

## **Riseley Parish Council**

### **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting**

Held on Thursday 16th April 2026 at 7.15pm

Venue: Riseley Village Hall Lounge

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Vice Chairman Cllr Connor Felce welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting was very well attended by residents of Riseley.

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#### **Open Forum**

A resident raised concerns regarding the condition of the allotment fencing and requested that the Parish Council review possible repairs. The resident also encouraged greater use of the village bottle bank rather than the orange recycling bins, noting that the bottle bank generates income for the village. In addition, the resident thanked the Parish Council for its support of the Community Hub.

The Parish Council advised that the bottle bank would be discussed at the May meeting, as it is managed by the Bottle Bank Committee, who will provide a report outlining associated costs. It was noted that the bottle bank is collected monthly.

A resident enquired whether the village noticeboards were still being locked. The Clerk confirmed that notices are displayed regularly and there was no cause for concern. Another resident confirmed that the Agenda had been displayed on the noticeboards.

No further matters were raised.

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#### **1. To Receive Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Chairman Cllr Darren Jowett.

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#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Jones declared an interest in planning matters.

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#### **3. To Approve the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2026 were considered.

Cllr Wallis queried whether the reference to barriers should state "Church Lane" rather than "Gold Street". The Clerk will review the wording for clarification.

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#### **4. To Report Any Late Correspondence Received After Publication of the Agenda**

An email had been received from a resident regarding the increase in council tax and other related matters, which will be addressed at the next Parish Council meeting.

It was also noted that the Village Newsletter delivery volunteer has resigned due to moving away from the area.

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## **5. Presentation on Brook House**

**Please note:** The following is not a verbatim record, but a summary of the discussion. The Parish Council cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies in statements made by members of the public.

Naomi Coombs, Service Manager from Bedford Housing Association, attended the meeting to explain the current position regarding Brook House. Although not the Brook House Manager, Ms Coombs outlined the proposed arrangements for the facility.

A new manager is due to be recruited shortly to oversee the project moving forward. Refurbishment works are approximately 90% complete, with external works still to be undertaken. The building is nearing completion overall, with an anticipated opening later in the year, around September or October, subject to building sign-off, Ofsted registration, and approval processes.

The home is expected to be registered for 10 beds, initially accommodating six children aged between 7 and 17 years old. The facility will support children with learning disabilities and emotional needs and will operate with staffing on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **Questions Raised by the Parish Council**

- **Will the home be secure?**  
Ms Coombs confirmed that the building would be secure and locked.
- **Would school-aged children attend local schools?**  
This would depend on individual needs and could involve a mixture of educational arrangements.
- **Where would the children be referred from?**  
It was understood they would likely be referred through the Local Authority, although this could not be confirmed.

### **Concerns Raised by Residents**

Residents raised several concerns and questions, including:

- Clarification regarding safeguarding and children's policies.
- Whether the security measures were intended for the protection of the children or the village.
- Further explanation of the term "emotional needs".
- The qualifications and experience of staff who would be employed at the home.

Some questions could not be answered during the meeting.

One resident requested that a senior representative from the organisation attend a future meeting to provide further information and answer questions directly.

A resident also referred to information published on the organisation's website and raised concerns regarding staffing ratios and the potential level of care required by residents.

A neighbouring resident expressed concerns that, whilst the building itself may be secure, the perimeter fencing and surrounding grounds did not appear sufficiently secure.

The Parish Council requested that a formal statement be provided by Bedfordshire Supported Living and asked that a senior member of staff attend a future Parish Council meeting.

It was noted that there remained considerable dissatisfaction amongst residents due to a number of unanswered questions.

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## **6. Planning**

### **a. Planning Applications**

#### **26/00410/FUL – 162 High Street**

Erection of timber shed.

It was proposed and **AGREED** to support this application.

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#### **26/00607/FUL – 91A High Street**

Single storey rear extension.

It was proposed and **AGREED** that the Parish Council had no objection to this application.

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#### **26/00591/FUL & 26/00592/LBC – Honeybee Cottage, 68 High Street**

Replacement windows.

It was proposed and **AGREED** to support this application.

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### **b. Planning Decisions**

It was noted that a tree lopping application had been approved.

The change of use from agricultural to residential use at Crowfields had been permitted.

### **c. Planning Appeals**

No planning appeals were reported.

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## **7. Administration and Finance**

### **a. Monthly Financial Report and Invoices**

The monthly financial report and invoices were reviewed.

It was proposed and **AGREED** that the invoices be paid as presented.

**b. Acknowledgement of the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Returns (AGAR)**

It was noted that acknowledgement of the AGAR submission had been received.

**c. Donation to the Memory Café**

The Parish Council queried whether the charity held its own bank account, noting that payments should not be made to a private individual. It was confirmed that the charity operates under the umbrella of the Tibbs Charity and that appropriate banking and payment information would be provided.

Following discussion, it was proposed and **AGREED** to approve the donation of £250.

**d. Updated Asset Register**

This item was deferred to the May meeting.

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**8. Riseley Village**

Nothing to report.

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**9. Riseley Recreation Association (RRA)**

Discussions have taken place regarding combining the RRA and Old School Field groups, which may require the implementation of a safeguarding policy.

Cllr Davies advised that it would be sensible for the Parish Council to adopt such a policy and circulated a draft document for consideration. It was noted that safeguarding policies are often required when applying for grants.

