

BURGHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY 1st JUNE 2023

Councillors: Cllr I MacFarlane, Cllr A Gallagher, Cllr L Sharp, Cllr J Ansell,
Cllr C Greaves, Cllr R Thorrington, Cllr D Selway,
Cllr Y Mattos, Cllr S Awbery

Apologies: Cllr P Lawrence, Cllr D Godwin, Cllr N Morse, Cllr A Mackinnon
Cllr B Neilson.

Officers: Clerk to the Parish Council

Public: 18 members of the public,

1. Introduction and Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed those present and opened the meeting.

2. To receive a brief report from local organisations having received grant funding from the parish council during financial year 2022/2023

The parish council had contacted all the groups from within the parish they had provided grant funding to for the previous financial year, requesting a presentation to members of the public explaining how the funding had assisted them.

Presentations were received from the Burghfield Santas, Burghfield Toy Library, Handybus, Burghfield Horticultural Society and the Morsbags organisation.

Due to being unable to attend the meeting, a note of thanks was forwarded by the organisers of the Burghfield Family Bike Ride and Creative Communities who had forwarded presentations having been in receipt of funding from the parish council in the previous financial year.

Thanks were expressed to the organisations who had taken the time to come along and prepare a presentation as to how the grant funding had assisted them.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted for Cllr P Lawrence, Cllr D Godwin, Cllr N Morse, Cllr B Neilson, Cllr A Mackinnon.

4. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2021

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting from 2022 were acknowledged by those present, having been approved as an accurate record of events.

5. Annual Report from the Chairman of the parish Council

The Chairmans read a report, providing a brief summary of the highlights and achievements of the Parish Council during the previous year.

N.B: The report provided factual information specifically relating to the parish of Burghfield only.

6. Reports from the Chairman of the Committees upon the Council

Reports were presented by the Chairman of the Communications Committee, the Community Committee, the Infrastructure Committee, the Community Hub Committee, and the Governance & Finance Committee outlining the achievements and highlights of the previous year. The Chairman thanked members for their hard work throughout the year.

7. Questions ahead of the meeting from Parishioners/Electorate

In order to assist the efficient administration of the meeting, members of the public were asked to email their questions in order to provide opportunity for a fuller answer to be provided. The Chairman advised that no questions had been received prior to the meeting.

8. Questions at the meeting from Parishioners/Electorate

The following question was raised by a parishioner:

- 1) *Would the council consider pursuing traffic calming measures on Hollybush Lane due to the close proximity to Tesco's, the Skate Park, and the Willink School?*
The chairman advised that the request will be forwarded to the infrastructure committee for consideration.
- 2) *A question was asked in relation to the area of land at Burghfield Park and what the plans were?*
The chairman advised the area falls within Sulhamstead Parish rather than Burghfield. However, closer links between the parishes is something hoped for in the future to enable the sharing of information.
- 3) *A request was submitted for the Cherry tree at the roundabout at the Chemist planted to commemorate Princess Diana.*
The request will be forwarded to the Community committee for their consideration.
- 4) *Could the bollards installed by West Berkshire Council at the entrance/exit to the Hatch allotments be moved to improve visibility existing the site?*
The chairman advised that the request will be forwarded to the infrastructure committee for consideration
- 5) A question was presenting requesting the overall amount the council had granted to local organisations during financial year 2022/2023.
The chairman advised that an email response would be provided for clarity.
- 6) Concerns were raised in relation to the use of social media, particularly from a negative perspective, and the influence this has had on people willing to volunteers for events being run by local organisations.
- 7) Disappointment was expressed by a member of public present that a representative from Burghfield Football Club hadn't attended the meeting given the extent of money they receive from the parish council.
- 8) A member of public in attendance responded, expressing they took exception to the comments raised regarding the football club and that to their knowledge Burghfield Football Club didn't receive a grant. The item on the agenda was for receivers of grants from Burghfield Parish Council to come along.
The Chairman advised that it was a personal opinion of which everyone is entitled.

9. Chairman's closure of meeting

The Chairman thanked parishioners for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 20.00pm.

Appendix A: Chairman's report for Annual Parish meeting

Well, this is a new experience for me. Over many years I have listened to the Chairmans report at the Annual Parish Meeting but today is the first time I have had to do it.

Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting!

I would first like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Tim Ansell, who had the unenviable task of leading a Parish Council through the Covid lock down and dealing with meetings online. Tim did a fabulous job steering the Council through some difficult times during which all too often social media was used by some people to vilify the council and to make sweeping accusations that were more often than not inaccurate and misleading.

The Parish Council is here to try and help engender a sense of community for the parishioners and whilst we may not always have the support of every member of the parish, please remember we are all volunteers trying to do what we think is the best for the majority. If you disagree then that's fine, that's democracy, but please bring your point of view to a meeting where it can be discussed and debated rather than fire off comments on social media.

