

## **BURGHFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MINUTES THURSDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2024**

**Councillors:** Cllr I MacFarlane, Cllr A Gallagher, Cllr L Sharp,  
Cllr C Greaves, Cllr R Thorrington, Cllr D Selway,  
Cllr Y Mattos, Cllr S Awbery, Cllr P Lawrence, Cllr N Morse,  
Cllr B Neilson, Cllr I Kitson, Cllr L Watts

**Apologies:** Cllr D Godwin, Cllr A Mackinnon

**Officers:** Clerk to the Parish Council, Support & Comms Officer

**Public:** 5 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 2023/2024**

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 Skatepark Refurbishment project representative, Burghfield & Mortimer Volunteer Bureau, My Cancer My Choices, Burghfield Allotments Group.

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 D Godwin & Cllr A Mackinnon.

### **4. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2023**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting from 2023 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 advised parishioners present of the change in committee structure as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 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:

No questions were raised by members of the public present.

## **9. Chairman's closure of meeting**

The Chairman thanked parishioners for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 20.13pm.

### **Appendix A: Chairman's report for Annual Parish meeting**

Good evening and welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting. This is the second time I have had the pleasure of chairing this meeting and of making a brief report of the activities of the Parish Council. I'll try and keep this report short for two reasons, firstly, although I like the sound of my own voice many may not agree with me and secondly, I want to avoid treading on the toes of the committee chairs who will also be making a reports about their committees activities following this one. So I'll just give a brief outline on a couple of points, we'll then hear from the committee chairs and after that I'll invite any comments or reports from those who'd like to participate.

I suppose the most obvious thing to report was the regrettable cancellation of the Café project that was destined for the Rec. We had to take a balanced view of its viability following the restrictions placed on the council by West Berks and by the misinformation that was spread following the publication of our plans. Maybe in the future we can look at other plans as the Council is still firmly of the opinion that there is a need for something on the rec for the users who want a cuppa whilst enjoying the open space.

I'm sure that all those who came to the May Fayre and visited our stand would have seen our plans for the Old Rec and skate park. Thanks to some fantastic fund raising the money is in place for the redevelopment and all the necessary planning requirements have been submitted to West Berks for approval, hopefully they won't be as difficult as they have been over the other matter. For anyone who hasn't seen the plans, they are on the display boards, the main thing to note is the footprint of the skate park remains unchanged, should be more fun for the users and longer lasting.

On a slightly more disappointing note, the council has been subject to a number of freedom of information requests by one concerned resident over the last year. Last financial year the cost to the council was £300, to date this year it stands at £75. More disturbingly the Annual return for the council was delayed following challenging requests being presented to the external auditor from a Burghfield Parishioner. The pattern of questions proved similar to previous requests received by the council. Whilst the council has nothing to hide and understands the importance of clarity and openness it not only has resulted in an extra burden of work on our clerk but also huge extra costs, the auditor charges £355 per hour and it took 3.5 hours extra work...£1242.50 plus vat. The auditor has provided confirmation they are happy with the accounts as presented and will now be signed off,

a year later! The council works hard to ensure they spend the precept prudently, we have all felt the crunch from the cost-of-living crisis and realise that any increases are never welcome. Whilst there are currently no plans for any increases it would be nice not to be subject to this type of financial burden.

On a more cheerful note, there are a couple of Parish Council activities coming up for your diaries. The Community Sports Day is on Sunday 7th July, this is a great day for all the families, and I am always amazed at the amount of energy children seem to expend without slowing down, wish I had 1/10 of that energy, I can't sit down on a sofa anymore without a little exhale of breath!!!

The date is a little way down the road but it'll be here before you know it, Burghfield on Ice. That's on the weekend of Friday 29th & Saturday 30th November.

Ok, that's enough from me other than to say we have ?? vacancies on the council at the moment and are always looking for new members. If you'd like to come along to see what we do you're more than welcome. The full council meets on the first Thursday of the month with the exception of August and December.

So the next bit are reports from the Chairs of the committees...

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 two main remits of the committee are to ensure that the Council adheres to the statutory requirements laid down by central government (Governance) and also to ensure that any public money spent is done so in a prudent manner (Finance).

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 lower than last year, a small but welcome decrease in a world where prices seem to be ever increasing.

As part of the Finance remit, the F&G committee also contributes money to grants for local charities or groups that need some additional funding. Recent beneficiaries have been the Handybus, the BRA to assist with the May Fayre. Unfortunately, we cannot donate to individual, but if a community organisation would like to apply to the Parish Council for additional one off funds, please ask for an application form!!

From a Governance perspective, the F&G committee also undertakes a regular review of the Council's standing orders to ensure they mirror any change in legislation and that they remain relevant.

I would like to thank all the members for their focus and thoroughness during these meetings and look forward to the forth coming year.

Paul Lawrence  
Chairman, Finance and Governance

## **Appendix C: Community Committee**

The Community committee is one of the busiest committees on the Parish Council and looks after the Recreation Grounds, the allotments, the pavilion and the Village Hall.

The committee is also responsible for all the play areas and ensures that regular safety reports and inspections are carried out and that any recommendations are acted on. For instance, one recent report noted that the safer surfacing area under the toddler unit at the Wells Recreation Ground needed replacing and this work has been programmed to be completed within the next few weeks. Also, concerns have been raised regarding the fence along Recreation Road and quotes are being obtained for its replacement.

The next challenge for the Committee is the replacement of the Skate Park on the Old Recreation Ground. The paperwork has now been submitted to West Berks Council for them to confirm that the redevelop can be classed as permitted development and will not require planning consent. Fundraising efforts continue with over 100 grant applications having been submitted so far.

This year the Common Allotments have had the water supply upgraded and along with the installation of five new standpipes and water troughs. Thames water should be making the new connection any day now.

The village hall continues to be extremely popular and hired with most weekends being fully booked months in advanced keeping our Facilities Manager very busy!

The committee is also responsible for maintaining the trees within the parish of which there are many. The rolling 3 year tree management plan ensures that diseased trees are dealt with and regular replanting takes place. This year two large Copper Beech trees having been planted at the Common recreation ground to replace the Cedar that had to be felled last summer. A replacement Cherry Tree has also been planted at Auclum Green to replace the vandalised trees planted for the Diamond Jubilee and a mixture of Holly, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Hornbeam hedging has been planted along the boundary of the allotment next to Chapel Path. Finally, I would like to thank all the committee members for their hard work and diligence over the last 12 months.

Chris Greaves  
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.

There has been a marked decrease of Planning Application over the last twelve months, mainly due to the AWE DEPZ which restricts new builds in the area.

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.

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 enhanced 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 3 newsletters and we are now offering 2 online versions with some printed at pick up points to reduce the cost of what is a well valued service.

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 are sections for 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 2024.

This years events cycle has seen another super successful Burghfield on Ice and MacMillan coffee morning, which again raised a record amount. We continue to support the Burghfield Bike Ride, Santas pop up pubs and Burghfest events and the BRA with the annual May Fayre where we had a stand this year for parishioners to come and talk to us. Still to come in 2024, as well as our ever popular Community Sports Day and Burghfield on Ice 2024, we are expanding our offerings, with film nights at the village hall and are always open to any ideas the parishioners have on expanding our community events offerings.

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