

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF BUTLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON 26th March 2019 IN THE CHURCH ROOM, BUTLEIGH.

PARISH COUNCILLORS PRESENT: E Aitken (Chairman), R Burdett, A Carr, K Otton, W Moore-Read, D Sharland.

APOLOGIES: S de Camp

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr & Mrs T Hoyle, G de Wilton, A Broomhead, N Woolcombe-Adams, Nigel Hewett-Cooper, D Salter, T Done.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: EMMA AITKEN REPORTED:

Firstly, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to you all at this year's Annual Parish Meeting (APM). The APM offers Parishioners a chance to hear a summary of the Parish Council's work over the last 12 months. Questions may be addressed to the Chairman at the end of the meeting.

Parish Council Members and Meetings

There are currently 7 Parish Councillors. Having lost Richard Davidson during October, to date we are down one councillor from this point last year. We continue to publish the dates of Parish Council meetings at the beginning of the year and mostly they take place on the first Tuesday of each month. Agendas can be viewed on the Parish notice board outside the shop and minutes viewed on the Butleigh Village website. Our Mendip Councillor Nigel Woolcombe-Adams and County Councillor Nigel Hewett-Cooper attend when their commitments allow. The Butleigh Facebook page continues to grow and now has 88 "followers". The Facebook page continues here to promote village events, communicate agendas and "share" news items of interest to the village.

Precept

The precept for 2018/2019 was set at £11,500. This is down by 11.5% on last year's £13,000. As usual the precept is carefully budgeted and monies assigned to various areas. These include the maintenance of the village green, footpaths, street sweeping and the churchyard. Grants are also given to Charities and organisations within the village. This year we have supported three charities that whilst are not within the Parish we feel may well benefit parishioners at some point in the future. The chosen charities are St Margaret's Hospice, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance and The Family Counselling Trust. The Butleigh Playing Field Association is also supported this year with a grant of £1,750 and a match funded grant for the play area at Holm Oaks of £900. A full break down of the precept can be found on the Butleigh Village website.

Mast Money

We have seen some monies already allocated to projects within the village. Some money still remains to be allocated but we do have a couple of ideas as to how it could be used. Some of the money has recently been used to fund a new bench on the village green. Projects that are definitely confirmed for the near future include repairing the corner of the village green that's been destroyed by lorries. The much anticipated village history trail is also well under way and we look forward to its launch soon.

Planning

As a public consultee, the Parish Council dealt with 24 Planning Applications between May 2018 and April 2019. The Parish Council recommended 20 for approval and 4 for refusal.

These figures do not include applications in relation to tree works. These types of applications are in most circumstances left with no comment and a decision is left for the Tree Officer at Mendip.

The vast majority of applications related to residential extensions, additions and/or alterations.

The Council have also had to deal this year with an application for the allocation of 32 houses to land at Westview off Sub Road. The Council recommended refusal on this application, predominately based on concern for Butleigh's 32 houses in the Local Plan being allocated to one site.

Highways

The Parish this year benefited from a grant from Somerset County Council. With this Highways raised the curb on Sub Road at the Compton Street junction. By giving a defining line between the road and pavement, safety of pedestrians should be significantly improved. These works only took place due to the Council being pro -active and nominating the project. The Council continue to work with Highways and our District Councillors to find a solution to lorries coming down the High Street. It was decided the problem needed to be addressed further back than just Butleigh. With staff change overs at Somerset County Council this has been delayed but we shall continue to liaise and seek a solution.

Environment

Last weekend the Parish Council co-ordinated another successful litter pick. Thirteen residents and 8 children pitched up to collect litter from the roads in and around the village. Some 35 bags were filled with glass bottles, cans, card, and plastics. We also sorted and ordered 4 boxes of recyclables. Other items such as a toaster, large pieces of carpet and car parts were also found. Whilst not a glamorous job it is absolutely necessary and in turn an important role of the Parish Council. The council continue to report and organise collection of fly tipping. I would like to thank all those that came and helped last weekend.

Footpaths and Walking

During June Alan Carr organised a family picnic walk. Nineteen adults and children walked a family friendly footpath across Cedar Avenue to an Orchard where we finished with a picnic. It was an extremely enjoyable morning.

A bench has been purchased for the footpath at Higher Rocks. This is soon to be installed and shall be a lovely spot to sit and enjoy the views of the village.

We have some of the best maintained footpaths in the area and this is all thanks to the hard work of Alan Carr.

Affordable Housing

Following the Housing Needs Survey conducted and published in 2017/2018 it was identified that there was need for Affordable Housing for 10 families with village connections. During 2018 a suitable site was identified in the village for Affordable Housing. Along with Mendip District Council the Parish Council put a considerable amount of time and effort into working towards securing the site. Unfortunately Mendip Council were outbid by a private developer. It is hoped that there shall still be future opportunity within the village to fulfil this need.

