

# BALDONS PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at 7.30 pm on Monday 12 July, 2021 in the Village Hall

<b>Present:</b>	Dorothy Tonge (DT; Chair), Lauren Collett (LC) John Maskell (JM), Laurence Attewill (LA), Tom James (TJ; Clerk) Sam Casey-Rerhaye (SCR; SODC) and later Robin Bennett (RB; OCC)
<b>Members of the public</b>	There were two members of the public in attendance

Ref	Item	Notes	Action
035/21	<b>Introduction by the Chairman</b>	The Chairman welcomed councillors and members of the public to the first meeting held in public since the start of the pandemic.	
036/21	<b>Apologies:</b>	The Council accepted apologies for absence from Elizabeth Gillespie and Stephen Dance	
037/21	<b>Declarations of Interests</b>	There were no new declarations of interest.	
038/21	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meetings</b>	The minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2021 were approved as an accurate record	
039/21	<b>Matters Arising</b>	There were no matters arising from the minutes	
040/21	<b>Open Forum</b>	There were four items raised by a member of the public: 6.1. Several years ago, a sweet chestnut tree was felled, under instruction from Queen's College, as it was causing damage to the wall adjacent to the Mole Inn. The College had agreed to replace the tree, but this had not happened. The Council agreed to raise this point when it next met with Savills (see item 7.2). 6.2 Road verges in Toot Baldon were now very long and needed cutting. Councillors reported other examples of verges that were now causing a danger to both pedestrians and drivers. The Council would write to Highways on this matter, but all villagers are urged to report the problem on the 'Fix my street' website. 6.3 LA agreed to cut any ivy on the trees along the Green. 6.4. The brick gate pillars by are beginning to collapse. This matter was raised at a recent meeting with Savills (see item 7.2).	
041/21	<b>Village Matters</b>	7.1 It was agreed that oak posts 40cm high should be placed at 2m apart along the green from the Seven Stars Inn to Boundary House. 7.2 Notes from the meeting with Savills had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The agents of Queen's College proposed to present a document outlining the responsibilities of the College and the Council concerning the cost of maintaining and replacing trees on the green. The council is still waiting for this document and for proposed dates for a follow up meeting.	

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		<p>Savills reported to the Council their intention to reapply for permission to develop the barns in Toot Baldon. There is also a proposal to build a small development of ‘retirement’ bungalows, on land in Toot Baldon.</p> <p>7.3 There is still one house, overlooking the green, with temporary fencing. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk would write again, this time requesting the removal of the fence and the use of white stones to protect the green.</p> <p>7.4 The Council agreed that the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee should be marked in some way. It was felt that a committee, consisting of representatives of both villages as well the council and other groups such as the cricket club and events committee, should be formed to take on this project.</p> <p>7.5. JM updated the Council on the proposal to install mains sewage drainage in Toot Baldon. Thames Water had completed a number of surveys. A number of drop-in sessions are planned to enable residents to see the proposed plans and to ask any questions. It would appear that problems with SODC may mean the nearly 25% of the houses on Toot Baldon would not be able to connect with the main sewer. The Council agreed to provide its full support to the community group dealing with the sewage project</p> <p>7.6. The Council was delighted to accept the offer of a park bench from the Masonic Lodge in Baldons Lane. The wording of the plaque needs to be refined and the final position of the bench finalised.</p>	
042/21	<b>Report from OCC</b>	<p>RB reported on a number of key county-wide items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. County Summer Reading Challenge for children</li> <li>b. Pathways to Zero-Carbon Oxfordshire plans</li> <li>c. An application to the Government’s Levelling-up fund for money to create a cycle path, along the Roman pathway, from Berinsfield through the Baldons to Greater Leys. The Council were disappointed to hear that John Howell MP had refused to support that proposal. The Council agreed to write to the MP asking for an explanation and for him to reconsider his decision.</li> </ol>	
043/21	<b>Report from SODC</b>	<p>SC-R reported that a number of challenges have been made over the projected housing land supply. A number of webinars are planned as part of the consultation for the Oxfordshire 2050 plan. Only un-costed future plans will be in the strategic plan. Those projects already agreed and costed would not be in the plan, as they had already been approved.</p>	<b>Clerk to obtain quotes</b>
044/21	<b>Treasurer’s report</b>	<p>9.1 The Internal Audit was completed by Auditing Solutions. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been signed noting that the Council has continued to improve and maintain its governance procedures and financial controls. There were three recommendations for continuous improvement and an Action Plan was approved by the Council:</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>R1 (Corporate Governance) The Council should consider reducing the tendering levels in its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to a level more appropriate to the size of the Council.</p>	