Although some members of the RRA felt a policy may not be necessary, it was agreed that the Parish Council should investigate the matter further.

It was proposed and **AGREED** that the Parish Council investigate safeguarding policy requirements.

The Clerk will contact NALC to establish any formal requirements and whether a designated safeguarding officer is necessary.

This item will return to the May agenda.

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**10. Old School Playing Field**

**a. Funding Requests Submitted by the Old School Working Group**

**Footpath**

A request for £2,000 funding towards the construction of a concrete footpath leading to the playing field was considered.

It was proposed and **AGREED** that up to £2,000 be allocated from existing CIL reserves.

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### **Picnic Tables**

A request was received for four round picnic tables, including one wheelchair-accessible table, at an approximate cost of £400 each.

Riseley Gardening Club kindly offered to donate funds towards the purchase of one table following the forthcoming plant sale.

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### **Basketball Net**

A request for a basketball net was discussed; however, no formal proposal or decision was made.

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### **Planning and Survey Requirements**

Cllr Davies explained that planning permission would be required for any proposed wooden structure on the site due to its designation as village open space.

The Borough Council had advised that the proposal would not fall under permitted development.

A request for a topographical survey was also considered, as this would be required as part of any future planning application. Hook Surveys had provided a quotation of £750.

It was proposed and **AGREED** to proceed with the survey using CIL funds.

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### **Shelter, Electrics and Public Wi-Fi**

Cllr Davies advised that a local company had been approached regarding the possible donation of a shelter for the field. Failing this, the anticipated cost would be approximately £3,000, subject to planning approval.

Further information regarding the provision of electrics and public Wi-Fi is currently being gathered.

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## **11. Rights of Way**

Vice Chairman Felce summarised notes provided by Cllr Jowett regarding completed and forthcoming works on the Rights of Way network.

A budget request of £12.99 for screws required to secure timber was considered.

It was proposed and **AGREED** that Cllr Jowett submit the receipt for reimbursement at the next meeting.

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## **12. Tree Warden, Ross Meadow and Allotments**

### **a. Tree Warden**

It was noted that ground conditions now allow the tree surgeon to commence the approved works.

A fallen tree in the brook was also reported. Cllr Toseland agreed to inspect this over the weekend.

### **b. Ross Meadow**

Ongoing maintenance works at Ross Meadow continue.

### **c. Allotments**

It was reported that there is one new tenant and two vacant plots currently available.

Invoices will shortly be issued to all allotment tenants.

The allotment posts are in poor condition and require replacement. Cllr Wallis agreed to inspect them.

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## **13. Children and Youth**

Nothing to report.

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## **14. Brook**

A fallen tree had been reported, with Cllr Toseland dealing with the matter.

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## **15. Highways and Footways**

It was noted that pothole repairs are currently being undertaken.

Bowers Close had been inspected, and several councillors intend to remove overgrown bramble bushes from the area. The damaged steps and broken slabs have been reported to Bedford Borough Council.

Cllr Davies will contact Graingers to request that the bank be cut back and to ask residents to move vehicles where necessary to allow grass cutting to take place.

It was noted that the grassed areas at Bowers Close are not the responsibility of the Parish Council; however, the Council is willing to assist residents where possible.

Concerns were also raised regarding the possible presence of Japanese Knotweed in the area.

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## **16. Lighting**

Nothing to report.

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## 17. Village Hall

Nothing to report.

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## 18. Grass Cutting

Grass cutting operations are now underway.

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## 19. Newsletter

The next edition of the Village Newsletter will be published in July.

It was noted that the Chairman's report contained an incorrect email or web address reference, which should be simplified and corrected.

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## 20. Website

It was noted that the official Parish Council website is now:

[www.riseleyparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.riseleyparishcouncil.gov.uk)

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## 21. Environment and Village Appearance

Nothing further to report.

It was noted that a village litter pick will not take place this year, as litter collection now forms part of the Village Handy Person's duties.

Instead, a new community event may be organised, potentially at the Old School Field.

The recently upgraded digital post box near the Police Station was also noted positively.

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## 22. Bedford Borough Council

Cllr Towler summarised Bedford Borough Council's report, which had previously been circulated to councillors.

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## Outstanding Items

- **02/22 – CIL Payment:** To remain on the agenda.
- **12/23 – Review of Parish Council Procedures and Protocols (DJ/CF & Clerk):** To be arranged following completion of the Asset Register and Risk Assessment, as several meetings will be required.

- **Children's Community Hub / Helen's Meadow (LW):** Ongoing updates. An AGM will take place next Tuesday.
  - **Helen's Meadow:** Legal processes remain ongoing.
  - **Handy Person:** To remain on the agenda for future works. Cllr TowseLand will ask Cliff to monitor Dodds Close and the area around the garages.
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### **Closing Forum**

A resident requested that the vacant allotment plots be advertised as soon as possible to encourage interest from prospective tenants.

A resident asked the Parish Council about concerns relating to their hedge. The Parish Council advised that this is a highways matter and that inspections are due to take place regarding several hedges in the village. Guidance will then be provided as to whether hedges require trimming or removal to ensure footpaths remain accessible.

Another resident confirmed that some village footpaths are difficult to use side-by-side due to overgrown hedges.

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### **23. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Riseley Parish Council will be held on:

**Thursday 21st May 2026**

The Vice Chairman closed the meeting at 9.07pm.