Land Purchase

Monies were raised some time ago by residents of the parish for the sole intention of building a village hall. During 2017 a suitable site was identified and the Council voted to purchase the land. Unfortunately towards the end of 2018 the land owner pulled out of the deal and the money is soon to be returned to the "Village Hall Committee". They shall now decide where the money shall be allocated.

Enforcement

Enforcement continues to be an important but often frustrating role for the council. With cuts at Mendip they have few officers “on the ground”. The council however continues to do all we can and report and chase areas of concern.

Speeding

Speeding is of great concern to the Council. Last year we lost our Speed Watch coordinator and whilst we have some volunteers willing to do the work we require someone to coordinate a small team. To date despite advertising in the News and Views and on Facebook we are yet to recruit anyone. We shall continue to advertise this post.

During 2018 Somerset County Council suspended the Speed Indicator Device service. The Council are able to purchase a device and this is a real possibility. We are currently investigating companies and their devices. It is possible that the remaining money given to the Parish by the telecommunications company will be used to fund this scheme.

Conclusion

It has again been a busy year. I think my fellow councillors will agree that at times it has been a frustrating one as working within the constraints of the council guidelines sometimes it takes longer than expected to make decisions and complete projects. That said we have made significant progress with a number of projects and have seen some through to completion. This shall be my last APM and indeed last meeting as Chairman and Councillor. It is a worthwhile position to hold and I hope that others from the Parish shall see the positives that are to be gained from taking on such a role. We are all advocates of our village and the Parish needs a strong Council to maintain our beautiful corner of Somerset. Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all my fellow Councillors and of course Sheila our Clerk for their support over the last year.

FINANCE : A comprehensive report of the year end finances (unaudited), was given by the Clerk. The unaudited book was open for inspection.

BUTLEIGH PCC REPORT : Mrs S de Camp gave a report :

This year, attendance at regular services has decreased and we now expect 25 - 30 at the two regular communion services held on the second and third Sundays of the month. This reduction is in line with national trends. However, at all the major festivals and in particular over Christmas, numbers were high: the Carol service, Christingle and Crib services were all well attended.

A review of the Electoral Roll was taken during the year and the numbers brought up to date: the number on the Electoral Roll has decreased from 103 to 78.

We continue to offer a wide variety of services: Parish Communion on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays; regular Morning Praise, Café church, Songs of Praise, Taize, take place on the fourth Sunday of the month and Bible Sunday is marked with a special service. The All Age service on the first Sunday in the month, is well attended. Acorns is held every Wednesday after school during term time. However, there is still no provision for young people aged 11 upwards. In September, we invited the diocesan youth officer to discuss provision for young people and we are considering her ideas and suggestions. The Christian Meditation Group continues to meet fortnightly and a Bible study group meets weekly. During Lent, we held a Lent lunch, this year in aid of Crisis and a Lent course was led by Roy Moody in the Church

Room during March.

The church finances are very well supervised and we are most grateful to our Treasurer, Mark Tolhurst for his detailed and excellent work; we thank Anthony Durbacz for auditing the accounts. We are also very grateful to our Secretary, Maggie Seward for all her efficient and thorough work. We thank David Heeley for continuing to chair the Finance and Administration Committee and Charmian Wright for chairing the Community Group. Sian Decamp chairs the Ministry Group.

The church fete this year was, once again, extremely successful, and we thank Elspeth Rymer and the committee for all their efforts and hard work. This event is an important and enjoyable village occasion and raises a significant amount of money for the work of the church.

The Quinquennial Inspection was carried out by John Beauchamp of the Borough Studios, Wedmore and the report was received in December. There is a copy of the report in the vestry for anyone to read. External works need to be carried out over the next eighteen months. We will need to fund raise and then apply for grants to cover the cost of this work which includes work on the roof and Bell tower. The interior of the church is in very good repair.

We continue to donate 10% of our income to charity. The three charities chosen by the PCC for 2018 were: Mission Aviation Fellowship, PromiseWorks and Butleigh School and we give to many other charities during the course of the year.

Because of the requirements of the new General Data Protection Regulations, we conducted an audit of all people who hold information for the church. We developed a policy, published a privacy notice and informed all data holders of their responsibilities. We are in line with the General Data Protection Regulations .

The refurbished Church Room has been well used. As reported last year, the PCC oversees the running of the Church Room and we are pleased to offer this facility to the village. The roof will need to be replaced in the near future and we will have to fund raise to cover costs.

The churchyard continues to be well maintained by Rob Hallett. A churchyard working group helps to keep the churchyard in excellent condition. We thank the Parish Council for their continued financial support in the maintenance of the churchyard.

