

2020 - 7

Minutes of the Biddenham Parish Council Meeting
held on Wednesday 8th July 2020 starting at 7.30pm.

In line with emergency Coronavirus Government legislation, the Parish Council will not be holding face-to-face meetings for the foreseeable future therefore this meeting was held by Zoom Conference facility.

Present: Cllrs P Chase – Chairman, G Bates, S Briggs, C Gee, H Fowler,
 A Jacobs, K Osuch, J Warren and Mrs Lyn Lyman (Clerk).

In addition, there were 13 members of the public.

In attendance: Borough Cllrs J Gambold, R Rigby & J Weir.

140. **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Cllr F Slade.

141: **Declaration of Interests:**

Cllr Osuch declared an interest in item 145 – planning (revised application for dwelling at rear of 118 Bromham Road).

142: **The minutes** of the meeting held on 10th June 2020 were approved and will be signed by The Chairman when normal face to face meetings begin again.

143: **Public open session:** Cllr J. Gambold, speaking on behalf of Mr P. Culverwell, informed the meeting that:

- The St. Georges flag which had been ordered had not yet arrived. The Clerk confirmed that it has now been re-ordered and paid for.
- That the sundial base had not been weeded and repaired – a job that Garry Creek was to have completed.
- That a “footpath” sign had been removed in Vicars Close & that he (Jon) would chase to have it replaced.
- Furthermore, the application for a replacement mower for use by the cricket club had been sorted. A new mower costs in the region of £30k, but a used model had been found at a cost of £10k of which £5k would come from a Rural fund. Cllr Chase reminded the meeting that for such an amount, the Parish Council required three quotes. Cllr Gambold replied that as the mower was a used model, no quotes were required. Cllr Briggs volunteered to complete the relevant form for this purchase. Cllr Jacobs asked if there was any opportunity to part-exchange the old mower. Cllr Gambold replied by saying that there was no value in the old mower.

Mr Bryan Gasper, the Biddenham Speed Watch co-ordinator, informed the meeting that Speed Watch was allowed to start up again after 1st August and that the age restriction of 70 had been removed. The target areas are Bromham Rd, by the river bridge and he hoped that he could get authority from Bedfordshire Police to target the Bromham Road between Biddenham Turn & Deep Spinney.

The golf club in Gt. Denham is not having its lease renewed by the landowners – Wingfield. Borough Cllr Weir informed the meeting that the club was due to close on 16th October 2020. The landowners, through their agents Bidwells, are looking to redefine the land as “of no defined use”. Cllr Weir has asked for a full debate regarding this amenity at the next full Borough Council meeting. A letter had been sent to Bidwell’s regarding keeping the club open, saving a green space and stopping urban sprawl. He believed that when the Gt. Denham development took place, the development had to have a golf course and that it had to remain there until 2029. Some members of the public were in favour of a petition against the club’s closure, whilst others thought it would not have any effect. Cllr

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Weir continued stating that under Policy 99 the loss of such a club required it to be relocated nearby, or shown to be surplus to requirements, but that no such consideration has been made and that he was seeking the opinion of Sport England. It was suggested that an outline petition be put onto the notice boards to make residents aware of this situation. Cllr Weir replied that he had set up an online petition (advertised via a "Facebook" page) which has had 2,500 electronic signatories. A question was asked if The Biddenham Society had been contacted over this matter. It was replied that they were considering their reply & how to react. A further question was asked as to if there is an obligation on the developer to provide alternative amenities, but does not, who makes contact. Cllr Gambold replied that it would be the Borough Council that will respond.

144: **Coronavirus measures update:** Cllr Chase asked if the current measures be continued to be circulated in the village magazine – The Loop. Cllr Gambold explained that the Borough Council had circulated a document explaining that the problems in Bedford are concentrated in the hospital as patients are brought to Bedford Hospital from outside the Borough e.g. Central Beds and the care homes, of which there are some 170 in Bedford. All this accounts for why Bedford is so high in the ratings.

Cllr Chase informed the meeting that hirers of The Pavilion were reluctant to return at this stage, which could be due to the approaching summer holidays. Therefore the Pavilion remains closed with no revenue. However, although the hospital is currently shut, thus not using the car park, the gates are periodically opened.

145: **To Consider Planning:** The various planning applications were discussed, but Cllr Bates pointed out there were no significant changes in any application. Cllr Rigby informed the meeting that he had seen a revised application for No: 32 Biddenham Turn, for a change of a window & that a neighbour had objected, but that the glass was then changed to opaque glass which sufficed. Cllr Fowler stated that the revised plan for 42, Lavender Lodge showed a larger garage, but in the scheme of things it was not an issue. Cllr Bates suggested putting in some landscaping to soften the sight for the neighbours.

