

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
ECCHINSWELL, SYDMONTON AND BISHOPS GREEN PARISH  
HELD AT ECCHINSWELL VILLAGE HALL  
WEDNESDAY 9 May 2018  
AT 7.30 PM**

**Present:** Councillors, Hall, Owen

Borough Councillor John Izett, County Councillor Tom Thacker, PCs John Dullingham, and Seb Pearce,  
Tim Davis from BDBC, Adrian Wander, S Jones (Parish Clerk) and 45 residents.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Dain and Sparrow.

**2. Minutes of Assembly held on 10 May 2017**

Owing to pressure of time, the signing of the minutes was deferred to the June PC meeting.

**3. Chairman's Report**

Many thanks to you all for coming to our Annual Assembly tonight. It's great to see you all and I wanted to stress how pleased we are, because we exist to support you – the members of our Parish! I'd also like to welcome our guests who we'll hear from in the next hour.

Borough Councillor - John Izett

County Councillor - Tom Thacker

Tim Davis from BDBC Housing team

John Dullingham and Seb Pearce from the Police

Professor Adrian Wander

Please also stay for a glass of wine and some sandwiches afterwards – we'd love to catch up with you if you have any questions.

As you'll notice, we're slightly short of councillors this evening because the re-validation and election process for Parish Councillors caught us out so we only managed to get a couple of us across the line – Mike Sparrow and Marian Dain are unable to be here, but Nick Owen and I managed to get our registrations completed...and we're here!

Can I also welcome our fabulous new Parish clerk – Sarah Jones. This is her first assembly and she's made such a great contribution to the PC over the last 10 months.

On the posters behind me you'll see all the things that we as a PC are responsible for. Let me draw out a few points that I'd like to make you aware of.

1 - Firstly, planning. We see all the applications for planning that are submitted in the Parish. However, I must stress that we're not planning experts, but we do like seeing you to hear about your planning, and we aim to represent/support you effectively within the limits of our remit. If you have planning applications coming up, please do attend the meeting at which it's being discussed so that we can understand more about the application.

2 - We've been trying to help alleviate the parking problems that exist in Oakfields Close. Whilst it's not within our area of responsibility, we're aiming to support the residents by lobbying the landowner/s to see if they'll act.

3 – We have pushed hard over the last 12 months on Broadband and the Vice Chair and I went to meet our MP, Kit Malthouse to raise the profile of the issue. He was very well informed about the situation and advised that he'd been in contact with BT Openreach who, at the time, were prioritising our area. We have now got Superfast Broadband and it seems most of the village has access – although I know there are quite a few houses on Back Lane which are yet to receive it. Does everyone here receive reasonable speeds? (a show of hands was almost unanimous although many said the speeds weren't all that they should be),

- 4 - We've had a spate of fly-tipping in the Parish and I must congratulate BDBC who are incredibly efficient at removing stuff when it's reported to them – normally within 48 hours. (www.basingstoke.gov.uk/flytipping). Please report any fly-tipping to us or to BDBC directly.
- 5 - We have spare allotments – if you'd like to take one, or know some who does, please let us know. We have a special offer of the first three months free to get you started.
- 6 - The hard winter has taken its toll on our roads with an epidemic of potholes. I know Tom Thacker will talk more about this; suffice to say that most of the bad potholes in our area have been reported and will be on HCC's radar – but who knows when they'll get around to repairing them. Let's keep fingers crossed – I have noticed recently that white marks have appeared round some of the bigger holes, which may indicate that BDBC have been out to mark them up for action.
- 7 - The PC has again supported the Ecchinswell May Fayre this year (hope you enjoyed it last weekend!) which we believe is a great draw for our village. We've also been lucky enough to receive a donation from the May Fayre committee which we will use to improve the area round the old phone box opposite the school once the phone box has been removed by BT. We will be doing some planting and put a bench out there so it's a much nicer area and a great improvement on the bank of nettles that normally grows there.
- 8 - As it's the centenary of the end of the First World War in November this year we are having the war memorial professionally cleaned and also getting an additional soldier's name added to the monument. Adrian Wander – who's speaking later – will give us more information about this person whose name seems to have been omitted.
- 9 - We've set up a Parish Facebook page – how many of you use Facebook? (a show of hands only revealed about 20% of the audience) well, I hope those of you who have Facebook will join the site and post comments for the enjoyment of other users of the site.
- 10 - As I said earlier, we have a guest from BDBC who will talk about the results of the affordable housing survey we undertook in March/April. You may remember we held an extraordinary PC meeting earlier this year to discuss and about 20 residents turned up to listen to our deliberations. We were delighted to see everyone because they helped us as a council get a fuller understanding of the need and sentiment that existed. Virtually everyone who attended agreed that we had a need for affordable rural housing – as long as it was only available for people who had a close association with, and a need to be resident in the Parish/village. We will hear the results from Tim Davis tonight.
- 11 - Finally, thank you all again for coming to this assembly. We really appreciate your time and, if you think you'd like to become a Parish Councillor, we do have vacancies and we'd very much welcome anyone who puts themselves forward.
- Now I'd like to hand over to Sarah Jones, our clerk, for her financial report.