The church continues to be largely supported by a congregation of people of senior years and this has obvious financial implications. Income from planned giving and collections has decreased but our expenses have remained broadly the same. Decreasing and elderly membership also has implications for the running of the church. We have only one churchwarden instead of two, and a limited group of people to take on other roles.

Gill Service opens and closes the church every day so that it is available to all. People from the village continue to clean the church and provide flower arrangements which help to make the interior so attractive. We trust that St Leonard's continues to be a welcoming and friendly community and we thank all who give their time to the life and influence of the church in this village.

BUTLEIGH PLAYING FIELD ASSOCIATION REPORT: Mr Andrew Broomhead reported:

The BPFa continue to look after the main playing fields and pavilion in Backtown, and the smaller play park next to Holm Oaks. Both facilities are maintained to a high standard by a few individuals and are inspected every 2 weeks by us, and annually by ROSPA.

Highlights of the last 12 months activities include:-

Fund raising activities

A Sportive cycling event was hosted last September from the Backtown field with about 170 participants from around the region cycling on either a 50km or 100km route. Participants thoroughly enjoyed this new event which raised about GBP800 and we plan to host another event this year.

The Multi Terrain Run last April had over 90 entrants, raising about GBP 600. The community helped with the marshalling and provided sustenance with a cake stall, for what remains a very highly popular part of the local running circuit and a successful day enjoyed by all.

A Barn Dance was held on a lovely September evening at Dave Sharland's farm. The event was well supported in what proved to be a toe tappingly active night with a superb local band. The event appealed to a wide cross section of ages with younger children enjoying the field outside the barn, while their parents and grandparents honed their steps inside.

Our annual Quiz Night was held on the 9th February where we remembered Nora Woolley who has sadly passed away. Nora was a big part of the village and prepared questions for the quiz for many years and will be greatly missed. This year over 50 people formed 9 teams from Butleigh and local villages to answer a wide range of questions, sustained with some locally prepared food and a few drinks.

Pilates and Yoga continue in the pavilion on a weekly basis as does Boot camp. The Nursery uses the pavillion for four days of the week..

Facilities maintenance

The Holm Oaks facilities have been upgraded. A new rotating steel cone climber is excellent, a new Rocking Horse has been installed, and the Rocking rabbit repaired along with the tyre beam. This small park has much to offer. There is a seating area at the top, making it an outstanding facility for young and old to use, come and give it a try.

The Backtown playing fields were badly damaged by the heat of last summer, but repairs have been undertaken and the pitch has largely recovered. The access by Shared Access to the telecoms mast had produced some additional damage to the periphery of the ground and Shared Access have been notified and requested to drive around the edge and not diagonally across the grounds to avoid future problems.

Football activity on the sports field remains low. The main user is Wessex FC and about 10 games of football were played over the year.

There continues to be no junior football, rounders, quick cricket, youth club, nor 811 club.

The grounds and pavilion are highly regarded, and well maintained. It continues to be very sad to see almost no sport played on them any more.

Finances

Overall the events mentioned above, along with the Parish precept and grants we have received helped generate a small surplus for the financial year to 31 August 2018. Tractor repairs have added to this year's pitch maintenance costs. Insurance costs for the buildings and third party liability amount to GBP1,560. These costs exceed the amount of the precept and we would request if consideration could be given to the base amount of the precept for next year.

The balance sheet remains healthy, in part due to the contribution from the telecoms mast. To utilise this contribution, the Committee has just installed a set of solar panels on the pavilion roof to generate an annual utility cost saving and an annual income from the national feed in tariff.

Overall

A new committee was established in October of last year. Following some local advertising we secured three new volunteers including a new chairman.

Richard Hughes stood down from the role of Chairman at the AGM through work related commitments, but I am delighted to say that he has stayed on the committee and looks to take an active role in the upkeep of Holm Oaks play area. Richard has been on the committee now for many years and we thank him for his past and continued efforts.

This year we have managed to secure a school's representative for the committee and hope to build a good and positive relationship with the school. We now have a committee of eleven and two parish council representatives, and a school representative. With this new team we hope to promote and run more community based activities in the coming year.

BATS REPORT: Mr Alan Carr (Chairman) Mr Tom Done(Co-ordinator) reported:

We again had a successful year with 142 of trips a reduction from the previous year. The Co-ordinator reports that the of transferring the phone to another member of the team has been very successful, number used 850577

We can report that the "Mid Somerset Car Scheme Partnership's" moratorium on driver insurance premiums for 2015 has ended and we now pay £8 per Driver. The Accounts for 2018 have been prepared.

We made a minor increasing our trip rates, which were last increased in July 2010, with the exception of free medical trip for over nineties which has now been withdrawn as income has dropped due to falling number of trips. The scheme has welcomed one new driver leaving the team with 18 drivers.

