

BIDDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Biddenham Parish Council met on Wednesday 11th January 2017 in the upstairs room of the Pavilion. Present were Parish Councillors Graham Bates, Peter Chase (chairman), Jon Gambold (also a Borough Councillor), Chris Gee, Krzys Osuch, Terry Platt and Joe Warren. Councillors Alan Jacobs and Francia Slade sent their apologies. Clerk Alison Southern, Borough Councillor Roger Rigby and several members of the public were also present.

WEED KILLING

We became aware recently that weed killer was being administered in all sorts of places across the village (I mean verges etc., not private property); a number of residents complained to us about this. A member of the public raised the matter at the meeting, expressing concern that weed killer can poison the ground and has often been used far to liberally. We agree.

Investigations by both the member of the public and our clerk have established that it is the highways department who are doing this – not some mistaken vestige of the Borough people who used to do our grass-cutting – and that this department does so under a legal and safety-related obligation to prevent road signage becoming overgrown.

Nevertheless, representations will be made to ask those that apply the weed killer to do so much more carefully. If you see further examples of perfectly good grass or shrubs being scorched or exterminated by such action, please let us know.

CRICKET CLUB

The Biddenham Cricket Club is a shining example of sport organised on a voluntary basis for the good of many – especially young – people in our village.

The club has a seven-year contract with the Parish Council (as the body that runs the Pavilion) whereby we share the workload and costs of maintaining the pitch and the building. Having such a long-lasting agreement lets the club show third parties, such as Sport England (from who they sometimes get grants) that they are a long term, going concern. The current agreement expires this May, so has been reviewed by both sides over the last few weeks.

There was some concern that the club was not paying enough, given the Pavilion's running costs. A fair balance must be struck in fairness to other Pavilion users (who pay hire fees) and the tax-paying residents of Biddenham (who are ultimately liable for any losses operating the Pavilion). The meeting was able to discuss an offer made by the club to settle on a basic amount per year with a provision for inflation (something that was previously absent). The Council decided to accept the main terms of this offer, which we thought took a sensible view of what is both fair all round and affordable for the club. I'm hopeful the club themselves will agree to the final wording of the new agreement, which we look forward to operating for another seven years from May.

NEW SPORTS CENTRE

From one sports facility to another... If you're not already aware of it, the Borough is constructing (and will be in charge of operating) a new five-pitch facility set back from the new bypass. A new building for this is largely built, and can just be seen behind the lower roundabout at the west end of the Great Ouse Way. Adjacent to this facility will be the new Biddenham Country Park, running alongside the river.

We were asked by the Borough Council to consider a name for this new facility, especially to avoid possible confusion with the existing Pavilion. After quite a bit of discussion we decided to suggest the "Biddenham Country Park Sports Centre", and hope this meets with your approval (and the Borough's).



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THE TAX YOU PAY

The meeting set a budget for the coming financial year from April. The good news we have, again, held our precept at £40,000 – this being the total amount we want from residents towards the upkeep of Biddenham, and which makes up part of your Council Tax. Due to a bit of growth in the population, this should mean the portion each person has to pay will be slightly less than at present.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 8th February 2017. Do please come along if you have anything you'd like to raise.

Peter Chase