BROMHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE **BROMHAM MILL BOARD**
HELD ON THURSDAY 11 JULY 2024 AT BROMHAM VILLAGE HALL

Attendees:

Councillors: Trevor Roff (Chair)
Sian Woodfine
Liz Luder

Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer: Julie Betts

Public: There were three members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

			Action
23/24	**Apologies for Absence**		
	Apologies were received from Cllr Rutter, Cllr Baker and Cllr Guerriero.		Note
24/24	**Appointment of Chairperson**		
	The appointment was deferred to the next meeting given the limited attendance. Pending the appointment for the next period the existing Chairperson, Trevor Roff, retained the position for the duration of this meeting.		Note
25/24	**Appointment of Vice-Chair**		
	The appointment was deferred to the next meeting given the limited attendance.		Note
26/24	**Declarations of Interest**		
	There were no additional declarations of interest.		Note
27/24	**Minutes of Previous Meeting Held on 14 March 2024**		
	The meeting considered the draft minutes of the last meeting.		Note
	RESOLVED:		
	That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.		PC
	(Proposed by: Cllr Woodfine, Seconded by: Cllr. Luder, All in favour)		
28/24	**Reports**		
	(a)	**Bromham Conservation Group**	
		The meeting received and considered the Bromham Conservation Group (BCG) update that detailed local conservation activities at the Mill.	

		The recent activity undertaken by BCG included the following: • A new pathway along the brook had been established with more bark laid thanks to volunteers from BOLD and National Highways. • The new educational animal footprints board had been created and installed and the bug hotel relocated into the new educational area of the Woodland Fairy Walk. Maintenance work had continued in the Woodland Fairy Walk to discourage nettles and cow parsley and promote alternative native flora. However, as climate change continues to develop the Mill Board may need to consider tree and shrub planting appropriate to the projected climate. • The outside toilets and volunteers barn had been repainted and work will continue to the back barn and garages weather permitting. • Bedding plants had been planted, flower beds tended and the pathways kept open despite the record plant/weed growth. • BCG continue to protect and tend the considerable number of young trees planted by the Nature Club and volunteers in the last 3 to 5 years. BCG will, over the next couple of weeks, seek to use the overflow car park gates to replace the main front gates. This had been agreed by the Parish Council at its meeting on 2 July 2024. The BCG meetings in August 2024 at the Mill will look to start preparing the grounds for Apple Day. <u>**RESOLVED**</u>: **That the update from Bromham Conservation Group be acknowledged and that the Group be thanked for their valuable contribution.**	Note Note
	(b)	**Bromham Nature Club**	
		There was no update from the Friends of Bromham Nature Club.	
	(d)	**Friends of Bromham Mill**	
		There was no update from the Friends of Bromham Mill.	Note
29/24	**Update on Current Issues**		
	(a)	**Mill Events**	
		Cllr. Woodfine reported that the next event would be Apple Day on Sunday 13 October 2024 and the Events Team would, in the near future, commence planning the event having regard to the lessons learnt from past events. <u>**RESOLVED**</u>: **That the update provided in respect of the events at Bromham Mill, and associated arrangements, be acknowledged.**	Note Note

