

Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green Parish Council Newsletter

December 2023

A Happy New year to all our residents!

The latest meeting of the Parish Council took place on Wednesday December 13th. 2023 at Ecchinswell Village Hall. The meeting started at 6.30pm, earlier than usual, because we had a presentation from Borough Councillors Paul Harvey and Andy Konieczko at 7.30pm. They came to speak to us about the new Basingstoke and Deane Council Local Plan Update. More on this later.

The Parish Precept for 2024/25 was agreed at the meeting. We have raised the precept by 5% which equates to 18 pence per month for a Band D property. This increase will allow us to meet our responsibilities on parish maintenance and prepare for replacing office equipment as it becomes outdated. We are privileged to live in a rural area and there a large number of mature trees on parish land. These need regular inspection. A major cost for the parish is land maintenance. We aim to spend your money carefully on things that benefit us all.

Good news at the allotments this year! Cllr Debenham has taken responsibility for the allotments, and he is working with the allotment holders to improve the site and increase community involvement. There is now an active Allotment Group. So far, there has been one working party which cleared paths and trimmed hedges; more are planned. In the light of this increased community involvement, the PC has been able to avoid a rent increase for 2024. It will stay as £40 per year. There are a couple of allotments available, so now would be a good time to think about joining the allotment community.

Our Neighbourhood Plan appears to be protecting us. The proposal for the large development in Bishops Green, which was contrary to our plan, has been withdrawn. The situation, both in central government and at Basingstoke and Deane, means we are very likely to need to review our plan before May 2025. To do this we will have to start work in the first quarter of 2024. If you are able to help with this, do please contact our clerk on clerk@ecchinswell-pc.gov.uk We do need community input.

On December 8th the annual Sleigh Event set off from Bishops Green and ended at The Royal Oak in Ecchinswell. Santa and his helpers entertained the children along the route - and the adults too!

As I write, the Ecchinswell Village Hall is gearing up for the panto, *Bronzilocks and the Three Heirs*. Rehearsals suggest that it is a performance not to be missed! Tickets will be available from The Royal Oak.

Bishops Green Village Hall is welcoming in the New Year with a new member of staff. The hall now has a coordinator who will be working with the community to ensure that the hall provides services that people want and need. We are looking forward to meeting her in the hall and around Bishops Green.

At 7.30pm Cllrs Harvey and Konieczko began their presentation to the parish council and a group of interested residents. They gave a broad outline of the Local Plan

Update process and the proposed content. This was both engaging and informative. They were very approachable, answering questions during and after the presentation. The public consultation on the Local Plan Update will begin in January 2024 and they urged residents and the parish council to send in responses to it. They are hoping for a high level of response from the residents of Basingstoke and Deane so that our voices can be heard, not just the voice of developers who will inevitably submit comments. We will send out reminders to the parish once the consultation is launched.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 10th January 2023 at Ecchinswell Village Hall starting at 7.30pm. Everyone is welcome.

Cllr Marian Dain