

BISHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Barry Malki
18 Linkswood Road, Burnham, Bucks. SL1 8AT
Email: clerk@bishamparishcouncil.org.uk
Tel: 07751141223

Minutes of Bisham Annual Parish Council Meeting 21st April, 2016

1) Welcome

Cllr Alan Keene (Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

2) Apologies

Cllr Margaret Cubley. Mrs Bellaby.

3) Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2015

Cllr Keene presented the minutes from the previous annual meeting.

4) Chair's Report

"The year started with local government elections in May, and unfortunately, as is all too common, there were not enough candidates for the number of seats on the Parish Council. So all of us who put our names forward were returned unopposed and we were left with a vacant seat, which we were obliged to fill if possible by co-option. I'm very unhappy about this process because it doesn't serve democracy at all well and can inhibit the development of new ideas and challenges to the status quo. It's disappointing that so few of us are willing to give up our time voluntarily to serve the community, and without new blood the council can't move forward as it needs to. We were lucky enough to find two excellent candidates and after much deliberation we invited Iain Steedman to join the council. Iain had already been active with us through his work on the Steering Group of the Bisham Neighbourhood Plan, and we knew he would be a valuable addition to the council.

Our new clerk, Barry Malki, had joined us in April and he brought with him an innovative, new approach to the job which has been quite different from that which we had been used to. Barry came to us with little direct experience of working in local government and is still finding his way through some of its complexities. He has dragged the parish council into the social media age with a Twitter account which allows you to follow what's going on around the parish and to share news and views. For Twitter users, our tag is @bishampc. Barry is also working on an update of the parish council website with the objective of providing better and more readily accessible information about what we are up to. Under new national regulations we are obliged to publish much more information than we used to, and I welcome this move to greater transparency. In the past there had been occasions when it was suggested that the council had been less than completely open about its affairs, and one of my main objectives when I took over the chair was to ensure that we are squeaky clean in this respect.

At our May meeting, as well as electing me as chairman and Jim Cooke as vice-chairman for the year, we delegated individual members to represent us on various external bodies, including the White Waltham Airfield Consultative Committee, Berkshire College of Agriculture Residents' Representation Group, the District Association of Local Councils, the Marlow Society, the Local Access Forum, the Rural Forum, the Flood Forum and the Neighbourhood Action Group. I would like to say a personal thank you to all of the

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councillors who have given up their time to attend meetings of these bodies, to promote the interests of Bisham Parish and to report back about what's happening in the wider area.

In June we were joined by two of our Borough Councillors - long-standing member Richard Kellaway and Gerry Clark who had been newly elected. We often welcome them to our meetings and they are a valuable liaison between the Parish Council and the Borough Council, sometimes managing to open back channels when the direct approach fails.

We contributed to the Draft Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan which is a long-term plan for development of the footpath, bridleway and cycle route network in the Borough. It is a frustratingly slow process, and in the Bisham area is hampered by the effects of the A404 which cut off some of the old routes when it was originally built.

In August, in response to proposals for changes to Bisham roundabout published by Highways England, the Parish Council hosted a well-attended meeting of residents to gauge local opinion on the issue. Although many differing views were expressed, there was a consensus that none of the proposals really addressed the problems, either for the trunk road or for the village. It was felt that any short-term local changes, apart from part-time traffic lights on the existing roundabout, would be of little value without a more strategic plan for the whole of the A404 from the M4 to the M40. The Parish Council reflected this consensus in its own submission to the Highways England consultation, and after consideration they agreed and decided to shelve any immediate changes.

Back in 2014 the Parish Council pressed the Borough for a 40 mph speed limit on the Henley Road from the western edge of the parish at Temple Golf Club to the eastern edge of the parish at Stubbings. Following a consultation, they decided to go ahead and plans were drawn up. These had to be shared with Highways England because some of the signs would need to be on their land on the A404 slip roads by Burchetts Green roundabout. This started an acrimonious argument between the Borough engineers and the Highways England engineers which has still not been resolved eighteen months later. In the meanwhile this much-needed speed limit has failed to materialise. This sort of frustration makes you wonder how anything ever gets done.

The new fence along the main road between Town Farm corner and Church Lane corner is another item which has not been satisfactorily resolved. As soon as it started to go up we alerted the Borough, because as far as we could tell it required planning permission. After it was completed the Borough first said they had no problem with it and then said it was permitted development. We have asked for an explanation and are currently awaiting one.

By contrast, the Streetcare department of the Borough have responded quickly and efficiently to many issues for us, including the installation of a low fence to protect the grass at the entrance to Stubbings Church.

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An issue that occupied our attention for a considerable period this year was the planning application to build a new private school in the grounds of Stubbings House. We resolved to object to this application on Green Belt grounds. It was approved by the Borough but was required to be referred to the Secretary of State, who ordered a public enquiry. Because Bisham Parish Council was the only statutory body to have objected, we were the main protagonist against the proposal, and needed to have legal representation at the enquiry. This was going to be quite expensive and we discussed at length whether we could afford to spend a large part of our reserve and carry on with the fight. Our choice was simple - support the many residents who had come to our meetings to ask us to fight the application, or walk away. We voted to spend the money, and Mandy Robson-Brown was delegated to be our lead member for the case. Mandy steadfastly stuck to her guns throughout what turned out to be a very trying and sometimes personal attack by the applicant both at the enquiry and in the press, and she is a credit to the Parish Council for doing so. The result is expected next month.

In the spirit of transparency, all of the financial details relating to the Beech Lodge School enquiry are available in our minutes. In spite of this considerable drain on our finances, we managed, at our budget review at the beginning of this year, which for the first time was debated in public in the open part of our meeting, to allocate money for new playground equipment and to reduce the amount of the precept that we have requested from the Borough out of your Council Tax for the year.

Flooding is always a item on our agenda. Councillor Jim Cooke is in the process of developing a response plan which would be invoked in the event of flooding or other major incident, to provide a coordination hub for the emergency services and affected residents. We are grateful to Jim McFarlane who is working in the background with the Borough on plans to relieve groundwater in the north of the parish towards Marlow Bridge. Jim is also working with the Borough regarding parking problems in Marlow Road. He is one of our small band of faithful supporters which includes Helen Belasco, Ricky Lambeth, Jo Kersey and others, who regularly come along to our meetings and take an active part in what we are trying to achieve for the community. We are only allowed 6 members on the council, and there is much that we would like to undertake that we just don't have the manpower to do, so the support of the community is vital. I would encourage all of you to attend our monthly meetings and let us know how you want us to help and what you could do in return.

Please get involved, if only by visiting our website (www.bishamparishcouncil.org.uk) or simply by following us on Twitter.

I hope this has given you an idea of just a few of the things that have been happening through the year, in addition to the many routine items of business that occupy us each month. It's been a challenging 12 months in many ways, and I hope for less frustration and more success in the coming year."

Cllr Alan Keene - Chair

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One Member of the Public thank the Cllrs for their support of Buchetts Green Village Association during the Beech Lodge Planning Enquiry.

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5) Bisham School Report



Wednesday 20th April 2016

Dear parents and carers

Re: OFSTED inspection – March 2016

I am absolutely delighted to be able to inform you that at our last inspection, just before Easter, the school was moved out of Special Measures!

I have attached a copy of the report which shows you that the school has now moved to 'Requires Improvement' and has been graded as 'Good' for our Early Years provision.

There are obviously areas that we need to continue working on and these are made clear, however, the great strides that have been made have been recognised and it is lovely to read the many positives that are contained within the report. I have highlighted the positive areas of the report for easier reading.

I would like to thank the staff for their hard work and dedication to the school, they are a great team to work with and their resilience, determination and sense of humour is much appreciated! I would also like to thank the children and yourselves for your continued support of the school.

Best wishes

Mrs H. Daniels
Executive Headteacher



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6) Oxford Lane Alms House (Brinkurst) Report

"It has been a quiet year for Brinkhurst this year with the property remaining full for the year so there has been no need for any nominations. I continue to attend some meetings although I have not been to that many due to personal commitments for my children and work.

Brinkhurst is in good repair and the residents continue to be really happy. Two of the residents are in their 90s. For the first time this year the committee took all the residents to the Harvester for Christmas. This was extremely successful especially for the residents that often don't have the opportunity to eat out very often.

For those people who don't know what Brinkhurst is. It is a sheltered unit on the corner of Oxford Road and Cambridge Road, it consists of 10 flats with shared bathrooms, residents do have their own WC and there is a lovely lounge for residents to meet up and socialise. A warden is on site for emergencies.

To be eligible for the Brinkhurst scheme residents have to be over 60 and have a local connection with the parishes of Little Marlow, Marlow Bottom, Marlow and Bisham. If anyone would like to know more about the scheme for themselves or for a relative or friend please do not hesitate to get in contact with me, Julie Greatwood on julie.greatwood@btopenworld.com "

Julie Greatwood - Trustee

7) Financial Report

BPC ended the financial year with a total of £18,405 cash in two accounts.

There is also a VAT reclaim of £7,137.40 due from HMRC.

This means a total of £25542.40 being carried over into 2016-17.

The Council's goal is to reduce the total reserves to £10,000 over the next few years.

Barry Malki - Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

One Member of the Public highlighted that the proposed £10k cap on Reserves should be higher to allow for unplanned costs.

8) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Iain Steedman (IS) gave an update on the Neighbourhood plan, and took questions from attendees.

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One Member of the public stressed the importance of Neighbourhood Plans as a pre-emptive measure. IS confirmed that that was the consensus of the Steering Group, and highlighted that the Plan needs to stand up to scrutiny to be effective on future developments.

One Member of the Public drew attention to the new fencing around the football pitch, and highlighted the impact of a Neighbourhood Plan on similar development activity within the Conservation Area. AK highlighted that properties within the Conservation Area have the same Permissible Development rights.

One Member of the Public raised concerns around the number of trees being cut down at Bisham Abbey. AK gave assurance that the Abbey put in the appropriate planning applications for any work, and this is subject to scrutiny from the RBWM Tree Officer.

9) Guest Speaker

Pera Marrs from the East Berkshire Ramblers gave a presentation entitled Ramblings of a Rambler.