

BASILDON PARISH  
ASSEMBLY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY ON 21st MAY 2013

PRESENT: Councillors Jeremy O'Brien (Chairman), Sarah Barnes, Elaine Cox, Tim Martin, Edward Golton and Nathalie Weekes.

Attended by District Councillor Alan Law, the Clerk and 21 parishioners.

1. MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY OF 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012

The minutes, having been circulated, were confirmed as correct and were signed by the Chairman.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY CHAIRMAN

Good evening and welcome to the 2013 Parish Assembly.

The Parish Council represents residents' views to West Berkshire Council and has influenced West Berkshire Council decisions on the following matters:

- Core Strategy

- Planning applications

- Eastern Area Planning Committee

and provides the following local services:

- Maintains Public Spaces

- Provides recreation facilities village amenities

- Maintains footpaths and bridleways (with WBC)

- Disposes of litter

- Supports the Village Hall and Parish Plan actions

4.1 COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

During the year the Council has been involved in the following activities:

- Footpath and highway improvements

- Wakemans Play Area refurbishment and improvements

- Bus stops and planning for new bus shelter

- Church Car Park upgrading

- Planning applications and appeals

- Financial support for the Basildon Show

- Support for the Faster Broadband project

- Village Hall activities as Trustees

- Telephone boxes

My name is Jeremy O'Brien and I have been Chairman since May 2012 as well as being a Trustee of the Village Hall and Recreation Ground.

Firstly, I would like to introduce the members of the Council:

Sarah Barnes

Elaine Cox

Edward Golton, who has recently joined us  
Tim Martin, who is also a Trustee of the Village Hall and Recreation Ground  
and Nathalie Weekes,

The other person at the table is Douglas Bending, our Parish Clerk.  
I am immensely grateful to all members of the Council and the Clerk for the  
support they have given to Parish business and to me during the year.

I would also like to introduce, Alan Law, our District Councillor. Alan is the  
WBC Portfolio member for Finance and Economic Development. He has  
been very supportive of Basildon issues in our representations to West  
Berkshire Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the fact that the  
Parish Council is greatly in need of three additional members to bring its  
numbers up to the specified number of nine. If you or anyone you know may be  
interested in serving the community by joining the Council would they please  
contact either me or the Clerk to obtain particulars of what is involved

#### 4.2 CHALLENGES FOR BASILDON IN MAINTAINING VILLAGE CHARACTER:

Desire for new housing  
Pavements, street lights, road signs  
Inconsiderate motorists  
Speed or safety  
Cars or pedestrians, cyclists and horses  
Hedgerows versus visibility  
Urbanising features in house design

#### 4.3 HIGHWAYS

Although WBC has had to cut its budget in various ways it has been able to  
maintain patching roads to some extent and also plans to carry out a  
limited amount of total re-surfacing.

Speeding continues to be a serious problem and further investigations will be  
made to quantify the true extent of this unsocial practice.

#### 4.4 FOOTPATHS

There were several reports of overgrown footpaths in 2012 and we have  
restructured the “volunteers” agreement to improve reporting to the Parish  
Council and WBC.

We aim to support the Primary school initiative to get more children walking to  
school by complete re-surfacing of FP3 from Kiln Corner to Bethesda Street  
and refurbishment of FP5 from Emery Acres to the school. We also plan to  
improve the surface on the remainder of FP5 and at the end of FP16

#### 4.5 WAKEMANS PLAY AREA

The play equipment at Wakemans Recreation Ground had deteriorated over  
time and was in need of refurbishment including painting and partial  
replacement of existing equipment and provision of some new equipment. A  
broken swing was replaced as a matter of urgency and all of the remaining  
work has been completed satisfactorily by means of a contract let to  
Wicksteeds - the whole cost of the project being met by use of S106 funding.  
Users of the play area are very satisfied with the finished project. I would like  
to record my thanks to Councillor Martin who took the lead on this project and  
saw it through to satisfactory completion.

#### 4.6 CHURCH CAR PARK

This car park is widely used by residents generally and not just by churchgoers and the existing surface had proved incapable of standing up to the additional wear and tear. It was agreed with WBC that in view of the car park's general usage its improvement could properly be funded from S106 Highways funds. A first stage of the work has been completed and all the remaining work will be done later in the summer of 2013.

#### 4.7 LOWER BASILDON BUS SHELTER

The Lower Basildon Bus Shelter had become unfit for further service and was demolished for safety reasons in 2012. A new shelter is to be provided using S106 Highways funding and this should be completed during 2013.

#### 4.8 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Although the evaluation of the questionnaire on Affordable Housing was completed some time ago it has not yet been possible to take any positive action in this matter.

#### 4.9 PLANNING

Purpose of Application	Number of Applications	Number of houses
Additional Houses	3	9
Replacement houses	6	6
Extensions, Conservatories	22	
Other (including conditions)	32 (21)	

There has been a marked reduction from previous years in the total number of planning applications and many dealt only with minor changes, details, discharge of conditions, tree work etc which would previously have been dealt with by administrative action and would not have required a separate planning application.

Overall, 90% of planning applications were approved and 10% refused or withdrawn. It is common practice for applicants to be advised to withdraw a proposal that is heading for refusal. This allows them to resubmit with more acceptable revisions and avoid creating a record of refusal for the site.

The Parish Council objected to 14 applications all of which, except 3 which were ruled invalid or were withdrawn by the applicant, were approved by WBC. There were no planning appeals in respect of applications submitted during calendar year 2012.