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		<p>R2 (Salaries and Wages) The Council should calculate the back pay due to the Clerk from 1 April 2020 and ensure that future NJC pay awards are promptly applied.</p> <p>R3 (Investments) The Council should consider developing an Investment Strategy.</p> <p><b>Action Plan</b></p> <p><b>R1</b> Adopt a revised Point 18a.v of the Standing Orders and Point 11.1h of the Financial Regulations, reducing tendering levels from £25,000 to £5,000. Revised Point 18.a.v of the Standing Orders:</p> <p><b>18. Financial controls and procurement</b></p> <p>a. The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:</p> <p>i. the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;</p> <p>ii. the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council;</p> <p>iii. the work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually;</p> <p>iv. the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the Council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and</p> <p>v. <b>whether contracts with an estimated value below £5,000 due to special circumstances are exempt from a tendering process or procurement exercise.</b></p> <p>Revised Point 11.1.h of the Financial Regulations:</p> <p><b>11.1 Contracts</b></p> <p><b>h. When it is to enter into a contract of less than £5,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk or RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £300 and above £100 the Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10.3 above shall apply.</b></p> <p><b>R2.</b> The back pay has been awarded to the Clerk and the salary fixed at the appropriate level for 2021-22. The council will consider fixing the Clerk's salary for 3 years (see note 048/21 below)</p> <p><b>R3.</b> The Council agreed an investment strategy for 21/22; the Clerk was instructed to keep the current account below £1000 and transferring any surplus to the deposit account.</p>	
045/21		<p>9.2 The payments for services and goods, as listed on the agenda, were approved. The Clerk reported that the VAT the previous four months had been claimed.</p>	

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<b>046/21</b>		9.3 The current status of the Council's bank accounts and the reconciliation for May 2021 had been scrutinised by JM, in advance of the meeting. The Council accepted the accounts as an accurate record	<b>Accounts checked by Cllr. Maskell and approved.</b>
<b>047/21</b>		9.4 The Council approved the annual expenses for the Chairman at the same level of last year (£250).	
<b>048/21</b>		9.5 The Council accepted the proposal that from April 2022, the Clerk's salary would be fixed at £12.00 per hour for the next three years.	
<b>049/21</b>		9.6 Scoop Dotty Dog were no longer trading. Facilities Management were now contracted to empty the dog waste bins. The annual cost, although increased, was considerably lower than SODC. However, the increased cost would mean that there would be no surplus from the Precept.	
<b>050/21</b>	<b>Planning applications 1.Pending</b>	P21/S2516/HH for demolition of lean-to and construction of new lean-to extension at 11 The Green, Marsh Baldon This was approved by the Council P21/S2610/HH for erection of double storey rear extension plus altered internal configuration at 2 Potland Cottages, Toot Baldon This was approved by the Council P21/S2706/LDP for installation of a caravan at the front of the property for ancillary residential use at 1 The Croft, Marsh Baldon The Council has serious concerns about this application as it would set a precedent for other properties wishing to build on their frontage. An objection would be placed with SODC.	
<b>051/21</b>	<b>2. Decision</b>	The Council noted that the following applications had been approved by SODC: P21/S1361/FUL for development work at The Coach House, Little Baldon P21/S1156/HH for development at New Farmhouse	
<b>052/21</b>	<b>Item for the next Agenda</b>	Digital technology	
<b>052/21</b>	<b>Dates of the next meetings</b>	<b>13 September</b> <b>8 November</b> <b>10 January 2022</b> <b>14 March 2022</b> <b>At 7.30 pm at the Village Hall</b>	

Signed as a true record: .....

Date: .....