

SALTFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held at Saltford Hall, Saltford on Tuesday 5th January 2016 at 7.15pm

PRESENT:

Councillors - Duncan Hounsell (Chair), Adrian Betts, Ben Eve, Phil Harding, James Macnaughton, Kyle Rice, Rob Taylor, Chris Warren and Farida Wilson

Officer - Tricia Golinski

The Chair took item 5 first.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 1 December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend this meeting were received from Councillors Jon Godfrey and Liz Macnaughton.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Adrian Betts declared an interest in items 5 and 11 as he was a governor at Saltford School.

Councillor Phil Harding declared an interest in item 9 application 15/05641/FUL 8 Claverton Road, as he knows the architect.

Councillor Rob Taylor declared an interest in item 13 as he is employed by Great Western Railway.

4. PUBLIC TIME

There were 5 members of the public present.

Geoff Brown spoke about the poor quality of the bus service serving Saltford.

Councillor Ben Eve left the meeting at 7.40 pm.

5. PROPOSED USE OF PLAYING FIELD BY SALTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Council received a presentation from B&NES Council's Schools Asset Manager and Project Manager about the proposed expansion of Saltford Primary School into the playing field. Plans were shown of the proposed new build at the back of the school, the relocated badger sett, and the proposed dual use playing field. The playing field will be fenced off to

exclude dogs but will not be locked, and will be for use by the school during school hours and for the public the rest of the time. B&NES Council expects to submit a planning application in February.

6. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:

- Representing the Parish Council, I read a lesson at the Carol Service held at St. Mary's Church on December 20th.
- Chris Essex of the SCA has informed me that the SCA has so far been unsuccessful in hiring a Youth Leader to run the proposed Friday night youth club at Saltford Hall.

7. CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Clerk made no announcements.

8. REPORT FROM B&NES WARD COUNCILLORS

B&NES Councillor Francine Haeberling reported that:

- B&NES ward councillors put funding into the SCA's planned youth work so she hopes it goes ahead.
- She hopes the Parish Council will be supportive of the work planned at the school, as the temporary classrooms have been there for 30 years and are not up to standard.
- There has been nothing back about the train timetable.

9. PLANNING MATTERS

- a) **Minutes** - The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 22 December 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- b) **New planning applications** – The Council considered the following planning applications in respect of which Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) Council had invited comments:

15/05641/FUL - 8 Claverton Road - Demolition of existing garage and construction of two storey side extension with single storey kitchen extension behind - Dr Tamar Freeman

It was resolved that B&NES Council be advised that this Council **SUPPORTS** this application.

- c) **Decisions** – The Clerk reported the following applications which had been PERMITTED with conditions by B&NES Council:

15/05010/FUL - 66 Montague Road - Erection of two storey side extension to existing dwelling - Mr John Andrews

- d) **Planning items of urgent information** – No items were reported.

10. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- a) **Monthly Financial Report** – The report was discussed and accepted by Members.
- b) **Schedule of Expenditure** – It was resolved that the expenditure for all items listed in the schedule for the month of January 2016 be authorised and the schedule signed by the Chair.
- c) **Budget and precept 2016/17** – The Council agreed its budget for 2016/17 and that the precept to be levied by Saltford Parish Council for 2016/17 will be £31,672.

11. B&NES COUNCIL'S PROPOSALS FOR SALTORD SCHOOL

The Council agreed the following response to B&NES Council regarding its proposals for the Saltford School new build and the implications for the adjacent public green space:

1. Subject to further consideration, Saltford Parish Council welcomes the proposal that the public retain access and use of this public open and recreational space.
2. There is concern at the lack of public access on a blanket basis up to 6.00 pm. The pitch should be available to the public from the end of the school day unless needed for a match.
3. Could the north boundary fence be re-designed so it runs parallel to the pitch and the south boundary fence, and further away from the path?
4. The Parish Council owns two goalposts which will need to be removed. The Parish Council will not seek compensation for this so long as B&NES Council installs suitable goalposts on the proposed pitch and allows their use by the public at agreed times. The Parish Council will no longer take responsibility for maintaining the goal mouths.
5. Saltford Parish Council urges B&NES Council to secure a legal basis for community ownership of the total green space at Manor Road playing field in perpetuity.
6. Saltford Parish Council welcomes the promise made in the presentation of full public consultation in respect of the planning application and proposals.

