



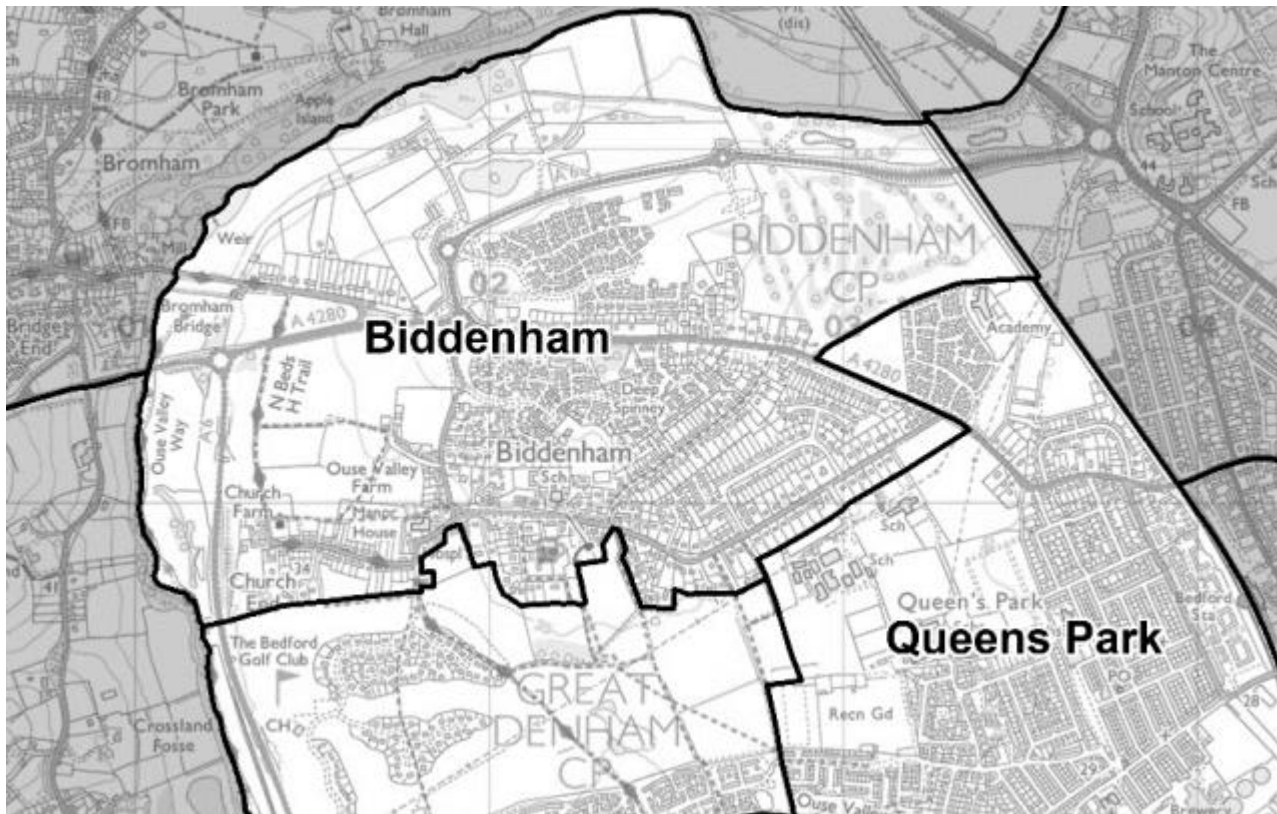
BIDDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The **Parish Council** met on Tuesday 16th May 2023 at the Pavilion. Present at the meeting were Parish Councillors Peter Chase, Chris Gee, and Francia Slade, the Clerk, David Brough, and myself. Apologies were received from Harry Fowler. Jon Gambold, our Borough Councillor, was also present.

This meeting was our first Annual meeting following the elections and the creation of the new Biddenham Ward. The new single Councillor Ward was created following a boundary review by the Electoral Commission who stated there were 1,869 electorate in 2019 and this was expected to increase to 2,935 by 2026. As a result, they determined Biddenham should a separate Ward and be represented by a single Borough Councillor. Following the elections Jon Gambold (Conservative) was elected.

The new Ward is shown in the diagram below.



At this Parish meeting Councillors elect a Chairman for the year and appoint representatives for the various Committees the Parish operates. I was pleased to be appointed Chairman for 2023/24 municipal year although to be fair, my colleagues seemed relieved to have a willing volunteer. I am also pleased to report Peter Chase was elected in the role of Vice-Chair. Two members of the public were co-opted: Aaron Melvin and Karen Cotton. However, as Karen is relocating very shortly the appointment was only for this meeting. This leaves the Parish Council light on numbers so we are actively looking for local residents who have an interest in their village to come forward and help us on the Parish council. Please see the bigger advert in this edition of the Loop which has been distributed to all properties within our Parish.

At this meeting the Council approved the end-of-year accounts for 2022/23 and the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) which demonstrates that the Council governs itself well and provides assurance that the financial management is robust and follows good practice.

The budget for the Parish Council is not large at just under £56,000 (we are one of the lowest precepts of the 47 parishes in the Borough). From this budget we need to allocate sums to meet our daily running costs – staffing, utilities, insurance etc. It leaves a small sum available from our revenue account to deal with ad hoc issues and small grant requests.

We do have a large (for the Parish) capital sum as a result of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts and we have a plan for using it over the next few years. As we look to commit to projects, I will keep residents updated via this report.

A key role for us is to be the voice of our community so we encourage local groups and residents to contact us if they need support as we may be able to either directly help them or if not use our voice to try and persuade others to assist.

Two items that were considered related to structural damage to 'Tommy', our World War memorial and the appalling vandalism to our flag pole. For those that do not know 'Tommy' depicts the outline of a soldier. He is a metal construction but has suffered from damage probably due to wind resulting in repairs being needed to strengthen him. Rather than repair, the Parish Council has chosen to replace him with a handmade replica constructed using heavy gauge steel. While initially costing more than the original repair, the 'new' Tommy will be much more robust and should be much more resilient to wear and tear. You could term it an invest to save. The good news is that 20% of the cost of the work is donated by the local craftsman to the Poppy Appeal.



I think it was fair to say my fellow colleagues were disgusted at the deliberate and contumacious vandalism to the flagpole. It appears the base was hacksawed halfway through and then the pole pulled down and the Ukrainian Flag stolen. Whoever did this may think they have stopped the Parish Council showing its support for Ukraine. However, their mumpsimus actions have just made us more determined to continue. The Parish Council has agreed to replace the flagpole with a more robust unit which will be set on concrete away from the memorial plinth and protected with a secondary surround.

It is great to see the new Speed Indication Device (SID) installed and working in Gold Lane. Let's hope it moderates driving speeds. At this meeting Councillors also agreed to request for a standalone pole to be installed on Biddenham Turn so that the SID on that road can be converted to solar power and save the need for the constant replacing of the batteries in the existing unit.

Finally, if you are not aware the Borough Council provides an annual bulky waste service. It will be in Biddenham at the Pavilion on 3 June between 13:00 and 16:00. This is a great opportunity to clear out your unwanted items so please do make use of the service.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday 20th June 2023 at 7.30pm** at the Pavilion in Deep Spinney and all are welcome.

Stewart Briggs

Chair – Biddenham Parish Council