

MEETING OF CAMPTON AND CHICKSANDS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held in Campton Village Hall on Thursday 4th April 2024.

Present: Cllr Baker as Chairman, Cllr Booton, Cllr Sibley. Cllr Longson, Cllr Wootton, Central, Central Bedfordshire Councillor Tony Brown.

Apologies: Cllr Ash, Cllr Turton, Bedfordshire Councillor Mark Liddiard

161/24 MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2024 were signed as a true record of the meeting.

Matters arising:

162/24 DECLARATION OF INTEREST/REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION:

None

163/24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

A resident thanked the PC for looking into reinstating the Good Neighbour Support scheme within the village, the resident is happy to help with a leaflet drop to see if more people would volunteer. It will be on the next agenda to discuss fully. Clerk will look at what the insurance covers.

164/24 UPDATE BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCILLORS:

- Report provided in Annual Parish meeting.

165/24 FINANCES:

Payments agreed: April 2024

C Bain payroll £58

D Granger £1,076.40

SLCC £91.50

Play inspection Co £385.20

A Muskett £104.40

Community account £11,913.25

Business account £23,368.52

As on 1/4/24

Payments agreed, proposed by Cllr Baker, seconded by Cllr Booton, all agreed.

Clerk has received a remittance today from CBC for the precept of £28,979.00 and £450 Ward Cllr funding for the IT equipment.

Clerk will set up payments for Cllrs to authorise.

Barclays have once again put a warning on the account that the account details require verification, Clerk has contacted them again to clarify that it is a PC account, so there should now be no outstanding queries.

Clerk has requested a copy of the Pellys invoice from Cllr Longson.

It was agreed there was no additional items to add to the Assets list for this year.

The school have arranged a Pop-up Planetarium for the children that was held at the Church, it was also available to residents outside of school hours. Cllrs agreed a £20 donation towards the costs.

166/23 PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

CB/24/00870/FULL 3 Mill Lane, Replacement of rear garden outbuilding and erection of a front porch. No objections.

Chicksands Private application is currently undecided.

No update regarding the Greenway development, Cllr Baker has contacted the planner for information regarding any traffic calming documentation associated with the plans.

167/23 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES:

JOINT BURIAL BOARD:

Clerk found an old document indicating that the JBB are responsible for the wall on their side in the Campton church yard.

CAMPTON UNITED CHARITIES:

No update.

P3 GROUP:

Cllr Wooton met with Rights of way officer, Chris Dorow. He discussed a few key items:

- There is currently no budget available for disabled access from Mill Lane to the bridge going towards Polehanger woodland, but Chris will add it to the list of potential projects for the future.
- The footpath between the two bridges in Campton Plantation is a potential project. Cllr Wooton asked if this area could be cut back further? It is land owned by the Base, but CBC could request it.
- Handrails will be fitted near to the bridge in Campton Plantation.

Cllrs thanked Cllr Wooton for his work on this.

168/23 PROJECTS/ONGOING ISSUES:

Campton Church yard:

Cllr Booton thanked Cllr Brown for his assistance with gaining a response from CBC. CBC have not carried out any of the inspections as yet. The Diocese are looking for a document that is issued when the burial ground was closed, it would have stated which party was responsible for the ongoing maintenance. The Diocese when they originally registered the land included the area maintained by the JBB, it needs to be clarified where the boundary is.

Recreation ground:

Cllr Booton continues to inspect the play area; an inspection has recently been carried out. The branches hanging over have been removed and the branches obstructing the climbing wall have

been cut back. The signs for the play area need replacing to include a contact and where the nearest defibrillator is. Cllr Booton proposed changing the wording, seconded by Cllr Baker, all agreed.

Speed watch:

The Mayor of Shefford is looking to pull local Parishes together to run a joint speed watch, Cllrs agreed that Clerk should advertise this in the newsletter to see if there are any volunteers within the Parish.

CBC Local Plan response:

The PC agreed a response via email and have submitted it to CBC. See notes at the end of the Minutes.

Wi-fi at the village hall:

A new full fibre package was agreed, and the installation took place earlier today. A Ward Cllr grant of £450 has been received towards IT equipment.

