

BISHOPSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Assembly Meeting held at 7.00 p.m. on Monday 8th May 2017 at Hinton Parva Village Hall

Those Present: Ian Thomas (Chair), Lesley Drewett (Clerk), Val Brodin (Vice Chair), Andy Greenhalgh, Nigel Crisp, , Julian Cooke, Tom Green, Stuart McGuigan, Cllr Gary Sumner.

1 Approved Apologies

Doug Stevens.

Apologies

None.

2 Minutes of Last Meeting (Parish Assembly 2016)

The minutes were proposed by Cllr Valerie Brodin and accepted unanimously as a true record of the previous meeting.

3 Financial Statement

The Chair of the finance committee explained that the Parish Council was healthy cash wise. The reserves have been increased from £16,000 to £24,000. There had been an income of £24,000 last year from the precept, parish grant for the transfer of services, £800 for mowing The Wyncies and the Churchyard maintenance contribution from SBC. The bank interest was £2.00, giving a balance of £24,150 in terms of income. Expenditure was £16,000 with 80% being spent on three items which are the Clerks salary, the Lengthman work and the Churchyard maintenance. With regard to the transfer of services, if the works were compared to the previous year the Lengthman's costs were an extra £2,700 for the extra works carried out. With the transfer of services grant that the Parish Council will receive for the next two years and the ongoing £800 for The Wyncies work, the money should last for a further 8 years. Whilst other Parish Councils in Swindon increased their precept by up to 50%, Bishopstone was able to freeze theirs for the 4th year running. As the Parish Council moves into the current year they are expecting to receive a further £4,000 for the footpath work which will cover the Lengthman and the footpaths.

In summary the Parish Council is therefore in a very healthy position and will have no need to increase the precept but a watching brief needs to be kept on the Lengthman's capped payment, which has worked well in terms of a check and balance. Councillors thanked Nigel for his hard work and an excellent summary.

4 Chairman's Report 2016/2017

This had been previously circulated via e-mail and is reproduced below:

This is my first annual report as Chair and having only been in office for half of the year I should begin by thanking my predecessor, Ian Thompson, for his part in ensuring that we have been able to achieve what we have. We are blessed with a particularly pro-active and knowledgeable Parish Council and long may it continue.

So what has the last 12 months seen.....?

Following completion of the deed relating to the transfer of services from SBC on the 1st April last year the PC is now responsible for the maintenance of more open space and the emptying of dog bins within our two villages and has extended its contract with the Lengthman accordingly. After some early teething problems at The Wyncies these works are now being carried out to our and residents' satisfaction (most of the time). Transitional funding is in place for the next few years but this will eventually run out and we will need to consider and address the implications. Along with other parishes across the Borough we have resisted taking on responsibility for fly-tipping. This and other indiscriminate littering of our verges continues to be a matter of great concern however and as well as our annual organised "litter pick" all parishioners are encouraged to help keep our villages and verges tidy by doing their bit as and when they can.

The previous Go Ride bus service ended in July last year and was replaced with a new no 47 service operated by West Berkshire Council. This service runs up to seven times a day between Lambourn and Swindon bus station with a request stop at the Great Western Hospital.

Bishopstone now has its own personal transmission mast which has improved our wireless Broadband speeds enormously and special thanks go to Councillor Greenhalgh for his persistence in ensuring that this initiative became a reality for us.

Signed:

Date:

Long-awaited improvements to the Royal Oak and True Heart are gradually being revealed and after almost eight years of uncertainty since the True Heart closed we can now all look forward to enjoying the extended facilities on offer. The Parish Council has had further success in ensuring that our foul drainage facilities function properly; this time in Hinton Parva where a new private treatment plant has been installed by SBC to replace a malfunctioning communal septic tank. This is another example of where the Parish Council, through the commitment and tenacity of its members (special thanks to Councillor Crisp), is able to facilitate improvements to village life and amenities despite having no formal powers of action.

Two new passing places have been constructed along New Road (between Bishopstone and the Bourton Road). We are beholden to SBC's budget constraints and technical manuals for not getting precisely what we wanted! The PC hopes to be able to make some further improvements to the other pull-ins soon which should make life a little more comfortable for our road users. Thanks to Councillor Green for his work with this.

And finally, Bishopstone's red telephone box has been saved! The box itself is now a listed building and the PC is hopeful of being able to help secure the continuation of the BT service within. At the time of writing there has been no formal decision by BT.

And what about the next 12 months.....?

A perpetual issue - planning matters continue to dominate the PC's activity not least in maintaining a close watch on proposals for Swindon's eastward expansion. The PC will continue to try and influence the detail of any new development in the interests of minimising the impact on our local infrastructure and the burden of any additional traffic and consequential "rat-running".

The PC will continue to take a robust stance on any development proposals outside the two village settlement boundaries and/or which might adversely affect the special character of our Conservation Areas. Given SBC's housing land supply shortfall there is increasing pressure on our parish to take further development and we must ensure that only appropriate development is allowed and that unacceptable precedents are resisted.

The state of our roads is becoming a matter of greater concern. Whilst acknowledging government cut-backs the PC must continue to push for repairs and improvements where genuinely needed and not allow SBC to treat us as a low-priority rural area.

Other tasks/issues ahead of us this year include the re-opening of the island and agreeing an ongoing management regime to include the School; and the potential for further attempted devolution of services by SBC. And we hope for satisfactory conclusions to a number of ongoing issues such as our resident traveller on the Ridgeway (since departed but when to return?!) and the untimely demolition of That Hovel.

No doubt there will be some surprises for us along the way but dare I predict a relatively quiet year ahead....?!

To conclude...

In terms of the Council's finances the reserves remain healthy and once again this year it was possible to avoid an increase in the parish element of the Council Tax despite our increased liabilities. It may be that some small increase will be required in future years to pick up the costs of additional services transferred from SBC but no increase will be countenanced without proper justification.

The PC's work is facilitated by our long-standing clerk, Lesley Drewett, whose experience of local matters and proper procedure is of immense value and is very much appreciated. I would also like to acknowledge the huge contribution being made by our new local Swindon Borough councillor, Gary Sumner, whose assistance and advice has been a breath of fresh air for us all.

Parishioners are always welcome to attend and ask questions at the monthly meetings of the parish council. Contact details for all councillors are published monthly and any residents' concerns should ideally be raised in the first instance with their most local representative.

The meeting closed at 7:20 pm.

Signed:

Date: