

Bathford Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting - April 18th 2004

Amenities Committee Report (Report by Stan Cherry).

The Amenities Committee currently consists of three people, John Lloyd, Wendy Chambers and myself.

Our responsibility is for four main areas, the playing field, allotments, village sweeping and village grass cutting therefore I will say a few words about each area.

Playing Field

Field Condition

The general condition of the field remains good.

During the last financial year we have installed a new gate at the entrance to the to replace the old tubular steel gate. The new gate is of a more substantial construction and in keeping with the village conservation area.

Apart from the routine grass cutting expenses, no other major work was carried out on the field itself last year.

The committee are currently looking to replace the two benches at the top of the field – one of which fell apart a few years ago and the second is now in a state of disrepair. We would also like to site a new bench under the trees at the bottom of the field.

We are hoping to use any excess money from our budget from last year to pay for these but we are also trying to fund extra benches around the parish where a need is identified. To take this forward we have asked questions in the second Parish Plan questionnaire regarding possible sites for benches and also seeking donations towards the cost from any individual, group or organisation who would like to sponsor a bench. In return, we would place a plaque on the bench to identify the donor (or the reason for the donation).

The only major problem remains that of dog fouling on the field. We have taken steps to try to stop this problem in that we have installed signs at the entrance to the field and on the side of the scout hut asking dog walkers to use the footpaths around the field rather than take their animals onto the playing area. We have also installed a new red litter / dog-waste bin on the bridleway for walkers to deposit their little bags. We felt this was important once we found that people were leaving their bags in the waste bin in the children's play area!

Remember, dog mess is extremely unhealthy for everyone – but especially for children!

Play area

The play area has seen significant change since this time last year. We have responded to comments in the first Questionnaire for the Parish Plan which indicated that the area was good but was "looking tired and in need of new equipment".

Firstly, we have extended the play area, fitted a new drawbridge unit and new swing seats to the infant swings. At the same time, we renewed the fencing all round the area and added a second gate. The drawbridge is "part one" of the new equipment and we hope to add another section to it in the coming year.

Secondly, all the older equipment has been given a new coat of bright paint and a new waste bin was installed.

In November we received notification of a grant aid scheme from B&NES Parks dept. towards costs of replacing broken equipment and some safety work. With this came a free safety survey of the play area. We decided to apply for a grant and use it towards cost of safety work, which we new needed to be done over the next year. The upshot was that we were given a grant of £895 towards the cost of replacing a

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broken spring toy and enlarging of the safety area around it to meet changes in legislation. We will also totally replace the safety area round the large swing set and install a new bench on the grass on the sunny side of the play area. (This, again, was a specific request identified from the Parish Plan “comments” page and – as a grandparent – I can testify to the need during the winter months)!
The order for this work as been placed and will commence within the next few weeks

Sport use and user rent review

The field continues to be used by four sports clubs covering Rugby, Cricket and Football. Three of the four clubs using the facility now have very active youth development programmes, providing opportunities for young people from the village in their organisations.

In accordance with our standing orders, rents for the use of the Parish facilities should be reviewed annually and any changes announced at this meeting. User rents for the Playing Field have been reviewed according to the set formula and will be as follows:

Avonvale Rugby Football Club	£288-00
Bathford Cricket Club	£94-00
Bathford Rangers F.C.	£94-00
Bear Flat Youth F.C.	£48-00

Former Scout Hut

Unfortunately, this issue is yet to be resolved. I was hoping to be able to report the matter complete tonight but the rugby club lawyers have asked for confirmation on yet another issue on the tenancy agreement which has been drawn up. It is hoped to bring this matter to a conclusion in the very near future.

SPORTS CAR PARK

One of the effects of the success of the sports clubs youth policies has been the parking problems which occur around Titan Barrow, Ashley Road, Bathford Hill and the bridleway leading to the field – especially on Sundays. The Amenities Committee were asked to take part in a joint meeting between Whitehaven and the Rugby club to address this problem and seek a solution.

One of the major problems is that parking on the bridleway is not allowed under the court jurisdiction made at the time of the court case some years ago. This time around, both parties are trying to find an amicable solution to the problem and we were happy to join them in discussions.

The current situation is that Whitehaven have offered use of part of their land at reasonable cost for use as a sports related car for the playing field. We believe that if this should happen it is in the best interests of the village that the Parish Council should be the controlling body and to this end we are currently investigating the implications of applying for the necessary planning permission.

In the Parish Plan questionnaire you will find some questions which we are using to sound out feeling on this subject as part of this process.

Allotments

Generally, the situation at the allotments is very good. Currently, all allotments are taken and there are two people on the waiting list.

Allotment User rent review

The wardens have asked that we change the system of rent collection slightly so that they have information they require to operate the allotments more efficiently.

Their main problem is that, in the past, they have not received information on who has paid until well into the new financial year. This leads to problems allocating vacant allotments early enough to give the new holders a good start to the growing year.

They have requested that, as before, the Clerk should issue the rent demand in September but with the monies to be returned via the Wardens. The Warden will then record the details and pass the rents on to the Clerk.

The benefit of doing this is that they will be sure of who has paid (and who has not) and will be in a position to:

- 1 chase up any late payers (the Wardens have direct contact with plot holders)

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- 2 know much earlier if someone intends to surrender their allotment
- 3 be in a position to re-allocate that allotment before the end of the calendar year.

Last year there was confusion over the application of the new rental charges with the result that some people were charged the wrong amount. As a result, we have agreed with the Wardens that the rent review for this year will not be announced until after the annual plot holders meeting on April 23rd. The new rents will be announced in the June bulletin and also in the Wardens newsletter for plot holders.

Village Cleansing

Speaking of "contact", this could be a good point to mention the Action Line at B&NES. Quite often, we as Parish Councillors are contacted just before a monthly meeting to be told of a situation that needs attention. Many of these incidents can be dealt with very quickly – by anyone – by simply calling the Action Line on 394041. You will be answered almost immediately, the task you are reporting will be logged and you will be given a reference number to record. This is all we do as Parish Councillors in many cases and the work will be carried out fairly swiftly.

Other issues

Village Green

The green remains a pleasant spot in the centre of the village. Last year I spoke of a project to put a footpath diagonally across the green but our budget for last year was overstretched therefore the project was shelved for that financial year.

This year we have revisited this project and have budgeted to install a path directly across the green alongside the British Legion wall. The main reason for this project is the safety issue for people from the Ashley Road side of Bathford Hill gaining access to the shop when the Legion gates are locked. A secondary aim is to try to encourage greater use of the green and this could be an ideal site for installation of more benches. Once again, you will find questions on this topic in the P.P. questionnaire as part of the consultation on this issue.

To summarise, I think that this has been successful year with few problems.

I have no further issues to report on therefore, if anyone has questions, I will take them now.

Thank you.

Stan Cherry.