

BALDERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held in the Village Centre on Wednesday April 12th, 2023, at 6.30pm.

PRESENT Cllr Mrs Hurst chairing the meeting, thirty-one residents, four non-resident members of public and the Clerk to the Council.

APOLOGIES were accepted from residents M & WA Clipsham, Parish Cllrs Mrs Buxton & Gloster: Cllr Ms White had advised she would be late joining the meeting.

23/01 Chairman's report

Cllr Mrs Hurst outlined the last year's Council activities including those undertaken to mark her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee; these included the lighting of a beacon on the playing field and the purchase of a clock for the front of the Village Centre. She also referred to possible options being considered to mark the King's Coronation. Anti-social behaviour continues to be a problem on the playing field and a decision was taken to fence off the dance studio canopy area, to try and ease the situation there as the young dancers reported being frightened of the older children's unwanted attention. Appreciation was expressed to the many litter pickers who help keep the village tidy, pointing out that Balderton is bigger than just around the Lake. (Mrs Callingham asked her to withdraw this remark as Friends of Balderton regularly undertake community litter picks in the village, the last event collecting thirty-three bags of litter, but Cllr Mrs Hurst refused to retract it). There are ongoing options being explored by the Council to both cut fuel consumption and use more renewable energy. The Council was served with a petition, asking for a decision to be revoked to allow the YMCA to undertake kayaking on the Lake; this had been formally considered but not supported. The threat of a residential development on land around Highfields school continues along with a new application for 150 dwellings on land off Lowfield Lane; the Council has objected to both of these recently. Councillors, some of whom are retiring at the end of the current term of office, were sincerely thanked for their hard work over the years. Council administration, ground care and attendant staff were all thanked, along with the village's County Councillors.

23/02 Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on May 4th 2022, were taken as read and noted, having been previously signed at a subsequent meeting of the Parish Council. Mrs Callingham challenged the accuracy of the minutes and the Council's right to approve them, considering that they should only be approved at the next Annual Parish Meeting-this will be looked into. Mrs Hall asked what progress had been made regarding the Chairman's comment that a working party could be formed to look at young persons' activities? This had not yet

been undertaken. Mr Talbot spoke about his perception that there is a division within the village and a campaign against the Council which was evident at last year's meeting. Mr Crane considered that the meeting should be declared null and void. Mrs Cawthorne asked again for assistance with regards to anti-social and threatening behaviour at Heron Way car park when deploying the overnight bollards. Mr Smith said he considered the picnic benches near to the car park are the main problem as they attract unwanted attention. The Chairman advised that the Heron Way car park issue would be included on the next Amenities Committee agenda.

23/03 Committee Chairmen's Reports.

Cllr Allen reported as the Chairman of the Amenities Committee and the Allotment subcommittee. The playing field is home to 6 adult football teams, several junior teams, the Balderton Cricket and Bowls clubs and all report that the Council's facilities are the best in the area. The teams all try to encourage young people to join and play. The allotments have 46 tenants, there are 29 Balderton residents on the waiting list plus several from outside the parish (Balderton residents always have priority when plots become available). Water costs have risen again this year and usage is being monitored. Regular allotment inspections take place to ensure all plots are well tended and kept tidy.

23/04 Balderton Parochial Charity.

Copies of the Charity's accounts for 2022/23 were circulated and duly noted.

23/05 Questions raised.

Mrs Callingham challenged and questioned the Council's reasons for allowing the YMCA to undertake supervised kayaking on the Lake-only one Councillor actually expressed an opinion at the meeting where the petition was considered. Previous Councils have turned down requests for similar activity so what has changed? Mrs Callingham was asked to submit her request in writing to the Council in order that a full reply may be provided.

Mr Roberts challenged certain Council expenditure, increased rates and previous local elections where residents were not given the opportunity to elect Councillors.

Mrs Bright suggested that a joint public meeting be arranged where the Police and all agencies that deal with anti-social behaviour be invited to address local concerns. Cllr Fairburn advised that local police surgeries are held in the library where members of the public can raise any concerns and engage with officers. Mrs Bright also reported on the uneven state of the pavement on London Road near to Sainsbury's and suggested that the grass verges in that vicinity be planted with wildflower seeds. Both of these issues will be referred to the local County Councillor for that area.

Mr Smith reminded the meeting that the Council does not own the Lake, it is only custodian of it for the people of Balderton and that in his opinion the YMCA will take it over in time.

Mrs Callingham challenged the quality of environmental/wildlife/safety appraisals and surveys undertaken at the Lake by the YMCA and challenged the claim that deprived young people will benefit from the kayaking activity as it is not a free activity and the YMCA has only referred to financial support through scholarships which are for one week a year, are means tested and like a contribution.

Cllr Allen stated that the biggest impact on the wildlife and ecology in the vicinity was created by the building of the houses on the Lakeside estate in the 1980's. The potential development around Highfields School is a very real concern and he urged people to object to the latest planning application.

Ms Farrell asked the Council to forget what has passed and to re-consider its decision to enter an agreement with the YMCA to allow kayaking on the Lake. The Chairman explained that this would be a matter for the new Council to decide upon but such a request could not be considered within 6 months of it being formally discussed.

Cllr Mrs Lee stated that there are many residents who support the kayaking but are too scared to speak openly at Council meetings, and who claim they were intimidated when they declined to sign the petition. There are many people who think differently to those opposing the agreement and Councillors represent all residents.

Mr Crane stated that the YMCA's charges for its facilities are very expensive and do not benefit local people.

Mr Talbot expressed his concerns about the hazards of poor parking outside John Hunt School. He suggested that more notices should be displayed notifying the public about planning applications. These two issues will be raised with the County Council and District Council respectively. He thanked Cllrs Olga and Paul Newstead who after many years' service will be retiring from the Council in May. He considered it vital that the dance studio building continues to be used. He expressed concern that number 27 London Road is on the market as this could be used as separate access for the proposed Highfields School development. He expressed concern that Council groundstaff face a lot of criticism from certain members of the public and praised their knowledge and hard work.

Mr Roberts stated that he did not consider the wildlife will be harmed by the kayaking activity; his concern is for the young people who will almost certainly take their own boats on the Lake unsupervised and get into difficulty because of the many feet of foundry ash on the waterbed.

Mrs Callingham raised concerns that the kayaking will take place from April to October which covers the main bird nesting and mating season.

Mr Marshall asked why the second water quality test took place in December and not when the planned activity will take place? (The YMCA had advised the Council that the second water test was to be undertaken when the first test had been carried out so that the two could be compared, like for like).

Ms Farrell suggested that a further water quality test should be undertaken between April and October when the proposed activity will take place and algae levels will almost certainly be higher.

Mrs Callingham stated that the Council had never challenged any of the YMCA reports including the very basic first ecology report and had signed the licence without ever seeing the water report.

Mr Jessop stated that he did not consider the Lake to be a safe place for kayaking as he saw a gravel barge sunk there many years ago. He also raised concerns about anti-social behaviour and bad language in the village and the Police's lack of intervention.

Miss Callingham asked if there was any evidence that kayaking reduces anti-social behaviour? (The Council is not aware of any such findings).

Cllr Ms White joined the meeting at approximately 7.55pm.

Mr Crane claimed the Council had not acted to remove some Poplar trees at the Lake that were reported five years ago as being diseased. (The Councils professional Tree Survey had not reported this to be the case. Any dangerous trees would reluctantly be removed).

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.

and the meeting closed at 8.00pm.