



Blackrod Town Council

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Town Clerk: Mrs L Nuttall

Minutes of a meeting of Blackrod Town Council held on Monday 3rd June 2024

Present:-

Chairman Cllr. D Snowden

Councillors Cllr. N Bell
Cllr. K Grant
Cllr. D Grant
Cllr. J Price
Cllr. R Seddon

Also Present: Mrs L Nuttall (Town Clerk), Ward Councillor P. Wright and 35 members of the public

Before the start of the meeting, the Town Mayor, Councillor Derek Snowden welcomed Councillors and members of the public to the meeting and explained housekeeping/health & safety.

No clergy were in attendance.

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received for the meeting.

2. Youth Council Donation Request (early on agenda to allow children to leave – no previous interest declared from members)

In relation to the Youth Council's fundraising activities

Members received a request for a possible donation towards the cost of providing equipment to help the Youth Council to organise activities for fundraising during the

Scarecrow Festival weekend at their respective schools. Following discussions amongst members, in regard to the cost, it was proposed by Councillor Price and seconded by Councillor K Grant and voted in favour and

Resolved:-

1. That the request be received and noted.
2. That a sum £500 as a donation and the two schools receive a cheque of £250 each.

3. **Appointment of Committees/Working Groups/Representatives on Outside Bodies (deferred from the AGM on Monday 13th May 2024)**

The members discussed the external and governance committees. It was proposed by Councillor D Grant and seconded by Councillor Price and voted in favour and

Resolved:-

1. That the following councillors will take post on the listed committees:
 - Rivington & Blackrod Trust (Cllr. K Grant/Cllr. R Seddon)
 - LALC (Cllr. J Price/Cllr.D Snowden)
2. That the governance committees of finance, staffing/HR, Civic Awards/Grants and IT/Social Media(temporarily Cllr. D Grant and Cllr. N Bell) be deferred until the meeting after the 4th July by-election when positions on committees can be shared with new members.

4. **List of Attendances 2023/2024 (deferred from the AGM on Monday 13th May 2024 with amendments)**

It was proposed by Councillor D Grant and seconded by Councillor Bell and

Resolved:-

That the list of attendances be received and accepted as correct.

5 . **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. D Grant declared an interest in all planning applications

6. Planning Applications.

18204/24

23A Whitehall Lane

Two spokespersons spoke on behalf of the members of the public present.

The first raised disbelief that the community were being put in this position again and that in 2019 a company called Next Stage had made similar promises to the community that are being stated in the current application but failed on these promises. Her daughters were attacked (stamped on the face) by the 'young men' in a similar home, who are currently serving 7 years for this act. The member of the public stated that she couldn't believe the hoops that they had to go through (with the support of Councillor Grant and Councillor Price) to get Next Stage closed down. The member of the public can't trust that the house will be used exactly in the way that is being stated in the application because the Next Stage application was not passed correctly by Bolton Council as they did not follow policy. It was stated that the youths would be in transition but this was not the case, they were known criminals with tags on. The member of the public does not want this happening to another member of the community and therefore strongly objects.

The second spokesperson made the point that most members of the public present would be directly affected and no matter what is said by the applicant, there is no guarantee. As a teacher of 25 years, he works with these children on a day to day basis with high level, complex needs. These children need quality trained staff to support them and having examined the OFSTED report of the company, it raised serious concerns about the staffing as the reports are shocking and this has formed the basis of his objection. The majority of judgements are requires improvement which speaks for itself. The spokesperson asked for the town council's support with this. He said that there is a social responsibility to support young children but there is also a social responsibility to support the people in the room, to the residents of Whitehall Lane and the residents of Blackrod.

Councillor D Grant acknowledged the emotion and concern that was evident in the room. He explained that any objection must be on material considerations. He has reached out to children's services who have informed him that, 'Children's Services were contacted by this provider in December 2023 with minimal details of their intentions. To date this provider has not been in contact again to discuss these in detail and our investigations have revealed they are mutual owners of many dissolved companies. We have little to guarantee that the proposed provider has the experience to develop a quality provision. The location of the home is not one we would now support as we are aware that there is another children's home in development in very close proximity and, on balance, we feel the risks would outweigh the benefits of this development'. This will form the basis of Ward Councillor Peter Wright's objection. Councillor Grant also stated the need for individual objections, not a petition.

A question from a member of the public raised a concern that Bolton Council have not refused any of these types of planning application. Councillor Grant responded that this is not the case and he knows of one that has previously been refused. If Bolton Council make a

wrong decision and it goes to the inspector in London, he doesn't know the location/ area and will only look at the facts.

A further question asked whether there had been any comments from the police. The response was that the police would not comment unless it was regarding licensing.

A member of the public stated that under the Freedom of Information Act people can make a request to the police, to children's services to gather evidence. If one has been closed, we need to know why and information like this can form the evidence you need for an objection.

A further member of the public raised concern about the lack of information on the application and the consultee comments being very vague and it left a feeling of whether the application had already been decided upon. Councillor Grant explained that redacted parts protect personal information as it is a public document.

Another member of the public raised a concern about the number of properties that were consulted about the application. Cllr. Price explained that 5 addresses were consulted and that would be the properties for compliance that are adjacent and overlooking properties.

Councillor Price went on to address the councillors with regards to a number of points that need clarification:

- Is the children's home 'in keeping' with the rest of the residential area?
- 'Important dates' in the file – 9 of the dates are missing.
- Why was the address chosen?
- The siting across from what is being classed as a children's play area needs highlighting.
- Vehicle parking is inconsistent throughout the application (stating there is provision 1, 2 and 3 spaces).
- Ownership certificate and agricultural land declaration – 'Is this applicant the sole owner of all the land in which this application relates and has the applicant been the sole owner for more than 21 days?' The applicant has ticked yes but the property is up for sale and Councillor Price was asked to put an offer in for the property at 4.58pm on this day.

Councillor Price stated that he is all in favour of anything that supports children and particularly those with needs, however due to the emotions of the residents, due to past events, it isn't a good environment to be bringing these children based on all of the above I proposed that the council object.

Councillor Seddon added that as the children would require multi-agency workers, the traffic and parking noted on the application would not be adequate to support these children effectively.

Councillor Bell raised inefficiencies with the planning documentation forwarded to Blackrod Council and asked for a motion to be put on the next agenda to request the Chair/Vice Chair of the Bolton Planning Committee to visit a Blackrod Town Council meeting for future clarification of needs.

Councillor K Grant reiterated Councillor Price's statements, encouraged as many people to raise their objections and agreed that the council object to the application on 5 key points for planning consideration.

It was proposed by Councillor K Grant and seconded by Councillor Seddon and voted all in favour and

Resolved:-

That the Town Clerk comment that the Town Council would like to object based on 5 points for planning consideration.

- **Concerns raised by Children's Services**
- **Missing information within the planning application documents**
- **Parking inconsistencies throughout all application documents**
- **Queries about the ownership and land declaration and the property being for sale**
- **Concerns about the providers track record and OFSTED reports**

17995/24

Land at Council Depot, Blackrod Bypass

Councillors offered no comment on the application

7. Planning Decisions

It was proposed by Councillor K Grant and seconded by Councillor Seddon and

Resolved:-

- 1. That the information regarding planning decisions be received and accepted.**

8. Enforcement Cases Received and Resolved

It was proposed by Councillor D Grant and seconded by Councillor K Grant and

Resolved:-

- 1. That the information regarding enforcement cases be received and accepted.**

9. Minutes of the meeting of the Town Council

- 1. Held on Monday 29th April 2024**(meeting for May brought forward due to Bank Holiday)

It was proposed by Councillor K Grant and seconded by Councillor Seddon and voted in favour by all and

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 29th April 2024 be received and signed as a true record.

- 2. Held on 13th May 2024 (Annual General Meeting)**

It was proposed by Councillor K Grant and seconded by Councillor Seddon and voted in favour by all and

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 13th May 2024 be received and signed as a true record.

10. Planning Correspondence/ Items on planning matters

There was no correspondence on any planning matters received for the meeting.

11. Correspondence - general

1. A letter of thanks from Barbara Worsley was read to the councillors for a donation for the repairs and restoration of a historical plaque at Vauze House Close.
2. A letter of thanks from Angela Stridgeon (on behalf of the Scarecrow Festival committee) was read to the councillors for a donation to fund portaloos on the Community Centre Car Park.

12. Public Participation

No public participation was recorded at the meeting.

