

Present

Fairfield Parish Council (FPC) - Councillors Barrie Dack, Viv Batten and Chris Bidwell

Fairfield Park Resident Association (FPRA) – Chris Titmus and Peter Nash

Fairfield Hall Residents Association (FHRA) – Tony Little

Fairfield Hall Directors (FHD) – Sharon Jones, Terry Glockler

Notes taken by Councillor Viv Batten

1 Apologies

Apologies received from Councillor Penny Daffarn, Councillor Phil Mitchinson, Katrina Henshaw (Parish Clerk), David Ball (Middlemarch Resident Company) and Les Pike (FHRA Chairman).

2 Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Barrie Dack opened the meeting and introduced everyone separately. He advised that he had received a letter from one of the FH residents which included a statement that they were not happy that the FPC are not spending any money on Fairfield Hall and only concentrating on Fairfield Park, plus various other comments. Cllr Barrie Dack advised that the FPC had not spent much money at all apart from setting up costs. He read out the parish clerk's explanation on how the precept was arrived at and the criteria for spending (see item 3). He also went on to say that we need to work as a team and in a harmonious manner, so that we can support each other. FHRA Tony Little commented that more communication and updates to be given back more dynamically.

3 Clerk's explanation of how a council agrees its budget for the annual precept

3.1 The financial year runs from April to March and is set at either the November or December prior to the meeting when the budget gets discussed and agreed, the Responsible Financial Officer (the Parish Clerk for Fairfield) asks all Councillors to supply her details of any expected costs on specific projects. With this information and her own knowledge of ongoing costs she then supplies all Councillors a draft budget so they are prepared when it gets discussed. The budget is broken down into categories (Admin, Recreation, Repairs and Maintenance etc) and also specific projects (Parish Plan). Fairfield is still very new so the budget at the moment is with very little previous knowledge and is made as flexible as possible. The budget is for Fairfield as a whole place and is not calculated by certain areas as anything that is done should be seen as a benefit to all residents. Once the budget is agreed it is sent to CBC. During the year, the RFO keeps an ongoing comparison between budget and expenditure to make sure budgets are not exceeded. In the future when new large projects start FPC will also look for grants to supplement the budget. This week going out with Fairfield matters you will all receive first Report and Account. Only set up costs have been sent. Waiting to buy Capital goods 76K out of 95k has gone to reserves. CBC cannot claw it back.

4 Update on road signs

4.1 Fairfield signs – Fairfield signs have been ordered but no installation date has been supplied yet. CBC will also be supplying warning children crossing signs near the school. FPC and CBC will share the cost.

4.2 Directional signs – CBC will be supplying new directional signs but no date for installation has been given yet. CBC inspected the directional signs on the 24.1.2014 for any foliage obstructing and no problems were identified. CBC has removed one of the damaged posts of the missing directional sign but haven't arranged for the replacement of the sign. Due to its size this will require a design which CBC will need to look into.

- 4.3 Yellow developer signs - Hertfordshire Highway have spoken with their enforcement team who have confirmed the yellow developer signs on Hitchin Road near Thornes and Wilbury Cemetery have been added to a list of 'yellow developer' signs to be removed around the County. Due to the number of signs and the logistics of removing these HH cannot commit to an exact date at this stage, but will endeavour to have them removed as soon as possible.

5 Update on Highways maintenance on adopted roads

- 5.1 Vegetation alongside the Hitchin Road – CBC has advised that the grass verges in Stotfold are due to be cut May 15th – 20th, July 28th – 31st and October 6th – 9th. The last time CBC inspected the hedges on Hitchin Road, Stotfold was the 24.1.2014 and no apparent issues were found. BD to raise with Brian Saunders on his return from holiday.
- 5.2 Broken bollard in Fairfield Park and style of replacement that is not in keeping with the other bollards – FPC will be looking into this and will ask Central Bedfordshire Highways why this is. Parish Clerk Katrina Henshaw and Cllr Nathan Hanks investigating the bollard costs.
- 5.3 Grass verge cutting – CBC has advised that FPC is able to 'opt-out' of CBC's highway grass cutting and instead run its own service using a contribution from CBC. The expectation is that FPC 'tops this up.' CBC's contribution is paid annually to FPC at the rate CBC would have paid if it continued the work itself. The mechanism is to first agree the precise stretches of grass, calculate the payment, and for the FPC Chairman to apply to CBC in writing with insurance details.
- 5.4 Tree maintenance – CBC has advised that this depends if the tree is considered 'highway' or private, but overhanging the highway. In the former it is often a case of calling in any maladies into the highways helpdesk. From there it would be cascaded to the appropriate Arboriculture team and CBC would deal with any problems considered to be a road safety issue. In terms of private overhanging trees, again these can be called in to the highways helpdesk and from there Officers would liaise with the household in whose property the tree is rooted. This confers a duty on them to cut back, typically to a height of 2.5m over the footway and 5.5m above the carriageway and if the homeowner does not uphold this themselves, in exceptional cases, CBC conducts the work and pursues the homeowner for its costs. This is a fall back situation of course.
- 5.5 Road gritting – FPC winter gritting in the new development CBC is able to accommodate local gritting by Parish Councils under a special "delegation Agreement." This would be entirely additional to the service provided by CBC, and it is considered a local wish to treat roads of a much lower classification than the priority road network. Principally the Agreement confirms the Parish assurances to CBC and FPC good working practises in a public highway setting. CBC to compile the various technical, legal and insurance inputs into a document for FPC Chairman to sign. The Agreement makes a local service lawful, but of course there is a great deal of work for FPC in advance of signing it. For example FPC would be well-advised to think about plant, labour, materials, storage and environmental controls in advance. FPC will also need clear, published, lines of communication with residents and a back office which accurately records all activities and standby details. Typically the season is October – April. FPC's intended service levels should be published in advance, as a parish Winter Maintenance Plan. CBC has advised inspecting CBC's published plan on the website.

