



# BIDDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## FREEDOM OF THE PARISH



Regular readers of my column (there must be some other than my wife) will remember the Parish Council resolved to award Freedom of the Parish to former Councillor Roger Rigby. I am pleased to report that on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February we held a small presentation for Roger in the Village Hall. It was attended by several close relatives and invited residents from the Parish with whom Roger had regularly been involved. The event seemed to go well and Roger was very

touched to receive the award, and I did enjoy the sandwiches and cakes!



## PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The **Parish Council** met on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February. Present at the meeting were Parish Councillors Peter Chase, Caroline Cross, Chris Gee, Harry Fowler, Simi Otukoya and Laura Simmonds. Apologies were received from Francia Slade. Also present were the Clerk, David Brough, and myself.

Following the resignation of one of our Councillors we advertised the vacancy and it was great to receive two expressions of interest. It was clear from the personal statements both candidates would be an asset but we only had the one vacancy. After some deliberation we decided to coopt Helen Humphreys. It was great that Helen then joined us for the rest of the meeting.

The public session raised some familiar issues. The problem of all day parking along Main Road (towards Church end) continues to frustrate residents. Presently there are no restrictions in the road to prevent this happening. After discussions we concluded the only effective option to manage the problem would be to introduce some form of traffic regulation. This brings with it new road markings and possibly additional street signage. It is not clear whether there would be an appetite if we were to suggest this solution. If the level of complaints rises and continues then this might be the route that we explore and ask the Borough Council to consult on.

Also, during this part of the agenda, we heard from a representative of Healthwatch Bedford. In summary this organisation seeks to provide a voice on behalf of the community to speak up about health and social care issues affecting them with the providers of these services. We will put up some information in the Parish noticeboards and more information can be found at <https://www.healthwatchbedfordborough.co.uk>.

Turning our discussions to the Pavilion, Councillors considered a draft maintenance plan for the facility. As it is now over 30 years old and starting to show its age (I can relate to this!) it is clear an update of some elements is needed. Two projects that were agreed were to refresh and remodel the entrance lobby and to clear and reconfigure the (currently closed off) bar area, filling in the service hatch and making this area a useable space.

Now it wouldn't be a Parish council meeting without a discussion on speeding and rat running by motorists. The difference here was the concern had come from the St Mary's development. As with all issues we need to validate what is happening before we approach the Borough Council to consider solutions. The complication here is that the roads within the development have not yet been adopted by the Borough Council from the Developer – this is in progress. So anything we may want to consider requires the Developer's agreement/permission. We will therefore need to explore this more over the coming months.

Later during the meeting, it was encouraging to discuss, as part of a live request, how the Parish Council could help support the start-up of a new local community group. We recognise our role is to support new ideas that build community cohesion and (where we consider these meritorious) we will try to help. Sometimes this might be financially with some modest seed funding or as a benefit in kind such as allowing the use of the Pavilion for an initial event. Such assistance will be limited in scale and would only be provided on the clear understanding that any new group becomes self-sustaining both financially and operationally.



In previous reports you may remember the Parish Council had agreed to fund some additional tree planting along Biddenham Turn. Our cunning plan was to have some of the wooden bollards removed and replaced with trees, thereby improving the street scene. The good news is the Borough Council has planted the trees. The bad news is they forgot to take out the bollards first and planted the trees between them. So, the final result is not quite how we had imagined it! We will liaise with the Borough Council to discuss what might be done.

Finally, here is some advance notice that **from April** our meeting will move to the first Tuesday of the month (changing from the current second Tuesday of each month). So, if you couldn't attend our meetings due to diary clashes, here's an opportunity to put that right and come and take part in our discussions. I look forward to seeing some new faces.

#### DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7.30pm** at the **St James's Barn, Church End** and all are welcome.

Stewart Briggs

Chair – Biddenham Parish Council