

Minutes of the meeting of **Little Bowden Neighbourhood Forum**, held at St Nicholas Church Hall, on 20th April 2023

Meeting started at 18.30 pm and ended at 20.10.

Apologies for absence: James Ward, James Turner, Linda Pentland, Keith Nixon, Kevin Millard, Simon Hobbs, Lucy Hobbs

Present: Beverley Brown (chair), Jan Turner, Phil Baidon, Pete Urmston, Kay Hillier, Janet Lee, Peter James, David Lax, Sally Lax, Julie Hilliam, Alex Beltrao, Jonathan Davies (minutes).

1. Minutes of the last meeting on 16th March 2023: matters arising
 - Please use the Apps linked on the minutes of 16th March to report street problems to MHDC. BB mentioned some vandalism in the park around the Bellfield Road skate park.
 - PU raised the lighting on the railway bridge and a cycle ramp is needed too.
 - JD briefly showed the group a map of where meeting members live – more around the ‘old’ village centre, but some from Ashley Way estate. We are keen to attract more – perhaps that will come from promotion events (see item 4).
 - We really need a leaflet to go alongside website (see item 5a). This needs a logo, some text (probably using the priorities list) and a map. **Action 1/2023:** PU to draft leaflet
 - Suggested that SH may have a banner that could be used at promotional events.
 - Proposed social event on 23rd May, possibly at Cherry Tree. **Action 2/2023:** PU to ask about use of back room
2. Expressions of interest. Confusion over what this item means. It was taken to mean whether anyone had any conflict of interest and none were declared by those present.
3. Neighbourhood Priorities Statement (NPS).
 - The discussion mainly revolved around the **sheep field**. The draft priority statement said to buy the field, but this has already been changed by the working Green space working group. The priority is to ensure it is protected and maintained with a view to enhancement in the future.
 - The field has never been ploughed and there are some unusual coping stones on the wall, some of which have been removed. SL suggested an information board would make it more interesting to the community, maybe with some information about history and wildlife (e.g. otters under the bridge).
 - The Bowdens’ Charity might buy it if there’s a danger of it being built on. The last planning application for a dog walking space was rejected, but PJ warned that once an application goes to appeal, the Council loses control over it.
 - JD has had an email from the Environment Agency saying they don’t own the river bank and don’t keep records of land they don’t own – it probably belongs to the farmer. **Action 3/2023:** JD to check Land Registry
 - PU: there’s a feeling that the farmer is allowing it to become more and more run down so there is more chance he will get permission to change its use.
 - SL: – was the land for houses in the far corner originally taken from the field? Could this be a precedent?
 - An email from Matt Bills suggests that the field is currently protected as Open Space Sport and Recreation, but we could try to have it designated as a Local Green Space which is the highest level of protection. If that doesn’t work, it could be protected by action in the Neighbourhood Plan.
 - PJ will ask the Council lawyer how robust the current protection is, whether there are any loopholes which might allow it to be built on and what we can do to raise its level of designation.
Action: 4/2023: JD to forward Matt Bills emails to PJ
 - JH suggested that the landowner may be hostile to our interference and AB reminded the meeting that the farmer is a businessman and we need to see things from his point of view if we are to work with him.

The discussion then moved to other green spaces in the area which aren't actually designated as green spaces. These are owned by management companies and their upkeep is paid for by residents of the development they are linked to, but they are still regarded as public open spaces.

There was a feeling that we don't need to rank the priorities statements yet. JT suggested grouping them under the four working party titles.

4. There will in be three opportunities to promote the Forum to the local community:

- PB has arranged with owners of Westbrook House to have a stand during open garden afternoon on Sunday 30th April (and possibly future events). Visitors are likely to be from a wider area than just Little Bowden.
Action 5/2023: PB and KM to staff a stand.
- Carnival on 10th June. BB can arrange a stand.
Action 6/2023: BB to book a place at the Carnival.
- LB Fete on 17th June. We have already got a place.

