

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council of Berkswell,  
held in the Jubilee Centre, Balsall Common, on  
14 March 2013 at 7:45 PM**

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence had been received from Borough Cllr Bell.

**2. Attendance**

Cllrs Benton, Burrow, Hitchcock, Howells, Lloyd, Lock (Chairman) and Meeson.

Clerk to the Council Mrs Wyldbore-Smith.

Members of the public: Messrs Dymond, Green, and Lupton (Berkswell Parish) and Messrs Deanshaw, Felthouse, Hope, and Longfield (Balsall Parish).

**3. Declarations of Interest**

None.

**4. Confirmation of Previous Minutes and any Matters Arising**

**4.1 Previous Minutes**

Cllr Benton queried whether it was correct that it had been agreed to approve Mr Davison's assistance to the Clerk (Administrative Matters minute c). It was resolved to delete this statement. After the minutes had been so corrected, they were signed as a true record of the Council Meeting on 14 February by the Chairman.

**4.2 Matters arising - Public Opinion Mr S. Tidy re Hornets Football Club**

An email was sent by Cllr Bell after discussions with Cllr Burrow and Mr Tidy requesting an extension to the lease from SMBC on the field adjacent Lavender Hall Lane once the Club had funds for drainage and building. SMBC had replied, agreeing in principle to an extension to 25 years at the recent Rural Communities Forum.

**4.3 Matters arising - Further matters raised in Public Opinion minutes 1, 3, 4**

Agreed the Clerk would write to Cllr Bell to progress outstanding issues on litter, lorry movements at Lincoln Farm Café, and roadside verges/ditches.

**4.4 Matters arising - Administrative Matters minute j) Dates of meetings**

Meeting dates have been set for the next 12 months. The number of Council meetings had been increased to 10 (plus the Annual Parish Assembly), with the Planning Committee holding a short meeting beforehand when required.

**4.5 Matters arising - Councillors' Area Reports - Conservation Area**

Cllr Lock reported that there would be an opportunity for residents to meet the SMBC Conservation Officer Mr M Saunders, and suggested this should be arranged for the AGM of the Berkswell Society.

**5. Public Opinion and District Councillor's Report**

Mr Hope said the waiting room at Berkswell Station is still frequently closed. Cllr Lock reported he understood that there was some improvement with it now normally open in the mornings.

He also reported that litter was a growing problem. Cllr Lock reminded everyone of the joint Balsall/ Berkswell Litter Pick over the following weekend.

Mr Lupton reported that mud from composting trucks was an increasing problem on Cornets End Lane. **The Clerk was asked to refer this to SMBC Highways Dept.**

He had also contacted the Council about the identification of public footpaths. He recognised it was impractical to change the path reference numbers, but he would like a method of identification that indicated "through routes". It was **agreed with Cllr Lloyd that the path from Berkswell to Hampton in Arden would be a good candidate, and he would discuss this with Hampton in Arden PC** to see if there could be joint action for a naming and marking scheme.

Mr Dymond reported the ditches on the Coventry Road were hazardous after being dug out. The Clerk had shown the damaged areas to SMBC. The landowners are responsible for the ditches. Cllr Lloyd asked whether the excavated material could be levelled to help pedestrians. **The Clerk was asked to discuss these issues with SMBC Mr Brant.**

Mr Green complained about the squalor in the centre of Balsall Common due to litter. He has long advocated the employment of a street sweeper. In addition, he said more oak posts were needed to protect the grass verges. In response, it was agreed the Clerk would liaise with Ms Kauser (Balsall PC) and get the SMBC schedule of cleaning. It was understood that SMBC were changing the responsible contractors. Cllr Lock said Ms Kauser was working on the problem of litter in the Library carpark. Mr Felthouse said he had a contact to deal with littering on the Partco carpark.

He also complained that the PC noticeboard outside the *Masala Club* was badly laid out and not kept up to date. It was agreed that the **PC should take up his offer of assistance, and allow him to have a key.** Notices about local activities were also thought to be a good idea.

## **6. Administrative Matters and Correspondence**

### **6.1 Closure of Berkswell Station waiting room. (Cllr Bell)**

In Cllr Bell's absence, the reported improvement was noted, though it is still far from ideal for opening to be restricted to when staff are present.