	(b)	**Site Management Issues**	
		(i) **Apple Tree Maintenance**: The apple tree adjacent to the entrance to the overflow car park had started dropping branches and required attention. The Tree People had assessed the situation but, as it is not the right time of year to work on apple trees, it had been agreed to made safe by removing the limb over the entrance to the car park within the next month and a tree reduction later in the year. This work would be funded from the Maintenance/Repairs budget. (ii) **Fire Risk Assessment**: The works identified by the Fire Risk Assessment, to install replacement fire doors, had commenced (minute 16/24(b)(ii) of the last meeting refers) funded by Bedford Borough Council. Ace Fire & Security, the appointed specialist adviser, had been required to deactivate the alarms on some of the doors that were being replaced. It is recommended that new intruder alarm sensors should be installed on the replacement doors at a cost of £615.00. **RESOLVED:** **That Ace Security be appointed to install new intruder alarm sensors to the replacement fire doors at Bromham Mill at a cost of £615.00 funded from the Health & Safety Arrangements budget.**	PC Note PC
	(c)	**Health & Safety Arrangements**	
		There were no updates in relation to health and safety arrangements.	Note
	(d)	**Service Development Updates**	
		(i) **Gallery Update:** No update (ii) **Website Development/Social-Media**: The Website for Bromham Mill is now complete, and it is envisaged that it will go live during August/September 2024 (minute 16/24(d) of the last meeting refers).	Note Note
30/24	**Bromham Mill Regeneration: Redevelopment Scheme**		
	The following updates were provided at the meeting: (i) **Badger Sett:** The first monitoring of the Badger Sett had been carried out and reported in 2022. Further up to date surveying was, however, required to support an application to close and relocate the Sett and, as such, the Parish Council, at its meeting on 4 June 2024, approved the appointment of CRK Ecology to update the Badger survey, Sett monitoring, licence preparation and Sett closure process. An updated report on the Badger Sett was due shortly. (ii) **Bromham Mill Regeneration Workshop:** A workshop had been organised for all Parish Councillors on Tuesday 16 July 2024 to outline the consented regeneration plans and work sequencing. Frazer Hickling, appointed planning consultant from Phillips Planning Services, will be in attendance.		Note Note

31/24	**Finance & General Administration**		
	(a)	**Budget Monitoring Report: 2024/2025**	
		The meeting considered the Budget Monitoring Report for the period to 30 June 2024, attached at **<u>Appendix A</u>**. This identified expenditure incurred and income received against the approved 2024/2025 budget. The figures in the monitoring reports are shown net of Value Added Tax (VAT). The meeting acknowledged the need to keep the financial position under review with regular budget monitoring reports. **<u>RESOLVED</u>:** **That the budget position statement, for the period ended 30 June 2024, be acknowledged and the financial position be kept under review.** *(Proposed by: Cllr. Roff, Seconded by: Cllr. Luder, All in favour)*	Note PC
	(b)	**Bromham Mill House: Council Tax Liability**	
		Bedford Borough Council (BBC) have now confirmed that the Mill House is liable to Council Tax and that a long-term empty premium would be applied. An invoice for the liability has been issued as follows:	

Dates	Liability £	Premium £	Total £
18 August 2022 to 31 March 2023	1,868.82	3,737.64	5,606.46
1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	3,119.97	6,239.94	9,359.91
1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	3,269.70	9,558.27	12,827.97
Total	**8,258.49**	**19,535.85**	**27,794.34**

BBC have to date maintained the account in dispute pending determination by the Valuation Office that Council Tax liability should be applied. A Compliance Visiting Officer submitted a report and photographs to the Valuation Office Agency, but they concluded that they do not consider the property to be derelict and, as such, are of the view that the property will remain in the Council Tax Valuation List. Factors that they considered include whether a property is watertight and airtight, i.e. does the property have a roof and windows. Note

There are two separate issues affecting the amount due, which cover (a) the liability for Council Tax and (b) the long-term empty property premium.

(a) <u>Liability for Council Tax</u>: It is the responsibility of the Valuation Office Agency to determine whether a property should be included in the Council Tax Valuation List and, given their determination that the property continues to remain liable for Council Tax, Council Tax is currently payable for the period from 18 August 2022.

(b) <u>Long-Term Empty Property Premium</u>: The Borough Council's policy for the charging of the Council Tax long-term empty property premium includes the levy of a premium for properties that are unoccupied and substantially furnished. This is identified in the table above.

