

BAGNALL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting

28 September 2021

Via Zoom

Present:

Cllr Les Knowles (Chair)
Cllr Andrew Batson
Cllr Anthony Drakeley
Cllr Roger Jackson

Cllr Peter Lawley
Cllr Dave Pearson
Cllr Sybil Ralphs

In attendance:

Denise Cooper (Clerk/RFO); Cllr Keith Flunder (County Council)

	Apologies
	There were no apologies.
	Minutes of the Previous Meeting
	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record.
	Declaration of Personal / Pecuniary Interest
	Cllr Jackson expresses a personal/pecuniary interest in the road closures through the village and Cllrs Knowles and Pearson on any discussions relating to Footpaths 12 and 28.
	Adjournment of meeting for public comments and concerns
	Parishioners' Concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Parish Council had not been informed of any concerns. County Councillor Reports <p>Cllr Flunder advised that a site visit / meeting had taken place with representatives of the Parish Council, County Council and Prysimia Systems Ltd. Western Power Ltd had not attended, but were represented by Prysimia Systems Ltd. After the meeting Cllr Flunder received an email stating that most of our requirements were being met, including the installation of traffic lights, but on the following day a further email was received by him rescinding this agreement. The cost of installing traffic lights on Springs Bank, which would be borne by Western Power Ltd, was prohibitive, and as this road was not directly part of the road works this measure was not a requirement, nor was the one-way road change past the church.</p>

As a good will measure some temporary road repairs had been carried out to potholes and around the Ford. More permanent repairs will be undertaken when the works are finalised. The cutting back of hedges overhanging the carriage way is still outstanding, the Clerk was asked to write to the landowner.

Cllr Flunder stated that although he had noticed an increased volume of traffic, the number of HGV's had reduced and asked if Cllrs agreed with this.

Cllr Pearson stated that the volume of traffic had increased significantly, but not everyone was driving with due care on Springs Bank and felt that the provision of traffic lights, as this was a very narrow stretch, would assist in slowing people down and preventing unnecessary accidents. This view was supported by all Cllrs. Cllr Knowles added that there is an expectation from residents that this will happen in the next few days and asked which organisation would be accepting liability for a serious accident or even a death. Cllr Flunder explained that Western Power Ltd has the authority to undertake works on the UK highways, and Staffordshire County Council has the responsibility to ensure that minimal disruption occurs by putting in place diversions and safety measures on the direct route of the works.

If the issue was purely one of costs, Cllrs suggested that some of the monies set aside for compensation works was utilised for the installation of traffic lights. The governance of all contracts allows a contingency fund for unforeseen events. Cllr Jackson stated that all contracts should have a matrix to ensure compliance with the contract and a clause that would allow works to stop temporarily whilst situations were being resolved. Cllrs felt that whilst accountability for the works may be with the contractors, responsibility for the installation of appropriate safety measures for road users and public protection on the roads lay with the County Council.

The Parish Council expressed a "Vote of No Confidence" in the County Council, who they felt were shirking their health and safety responsibilities by not showing due diligence around the contract. Cllr Batson asked Cllr Flunder to request, in the strongest terms, that SCC put in place the measures that were originally agreed at the meeting.

Cllr Ralphs stated that the people at SCC Cllr Flunder was in liaison with were not of sufficient status within the department to make decisions and this issue should be pushed up to more senior officers. She felt that SCC had merely undertaken a 'desktop' view of Bagnall and they needed to embark on a site visit so they could clearly see the issues we are facing. Cllr Ralphs asked for a paper trail of discussions between Highways and Cllr Flunder, as she understood that he was aware of these works much earlier but had failed to raise the issue with the Parish Council in a timely manner. Cllr Flunder agreed to provide copies of the emails received to the Clerk for reference purposes, although he denied that he had received advanced notice of the works and was actively working directly with residents.

Cllr Lawley stated that additional remedial road works were being undertaken through the village, which is adding to the chaos. He was surprised and disappointed at the lack of co-ordination between the different sections of Highways at the County Council.

Cllr Pearson advised that some residents along Thorney Edge Road had already undertaken some remedial work, and they were thanked for taking this initiative. However, it was unfair to expect residents to wait until the whole contract had been finalised.

In terms of reinstatement of verges and road surfaces, SCC has agreed to undertake this work at the end of the whole contract, requesting compensation from Western Power Ltd for the cost of so doing. Cllr Flunder is looking into how residents can input into this process.

Cllr Jackson asked for reassurance that funding was available to undertake this remedial work. He added the work had been compartmentalised into three phases and it was not unreasonable to request that repairs were done at the end of each phase. Cllr Flunder agreed to obtain confirmation in writing that a phased approach would be enacted and forward a copy to the Clerk. Cllr Batson accepted that the Highways' schedule of works for the repairs would change on a weekly basis but requested that the Parish Council is kept informed of when works were to be undertaken.

Cllrs raised the issue of the lack of signage, particularly coming from the A53. Cllr Flunder explained that there were no further signs available. Cllr Ralphs agreed to resource signs from Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

The Clerk was asked to send a strongly worded email to SCC to demand the installation of traffic lights on Springs Bank and Cllr Ralphs will follow this up with senior officials at SCC. Another week's delay is unacceptable. If the response is still negative, the Parish Council will have no alternative than to do a press release stating our Non-Confidence in the County Council's Highways department.

Addendum

As requested, the Clerk wrote to SCC to express our extreme dissatisfaction with the way this issue had been dealt with. A response was received stating that the installation of traffic lights on Springs Bank from the green to the 'T' junction at the end of Thorney Edge Road was still not viable but suggested that the road be closed.

