

NEWS FROM THE VILLAGES ARTICLE ECCHINSWELL, SYDMONTON & BISHOPS GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

A shortened Parish Council Meeting took place at Ecchinswell Village Hall on 10th May followed by the Annual General Meeting.

Firstly, Cllr Marian Dain was unanimously re-elected as Chairman for another year. Cllr Bayliss has stepped down as Vice Chair but will remain as a Councillor. Cllr Mark Stamp has been elected as Vice Chair for the coming year. Sadly, for the Parish, Cllr Rachael Coward has moved from the area and is no longer eligible to stand as a Councillor. We thank her for her hard work and dedication to the team. This has left the PC severely under manned. In order to remain viable and quorate we require a minimum of three councillors at each meeting. We currently have very little leeway to absorb illness, resignations or holidays. Should we fall short ESBG would have no option but to amalgamate with another parish and we would lose our independence. Please contact our clerk at clerk@ecchinswell-pc.gov.uk if you would like to join our team and prevent this from happening.

Chairman Marian Dain started her AGM report by providing an update on the newly purchased Speed Indicator Device which is currently situated in front of Malthouse Farm. Since it was installed the data collected shows that 3,600 cars have passed by at 27mph or above and the average speed is 31mph. However, 20 vehicles have sped past at over 60mph which is concerning. For maximum effectiveness the device should be moved every four weeks and we will require a team of volunteers to help with this process. Again, if you feel you could help with this please contact our clerk at the above address.

The project to replace stiles with kissing gates continued last year with five new gates being installed with the help of a team of volunteers. It is hoped to replace the remaining stiles sometime in the future.

The Neighbourhood Plan has now been adopted and should give the community at least two year's protection from further threat of speculative development. The Plan will need regular updating and again volunteers are urgently required to help with this.

Cllr Dain thanked all of the volunteers who gave their time freely to collect litter, clean and maintain our Village Halls and generally help in reducing maintenance bills which would otherwise have to be met out of parish funds.

Our Clerk, Sarah Jones, then delivered the Financial Report for the past year. Every effort was made to keep the rise in the precept paid by each household via their Council Tax Bill as low as possible. However, it was necessary to raise this last year to cover under funding and emergency costs. The biggest expense was the Speed Indicator and we also are required to undertake an annual tree survey for safety reasons. Furthermore, there is a need to factor in the cleaning of our War Memorial. The Parish Council is not permitted to fund raise and our only income is from the precept paid to us by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and the rents from the allotments.

The first of our speakers were the Community Safety Patrol Officers Benjamin and Kerry who have been appointed by Basingstoke and Deane to try to combat the antisocial behaviour by a small minority of young people in Bishops Green. The officers have worked hard to build relationships with the children and the shopkeepers and are listening to the concerns of local residents. They have both stressed that it is vitally important to report all incidents speedily so they can try to prevent things escalating. If you have anything to report please do so. Their details are on the PC website.

The Borough Councillor's Report was delivered by newly elected councillor John Izett. He congratulated the team who have guided the Neighbourhood Plan to its final stage so quickly and thanked them for their hard work.

Since the local elections there is no majority party at Basingstoke and Deane and a cross party amalgamation maybe required to move things forward. There are some exciting projects in the pipeline which includes a new aqua dome and a complete refurbishment of the ice rink.

A funding for a part time manager is being sought for Bishops Green Village Hall in partnership with local housing associations and Greenham Trust.

More than 1500 households in the borough have received assistance with the cost-of-living rises. All in all, he concluded the finances within the borough are in a healthy state.

Next to speak on behalf of Hampshire County Council was Tom Thacker. He advised that although Hampshire is one of the best funded counties in the country their resources are finite and they face an eighty million pound shortfall this coming year to maintain services and reserves will need to be drawn upon. Worryingly they only have reserves to cover a couple of years. The biggest demand is for social care, environmental issues and highways. He assured those present that climate change is at the forefront of every decision that is made.

On a positive note there are 220 more police officers in Hampshire and there is an expansion programme to assist children with mental health issues. Also, there is more funding for Children's Homes in the county.

Our final speaker, Rob Daniels, represented the Greenham Trust. This local organisation collects the rents it receives from the units at the Business Park and distributes funds to eligible charities within the area. They are currently assisting projects like cost of living support groups, the Watermill Theatre which has lost its current funding, youth clubs, village halls and scout and guide premises. The good news is that the trust is in a position to be able to continue to invest in local projects.

This concluded an interesting and informative evening and the meeting drew to a close at nine thirty.

The next Parish Council meeting will be on the 14th June at Bishops Green Village Hall at 7.30pm. Please come along and find out more about your community.