



BIDDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The **Parish Council** met on Tuesday 12th March 2024. Present at the meeting were Parish Councillors Peter Chase, Caroline Cross, Chris Gee, Harry Fowler, Helen Humphreys, Simi Otukoya and Laura Simmonds. Apologies were received from Francia Slade. Also present were the Clerk, David Brough, and myself.

The March meeting included again many highways related matters with speeding and parking continuing to be leitmotifs permeating the discussions of the Parish. Of particular focus was the petition that had been submitted to Bedford Borough's Full Council meeting on 28 February by Miss C Guri, a young resident in the Parish. She had collected a petition of 56 signatures requesting the Council to consider introducing a 20-mph speed limit and the installation of average speed cameras within the village of Biddenham. As the petition was over 30 signatures under the Borough Council rules it has to be debated at the next Full Council meeting which will be held on 20 March 2024. Some of you may remember that the Parish had consulted residents on their views regarding 20mph speed limits in the Parish several years ago. The outcome was strong support for control of speeding in the Parish and this resulted in the Borough Council implementing a 20mph zone in the streets off Deep Spinney. For clarity, and restated after a thorough discussion by Councillors, the Parish Council's position remains that it supports measures that control speeding in the Parish and this includes the use of 20mph speed limits and average speed cameras. This view will be reported to Bedford Borough's Full Council.

As an aside, the Department for Transport revised its Circular 01/2013 (Setting local speed limits) on **17 March 2024**. This Guidance states Councils should only *"introduce 20mph limits and zones, in the right places, over time and with local support in urban areas and built-up village streets that are primarily residential...[and] ensure any such measures are targeted and not introduced as a blanket measure."* The Parish will follow how this updated guidance impacts any decision the Borough Council makes in response to the petition and our expressed view.

At the last meeting we had discussed the speeding in Biddenham Turn and debated the pros and cons of speed tables to control speeding versus average speed cameras. Our conclusion was the only effective measure would be to have average speed cameras installed and the Clerk reported that in principle the Borough Council agreed with this approach, provided the Parish Council met the capital and revenue costs. We are in the fortunate position to have the funding available, mainly through CIL receipts.

In line with our CIL policy for allocating funding to projects average speed cameras in Biddenham Turn scored positively. In light of this the Parish resolved to ask the Borough to proceed with the scheme. The only blemish is the Borough Council appear to be seeking to secure additional funding from us to undertake the preparatory design work for the scheme despite this element not being mentioned as part of their average speed camera policy. Our assumption was this was included as part of the process. As their staff costs are already covered, I can only assume they are employing a third party to prepare the scheme design or they are paying staff overtime to do the work. This hopefully means the project will progress quickly. If this isn't the case then I'm not sure what the charge is for. We will seek some clarification.

Another decision made was to relocate the speed indication device (SID) on Gold Lane to St James Way. Following residents raising local speeding concerns the Parish approached the Developer who agreed to posts being installed to allow the SID to be mounted. So, sometime in the not-too-distant future I hope the unit should be up and running and helping to ameliorate the issues being caused.

Finally, not speeding related you'll be pleased to note, we discussed some snagging issues with the newly installed play area. Overall, I think this has been a great update and judging from the use it's having this is a view shared by many in the parish. This is, I believe, a great use of the CIL funding. Based on feedback from users we did agree to provide some additional seating in and around the play area. The positioning and location of the seating will be agreed with the designer/installer of the equipment to ensure the seating does not compromise any safety or design considerations.

Finally, just a heads up – the next meeting will be a week earlier in the month as we have now moved our meetings to the first Tuesday of the month. This means it will only be three weeks to the next meeting.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be on **Tuesday 2nd April 2024 commencing straight after the 7.00pm Annual Parish meeting** at the **St James's Barn, Church End** and all are welcome.

Stewart Briggs

Chair – Biddenham Parish Council