



Meeting of Rampton & Woodbeck Parish Council

Minutes of **Rampton & Woodbeck Parish Council** held on the 14th Dec 2020 virtually via Zoom, as per the regulations enacted under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the meeting commenced at 6:30pm.

Members Virtually Present

Cllr Sue Kyle

Chairman

Via Remote Attendance

Cllr Gary Dinsdale

Vice-Chair

Cllr Felicity Ferriter

Cllr Janet Lancaster

Cllr David Eddy

Also, Virtually Present

Ed Knox Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

County Council Broadband Engagement Officer

Via Remote Attendance

0 Members of the Public

529 Chairman to Introduce Everyone

The Chairman opened the meeting.

➤ Adjournment – 15 Minute Public Forum

Cllr Kyle adjourned the meeting to allow members of the public to speak. There were no members of the public present, therefore, Cllr Kyle reconvened the meeting.

530 To Approve Apologies for Absence

None.

531 To Receive District & County Councillors Reports

Dist Cllr Coultate did not attend.

County Councillor Ogle did not attend.

532 To Record Declarations of Interest in any items to be discussed

None.

533 To Approve Minutes of the Previous Meeting

After discussion, the council **resolved** to accept the minutes. The chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate record.

534 To Discuss co-ordinating a community partnership bid for financial help with improving Broadband

The Chairman welcomed the County Council Broadband Engagement Officer (NCCBEO) and invited him to take part in this agenda item's discussion. Nottinghamshire County Council have invested £750,000 in order to help deliver high-speed broadband to the most rural parts of the county. The £750,000 investment is to support the government's 'Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme' which delivers subsidy to rural homes and businesses without access to high-speed broadband to help deploy a full-fibre network. Under the scheme residential premises are eligible for up to £1,500 and small and medium sized businesses are eligible for up to £3,500 through a registered supplier when part of a group scheme. The Notts top-up doubles the value of the voucher, meaning rural residential premises are eligible for up to £3,000, and small and medium sized rural business are eligible for up to £7,000, to help deliver digital connectivity to the hardest-to-reach areas of the county.

Rural premises with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps can apply for vouchers worth up to £3,500 for each small and medium size business (SMEs), and up to £1,500 per residential premises to support the costs of a new gigabit-capable broadband connection when they apply as part of a group project (defined as two or more properties). In Nottinghamshire, the maximum voucher values available are doubled as a result of the additional funding being provided by Nottinghamshire County Council.

To be eligible, the home or business benefiting from the voucher must:

- be located in an area defined as rural by Defra.
- apply as part of a group scheme. (Group projects are where two or more residents and/or SMEs get together to combine their vouchers towards the shared costs of installation). Single connections are not eligible for this scheme.

• not be able to get a broadband download speed of 100 mbps or more from any provider and be outside the scope of any publicly funded upgrade plans. For example, the Nottinghamshire BDUK Broadband Project.

To be eligible for the additional Nottinghamshire top-up voucher funding, the following additional criteria applies:

- the property must reside in the Notts County Council area
- the property must be a permanent residential dwelling, which is eligible to pay council tax.

The NCCBEO explained that across the Rampton & Woodbeck Parish, there are at least 23 premises without access to 30Mbps broadband – the worst of the worst in the area. Due to the rural location of the area, the vast majority of premises across the parish are eligible – criteria for eligibility is rural location according to DEFRA, part of a group scheme, and cannot access a broadband service of 100Mbps or below (Openreach FTTP and Virgin Media etc). The issue you might run into if you simply register EVERY premises within the parish in the group scheme is that some residents simply may not see the benefit of a full-fibre network, especially if they are already receiving a satisfactory service. Your supplier would be able to discuss how many commitments would be required in order to commit to the network build when a ballpark figure is received.

There are likely premises nearby to the 23 worst ones, which receive a broadband service over 30Mbps, but would benefit from a full-fibre network, due to contention issues on the line, a poor section of copper line causing reliability issues. If the Parish Council proceeds with an application, a registered supplier will put forward a possible network build to you when they return a ballpark figure which includes a wiper scope. We're hoping that through engagement with the parishes they will be able to highlight areas of poor connectivity to address in the group scheme.