Finally in this time of reduced Public Transport we cannot express how important it is for BATS service to be known to our community, and how rewarding it is to hear the complements for our passengers'.

MENDIP DISTRICT COUNILLORS REPORT: Mr Nigel Woolcombe-Adams

reported: Mendip – Somerset Waste Partnership, new waste collection contract to be awarded from March 2020. Residual waste – green bins to be collected every 3 weeks. Promoting public health, people in Mendip higher than average life expectancy, less alcohol problems.

Housing- temporary accommodation down to single figures. Efforts are being made to prevent people being evicted. Rough sleepers- Mendip have funded a specialist officer to reduce rough sleepers. A new hostel at a farm at Kilmersdon is successful.

Private sector landlords- some do not maintain their properties and it is being taken seriously with an enforcement procedure. Working to bring empty homes back into occupation.

Social housing and affordable homes, grants of up to £10k per property available. 540 affordable homes have been built in Mendip. .

Planning- Local Plan Part II hearing date in July. Full compliment of planning staff, hopefully more swift decisions will be taken.

New General Manager for economic growth.

Alternative arrangements for funding other than from the Government- MDC made 6 sensible/diligent investments totalling £40m. Warehouses and strategic land in Shepton Mallet and the Saxon Vale site in Frome..

Sound balance sheet and reserves. Council tax- MDC proportion 3.26% increase.

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT : Mr Nigel Hewett-Cooper

reported: .

Again, this has been a challenging year, and one which has seen criticism of the council at fever pitch, generally by those who were the architects of the financial problems we face.

But, we know it's easy to cause an issue, and then spit venom from the sidelines.

Despite our financial difficulties, which I shall touch upon later, some very good work is carried out by the County, much of it ignored, as it doesn't tick the 'insalubrious' box which so many facets of the media prefer to indulge themselves in.

Back in July, we took the decision to become paperless for our meetings. Printed agendas were costing the council in excess of £60k per year. The payback for the tablets we use is around 18 months, meaning this simple operation will save the council £150k in this quadrennium.

Our Children's services, deemed inadequate in 2015, continue to improve, with all aspects monitored turning the corner and now moving towards a further improvement at the next inspection. A recent spot-check inspection highlighted this.

In September we were forced to make another £19 million of savings. Remember, our annual grant from government has reduced over the past decade, and is expected to be zero by next year. There is only so much you can do with the money you have, and borrowing for everyday services is no longer allowed. This hard decision meant that the county finances are

back on track for this year. Money is, I believe, going to be a perennial issue at the county council, as I feel there seems to have been a lack of forethought and thinking ahead in years gone by, a situation we considered to our advantage at Mendip. For now though, we are heading in the right direction, but are still far from being 'out the woods'.

The library consultation was a successful exercise, with many respondents. Our nearest libraries in Shepton and Street are safe, though the decision whether to move the Shepton library is pending. Castle Cary has been successfully taken over by a community group. Council tax has again risen by the maximum 2.99%, with an extra 3% for adult social care. We sit on a social care time bomb, with an aging population, and a lack of families in the villages is exacerbating this problem. 70% of our council tax received at county goes on this, 30% for children, and 40% on the adult provision. If we don't get more families in our villages soon, we are all destined to suffer. Indeed, West Somerset was recently one of the 12 most socially deprived districts in the country, and has received government money to help with this. It ranked at number 1.

We still grit over 720 miles of roads on a precautionary basis, and after the September tranche of cuts seems to have placed us back on a firm footing, these will again be reviewed for next winter. I am hopeful of some of those routes removed from this programme to be reinstated. I should add that there were no routes in Mendip South affected.

Following the announcement late last year of an additional £9.9 million pounds to maintain roads in Somerset the following resurfacing and improvement schemes have now been announced and will be implemented by the end of March.

Here are a few figures concerning finance:

- £780m gross spend on services in the county for the next financial year
- 2.99 percent increase in the County Council's element of Council Tax
- 91p per week rise in Council Tax for Band D
- General Fund reserves to double to £19m by the end of the next financial year (previously £5.6m)
- Ringfenced £1m to develop preventative work that will reduce demand on services.
- An extra £200,000 made available for winter maintenance in 2019/20.
- Savings proposals on gully clearing and jetting dropped
- Delay on proposals to make savings in flood water management (£80,000), Dementia support (£100,000) and support to help vulnerable young people in to work (£50,000).
- £224m in capital projects in the County over the next four years

D Salter- Lorries – noticeable increase in arctic lorries coming down Henley Lane. N Hewett-Cooper to obtain an update from the officer at Somerset.

T Hoyle- Questioned the reason for the purchase of land being withdrawn. Many complications.

Meeting closed at 7.57 p.m.

Chairman
16th April 2019