146: **To Agree Financial Matters:**

(i) Income & expenditures were discussed and approved. Cllr Chase advised the meeting that The Parish had received a grant of £10k from Bedford Borough Council (in line with the Government directive) for financial hardship due to Coronavirus and that it had been included in the Precept section. That there had been no income from The Pavilion in the last month.

(ii) Cllr Fowler asked if there was any income from the cricket club. Cllr Chase replied that the cricket club paid when they had matches, but not when they practice. Our earlier decision was that, should matches take place, fees should be pro-rata. It was decided to leave a review of this decision to another meeting. Cllr Gee asked what could be done to prevent further expenses being incurred at the Pavilion when no income was forthcoming and suggested that only emergency work should be carried out. Cllr Chase replied that there were areas that needed refurbishment in order to be able to open The Pavilion in the future. He stated that any work was capped to £500 and that work for over £500 required quotes.

(iii) The Parish Clerk informed the meeting that the AGAR for the external audit had been partly completed. Cllr Chase suggested that he & Cllr Osuch would complete the form, then it would need to be internally audited, before its submission to Mazars.

147: **To Accept reports:**

(i) Clerks report. The Clerk had nothing to report.

(ii) **Borough Councillors reports:** Cllr Rigby reported that he was chasing Mr Andy Prigmore at Borough regarding the proposed 20mph speed limit over the river bridge. Mr Prigmore had promised that it would be installed by the end of September, and that an illuminated sign would be on the Biddenham side of the bridge. Cllr Rigby, then explained that there was discussion as to the possible closure of the bridge to cars, allowing only cyclists & pedestrians to use it. He thought that it was unlikely that the



bridge would be closed off to vehicles. Cllr Rigby next informed the meeting that the Great Denham Village Medical Centre, which many Biddenham residents use, had received a very negative CQC report and needs to make significant improvements. This report is publicly available. He had had a meeting with the owners of the centre to discuss the required improvements and stated that, unless these were made, the centre could indeed be closed. Cllr Rigby informed the meeting that Bedford Borough Council had received a grant of £1m for town centre improvements and that this grant needed to be spent by the end of the financial year.

148: Matters in Progress: Cllr Chase informed the meeting that there had been no progress regarding changing the speed limit along Bromham Road. The Parish Clerk informed the meeting that there had been no response to her letters to the development companies regarding supply of suitable site (to include electric power) for the Christmas tree in the St. Mary's housing estate and that there was no response from Borough regarding the proposed "Welcome to Biddenham" road signs. The Clerk also informed the meeting regarding the request for the new dog bins situation. Where rural bins are emptied bi-weekly, the bins in Biddenham are emptied weekly and that there would be no increase made to this. The areas where extra bins are needed is being monitored over the next 6-8 weeks.

Cllr Chase stated that the job description for the employment of a new Parish Clerk was almost agreed between himself & Cllr's Gee & Briggs. When agreed, appeals for candidates would be put onto the village notice boards, on the village web site, WhatsApp and BATPC for candidates to come forward.

149: Parish Concerns:

Cllr Gee was concerned that "Tommy" is fluttering in the wind and being bent. Cllr Gambold informed Cllr Gee that the statue had been re-positioned so that it was more stable. He also suggested that the statue be kept in position right through and beyond Remembrance Sunday and not just till "VJ" day as previously decided.

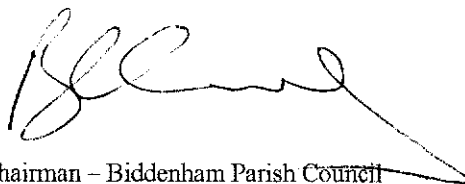
Cllr Bates asked if a sign could be erected on the by-pass at the point the footpath from the Church meets the road, informing drivers that pedestrians are crossing the road. Cllr Chase thought that as the road had been now open for quite some time, that he saw no justification in having such a sign. Cllr Bates has asked Borough to clean the graffiti under the A428 bridge in the country park.

150: Date of next meeting:

Councillors were split on whether a meeting was needed in August when normally no meeting is held. Some suggested that only an emergency meeting should be held – if necessary. Cllr Gambold suggested that a meeting be scheduled with the golf course as the sole topic for discussion. If there was no point in holding a meeting it could be cancelled.

It was therefore agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting at 7.30pm on Weds 12th August, and to hold the next normal meeting on 9th September 2020 starting at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 21.30.



Chairman – Biddenham Parish Council