

# Bathampton Parish Council

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## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30p.m. on Monday, 23rd., May 2016 in the Village Hall, Bathampton

### Introductions:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and thank you for coming to the Bathampton Annual Parish Meeting – which is a chance for your parish council to update you on the things that have been taking up their time over the last year and also to give the Bathampton electorate a chance to discuss any issues that concern you. I shall start off by asking each of the councillors to stand so that you know who everyone is.

Don Smith. I am Moira Brennan, Chairman to the PC, Lin King Vice Chairman (can't be with us tonight) George Ardrey, David Mayo, Jan Helps, Liam McMurray, Stuart Andrews, Jacqueline Bird.

Last year was an election year and we started the year with our full compliment of 9 councillors. Unfortunately Sarah Batterbury and Nick Land resigned during the year for personal reasons and we thank them for the work they did in the early part of the year. Jacqueline Bird joined us during the year. We still have one position vacant, so if anyone would like to join us please speak to one of us later.

You will be hearing from some of the councillors soon and you will have a chance to ask questions at the end of our reports or more informally over a drink after we have heard from Mark Evans from the Canal and River Trust.

### Apologies for Absence:

Apologies had been received from Cllr. L.King, Mr. Tony McCann and Mrs. Christine McCann.

### Minutes of the 2015 Annual Parish Meeting.

Minutes of last year's meeting have been distributed. Does anyone have any comments regarding their accuracy. If not may I have a proposer and a seconder for the adoption of the minutes. Cllr. G.Ardrey, seconded by Cllr. J.Helps, proposed that the Minutes be adopted. I declare the minutes adopted.

### **Chairman's report.**

**Cllr. M.Brennan**

#### Finance

Although our accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016 have not yet been audited, I want to give you a brief run down of our income and how we spent it. In the year 2015/16 we had income of £27,860. This is made up of £23,000 of precept raised through council taxes, The balance of £4,860 is a combination of allotment rents, the footpath maintenance grant, £1000 from Councillor Ward towards the installation of an accessible swing and a council tax support grant of £1270 from B&NES. Also included is £616 VAT claimed back from the previous year. We have been informed that the council tax support grant of £1270 will reduce over the next 4 years to zero in 2019/20.

Our largest spend of £11,674 is on salaries paid to our clerk Don Smith and our Handyman, Alan Saunders. We gave grants totalling £2,100 to various village enterprises including amounts towards the Village Show, maintenance of the churchyard, the Maxi Club and the Cricket Club and the historical society. We paid £1471 on subscriptions, the largest of which is the insurance premium. We pay for lighting in some parts of the village not supported by BANES at a cost of £642.

## Chairman's report.(Cont'd.)

### Finance (Cont'd.)

We paid £ 2,552 for the amenities of the village – the largest part of which by far is grass cutting, maintaining equipment, payments to our planning adviser etc. Our total expenditure was £ 22,657 representing a surplus for the year of £4,541 which is higher due to the fact that we have yet to pay for the accessible swing (of which you will hear more later). Our bank balance at year end was £ 44,466.

A question was raised last year about the size of the cash balance we are holding. We have discussed this in detail during the year and are conscious that we have substantial uncertainty regarding the potential Park and Ride and the threat that the proposed link road could turn out to be a flyover over the village. Even if these threats do not require us to finance legal costs or similar, replacing the fencing around the play area is a more immediate concern and likely to be expensive.

And so to the issue which has probably caused most concern to us as a village over the last year. Since their election in May 2015, BANES council have been trying to progress a park and ride to the East of Bath. The initial plan, on which they consulted last September, identified only three sites, all of which were in the Bathampton Meadows – two in the village either side of Mill Lane and a third on the rugby ground on the other side of the river. I think it is now widely accepted that the consultation was poorly managed and very flawed. I offer my thanks to many of you who spoke out in the consultation, wrote to MPs and Councillors and attended the protests at the Guildhall and events on the Meadows. In particular I want to thank the members of the Bathampton Meadows Alliance and in particular Sian James and Fiona Powell from Bathampton who have put in days of work to build a compelling argument against putting a park and ride on the Meadows. One side effect of all the research that has been done is an understanding of what poor value for money the existing B&NES park and rides offer and how poorly BANES understand their usage. We also learned a lot about the research which suggests that Park and Rides in general increase traffic rather than reducing it and are no longer supported by central government.

The current situation is well documented in the Chronicle, but the decision which was expected last week has once again been delayed. It is perhaps heartening to hear that two more sites are now being considered but the threat has by no means passed. It was heartening to hear that Bathampton Meadows was identified in the Sunday Telegraph as one of the top ten beauty spots under threat – but we must also recognise that items like these in the national press only come about because of the hard work of local people keeping the issue on the radar of journalists. (I am hopeful that we will hear an update from Fiona Powell in our open session later).