The Council asked questions NCCBEO advised:

- Most fibre supplies under the scheme are overhead supplied rather than underground
- 2 Commercial premises are included on the list of the worst speeds in the parish
- The NCCBEO is encouraging and working with as many parishes in the County to see if they have enough properties eligible for the scheme.
- No permission, consent is required for the first stage, which is for the Parish Council to submit addresses to the scheme, the NCCBEO explained the easiest way is to register all addresses in the parish with under 100mbps.

After discussion, Cllr Kyle **Proposed**, Cllr Dinsdale **Seconded**, and the Council **resolved** to register all premisses (domestic and non-domestic) for the stage 1 enquiry to see if funding is available to cover the total potential cost to upgrade everyone who can potentially benefit. **Action**, Clerk.

535 Finance:

1. To Approve Payments:

The Council **approved** the following: -

<u>Payee</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
R & R Motors	Petrol Parish Mower November	£7.00
Cllr Ferriter	Expenses Rampton Christmas Tree Balance-Sunrise Plants	£20.00
Total Payments		£27.00

2. Receipts:

<u>From</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Good Energy Ltd	Village Hall Solar Feed in Tarif 12.06.20-09.09.20	£76.59
Neighbouring Parish Councils	Contribution to Full Access Zoom Accounts for Meetings	£71.94
Total Receipts		£148.53

Bank Balance

The Current Account Balance **£13,373.87***

***£270.59** ring-fenced for Flowers for Planters. All these items are grant funded. **Total Funds Ring-Fenced £270.00**

Direct Debits and Standing Orders for staff salaries including PAYE and Pension, all **approved** unanimously.

After further discussion, the Council agreed to appoint Cllr Dinsdale as a point of support to the Responsible Financial Officer.

3. To Approve 2020/21 Budget & Set a Precept

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk had circulated the draft budget, statement, precept requirement for 2020/21 and the facts surrounding the precept to allow each member time to prepare for making a decision.

Bassetlaw District Council Concurrent Grant has reduced year on year from £4,478 in 1996 to just £55 in 2020. It is expected that the grant will reduce to £33 in 2021 before ceasing altogether. Compound Interest income has reduced from £2,000 in 2001 to £25 in 20. Explaining the reduction of the Concurrent Grant, Bassetlaw District Council wrote to each Parish Council to state that: *"we continue to reduce the concurrent grant; therefore, you need to factor in these reductions, you will see that Harworth & Bircotes Parish Council decided some years ago to substantially increase their precept and invest in their infrastructure for their local people."*

NALC and the SLCC advise that Parish Councils should not set any arbitrary, random figure for their precepts, the law requires parish councils to set a precept that is a 'balancing figure' known in legislation as the 'council tax requirement'. The precept should be set to be the amount of money required to 'balance' the accounts **after deducting all 'other expected regular annual income'** in our case this is all rental income from Parish Land and Property.

The table below of self-generated income already **reduces** the cost of the precept to the tax payer for 2020/21 as follows:

Rents	Income	Precept Saving per home @ Band D	Precept Saving per home @ Band A
Forest Garden Field 4.81 Acres	£451.00	£1.54	£1.03
South Ing Yard 7 Acres	£700.00	£2.39	£1.59
Phone Mast	£5,500.00	£18.77	£12.52
Rampton Wharf 0.5 Acre	£525.00	£1.79	£1.19
Post Office £6 x 5hrs x 52 weeks	£1,560.00	£5.33	£3.55
Bowling Green	£25.00	£0.09	£0.06
Wayleave - Electric Pole South Inge Yard	£39.12	£0.13	£0.09
Wayleave - Electric Pole Forest Garden Field	£8.21	£0.03	£0.02
Surveyors Field 10.695 Acres	£1,229.93	£4.20	£2.80
Notts County Council Lengthsman Grant	£1,000.00	£3.41	£2.28
Bassetlaw District Council Street Cleaning Grant	£1022.00	£3.49	£2.33
Village Hall Income Substitute Central Govt non-domestic business rates grant to cover 2020/21 loss of income	£5,100.00	£17.41	£11.61
Total	£17,160.26	£58.58	£38.97

In addition to the usual running costs, after taking into consideration the self-generated income, a precept rise is required to cover the following recurring expenditure:

- Future Parish Equipment Replacement Contingency Fund £1,000
- Reduction of Concurrent Grant £17
- Insurance Increase £116
- NALC Subscription Rise £20

Expenditure was previously agreed to be added to the 2021/22 budget for a parish council staff member to be compulsory auto-enrolment into a pension scheme which is the balance of the rise of the precept.

