

OLD LAUND BOOTH PARISH COUNCIL
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MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 3RD, 2025. IN FENCE VILLAGE HALL.

Present: Couns, B. Newman, J. Myers, M. Ridge, D. Hall, K. Gardner, Boyes, J. Hartley, I. Hargreaves, County Coun H. Hartley, 6 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

Coun. A. Devanney

2. Declaration of interests

None.

3. Questions from residents

Two questions were raised over the leafleting of the village regarding CCTV and the delay in correspondence due to the parish council meetings being held monthly.

A question was raised over staff costs and the way they are formulated.

A question was raised regarding the chairman being recorded as present at the February meeting, despite missing part of it due to a clash with another meeting.

A query was raised as to why the chairman's annual report had been publicised in the village directory which goes to other villages and what the cost had been.

A query was raised as to why the minutes are not spread out when placed in the noticeboard.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

These were accepted.

5. Matters arising from minutes

5.1 CCTV

Following last month's part 2 meeting, the official response on February 6th to the CCTV committee was recorded as:

“Dear CCTV committee

As clerk, I have been asked to send you the following response after Monday's meeting.

"In the meeting, members of the public highlighted their concerns over crime levels in the village, something as residents ourselves, we are obviously concerned about too.

We were asked to make the parish council's position on the matter clear, as soon as possible, and so a part 2 (press and public excluded) meeting was held following the main meeting.

After a long discussion, the councillors present, all agreed to your request to "support the CCTV plan in principle" and to make it clear, that from the start, the parish council has never opposed the scheme, but instead, has evaluated the pros and cons using the information the CCTV committee has supplied .

In agreeing to "support the CCTV plan in principle" , the councillors wish to make it clear, that this puts the council under no obligation to fund, source or hold funds, procure, erect, maintain, insure or monitor the scheme.

The parish council would urge the CCTV committee to seek the advice offered by Pendle Borough Council, whose officers have specialist knowledge of all aspects of such a scheme and are happy to help move the project along.

To this end, councillors wish you well with the project.”

The official response from the CCTV committee as below:

“ Dear Parish Council

It would appear yet again that you have failed to understand the principle behind the residents wishing to embark on the installation of CCTV with the Fence community.

As you saw at the meeting of 3rd February many residents feel aggrieved that the Parish Council is not supporting the issue 100%.

Following the increase in crime especially car theft, drug issues and anti-social behaviour within the area many residents feel that not enough is being done to protect residents and property within its boundary.

There would appear to be somewhat of a contradiction to your latest stance of “support in principle “without any contribution into the scheme. What has been requested from the CCTV committee for some 10 months is that the Parish Council accept the will of the residents and embark on its own investigation as to how to achieve the end goal.

The agreement in Principle sought by the committee earlier was to establish a way forward for the Parish Council to be given all the relevant information and then adopt the system as their own initiative, however what we see is the Parish Council fighting the principle and for what ever reason failing to see the requirements of the residents whom they are elected to represent.

In law, an **agreement in principle** is a stepping stone to Formal Agreement. Such agreements, regarding the principle, are usually considered fair and equitable. Even if not all details are known, an *agreement in principle* may, for example, outline a schedule of works to be carried out later, once everything is agreed. What we see here is a total disregard for that principle together with a total disregard for resident's feelings and requests.

The Parish Council is a corporate body, and a legal entity, and is accountable to the local community. Parish Councils provide a focus for the community to identify concerns and projects, and endeavour to solve them locally themselves.

The Local Government Act 1972 substantially revised the powers available to parish councils. For example, it provided them with the opportunity to raise money through taxation, known as the precept, allowing them to take on various responsibilities. These responsibilities vary between councils depending on the needs of those communities. We believe that the request for the installation of a CCTV system falls within that responsibility for you the Council.

We believe that your intransigence on the subject matter is a blatant dereliction of your duties within the Council towards the residents and would therefore request that you reconsider your present stance and engage fully with the request of the residents and the CCTV committee to establish a proper way forward in order to safeguard the village and its future.”

Legal advice from Pendle Borough Council’s Head of Legal and Democracy

“I am not sure what the writer of the “CCTV Committee” letter means by an agreement in principle being legal terminology. In my view it is a phrase with no meaning in law. Agreement yes but not the “in principle” part.

However, that is neither here nor there really and the fundamental point here is either the council decides to pay for and/or administer the cameras or it does not. The members of the council have an entirely free choice in that decision and are accountable for their decision at election time, if indeed seats on the council are contested.”

5.2 Diamond Landmark Tree

Awaiting BT to confirm there are no clashes with their equipment at the proposed site close to the village hall before the tree can be ordered by The Forest of Bowland for planting.

5.3 Play area lease

All the paperwork regarding the new lease has been signed by the parish council and is being processed by the council solicitor and LCC.

6 Reports from outside bodies

Coun Myers gave the crime figures for February – which were recorded as 4. Comparisons of crime figures over several years were also given and showed crime had gone down, although it was felt some of this could be down to people not reporting crime to the police.

It was agreed that JR Landscaping of Gisburn would be the grass cutting contractor for the season, with the first cut at the end of April.

7. Correspondence

A request had been received to place a memorial bench in the play park in Old Laund Street, this was agreed.

The Forest of Bowland National Landscape Character Assessment Refresh was circulated by email.

Coun Newman to attend the 80th anniversary of VE Day service at Blackburn Cathedral on May 11th.

8 Planning

APPLICATION: 25/0057/HHO PROPOSAL: Full: Erection of a single storey rear kitchen extension. AT: 1 Wheatcroft Avenue, Fence. The parish councillors would like to point out that there is a TPO order at this site and feel if the development will affect the tree in any way, the application should be refused.

25/0098/HHO PROPOSAL: Full: Demolition of existing single storey extension and store and the erection of a single storey extension. AT: 390 Wheatley Lane Road ,Fence – no comments.

9. Finance

Authorised payments were made to:

£460 - Rebecca Hay, clerk's salary and expenses.

£96.63 – LCC pension contribution for clerk

£31.99 – Kaspersky security.

The annual employee pay review was deferred to a part 2 item after the meeting for discussion with the appointed financial assessment representatives, following a request for the audited accounts for 2023/24 and accounts for 2024/25 by Coun J Hartley.

10 Any other business

Coun Hargreaves said there appeared to be a problem with the water levels in the top half of Harpers Lane. The clerk to report.

Coun Myers asked re LCC's current tree cutting programme on grass verges and County Coun. Hartley said this was clear diseased trees and ensure the roads are kept safe..

Coun Newman said Harpers Lane will be temporarily closed for work on April 9th.

11 Date of next meeting

March 31st, Fence Village Hall, 7 p.m. Please note new meeting date.