#### **4. Parish Financial Report**

The clerk reported that the precept for 2018/19 is £12,842 so a very small increase of £235 from 17/18. The balance in the Parish bank account at 31/03/2018 was £20,377.15. The accounts will be audited by the internal auditor on 17th May.

To give you an idea of what the PC spends its money on:

During the year we spent some £2500 on village maintenance – grass cutting etc at the pond, the war memorial and the Digweeds site.

We are obliged to have insurance cover and this cost £540 last year, and has just been quoted, increasing to £636 this year. We anticipated an increase and adjusted the budget accordingly so this has been taken into account.

We've had several new Cllrs during the year and they – along with the existing Cllrs – needed to undertake training. This is expected to cost some £360.

The internal audit is expected to cost in the region of £200 but we won't have the £160 costs of the external audit. The rules have changed so there will be no external audit this year.

We have a small amount of money available for grants or donations and during the year we made a donation of £50 to the Basingstoke Conservation Volunteers for their help with Pond Clearance Day, they

have also provided invaluable advice. We also made a grant of £550 to Ecchinswell Village Hall towards the cost of grass cutting at the playing field. Also a donation of up to £200 has been agreed to go to the May Fayre committee for their insurance costs that the PC will cover. We have been lucky enough to have received a donation of £500 from the May Fayre Committee as mentioned by the Chairman.

We have continued to use the services of the Parish Lengthsman to carry out projects in the parish including cleaning road signs and cutting back vegetation round them, additional litter picking in areas not covered by the Litter Wardens, and work to clear blocked roadside ditches. This scheme is continuing into the current financial year; it is very beneficial to the parish, providing £1000 of labour for small, mainly Highways related, tasks like these.

Apart from the precept, we receive a grant to cover the cost of the litter wardens and a grant contributing to the cost of grass cutting in the parish. We will be applying for an extra grant on 1st June to help with the cleaning and maintenance of the war memorial. This could be up to £300 which would help cover the cleaning costs. Other income is received from allotment rental.

Unfortunately, the PCs income from BDBC is being cut for the current financial year; the Council Tax Grant has been cut reducing income by £280.

Unlike charities, the Parish Council is unable (by law) to carry out fund raising. Apart from the grants from BDBC and the small income from the allotments, the only way the PC can make money is through raising the precept. There are few opportunities for reducing expenditure, since most of what we spend money on is unavoidable expense. We must, for example, have sufficient insurance cover, we must pay for audit expenses, for the cost of meetings, and various administrative costs such as telephone, stationery and computer costs.

Overall the finances are looking healthy but there are many expenses that need to be paid out and income is limited. We have to ensure we have the funds to cope with increases in fees we need to pay and also to cover any emergency or unforeseen expenses. I hope this gives you a good overview of the Parish Council finance position.