Nine schemes for additional houses which had previously been approved by WBC or on appeal had not been started on site by the end of 2012.

### 5 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT (Alan Law)

The District Councillors holds down four jobs:

Ward Member for Aldworth, Basildon and Streatley

Portfolio member for Finance and Economic Development

Executive Member involved in the general running of WBC and WBC representative on Thames Valley Local Economic Partnership.

Governor: Royal Berkshire Hospital

West Berkshire Issues: West Berkshire is one of the fastest growing local economies in UK and part of the fastest growing Region – Thames Valley. Major developments are Parkway shopping and housing in Newbury, IKEA at Calcott and promotion of a new rail link direct to Heathrow but new housing is still at low levels.

Challenges: Reduced Government grants; Expanding ageing population; employment costs

New Council Strategy: Living within our means and keeping Council Tax at or below inflation; Protecting the aged and vulnerable; Improving education; Protecting the environment; Promoting a vibrant district and improved broadband..

Local Issues

Planning - inappropriate developments; Unelected inspectors; Adjusting to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework

Roads – Planned restriction of HGV's on local roads including Hook End Lane and Park Wall Lane; Continuing programme of road repairs and resurfacing.

## 6 PARISH ACCOUNTS

The detailed accounts for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are available - some copies will be found on the side table here tonight and electronic or hard copies are also available from the Clerk. I do not propose to set out all the figures since it suffices to say that in both years the Council remained within its budget and its accumulated reserves were satisfactory.

However, the following notes set out how the Council sees the current and prospective situations.

### Routine expenditure

How much	£27K budget for 2013/14
Cost per head of electors	approximately £20 per annum

Where does it come from?

The Parish Council agrees a budget for each year and issues a Precept upon the District Council (£27,000 for 2013/14)

The District Council is funded mainly by government grants but to some extent by Council Tax.

Where does it go?

Routine expenditure covers such items as Clerk's salary	(£K7)
Office expenses, audit and subscriptions	(£K2)
Insurances	(£K2)
Grass cutting and external maintenance	(£K5)
Litter picking and footpath clearance	(£K2)
Grant to Village Hall etc	(£K6.5)
Contribution to broadband project	(£K2.5)

Total (£K27)

How are we held to account?

The Parish Council is held to account by its own internal rules regarding budgeting, reporting and minuting all expenditure; the accounts are checked by independent Internal and External Auditors; a check is made to see that every item of expenditure is permitted under the appropriate legislation; the published accounts are available upon request by any elector.

#### Non-routine expenditure

Apart from its routine activities Council has been able in recent years to carry out or support a number of capital projects. The funding for these has been obtained by setting aside reserves from the Precept (for Village Hall and Parish Plan projects) and by way of WBC capital grants or very considerable developer contributions for Open Spaces consequent on the granting of planning permissions for additional houses in the village.

The reserves for these purposes (£K10 for Parish Plan projects and £K10 for Open Spaces projects after meeting the cost of the first stage of the Wakemans project) are not available for routine or maintenance expenditure and can only be spent on certain approved projects. Further S106 funding is also available for work related to highways but this is controlled by WNC Highways rather than by the Parish Council.

#### Overall expenditure and reserves

The overall position in 2012/13 was as follows

Starting balance		£K46
Made up of :		
Ordinary reserve	£K15	
S106	£K18	
Parish Plan	£K10	
Income		£K27
Expenditure		£K39
Final balance		£K34

Made up of :

Ordinary reserve	£K14
S106	£K10
Parish Plan	£K10

The Council aims to keep an ordinary reserve of approximately half of the Precept to deal with unexpected circumstances. The ordinary reserve currently exceeds this figure and Council will give further consideration to whether this should be spent on non-recurrent projects or on a one-off reduction in the precept.

Council has agreed that during 2013/14 it will use the remaining balance of its S106 funds to complete the refurbishment of the Wakemans Play Area and WBC Highways has agreed to fund the upgrading of the Car Park and the provision of a replacement bus shelter in Lower Basildon from its S106 funds.

Council is in the process of refreshing its Parish Plan and it is anticipated that this will lead to a demand upon the Parish Plan reserve.

The Council has paid the first of three instalments, each of £2600, towards the cost of the broadband project and the cost of meeting the remaining two is covered by the present level of the Precept.

7 The Vicar, speaking as a school governor, described the achievements of the primary school over the past year and pointed out that planning was well advanced for a further classroom to cope with growing numbers of children.

## 8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following questions were asked:

1. Can anything be done about dangerous driving conditions in Gardeners Lane.? This is a matter for WBC rather than the Parish Council but the PC will continue to press the matter.
2. Could a 20mph speed limit be introduced on certain roads in the village? Again this is a matter for WBC and the Police but the PC will raise the matter with them.
3. Are the settlement boundaries likely to be reviewed soon? The PC's understanding is that all settlement boundaries will be reviewed in the next few years as part of the West Berkshire Development Plan but this does not imply that the boundaries will necessarily be amended.
4. Is anything known about the possibility of development on land between Blandys Lane and Beckfords? Nothing definite is known at present but speculation has arisen because of the fencing off of land which was previous partly open and what looked like survey work being carried out.

Thank you for coming tonight and for your interest in the Parish Council's activities. Please do contact the Parish Council, or our District Councillor on matters that concern you. We cannot resolve problems unless we know about them. You are welcome to attend and speak (briefly) at Parish Council meetings, held here usually on the second Tuesday of each month.

There being no other business the Chairman declared the meeting closed.