13. End of Year Financial Quarter Reconciliations (with internal audited report)

The Town Clerk provided members with the usual copy of the current quarter/ year end banking reconciliation of accounts for the period ending 31st March 2024. (Previously circulated) It was proposed by Councillor D Grant and seconded by Councillor Price and voted in favour by those present and

Resolved:-

That the information be received, noted and approved

14. Approval of the audited Town Council's statement of accounts and annual return (AGAR) for the financial year 2023-2024 ending on 31st March 2024

Part One

Members considered the Annual Statement of Accounts audit report for the year ending 31st March 2024, copies of which had been distributed previously with the banking statements. Internal audit concluded that there were sound systems for internal controls in place, including preparation of quarterly accounting spending statements and monthly spending schedules and that no issues to comment on had been found. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Price and seconded by Councillor K Grant and voted in favour and

Resolved:-

- 1. That the Annual Governance statement be approved and completed and signed by the Chairman and Town Clerk/ RFO and then be forwarded for full external audit process.**

15 Part Two

Members considered the Annual Accounting Statement for the year ending 31st March 2024, copies of which had been previously circulated following completion of final audit stage, which had found no issues to be raised. It was therefore proposed by Councillor Price and seconded by Councillor K Grant and

Resolved:-

- 1. That the Annual Accounting Statement be approved, completed and signed by the Chairman and the Town Clerk and then to be forwarded for full external Audit Process.**

16. Finance

A query was raised with regards to the amount of £28,504.56 to be paid on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Delivery Group from the Community Account. It was noted that this payment had been previously agreed and minuted and as the work had been done, should be paid.

It was moved by Councillor K Grant and seconded by Councillor D Grant and voted in favour and

Resolved:-

- 1. That the Town Clerk and two members authorise payments amounting to £7826.27 (seven thousand, eight hundred and twenty-six pounds and 27p only) and dated 29th May 2024 for the payment of cheques as listed on the schedule of payments (previously received by members).**
- 2. Members to note scheduled spending at month 3 against 24/25 estimates.**
- 3. That the £28,504 from the Community Account be paid on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Delivery Group.**

17. Site Visits

Councillor Price commented on a recent site visit to Vicarage Road Park and noted the current dangerous facilities and that Bolton Council need to make a site visit. He stated that the equipment was broken and dangerous, particularly an exposed metal disc at head height on top of a broken piece of equipment. He also raised that the litter gathered in pieces of equipment are a fire hazard.

Councillor K Grant also noted that the rusty equipment could cause a nasty cut.

Councillor D Grant commented that this issue has been raised with Bolton Council.

18. Information on upcoming by-elections

The Town Clerk informed the councillors that as 10 requests for elections had been received in all 3 Blackrod wards (North, Central & South) that nominations for candidates in all 3 wards could now be accepted by the Returning Officer no later than 4pm on Friday 7th June. If any election is contested, the poll will take place on Thursday 4th July 2024.

If the poll is to take place:

- Applications to register to vote be received by midnight on Tuesday 18th June 2024.
- Applications, amendments or cancellations of postal votes by Wednesday 19th June 2024.
- New applications to vote by proxy by 5pm on Wednesday 26th June 2024.
- Applications to vote for emergency proxy be received by 5pm on Thursday 4th July 2024 (the physical incapacity must have occurred after 5pm on Wednesday 26th June 2024).

19. Neighbourhood Plan Update

No update was received on the Neighbourhood Plan due to illness.

20. Other Matters/ Future Agenda Items for consideration

Councillor Price raised a concern about the collapsed wall near to Spar and that with the Scarecrow Festival coming up it could prove to be a health and safety hazard.

Councillor Price also raised a concern about the upkeep of the cemetery and general grass cutting around the village with grass being left on footpaths.

Both points requested to be motions on the next agenda.

21. Ward Councillor Updates.
(Cllr Grant stepped out of committee for the update period)

Councillor D Grant shared updates on the following:

- That there are currently ongoing negotiations for a crossing on Vicarage Road outside Blackrod Church School.
- That negotiation regarding amendment to Vicarage Road Park is taking place.
- That he is still awaiting a date for the refreshing of the double yellow lines.
- That the wall and hand rail between Fryent Close and Boardman Street that had become a health and safety concern is in the process of being fixed.
- Councillor Grant also referenced Councillor Price's concerns over the green spaces and cemeteries. He stated that the grass had been cut 3 feet from the edge of flower beds. He has been informed that this is due to sickness and they are trying to catch up. It was noted that contingencies need to be in place for lengthy absences. Councillor Grant had also been informed that community service workers in the cemetery could not work over a certain time frame without a working toilet. Councillor Price commented that the cemetery has a working toilet.

Councillor P Wright shared updates on the following:

- That the missing sign on Green Barn Way is to be reinstated.
- That he will request that the planning application for 23A Whitehall Lane be put forward to a full planning committee decision.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

The Time and date of the next council meeting was confirmed as 1st July 2024 commencing at 7pm.

Signed.....Chairman