### **6.2 Meeting with SMBC re damage by vehicles to Village Green - (SWS)**

The grass has been damaged, and new posts and signs have been requested.

### **6.3 Working party re cost savings in 2014-15**

It was **agreed to establish a Working Party comprising Cllrs Benton, Burrow, Howles, and Lloyd,** with a remit to brain-storm ideas to reduce costs in 2014/ 15 from the spending plans for 2013/ 14.

### **6.4 Letter received re Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Green Infrastructure Strategy including Biodiversity Offsetting.**

A consultation was in progress on the strategy, which was a technical matter aimed at preserving and enhancing biodiversity through the Planning process. **Cllr Hitchcock knew the author of the report and would respond on behalf of the Council** before the closing date of 22 April. (Mr Hope had been to a meeting at which it was explained that Planning Applications causing a harmful impact on biodiversity would attract a cost penalty that would be used to offset the damage.)

### **6.5 *Running and maintenance cost of Speed Visors***

The Council has funded five speed visors. Cllr Benton said that the batteries are changed weekly by SMBC and we are charged £158 for each of 12 relocations per year. It was agreed to reduce the number of relocations to 6 per year.

Mr Green asked for a visor to be moved to the village centre end of Station Road. Cllr Meeson undertook to investigate visor locations to get the best effect. He would discuss this with Mr Green and report back to the Clerk who is dealing with Mr Ballinger at SMBC.

The Clerk reported that the Berkswell Speedwatch initiative was still lacking a coordinator.

### **6.6 *Parish Council's IT Policy***

It was resolved to adopt the policy circulated by Cllr Lock.

### **6.7 *Health and Safety Risk Assessment***

Cllr Burrow reported he had met two Park Rangers from SMBC who appeared to have a good understanding of the main hazards. He proposed that we commission them to do an assessment at a cost of £238, and then follow it up with a confirmatory review by councillors. The assessment would be based on the Council's asset list, play equipment being a significant problem. It was resolved to accept this recommendation.

### **6.8 *Neighbourhood Development Plan for Berkswell Parish***

It was noted that training had been completed and funding was in place.

It was resolved that the Council would designate its Parish for the creation of a NDP, and that if Balsall Parish Council did likewise for their Parish, as anticipated, the Council would work with Balsall Parish Council to produce two plans in parallel that would complement each other to protect and develop our joint communities within the precious greenbelt.

It was discussed whether the Council should produce a Parish Plan to complement the NDP, which would capture issues outside the remit of the NDP. However, it was felt this would take too much effort and divert resources.

The next step would be to designate the NDP area, and **Cllr Howles was asked to progress this with the Council's consultant.** A contractual letter was required, and a maximum budget for this work of £2000 was resolved.

It was also resolved that the Council would take steps to meet the conditions to achieve the General Power of Competence.

### **6.9 *Revised Financial Regulations***

A revised version of the Council's Financial Regulations had been circulated by Cllrs Benton and Burrow, and it was resolved to adopt these, with an effective date of 20 March 2013. Councillors agreed to assist the Clerk with the changes.

### **6.10 *Best Kept Village Competition***

This competition among four local parishes was originally run by the Berkswell *Felons* in May to suit their annual dinner. This was an unsuitable time of year, and did not match with other regional and national competitions. It was agreed that Berkswell would participate in May this year, but would also participate in the Heart of England in Bloom competition held in the summer, using the same criteria. In future years, there would be a single judging, with the result from July leading to an award at the *Felon's* dinner in the following May.

### **6.11 Right to Bid**

More information had been received about the Community Right to Bid, and SMBC has said Berkswell was the first parish to show interest. Because of the work involved, it was agreed to reduce the initial list down to the *Bear*, the *Brickmakers*, and the field by the Catholic Church. **Agreed the Clerk would amend the list and discuss with Solihull MBC.**

## **7. Heritage and the Community**

### **7.1 Footpaths**

Cllr Lloyd reported that the ground was finally drying out after the prolonged wet weather that had started in the middle of last year. It was good to see that farmers were able to get on the land for ploughing, but some footpaths had not been reinstated afterwards and this had been report to the Highways Authority. He was pleased to see that a stile in a hollow prone to flooding on M198 at Beechwood had been replaced by a kissing gate on drier ground. With regard to creating bridle/ cycle access to the Greenway at the Station, he had observed that the siding across the storage yard area was no longer "active" at as it was blocked off.