12. ALLOTMENT RENTS AND PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE 2016/17

The Council agreed to renew the public liability insurance with Shield for the allotment tenants at a cost of £72.50 (budget heading Insurance).

The Council agreed to take into account the cost of the tenants' public liability insurance in the setting of allotment rents for 2016/17.

The level of allotment rents for 2016/17 (to take effect from 1 April 2016) was agreed as £20 per year for a full plot and £10 per year for a half plot. The increase reflects inflation, simpler administration and inclusion of the public liability insurance.

13. SALTORD STATION

Councillor Chris Warren declared an interest as Chair of Saltford Station Campaign.

The Council agreed the following proposal from Councillors Duncan Hounsell and Phil Harding:

Saltford Parish Council reminds B&NES Council of its role since 2011 as the official promoter of the station and asks B&NES Council to make effective and renewed commitment to engage with the West of England Local Transport Body, GWR and Network Rail to seek the re-opening of Saltford station and to make every effort to secure a place for Saltford station in the Metro West timetable.

Saltford Parish Council notes that the public leaflet produced by the West of England Partnership *Metro West - Investing in our local rail network* (June 2014) stated that a Saltford Station could be in Metro West phase 1 subject to the business case. Saltford Parish Council therefore wishes to express its concern that B&NES Council did not seek to include Saltford Station in the current Metro West timetable studies being carried out by GWR on behalf of the West of England Local Transport Body. Saltford Parish Council wishes to express its dissatisfaction that reasons given for this include comments on time-table constraints which would have been better determined by Saltford actually having been included in these studies.

Saltford Parish Council notes that while alternatives need to be considered as part of the Department for Transport's TAG (Transport Analysis Guidance) process and also to fulfil a past resolution of B&NES Council, there remains a consensus that the existing site is the preferred site option.

14. WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT SPATIAL STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

The Council agreed the following response to the West of England Joint Spatial Plan Issues and Options consultation:

“New housing needs to be located close to jobs”

Saltford Parish Council is concerned that the continuous addition of new housing developments to existing settlements in towns and rural areas to meet the projected housing needs of Bristol and Bath will create many more problems than are solved for the region and its communities.

The resulting negative impacts include: more overloading of transport systems; reduced air quality arising from higher traffic volumes and congestion; local services put under increasing strain, loss of recreational green spaces; loss of Green Belt so that natural habitats including wildlife corridors are depleted; local tourism/leisure businesses put at risk; and agricultural land permanently lost for food production purposes. Those impacts underline why that approach is not sustainable development.

Saltford has the status of an Air Quality Management Area on part of the main A4 road through the village due to the traffic volumes it currently experiences leading to periodic levels of dangerously high NOx levels being reached; adding new housing developments and thus road transport in the area would exacerbate this existing problem. Furthermore the Issues and Options paper at paragraph 2.18 makes the transport case for not adding further housing developments to towns and rural areas (i.e. including Saltford) by stating that “there is an imbalance of jobs over resident workers in central Bristol and Bath and an imbalance of workers over jobs in Weston-Super-Mare, the towns and rural areas with resultant unsustainable commuting patterns”. In other words, new housing needs to be located close to jobs.

To prevent the piecemeal destruction of the West of England's open spaces and Green Belt over and above existing Core Strategies, we request that:

1. the first priority should be to create affordable attractive housing on suitable brown field sites close to employment - with developers and architects competing to produce the best designs;
2. the design and location of further new housing developments in the Joint Spatial Plan should avoid overloading towns and rural areas (by implementing 1); and
3. Green Belt land in the West of England should be protected from development and recognised as a high value irreplaceable asset thus reflecting the Government's policy on protecting the Green Belt against urban sprawl (see section on Green Belt below).

If the need (not demand) for new housing continues to outstrip the supply from brown field sites in the longer term, a region-wide consultation could be held on whether a new "Garden City" would be appropriate and where it might be located. A new "Garden City" should be genuine sustainable development, i.e. a self-contained community surrounded by Green Belt, containing proportionate areas of housing, industry and commerce, green spaces and agriculture, yet with good public transport routes and access to Bristol or Bath.

