

Benson Parish Council

Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson, Wallingford. OX10 6LZ

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

Held at Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside on Thursday 11th May 2017

Present: Parishioners including Parish Councillors, Mark Gray (County Councillor), Andy Spink (Community First Responder) and David White (Henley Standard).

Councillor Jon Fowler opened the meeting and welcomed all those present. He passed on apologies and best wishes from Chairman Pat Peers who was unwell and not able to attend.

1. Apologies: SODC Councillors Felix Bloomfield and Richard Pullen, Parish Councillors Pat Peers, Rob Jordan, Dave Olley, Tom Stevenson and Michael Winton and PAGE (Parishes against Gravel Extraction).

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th May 2016 were available for inspection at the meeting and on the PC website at www.bensonpc.org.uk. One correction required at item 5, line 2 which should read 'unable to attend'. There were no other comments or objections. Proposed by Councillor Philip Murray and seconded by Martin Spence (Parishioner).

3. Presentation of the Don Fletcher Community Award: Councillor Fowler presented the award to Ms Delia Carsberg (Resident) for looking after various floral garden areas around Benson village. Photos were taken by the Henley Standard and Ms Carsberg addressed those present to express thanks and explain how her involvement came about.

4. Presentation of the Bob Griffiths Trophy: Councillor Fowler presented the award to the Benson Youth Club for their activities in highlighting the plight of the homeless. The award (including the Bob Griffiths shield) was collected by 3 Youth Club members and photos were taken by the Henley Standard.

5. To receive a report on Millbrook Mead from the Benson Nature Group (formerly the Benson Ecological Study Team): A report for 2016 to 2017 written by Chairman Tom Stevenson was available at the meeting and on the PC website at www.bensonpc.org.uk Councillor Fowler explained the location of Millbrook Mead to those present. There were no further questions and thanks were expressed to the Benson Nature Group.

6. To receive reports from District and County Councillors:

- a. No reports were received from District Councillors Felix Bloomfield or Richard Pullen. Apologies had been received. Concern was expressed at their lack of attendance.
- b. Mark Gray (County Councillor) began his report by expressing his thanks to Parishioners for their support in the recent County Council elections. He explained the scale of cuts

applied to the County Council budgets which amounted to nearly half of the previous £1.2 billion. The County Council had therefore had to make difficult decisions and was focusing on statutory services. He advised that he, personally, had looked at the issue of the possible closure of Children's Centres by approaching community groups and Parish Councils to assist. He explained his reservations of the Unitary Council issue and advised that the decision expected in September would now be put back due to the General Election. He was aware that Benson was facing difficult times from developers and praised the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan team for their work, particularly with the issue of the 'edge' road which still needs pursuing. He had a particular interest in this situation and had been out recording the effects of traffic in the area. Mark Gray advised that he was also well aware of the difficulties facing the school, its required expansion and the possibility of having to walk children to access playing field areas. He is in discussion regarding ideas.

Mark Gray took questions. He was asked about the locations of Children's Centres. He advised that there was one in Wallingford and he had been involved in a new centre in Cholsey. He was asked about involving more people in the Community in attending events such as this Parish Meeting. Members of the audience felt that there would be more attendance if there were more controversial issues to discuss. Mark Gray advised that in some of his area, Parishes have very much smaller attendances and agreed that ideas were required.

Councillor Fowler thanked Mark Gray for his attendance and report. He offered congratulations on retaining his seat at the recent elections. Mark Gray left the Parish Meeting following his report.