Additional Accessible green space Grant/Project

The National lottery bid was unsuccessful, Cllr Booton has sought advice on this as to why the bid was unsuccessful. It was partly due to location and the Parish not being a deprived area. As part of the assessment the Minutes and finances of the PC were viewed. The finances were not explicit enough in explaining what was earmarked for each project. There was also very little minuted as the Cllrs did not want to release too much information until there was further confirmation that the land would be available to the PC. There is an alternative fund that Cllr Booton will submit an application to and a second fund that Cllr Baker has looked into.

Village hall land:

There are some documents that the PC need to complete, and the PC need to clarify what is required. Clerk and Cllr Longson will discuss this. Cllr Longson will also confirm that there are no liabilities on the land.

Email addresses:

Cllr Baker has set up separate email addresses for Cllrs, purely for Council business. He will pass out the details to Cllrs.

Hedge maintenance:

Clerk has requested that CBC Highways inspect the overgrown hedges in the village, he will report back.

Code of Conduct:

Deferred until the next meeting.

169/23 CONSULTATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

The following correspondence was received:

- Clerk attended the group Priority setting meeting, the next one run by the Police will be 10/4/24.
- Sustainability and climate resilience, PC will respond.

- Local Nature recovery strategy, PC will respond. It was agreed that the PC should review natural assets within the Parish and use this as a strategy to protect what the Parish has. Cllr Baker will prepare a draft response to be agreed at the next meeting.
- Youth Parliament 25/5/24
- The next Topic session is Local Transport Plan, 16/4/24.
- Greenway will be closed until at least 19th April, whilst Anglian water carry out sewage pipe repairs.

170/23 AOB:

Last year the PC suggested that two more trees be placed along Greenway, proposed by Cllr Booton, seconded by Cllr Baker, all agreed.

A few residents have commented on how useful the walking maps in the centre of the village are.

171/23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be:

Thursday 9th May 2024 7pm, to include appointment of Cllr roles and responsibilities for the next 12 months.

CBC Local Plan - Town & Parish Council Engagement March 2024

Parish of Campton and Chicksands

Introduction

The Parish has three very distinct areas (please see 2021 Neighbourhood Plan) each having a major significance for different reasons.

To the north of the Parish, you have the rural area of Chicksands Wood and the open farmland. The history of this area can be seen in the names on the ordnance survey map The John Bunyan Trail, Druids Grove, Temple Grove. In the centre of the Parish, you have the military base (Chicksands) and the housing development of Chicksands Private. Situated within the base is Chicksands Priory and grounds which has historical significance as it was founded by the only English monastic order (Gilbertine) and parts of the old abbey still remain. During the Second World War it housed some of the code breakers who worked at Bletchley. It then became a base for the American Air Force then the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Today it houses MOD UK Strategic Command. The base personnel have had a significant effect on census data with approximately 800 personnel, most of whom are young and are only based there for three to four years. The base has been identified for closure in 2030 which will bring major changes to the area in the longer term. It is the view of the Parish Council that as much as possible of the open green space should be preserved to enhance the wild habitat that exists there, and provide recreational and leisure space for parishioners, so meeting objectives SO3, SO4, SO11 and SO12.

To the south of the Parish beyond the A507 you have the historic village of Campton which can trace its history back to the Domesday Book. The village has several buildings, many listed, dating back over two hundred years, including Campton Manor, the Public House and the old Post House with its thatched roof. The roads in the village are narrow and parking is difficult as many of the houses have no parking. Parking generally is a problem with there now being 2.7 cars per household. (See notes on transport) The Parish also has two rivers flowing through it; the River Flit to the North and the River Hit (Campton Brook) to the South both of which provide habitat for wildlife including freshwater crayfish. To the south the river often overflows onto the flood plain so far this has happened twice this year (see pictures at end of document)

Vision

Vision statements are important and there is much to commend in this statement. However, the devil is in the detail. For instance, we feel there remains a real conflict in the aim of preserving the heritage and distinctiveness of market town & villages and promoting moderate growth. What is the definition of “moderate”. Many will feel that we have seen more than “moderate” growth under the umbrella of the existing plan (some villages doubling in size); and ask the question when does moderate growth become excessive and unsustainable. Some will say we have already reached this point.

We also feel that the vision should refer to the global issues faced, because of Climate Change and the challenges of a transition to Net Zero that must be faced by all. Simply mentioning “sustainable” homes no longer “cuts the mustard”. We feel that sustainability needs to underpin all aspects of the Vision Statement, including infrastructure, housing, environment, transport, and business development.

Strategic Objectives

Growth and Infrastructure

SO1 At present the Parish Council has seen little provision of integrated health and care hubs. Residents still complain about the difficulty of getting a doctor’s appointment.

SO2 Homes need to be built in the correct areas with appropriate communication links not on the edge of villages where the design and layout is generally not in keeping with the surrounding area. At the previous consultation on the Local Plan the Planning Officers we feel refused to listen to proposals that were in keeping with the Parish.

With a view to establishing improvements in sports and leisure facilities for the parish, it seems that the closure of the military base in 2030 might offer potential solutions with the extensive “Sports Island” facilities and reasonable vehicular access currently a facility on the base.

Local community infrastructure is pressured already. The Village Hall is only leased by the community (it is owned by the Diocese of St Albans) and whilst central to Campton village has minimal dedicated parking and relies heavily on on-street parking. With the expectation that the lower school buildings, that are listed, will be vacated in the late 2020’s the Parish Council would like to better explore the future potential of these buildings to improve community facilities for the parish.

Local Character

The last few years have seen the almost uncontrolled growth of small and medium villages in the area Clifton/Meppershall/Stondon for example.

Campton is a small village with at present 200 homes which has a distinctive character. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book. It is important that Central Beds recognise the qualities and uniqueness of these villages and not continue to expand them so as they become part of larger conurbations. It appears to residents that CBC say they recognise the distinctive nature of such villages but do nothing to preserve the character.

Adjacent to the village are the Glebe lands which are of historical importance as they were part of the strip farming for residents to support their basic farming income. Today they are still farmed by a local tenant farmer. A portion of these Glebe lands with a strong parkland feel central to the village was designated as Local Green Space (LGS) in the 2021 Neighbourhood Plan. The parish has also designated three other sites as LGS in the Plan.

As well as the historic village of Campton there is the historical nature of parts of Chicksands.

Chicksands Priory contains the remains from the only English monastic order (The Gilbertine Order).

The present Priory also housed personnel from the code breakers based at Bletchley during the Second World War. The site also contains a large (and lovingly recently restored) walled garden with ancient fruit trees. After the Second World War the American Airforce took over the site and upon their departure the Ministry of Defence took over the use of the site.

Jobs and Business

At present most people leave the area for employment. However, with the introduction of AI employment may need to change. There is an opportunity to develop other skills and trades. The Parish Council have already considered how the present Village School building and site could be used for recreation and employment but the large plan for the area preserving the environment as outlined under the “Environment” section could create other employment opportunities.

Homes

The Parish Council recognises the need for homes, but they need to be in the right place with good communication and infrastructure links. The Parish already has a planning application progressing for 66 houses on the edge of the village. The surrounding area has also experienced a mass of development over the past five years. With the Chicksands base being closed it is vital that we

know what is likely to happen before any further developments are permitted in the Parish. There are currently approx. 250 dwellings on the base and extensive brownfield sites currently used for military offices and works buildings. Clearly the site has all core infrastructure services. The future of this site is key to planning for the parish.

Campton Village, at present linear in nature with a real variety of buildings built up over a long period of time, has created a wide variety of buildings ranging from the 500 year old Manor House, to a thatched cottage and to many farmers cottages built at the end of the nineteenth century. As well as those built more recently. There is a planned development at the edge of the village that will change the established layout of housing, alter and urbanise the village approach significantly. Chicksands has the Military Base and Chicksands Private housing (116 dwellings) that were sold off after the American Air Force left.

Transport

There is a lack of understanding of the area when it comes to transport. The present objectives presume that everyone will travel by public transport. There are in fact three separate issues: the car, the lack of public transport and the location of the Parish.

Due to its location, there is a need for residents to own a car and a recent survey showed that the average car ownership for Campton was 2.7 vehicles per household.

