



Biddenham Parish Council hosted the Annual Parish meeting on Tuesday, 2nd April 2024 at St James' Barn, Church End, Biddenham, MK40 4AS at 7.00pm

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MINUTES

This was a meeting hosted by the parish council on behalf of the residents of Biddenham.

1 Welcome from the Chairman – Stewart Briggs

Cllr Briggs welcomed one member of the public and the following councillors to the meeting: Cllrs Peter Chase, Caroline Cross, Laura Simmonds, Helen Humphreys, Harry Fowler and Jonathan Gambold.

2 To receive the minutes of the last Annual Parish meeting held on 18th April 2023.

It was agreed that the minutes accurately reflected this meeting.

3 Any Other Group or Individual

No groups or individuals spoke.

4 Biddenham Pavilion – Report from Deborah Slade (Pavilion Manager)

The full report can be found in the appendix.

5 Biddenham Parish Council – Chairman's Report – Stewart Briggs

Cllr Briggs gave a shortened version of his full report, which can be found in the appendix.

Biddenham Parish Council - Chair Report

Good evening to all and welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting.

Each year the Chairman is required to draw up an Annual Report which outlines what the Parish Council has done over the previous 12 months. This will be my third report as Chair of Biddenham Parish Council. It has been a great honour to preside as Chair.

Though our statutory responsibilities are few, we continue with many non-statutory roles. Many residents see the Parish Council as all powerful and responsible for everything which, of course, is certainly not the case. We are happy to pass the issues raised with us to the responsible authorities or individuals though. However, sometimes it is proving more difficult to get responses to issues raised especially with the Borough Council, and this is usually with their highways and planning teams.

The municipal year started with an uplifting event and we celebrated the King's Coronation on Saturday 6th May 2023.

As you will see from the list below, we have been involved in a variety of activities that hopefully will have brought an improvement to both the environment of the parish and quality of life in Biddenham, although we recognise there is much that could still be done.

This year saw a revamped website for the Parish. The new layout now provides a clearer and more easily navigable site for residents. Also, we are now finding a popular way of communicating seems to be through our social media presence on various platforms. We aim to provide up to date information and a reactive response to issues raised. If this isn't working for you, please let us know – you can find contact details on our website www.biddenham.org.uk . While we don't produce our own newsletter, we do provide a report on every meeting to 'The Loop' which is a low-cost subscription newsletter published by the Parish Church of St James as a service to the communities of Biddenham and Great Denham. In an initiative funded by the Parish Council the July/August edition of the Loop was distributed to every household in the Parish. This annual distribution is now part of our annual budget so expect another one later this summer.

The biggest project this year for the Parish Council was the replacement of the play area at the Pavilion. Looking back, I can remember my children playing in the play area at the Pavilion. So clearly it was starting to show its age and in need of a much-needed revamp; in fact, just how I feel!

In January our contractors started by removing the old play area and by March a new 'fit for purpose' one had been installed. This had only been possible with the benefit of the CIL received following the new development in the Parish. A measure of whether this was a successful project is clearly shown by its popularity and the positive comments received on its opening and subsequently. Well done to all involved in the project.

Sticking with CIL, the Parish Council has also agreed to use some of the CIL funding to provide average speed cameras on Biddenham Turn. This project is in early gestation and we want to ensure that we can secure the best and most affordable outcome for residents. We will therefore work closely with the Borough Council over the coming months to deliver the project.

In January we learnt that through the diligent work of our Clerk the Parish was successful in securing a grant of £16,000 towards providing LED lighting, solar panels and battery storage for the Pavilion. This represents 50% of the project cost and should save the Parish Council over £2,600 in energy costs (based on energy costs at the time of the application). A great piece of work by our Clerk. The order has been placed and work should commence shortly.

There have been numerous other smaller projects where the Parish has been actively involved in improving our local environment and supporting our residents. These include

- Arranging for new column along Biddenham Turn to hold the vehicle activated speed sign (SID) following complaints of excessive speeding;
- Pruning the bushes on PC-owned land at Fleming Close near to the SSSI pit;
- With a contribution from Dandara, funding a new bench on the cricket pitch for the Cricket Club;
- Purchasing 15 trees through the Borough Council's 'Trees for Streets' programme to replace some of the bollards on Biddenham Turn;
- Organising tree maintenance to clear low hanging branches and dead wood on Bromham Road service road;

- Meeting the costs of stoning the Red Gate PROW and the Main Road PROW – the work is, we are told, imminent!
- Requesting a refresh of the feasibility report for pedestrian refuges on Bromham Road as discussed at the Council's July 2022 meeting;
- Securing Bedford Borough Council support for the installation of a double yellow line on Main Road to create a passing place, expecting this summer;
- Approving the cost of erecting two columns in the St Mary's development so we could rotate the use of our speed indication devices (SID);
- Arranging for Pavilion improvement works including the refurbish/redesign of reception area; the removal of the redundant bar frontage and the renovation the bar area into a storage and changing area; and extending the current Pavilion CCTV system to include the side door entrance. All the works have now been completed;
- Agreeing the maintenance of the memorial benches near the tennis courts;
- Approving a new 7-year hiring agreement with the Cricket Club for the use of the field and facilities at the Pavilion;
- Supporting the purchase of two picnic benches for the new play area at the Pavilion.

A really fulfilling part of the work of the Parish Council is being able to provide small grants to local groups to help them survive and thrive. This year we made grants of over £1,200.

In these troubled times it is important to remember those who served our country. The Parish Council is very proud to be the guardian of the War Memorial and this year we replaced the broken "Tommy" statue with a stronger steel replica, arranged for a new flagpole to be erected (after the previous one had been cut down!) and had the war memorial cleaned. The memorial service in 2023 was held in the morning with the two-minute silence at 11.00 am. Three wreaths were laid on behalf of the children of the village, the Parish Council and the Borough Council.

In a first for the Parish Council, we awarded the honour of Freedom of the Parish to the former Borough Councillor, Roger Rigby. The Freedom of the Parish is an award, solely in the gift of the Council. While it confers no material honours or special privileges it is the highest honour the Parish can award to a

person who has, in our opinion, “rendered eminent services to the Parish” and in our view was well deserved by Roger.

Those of you who have received your local Council Tax bill for next year from the Borough Council, and been brave enough to open it, will have been pleasantly surprised to see the only part of your council Tax not to increase was the Parish contribution. We remain once of the lowest precepting Parishes.

Though the topography of the Parish does not lend itself easily to help us come together as one community, the activities and social media links that have been established and strengthened help us to feel more together. My thanks and appreciation go to all those who have worked so hard in everything we do for the Parish and, of course, to those who selflessly give their time to act as Councillors or volunteers with the only reward being that we do it to make Biddenham a better place for residents.

Thank you

Stewart Briggs
April 2024

Biddenham Pavilion Report March 2024

Upgrades :

The LED lights throughout the whole have now been installed (except main hall) and are working well. The large external wall lights were also replaced with LED for cost saving as these were on all night for security (however set to go off at 12 midnight as to not disturb surrounding houses)

The play park is had a successful opening and is being used a lot by the community, especially after school time and weekends.

The front lobby has been remodelled to make a friendlier environment with a reception desk and the cloakroom area more open.

The bar hatch has now been removed from the main hall to create a blank wall as it no longer had a purpose and the old bar cleared out to create a storage space for the cleaning equipment and all the remote electronics.

The room which housed the old bar pumps etc has now been remodelled to create an umpire changing room for visiting umpires during the cricket season.

New mats have been purchased for the main hall doorways as the previous ones were being to disintegrate.

One the whole all has been greatly received.

I await the authorisation of the next batch of works (window refurb, toilet refurb, kitchen upgrade – quotes received) to carry on with the needed refurb works. There is also the refurb of the main hall floor (approx. £3k-£4k) and the replacement of the curtains (approx. £1000 for obscure window film) that need to be considered (still awaiting comparable quotes).

Issues :

We have had an ongoing issue with the toilet in the gents front toilets whereby it would be continuously blocked. We engaged a drain company to clear the blockage and with the help of a camera we found tree roots throughout the pipework. The quote to have this issue resolved came in at £1150.00 plus VAT. Specialist root cutting equipment can be accessed through the back of the toilet and a structural patch repair can be done to the pipe to stop this happening rather than digging up outside to find the drainpipe to be replaced.

As a result of this recent find it was also discovered we were unable to locate the outside manhole and all works had to be done internally through the back of the toilet (after it had been removed). The proposal would be to remove invasive foliage from directly outside the building to the front firstly to find the outside manhole and secondly to remove the potential of this reoccurring elsewhere in the pipework. Suggestion would be to replace approx. 2 metres of foliage directly in front of the building (both sides of the front door) and replace with some sort of hard landscaping, this would still leave a strip of foliage closer to the car park.

Current Income for year 2023/2024 are :

Regulars	£20312.93
One Offs	£ 4592.50
Car Park	£ 6175.00

Total for Year £32587.43

Av. monthly Income for 2023/2024 £ 2590.04 (predicted was £2600.00)

Projected Income for year 2024/2025 are :

Regulars	£20771.00
One Offs	£ 4500.00
Car Park	£ 6300.00

Total for Year £31571.00

Av. monthly Income for 2024/2025 £ 2630.92

I believe we have now stabilised at £2,600 per calendar month. However I have requested a rate increase (see below) which has not happened since January 2023.

Currently:

Regulars £16.50
Weekday £20.00
Weekend £25.00
Children's Party package £80
Returnable Damage deposit £75

Proposed :

Regulars £18.00 (9%)
Weekday £22.50 (10%)
Weekend £27.50 (10%)
Children's Party Package £90 (12.5%)
Returnable Damage deposit £100

These new rates are still very competitive.

Biddenham Village hall currently charge £30.00 per hour flat rate and £15.00 per hour flat rate for residents

Bromham village hall are currently £30 weekdays and £35 weekends.

Great Denham Community Hall £20/£24 per hour regular hirers and £39.50/£54 per hour (depending on event) – Children's Parties are £84.50 for 3 hours plus £22 per hour for additional hours. Kitchen use is an addition to these rates.

As of September 2024 current rates for 'regulars' would be a weekly income of £519.75 (31.5 hours per week), if increased this would equate to £567 per week. This gives an annual increase of approximately £2,000 for regulars (some clubs are term time only). Plus extra on the hourly one off hires

Thank you
Deborah Slade