



BIDDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The **Parish Council** met on Tuesday 19th September, our first meeting after the summer break. Present at the meeting were Parish Councillors Peter Chase, Caroline Cross, Harry Fowler, Chris Gee, Aaron Melvin, Simi Otukoya, Francia Slade and Laura Simmonds. Also present were the Clerk, David Brough and myself and Borough councillor Jon Gambold.

One of the key topics was to review proposals for upgrading the play area adjacent to the Pavilion. The Parish is in the fortunate position of being able to use some of the funding it received from the housing development at Gold Lane. Refurbishing the play area was one of the suggestions put forward for the use of CIL and it is great to see it move from an idea to a proposed scheme. It was helpful that some of our newer Parish Councillors have children as they were able to input much more knowledgeable than say, myself, who last used a play area as a parent decades ago! The plans for the new play area include monkey bars, swings, tubes and springs, a wheelchair accessible roundabout and other exciting play elements for children. It all sounds and looks amazing and I think we are very fortunate to be able to undertake the upgrade. Let's hope it gives much pleasure to our younger residents. If you want to see more details, please look on our website.

Still on the Pavilion area, we discussed a complaint from a local resident about the impact the greater use of the field has had on their quality of life. It is important that we are a 'good neighbour' and listen to residents when activities we influence have impact on them. Councillors agreed we needed to fully understand the problem before we consider our next steps and therefore agreed to review it again after some further investigation while the field was being used.

While most of the issues we consider are fairly local to the Parish one larger matter we considered was the likely impact of East West Rail. While my intention is not to debate the merits of this national scheme, if the East West Rail company's preferred route 'Option E' is progressed it will impact Biddenham residents as there will be the replacement and extension of existing bridges coupled with the remodelling/replacement of Bedford Midland Station. Both will lead to traffic disruption for an extended period. Additionally, more trains (both passenger and freight) will be routed through the urban area of Bedford. The issues arising from these impacts were considered and debated by Councillors. The outlet for us to voice our concerns and express our views is unclear and we resolved to make contact with our local MP, Richard Fuller, and the Borough Council to hear their take on the project and receive their advice on how best to effectively engage.

Once again, we were able to support the local conservation group with a grant to purchase some tools and a shed to store them. This group does a great job improving and sustaining important parts of our local environment and if you have any locations you think could benefit from their attention let us know.



Staying on the topic of restoration I was pleased to see the restoration of the 1934 marker post on Bromham Road. I am told there are only two more left - Clapham & Cardington. It's important to preserve our heritage and I am grateful the Parish Council could step in and undertake the work which the Borough Council had rated as a low priority (effectively consigning it to the back burner). The pictures show the before and after.



At this meeting we resolved, for the first time, to adopt a 'Freedom of the Parish' policy. This enables the Parish to select and appoint Honorary Freeman and Freewomen for Biddenham Parish. Granting the Freedom is the highest honour that Biddenham Parish Council can bestow. Although it carries no privileges, those who receive the honour are able to use the title of Freeman or Freewoman. The driver behind this was a proposal from Cllr Fowler that we should recognise the distinguished service that former Councillor Roger Rigby had provided to the Parish, championing issues for us, influencing the Borough Council's thinking and representing our residents tirelessly and with passion.

At a separate meeting following our normal Parish meeting we resolved to grant the honour of Freeman of Biddenham Parish to him. We hope he will accept the honour and if so, details on the ceremony will be shared in a later post.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday 10th October 2023** at **7.30pm** at the **St James Barn, Church End** and all are welcome. **Please note the change in date and venue.**

Stewart Briggs

Chair – Biddenham Parish Council