



MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF LOOSE PARISH COUNCIL

Wednesday 12 July 2023 at 7.30pm
in the Parish Pavilion, KGVPF

Councillors taking part: Vianne Gibbons (Chairman) (VG), Velma Bennett (VB), Charlie Hollister (CH), Peter Rigby (PR), Andrew Richards (AR), Susan Luckhurst (SL), Tony Oliver (TO) Velma Bennet (VB) and Elaine Lawford (EL).

Also present: Susan Grigg (MBC Ward Councillor) (SG), Doug Smith (Chairman of BMAT) (DG), Nicky Bourne (Deputy Clerk) (NB) and Kim Owen (Clerk) (KO) who took the minutes.

There were three members of the public present.

The Chairman explained the Housekeeping Rules.

1. To receive and record any apologies for absence.

There were no apologies for absence.

2. To receive and agree any decision regarding any item to be taken as confidential.

None.

3. To receive any declarations of pecuniary interest on items in the agenda

(In accordance with the NALC Model Code of Conduct for Parish Councils (pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011). In addition, any declaration of personal or prejudicial interest. *(As agreed by LPC 21 Jan 13)*

None.

4. To receive any signed dispensation requests for any item on this agenda

(Councillors to approve/disapprove as appropriate and to agree the reason for the dispensation if approved. (see dispensation form). This follows the agreement made by the LPC at the meeting held on the 17 July 2017- (item 17))

None.

5. To receive any questions/comments from the public regarding agenda item 6.

Members of the public comments were moved to item 6.

6. To discuss the proposed Parish Boundary changes and make any necessary decisions.

JA advised that the meeting where the original decision was made was the Extraordinary Planning Meeting on 30 March 2023. SG and Cllr Steve Munford were present and spoke at length about the proposed boundary changes. There was a full discussion on the topic and the Council reached a democratic view on the topic. The decision has been called in and would like to know on what grounds.

The Chairman asked the two Councillors who called it in to explain their reasons. PR advised he was against the proposal from the start and was asked to support the decision being called in. He felt that there was undue pressure to change his mind at the last meeting. TO advised he abstained from voting at the original meeting because he could bring himself to vote against the environmental reasons for BMAT purchasing the land. He did not want to vote for part of the Loose Parish being



moved to Boughton Monchelsea Parish. He wanted it called in as he got the impression at the last meeting that if we did not allow the boundary changes the land would be purchased by BMAT and we would be facing development on the land. After the vote was completed it came out that BMAT had already bought the land. He got the impression that he had been misled.

SG asked to give her understanding of the situation and is surprised that she is at a meeting for the third time on this matter. She feels that going back on the original decision is illogical. It says a lot more about relationship between Loose Parish and Boughton Monchelsea Parish than the benefits for the residents, which is sad. At the last meeting Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council was accused of having meetings behind closed doors to discussed matters and that is exactly what has happened here with Loose Parish Council as I did not know about this meeting until I got the agenda. I think I was not included in any conversations as I was seen to be in support of Cllr Munford and BMAT. I did not support them but I did agree with them, which is very different. She advised that as the Ward Councillor of Loose she has never made a decision that was not in the interest of residents. The reason was they wanted the alteration was Boughton Monchelsea want the land is so they can spend legitimate money on it, which we do not have. To say that she is disappointed is an understatement. Not only does it meet the MBC biodiversity targets the residents of Loose will have 80 acres of wood land on their doorstep. We should be behind the project but all we have done is antagonised our neighbours.

DS advised that Boughton Monchelsea already own the land but there is a long lease on it, which they hope to buy back. BMAT vision has always been to protect open space. Based on same principles as the Open Space Society started in 1875. With regards to Campfields they have been working on it for the last 2-3 year and feel that it will benefit both our Parishes. It will be rewilded, contribute to the climate crisis improving biodiversity, revert to open space and prevent the urban sprawl. We will follow the Salts Wood modal and eventually get Village Green status on the land. It will be protected in perpetuity. Salts Wood and Campfields will amounts to 80 acres of public open space for both our communities and with Salts Wood, more Loose residents use it than Boughton Monchelsea Residents. We cannot expect our residents to pay for the work on land outside their Parish again. If the proposal goes ahead we can legitimately spend precept money on the land. Without your support, and collaboration we would need to look at some other way to support BMAT land in the parish which may be on the other side of the Parish, which would not be available for Loose residents.

A resident raised concerns about the proposals and how it will affect Swiss Scouts' land. DS advised that the move will only take into account the farm land and not affect Swiss Scouts land.

VG asked Councillors to respond. JA advised that taking the land and turning it into a village green he would be in favour of it. Boughton Monchelsea have a record of doing things in the past including Salts wood and Cliff Hill etc.

CH advised that it is a good idea but there is a concern that Loose will lose a part of their Parish. Why can't the land stay in Loose like Salts Woods? DS says that they cannot ask their residents to use their precept to pay for works outside their Parish again as they have done in the past. It will be a serious amount of money for the rewilding.

SL asked how much will it cost Loose if the proposal goes ahead. SG advised that there will be small loss of precept. DS advised that with regards to the CILs money on the small development Boughton Monchelsea are happy to gift Loose the CILS money.

VG asked with the rest of the land being taken from Loose what protection is there regarding future building works. DS confirmed in theory nothing, but that our objective is to protect Loose and stop the development sprawl from Maidstone. They want to take control from Firmins who wanted to develop their farm buildings in the middle of the land, which would have been a disaster. We agree to support a small development which tucks in to the existing hamlet and then gives us control of the 58 acres. We want to rewild.



After a discussion regarding whether or not a decision should be called in and whether or not there were discussion prior to the meeting VG advised that we are now in a full Council Meeting in the public arena and a decision will be made.

VB asked how long it would take to get Village Green status? DS advised 3-4 months. The wilding will be done in phases so that sufficient funds can be raised for each stage.

EL asked about collaboration. DS advised that he would welcome collaboration with Loose on the project.

After discussion the proposal put forward by JA was that Loose Parish Council agree to the boundary change by Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council regarding Camfield Farm. Agreed by 6 members of the Council.

VG thanked everyone attending.

7. Next meeting of LPC – 17 July 2023

The Meeting ended 8.50pm

Dated.....

Signature.....