

BASILDON PARISH ASSEMBLY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY ON 16th May 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Ian Parsons (Chairman), Sarah Barnes, Elaine Cox, Geoffrey Couchman, Tim Martin, Ian Parsons and Nathalie Weekes.

Attended by the Clerk and 17 parishioners. The District Councillor, Alan Law, was present as was Inspector Chris Ward from the local police force joined the meeting for sections 1 to 4.

1. MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY OF 11th April 2016

The minutes had previously been circulated and 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

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public and speakers to the meeting and outlined the format that would be followed. The Chairman confirmed that all Councillors would cover off certain sections of Parish Council business with a short question and answer session from the local police and an update from District Councillor Alan Law. He then introduced Inspector Chris Ward who addressed the meeting.

4. Local Police Update

Inspector Ward confirmed that he manages two teams, one of which covers the Basildon area along with Pangbourne and Burghfield. He confirmed that crime has risen nationally by 8% with local crime in the Pangbourne / Burghfield / Basildon area up by 7%.

103 incidents were recorded in Basildon covering crime, traffic and domestic issues. There were 3 burglaries, 6 non dwelling burglaries (sheds etc) and 4 car break ins during 2016/17 as well as an anti social behaviour relating to cars at the Village Hall. The most significant issue was an unsuccessful attempt to steal the cash point from the garage in Lower Basildon.

Inspector Ward concluded his talk by reminding people to keep their belongings safe and out of site. He then answered a question from a member of the public regarding call centres and confirmed that staff are UK based with the nearest in Abbingdon.

5. Parish Council Summary

The Chairman then provided a summary of Parish Council activity and confirmed the following:

As of the end of March 2017 there was £57,599.80p in two bank accounts controlled by the Parish Council.

The budget for 2016/17 had been 70K and the Council spent just under this sum.

Key items of expenditure had been the village green (almost 5K) and support for the

Post Office (£1600) and Bus Service (1K).

Future costs included the potential support of the library service and the winter gritting programme.

The Chairman confirmed that the internal audit was complete with the external audit set to kick off shortly.

Planning – 76 applications were received and WBC only offered a different outcome to that proposed by Basildon Parish Council on 7 occasions. Applications were received for 6 new homes and 6 applications covered 12 new houses. Of these, 4 requests are still outstanding with the other two rejected.

Staffing changes – The Clerk has retired and been replaced by a temporary clerk who has left his position of chairman to take on the role. There is a new councillor (Councillor Jones) and there have been two resignations.

The Chairman outlined a number of key Parish Council achievements:

Replacement noticeboards

New bins

Access ramp for footpath 5

Visual Design Statement updated

Support for Emery Down Wood

The Chairman confirmed that School parking will be followed up, as will a number of proposals to assist the Village Hall. Additionally the Parish Council will look to meet again at St Barts in Lower Basildon and continue to train Councillors to make them better equipped to do the job.

The Chairman introduced the rest of the Council in turn and each covered off a specific topic:

Councillor Jones talked about support for the local library and confirmed that much of the funding requested by WBC of local councils has been achieved. He confirmed that the Council was supportive of a grant of £1740 (representing £1 per parishioner head) to support the Pangbourne library service.

Councillor Couchman confirmed that the new volunteer bus service (142) was about to kick off and would include Lower Basildon in its route. He also confirmed that the 143 service to Upper Basildon was under threat following the withdrawal of subsidies from related Oxfordshire Parish Councillors. Councillor Couchman confirmed that the Parish Council was in regular contact with WBC and would keep members of the public informed on progress with the hope being that a reduced service may still be retained.

Councillor Weakes outlined the Grotto planning application and confirmed the boutique hotel application was still at the pending stage. She confirmed that there had been two written objections and two in favour with the Parish Council voting to support the proposal given the state of the building and the need to save it.

Councillor Barnes outlined training given to Councillors to operate hand held speed guns. Additionally, Councillor Barnes confirmed that the Parish Council would be borrowing a machine to monitor traffic speeds and placing them around the village at some point in the near future.

Councillor Cox updated the meeting on rights of way and informed the meeting that the Parish has 14 miles of paths, bridleways and rights of way across 26 locations.

WBC is responsible for keeping paths 5,6 and 17 clear and has worked with the Parish Council to get footpath 5 resurfaced. Councillor Cox concluded by outlining a project called 'Devolution' which looks to utilise volunteers on local projects.

Councillor Martin updated the meeting on the Village Green. He informed those present that new trees had been planted along with wild flower borders. The Cherry Trees will receive some attention this year and the expectation is that at some point they will deteriorate to the point that they will need to be removed.

6. District Council Update

The Chairman introduced Councillor Law who updated the meeting:

Councillor Law informed the meeting that this was his 10th year as a District Councillor and that this year he had left the executive for planning but remained part of the Eastern Area Planning Committee and was Chair of the District Planning Committee.

Councillor Law noted that during 16/17 no planning applications were called in but this was likely to change in 17/18. Additionally, a common issue of previous meetings was now addressed with the high speed broadband install being underway from Gigaclear. Away from broadband, the bus service looks like being an issue for this year and the 'use it or lose it' statement of previous years remains with the service still failing to pick up adequate numbers from the Basildon area.

Councillor Law confirmed that the district council has a new chairman following the tragic death of Councillor Croft. His replacement, Councillor Jones is now fully embedded in his new role.

Councillor Law confirmed an increase of Council tax by 4.9% before outlining proposed boundary changes to the area which would reduce District Council members from 52 to 42. Councillor Law has raised objections to the proposals and suggested to residents that they review the proposals and have their say if they feel strongly about it.

7. Any other Business

The Chairman opened up the meeting to questions and the following were asked:

Railway Action Group

The clerk was asked about the groups progress and confirmed that nothing was currently happening and Network Rail had been chased. It was then noted by residents that the current gantry style was completely out of keeping with the local area and the clerk confirmed that the Parish Council would retain an interest.

Bus Service

Concern was expressed about the potential lack of bus service for Upper Basildon. The Chairman confirmed that no decisions have been taken yet and parishoners would be kept informed. The Chairman was asked if the subsidy currently paid covered the whole route or just the Pangbourne to Upper Basildon section. The Chairman agreed to ask WBC as this was not clear from the agreement in place. The Parish Council was asked if the school bus could be used to provide a service and it was confirmed that this was unlikely given the ad hoc nature that the school requires it coupled with other groups who already utilise it.

With the questions complete, the Chairman concluded the meeting at 9:25pm and confirmed that there would be another assembly in 2018.