After discussing the budget and various options, the Council narrowed the decision to two options:

Option 1, increase the Parish Council precept by only the necessary running costs, and replace the lost income of the Hall due to Covid restriction, with £5100 from the Central Govt Business Support Grant.

Option 2, increase the Parish Council precept by the necessary running costs and replace the lost income of the Hall due to Covid restriction, using an additional £5100 onto the precept.

Option 1 increase works out as follows per household:

Tax Band	Increase Per Year	Increase Per Month
Band A	£11.61	£0.97
Band B	£13.54	£1.13
Band C	£15.47	£1.29
Band D	£17.41	£1.45

Option 2 increase works out as follows per household:

Tax Band	Increase Per Year	Increase Per Month
Band A	£24.16	£2.01
Band B	£28.19	£2.35
Band C	£32.21	£2.68
Band D	£36.24	£3.02

After discussion, Cllr Kyle called for a vote, all 5 members in favour, **resolved to 1)** approve the budget, **2)** to select option 1 and set precept at Band D at £144.65 **per year** (£12.05 per month). **Action**, the RFO to submit the completed Precept paperwork to Bassetlaw District Council.

The Council thanked the Clerk for obtaining the grant from Bassetlaw to support the village hall, which was not given without applying, NALC have emailed the parishes across the County in dismay that there are parish clerks in the county who did not bother to apply for the grant or even advise their Cllrs that a grant may have been possible.

It is also worth noting that the parish has 382 properties, 169 are in band A, 15 in Band B and 23 in Band C, 207 homes out of 382 will pay less than the Band D figure. Homes with only 1 adult occupant are entitled to receive a further 25%

reduction on the above figures, with additional reductions for residents in receipt of certain benefits. Details are found by contacting Bassetlaw Council regards Council Tax reduction.

Choosing option 1 results in a smaller increase at Band D than last year, and uses the Government grant for the purposes of sustaining the village hall lost income without a negative effect on the local tax payer.

The Clerk, advised that now the staff member is enrolled into the pension scheme, this only has to happen once and apart from any unforeseen event that may affect all parish councils, the precept rise in 12 months' time is expected to be minimal.

536 To Note the Cottam Development Section of Bassetlaw Local Plan

CLlr Kyle advised that after talking with the District Councillor, the former Cottam Power Station site is no longer specifically earmarked for a housing development. The Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have worked together to add to the Steering Group Chairman's suggested joint response from the Parish. CLlr Kyle conveyed thanks to the Steering Group Chair for taking the time to dissect the Bassetlaw Plan and draft a comprehensive response as follows:

Our main responses and criticisms of the Draft Bassetlaw Plan are:

- The inclusion of any new builds in response to the increased housing need.
- Will the right sort of dwellings be provided?
- The concept of the Garden Village.
- What the Plan considers to be evidence and the use or misuse of the term evidence base.
- Potential threats to our (and other settlements) Neighbourhood Plans.
- The proposed housing development at Cottam.

In addition, we have a minor irritation about the presentation of the document which can be avoided by better editing.

The inclusion of any new builds in response to the increased housing need

What most reasonable people would agree with is that there is a housing crisis in the UK and that this is mirrored in a housing crisis in Bassetlaw. It is appropriate that the Council should draft a plan to address this crisis in the District as one of its two major priorities. The second major priority is that any solutions should be green ones. Neither priority should subordinate the other.

The Plan quite rightly refers to, and approves of, appropriate change of use of vacant commercial properties such as shops to housing. The UK has, somewhat belatedly, moved from ideas of rigid zoning, the separation of housing from commercial or industrial land use to a more flexible approach. Late or not, it is welcome, and one can see good examples of this in nearby cities such as Sheffield where old, redundant Victorian warehouses and factories have been converted into, often quite desirable, apartments. The logic of this is obvious, it requires fewer building materials and is therefore cheaper and does less harm to the environment than building the equivalent number of dwellings from new. Other countries such as the Netherlands have grasped this point. Whether converting existing buildings offer the same profit margins to developers as new builds is a moot point. In short, no authorisation for new build housing should be approved until a full stock take has been made of redundant buildings that are appropriate for conversion though this will present difficulties.

