

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TAPLOW PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2014 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE PERKINS ROOM TAPLOW VILLAGE CENTRE HIGH STREET TAPLOW**

**Present**

Cllr. Rachel Gainey-Corcoran (In the chair)  
Cllr. Elizabeth Forsyth                      Cllr. Euan Felton  
Cllr. Louise Symons                         Mrs. K H Holder - clerk  
No members of the public.  
The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.30pm.

**PC/58/14 Apologies for absence**

Apologies from Cllr. George Sandy, Cllr. Josie Corio, Cllr. John Bamberg, Cllr. John Kennedy and Cllr. Iris Midlane.

**PC/59/14 To consider the proposals for devolution of powers from BCC**

59.1 Cllr. Felton explained that BCC wanted to devolve various powers to parishes They had set up a website with a list of FAQs and the Clerk was asked to circulate the details of the website with the minutes. He said that many more questions still had to be answered. He circulated a document taken from the website which outlined the powers to be devolved being urban grass cuts, weed control, cleaning traffic signs (road signs not road name signs), minor repairs of traffic signs, trimming vegetation obstructing footways and footpaths (liaising with land owners where apt), checking for obstructions to footways and footpaths, hedge cutting, rights of way clearance, serving of hedge cutting notices, siding out of overgrown footways, clearing of drainage grips and kerb weirs, removal of flyposters and other illegal signs, approval of charity event signage and maintenance of street furniture including repair replacement or repainting - all within 30mph zones only.

59.2 Some immediate questions to be asked included –

59.2.1 'hedge cutting' - we would be required to send notices but it wasn't clear what was required after that – would we be required to pursue legal action; what further costs could arise;

59.2.2 'siding out'; this seemed to mean the cutting back of creeping growth – the clerk was asked to find out how often this was required/advised to be done to achieve a good result

59.2.3 'clearing drainage grips and kerb weirs' - what exactly did this involve

59.2.4 'maintenance of street furniture' - if any of the bus shelters were in a 30mph zone who was responsible for these; would we be responsible for bollards in the middle of roads, or metal barriers at side of roads. If so and they were knocked down would we be responsible.

59.2.5 potholes – assume no longer on list so not responsible for these

59.3 Cllr. Felton used a monitor and google street view to examine each road within 30mph zones in Taplow parish and identifying questions to be answered:-

59.3.1 Trees – would we be responsible and to what extent for trees in verges or on adjoining land overhanging roads/footways; have all/any such trees been inspected ; if we would be responsible would insurance cover it; when is a tree not a tree ie would trees growing from an overgrown hedge be a tree?

- 59.3.2 Grass cutting – the maps provided do not make it clear which areas are in 30mph zones. The Clerk was asked to obtain accurate maps
- 59.3.3 Cliveden Road from Taplow Court going south –who is responsible for the hedge and trees between the cricket club entrance and Queen Anne House; Issues which would be our responsibility included weed growth from gardens – under or through fences or hedges-; the overgrown verge opposite Taplow Hotel
- 59.3.4 A4 Ellington Road to Bridge 30mph zone – who would be responsible for the major trees in the verge
- 59.3.5 River Road and Ellington Road– many overgrown hedges, would our responsibility end at the private road. Assume BCC only responsible for adopted roads
- 59.3.6 Mill Lane from Berry Hill to the Bath Road – visibility splay a problem as hedge needs trimming on left turn onto Berry Hill. Who is responsible for grass cutting on the Springfield estate on first right junction – is it adopted. Would we be responsible for kerbing eg granite blocks dislodged. A lot of siding out /trees / brambles. After Berkeley Homes have finished the development there is likely to be some cosmetic and other teething issues – who responsible
- 59.3.7 Boundary Road – signage obscured, siding out – the LAT had said in an email in July that it would be flailed. Concern that the carriageway has been substantially encroached on. Clerk to establish what should be the width of each carriageway and who sides out to that width. Note road narrowing near Hitcham Grange and new wall showing actual boundary line; weed killing necessary along footways and visibility splay an issue on corner with Rectory Road; de-restriction speed signs obscured
- 59.3.8 Buffins – need to clarify if adopted or not – what would we be responsible for
- 59.3.9 High Street – hedge opposite church is our responsibility in any event
- 59.3.10 Rectory Road – hedges encroaching on left eastbound, must be clear we have no liability for springs across road; the hedge by the Green was our responsibility in any event and we should check covered by Clarke’s contract, how wide should the carriageway be by the church hedge (currently cut by THRGA); Wellbank grass cutting would be our responsibility
- 59.3.11 Marsh Lane and Ye Meads- we need a grass cutting map for Marsh Lane as none supplied; examples of residents encroaching up to side of road – are we responsible to report/reclaim/maintain; ivy on telegraph pole could cause it to topple/ BT could ask for it to be removed – who responsible?
- 59.3.12 Not clear if following adopted or whose responsibility – Stockwells, Saxon Gardens, Cedar Chase, School Road, Wellbank

59.4 It was agreed that the Clerk should ask the LAT to meet with us and answer the above questions. The Clerk advised that she knew the LAT was taking some sick leave at the moment.

59.5 Cllr. Felton explained that BCC were currently inviting parishes to consider clustering and for cluster leaders to step forward by September. The Clerk commented that Burnham had been in contact with her about possibly becoming a cluster leader but it was not clear what clustering meant. It could mean the leader contracted with BCC and provided all the services in their place or subcontracted all services to parishes or simply became the main point of contact which is what Burnham thought. In the first two scenarios complex legal arrangements would have to be in place and in the last scenario the cluster leader’s role seemed unworkable as parishes would want direct contact with BCC if they had individual contracts. Cllr. Felton confirmed a letter had been sent to BCC and an answer had been received but it lacked any detailed substance.

Although there could be some financial benefit in clustering services such as hedge flailing because of economies of scale and clearly it would suit BCC to have one contract rather than many, there were complex practical issues with clustering as well as the legal issues– with whom would we cluster? Would we be a priority for a cluster leader? Were BCC thinking in terms of the existing LAFs which were already a problem for us? Why shouldn't SBDC be the cluster leader? There was some evidence that BCC was backtracking and might not insist on the clustering route.

59.6 Cllr. Felton foresaw issues with the contracts – the Clerk explained that she had recently had sight of the new contract and specification in respect of ROW footpaths and the indemnity required by BCC from parishes was draconian with a high 'spec' of what was required for example in respect of reporting requirements. Even if volunteers were used they would need to be trained and issued with correct safety equipment and it would require a huge commitment from them

59.7 Cllr. Felton referred to a meeting last June which the Clerk and others had had with ROW team. Footpaths had been divided into priority footpaths cut twice a year and non- priority footpaths cut once a year and others that were never cut. We had been offered a refund of £1241.80 last year if we undertook the cutting but we had declined this as it would cost us more to do it to the standard we required. It was now fairly clear that BCC were falling below their statutory duty of maintenance as the footpaths were in a terrible state. The current breakdown from BCC suggested they would only be allocating £381.37 for the maintenance of footpaths this year. He had prepared a list of questions that needed answers in respect of ROW which was circulated. Further questions in this format should be raised in respect of each of the services proposed to be devolved.

**PC/60/14 Any other business**

There were none

**PC/61/14 To consider agenda items for the next meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014**

The Clerk was asked to put the devolution issue on the next agenda.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm.