

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting for the parish of Biddenham

Wednesday 13th April 2016

Present: Parish Cllrs Peter Chase (Chairman), Krzys Osuch, Chris Gee, Terence Platt, Graham Bates, Francia Slade, Jon Gambold & Borough Cllr Roger Rigby, Alison Southern (Parish Clerk) and 19 members of the public.

1. Mins of Last Annual Parish Meeting held on 13 May 2015

It was resolved to accept the minutes of the last meeting

2. Chairman's Report

Cllr Chase provided a report on behalf of the Parish Council (copy attached to minutes).

3. Reports from local organisations

St James School

Cllr Bates provided a verbal update regarding proposed changes to St James School. As part of the Borough's proposal to move to a 2 tier education system the age range of pupils at St James will alter to include years 5 and 6. This will be take effect from September 2017 with a maximum of 30 pupils per classroom. Beds BC will be funding 1 new build class room and will be replacing the existing temporary classroom building. One of the major difficulties is not having sufficient outdoor space for the older children to access sport facilities and the school would like to use the Pavilion field. Building work will take place during 2017-18 although exact timings are still to be confirmed. Apologies from HT and Chair of Governors who are currently attending a Full Governing Body meeting.

Q – has Bedford Borough Council provided any statistics to ensure the places will be needed? Have the governors considered Academy status? The school has considered the subject of academy status but the school is not large enough to warrant this at the moment. It is unclear how the school will deal with the proposal by central government that all schools should be in an academy by 2022.

Peter Chase asked whether members of the public were supportive of the use of the pavilion field by St James School – there were no objections. Biddenham cricket club with be working in partnership with St James (running sessions with the school) so they are supportive of this idea. The school will need to put forward a formal proposal to the parish council for consideration.

Peter Marks, Chairman, Biddenham Cricket Club

Thanks to the parish council for the continued support of the cricket club. The club continues to thrive and our objective is to encourage cricket for everyone and opportunities for all. Last year we achieved the Club Mark badge which demonstrates the club's policies and safeguarding procedures are securely in place. We have 4 teams running at the moment and also an indoor cricket team and 4 junior teams. Last year the Saturday team came 3rd which is our best achievement yet. Our Sunday team was promoted last year and our under 12s also won their league. Overall we played 54 games at the pavilion of which 17 were junior matches. Thanks to David Watson who keeps the grounds so well maintained and we have received numerous compliments on the professional standard of our pitch. The juniors start playing on Monday 18th May and we currently have 4 coaches. We have boys and girls in the junior teams but our long term objective is to have our own girls team.

Peter Applewhite – Friends of Biddenham Pond

We are a voluntary group who look after the 300-year-old pond. Our membership fee remains at a very low cost of only £5.00 per household. We were delighted that the pond is included as a feature

on the Biddenham heritage trail and were especially pleased to see that the new village sign also has a picture of pond. This clearly confirms the pond is an important part of Biddenham's heritage. The Spring work morning will be held on Saturday 16 April at 10am. Volunteers have rebuilt part of the stone wall and cleared some tree stumps to encourage more wild flowers. Due to low water levels volunteers were also able to clear large amounts of weed that was more easily accessible. It is our 30th anniversary year this year and we have arranged a series of events:

25th April presentation in conjunction with the Biddenham Society, 8pm at the Church Barn

19th November - joint concert with the friends of St James's Church

This year we are delighted that all proceeds raised from the Biddenham Show will go towards the village pond.

The group have a website and a Facebook page.

Q- Have you got new members to take over? It is difficult to find new members willing to join the committee so we always looking for volunteers.

Q – Has the group given any thought to importing any wildlife to the pond? We must be cautious about this and it doesn't always work importing new species. There is a widespread problem with declining numbers of frogs but we are happy to report that the Midwife Toads are still present in good numbers.

Chris Jones – footpaths & cowslip meadow

The Coffin Path

Unfortunately, it was thought this path had protected status but it doesn't (Windmill Field had a change of use to arable and obtained permission from Defra). If anyone has any historical information to support previous use of the coffin path, please do let me know.

Q - Has the parish council pursued reinstatement of footpath? Yes, the parish council has requested the path is re-instated although what has been promised will only be approximately 1m wide – which is considerably narrower than the path prior to the ploughing. The coffin path was still clearly visible once the field had been burnt off and it is vital we ensure the footpath is afforded legal protection – possibly by obtaining support from CPRE and the Open Spaces Society. The two footpath gates (are wide) and were installed to ensure a coffin could be carried through. Q - Could the Biddenham Society investigate with CPRE to see what the legal situation is. Dr Wood replied that the Society would endeavour to assist in this matter.

Cowslip Meadow – owned by Beds BC

Chris Jones would like to form a friends of cowslip meadow group to undertake the management of the field. The field has lots of unusual flora and fauna including orchids and a wet area. Chris will put something into the Loop and is proposing to purchase a mower which could also be used to cut the churchyard extension. He has also been donated a strimmer which has now been serviced and repaired and this could also be used by village groups.

To note the year end accounts for 2015-16 for Biddenham Parish Council including the Pavilion

The accounts were noted.

To note the Annual Report from Gill Wiggs, Biddenham Village Agent (copy of report in minute file) – this is also displayed on the parish website and notice boards.

Open Session

Traffic -

A black 4 x 4 vehicle was travelling at speed and rat running through the village at least twice this week, has anyone else come across this vehicle? No-one else had but the traffic situation will be monitored very closely by the Borough and members of the Parish Council when the new bypass opens.

St James's Way – please ensure this is the name used for the new development main road.

One resident wished to thank all the members of the PC and all the organisations within Biddenham for making it such a wonderful parish to live in.

Meeting closed at 8pm.

Signed:..... Chairman, Biddenham Parish Council

May 2017