

**Minutes of a Meeting of Brickhill Parish Council held on Thursday 7 February 2008 at St Mark's Church & Community Centre, Calder Rise, Bedford commencing at 7.30 pm**

**Present:** Cllrs Blakeman, Green, Haughton, McConnell (left during item 9), Ovenell, Royden and Seymour and the Clerk. Also in attendance Peter Knowles and PC Dave Hawkey, Bedfordshire Police; Sally Flint, Community Safety Manager, Bedford Borough Council; Kim Norris, Community Development Officer, BPHA. Three members of the public.

**Apologies:** Cllr Hand, Cllr Holden, Cllr Humphries, Cllr Rider

1	<b><u>Apologies</u></b> The apologies were accepted.	<u>Action</u>
2	<b><u>Declaration of Interests in matters on the agenda</u></b> None	
3	<b><u>Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2008</u></b> <b>Resolved:</b> to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting.	Clerk
4	<b><u>Declaration of Casual Vacancy</u></b> It was noted that former Cllr Desmond Clarke had not attended any meeting of the Council since 5 July 2007 and therefore had ceased to be a Parish Councillor. In view of proximity to the planned May 2008 parish elections the "six month rule" would be invoked and there was no requirement to hold an election. <b>Resolved:</b> to send a letter to Mr Clarke thanking him for his work as a councillor and extending the council's good wishes.	Clerk

*Public Open Session*

*The meeting was adjourned for members of the public to address the council. The Chairman reminded the Councillors and the public of the purpose and format of the open session. The following topics were discussed:*

- 1. Drains and flooding on Brickhill Drive (Cllr McConnell agreed to raise this with Cllr Wootton relevant portfolio holder at the County Council.)*
- 2. Flooding at the allotments and in adjoining properties on Curlew Crescent.*
- 3. Problems of crime and anti-social behaviour associated with Torridge Rise footpaths.*
- 4. Potential closure of Brickhill Drive Post Office. Mr Bobby Chambers, Sub-postmaster advised that in April 2008 an 11 week pre-public consultation would begin and this would be followed by a full public consultation. He appealed for support with a campaign to prevent closure of the post office.*

*Members of the public were thanked for raising these matters and the meeting resumed.*

5 **Policing Issues**

PC Dave Hawkey gave a report on policing in the parish and relevant crime figures were circulated (copy in minute book). Persistent problems of anti-social behaviour around Aelfric Court and Avon Drive shops were highlighted. Warning letters had been sent to 12 families in the parish. PC Hawkey noted no progress had been made with the proposed MUGA. Bedfordshire Police would be starting Operation Langley over the half term holiday and would be attending all reported youth nuisance calls. During the past month 80 incidents had been reported at the local police surgeries. Truancy patrols were ongoing. Parking problems on Kennet Rise were also being explored.

PC Hawkey was asked to investigate speeding problems on Kimbolton Road.

6 **Footpaths**

Results of a survey conducted via the December Parish Council Newsletter had been summarised and circulated to councillors in advance of the meeting (copy in minute book). Peter Knowles of Bedfordshire Police gave a presentation to the Parish Council explaining the key topics to be considered in designing out crime from communities (namely defensible spaces, natural surveillance and movement routes). He also reviewed all the footpaths included in the Parish Council's newsletter responses and gave his opinion on the feasibility of taking action to resolve problems with each of these. (Photographs and relevant maps were circulated to the Council and are available in the minute book.) PC Hawkey advised that since November 2006 there had been 42 reported crimes near the footpath in Douglas Road and 34 incidents of anti-social behaviour reported; in the rest of Douglas Road only 6-10 crimes had been reported during the same period. It was noted that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 contained a provision to allow the stopping up or diversion of paths and bridleways for the purposes of crime prevention but only in areas which have already been officially designated by the Secretary of State as affected by high and persistent crime. The problems associated with such a designation were discussed. The dangers of stigmatising particular communities were also recognised. It was noted that closed footpaths could become a fly-tipping burden. There was extensive discussion of the implications and processes for taking this matter forward.

**Resolved:** that the Parish Council would set up a working group of Cllrs Fitzpatrick, Haughton, McConnell and Seymour to continue working towards practical resolution of the problems associated with these footpaths.

