

# BISHOPSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of Parish Assembly Meeting held at 7.00 p.m. on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at Bishopstone Village Hall

**Those Present:** Ian Thomas (Chair), Lesley Drewett (Clerk), Val Brodin (Vice Chair), Andy Greenhalgh, Nigel Crisp, Julian Cooke, Doug Stevens.

### 1 Approved Apologies

Tom Green, Stuart McGuigan, Gill May, Cllr Gary Sumner.

#### Apologies

None.

### 2 Minutes of Last Meeting (Parish Assembly 2017)

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

### 3 Financial Statement

The Chair of the finance committee asked that the Clerk minute an official note of thanks to Paul Bailey as our internal auditor, this requires a lot of his time and effort. He went on to say that the Parish Council finances are healthy. The reserves increased from £22,000 to £30,000 which has been helped by £4.6k transfer of services, a 4K footpath grant and a £1K Tesco grant thanks to Cllr Greenhalgh. Expenditure has also increased by £1.4K over the previous year, but this has included the cost for the new bridge. In the future the Parish Council's income will reduce as it is coming into the last year of the transfer of services grant which is only £2.3K for this year. The Council Tax support grant will also reduce. Therefore the income will be slightly down and the expenditure looking at the big tick items such as the Lengthman's payment and the Clerk's salary. [The Lengthman's payment has stayed the same but the Clerk has received a slight pay rise.

In summary Cllr Crisp went on to say that the reserves were massively high and would easily cover any small shortfall in the foreseeable future. Councillors asked a few relevant questions, including how much of the existing precept is allocated to the Lengthman and how long will the £30K last. It was it should last for many years.

Councillors thanked Nigel for his hard work and an excellent summary.

### 4 Chairman's Report 2017/2018

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

I predicted that 2017/18 would be a relatively quiet year and I think it was - relatively speaking. As always planning matters have continued to demand most of our time as our villages come under increasing pressure for development in the light of Swindon's woeful five-year land supply position (only 2.5 years the last we heard).

So what has happened over the last 12 months.....?

We have renewed our Lengthman services contract with Allbuild. Lee Wells and his team are now familiar with all areas where we have taken over responsibility from SBC and we are becoming increasingly satisfied with the standard of service being provided. Naturally there will be occasions when things don't get done on time or to the correct standard and parishioners are encouraged to make Councillors aware of any such instances in order that we can pass this information on to Lee as soon as possible.

Littering of our verges continues to be a matter of great concern – who does this?! - and our annual organised litter-pick collected a staggering amount of junk again this year. A big thank you to all that turned out to help. We don't need to wait for the next year however and everyone is encouraged to help keep our paths and verges tidy by doing their bit as and when they can.

Unfortunately there seems to have been an increase in the amount of dog excrement being left behind or left hanging in bags on branches! The Parish Council has provided a number of dog bins around the villages, which are emptied fortnightly, and so we should use them or take our "deposits" home to dispose of.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

As mentioned above planning matters continue to dominate our agenda. The Parish Council recently had cause to take legal action against SBC over a poorly considered decision to grant planning permission for two dwellings within the Bishopstone Conservation Area. This decision would have set an unwelcome precedent for future planning applications and it was felt that SBC had completely disregarded its own adopted conservation policies and, equally importantly, protective national policies. A legal challenge was lodged against the decision and I am delighted to say that SBC has now conceded and the planning permission concerned will be quashed as a result. The Parish Council is committed to preserving the special character of our Conservation Areas and will continue to ensure that relevant planning policies are properly applied for the benefit of all concerned as well as for future generations.

This does not mean that all development within our Conservation Areas is unwelcome, far from it. We must allow our villages to evolve and to prosper so that they do not “die” and new developments that contribute to their vitality should be actively encouraged. Slightly further afield the Parish Council continues to keep a close watch on proposals for Swindon’s eastward expansion and we are particularly keen to ensure that any new developments do not lead to significant additional traffic in the form of “rat-running” through our villages.

The state of our roads and some of our adopted footpaths is becoming a matter of increasing concern. Whilst acknowledging government cut-backs the Parish Council will continue to push for repairs and improvements where genuinely needed and not allow SBC to treat us as a low-priority rural area.

As per last year, and the year before, the Parish Council’s financial reserves remain healthy and again this year it was possible to avoid an increase in the parish element of the Council Tax despite our increased liabilities. The one-off payments received from SBC to help compensate for the transfer of services will not last forever though and it may be that some small increase will be required in future years to pick up these ongoing additional costs.

What’s in store for the next 12 months.....?

More of the same I guess.....planning, planning and yet more planning.

Other matters to deal with.....

We failed last year to achieve one of our set tasks - to agree an ongoing management regime for the island to include the School. Whilst the island forms part of the Lengthman’s maintenance remit it might be nice to have a proper plan for it. Perhaps a village survey to seek suggestions would be a good idea?

The “Traveller on the Ridgeway” (sounds like a novel) has just returned having over-wintered far away near Idstone. So, having accomplished the task of having him moved on last year we will have to add it to this year’s agenda too! Some people will say he is doing no harm but others would disagree. The Ridgeway has its by-laws and SBC has the necessary powers to see that they are enforced.

Talking of The Ridgeway – as reported recently in the Parish Times there are moves afoot by some to open up the path through Oxfordshire “to all traffic”. This comes just when the Parish Council is in the process of asking its parishioners whether the short section of this National Trail that passes through our parish should be closed to vehicles! I doubt whether we will have much influence over the outcome of either but we will do what we can.

Thank you...

The Parish Council could not function effectively without the contribution made by our long-standing clerk, Lesley Drewett, whose experience of local matters and proper procedure is of immense value and is very much appreciated. Thank you Lesley.

I should also add that I think we are very fortunate at present to be blessed with a particularly pro-active and knowledgeable Parish Council. We commit our valuable time and energy to doing our best for our villages and it can be like pushing water uphill at times trying to get things done. Thank you 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 concerns should ideally be raised in the first instance with their most local representative.*

**The meeting closed at 7:15 pm.**

Signed: .....

Date: .....