

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at 8pm in the Reading Room on Monday 11th March 2024.

Present:

Cllrs Bourke, Cox, Gowrley, Husband (Chair), Jones, Pryor, and Steed.

In attendance

Mole Valley District (MVDC) Cllrs Simon Budd and Paula Keay, and the Clerk attended the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

(236) Council noted apologies had been received from Surrey County Council (SCC) Cllr Helyn Clack and MVDC Cllr Paul Potter.

2. Declarations of Interest

(237) None.

3. Requests for Dispensations

(238) None.

4. Minutes

(239) Council **resolved** to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th January 2024. The minutes were duly signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. Planning

New Planning Applications

(240) Council, having considered each of the following three planning applications **resolved** not to submit any comments:

- (i) MO/2024/0251: Erection of Oak framed outbuilding following demolition of two existing sheds at 3 Buckland Court, Reigate Road, Buckland, RH3 7EA;
- (ii) MO/2024/0281: Reduce crown of willow by (50%) 5 metres in height and width (old points) leaving inner weeping growth to leave tree at a height of 10 metres and width of 10 metres at 3 Little Maltings Cottage, The Green, Rectory Lane, Buckland, RH3 7BH; and
- (iii) MO/2024/0284: Erection of a single storey extension to existing garage at April Cottage, Old Road, Buckland, RH3 7DY.

Planning Notifications

- (241) MO/2024/0040: Discharge of Conditions 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 13 & 14 of approved planning application MO/2022/1107 for the erection of new dwelling by utilising and extending existing double garage and store and demolishing existing barn, garage and out-buildings at Land adj to Yew Tree Cottage, Reigate Road, Buckland, RH3 7BG. Split decision, conditions relating to drainage refused.
- (242) MO/2023/1802: Installation of a standalone structure to house a transformer at Chesterfield Park, Reigate Road, Buckland, RH2 9TB. Approved with conditions.
- (243) MO/2023/1913: Remove 2 holly trees, one silver birch tree, one sitka spruce tree, and 2 yew trees at 3 Buckland Court, Reigate Road, Buckland, RH3 7EA. No objection.

Future Mole Valley – New MVDC Local Plan

(244) Council noted:

- (i) following an Extraordinary Meeting of MVDC, held on 25th January 2024, MVDC had decided to restart work to prepare and adopt of a new local plan for Mole Valley; work that had been paused in December 2022; and
- (ii) a consultation on changes to the Local Plan the Planning Inspector considers are required to make it compliant with relevant government policy opened on Friday 1st March 2024 and will close at 5pm on Tuesday 23rd April.

(245) Council, having considered the consultation documents **resolved** to submit a response drafted to be consistent with the response submitted in response to the Regulation 19 Consultation. **Action:** Clerk.

6. Highways, Airports and Trains

Highways

Surrey RoadSafe Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy

(246) Council noted:

- (i) the consultation on the draft Roadsafe Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy was launched on the Commonplace Platform;
- (ii) Council had declined to engage with the scoring which utilised a mix of emojis and numerical scores and chosen to focus on submitting narrative comment;
- (iii) a summary of the narrative comment had been shared with SCC Cllr Clack with a request for it to be shared with the relevant officers at SCC; and
- (iv) the summary response had been published on the village website.

(247) Council noted:

- (i) while a reference under the Safe Speeds to SCC “having already embarked on a proactive, strategic review with the aim of replacing all the existing 60 mph national speed limits on rural roads with lower speed limits” does not include any rural roads to the north of the A25;
- (ii) SCC has stated its “aim will be for all existing national speed limits on roads throughout Surrey to have been reviewed and new lower speed limits implemented where appropriate by the end of 2028”; and
- (iii) Any reduction in speed limit will come with the installation of additional street furniture along the rural lanes.

DFT funded safety improvements on A25 between Reigate and Dorking

(248) Council **resolved** to record a vote of thanks to:

- (i) the Clerk for the time and effort put into engaging with SCC Highways engineers and various other contacts in advance of and during the recent safety improvement works;
- (ii) Dominic Sanders for making available off highway storage which allowed the traffic lights located near Park Cottage to be reduced from 24/7 operation to daytime working hours and ensured proposals to locate a storage compound on the carriageway of Rectory Lane were not implemented; and
- (iii) the lead SCC Highways engineer for his positive engagement immediately prior to and during the work.

(249) Council noted:

- (i) further work in Buckland will be scheduled over the term of this project with the installation of high containment kerbs and a refresh related to traffic signage on Buckland bends being in advanced planning;

- (ii) work will include a review and refresh of all traffic signs located on central traffic islands along the A25 between Dorking and Reigate, work that will be undertaken as one task; and
 - (iii) while the timing of individual tasks remains uncertain, SCC has committed to “implement the £1.8 million A25 Dorking to Reigate Department for Transport Safer Roads Fund Scheme by the end of the financial year 2024/25.”
- (250) Council noted SCC Cllr Clack had recently confirmed “average speed cameras are set to be installed on the A25 between Dorking and Reigate as part of the £1.8m road safety monies from DfT and shared the fact she had expressed concern around road users wishing to avoid the cameras, adding extra traffic to rural roads and rat runs.”
- (251) Council **resolved** to task the Clerk, with the support of Cllr Steed to continue to closely monitor this initiative to increase the chance of injecting local knowledge at the earliest opportunity to any tasks that could impact our local community.

Verge Maintenance to the inside of the recently installed high containment kerbs

- (252) Council **resolved** to ratify:
- (i) an enquiry submitted to SCC Highways seeking assurance the recently reprofiled verge to the inside of the high containment kerbs will be able to withstand the proposed mode of operation for cutting the roadside verge and verge to the inside of the footway; and
 - (ii) the follow up request to SCC Cllr Clack asking her to intervene with the highways officers who had suggested, given the concerns being expressed by Council that Buckland Parish Council assume responsibility for maintenance of the verge.
- (253) Council noted a response from SCC Highways is awaited and the fact the verge has already started to deposit earth onto the adjacent footway had been highlighted to SCC Highways and SCC Cllr Clack.

A25 Roadside Footways – maintenance

- (254) Council **resolved** to add its weight to the positive feedback received from several residents that had expressed their appreciation for a job well done by the team from Clover Grounds Maintenance. A three man team, on Monday 12th and Friday 16th February had cleared a build-up of seasonal debris from the previously cleared sections of A25 roadside footways still with an intact surface layer. **Action:** Clerk to relay Council’s thanks to Jake Burley for his team’s hard work and commitment.
- (255) Council noted it is not possible to cut back sections of footway without an intact surface layer as this would breach SCC Highways guidelines that do not allow work to disturb the surface. **Action:** All to continue to encourage residents who use sections of footway with a broken surface to submit requests to SCC Highways for reconstruction of that section.

A25 Roadside Footways – reconstruction

- (256) Council noted SCC Highways had advised that until the drainage works had been completed to address the wet spot just to the west of The Pheasant, it would not be possible to consider scheduling reconstruction of the A25 roadside footway identified in the list of Project Horizon possible future projects (i.e. between the wet spot and the driveway to Buckland Court)
- (257) Council **resolved** to ratify support a recommendation to write to SCC Cllr Clack to ask for:
- (i) reconstruction of the section of A25 roadside footway between the wet spot and the driveway to Buckland Court to be scheduled as soon as practicable following the drainage works scheduled for early 2024/25; and
 - (ii) the design of the footway construction to take into account the proposed mode of operation for cutting the roadside verges and verge to the inside of the footway.

Action: Clerk.