7. To receive reports from the Chairman of Finance, the Chairman of Recreation and Lands and the Chairman of Halls Committees:

a. A report from the Chairman of the Finance Committee was available at the meeting and on the Parish Council website at www.bensonpc.org.uk

b. A report written by Councillor Patricia Baylis (Chairman of Recreation and Lands Committee) was available at the meeting and on the Parish Council website at www.bensonpc.org.uk Councillor Baylis ran through her report and highlighted the ongoing work at the play areas, the Millbrook Mead walkway and at the pavilion/post office footpath. She expressed particular thanks to all those who assist in looking after village areas and noted the need for assistance with the War Memorial following the decision by Lynne Powell and Faye Crabbe to stand down after many years of sterling work. She reported ongoing issues with dog fouling and the assistance of outside agencies with village projects. She ended by thanking the parish staff for their hard work throughout the year.

c. A report written by Councillor Teresa McTeague (Chairman of Halls Committee) was available at the meeting and on the Parish Council website at www.bensonpc.org.uk Councillor McTeague explained that a number of issues had arisen due to non-compliance following the fire inspection. She advised that consultations had taken place regarding the

refurbishment of the main hall and plans had been lodged with SODC. A new public address system had been ordered and new microphones were now in place. The Hall Hire rates had been simplified and would be available on the new website. She concluded by thanking the staff, fellow Councillors and Parishioners for their continued help.

Councillor Fowler thanked the Committee Chairs for their reports. There were no questions at this point.

8. To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Plan: A report from the Neighbourhood Plan Team led by Councillor Fowler was available at the meeting and on the Parish Council website at www.bensonpc.org.uk Councillor Fowler advised that the Draft NP was submitted for consultation at the end of March and this ended on 14th April. The Team are busy considering the responses and further work is needed to secure the Edge Road. Parishioners can be kept up to date via the Benson Bulletin, NP website, PC website and a NP Facebook page. The revised Plan is due to be examined by an Independent Inspector and then to Referendum by late summer.

9. To receive a report from Parishes Against Gravel Extraction (PAGE): No report had been received but a representative of PAGE has agreed to update the Parish Council at their next meeting.

10. To receive a presentation from Any Spink, Community First Responder South Central Ambulance Service: Andy Spink explained to those present that he was a volunteer, funded by charity and was available to support the Ambulance Service. He brought to the meeting his pack of basic equipment. In order to explain his role, he felt it best to recall some of the incidents he had attended and the outcomes of those situations. He had had great satisfaction and some emotional moments at being able to get quickly to help patients before the Ambulance Service arrived. He advised that he was also available to cover events e.g. The Chiltern Chase. He was asked by the audience about the frequency of his involvement and his area. He replied that he was on a pager system as much as possible and would on average have 2/3 calls per week, sometimes more. He covered Benson, Ewelme, Wallingford and further afield if required.

Councillor Fowler thanked Andy Spinks for his presentation. Mr Spinks left the meeting at this point.

11. An Overview of Parish Council activity: Councillor Jon Fowler showed the audience a PowerPoint presentation showing the following points throughout the last year:

May – Rivermead Padding Pool opens after refurbishment and objections were made regarding the proposed plans for the Littleworth Road development.

June – the bus route to Cholsey was saved and objections were submitted regarding the plans for 130 houses on St Helens Avenue.

July – Giant Hogweed was discovered at Millbrook Mead and a specialist company was employed to eradicate it. This will take a number of years to complete. A grant was received for a Hydro Feasibility Study.

August – the A4074 was resurfaced between Elm Bridge roundabout and the Waterfront Café.

September – Following objections from the PC, SODC refused planning permission for 22/24 houses to the rear of Blacklands Road. This is now going ahead but with reduced numbers.

October – Parish Hall extension plans were consulted upon and the proposed development of St Helens Avenue went to appeal on the basis of SODC non-determination.

November – A new Parish Clerk (Dianne Brooks) was appointed following the retirement of Pete Eldridge and the PC objected to the proposed development of 189 houses behind Brook Street.

January – a pre-application for the Parish Hall extension plans were presented

February – Plans for the Parish Hall extension were submitted and repairs to the Millbrook Mead walkway got underway.

March – New Hall hire fees were discussed and replacement benches in Church Road were installed commemorating the Queen's 90th birthday.

Councillor Fowler advised that £5,837 of grants had been allocated and 87 Planning applications had been processed throughout the year.