		The meeting considered that an appeal should be submitted to the Valuation Office as the house is considered to be derelict and not habitable. The Mill House has deteriorated significantly since the transfer of the property in August 2022 and it is relevant that, over a long period of time, a property can deteriorate so badly that it is no longer capable of being repaired without very significant reconstruction. The following link is relevant: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/council-tax-domestic-properties-in-disrepair-or-derelict/council-tax-domestic-properties-which-are-in-disrepair-or-are-derelict This confirms that, as the property is in severe disrepair, is derelict and is not habitable (i.e. it has deteriorated so badly that it is no longer capable of being repaired without very significant reconstruction), the Listed Officer should seriously consider deleting the band on the property and the taxpayer should not, therefore, pay any Council Tax until it is restored. Planning permission was granted on 29 January 2024 for the redevelopment of the site, including the renovation of Bromham Mill House. Significant works are required to the property; these works will be substantial, including structural alterations, major renovation or other alterations during which the property will remain, as a present, incapable of being lived in. **<u>RESOLVED</u>:** **(1) That an appeal be submitted to the Valuation Office Agency against the Council Tax Banding, arguing that as the property is in severe disrepair, is derelict and is not habitable (i.e. it has deteriorated so badly that it is no longer capable of being repaired without very significant reconstruction), the Council Tax banding should be deleted until the restoration work is completed.** **(2) That, pending determination by the Valuation Office Agency, a payment arrangement be agreed with BBC for the outstanding liability on the basis that a refund will be payable if the Council Tax banding is deleted or reduced by the Valuation Office Agency.** *(Proposed by: Cllr. Roff, Seconded by: Cllr. Luder, All in favour)*	Note Note PC PC
32/24	**Tenant Matters**		
	(a)	**The Coffee Shop**	
		The current tenancy agreement for the Coffee Shop is based upon an annual Licence to Occupy, which concludes on 17 August 2024. The Coffee Shop tenant, Mitch MacFarlane, had expressed concern that the current annual arrangement gave no security of tenure for his business and he had, therefore, requested that a 3 year lease (minimum) be granted for the Coffee Shop in its current location at Bromham Mill; this could include a break clause for relocation when the upgraded barn was ready for occupation.	Note

		The Licence to Occupy was always intended to be only of temporary duration to apply only until the formal lease is negotiated and agreed with the Tenant. Licences are ordinarily for periods of up to 365 days and are intended to safeguard both parties until the formal lease is executed.	Note
		The Parish Council, at its meeting on 4 October 2022, resolved that the grant of a lease to Mitchell MacFarlane for the provision of The Coffee Shop at Bromham Mill be supported, in principle, and that the terms of the lease be negotiated and reported back to the Parish Council for consideration and final approval. The meeting also resolved that the Parish Council Solicitor be instructed to prepare a draft Lease, ensuring that the terms of the lease are compliant with the provisions in the master lease with the Borough Council.	Note
		A draft lease (for up to 20 years) had, therefore, been prepared and issued to the tenant, based upon occupation in the front barn, but it is evident that relocation of The Coffee Shop is some considerable time away. It would be appropriate, therefore, to consider granting a lease of 3 to 5 years relevant to the current location of The Coffee Shop. In relation to the proposed lease there is, however, a need to determine the annual rental that would be payable, which should include a contribution for utility costs.	Note
		RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:	
		That a 3-year lease (minimum) be prepared for the continuation of The Coffee Shop in the existing Mill building, with appropriate break clauses (as identified above) to enable relocation to new premises when available, and that the final lease and lease terms be reported to Parish Council for approval.	PC
		(Proposed by: Cllr. Roff, Seconded by: Cllr. Luder, All in favour)	
	(c)	**Potential Tenants: Summary of Recorded Interest**	
		Recorded interest in business space at Bromham Mill had now reached 63 prospective tenants.	Note
	(d)	**Space Hire/Workshops**	
		Bookings for workshops in the Mill building had been slower, not helped by the difficulty in hiring space due to the cold condition of the building.	Note
33/24	**Staffing Matters**		
	There was no update in relation to staffing matters.		Note
34/24	**Communication**		
	Times & Citizen had offered to write a positive post about Bromham Mill. It was considered appropriate for Cllr Guerriero to meet with Cllr Woodfine and the Parish Clerk to look at positive messages for social media.		PC
35/24	**Date of Next Meeting**		
	The date of the next meeting is Thursday 17 October 2024.		Note

APPENDIX A

BROMHAM MILL

REVENUE BUDGET 2024/2025
MONITORING REPORT AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

		Budget **2024/2025**	Actual **2024/2025**	Comments
	INCOME			
	Rental Income: [**Note 1**]			
	Mill House	0		
	Mill House Outhouse A **[Note 2]**	600		
	Mill House Outhouse B **[Note 2]**	600		
	Mill House Outhouse C **[Note 2]**	600		
	Mill House Outhouse D **[Note 2]**	600		
	Barn 2 (Current P3 Barn) **[Note 2]**	1,480		
4017	Bromham Mill: Café Rent	10,000	3,638	
4025	Bromham Mill: Friday Event Income	5,000	2,560	
	Nature Club Barn/New Business Units	0		
	Bromham Mill Granary Floor	5,000		
	Event Income:			
	Duck Race (biennial)	3,000	5,490	
	Apple Day	10,000		
	Other events	4,000		
	Commission:			
	Gallery commission from Artist Network	0		
	Commission from Workshops/Crafters	15,000	225	
	TOTAL INCOME	**55,880**	**11,913**	
	EXPENDITURE			
5078	Rent **(Note 3)**	6,600	1,434	
	Maintenance/Repairs:			
	Museum & Gallery Complex	2,000	2,780	Replace Sump Pump
	Mill House	1,500		
	Car Park	1,500		
	Grounds	1,500	365	
	Toilets	500		

5079	Cleaning Service (8 hours per week @ £12.50 x 50 weeks)	1,500	150	
	Pest Control	400		
5070	Fire/Intruder Alarm Maintenance	800	166	
	Volunteer Group Expenses	1,000		
	Running Expenses:			
	Employee Costs **(Note 4)**	47,900		
	Rates	150		
	Rates: Void Period Liability	0		
	Refuse	1,500		
5074	Water/Sewage	1,200	245	
5074	Electricity	20,000	3,903	
5074	Telephone/Broadband Costs	480	43	
	Health & Safety Arrangements	1,000		
	Marketing & Promotion	1,000		
	Events	3,000	1,245	
5080	Printing, Stationery & Office Sundries	350	300	Leaflet delivery
	Consumables	200		
	Insurance	1,800		
	PWLB Loan Repayment	0		
	Contribution to Maintenance Sinking Fund **(Note 5)**	0		
	Contingency for Business Losses **(Note 6)**	0		
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**95,880**	**10,631**	
	NET FINANCIAL POSITION (Note 7)	**-40,000**	**1,282**	

NOTES:

1. Based upon lower range "minimum" figures recommended by Kirkby Diamond for each lettable space; following project investment, rental expectations for lettable space would be increased.
2. Rental income is assumed from 1 December 2024 but, in the event of planning or construction delays affecting rent income, it is assumed that there would be a corresponding reduction in expenditure.
3. Rent to Bedford Borough Council is based upon initial rent reductions identified in the Lease (0%/33%/66%/100%).
4. Provision for Mill Estate Manager from 1 April 2024 (full time at £36,648 per annum, including known pay award, plus overheads).
5. Proposed lease terms enables transfer of up to £50,000 per annum to Maintenance Sinking Fund for larger projects; this will be relevant for consideration in future years.
6. It is expected that a contingency against business losses (e.g. tenant churn, rent arrears, event failure, inclement weather etc) will be provided in future years
7. Lease terms requires payment of 10% of net annual profit over £50,000 to Bedford Borough Council.