

Bathford Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting – April 21st 2008

Amenities Committee Report

The Amenities Committee currently consists of five people:

STAN CHERRY (Chair) JOHN LLOYD WENDY CHAMBERS HUGH BAKER RICHARD WICKHAM

Our area of responsibility covers the playing field, allotments, village sweeping and village grass cutting plus several other issues.

PLAYING FIELD

Field Condition

The general condition of the field remains good, despite missing the planned maintenance last spring due to very hard ground conditions due the very dry spring. We hope to catch up on this work at the end of the winter season by re-seeding and rolling the field after re-building the football goalmouth areas. In September the field was treated to control weed growth and in October further tree work was required to allow access for tractors along the bridleway.

Our struggle with dog owners continues and we would remind every dog owner that dog mess is extremely unhealthy for everyone – but especially for children!

Play area

Last year I reported that the play area renovations would be complete and that no major expense was foreseen this year. However, once again, we have used the B&NES Parks dept. grant scheme. This year we are in the process of replacing the old rocking horse with a new piece of rocking equipment that meets current safety regulations. The scheme is too good to miss if work can be identified since B&NES pay 85% of the cost involved – and the scheme may not last!

Once again, we believe that the renovation and safety modifications will then be complete but we will continue to ensure that the play area remains in good condition and meets all current safety requirements.

Sport use and user rent review

The field continues to be well used by clubs covering Rugby, Cricket and Football.

Two of the four clubs using the facility still 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 from September 2008:

Avonvale Rugby Football Club	£366-00
Bathford Cricket Club	£119-00
Bathford Rangers Football Club	£119-00
Bathford Rangers Reserves F.C. (The Crown)	£119-00

While these charges may seem relatively low compared with hiring pitches from the main local authority, we continue the policy of encouraging local users and this has continued to pay dividends with so much youth sport available to local young people.

Cricket Pavilion

The Cricket Club is to install a secure steel container very shortly and eventually remove the old lean-to shed at the rear of the pavilion. The Amenities Committee had intended to replace the corrugated iron roof on the pavilion with a more suitable protective material when this was removed and money for this project has been precepted. However, it is likely that the pavilion itself will require more substantial repair when this work takes place and for that we have precepted an extra £2000 for the coming year.

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ALLOTMENTS

Once again, the situation at the allotments is very good. Most allotments are taken and the Wardens (Mike Smith and Martin Wright) continue to manage the allotments superbly.

As proposed by the Wardens last year, the Amenities Committee have made a small plot available, free of charge, for use by youth organisations such as Brownies, Guides and the school to encourage young people to learn about growing food, etc. The Wardens report that this offer was taken up (very enthusiastically) by the school and work continued throughout the season and use of the plot will continue this year.

The plot is only used by children in their final year at Bathford School and fits in well with the school curriculum. The effect is that a new set of children will be introduced each year and we intend to carry on this project as long as the school wishes to retain the plot.

A new allotment main gate was fitted to the Ashley Road entrance during the winter.

Allotment Charges

Allotment rent increases were also due to be announced at this meeting but we are in the process of reviewing the procedures to fix these rents for several years ahead whilst providing funds for any identified improvements to services for the ploholders. A couple of options have been prepared to put to the annual ploholders meeting on April 19th (three days before this meeting) and any agreement will be reported on the night of the Annual Parish Meeting.

The water charge (separate, per plot holder and based on meter reading) has risen considerably in the last year – possibly due to the dry spring and early summer season as well as raised charges from the water supplier. However, we hope to include the water charge in the review and only increase it once every few years.

Allotment tenancies

Following guidance received from ALCA the committee and wardens are investigating the issue of allotment tenancy documents for ploholders. Guidance recommends such agreements for the protection of both the ploholder and the landlord and we will be looking to introduce the documentation from September this year.

VILLAGE CLEANSING

No major issues have arisen on this front, other than the perennial problem of dog fouling. This is becoming more prevalent in several areas of the parish but is particularly unpleasant when owners walk their dogs on footpath areas and leave their mess behind. We would encourage all dog owners to clean up after themselves and make Bathford an even pleasanter place to live.

FINANCE

Throughout the year the Amenities Committee has continued to work within its budget and even achieved a small surplus at the end of the financial year, which should be sufficient to cover the cost of the new play equipment we are due to install.

OTHER ISSUES

VILLAGE GREEN

The committee is investigating the possibility of registering the land we know as the village green as an official green under the Commons Act 2006. The land has been in use as such for many years and registration would prevent future development of the land and retain a valuable amenity for the parish.

MANOR GREEN

Last year I reported that several parishioners raised a question about access across the Manor Green and the safety of the steps up to Birdcage Walk. As regular users will be aware, B&NES have now reinstated the steps, together with a handrail.

PARISH PLAN BENCH PROJECT

The Amenities Committee took responsibility for the 'Bench Project', initiated from the Parish Plan and led by Hugh Baker.

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Last year we reported that seven new benches had been purchased. These were duly installed and the committee believed that would be the end of the project. However, since then more donations have been received and three further benches and two picnic tables have been purchased and are due to be installed. One bench is to be on the playing field and two in the Churchyard. All three donated in memory of loved ones.

The picnic tables will be installed on the village green and the Playing Field - the plan being that they will be fairly easily transported and can be unlocked and moved temporarily, should they be needed elsewhere for an event.

It is worth noting here that this has been a very successful project which sprang forth from two simple questions on the first questionnaire - 'Would you like to see more benches in Bathford?' and 'Would you donate towards the cost?'

As a result, we will have installed no fewer than fifteen extra benches and two picnic tables at no extra cost to the parish - from two questions that we worried over asking. Thanks are due to the many people and organisations who donated towards this project and, in particular, to Hugh Baker - who led this project on behalf of our committee.

The Committee have agreed that this project will finally close once the current purchases have been installed and any money remaining will be left in the Parish Plan Account for future projects.

OTHER PARISH PLAN ITEMS

As reported previously, grants had been obtained from Quartet for two projects.

Firstly, the speaker system and hearing loop for this hall, identified as a need as a direct result of a parishioner walking out of this meeting two years ago! As you can see, this project is now complete and in use. The Parish Plan grant input to the project was £1350. £50 was donated from the Parish Plan Account and the balance met by the Hall committee.

Secondly, the Bathford Bulletin. This will be covered in reports elsewhere but the money to fund changes to the Bulletin has also been provided by a grant from Quartet as a Parish Plan identified action to improve communication within the parish.

PARISH PLAN BANK ACCOUNT

For those who are not aware of this account: a brief explanation. This account holds money we were allowed to retain at the end of the preparation of the Parish Plan. It has also grown slightly over the last few years.

The account is used to provide funds specifically for projects identified as a need directly from the parish plan and is within the control of the parish council. The parish council is very careful about donating precept money to local causes but the parish plan account is there specifically for this use. Any individual or organisation may approach us for assistance with a project – providing the request meets the required criteria.

OTHER GRANTS APPLIED FOR

The Committee is hoping to seek two further grants in the coming year.

Firstly, B.Y.T.E., (Bathford Youth Theatre Ensemble). This group, initiated by Luke Emmett, aims to provide drama and music activities for young people in Bathford. We will be trying to obtain a grant to help their funding as soon as they have identified needs and brought forward details of their requirements.

The second project – again in the very early stages – is the British Legion Stairlift Appeal. Our target of improvement to mobility access within the parish covers this project and their aim is to replace the ageing stairlift in the British Legion with one that will take a person from the ground floor to the main room in one journey. The British Legion has already started fundraising efforts for this project and we will seek a grant to help once they provide us with detailed figures.

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FURTHER INFORMATION ON QUARTET GRANTS.

Quartet provides grants for local projects within the community. The project usually costs the Parish Council very little other than a small donation to the overall cost and can be granted within about eight weeks of application. The only criteria are that the project must have been identified as a part of the Parish Plan and that the Parish Council retains the grant money and are accountable for its proper use within the project.

Any organisation within the parish may approach us to apply for a grant so long as these criteria are met.

IN CONCLUSION

I believe that, once again, this has been a satisfactory year. We will continue with our aim of working within budget and to maintain parish amenities to a high standard.

Any issues arising from this report, which you may wish to raise with the Amenities Committee should be directed via the Clerk at the Parish Office.

Stan Cherry, Chair – Amenities Committee.