It's been a busy year for the Council as is usually the case. The committee chairs will be presenting their reports after this one, so I won't go into too much detail here but suffice as to say, the Community committee who are responsible for open spaces, play equipment, tree management programs and the allotments have had their hands full this year. It looks like it will be a busy one as the replacement for the skate park is looming on the horizon.

The Communications committee have been busy looking at ways to contact the community in the most cost efficient and environmentally friendly way possible. The newsletter they produce is excellent, but they always need contributors!!

The infrastructure committee continue their diligent work regarding planning and general oversight of the council's assets. The big news this year will, hopefully, be the opening of the café on the rec. We are waiting for West Berks to clarify a couple of points but the tender documents to run the café have been issued and we are hopeful that this is done we will be able to proceed to the next stage. I am sure that the cafe will be a real asset and focal point for the whole community.

Finally, the Finance and Governance committee, which is made up from the Chairs of the other committees, have been maintaining their oversight of the council and ensuring all legal requirements are met.

On another note, the council has welcomed a new member of the admin team this year, Elle Gibbons, who joins us as the Communications and support officer. Elle's job is to help the Council promote its events and clearly she has been doing a great job already, the Coronation Picnic was a great success and well supported by the community.

All councillors are available should you wish to contact us if you have questions or concerns, email is the best way via our Council email addresses and please be assured we will reply.

Thank you for your time.

Ian Macfarlane
Chair, Burghfield Parish Council

Appendix B: Governance & Finance Committee

The Finance and Governance Committee is made up from the chairs of the other committees on the Council. The chair and vice chair of the Council also have full voting rights.

The main remit of the committee is to ensure that the Council adheres to the statutory requirements laid down by central government and also to ensure that any public money spent is done so in a prudent manner.

The Council is funded by a precept that is presented to West Berkshire Council annually and is paid through the council tax. Thanks to some careful budgeting the precept served on West Berks this financial year is 2.5% lower than last year, a small but welcome decrease in a world where prices seem to be ever increasing. There have been some comments made about using a portion of the council's reserves to fund a larger decrease in the precept, but the council has a statutory duty to maintain at least 6 months expenditure in reserves and so this would not have been possible.

The recent independent audit of the Council's finances were a glowing commendation of the care and diligence taken by this committee and the Responsible Financial Officer, Cally Morris. I would like to thank Cally for being able to translate complicated financial language into words that are more comprehensible to people like myself!!

The F&G committee also have money available for grants for local charities or groups that need some additional funding. Recent beneficiaries have been the Handybus, Burghfield Toy library, the BRA to assist with the May Fayre and the Burghfield Santas for toilets at Burghfest. Please ask for an application form!!

The F&G committee undertake regular reviews of the Council's standing orders to ensure they mirror any change in legislation and that they remain relevant.

As outgoing Chair of the committee, I would like to thank all the members for their focus and thoroughness during these meetings and look forward to the next chapter.

Ian Macfarlane
Chairman, Finance and Governance

Appendix C: Community Committee

The Community committee continues to be one of the busiest committees on the Parish Council and looks after the recreation grounds and play areas, the allotments, the skate park, the pavilion, the village hall, the burial ground and all the parish's 800+ trees!

The responsibilities include:

Recreation Grounds

Weekly and Quarterly ROSPA health and safety inspections @ £3500 per annum which we ensure that any safety recommendations are acted upon. This included resurfacing part of the Recreation Ground safe play surface which will need further work across the remaining area. The annual cost unfortunately has been hit with an additional £7,500 required to repair the recent vandalism together with the disruption to the resurfacing work last summer.

We have installed infra-red CCTV on the recreation ground and the individuals who were writing graffiti on the Pavilion and those who vandalised the play area have been shared and identified by the police.

Other grounds the Parish Council are responsible for maintaining are the Wells, The Hatch and Auclum Green and their play areas.

Pavilion and Village Hall

The costs of the pavilion continue to increase with issues with the heating system, roof vents and hot water system which will be an area of focus for the council in the coming months.

The village hall continues to go from strength to strength following its refurbishment and has increased its revenue substantially now 15% up on pre covid income. We continue to invest in the facilities as more rooms become available to rent.

Skate Park

One highlight is the amazing work that Alex a parishioner has done to raise funds to build a new skate park. The plans were on display at the May Fayre and received a lot of interest from the rest of the parish. This was the start of the public consultation, and it is hoped work will commence soon after the summer busy period.

We have also increased the parish's defibrillators by two – news ones being sited in the Cuning Man Public House and the Baghesha Curry House on Clayhill Road expanding the cover across the full parish. Thank you all involved in this achievement – this brings the total to 11.