We also need to mention GDPR – as most of you will be aware there has been changes to the laws relating to Data protection. I have emailed the residents list we have on file requesting confirmation you wish to remain on the list. No information will be shared with ANY other 3rd party. I have to have a proactive confirmation you wish to remain on the list otherwise you will be removed. Deadline is this Friday 12th May. If I don't hear from you, you will be removed from the list, however you can always email me at a later date and I can include you.

## **5. Borough Councillor's Report**

Cllr Izett advised the issues he will be reporting on this evening are planning issues, waste collection, highways, recycling and council tax. He reported that he works closely with County Cllrs Thacker and Mellor, the Parish Council and Kit Malthouse.

Planning applications – Cllr Izett advised usually the decisions of the PC are followed but occasionally this does not happen. He advised of 3 specific examples where this was not the case; ultimately all were resolved happily and sensibly in the end.

Bin collections – residents were listened to and the weekly collections maintained, not reduced to 2 weekly as was proposed. The Council are aware of residents concerns relating to the Newtown Road recycling centre. Temporary permits are in place but a longer term solution is being sought.

Potholes remain a huge issue. More money and better equipment is being used to try and help this problem.

The infrastructure fund – the Council are working with the PC and the village hall has received £29k for refurbishment. Another £40k has been received in previous years.

Overall the Borough Council's finances are sound. Council tax is not relied on as heavily in some other areas. The Council invest in commercial property which has increased revenues. HCC are looking to make budget savings but the Borough may have to step in so there won't be a reduction in services.

Housing – Borough have a responsibility to ensure planning permissions are granted, and that new houses are being built, of which 40% should be affordable. 3,500 houses are being built at Manydown, which is a

huge project and supported by Welcome Trust.

Other investment includes a signed deal with New River to re-develop the leisure park. It will however be many years before this happens, and planning permission is required.

There is a re-generation project in Basing View which will include the first new office building in 15 years.

There have recently been elections and a third of Cllrs were subject to this. Borough Cllr Graham Falconer was subject to election and has been returned. The situation in this Borough has remained the same. There is a project with the Boundary commission; there will be fewer Cllrs, from 60 at the moment to 54. Wards will have 3 members with 8000 residents per ward. This will not affect ES&BG.

The Borough has a future plan – Horizon 2050, what will the borough look like then? There is a website which offers the opportunity for residents to make their views known, Cllr Izett urges residents to complete this. The population is aging, and is growing, expected to increase from 185k to 250k within this timeframe.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Izett for his report and time in attending the AGM.

### **6. County Councillor's Report**

County Cllr Thacker advised there are some financial pressures and HCC need to make £23m in cuts.

There are budget requirements in adult services which means additional monies need to be found. Council tax has been raised to the maximum.

Any cuts will apply equally to all services. One of the main areas to suffer is highways. Kit Malthouse has helped with this issue at Government level, who have recognised the extent of the problem and that roads need to be fixed. The Government have given an extra £3m to HCC for the roads. There has been investment in the infrastructure improvements, with 2 jet patchers purchased which can fill the potholes at a quicker rate, however there is only 2 of these for the whole County.

Cllr Thacker advised the 2 biggest issues for Ecchinswell, Sydmonton and Bishops Green have been the potholes and recycling centre. The main issue with the recycling is that it is run by West Berks so HCC have no control over any decisions that are made. The permit system is on-going for the foreseeable but a permanent solution needs to be found. West Berks receive money from HCC for the permits, which they need, so it is unlikely this will stop any time soon, as it is a mutually beneficial scheme. However, Cllr Thacker will continue to look for a solution.

There is no statistical evidence that fly-tipping has increased. Residents commented when fly tipping is reported it gets cleared up very quickly, often within 24 hours.

Cllr Thacker urged residents to report potholes on the website; they then become the council's problem and so they will sort it out. The same applies to fly tipping.

Cllr Thacker advised his personal budget has increased this year which allows him to help fund community projects, so if there are any small funding projects please contact him as he may be able to assist.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Thacker for his time and attending the AGM.

### **8. Tim Davis from BDBC Housing Office Report**

This item was taken out of turn and dealt with before item 7.