The second issue that is also causing concern is that the threat of a link road across the valley has again raised its head. Both of the local M.P.s are in favour of a road for very different reasons. Ben Howlet believes it will address congestion and pollution on the London Road and Jacob Rees Mogg, who I went to see with a group from the Valley Parish Alliance, believes that the solution to pollution will have to come through national policy not individual roads and that a link road will have little impact on the London Road as it will quickly fill up with previously suppressed demand. Jacob believes that road building in general is good for the economy and in particular for the economically depressed areas around Radstock. Jacob at least recognises the threat that a road could be a major eyesore and has promised us that he will “turn on a sixpence” if the proposed road is not a thing of beauty.

The major issues at play with regard to a link road relate to funding. If Highways England are to fund it then it will have to compete nationally and be proven to be value for money as ranked against other schemes. B&NES are therefore keen to source money via a West of England devolution deal which is more likely to fund a road across the valley.

The other issue of course is where the road would be. Initial rumours were of a road crossing from Warleigh to Claverton but Councillor Tony Clark assures us there is no “black line on a map” so the threat that the proposed road could be a flyover over Bathampton is very real. I know there will be mixed views on whether people hate or support the idea of a link road and I invite you to take a chance in the open session to clarify any issues and to tell us your views over a glass of wine.

## Planning & Conservation Report

Cllr. G.Ardrey

### **B&NES Placemaking Plan**

As part of B&NES Placemaking Plan, the Parish Council proposed two 'Local Green Spaces', to be protected from future development. These are the 'Triangular Field' and the three fields to the west of Miller Walk. B&NES have accepted these sites into the Draft Plan, which is now under consultation. Leaflets to 757 dwellings in the village produced 261 replies in favour; this is more than the required third of households so have been submitted with the final paperwork to B&NES.

### **Jewsons Yard (The Old Timber Yard)**

15 new dwellings are being erected on this brownfield site at the end of Tying Road; it has been cleared and detoxified and bats rehoused. The level railway crossing will be for pedestrians only. The narrowness and lighting of Tying Road poses a degree of safety and environmental concern, but some funding is due from the developers. Added parking restrictions in the High Street are to allow contractor access.

### **Previous MOD Site on Warminster Road**

The site is currently being cleared for the erection of 204 dwellings which will have a significant effect on the aspect both from Warminster Road and from across the valley. Also, the green field between the site and Bathampton will be much reduced.

### **Pedestrian and Cyclist Path across Bathampton Meadows**

The new bridge and path from Batheaston continue to be popular and, in cooperation with Batheaston PC and B&NES, the Parish Council has acquired a grant of £5000 and is indebted to the volunteer group now maintaining this riverside project. Clearance work has been carried out and benches and tables have been installed. If you wish to join in please consult the village Newsletter on the village website.

### **University Development towards the Bathampton Boundary**

The University have appealed against B&NES's refusal for a new car park at the edge of the golf course. More recently the university has applied for a major extension of a residential block, to which we have objected as it seeks to extend outside the current building line towards the golf course.

### **New Leaf Farm Agricultural Worker's Accommodation**

We reported last year that various applications for a single permanent dwelling, supported by the Parish Council, had been refused. As a consequence an application was made under recent legislation for the farm's large barn to be converted into three dwellings. This was permitted, though objected to by the PC.

### **Canal Boat Decking**

Extenuating circumstances have led CRT to allow a particular canal-boat a long term stay, but we are continuing to ask CRT for enforcement to clear the canal-side chattels.

### **Miller Walk Footpath**

The Parish Council have opposed the change of track surface on the footpath and the current application for the build of four new dwellings.

### **8, Warminster Road**

An application has been made for a two storey rear extension – the PC have objected due to the proposed extension being overbearing and intrusive to neighbouring gardens and extending beyond the current rear building line.

## **Planning & Conservation Report (Cont'd.)**

### **Down House, Bathampton Lane**

An application has been made for the erection of a new two storey dwelling in the garden – the PC objected due to the proposed house being too large for the site and too close to the boundary; also, the ownership of the proposed access track and the location of the local sewers have been questioned. The applicants are appealing against B&NES's refusal.

Over the past year the Parish Council have commented on over fourteen other planning applications without raising objection, plus various applications for tree works where a Tree Preservation Order exists. All such matters, including your council's responses, can be followed on B&NES's website.

## **Leisure & Amenities Report**

**Cllr. J.helps**

I have been responsible for the village leisure and amenities since joining the council last May.

### **Allotments**

There have been 4 changes of allotment ownership and we still have a small waiting list. A skip was not provided this year as it was considered unnecessary but it will be reconsidered on a yearly basis.