Trees

The rolling 5-year tree plan for the more than 800 trees the Parish Council is responsible for ensures that diseased trees are dealt with and regular replanting which is currently being managed at the cost of £9 per tree pa!

Allotments

The quarterly surgeries at the allotments continue to be successful with Allotment holders able to raise any points of discussion directly with the council.

This committee works very hard to provide great facilities for the Parish which is a lot of work for a few elected 'volunteers!

Finally, I would like to thank all the committee members for their hard work and diligence over the last 12 months, you all make the Community Committee what it is today. I look forward to the coming year and defining our 4-year strategy on our priorities

Jane Ansell

Chair of Community Committee

Appendix D: Infrastructure Committee

The Infrastructure Committee continues to investigate, review and comment on planning applications submitted to West Berkshire Council that are within the parish or that may affect the parish, to ensure they are in accordance with the Village Design Statement and planning policy plus the nearly completed NDP.

If you have concerns about an application that has been submitted it is important that your comments and observations are made direct to West Berkshire Council, so the case officer is aware of your concerns. Please feel free to forward your comments to the Parish Council so the Infrastructure Committee can take them into consideration when reviewing the application.

Three applications of note are;

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|-----------------|---|
| 22/00325/RESMAJ | Land North Of Dauntless Road and South Of Pondhouse Farm, Clayhill Road, Burghfield Common, Reading. |
| 22/00535/FUL | Erection of a temporary cafe (prefabricated unit), Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Recreation Road, Burghfield Common. |
| 22/00244/FULEXT | Erection of 32 dwellings, Land at rear of The Hollies, Reading Road, Burghfield Common – Going to public Inquiry. |

The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) through the community lead Steering Group has delivered the proposed NDP to the Parish Council for consultation and then presentation to WBDC in due course.

And finally, the Committee also considers is Road Safety and Highways Improvements utilising funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy. If there are any areas roads or paths that you believe would benefit from improvements please let the Council know so the committee can consider them.

Paul Lawrence
Chairman, Infrastructure Committee.

Appendix E – Communications Committee

The purpose of the Communications Committee is to gather the wishes and opinions of local people, reflect those wishes to the PC and communicate the actions through various media and events.

Our objective is to develop links within the community and to inform parishioners of the aims and aspirations of the Parish Council. The committee's aims are to develop printed publications, the website and social media to build a stronger community by way of effective communication.

This year the Parish Council has employed a support and communications officer to enhance the quality, frequency and engagement of communications and events to the Parish.

As Chairman of the Communications Committee, I would like to thank the team for their contributions and energy during the past year.

We have produced 4 newsletters and we are looking at ways to reduce your cost of what is a well valued service including the option of an electronic version if desired.

I must mention the PC website and Facebook page which continue to improve. with a plethora of items from the latest local news to information about all aspects of the Parish Council's work. There is also a section on the development of the plans for the cafe and archive copies of newsletters and Parish Council meetings and much more. It is really worth a regular visit.

We continue to use our traditional method of communication which is the notice boards.

The committee is also responsible for progressing the diary of community events for 2023.

This year's events cycle has seen a super successful Burghfield on Ice, MacMillan coffee morning which raised a record amount and most recently the extremely popular Coronation Picnic in the Park and we continue to support the Burghfield Bike Ride, Santos pop up pubs and Burghfest events and the BRA with the annual May Fayre.

Thank you to the other committees for your help this year, to the inhabitants of Burghfield parish and in particular to Cally, Elle and Claire for their unstinting support.

Libby Sharp
Chair, Communications Committee

Appendix F: Community hub Committee

The Community Hub Committee's primary focus has been to provide a Community Café situated on the Recreation Ground next to the Pavilion.

Planning permission was finally granted by West Berkshire Council in August 2022 for a Temporary Café for a period of five years. The permission came with numerous pre-commencement conditions that required the Council and its representatives to undertake a considerable amount of work to prepare the necessary documentation for these to be discharged.

West Berkshire Council planning department are currently reviewing the documentation with a Determination Deadline of 28th June 2023.

In November 2022 the Committee requested Expressions of Interests from potential operators of the Café and received considerable interest. This was followed up in May this year when the formal Tender Documents for the Operation of the Café were issued to those that express an interest as well as being made available to other interested parties.

In the meantime, the Committee have been working with the Modular building providers to refurbish, adapt and fit out the units to make a wonderful Community Café for all the residents of Burghfield to enjoy.

The Committee is also in the process of obtaining quotations for the groundworks required for the building and will be investigating the best sources for furniture and fittings.

The committee envisage the café will be operational this summer!

Cllr Chris Greaves
Chair of Community Hub Committee.