Cllrs felt that by closing the road Bagnall would effectively be shut off from people accessing from Werrington/Cheddleton and would adversely affect several businesses/farms in the village. The Parish Council's preferred compromise would be traffic lights on Springs Bank but for a shorter length, say, the stretch from just below Old Mill Lane to Little Lawn Farm on Thorney Edge Road. Cllr Ralphs is currently in liaison with senior officers at SCC to put forward this option and is optimistic of a successful outcome.

21.27	Finances
	<p><i>Matters Arising from Previous Minutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ None <p>New Issues</p> <p>21.27.01 – BPAG</p> <p>The Clerk has been informed that the Bagnall Parish Action Group (BPAG) has now disbanded and have offered to transfer £300.00 to the Parish Council for use towards the Christmas light decorations. Cllrs stated it was important to keep traditions going and expressed thanks for the monies. Cllr Knowles will advise them accordingly.</p> <p>Discussion followed on how best to use the funding we have for this purpose. As there is no dedicated electricity supply, Cllr Pearson was asked to scope out the best lighting options available. The height of the tree will affect the cost of putting the lights up, it was agreed that it was now at its optimum height and Cllr Jackson stated it would be better to cut this back in the Spring.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Actions: Cllrs Pearson</p>
21.28	Planning
	Discussions on planning were deferred until the meeting in October.
21.29	General Maintenance and Other Issues
	<p><i>Matters Arising from Previous Minutes</i></p> <p>21.24.02 – Renewal of Contracts – Village Green and Playing Field</p> <p>The contractor for the greens has been advised that his contract has been extended for a further two years.</p> <p>In relation to the playing fields, the current contractor has not honoured his agreement to bring the field up to standard. Cllr Batson will liaise with the greens contractor to do a temporary cut of the field with Cllr Lawley assisting where necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All other items have been deferred to the October meeting <p>New Issues</p> <p>21.29.01 – Virtual Meeting Review</p> <p>The Clerk advised that following the recent Government Cabinet reshuffle, a new Minister had been appointed to review virtual meetings, and he has asked for our views. Cllrs agreed to reiterate the points previously made, particularly as the winter months had the potential to be challenging. Cllr Pearson suggested the purchase of a TV that could be utilised to provide hybrid meetings if required.</p>

21.29.02 – Remembrance Wreath

Cllrs agreed to the purchase of a Remembrance Wreath as in previous years. Cllr Flunder stated that he would be providing a wreath and asked if Cllrs could present this on his behalf. This was agreed.

21.29.03 – Police Surgeries

The Parish Council had been made aware of a surgery run by the local PCSO to provide an avenue for the public to raise issues. Cllrs felt that the promotion of this via Police Twitter and Facebook was not inclusive enough. The Clerk was therefore asked to write to them to raise our concerns.

21.29.04 – Website Upgrade

Cllr Knowles advised that he had found a website provider that would enable the Parish Council to be compliant with current legislation. This would come with a one-off purchase price, rather than an annual upkeep subscription. After discussion it was agreed to proceed with the one-off purchase price website provider and investigate cyber insurance next year when our insurance policy is renewed.

21.29.05 – Telephone Kiosk outside Rose and Crown

The first step in bringing the Kiosk into use for a defibrillator is to connect it to an electricity supply. Cllr Drakeley was asked to approach local electricians for a cost for this work. Cllr Knowles stated that within an agreed wattage, BT had agreed to pay for the electricity used.

Action: Cllr Drakeley

21.29.06 – Solar Panels / Battery Storage

At the last meeting the Parish Council was made aware that several applications for solar panel installation upon Green Belt land were to be submitted early in 2022. Cllr Knowles felt that the Parish Council needed to undertake some research into these provisions and provide a balanced information sheet for residents. The Parish Council could then make an informed decision, taking a steer from residents, when applications came before us. Cllr Batson will pull together a Newsletter outlining all the pros and cons of these facilities in a balance way and request that residents provide their own views to either the Parish Council or direct to SMDC once these applications are received.

Cllrs felt that many farmers may be swayed by the financial implications of allowing development on their land, but that there was a downside apart from their appearance on the landscape in that they had a relatively short life span. Technology is advancing at a rapid pace, and in a very short time current technology devices would become obsolete, and we are left with the detritus of the old which is not recyclable and will need to go to landfill.

This is not about rejecting green technology, but more that it is placed in the right places and not within Green Belt or designated Areas of Outstanding Beauty, as is currently being considered.

	<p>Cllr Pearson felt that such applications would be submitted to other parishes within the Moorlands and there is the potential for a saturation of solar panels / battery storage units and therefore it was important for all parishes to work together to provide a comprehensive response; we also need the views of SMDC planning. This would require a broader meeting to provide information and gauge support, and this needed to be raised at the next Parish Assembly.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Cllr Batson</p>
21.30	Footpaths and Highways
	<p><i>Matters arising from previous minutes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deferred to the October meeting. <p>New Issues</p> <p>21.30.01 – Seat</p> <p>Cllr Ralphs stated that she had received a request for funding to provide a seat by Bagnall Heights. Cllr Knowles replied that although we had agreed to the provision of a seat, we had been under the impression that funding was being provided by Bagnall Heights and not via a grant.</p>
21.31	Correspondence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SMDC – W.A.R Fly Tipping Campaign
	Date of Next Meeting
	The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Tuesday 19 October 2021, 7.30pm

Meeting concluded at 9.45pm

Signed

(Chairman)

Dated: 19 October 2021