The reasons for the need for a car are as follows: firstly, the lack or infrequency of public transport so making it difficult to get to places of employment or that people work some distance away from the area. Secondly, if you are going to the theatre or cinema, you either go to London, Milton Keynes or Stevenage for all of which you need a car to get there, or a station.

We have in Campton an older population than the national average (over 65) and so need to visit the doctor more frequently; the nearest doctor is in Shefford, which is too far to walk or take a bike and the buses are at the wrong times or non-existent.

The Parish has the A507 passing through in an east to west direction and on its eastern boundary. Central Bedfordshire carried out a road survey some years ago, pre-pandemic; the results showed that the roads had major congestion particularly from the roundabout on the entrance to Shefford up to the Airman pub. Since this report there has been a considerable amount of development in the area Shefford, Stondon Meppershall and Clifton which has increased the volume of traffic. In a morning and evening traffic leaving Campton from Greenway and want to turn right heading towards the A1M must turn left and go down to the roundabout by the entrance to Shefford by the Monkey Puzzle and come back along the A507 bypass so creating more of an issue at the roundabout during rush hour periods.

Due to the increase in traffic, vehicles are now using Campton as a short cut (rat runs) which has caused other problems such as vehicles travelling too fast through the Village. The Village was never designed for motor vehicles. Also, several houses have no parking on site and are having to park on the roads, which causes more problems particularly with heavy farm machinery being transported through the village. There are also major congestion issues in the Village if there is an incident on the A507 which has happened several times. The Parish Council invited the CBC Traffic Management Officer to review the situation and he was concerned at what he encountered.

Environment

The Parish is blessed with an amazing array of wildlife like Buzzards, Red Kites, Sparrowhawks, Kingfishers. Each one of these requires a different form of habitat, for example Buzzards need areas of open space/fields etc. to hunt. The small farmland birds need different types of trees and bushes. To maintain a balanced food chain, we have animals such as Muntjac deer, foxes,

badgers and farm livestock like sheep and cattle on the Glebe land. The two rivers are home to a wide variety of small fish as well freshwater crayfish.

There are parts of the Parish south of Campton that flood on a regular basis this year (2024) they have so far flooded twice.

SO11 The Parish Council totally agrees with this principle. However, when the Parish Council applied for grants to CBC that promote this objective they have not been supported.

Within the Parish there are several footpaths and those in authority appear to presume that because we have access to footpaths then everyone can use them to lead a healthy lifestyle. However, none of the footpaths are suitable for the infirm or people with prams or mobility scooters so restricting the accessibility of a healthy lifestyle for all.

SO12 The Parish Council welcomes the development of wildlife corridors and open green spaces. The Parish Council as part of its Neighbourhood Plan consultation employed an independent Environmental Charity (The Greensand Trust) to review our greenspaces (full documentation contained in the 2021 Green Infrastructure & Neighbourhood Plans). The Greensand Trust identified a shortage of accessible greenspaces, and this was also confirmed in a CBC review.

The Parish Council believes Central Beds Council to work with us regarding a real opportunity to create a long-term vision for the Parish in the creation of a large National Park area combining very different recreation activities and the creation of long term employment based on the natural world. The Greensand Trust is in the process of developing a new reserve (Clophill Lakes) to the west of the Parish and adjacent to the established Sandy Smith Nature Reserve (within our parish). Clophill Lakes is already a County Wildlife Site with a mosaic of wetland and floodplain habitats and the Trust are committed to ensure that public access to this site is established in a sensitive and sustainable manner which conserves and enhances these emerging habitats, whilst enabling visitors to share in the benefits this very special environment provides.

To the north of the Parish, you have the Rowney Warren Forestry Commission sites which are used by cyclists, dog walkers and people who just like to go for a walk. With the Forces leaving the Chicksands base, it provides an opportunity to maintain the wooded areas and parklands within the military base. Chicksands Priory could become a historic visitor attraction (ask the National Trust to run it perhaps).

The Parish Council have previously discussed a vision of creating a wildlife corridor from Chicksands around the west of Campton and along the river to Shefford. Leaving the flood plain open for wildlife habitat. This would comply with strategic objectives SO11, SO3 and SO4.