"Protecting the Green Belt"

There are strong planning and sustainable development reasons for not building new housing developments on Green Belt land in the West of England. Building further new developments on the Green Belt will destroy much of what gives the region a rural and semirural character that has attracted people to live and work in the area. It would put at further risk the region's agricultural and tourism/leisure businesses and the wider ecosystem benefits that the Green Belt is increasingly relied upon to provide.

Furthermore, the Government has made it clear through several policy statements by DCLG Ministers that Local Plans should protect, not build on, the Green Belt even if it constrains the ability of some local authorities to meet their own housing needs. The following three example statements show why the West of England Joint Spatial Plan should not include Green Belt land for development:-

Extract from Press Release "Councils must protect our precious green belt land"
4.10.2014:-

...Once [housing] need has been assessed, the local planning authority should prepare a strategic housing land availability assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability... and in so doing take account of any constraints such as green belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need.

Extract from Press Release "New rules further strengthen green belt protections"
16.10.2014:-

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles said: I am crystal clear that the green belt must be protected from development, so it can continue to offer a strong defence against urban sprawl.

Extract from Press Release "Thousands more homes to be developed in planning shake up" (new measures that will make it easier to turn underused office buildings into new homes) 13.10.2015:-

"We're determined that, both in Whitehall and in town halls, everything is done to get the homes we need built."

"Today's measures will mean we can tap into the potential of underused buildings to offer new homes for first-time buyers and families long into the future, breathing new life into neighbourhoods and at the same time protecting our precious green belt."

Looking at Saltford specifically, the Saltford Placemaking Plan was produced (and is published on the Parish Council website) following community consultation in 2013. The purpose of this plan is to complement the strategic planning framework provided in Bath & North East Somerset Council's Core Strategy. It provides an updated and refreshed planning policy framework for managing development in the Parish of Saltford. It also describes why Saltford's Green Belt is unsuitable for housing development. The following is a short extract from the Green Belt character assessment (Chapter 6):

The Cotswold AONB ridge and the distinctive local landmark of Kelston Round Hill (also known as Kelston Tump) together with Saltford's Green Belt and the river Avon provides a rural setting for the village. Despite Saltford's proximity to the cities of Bath and Bristol and the neighbouring town of Keynsham, this landscape gives Saltford its own distinctive character complementing and preserving both the setting of Saltford's Conservation Area with its historical buildings and the newer housing developments within the village.

The openness of Saltford's Green Belt also provides a sense of permanence to the countryside surrounding the village, provides separation whilst keeping in check urban sprawl from Keynsham, Bristol and Bath, and helps to safeguard the adjacent countryside including the Cotswold AONB from encroachment.

It is also a very important green infrastructure asset for Saltford and the wider community of Bath & North East Somerset. It provides ecosystems that support agriculture and wildlife together with an element of flood protection for the village from the river Avon and from surface water flooding arising from extreme rainfall events.

Saltford's Placemaking Plan in Chapter 6 (paragraph 6.7.3) also highlights the reasons why developers lobby for housing development, that cannot realistically be described as affordable, in Saltford's Green Belt whilst explaining why, in the opinion of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, such development is inappropriate:-

The relatively high property prices in Saltford put a high commercial value on any land that becomes available for development and thus Saltford's Green Belt is a target for property developers. An example of this was the Saltford Green Belt Appeal Inquiry in August 2013 following the non-determination of a planning application by developers to build a housing estate of up to 99 dwellings on the fields within the Green Belt south of Manor Road...

...Following his decision in September 2013 to make the determination himself, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government dismissed the appeal and refused planning permission on 4 March 2014. In concluding that the appeal proposals were inappropriate development in the Green Belt causing harm to the Green Belt's openness and purpose of preventing encroachment into the countryside, the Secretary of State said "the proposed development would result in an unacceptable reduction of the Green Belt in that area." He was also "mindful that the site lies within a substantial sub-area of Green Belt identified as strongly serving the purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and attributes considerable weight to this issue in the planning balance.

