

# BRIDGTOWN PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting.

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023

At Bethel Methodist Church

### Present:

Cllrs. Val Jones (Chair), Kevin Whittaker(Vice-chairman) Peter Kruskonjic, Bob Eccleston, Mandy Cook,

### In Attendance:

Chris Gracey – Clerk

2 Police Officers

Cabinet Member for Community Safety Cllr. Bryan Jones

16 residents

The Chair welcomed Councillors & resident to this month's council meeting, she reported that at her request representatives from the Police & District Council were present to discuss any issues arising from the visitors staying in the Holiday Inn. Members of the public were asked to raise any other concerns towards the end of the public participation session. She asked Members to raise their hand if they wished to speak, stating their name and where they live, any concerns will be dealt with this evening if possible however, it may be that the council would have to come back with the answers or more information. She opened the floor to the public and the following issues were raised:

1. Concerns about children playing on the park and men standing around.
2. Breaking into vehicles.
3. Front door tried to gain access
4. Looking through windows – resident having to keep blinds closed permanently
5. Concerns about men on the street at all times of the day and night, the visitors are adult males and not youths
6. These men are supposed to have been housed in the hotel on a temporary basis, why are they still here.
7. Why aren't we told how many people are staying in the hotel
8. Concerns about the men standing around with 3 nurseries in the area, school & gym.
9. Why are people walking around the street at 3am in the morning?
10. Vehicles being parked on double yellow lines from a local business upto the junction of Park Street and New Street at times 20 vehicles are in the vicinity.
11. No police presence in Bridgtown

Sgt. Pearson, Staffordshire Police reported:

A gentleman was arrested for trying doors and charged, the police have not received many reports and asked the public to report any incidents, if its happening when you ring and it is urgent use 999 or go online and use the website or facebook. There is also a 'smart alert' system from the police, more details online, and it is planned to carryout a leaflet drop in the parish with details.

Sgt. Pearson reported on the comments about no police presence in Bridgtown and explained that there are no resources to put a police presence in village areas unless there is a crime taking place, people standing or sitting around in groups is not considered to be a crime, although he appreciated that it can appear intimidating. Members spoke at length about the concerns and people's perception of groups of young men hanging around.

Crimes committed aren't necessarily being carried out by people living in the parish, criminals do come in from other areas to carryout crime.

The visitors living in the hotel where they are provided with very basic food mostly pre-wrapped and given £8 per week for personal expenses.

The current statistics for reported incidents since the people came into the parish is:

- 1 burglary
- 10 Anti social behaviour
- 8 violence against person (issues within the hotel)
- 8 suspicious incidents

Cllr. Bryan Jones Deputy Leader of Cannock Chase Council & Cabinet Lead for Community Safety

Bryan introduced himself to the meeting and outlined his position, he reported that the Asylum Seekers based in Staffordshire are discussed on a daily basis and the concerns of the residents in Bridgtown are similar to those felt by all the villages with visitors in their areas.

The individual recently charged may have mental health issues.

There is a scheme being considered by Central Government looking at how people coming into the country are housed, the existing visitors maybe dispersed to live in private landlord property, as there is estimated 40,000 people in hotel accommodation nationally, the cost of providing immediate housing is immense.

The Police & Cllr. Bryan Jones left the meeting at 8.10pm, along with most of the public.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - as above

#### **1. Apologies received in writing prior to the meeting.**

Apologies were received and accepted from – Cllrs Matt Freeman & Paul Snape

**RESOLVED: To accept the apologies of above Councillors.**

#### **2. Declaration of Interests on agenda items and consideration of dispensations where appropriate.**

None

### **3. To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

3.1 Members discussed the minutes in detail and agreed the minutes:

This was proposed by Cllr. Peter Kruskonjic seconded by Cllr. Val Jones (Chairman) and carried to approve the minutes.

**RESOLVED: MINUTES WERE APPROVED.**

### **4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes.** (Not already on the Agenda)

4.1 Cllr. Mandy Cook asked about the change of date for the January meeting, the clerk confirmed that the meeting date was changed at the request of the Chair and an email was forwarded to councillors with two dates for them to decide. Cllr. Mandy Cook replied that she had not received the email, the clerk will check and respond directly to her.

4.2 Cllr. Mandy Cook queried her request for the council to consider changing from bi monthly meetings to monthly meetings, and questioned why it was not in the minutes. The clerk confirmed that although she recalled Cllr. Mandy Cook mentioning the item, it was not on the agenda or debated by Members. The item will be included in the March agenda.

### **5.0 Chairman's Report.**

5.1 The Chairman reported that the main item of her report was around having made contact with the Deputy Police Commander for Cannock and District Council Cabinet Lead for Community Safety to request that they attend tonight's Parish Council meeting, to be able to answer questions on the asylum seekers at the Holiday Inn, from local residents. The Deputy Commander, Inspector Chris Moss told the Chair unfortunately he would not be able to attend this meeting as he was in charge of policing a football match being played at the same time. Although he committed to sending a senior police representative along with the PCSO for Bridgtown on the night.

