019)

- a) No specific reports or updates on Highway related issues were made.
- b) With the presence of Mr Timmins, it was noted that he had met on site with the Chairman and Clerk to look at the situation regarding flooding in Church Lane. He commented that the rain had been double that in similar periods, but there had been no significant change in the geography of the site. There was a long discussion involving Cllrs, and Members of the Public who were invited to speak. This included aerating and mowing, flash floods being the issue, compacting of the access, drains being blocked [Clerk to write to NCC], mud from vehicles using verges, funding, culverts, signage – clarity on access/turning [Clerk to write to NCC], signage – cricket club access. [Cllr French arrived during this at 7.50pm.]

Signed:

(Chairman) Date: 10/4/24

6. Public Participation (24/020)

- a) Members of the Public having contributed above, there was one additional point – the digital switch-off of telephone lines, and scams resulting – Clerk to add to Bircham Times/Facebook for public info.

7. Reports (24/021)

- a) Bircham in Bloom – none.
- b) County Councillor – none.
- c) Borough Councillor – Cllr Morley apologised for previous absence. He commented on trying to ensure that Council Tax raised on second homes etc. came to the local area [Clerk noting that this should come to PCs separately from the precept request]. He noted recent flooding and issues arising more generally, especially relating to Anglian Water. Borough budget had been set – 3 to 4% rise, including higher charges for car parking and Mintlyn services etc.
- d) Clerk – Clerk noted: the tractor ruts reported on the Playing Field seemed to have been solved; a vacancy on Council; Borough approval for BiB to use the Fring Rd Triangle; banking issues sorted with a £50 compensation payment; training. Other matters already on agenda.

8. Planning (24/022)

- a) No Planning Applications had been received.
- b) No other Planning matters to report.

9. Finance (24/023)

- a) Financial Report – The Clerk noted that figures would be near the year-end ones. The budget listings had a BiB line showing money ring-fenced for this, as not a separate budget line; also s.137 figure had been changed in line with training. Total balances c.£22.8K – this c.£2,000 above that at end of 22/23. Though spending on budget items was 5% above amounts set, this was more than offset by grants.
- b) Expenditure, as listed in the public pack¹, was agreed. This included approximate figures for March salaries/tax to ensure paid before year-end – corrections to be made if necessary.
- c) The draft Asset List was approved². Clerk noted that it may be possible to get a formal insurance valuation on Council assets, but would bring this back to Council in due course.

10. Delegated decisions (24/024)

- a) No decisions had been taken under scheme of delegation.

11. Other items for consideration (24/025)

- a) Litter pick – Clerk to seek Borough equipment for Sat 4th (or Fri 3rd) May.

¹ See below

² To be on website

- b) The proposals for the Interpretative Board at the Spinney were discussed. Cllrs asked for approval of the plans before production, input etc., noting the possible price of c.£1,700 (including design, production and installation) seemed reasonable. Clerk to continue seeking grants and report back.
- c) Clerk and Chairman noted an email from the Diocese with matters to consider regarding Allotments – Diocese could not make a decision until their meeting in June, hopefully to include possible costs. Clerk had attended training earlier in the day, and gave a detailed explanation of issues to consider – it seemed likely that the best route was a committee of Council, with holders, rather than a separate body (in line with Diocese requirements). There were very large set-up costs (into five figures) – though grants were available this could not be recharged to allotment holders (they would pay only for the plot and water). Clerk time for continuing admin could probably be coped with, but the set-up best done by another (locum with experience?). To await info on rent for site – noted that it may not be an ideal place, but this was part of a whole process – Sandringham may be a better option, though location may be further afield. Despite possible problems Clerk stressed that those at the training had been positive on grounds of Community, biodiversity and health/wellbeing. Questions were asked about support for this – above the minimum of six which were required for Council to have to consider, though not obliged to provide if impractical.
- d) It was noted that the Borough had approved the use of the Triangle as above – awaiting licence. BiB to be made aware at their next meeting.
- e) Play equipment – Clerk to chase company reviewing condition of swings.
- f) Council agreed to adopt a Policy³ on Vacancies and Co-option, based on that used at Brancaster PC. This to clarify timescale and rules – the current Call for Election expires on 19th March.
- g) There was discussion of D-Day Commemorations. It was noted that £1,000 was set aside in the budget for “Events”. This to be noted in the Bircham Times as available on request to groups organising events, whether or not related to D Day. Council itself would not be arranging anything; some suggesting focus should be more on VE/VJ Day next year. Mention was made of bonfire, but lease to be checked to see if this even allowed on Playing Field.

12. Other items for discussion (24/026)

- a) Clerk asked to pursue streetlights maintenance contract and Cricket Club matters.

13. Correspondence (24/027)

- a) No additional correspondence mentioned.

³ To be on website

14. Next Meeting (24/028)

- a) The next meeting was confirmed as 7.30pm on Wednesday, April 10th at the Social Club.
- b) Meeting dates for 24/25 were agreed⁴. This included the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting to precede the PC Meeting on 15/5/24.

Councillors noted the long service of Cllr Malcolm Sargent.

A formal Vote of Thanks was agreed. Clerk to write.

Expenditure:

Inv Date	To	For	Gross	VAT	Budget
		Street Lights -			
3/2/24	Npower - jan	jan	£203.63	£9.70	SLP
6/2/24	ICO	Data Protection	£35.00	£0.00	EXP
29/2/24	Salaries incl tax	Salary	£483.08	£0.00	CKS
	HMRC	Tax - extra	£49.51	£0.00	CKS
1/3/24	ECS - mar	Computer - mar	£24.60	£4.10	EXP
	Npower - feb	Street Lights			SLP
29/2/24	Simon Bower	Expenses	£385.96	£0.00	var
	Darri Pattinson	BiB	£101.72	£0.00	(BiB)
20/3/24	Salaries incl tax - approx	Salary	£483.08	£0.00	CKS
INCOME					
31/1/24	HMRC	VAT	£3,738.23		XXX
23/2/24	Barclays	Comp	£50.00		XXX

⁴ Will be on website

Signed:

(Chairman) Date: 10/4/24