He ended the overview by thanking the following:

The Parish Office Staff, David Cook for his involvement in transport, Lynne Powell, Faye Crabbe and Delia Carsberg for their assistance with the War Memorial and garden areas, Suzi and Mike Francis for maintaining Wells Crossing, Peter Keable for his Christmas Tree donation, Grundon and Agrivert for regular donations of bulbs and compost and to those parishioners and retailers who maintain the tubs within the village.

Councillor Fowler was asked how the grant monies were allocated. He did not have details to hand but agreed to make them available

Dianne Brooks (Parish Clerk) on behalf of the Parish Council Chairman, Pat Peers, asked for a vote of thanks to be recorded to the Neighbourhood Plan Team led by Councillor Jon Fowler for their continuing hard work on preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.

12. To answer any written questions received prior to the meeting:

a. Kate Hart (Parishioner) asked if BPC could make better use of the Benson Bulletin to keep residents fully informed of the names of serving Parish Councillors and makeup of the Parish Council and its committees – particularly after elections.

Councillor Fowler responded that there were no problems with and would ensure that an entry into the Bulletin was be made following the PC statutory meeting.

b. Ian Leppard (Parishioner) asked how much the Parish Council had spent drawing up plans for the relocation of the Parish Office.

Councillor Fowler advised that he will confirm this but thought that it was £400/500.

c. Ian Leppard asked if the Parish Council could urge the OCC to implement speeding limits in Mill Lane. The road is as it states, a lane. He advised that there had been an accident this year involving a child.

Councillor Fowler advised that OCC and Highways are unlikely to take action due to budget cuts and it was a case of keep on asking and reporting incidents.

d. Elizabeth Leppard (Parishioner) asked if the Parish Council could put gates on the play area in St Helens Avenue to deter residents with dogs from walking in this area. She asked what is the point of having a play area if children cannot use it.

Councillor Fowler agreed to request that the Chairman of Land and Recreation look into this.

e. Elizabeth Leppard asked, that as most of the country is talking about pollution, could Benson Parish Council urge our District and County Councils to think about residents of Benson especially those living in the High Street who are subject to pollution from the increasing amounts of heavy lorries, buses and passing through traffic. Could the councils monitor levels?

Councillor Fowler agreed that this was a very good idea and agreed to request that the Parish Council look into it.

13. To put questions top Councillors from the Audience:

a. Kate Hart (Parishioner) asked if there was the possibility of having a crossing installed on the main road in Benson, similar to that which has been installed at Berinsfield. The audience was advised that SODC had funded the Berinsfield installation.

Councillor Fowler advised that that this had been raised last year. He agreed to ask Mark Gray (County Councillor) to take this forward.

b. Ian Leppard (Parishioner) asked about the large number of potholes within the village that remain unrepaired.

Councillor Fowler agreed that it would be worth to keep advising 'Fix My Street' until the repairs had been completed.

c. Geoff Stock (Parishioner) asked if the Parish Council were looking at the recent issue of the locking of the entrance gates to the Youth Hall field. He felt that the only way to access the basketball court was to climb over the gates or fences and he feared that children would be blamed for any damage that may occur.

Councillor Fowler responded by informing those present that the land is owned by the Church Trustees and not by the Parish Council. He understood that the Trustees had taken this action as the field is primarily for the use of the school children and there had been a problem with dog fouling. He advised that Parishioners should make their feelings known to the Trustees. Martyn Spence (Parishioner) advised that the field was only allocated for the benefit of the School children and currently the Education Authority are looking at the feasibility of expanding the school and this may take up some of the field. The report is yet to be published.

d. Parishioners expressed concern over parking outside the Village Place fish and chip shop. Signs had been erected but seem to have had no effect.

Councillor Fowler advised that the PCSOs had been pursued to deal with this but are stretched within their area. Parishioners were advised to continue to complain to PCSOs.

14. Closing Remarks – Councillor Jon Fowler:

There being no other questions, Councillor Fowler thanked Parishioner and Councillors for their attendance. He also thanked Sue Brown for taking the minutes and Tanya Ellis and Dianne Brooks for organising refreshments. Councillors would still be available after the meeting if required.

The meeting closed at 9pm