Currently, we are in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic and also, we leave the Brexit transition period at the end of the month. Both of these events have consequences for commercial and industrial buildings. White collar workers have been encouraged to work from home if possible, during the pandemic and minimise trips to the office. There is speculation that for many workers this trend may become a permanent feature of life with a consequence that companies will downsize their requirement for centralised office accommodation which may, in turn, lead to a significant number of redundant office buildings. This is a matter of real concern for commercial landlords but an opportunity to use some of these office buildings to be converted to apartments which would be cheaper and greener than new builds.

Brexit will have a similar impact. The Governments own, recently leaked, impact assessment of both a "no deal" Brexit or minimal deal Brexit forecasts a significant downturn in the economy with consequent large number of job losses and business failures. In turn, this will lead to vacant commercial and industrial buildings that can be converted to housing use.

In summary, the Council should carry out a stock take of vacant buildings but not just yet. By the end of next year, the pandemic, hopefully, will have abated and we will also be clearer what the real rather than projected cost to the economy has occurred because of Brexit. Then, and only then, will it be possible to know whether we need any new builds at all.

Will the right sort of dwellings be provided?

At a national level it can be argued that we do not have a housing crisis in terms of the number of individuals and families that require accommodation and the number houses and apartments that currently exist in the country as they are roughly in balance. The problem is the type of housing. These problems include second home ownership which often inflates local property prices driving out local people and high-end properties bought by investors left unoccupied and mothballed in the hope of future profits. Neither of these problems are a significant issue in Bassetlaw though they are in the major cities and popular holiday areas. They are also beyond the remit of a District Council to address and are a matter for national government to address, assuming there is the political will to do so.

The problem that should be addressed locally is whether the right sort of houses is being created, for example affordable entry level homes for first time buyers rather than expensive “executive” houses. Once again, conversion of redundant existing buildings rather than new builds would be cheaper and more affordable for first time buyers or renters.

The concept of the Garden Village

The concept of the Garden Village has direct links to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century concept of the Garden Suburb which itself had roots in the Arts and Crafts movement with its rejection of the industrial revolution and the unhealthy and noxious urban environments the revolution created. It was also dependent on good and affordable public transport links between the country and the city. For those who still had to work in the industrial cities but could afford to live outside it and commute they provided an ideal solution. Pastiches of a bucolic idyll that had never existed they may be but done well, they provided good houses that are still desirable, and a solution to an industrial age problem.

So why not build a new Garden Village in Bassetlaw? The first reason is that, as stated above, there should be no new building until we have exhausted the possibilities of conversion of redundant commercial and industrial buildings.

Second, we are now in a post-industrial age and solutions that were appropriate to an industrial age are inappropriate and anachronistic to our current housing crisis.

Third, this harks back to the old twentieth century practice of zoning places of residence separate from places of work. The environmental impact of zoning is that it necessitates both the number and length of environmentally damaging car and public transport trips residents will need to make to access work, recreation, and shopping. Electric vehicles are only a partial solution and when the report argues that the new village will be convenient for the A1 and A57 this is, in fact, a statement of a major weakness of the proposal. Most redundant buildings fit for conversion are likely to be near places of work. Our cities are no longer noxious and unpleasant places to be in and town centres are ripe for regeneration where people might be able to live in walking or cycling distance to their place of work (with incidental health benefits). For all these reasons a new Garden Village should not be built in Bassetlaw.

The use of the term evidence based

Evidence should be explicit and open to external scrutiny; it may be quantitative and open to further statistical analysis. The term evidence based is often misleading and misunderstood. For instance, the Plan document lists the Council’s existing Strategies and current Planning Policy as evidence which, of themselves, they are not. They may or may not be based on a sound evidence base. Equally, they may be based on opinion or ideological or political bias.

Potential threats to our (and other settlements’) Neighbourhood Plan

Those of us who worked on our own Parish’s Neighbourhood Plan are concerned with a statement in section 1.12.5.