A25 Roadside Footways - Street Cleaning Requests

(258) Council noted:

- (i) residents had expressed frustration that SCC Highways had repeatedly failed to accept responsibility for mud being deposited on the section of footway just to the west of The Pheasant, which occurs as a direct consequence of a drainage issue on the main carriageway that results in ponding;
- (ii) SCC had been redirecting residents to MVDC, advising street cleaning is a district responsibility;
- (iii) MVDC had been redirecting residents to SCC, stating that as the mud being deposited relates to a maintenance issue that is an SCC responsibility it is not a MVDC responsibility; and
- (iv) an email exchange between a resident and SCC Cllr Clack that had:
 - (a) asked Cllr Clack to intervene with SCC Highways officers to secure their commitment to keep the section of footway just to west of The Pheasant clear of mud until the programmed drainage work is completed; and
 - (b) confirmed to the resident Cllr Clack had expressed support for the resident's request for the surface of the footway to be cleared of mud.
- (v) the MVDC contractor, having had notification from SCC Highways of the need for MVDC to clear the footway had arranged for the earth to be removed only for it to be as bad following a further heavy downpour.

Street Cleaning Requests - A25 Carriageway

(259) Council noted:

- (i) several residents had expressed concern that despite receiving a reply from MVDC to street cleaning requests submitted via the MVDC website to advise a visit would be made within 5 working days that the promised visits had not materialised;
- (ii) a helpful resident had agreed to monitor the state of the A25 and to submit follow up requests in the event of a no show. After waiting 5 working days, the resident submitted a follow up request. After a further 5 working days a second repeat request was submitted. After a further 5 working days the resident advised an approach had been made to all three MVDC Cllrs to ask for their assistance;
- (iii) despite repeated requests from several residents, the parish council and all three MVDC Cllrs the road sweepers have yet to make any progress on the section of A25 Reigate Road between Rectory Lane and Tapwood Lane, nor has the build up of debris along other sections been swept.

(260) Council **resolved** to write to the MVDC Chief Executive to express concern that as the contractual arrangements between MVDC and its contractor appear to have broken down executive intervention is required. MVDC Cllrs Budd and Key indicated that upon receipt of a copy of the letter they would write letters of support. **Action:** Clerk.

Surface Water Drainage : A25 Reigate Road

(261) Council noted:

- (i) Clover Grounds Maintenance, having cleared four inches mud from the section of footway opposite the exit to the Shell garage had dug drainage ditches in the verge to the inside of the footway to aid drainage of any future ponding;
- (ii) several residents had expressed their frustration with SCC Highways for appearing to dismiss online reports of blocked gullies by closing enquiries without providing any feedback;

- (iii) surface water draining from the brow of the hill near the junction of Old Road flows out of a blocked gully, a short distance to the west of The Beeches, fails to re-enter subsequent gullies, flows across the road either side of the central island close to the exit to the Shell garage, floods the verge to the inside of three gullies (also blocked with silt) in the westbound carriageway and floods the footway; and
- (iv) residents have recently reported each of these blocked gullies and, given the risk of ice forming during cold weather, road safety concerns have also been registered.

(262) Council **resolved** to support a recommendation to write to SCC Cllr Clack to ask for a drainage investigation to be scheduled to address all gullies on both carriageways of the section of A25 Reigate Road between the Rectory Lane and Tranquil Dale junctions.
Action: Clerk.

Airports

(263) Council noted slides presented to a stakeholder information, held on 30th January 2024 as part of the Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) Airspace Change Proposal (ACP 2018-60) to redesign the arrival and departure routes that serve the airport's operation in line with the UK's Future Airspace Strategy Implementation (FASI) programme and UK Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS), had been circulated to Cllrs.

(264) Council noted:

- (i) Cllr Cox had attended a public session on 28th February 2024, held as part of the preliminary hearings on the Application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Northern Runway Project at Gatwick Airport, to deliver a statement setting out Council's key concerns about the application;
- (ii) a copy of the statement had been published on the village website.

(265) Council **resolved** to record a vote of heartfelt thanks to Cllr Cox for taking the lead, on behalf of Council, on the DCO and FASI consultations.

(266) Council noted Cllr Cox had booked a space to attend a Discover Gatwick Community Engagement Session on 14th March 2024.

Trains

(267) Council noted the Clerk, with the support of Cllr Steed had recently:

- (i) reviewed a draft proposal submitted to Betchworth Parish Council, by a Betchworth resident, that had suggested a re-routing of Network Rail replacement bus services along Old Reigate Road, Betchworth and Old Road Buckland;
- (ii) highlighted the adverse implications of the proposal on the wider community;
- (iii) put forward alternative points for consideration; and
- (iv) subsequently been advised a different proposal, with a routing that would remain on the A25 Reigate Road is now being sought.

7. Amenities and Events

(268) Council **resolved** to hold a litter pick between 10am noon on Saturday 20th April 2024.
Actions: Cllr Husband to prepare a poster for publication in the April parish magazine. Cllr Jones to coordinate litter picking and prepare risk assessment. Clerk to ensure recently replenished first aid kit is available. All Cllrs to encourage residents to participate.

(269) Council noted a trial planting of snowdrops in the green had been completed alongside the footpath extending towards Bromley field from Old Road. Council **resolved** to record a vote of thanks to the resident who had cleared residual brambles before planting the 1000 snowdrops.

(270) Council **resolved** to make a donation of £130 to St Mary's Church, a value sufficient to fund the electricity cost for powering the floodlights to the church for the 2023/24 financial year.

(271) Council noted:

- (i) the UK Government had extended the offer of a free portrait of His Majesty The King to include, for the first time, all town, parish, and community councils;
- (ii) the offer, which must be taken up by 28th March asks recipients to display the portrait “in reception areas, function rooms, boardrooms and similar locations where the portrait may be on display to staff and visitors of that building”;
- (iii) as Council does not own any buildings, an approach had been made to the Reading Room Committee who had politely declined the opportunity to receive a portrait to display in the Reading Room.

(272) Council reviewed arrangements for the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting and noted Cllrs Husband, Jones and the Clerk will meet on Wednesday 13th March to finalise the content of the Chair’s address and the topical update on Biodiversity to be presented by Cllr Jones.

8. Formalities

Buckland Parochial Charity

(273) Council noted a copy of Buckland Parochial Charity’s draft accounts for the year to 31st December 2023 had been circulated in advance of the meeting and would be presented to the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting on 18th March 2024.

(274) Council noted when:

- (i) Council met on 13th January 2020, Liz Vahey had been appointed to serve a four-year term as Nominative Trustee of Buckland Parochial Charity; and
- (ii) The trustees met on 25th January 2024, Liz Vahey had been appointed to serve as a Representative Trustee of Buckland Parochial Charity for a period of five years.

(275) Council **resolved** to appoint Margaret Abu-Nimeh to serve a four-year term, commencing 11th March 2024, as a Nominative Trustee of Buckland Parochial Charity alongside Debbie Jones, Amanda Oakes-Smith and Martin Boyce, each of whom were appointed to serve for a period of four years commencing 25th April 2023.

Annual review of effectiveness

(276) In accordance with advice set out in the Practitioners Guide to Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (2023), Council considered the effectiveness of its system of internal control and reviewed the measures in place to prevent and detect fraud and corruption.

(277) Council noted that the Financial Regulations had last been reviewed at the 2023 Annual Meeting and the next review is scheduled for May 2024.

(278) Council, having reviewed the recently circulated risk assessment schedule and audit plan concluded its system of internal control remains effective, its risk assessment is relevant and effective.

(279) Council, having given due consideration, **resolved** to re-adopt the current audit plan and to appoint Peter Barclay to continue as Council’s Internal Auditor for the period covering the preparation and publication of the 2024 Annual Return (AGAR).

Action: Clerk to liaise with the internal auditor.