6 Update on FPC trying to resolve the many outstanding 106 issues.

- 6.1 Meetings with CBC and FHMC – FPC have met with FHMC to discuss transferring land from FHMC to FPC. FPC has received a letter from Livesey stating what land they own and detailing their understanding on future maintenance. A decision now needs to be made to decide who is going to take responsibility for the land. FPC agreed in principal to accept community land if the terms were satisfactory.

- 6.2 Meeting with the Rt Hon Alistair Burt, MP – The Rt Hon Alistair Burt, MP for North East Bedfordshire has agreed to chair a meeting with CBC Officers, FPC and FHMC which Hotbed Investments would be invited to try and resolve outstanding issues. Date of meeting to be arranged. The chairman said that CBC were trying to arrange it so that top level officers were available so that decisions could be made at the meeting.

7 Update on current situation over ‘Public Arts Money’

- 7.1 Cllr Barrie Dack advised that there is £8K in the pot. Proposals have been received from FPRA and FHMC on how they would like the money spent. A comment was made that something decorative would be appropriate. However, Cllr Barrie Dack did say that the final decision will come from Central Beds on how this money will be spent. He also advised that there is no time limit on this.

8 Action so far to obtain land for

- 8.1 Allotments and recreation land – Cllr Chris Bidwell and Cllr Barrie Dack had a meeting with Central Beds Leisure department where the case was made for both allotments and a recreation area for the community. FPC preferred site is on the southern boundary. There is no time scale. All farm land being reviewed to see what can be released. There will be quite a lot of setting up costs for this. e.g. sheds, running water, car standing areas.
- 8.2 Cricket Ground in Fairfield – Cllr Barrie Dack advised that a meeting was held earlier in the week at the Cricket Ground. Cllr Dack said that he felt strongly that the freehold of both the cricket ground and bowls ground should be transferred to the Parish Council from the developers. Using the cricket ground for football was mentioned. Hall representatives said the main bone of contention was parking. The chairman said the cricket club had not made any decision on the subject.

9 Update of work at the school

- 9.1 The works have been completed; Hardy Way has not been restored as promised though. Parish Clerk to chase up the works foreman to get this done.

10 Update on Parish Plan & Neighbourhood Plan

- 10.1 No full update as Cllr Phil Mitchinson was not at the meeting. Cllr Barrie Dack gave a brief update. Steering committee has now agreed all the questions on Parish Plan. Cllr Barrie Dack, Cllr Penny Daffarn and Cllr Phil Mitchinson attending a Neighbourhood Seminar on 3 July. Cllr Penny Daffarn and Cllr Geoff Smith attending Neighbourhood Planning Event on 11 July. A paper and electronic version of the questionnaire will be available. The questionnaire will go live in the autumn.

11 Update on actions taken to try and resolve parking problems

- 11.1 There are some questions for this incorporated in the parish plan. Tesco area has now become a dangerous crossing area. FPC had ideas on how to rectify this e.g. yellow lining in certain junctions, no parking in some areas, restricting parking times, speed restrictions along Dickens Boulevard.

12 Current situation over the land at the former pig testing site

- 12.1 Campbell Buchanan submitted a pre-application enquiry to Central Bedfordshire Council and continue to wait for their formal response. Informally Campbell Buchanan understand that CBC will be looking for them to provide more employment within the proposed development which they find is little disappointing. FPC and Campbell Buchanan to meet in the next few weeks to discuss the developers plans. (Date to be agreed). A 70 bed nursing home is amongst their proposals.

13 Any Other Business

- 13.1 Chapel in Fairfield near Middle March and Fairfield Hall – Cllr Barrie Dack advised that a planning proposal has been submitted to build 6 flats in the Chapel with 14 parking places outside. Cllr Phil Mitchinson, Cllr Nathan Hanks and Cllr Chris Bidwell to meet to discuss vehicle access to the building.

14 Date of Next Meeting

- 14.1 The next joint meeting will be October 2014 unless it is considered necessary to have one before.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm