



BIDDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

The most recent **Parish Council Meeting** was held on Tuesday 16th February 2021 using the Zoom conferencing facility. Present were Parish Councillors Graham Bates, Stewart Briggs, Peter Chase (Chairman), Harry Fowler, Chris Gee, Alan Jacobs, Krys Osuch, Francia Slade and Joe Warren. Borough Councillor Roger Rigby, outgoing Clerk Karen Cotton, incoming Clerk David Brough and several members of the public were also present.

KINGSFIELD SPORTS CENTRE

After several false starts, the Kingsfield Sports Centre, accessed from the Great Ouse Way roundabout down the hill from Deep Spinney, has been leased. The new tenants are the youth section of Bedford Town Football Club, who have no less than 18 teams of kids ranging from the ages of 8 to 18. It is amazing that we now have the developing talent of Bedford Football Club amongst us, and I hope you'll join me in welcoming them to our community.

Dennis O'Meara, youth development chairman, attended our meeting and explained how the organisation will operate. Dennis is placing information on our website, Facebook and in this august publication, so I will not steal his thunder. Our only advice was not to call the sports centre a Pavilion (as we have one already, and two would be confusing) and to provide as much information as possible so we can all support him and "BTFC-YD" in any way we can.

HOUSES WEST OF GOLD LANE

Also attending our meeting were Chloe French of Bidwells and Amy Atkins of Dandara. Bidwells are the land agent for the site off Gold Lane where diggers with very large buckets are now exploring the archaeology of the site. Having watch the excellent film "The Dig" the other day, in which teeny-tiny trowels scrape away to reveal the treasures of Sutton Hoo, I am mystified how such "heavy plant" can do the work of hunting for buried artefacts. But we are assured that this is all that's going on at the moment – and for several months more. Indeed, they have apparently unearthed some interesting relics. The Bedford Historical Society are working with them.

Dandara are the house builder. They have recently submitted their plans for the layout of the site, mainly a first phase of 119 houses. Amy and Chloe were rather taken to task by yours truly, and others, about the incredibly stupid idea of making access to the new estate be situated off Gold Lane, within a stone's throw of its junction with Deep Spinney. We have bitterly opposed this idea ever since it was first mooted. Rather than use Deep Spinney instead – a wide, open road with a less historic hedgerow – the idea of using Gold Lane seems unsafe and a likely traffic nightmare. I think we said our piece, and I have no idea if we will have any effect. Only the developer can choose to change this though, and the time is really "officially" past when this could be altered. But in the face of such nonsense, we will not shut up!

More amicable discourse took place in relation to the treatment of the field immediately north of the village pond. Chris Hayden Jones, who is acting chair of the pond committee, thanked Dandara and Bidwells for the ecological survey work and drainage treatments proposed, which are mainly down to a well-respected Bedford company called the Landscape Partnership. We appealed for more dialogue directly with Chris and his associates going forward, which I am confident will happen.

A resident of Duck End Lane made some good points about how cars are, already, regularly parking in the lane to access the field off it, now that those north of the lane are off limits due to the works. This is chewing up the verges, creating disturbance and, given dogs that are being allowed to roam, will potentially suppress natural wildlife in the field in question. We are going to write to Bedford Borough Council to ask them to consider making Duck End Lane "access only" for traffic. We don't mind pedestrian access, but the lane cannot become a de facto car park.

If you're keen to comment on the plans under consultation, please use the Borough's planning website to search for application 21/00236/MAR.

OUR CLERK

We are very grateful to Mrs Karen Cotton who, last August, agreed to become Parish Clerk. Since starting in September she has worked very hard on a number of issues, including our audit, re-opening the kids play area at the Pavilion, sorting out numerous jobs around the village such as de-weeding the sundial and de-mossing the war memorial, coordinating the rather abnormal Remembrance Sunday ceremony in November and organising the Christmas tree.

Very sadly, for a combination of reasons, Karen has felt she can't carry on in the role. We are really sorry to see her go, and so grateful for the amazing energy and organisation she has brought. She finishes just before the next meeting, so this one was her last. We wish her all the best for the future and know she will continue to take an active interest in the Parish Council's work.

In her place, we are delighted to welcome Mr David Brough. David was pipped at the post last August by Karen, having impressed us equally at interview. David is a resident of Harrold; he is their Parish Clerk and also that of Melchbourne & Yelden. This was David's first meeting, having started on 1st Feb, and he has clearly already got his head around a lot of ways in which we work. We very much look forward to working with him going forward.

MEETING DATES

As a result of David's appointment, we are having to change the dates on which we meet. Unfortunately, Harrold PC also meets on the second Wednesday of the month – our normal date. I have joked several times (and I think it's wearing a bit thin) that Harrold should move their date so we can keep ours. Unsurprisingly, I have been ignored. So, we have elected to meet in future on the third Tuesday of each month.

The meeting *after* next will be the Annual Parish Meeting, to be held on Tuesday 20th April. This is customarily a larger meeting at which leaders of our many community groups have a chance to say a few words about their activities. It will still be held using Zoom, and if anyone would like to be included, could they please contact me or David (email clerk@biddenham.org.uk).

OUR NEXT MEETING – **IMPORTANT, CHANGED INFO**

Please consult the biddenham.org.uk website for agenda and details of each meeting. The next one will be on Tuesday, 16th March at 7.30pm. 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.

To participate, please use a computer or tablet by accessing the Internet and carefully entering <https://zoom.us/j/6877285966> (NB this is a new meeting number).

Alternatively, use a phone to ring **0208 080 6592** and then use its keypad to enter the code **687 728 5966** followed by the # key. Calls are national rate, I'm afraid.

Peter Chase
Chairman