The Council also agreed to send the following questions in response to the West of England Joint Spatial Plan Issues and Options consultation:

Given the electorate's support for winning candidates in recent local and general elections who were opposed to development in the Green Belt, what mechanism does the Strategy have in place to ensure that any decisions that come out of the

plan are democratically agreed and have the support of local residents?

How do these proposals fit in with the recently approved B&NES Core Strategy which has been agreed up until 2029? Does the B&NES Core Strategy remain in place until 2029 and then the additional housing numbers outlined in the West of England Joint Spatial Plan become the starting point for B&NES' next Core Strategy?

Why has the possibility of a new settlement not been fully and effectively considered (Spatial Scenario 5)?

How are the housing numbers predicted by the Plan to be divided between the four authorities?

How will disagreements between the four Authorities be resolved?

Given the benefits of providing affordable housing close to employment what is the strategy in respect of the location of affordable housing across the four authorities?

What process will be included in the plan to ensure that land banking by landowners and developers does not affect the delivery of the target housing numbers outlined in the Plan?

What mechanism does the report suggest is employed to ensure that brownfield sites are brought forward first before any Green Belt sites are considered?

As Saltford has been specifically mentioned in the plan, the Parish Council asks to be included in any discussions or meetings in relationship to the Plan which might involve Saltford.

15. WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT TRANSPORT STUDY

The Council agreed the following response to the West of England Joint Transport Study Consultation:

Saltford Parish Council supports the development of the Metro West rail project and re-opening a station at Saltford as part of this is the highest priority for this Council. Saltford Parish Council thinks that transport development should not just be to support new housing and employment development but also to serve existing communities that have inadequate transport provision such as Saltford.

Saltford Parish Council supports the idea of a dedicated cycle route running parallel to Keynsham by-pass to enable cyclists to commute into Bristol on a continuous stretch of cycle path.

Saltford Parish Council recommends joining up existing dedicated cycle paths and that a continuous path be made from Bath to Bristol through Saltford.

Saltford Parish Council asks for consideration of using existing transport corridors more effectively for example the former Midland Railway (now a cycle path).

Saltford Parish Council asks that the plan ensures that the conditions of air and noise pollution coming from the A4 as it goes through Saltford and towards Keynsham are not worsened by any plans in the strategy.

16. TREE WORK ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD

The Council considered quotations for the tree safety work in St Mary's churchyard recommended in the Tree Risk Assessment report by All Tree Services Ltd in September 2015. It was agreed that Smart Trees will be asked to do the work, subject to the renewal of their public liability insurance, and with the planting of replacements for the Lawson Cypresses removed from the specification.

17. CHURCHYARD GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SPECIFICATION

The Council agreed the following specification for grounds maintenance at St Mary's churchyard for the year commencing on 1 March 2016:

- Cut all the grass twice a month during the growing season.
- Time the grass cuttings to take place just prior to any occasional wedding dates which will be advised in advance.
- Strim the grass around the edges of the graves twice a month during the growing season.
- Graves to be subject to appropriate and timely weed treatment.
- Treat weeds along the footpath adjacent to the wall running from the entrance gate to the stile.
- Remove all grass and weed cuttings.
- Empty the refuse and compost bins and remove refuse and compost monthly.
- Trim the beech hedge twice during growing season.
- Clear the ivy from walls four times during winter.
(The 'growing season' is defined as 8 months)

18. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

This item was deferred until the February meeting.

19. USE OF PARISH COUNCIL NOTICE BOARDS

The Council agreed that it will use its notice boards only for:

- Saltford Parish Council business
- Information from other Councils and public bodies including events when relevant to Saltford, and
- Information from other Saltford organisations in special circumstances to be determined jointly by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk eg. Saltford Festival information.

20. REPORTS FROM LINK MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

No reports were made.

21. ITEMS OF URGENT INFORMATION FROM COUNCILLORS

No items were reported.

22. PUBLICITY

The Council agreed items to include in the Parish Council's page of SCAN and ideas for the next Parish Council e-newsletter.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Chair's signature.....

Date confirmed and signed...../...../.....

Next Council meeting: 2 February 2016
Next Planning Committee meeting: 26 January 2016