5. Working Groups:

a. Social and Community Activity

- No activity since the first meeting. JL expressed frustration.
- BB mentioned that the committee had briefly discussed a skate park demonstration at Bellfield Road.
- A WhatsApp group was suggested to improve communication amongst members.
- There needs to be a way to engage with the community more –we really need the **website** to be up and running as soon as possible. This would give more idea of what the community wants.
Action 7/2023 could SH look into this?
- PU suggested using post-its again at the events in item 4 (above) –this would give some feedback. Action points could then be allocated to individuals or working groups. This was received as a good idea.

b. Flooding and Greenspace

- SL mentioned the flood river walk which the working party did with Bruce Durham. JD pointed out that it only covered West Brook and a lot of volume of water in the Jordan comes from the main river that rises in Desborough.
- SL suggested that it is important to have video evidence in times of potential flood, so people are encouraged to video water courses where problems appear to be emerging so the provenance of water flows can be identified.
- Bruce is already engaged with a number of agencies (Environment Agency, MHDC, etc) over flood alleviation strategies.

c. Built environment

- PU referred to the illustrated document he wrote about the build environment in Little Bowden. He is now keeping an eye on all planning applications (current and future).
- PU reports that the working group initially failed to make headway because some attendees of the first meeting came with only one issue in mind (their specific desired use of a new community centre in Overstone Park) and were not able to countenance any other ideas. The general feeling in the Forum meeting (20th April) was that a community building should be flexible and able to be used for a range of things. The problem at the moment is that the community it will be closest to does not yet exist (i.e. the houses have not yet been built or occupied). The community centre probably won't be built for some time (years) so it is an issue we will come back to.

d. Transport

- An email from JW was received on the afternoon of the meeting asking for a discussion about the cycle path that is meant to be built down Kettering Road. It was felt that more explanation was needed and as

the meeting was running out of time, this item was moved to next meeting. PJ says there is some urgency because a decision will soon be made regarding which side of the road it will be on.

- PJ: Kettering Road speeding (downhill) is a problem. An average speed camera may be the only way to resolve it.
- SL: speeding in Scotland Road is a problem too – there aren't enough signs for the 20 limit. PB says a flashing speed sign costs £2,000 to £3,000.
- AB and JT are interested in joining this group.

6. Any Other Business

- JT: parking outside Little Bowden Primary School is still bad. Two vans were parked on the pavement the other day preventing JT access and she had to walk round on the road (aided by a helpful motorist who stopped, blocking the traffic). PJ, a governor at the school, says the school is concerned about the issue.
- KH: cars parking on the corner of Scotland Road where cars turn right up towards Northampton Road – cars are too close to the corner so you can't see to turn out.
- SL: ice cream van is still parking outside Sainsbury's with its engine running.
- Various: Is the CCTV in the rec still working? Who monitors it? 'No drinking' signs have been removed. The summer is coming so anti-social behaviour is more likely.

7. Date of next meeting: Thursday 18th May 2023, location TBC

8. Action List

Action	What	Who	By When	Comment / Outcome
1/2023	Create a leaflet for promotion of the Little Bowden Neighbourhood Forum (LBNF) to attract more members	Pete Urmston	18/5	Ongoing
2/2023	Ask Cherry Tree about the use of the back room for an event on the 23 rd of May	Pete Urmston	18/5	Ongoing
3/2023	Check Land Registry on the ownership of the riverbank by the sheep field	Jonathan Davies	18/5	Ongoing
4/2023	Forward Matt Bills emails to Peter James	Jonathan Davies	18/5	Ongoing
5/2023	Staff a stand at the Westbrook House during the open garden afternoon on Sunday 30 th April	Phil Baildon and Kevin Millard	30/4	Ongoing
6/2023	Book a stand at the Carnival on the 10 th of June	Beverley Brown	18/5	Ongoing
7/2023	Arrange a website for the LBNF	Simon Hobbs	18/5	Ongoing