It was agreed access to the Greenway should be kept on the agenda.

Cllr Lock said he was unable to report further progress with the formation of a new path along Lavender Hall Lane.

### **7.2 HS2**

The public meeting organised by the Council in the Jubilee Centre on 16 February had attracted around 100 visitors. They were able to see and comment on the HS2 plans that were the latest available at that time, and this continued with an on-line survey. Cllr Benton had analysed the gathered data, and produced a pie-chart based on 169 issues raised by residents. Main issues were: Noise, Building/construction, Property values/compensation, Traffic & road diversions.

However, this was before further detailed information was released at the Community Forum on 4 March, which revealed major construction depots at Park Lane and Truggist Lane/ Berkswell Station. Councillors reported that HS2 Ltd wanted to discontinue the Community Fora, but all participants had objected to this.

HS2 Ltd had offered a "bilateral" meeting with the Council, and this would be pursued.

Thinking ahead, there would need to be a clear list of issues to present to the Select Committee for the Hybrid Bill, with agreement over which petitioners would handle which issues.

The next SMBC Working Party would be on 18 April. Mrs Spelman had recently pressed for blight compensation to be keyed to noise levels rather than nearness to the line, but there was concern that noise was only one of many factors that reduced property values.

### **7.3 Berkswell Museum**

Cllrs Benton and Lock informed the meeting that the Museum had been founded by the Council, and was a continuing commitment. The Council met the energy costs, which had risen considerably, and it was thought there was scope to reduce them.

New people had joined the Museum Committee, and everyone wanted to see more visitors with the Museum open on Saturdays. It was hoped to make one room a "living"

exhibit, and that the resumption of Sunday Teas in the Reading Room would increase visitors. The History Group used the archive facilities but weren't involved in management of the Museum. It wasn't thought there was a Health and Safety problem preventing visits by school groups.

Alternative funding was being sought, and Borough Cllr Diciccio will take the matter up with SMBC Heritage and Education. Their "buying power" could help, but a grant was unlikely in the near term.

Cllr Burrow requested the matter was discussed again in two months time.

#### **7.4 Village and Parish Signs**

Cllr Burrow reported that Mr Tovey SMBC had agreed to fingerpost signs at both junctions on Truggist Lane at Carol Green. However, the design needed to be confirmed. Cllr Lloyd was concerned that these signs should match the style and detailing of the fingerpost at the Berkswell crossroad, and pointed out that the Council held funds that were raised to provide traditional-style direction signs.

**It was agreed that details would be finalised by e-mail.**

### **8. Accounts for Payment**

The following payments were approved:

	Cheque	Amount	VAT
J. Caffery, Village Maintenance	501	£174.00	
Cancelled	502		
Blessed Robert Grissold, Room hire fees	503	£105.00	
Berkswell Reading Room, Room hire fees	504	£180.00	
Ian Geddes, Website update	505	£58.08	
J. Hool, Investigation into cheque	506	£534.40	
EON, Elec at Museum	507	£1271.14	£211.86

The Clerk was asked to obtain a proper invoice from Mr Caffery prior to settlement.

Cllr Benton undertook to reconcile an end-of-year claim for £455.15 from the Clerk with her cashbook entries. The sum included travel and telephony expenses.

Cllr Benton had negotiated the energy costs with the supplier, and believed a retrospective reduction (e.g. Climate Change penalty) was possible for the last three years. Details would be given to the Clerk to implement and to reclaim the VAT.

It was agreed to continue making a grant to Berkswell Village Stores of £500.

### **9. Councillors' Area Reports**

Cllr Lloyd gave an update on the consultations regarding the proposed Airspace Changes arising from the runway extension at the Airport. A basic response had been made to the Approach consultation, as there were no realistic alternatives to the proposal. There appeared to be inconsistencies in the information regarding the Departures options, and clarification had been requested from the Airport company.

The Council was concerned about the possible increase in noise disturbance from the current proposals, and it was agreed **Cllr Lloyd should respond making it clear the Council was opposed to the deletion of the current "Hampton Turn".**

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

The Annual Meeting of the Council will be held on 9 May 2013 at 7:45 pm in the Reading Room, Berkswell.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in the same venue on 23 May.

**11. Private Session**

See separate confidential section (2 pages).

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