**Resolved:** that initially the working group would concentrate work on the following five areas/footpaths:

- Torridge Rise/Otter Walk footpath
- Area behind back of houses on Tyne Crescent and St Thomas More Upper School
- Footpath near numbers 23-25 Douglas Road

Cllrs  
Fitzpatrick  
Haughton  
McConnell  
Seymour

- Footpath near 16-24 Witham Close
- Footpaths in Churnet Close

7 **Street Ranger**

A report from the Brickhill Street Ranger for January 2008 was tabled and noted. Sally Flint, Community Safety Manager, Bedford Borough Council informed Council that she had taken over as line manager for the Street Ranger Service and was happy to represent the service in Street Ranger Renuka Chopra's absence on annual leave. There was general discussion of activities performed by the Street Ranger service in Brickhill. It was noted that the local shopkeepers did not know the Street Ranger and the Community Safety Manager suggested that patrolling time should be increased and contact made with the traders on both community shopping parades.

Street  
Ranger

8 **Post Office**

The Parish Council was already aware of the potential threat of closure to Brickhill Drive Post Office and had previously affirmed its commitment to keeping this Post Office open.

**Resolved:** that the focus of a campaign to work towards keeping the Brickhill Drive Post Office open should be the Brickhill Parish Council.

**Resolved:** to set up a working group of Cllrs Hand, McConnell, Green and Royden with an initial budget of £500 to work with the Sub-postmaster and residents to publicise the potential threat of closure and to work to avert this. The group would consider writing to the Borough asking for the charge for making payment of Council Tax via the post office to be removed. The group would also prepare an article for the next parish newsletter (copy deadline 29 February 2008).

Cllrs  
Green  
Hand  
McConnell  
Royden

9 **Elections**

The Clerk had circulated background notes on the current position with regard to deferral of Borough elections in the light of potential creation of the new unitary authority for Bedford. There was discussion of the implications of delaying elections and/or making other changes to the electoral arrangements in the parish.

**Resolved:** to make representations to the Borough Council and/or Electoral Commission to defer the Parish Council election of May 2008 for a period of up to 12 months in the event that the Bedford Borough Council election is so deferred.

At this point Cllr McConnell left the meeting.

**Resolved:** to make representations to the Borough Council requesting an immediate review of the Brickhill Parish Boundary to include the housing development and residential care home being built on land formerly known as Jackman's Farm/Freeman's Common.

**Resolved:** to write to Ravensden and Clapham Parish Councils to seek their opinions on the proposed change.

**Resolved:** to delay requesting warding of Brickhill Parish until after wards for the new unitary authority have been agreed. However the Clerk would seek clarification from the Borough Council of the necessary actions/timetable to ensure that the parish could be warded before the next

Clerk

Clerk

	parish election (assuming the May 2008 election is deferred).	Clerk
10	<b><u>Allotments</u></b> A report on the management of Brickhill Allotments prepared by the Allotments Officer had been circulated and was noted. The Clerk drew attention to the drainage and security issues noted in the report. It was agreed to seek further information on both matters. Meanwhile permission will not be granted to individual tenants to install pumps, drainage ditches etc.	Clerk Cllr Fitzpatrick
11	<b><u>Correspondence</u></b> Correspondence received by the Parish Council since the last meeting had been circulated at the meeting. Details of the election re-charges for the Parish Council Elections held on 4 May 2006 had been received and the total amount charged to the parish was £3,958.05. A letter from the Overview and Scrutiny committees of Bedford Borough Council requesting suggested topics for the committees to consider this year had been received/ <b>Resolved:</b> that Brickhill Parish Council would suggest the committees explored enforcement of deeds of covenants, the Borough's approach to community shopping parades and problems with green verges in the Borough.	Clerk
	Concern was expressed that the Council was not being fully included in consultations by the District and County Councils and the Clerk was asked to write to the Chief Executives of Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire County Council expressing this concern and citing recent examples of lack of consultation, ie failure to consult on refurbishment of shopping parades (Bedford BC) and failure to consult on safer routes to school (Highways Dept, Beds CC).	Clerk
	The Clerk was instructed to write to the Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council to expedite progress with regard to the MUGA by asking for a meeting with him and relevant Officers.	Clerk
12	<b><u>Clerk's Report</u></b> A report on the administration of Parish Council business since 10 January 2008 was noted. <b>Resolved:</b> to change the date of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and the Annual Parish Meeting from 1 May 2008 to 8 May 2008.	Clerk
13	<b><u>Accounts approved</u></b> A financial statement and list of accounts for payment was presented by the Clerk (copy in minute book). <b>Resolved:</b> to approve the accounts for payment.	Clerk
14	<b><u>Anti-bullying and harassment policy</u></b> A draft anti-bullying and harassment policy had been circulated before the meeting. <b>Resolved:</b> to adopt the policy with immediate effect.	All

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Approved by Chairman  
6 March 2008

**Dates of Next Meetings:**

Parish Council 6 March 2008 7.30  
Planning Committee 6 March 6.45 pm