Tim reported the following key findings from the Parish Housing Need Survey

Household survey:

The survey was online but there was a paper version available too. Postcard were sent to 493 households asking them to complete the survey. They were aimed at households who have members in housing need and those who may be looking to downsize.

A full report is being prepared which sets the findings in context.

**What was asked?**

A wide definition of housing need was used

The test is really households who can't afford to rent or buy on the open market.

It can include people who are struggling to afford private rents and those who are living at home.

People were asked why they felt they were in housing need?

What type of housing they were seeking and whether they wanted to own or rent?

The opportunity was given for older people who may be looking for forms of sheltered housing or need support to advise this.

Also questions were asked about those who would like or need to downsize.

People with a local connections were asked to complete the survey - residents or those who have previously lived in the Parish, have close family living here, or who work in the Parish.

They were asked how soon they might want to move, which part of the Parish they were connected to and if they had a preference for the part they would like to live.

Questions were asked about the size of home they need, their income band and if they had any savings or money they could contribute.

### **How did people respond?**

As this type of survey collects individual responses from households in housing need, moderate numbers were anticipated.

A total of 20 responses were received.

12 defined themselves as being in housing need, 4 were seeking to downsize and 4 responses were incomplete.

All of the 12 households in need had a local connection to the Parish, with the majority having a specified connection to Ecchinswell.

The majority of respondents said they would be happy to live anywhere in the Parish, followed by Ecchinswell, Sydmonton and Bishops Green.

Asked which type of affordable housing they would consider and could choose from a list, 10 responses were given for Housing Association Rented; 9 for shared-ownership, and 8 for other forms of home ownership.

10 of the 12 households had a combined income of no more than £30,000.

Of those interested in forms of affordable home ownership, 3 had no savings; 3 had savings below £1,000 and 3 had savings of between £1k and £10k.

Of households looking to downsize, all 4 respondents are current home-owners occupying either a 3 or 4 bedroomed property, who would have properties to sell to assist with the purchase of a new smaller home.

Aspect of the survey has currently raised more questions than answers, which we will need to address.

Of the 12 respondents in housing need, only 1 confirmed they were listed on the borough council's housing register. However, a total of 21 households with a local connection to the Parish are on the council's housing register. This raises questions about why so many applicants on the council's housing register did not respond to the survey, and the intention is to undertake some further work with these applicants to bottom-out the answers.

### **So what does this mean?**

There is a need to fill the gaps in the knowledge but based solely on the housing need survey itself, the following conclusions have been reached:-

- The HARAH survey supports the case for a rural affordable housing scheme serving the parish
  - It is suggested that a scheme of 8 to 10 homes would be justified, with homes for both rent and shared-ownership. Of course, these would be retained in perpetuity as affordable housing.
- HARAH have understandably added some caveats to the research, given that needs can change over time.

The next step is that the Parish Council will be sent a full set of the results and then a meeting will be arranged with Tim to discuss the results and decide on the next steps.

The Chairman thanked Tim for his time and report.

Tim left the meeting.

**7. Presentation by the Police**

PC's John Dullingham and Seb Pearce presented this report.

PC Pearce advised he was new to this area, starting only 2 weeks ago.

PC Dullingham referred to his crime report which is sent to the clerk monthly. This has been circulated to Cllrs but residents asked that going forward this be circulated to all residents on the distribution list.

**ACTION: Clerk.**

The Police advised that the Wards they cover extend from East Woodhay, the Candovers, Tadley, Chineham, a rural area of 250m squared, covered by 2 sergeants and 15 officers, so their resources are stretched.

Residents asked about the issues relating to drugs in the village, there are a number of areas which are badly affected by this problem. PC Dullingham advised residents to report directly to him, to the local police via the website or to Crimestoppers. As much information as possible provided is vital, including car registrations if they can be obtained.

The Police were thanked for their hard work, and taking the time to attend the AGM.

**9. Professor Adrian Wander – War Memorial Report**

**10. Any Other Business**

The Chairman thanked all those who had given presentations and the residents who had attended the meeting, and as no other business was raised, he invited all to join the Parish Cllrs in refreshments.

Chairman.....

Date.....