### **Grass cutting**

As a consequence of dissatisfaction with the current contractor, we have appointed a new contractor. We have had some teething problems with the cutting of grass in the allotments but the contractor has been responsive to our concerns and hopefully these are only teething problems. The contractor is also cutting the playing field, the areas at the bottom of Down lane and the grass in front of the school.

We will keep a watch on fences, hedges and walls and thank you to everyone who liaises with the council when they are aware of any problems .

### **Playground**

Thanks to Councillor Geoff Ward, we have been able to install an inclusive swing. Unfortunately there were problems with the swing when it broke after three days use. It is being replaced with a bespoke new nest style swing which will have easy accessibility and will also be a substitute for the cradle swings which were removed. We hope this will be installed within the next 3 weeks.

## **Leisure & Amenities Report (Cont'd.)**

### **Playground (Cont'd.)**

We have established a small working party and are currently engaging companies to help with designing and costing a new playground. This is proving to be a slow process but the intention is to display suitable designs in order to consult with the community. We are grateful to all those who contributed to our survey as it is proving to be helpful in establishing priorities. It is obviously going to be costly even to make fairly modest changes and we will have to fund raise once we are clear about what we want. We would be very happy to have more people to help with this project.

### **Christmas tree**

Once again we had a Christmas tree outside the village hall. Thank you to the Pulteney Practice, Alan Saunders, Ray Book and the playgroup for their help with providing, installing and decorating the tree.

### **Planters**

The planters around the village have been very attractive this year. Thank you to Claire Whelan, Emma McGuinness, and Eric Greaves for their care of the planters and to Ray Book for looking after the memorial at the church. A big thank you also to Ron Taylor for growing the flowers for the planters each year.

### **The lengthman's hut at Jubilee Gardens**

We have handed this back to the CRT as we had no need of it and therefore it wasn't sensible to have responsibility for its upkeep.

### **Highways Report**

**Cllrs. S.Andrews & J.Bird**

We only have a few roads through the village but each of these causes problems. In brief, the 60 mph limit along Mill Road seems a nonsense, especially now there is the newish foot and cycle path across the meadows; the High Street remains narrow and congested but this does have the blessing of slowing the traffic; Down Lane's chicanes are pretty effective but traffic does not have to slow much to negotiate the speed humps; Bathampton Lane's 20 mph limit seems to be routinely broken in the middle section; and, as ever, the Warminster Road's 30 mph limit is rarely adhered to. The latter is a Highways England issue; the others are B&NES, but the response from both agencies is rather unhelpful. Regular contact and appeals for assistance are made to them, but with no accidents, few incidents and the familiar refrain of 'there is no money' it is unlikely things will change.

There is support, though, for a Community Speedwatch in the village. Volunteers have signed up but there is an astonishing amount of regulation to be negotiated and this is taking a disappointingly long time.

## Highways Report (Cont'd.)

A recent issue has been unhelpful parking outside the primary school at drop-off and pick-up times. This represents such an obvious danger to the children so we urge parents to park in The George's car park and walk the 50 yards or so to school.

Regarding the canal, the major resurfacing project is well underway. Despite a few issues the work has progressed smoothly and residents seem to have coped with the inevitable disruption. Around Christmas-time there was revised signage relating to mooring and more recently a Quiet Zone was created through the village which should encourage even more thoughtful behaviour. I am delighted that Mr Evans is here on behalf of the CRT.

Finally I would like to thank the many residents of the village who have contacted me throughout the year regarding Highways issues, and especially those who have been, or wish to be, actively involved in making the parish safer for all.

## Footpath Report

**Cllr. D.Mayo**

The main item to report from Footpaths is the working parties that keep the surface vegetation under control as part of our Parish Agency agreement. We concentrate on four paths:

- From the end of Holcombe Lane to the swing bridge
  - From the swing bridge to the A36
  - The triangular field
- From Candy's Bridge to Grosvenor Bridge that runs between the railway and tow path

We are currently doing our first cut of the year. So far we have done the paths leading to the swing bridge. We will be tackling the triangular field on Thursday at 6pm.

In terms of footpath maintenance, there are two main items to report. First of all two missing gates on the path between the end of Holcombe Lane and the swing bridge. Replacements have been ordered by B&NES and will be fitted in due course. The other obvious improvement is the surface of the tow path which hopefully our speaker from Canal & River Trust will be able to report in more detail.

There have been two updates to the definitive map which is the official record of public rights of way. The path that runs through Miller Walk, where it narrows with trees on one side and a field on the other, did not follow the legal line so paperwork has been filed to correct this. There will be no change to the path, only to the legal line. The other very good piece of news is that the application we made in 2012 to get the swing bridge added as a public right of way was finally accepted last year so this gives it the same protection as the rest of the footpaths network.