“Following adoption of this plan, as new planning policies are approved at national, local and neighbourhood plan level - the most recent policies always take precedence. If as a consequence of this Plan or new national policy being introduced part of a Neighbourhood Plan becomes out of date, the Council will support Parish Councils to revise their plans accordingly.”

This seems to imply that where a new higher tier of government plan is in contradiction to the approved Neighbourhood Plan then the Neighbourhood Plan will always be “trumped” by higher tier plans without recourse to discussion or mediation. What if the higher-level plan, say from the Government, is not evidence based but the Neighbourhood Plan is?

The proposed housing development at Cottam

Cottam is one of our neighbouring parishes and we, and others from our parish have attended meetings on the development; however, a large proportion of the EDF land, including that of the former power station itself falls within the Rampton & Woodbeck Parish boundary.

The decision to give permission for a substantial number of houses on this site is both reckless and wrongheaded. Section 6.2.1 is concerned with the High Marnham Energy Hub and the opening sentence implies the environmental reason why that site is not being developed for housing:

“The Former High Marnham Power Station is predominately brownfield with a legacy of contamination due to its historical association with a coal fired power station and associated infrastructure.”

This description is also an accurate description of the Cottam Power Station site as conceded in 5.4.11: “The site is predominately brownfield with a legacy of contamination due to its former uses associated with a coal fired power station and associated buildings and infrastructure.”

We are aware that there are no accurate site maps for Cottam of where contaminates have been buried. We are also aware that former and retired Cottam Power Station have been reemployed to try and identify where contaminants may be buried. It is obvious that if those decontaminating the site must rely on fallible human memory alone there can be no guarantee that some contaminates might be left and pose a health threat to residents of the new development. Were the Council aware of this? If so, why propose using the Cottam site for housing? If potential residents are made aware of the possible risks will anyone want to live there?

The High Marnham Energy Hub is an excellent and innovative use of an otherwise problematic brownfield site. The Council deserves praise for supporting this. Councillor White, in her Forward to the Plan, describes it as unique, which can only mean it is the only one of its type. With the rapid growth of renewable but unpredictable energy sources such as wind and solar power we need more energy hubs, and the Cottam site is the obvious candidate and will show that the Council is serious about its green agenda and that the Marnham Energy Hub is not just a single token gesture.

In addition to the above arguments, the same arguments against the Garden Village can be levelled against the Cottam development that is there should be no new builds until the conversion of vacant builds has been exhausted and residential developments should not be encouraged in isolated rural areas, away from places of work, recreation and shopping causing more vehicle use. We are also surprised that no mention is given to the Cottam site’s principal infrastructure asset, the working railway line to the Power Station site. Once again, the thinking seems to be predominantly 20th century when planning was structured around car use. An important further consideration regarding transport is the lack of a public transport system. Nearby Rampton lost its regular travel to work bus, and this will also be a factor for those moving into the proposed Cottam development who need public transport. The roads in and through Cottam are narrow country lanes, and an increased number of cars will not only have an effect on road use but will also lead to further pollution. There is already a safety aspect with increased traffic for the delivery hub in the village, this will be worsened by the needs of extra vehicles, and families living in rural areas often find they need to have more than one car.

If the development were to be a mix of social housing, residents on benefits or low incomes would be severely impacted by the lack of effective public transport access to large shops, schools, and doctors’ surgeries etc. A community shop proposed in the plan would likely be expensive and unaffordable for lower income residents.

As a final stylistic point will the authors please refrain from the excessive use of positive adjectives. Examples include but are not restricted to Councillor White’s Forward where planning frameworks have to be “ambitious, innovative and positive”, changes can’t just be changes but have to be “step changes” and people will not just have more access to jobs, but they have to be “better paid, higher skilled jobs”. It is not just a case of being irritating to read. Good writers of both fact and fiction know that the secret to writing well and effectively is to use words sparingly but with precision to engage the reader and this is especially true of adjectives. An excess of “happy, clappy” adjectives is the sign of a writer not convinced that the bare facts of their argument will sell themselves to the reader. As our criticism shows, there are substantial problems with this proposal.

537 Closure of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting at 8:40pm. The next meeting of the Parish Council, unless there is any urgent business which cannot wait, will be in March 2021.