5.2. The Chair read out two letters, which were sent by Amanda Milling MP by the Chair in response to a letter sent to her previously by the Parish regarding concerns around the asylum seekers at the Holiday Inn. The response from the MP is marked private and confidential however, the Chair obtained permission to share it with councillors.

In her letter the MP acknowledged the concerns and frustrations of local residents and reported that she is in regular contact with the local policing team and ministerial colleagues. The Home Office have told her they are taking steps to end hotel accommodation and the MP has asked what their plans are for this to happen. As a result of the resident concerns of antisocial and illegal behaviour she also wrote to the Deputy Police Commander for Cannock for an update. In his reply to the MP he comments that the number of reported incidences do not appear to reflect the level of concern seen on social media although accepts that there is a perception of intimidation due to asylum seeker behaviour. A few reports when investigated have not been substantiated nevertheless the Police are committed to dealing robustly with any suspects including any asylum seekers. The Police have increased their patrols around the hotel area and visiting the hotels themselves. Residents are urged to report any incidents.

5.3. The second item Planning Application CN/21/039 was to make fellow councillors aware that the developers appeal against CCDC Planning Committee's rejection of 3 flats and 3 garages at 33 North Street (also known as the Forge) has not been upheld.

### **6.0 Consideration of reports received from the PCSO.**

6.1 None received but Sargeant & PCSO attended the pre-meeting public session which was well attended, and discussed local concerns.

### **7.0 County Councillor's Report**

7.1 In his absence Cllr. Paul Snape had forwarded his report on the following:

The County Council, Council tax will rise by 5.9% in April. 2% ring fenced for Social Care and 3.9% for the general rates. Our Staff will be having the nationally agreed pay rise, our road budget has increased drastically, as most of our materials are oil based. I believe that a general rate settlement of 3.9%, even though it is much higher than anyone would have liked, is necessary when inflation has hit Staffordshire County Council, like it has hit everyone else. The final decisions will not be made until the March Meeting of Staffordshire County Council. I am sure that the District Council Rate figure will be decided on or about the same time.

1. The main roads are being gritted every day that it is needed. I am receiving emails that side roads are not gritted. They never have been. If there are grit bins about the Parish that are empty, then either use the App or let me know and I will try and get them refilled ASAP.
2. For pot holes, please use the App to report them. You can use the map on the site to give an exact location and include a photograph. You will then have a reference number to chase up, if you are not happy with the speed of it being repaired.
3. Val Jones, Peter Kuskonjic and myself will be in Cannock Library on Saturday at 11am, holding our monthly surgery. Please pass it on to any one who may require advice.
4. I believe that Councillor Bryan Jones, the Deputy Leader of Cannock Chase District Council is attending the meeting this evening. Bryan will probably give an update on Policing and other such matters including the ASB and reported issues concerning the hotel. As it is not part of my jurisdiction, I will not pass comment. I feel Councillor Bryan Jones and the Parish Chairman, have done remarkably well, in a matter that Councillors have little control over.
5. Since our last meeting, I have had many conversations with the Three District Councillors who cover the Parish. Together, we all try to assist where ever possible. Even though two are Labour and two of us are Conservative, we in most cases think alike and collectively get results that help all.

### **8.0 Recreational Areas.**

8.1 The Leighton Memorial Garden – Cllr. Mandy Cook reported that the garden is constantly maintained by volunteers.

8.2 War Memorial - No comments

8.3 Bridgtown Memorial Gardens & Play Park in Union Street – Sue Heath, Volunteer reported that the parking is looking much better with the work carried out by the gardener, although some of the new plants put in have been broken, which is disappointing. The gardener has suggested to reduce maintenance, to use bark on the flower bed areas, this was agreed.

No quote received to replace & repair the brickwork, the clerk will follow up with CCDC.

#### **9.0 Adjournment to receive reports from 'Friends of Bridgtown Park'**

9.1 As discussed in item 8.3

#### **10.0 Planning:**

All planning applications have been circulated to Councillors for comment.

10.1 **Applications for Consideration** - none

#### **10.2 Applications Approved/Rejected by District Council -**

CH/19/0044 Retention of 3 No. non-illuminated aluminium signs Grass verge, Walkmill Lane, Cannock, WS11 0LN – refused  
 CH/22/0344 Lawful Development Certificate - proposed use as a solarium (tanning salon) Use Class E, as lawful  
 Unit 3, A5 Trade Centre, Delta Way, Cannock, WS11 OBE – approved  
 CH/22/0450 Proposed 5G telecoms installation: H3G 15m phase 9 pole and equipment cabinets @ Watling Street  
 Cannock WS11 OBW - approved

11.0 **Correspondence** – Items of correspondence received during the month are emailed to Councillors, as received and for this month included the following:

#### **11.1 Incoming –**

- SPCA Bulletin emailed to council 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022
- SPCA Bulletin emailed to council 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023
- SPCA Bulletin emailed to council 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023
- SPCA Bulletin emailed to council 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023

11.2 **Outgoing** - None

**RESOLVED: ALL RELEVANT POST HAD BEEN CIRCULATED AND NOTED.**

#### **12.0 Accounts**

##### 12.1 Payments for Approval

Date	Payee	Cheque Nr.	Amount	VAT	Approved/declined
Cancelled		102092			
Cancelled		102093			
24/01/2023	Rydan International Ltd(Replacement cheque for 102084)	102094	2373.60	395.60	approved
24/01/2023	Marie Pawley(Remembrance Sunday Buffet)	102095	200.00		approved
24/01/2023	Bethel Church(Grant towards Christmas toys)	102096	200.00		approved
24/01/2023	Bethel Church(Donation from Chair's allowance)	102097	100.00		approved
24/01/2023	V Jones(Chairs allowance 2022 less donation to church)	102098	400.00		approved
24/01/2023	Signcast Ltd (Plaque replacement cheque for 102093)	102099	474.00	79.00	approved
24/01/2023	Bethel Methodist Church (Hall hire 24/01/2023)	102100	20.00		approved
24/01/2023	HMRC Clerk's December & January PAYE)	102101	72.60		approved
24/01/2023	C E Gracey Clerk's salary December & January salary including backpay from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022 )	102102	347.36		approved
24/01/2023	K. Punter(Gardening at the gardens & park 22/11 & 5/12)	102103	80.00		approved
24/01/2023	K Punter (Gardening 11/01 & 24/01 & plants for Jubilee planters	102104	116.00		approved
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£4383.56</b>		

Cllr Mandy Cook commented on the payment to the Chairman for her 2022 Chairman's Personal Allowance,. It was noted that £100 had been paid to Bethel Church from Chair's allowance. Bob Eccleston commented on the payment and referred to the protocol with other councils. This will be an item for the next meeting & the clerk will collate figures from other parishes for comparison.

RESOLVED: Authorisation of the accounts presented for payment totalling £4,383.56 was agreed proposed by the Cllr.Peter Kruskonjic seconded by Cllr. Kevin Whittaker and carried.

12.2 Consideration of the Current financial situation of the Council - The financial statement 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 was presented, proposed by Cllr. Peter Kruskonjic seconded by Cllr. Val Jones (Chairman) and carried.

12.3 Budget/ Precept 2023-24 – Members agreed the budget and discussed the precept, The Chairman Cllr. Val Jones proposed an increase of 4% seconded by Cllr. Kevin Whittaker & carried.

12.4 Consideration of infrastructure projects update – Painting of ornamental stands for flower baskets holders, quotation received from local contract proposed by Cllr. Peter Kruskonjic seconded by Cllr. Kevin Whittaker and carried. The posts will be painted in the colour green similar to the proposed new lamp posts.

Members discussed the purchase of 2 speed indicator devices & agreed a budget cost not to exceed £8,000 proposed by the Chairman Cllr. Val Jones seconded Cllr. Peter Kruskonjic and carried. Members discussed the proposed locations on which will be marked on a map attached to be agreed by councillors at the next meeting. It was also agreed to explore whether there is a possibility of a deal for an additional two making the total of 4 at discounted rate. It was agreed to a limit this to a budget of £14,000 in that instance. The clerk will contact Highways Dept. for approval & apply for Section 50 Licence and a 'Permit to Dig', arrange a SCC approved contractor and purchase the devices.

12.5 Consideration of any grant funding application opportunities – Nothing to report

12.6 Consideration of any Grant applications received – None

**13.0 Highways Issues** - Quote for the Painting of the Hanging Baskets Stands on North Street

13.1 As discussed and agreed in item 12.4

**14.0 To receive reports from Councillors who have attended outside meetings** - None

**15.0 HGV Signage – North Street – New Street – Cross Street**

15.1 No comments

**16.0 Lakeside Boulevard**

16.1 No further information Cllr. Peter Kruskonjic will follow-up.

**17.0 New Lamp Posts**

17.1 Awaiting date for the commencement of work, the clerk will follow up.

**18.0 Asset of Community Value** - Broad Street Car Park

18.1 Members agreed to proceed with the application and once processed apply for the other car parks until all car parks in Bridgtown have been applied for.

**19.0 Drains & Flooding in Bridgtown**

19.1 Cllr. Bob Eccleston reported that many of the gullies in Bridgtown are blocked, too numerous to report to SCC, but in need of flushing and if needed digging out. Cllr Peter Kruskonjic advised that the County require repairs or issues to be logged onto "MYStaffs App" and will no longer take direct referrals from Councillors unless it is accompanied by a report on the App where a reference number is provided. This is to prevent councillors jumping the queue ahead of members of the public. He will report all the affected gullies on the App on behalf of Cllr. Bob Eccleston but will need a list and photographs of the affected gullies to do so, Cllr. Bob Eccleston has been asked to provide the information to Cllr. Peter Kruskonjic.

**20.0 Items for Information or Future Agendas**

20.1 Council meetings Bi monthly to Monthly – subject to Standing Orders  
Chairman's Annual Allowance – subject to Standing Orders  
Grit Bins Church Street junction New Street

**21.0 Date of Next Meeting.**

21.1 The next meeting would be Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**RESOLVED: NEXT MEETING: 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**22.0** The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 9.55pm.

**23.0 Confidential Items – exclusion of the press and public when applicable.**

Signed By Chairman .....

Date .....