## Communications Report

**Cllr. L. McMurray**

This is primarily a digital role to ensure the availability of information relating to Parish Council activity online. For instance, it is a requirement that our minutes from every meeting are accessible so we have a place online that lists them all.

I have spent the early part of my first year in post updating the website and the supporting infrastructure so that it now displays natively on a table or mobile phone, as well as desktop. And also speaking to other local website owners about the remit of our particular site. This is ongoing.

I have also created a profile for the Parish Council on Twitter, and a page on Facebook. These both support the website which is the primary source of information, however they provide an important method for engaging and interacting with the local (and wider) community. A sterling example of this is the ongoing information sharing regarding the East of Bath Park & Ride plans on Twitter.

## Communications Report (Cont'd.)

We have an average of 35 views for content posted on Facebook, and have over 120 followers on Twitter. These aren't huge figures, but they are growing steadily and we don't post that much content. Today I have added a plea from the local school (Bathampton Primary) for a person to take on the job of crossing warden, the last update was about the new playground equipment.

Finally, a brief update concerning broadband availability in the village. Neil McCabe - a local resident - is keeping me informed of his discussions with BT to upgrade the phone exchanges that serve a large section of Warminster Road, parts of Devonshire Road, and Hantone Hill. The two exchanges in question are Bath Kingsmead 15 and 30, situated at the top of Bathampton Lane, and Down Lane respectively. BT have agreed to update the former as part of scheduled work in the next 24 months, which would solve issues for Warminster Road West of Devonshire Road..

Neil will attend the next WERN (West of England Rural Network) meeting to see if there is funding available though "Connecting Devon and Somerset" to pay for the upgrade to the second cabinet - around £18,000. If there is not, then community co-funding is a possibility.

If you have any questions or thoughts about how to improve our digital communications then please come and chat with me afterwards, I'd be happy to take your suggestions onboard.

## Park & Ride East of Bath

Fiona Powell, a member of Bathampton Meadows Alliance, then gave us a brief history of the attempts by B & N.E.S. to build a Park & Ride on the meadows and the reasoning and actions made by the Alliance to oppose them.

## Conclusion

Before I draw the meeting to a close I would like to thank the management committee of the village hall for their hard work in keeping this wonderful community asset available for all. The committee will be holding their Annual Meeting in the small hall this Thursday at 7.30pm and all are welcome. Maureen Miles, who has been secretary to the committee for at least 11 years has informed us that she will not stand for re election this year. Maureen has done so much over the years to keep the hall functioning and we offer her our thanks. Jacqueline Bird has indicated that she is willing to stand for election as Secretary. Julie Reed has also indicated that she would like to stand down as Chairman but has agreed to continue in the role until we find a successor. If anyone would like to get involved please speak to me later. The role is not onerous and you do get to meet a lot of people !!

My final task is to remind you of the many other people that support the parish council.

**Denys Clarke** is our highly valued consultant to the planning group and

**Suzanne Wing** also helps out with planning matters

**Tony and Christine McCann and a team of volunteers** organise and distribute the newsletter

**Alan Saunders** is our handyman

**The volunteers** who maintain the footpaths and those who are developing and maintaining the new riverside area.

And of course **Don Smith**, our Clerk, keeps us right.

### Conclusion(cont'd.)

I would also like to thank the many other volunteers who make Bathampton such a great place to live. I mentioned as many as I could in our last newsletter. If any of you know of volunteering opportunities or would like to volunteer mention it to one of the councillors and we will try to put people in touch.

Last but not least I would like to thank our Councillors and also their partners who put up with all the phone calls, meetings and reading with very good grace.

### Questions

- 1) **Mr. Bob Cole** stated that there should be a “No Through Road” sign at the end of Holcombe Lane. On several occasions when the Warminster Road was closed, lorries had turned into Holcombe Lane in an attempt to find an alternative route.
- 2) **Mr. Ken Jefferies** said that the Warminster Road footpath on the South side is owned by the house owners and the Highways Agency (H.E.) has no authority over it . Cars can park on it with impunity. It was agreed that this was a problem which the parish council is aware of. About ten years ago we tried to get H.E. to compulsory purchase the path with no effect. Mr. Jefferies also commented that the footpath on the North side of the Warminster Road was not being cleaned.
- 3) **Mr. Malcolm Douglas** mentioned that in his experience Broadband reception was adequate.
- 4) It was pointed out that there is a dead tree and vegetation overhanging the steps which lead down from the Warminster Road to Holcombe Close opposite Hantone Hill.

The Chairman then welcomed Mark Evans, Waterways Manager with the Canal and River Trust and invited him to speak to us concerning the Canal.