

Biddenham Parish Council – Chairman’s Annual Report

Good evening to all and welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting.

This is my second report as Chair of Biddenham Parish Council. It has been a great honour to preside as Chair.

Parish Councils are a third tier of local government and as such I believe we are closest to our community. We always try to ensure our decisions are the right ones, on balance, for our community. I believe the Parish Council has been an effective voice for residents. We listen and pay attention to the needs of our community and seek to add our voice to help to resolve problems. This may, on occasion, appear to be non-action and progression may, at times, prove to be slow. Usually this is because the resolution of the problem lies with a third party – commonly this is the Borough Council.

Reflecting on the year past has recorded some significant events. The War between Russia and Ukraine was prominent in our minds in 2022/23 and we recognised this by flying the Ukrainian flag as a show of support, notwithstanding the appalling behaviour of an unnamed parishioner(s) to steal the flag, which was quickly replaced by the Council.

It was with great sadness Biddenham Parish Council heard of the demise of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 8th September 2022; the Council and its parishioners were united in their grief.

The Parish Council was also truly grieved to hear of the loss of Parish Councillor Graham Bates. We lost a much-valued member of our Council and have planted a tree in Kings Corner to recognise his service to the Parish.

In looking back the Parish has been actively involved in working to resolve issues raised with it by our residents. These include

- Traffic problems with the Gold Lane development during the last year.
- Enduring a summer of disruption as the new roundabout on Bromham Road was built; with the Parish receiving many reports of excessive speeding on Main Road and Biddenham Turn, large vehicles ignoring the diversion routes, the inadequacy of the signing erected and the increased rat running through the village. We successfully persuaded the police to attend and do multiple speed checks during the roadworks period.
- A further 27 trees were planted following consultation with residents in addition to the 40 trees planted last year as part of Trees for Streets initiative.
- 20mph speed limit in Deep Spinney was introduced by the Borough Council following pressure from the Parish Council.
- Grants of nearly £3,000 were made to local Groups and organisations.
- A further speed indicator device was purchased and installed in Gold Lane.

- Improvements were made to the to the Pavilion with new CCTV provided, upgrades to the heating, a new commercial oven installed, an induction loop provided and a new website with online booking system introduced.
- Money has been put aside to develop further the Biddenham Heritage trail.

Another significant piece of work by the Parish has been the development of a policy for allocating the additional funding coming to the Parish (via the Community Infrastructure Levy as a result of new developments in the Parish). The additional funds are a significant sum in terms of the Parish budget and it is important we spend it on projects that benefit the community. This remains a work in progress and will feature in this coming year's deliberations!

As this is the last Annual meeting before the local elections, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow councillors for all their efforts during their term of office. I also want to recognise the work and support provided to the Parish Council by David Brough, Parish Clerk, who has ensured all the aspects of running the Council were completed accurately, on time and despite many pressures maintained a professional and cheerful outlook to all. Thanks also go to Deborah Slade and her team who look after all the facilities at the Pavilion.

The next municipal year will see several Councillors stepping down and it would be remiss of me not to personally thank Krzys Osuch, Karen Cotton and Irina Madan-Sau for their input, help and attendance! I hope they all got as much from being involved as we did from their involvement.

Finally, as we move to a one Councillor Ward it is only right to thank our Councillors, Roger Rigby and Jon Gambold, for their support over the year. Roger Rigby is leaving the area so a particular thank you to him for his sterling support over many years. His effectiveness at getting things done by the Borough will be missed.

Thank you

Stewart Briggs
April 2023