Biodiversity

(280) Council noted:

- (i) the Clerk had attended a virtual SCC led Biodiversity Duty Workshop for Surrey ALC member councils on Tuesday 20th February that had been intended to provide a good understanding of a parish council’s duty and responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021; and

- (ii) SCC's Chief Ecologist, whose team is charged, with the support of the Surrey Nature Partnership (and its working parties), with drafting a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Surrey had advised:
 - (iii) a draft strategy will hopefully be put out for consultation by the end of 2024, and performance metrics follow shortly thereafter; and
 - (iv) whilst the team acknowledges this has not been in time for the legislation taking effect, it will be sufficiently in advance of the first formal reporting deadline of January 2026.
- (281) Council **resolved** to “consider the potential impact of actions it considers taking on biodiversity” and “take an interest in any future initiatives our neighbouring parishes and statutory councils might be championing with a biodiversity theme“. **Action:** Clerk to add this statement to the Environment section of the village website.
- (282) Council, having given a request from a project team asking Council to purchase hedgehog arches for insertion in solid property boundaries to create Hedgehog Highways concluded that given the rural characteristics of the village and the many natural gaps in the majority of property boundaries not to take any further action with respect to this request.
- (283) Council noted Re-Betchworth's successful application for grant funding to explore the possibility of establishing a biodiversity park across the communities of the 4Bs (Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland and Boxhill), four of the five communities in the 4Bs and Headley ward of MVDC. Council **resolved** to accept Cllr Jones offer to attend any collaborative meeting that might be arranged as the Buckland Parish Council's appointed representative.
- (284) Council **resolved** to appoint Cllr Husband to attend a MVDC led meeting of Parish Councils and Resident Associations between 10am and noon on 16th April 2024 to learn more about MVDC's Transformation Programme.
- (285) Council noted Cllr Jones had attended a forum of Surrey ALC Parish Cllrs on Wednesday 17th January 2024 and was pleased to advise the topics highlighted were already under discussion or had been addressed by Council.

Surrey Police

- (286) Council noted the crime and incident report provided by Surrey Police had advised:
- (i) No crimes;
 - (ii) One lost property report; and
 - (iii) Six traffic related incidents: five occurring on the A25 including one police stop and one on the bridleway between Dungates Lane and Reigate Heath;
- recorded in Buckland since 8th January 2024.
- (287) Council noted details of online cyber security training being offered by the Surrey Police Protect Team had been circulated with a request for anyone who would prefer to attend an in person session to contact the Clerk.
- (288) Council noted that
- (i) following a change of operator at Dorking Sports Centre and Leatherhead Leisure Centre, young athletes living in Mole Valley are being invited to apply to the GLL Sports Foundation for support;and
 - (ii) the invitation had been published on the village website and forwarded to Reigate Pilgrim Cricket Club and Buckland Village Charity.
- (289) Council noted an update issued by Nicola Davidson, Rural Housing Enabler for Mole Valley, which had included links to Home England factsheets and recently published research by UCL about unlocking the potential of Rural Exception Sites to develop housing for local people in rural areas, had been circulated to Cllrs.

(290) Council noted updates issued by the Surrey ALC, Surrey Hills Society, River Mole Partnership, GACC, SCC and MVDC and SCC Cllr Clack had been circulated to Cllrs and key information published on the village website and/or included within Parish Updates.

9. Finance

(291) Council noted:

- (i) budget schedules, updated to reflect the decisions taken at the January 2024 meeting had been circulated to Cllrs since that meeting;
- (ii) the explanatory notes attached to the budget schedule had noted that:
 - (a) No change to fees set in Council's Model Publication Scheme for provision of hard copy information in response to Freedom of Information Request were being made; and
 - (b) No other fees or charges are levied; and
- (iii) a year-to-date cash book, analysis of current year expenditure against budget, refreshed budget, asset register and risk assessment schedule had been circulated prior to this meeting.

Council **resolved** to adopt:

- (i) the budget schedules dated 11th March 2024;
- (ii) asset register (unchanged);
- (iii) risk assessment (unchanged)

and noted asset valuations (included on the asset register) would be updated prior to requesting quotes to renew for insurance.

