

ES&BG

Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green Parish Council

The May meeting of the Parish Council was held at Ecchinswell Village Hall on Wednesday 11th May. There was a short AGM at 7pm where Cllrs Marian Dain and Jackie Bayliss were re-elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

The Annual Assembly at 7.30pm was our first face-to-face assembly since 2019 and it was gratifying to see a good number of residents in attendance. The evening began with the Chair's report. Cllr Dain welcomed everyone back and gave a round-up of the main issues the council has been dealing with over the last year.

- Planning has been a significant issue, both in organising the parish objections to two large planning applications for Bishops Green and in driving forward the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan to enable residents to have an input into how the parish should grow. These different strands of council work have required close liaison with members of the local community and the support the council has had in this has been very reassuring. We are still awaiting Basingstoke and Deane's decision on the large planning applications.
- Finance has been another major issue and Cllr Dain explained the reasons why the precept had to be increased by a larger percentage this year. This was not a decision taken lightly by the council. Staffing costs and increasing maintenance liabilities are the main contributors to the necessary rise.
- Traffic and Roads continue to cause concern in the parish and the Speeding Working Party is busy working behind the scenes on ideas to improve things. In the last year we have had a traffic census and some traffic calming measures installed.
- Following the success of the Ratt's Cottages projects, more gates will be installed around the parish to replace stiles. Increasing access to our countryside is important to our parish.

The Financial Report was given by the Clerk, Sarah Jones. Her report shows that the parish is in a good position financially and reiterated the reasons for the precept increase.

Our Borough Councillor, John Izett, gave us his report next. He gave details of the recent local election results and was able to tell us that Cllr Sam Carr was re-elected for Evingar, so our team remains the same. He spent the majority of his report focussing on planning and explaining the application process with regard to the two big development proposals in Bishops Green. He put these in the context of the broader planning concerns for the borough. Basingstoke and Deane believe the borough is being required to build too many homes and is pushing back on the allocation.

Our County Councillor, Tom Thacker, gave us an overview of the responsibilities of Hampshire County Council. Hampshire is currently addressing the issue of elected mayors. They are proposing an elected cabinet rather than just an individual mayor. He also

explained the ~~almost unique unusual~~ position of our parish in having two county councillors for one parish. He is responsible for the south of the parish as far north as ~~Ecchinswell pond~~ **Brocks Green**, while Cllr Derek Mellor is responsible for the northern part of the parish.

The next item was an update from the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group given by the Secretary, John Dain. He gave a reminder of what a neighbourhood plan is and why we need one to influence development in our parish. Draft policies and potential sites for small scale development are now ready for community comments. There are three Community Consultation events for residents to have their say on the draft policies and potential sites on May 26th, 27th and 28th. The target for completion of the plan is still late 2022.

Our final item was “A Trip Down Memory Lane – the parish over the last 70 years” in honour of the up-coming Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. Jaydon Perrin, an Ecchinswell resident, had conversations with two of our older long-term residents and gave an entertaining talk based on these interviews. We were taken back to a time when there were very few cars, open views from the pub, and everyone knew everyone. This was a lovely way to end the formal part of our evening.

The next Parish Council meeting is on Wednesday 8th June at Bishops Green Village Hall. We look forward to seeing some of you there.

Cllr Marian Dain