The most recent **Parish Council Meeting** was held on Wednesday 14th September 2020 using the Zoom conferencing facility. Present were Parish Councillors Graham Bates, Peter Chase (Chairman), Harry Fowler, Chris Gee, Alan Jacobs, Francia Slade and Joe Warren. Apologies were received from Councillors Stewart Briggs, Krys Osuch and Borough Councillor Roger Rigby. Borough Councillor Jon Gambold, Clerk Karen Cotton and two members of the public were also present.

PARKING HELL

As a Parish Council we are acutely aware of occasional parking difficulties in Deep Spinney caused by people coming to the Pavilion. We were, indeed, aware of the chronic situation that developed on Saturday 10th October. A member of the public raised the matter, which we all agreed is a problem that needs dealing with.

The Pavilion is a community asset, of course, and we want it to be used to promote healthy pursuits such as sport on the field. When the very successful Oakley Football Club approached us in search of an overflow ground to complement their own (in Oakley) we cautiously said yes. For much of their time, their practice sessions do not generate any significant parking problems. But when matches are played, the away time players add a lot more vehicles into the mix. The results are not good.

The problem is made worse by the current Covid situation, as no-one can car share. The Pavilion car park is also still being used by Manor Hospital staff (who pay us for the privilege), although that is stopping soon.

Our Pavilion Manager already talks regularly to the football organisers, and they in turn try to get people to park considerately. This does not always seem to work. These same organisers are now, we understand, in discussion with the Three Tuns pub to use their car park on Saturday mornings, which I’m sure would be a big help on days like 10th. We can only hope their talks bear fruit.

REMEMBRANCE DAY, SUNDAY 8th NOVEMBER

I, for one, am gutted about the national advice being given out that people should NOT attend Remembrance Day services in their local communities. Covid is a global disaster, and this just adds insult to injury. As a Parish Council, it falls to us to organise things each year, and our Clerk reported at our meeting that she has been busy doing so.

However, Borough won’t let us shut the road to traffic this year, as that would apparently encourage attendance, and national guidelines also say we cannot have a bugler for fear that spittle from their instrument may cause the spread of the virus. Really?

Suffice to say I anticipate people will make their own minds up about the advice being given out; there is little we, as the organising Parish Council, can do to influence people who feel strongly about commemorating our war heroes. And who can criticise them for that?

We are therefore keeping the officiating party who are giving the service to as small a group as possible: the Reverend Lomax from St James who will officiate, two wreath layers and someone to lower and raise the flag. A local resident has also offered to stream the ceremony using Zoom, so will attend with microphone, camera and Internet gizmology to make all that happen. We are extraordinarily grateful for the offer they have made of their services.

Two other Parish Council members will attend to ensure that social distancing rules are observed. If you are thinking of coming, do please bear in mind the advice being given. If you still decide to attend, please behave responsibly. To be honest, at the distance you may have to stand from the Reverend Lomax, you may well be better off following things via an iPad in the comfort of your own home.

GOLF COURSE RIP

The Great Denham golf course closed its doors on Friday 16th as a result of the landowner’s refusal to negotiate renewal of their lease. Since our last meeting, I was able to update Councillors that we, alongside Councillors from Great Denham PC, had met twice with Bidwells, the landowner’s agent, and once with Bedford Borough Council.

The Bidwells meetings were useful in understanding that the owner’s concern is to diversify their income off the land. The clubhouse is now being offered to a nursery operator, and the greenkeeper’s compound is likewise set to be offered up for let. The land is apparently to be used for sheep grazing and hay production, and a contract farmer is lined up so to do from the new year. The sheep, should you be concerned about invasions of your back garden, are to be contained by electric fencing. We will see how well we all get on with that…

The second meeting with Bidwells focussed on security of the land. Again, we are sceptical that enough is being done, and it may not be until something bad happens that it is taken seriously. If that involves the Clubhouse, an asset the landowner is keen to exploit, then I’m sure they will step things up. If travellers come visiting on the wider land, we can only hope they are booted off quickly. Any problems should be reported to the clerk of either Parish (see websites for details) who will engage directly with Bidwells at any time of the day or night.

The Borough meeting was with the Mayor and Head of Planning. I was heartened at the time they devoted to the subject, indicting their own concern for what happens to the land. Borough Hall works in mysterious ways, its wonders to perform, and our conversation was helpful in anticipating how things may develop.

OUR NEXT MEETING – **IMPORTANT INFO**

The Parish Council meets every second Wednesday of most months. We very much welcome hearing from residents, there being a public “open session” near the start for anyone wanting to say something. Please call in and let us know anything concerning you about our village, or just listen. The date for the next full meeting is **Wednesday 11th November** at **7.30pm**.

To participate, please use a computer or tablet by accessing the Internet and carefully entering **https://zoom.us/j/524544164**

Alternatively, use a phone to ring **0208 080 6592** and then use its keypad to enter the code **524 544 164** followed by the **#** key. Calls are national rate, I’m afraid.

This information is provided on the village website at biddenham.org.uk.

Peter Chase
Chairman