The Chair signed and dated the same.

(292) Council **resolved** to:

- (i) approve a grant of £384.00, to allow the volunteer webmaster to settle the Design Lynx annual charge for domain hosting, web space, disk space and bandwidth for bucklandsurrey.org.uk for the year commencing 1st April 2024;
- (ii) approve an update to plug-ins on the Village website to safeguard the website's responsiveness and page load speeds at a cost of £114.00 including £29.00 Vat;
- (iii) extend its current subscription to Zoom for a further year, at the advised cost of £77.94 including £12.99 Vat; and
- (iv) approve a payment of £201.80 to Surrey ALC to renew membership for the year commencing 1st April 2024 (NALC £35.85, Surrey branch £162.94).

Action: Clerk to arrange payments upon receipt of appropriate paperwork.

(293) Council **resolved** to support a proposal to pay the Clerk for additional hours worked since December 2023 to ensure costs are reported in the 2023/24 financials. **Action:** Cllrs Husband and Jones to approve the March payment to HMRC and additional payment to the Clerk.

(294) Council noted a payment for £30.00, to the Surrey Hills Society, had been raised in accordance with minute 2023/24:219.

(295) Council noted a claim for a repayment of the Vat incurred between the 1st March 2023 and 28th February 2024 had been submitted to HMRC.

Account Receipts and Payments

(296) Council **resolved** to approve the following payments:

- (i) HMRC £130.44, PAYE liability re: January salary payment;
- (ii) HMRC £130.44, PAYE liability re: February salary payment;

- (iii) HMRC £130.44, PAYE liability re: March salary payment;
- (iv) HMRC £312.97, PAYE liability re: Additional hours payment, December 2023 – February 2024;
- (v) Eurobulbs UK Ltd £99.50 including £16.58 Vat, Snowdrops in the green;
- (vi) SOS Business Supplies £57.56 including £9.59 Vat, Toner cartridges;
- (vii) FirstAid4Less £36.42 including £6.07 Vat, Replenish PC first aid kit;
- (viii) Clover Grounds Maintenance £1,512.00 including £252.00 Vat, Edging intact sections of A25 roadside footways between western parish boundary and western boundary of Squires Garden Centre;
- (ix) St Mary's Buckland Reading Room £69.00, Hall hire : 8th January 2024, 11th March 2024, and 18th March 2024;
- (x) Design Lynx Limited £114.00 including £29.00 Vat, Upgrade to plug ins undertaken at Council's request;
- (xi) Buckland Parochial Church Council £130.00, Contribution towards the cost of electricity re: floodlights to the church; and
- (xii) Sheena Boyce £638.51, Additional hours payment – December 2023 – February 2024.

10. Forthcoming Meetings

- (297) The Parish Council will next meet on Monday 13th May 2024 and meetings are subsequently scheduled to be held in the Reading Room on the following dates:
- 2024: 8th July, 9th September, 11th November;
- 2025: 13th January, 10th March; 12th May; 14th July; 8th September; 10th November;
- 2026: 12th January; 9th March.
- (298) The 2024 Annual Parish Meeting will be held at 8pm on Monday 18th March 2024 in the Reading Room.
- (299) Cllr Jones will represent Council at the Betchworth Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 25th March 2024.
- (300) Cllr Husband will attend a MVDC led workshop on Wednesday 16th April 2024 which will focus on Transformation Mole Valley.
- (301) A litter pick event will be held between 10am and noon on Saturday 20th April 2024. Details will be published in the April parish magazine and via the village email group and community WhatsApp group.
- (302) Cllrs Bourke and Cox will attend the Surrey Hills Society's Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the 1949 National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act on Wednesday 24th April 2024 at Denbies Wine Estate.
- (303) The 2025 Annual Parish Meeting will be held at 8pm on Monday 31st March 2025 in the Reading Room.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

email: parishcouncil@bucklandsurrey.org.uk

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