

# **BATHFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF THE BATHFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 21 APRIL 2008 AT 7.30PM IN THE PARISH ROOMS, CHURCH STREET, BATHFORD**

Present: Councillor Shirley Beazer (Chair)  
Councillor Stan Cherry  
Councillor Hugh Baker  
Councillor Susan Barclay  
Councillor Wendy Chambers  
Councillor Paul Faulkner  
Councillor John Lloyd  
Councillor Keith Masdin  
Councillor Ian Plain  
Councillor Jean Vesey  
Maureen Breeze, Chair of BEFA (Speaker)  
PCSO Greg Doyle (Speaker)  
Gabriel Batt (Ward Councillor)  
Martin Veal (Ward Councillor)  
Ruth Holding (Clerk)  
33 members of the public

### **1. Apologies**

- 1.1. Apologies were received from Cllr Richard Wickham and Ward Councillor Ian Dewey.

### **2. Welcome and Introductions**

- 2.1. Chair Shirley Beazer opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. She introduced the Parish Councillors present and the Clerk, welcomed the Ward Councillors present and thanked PCSO Greg Doyle for attending.
- 2.2. Chair Shirley Beazer said that copies of all the reports presented by the Committees, together with the accounts from the Bathford Consolidated Charities could be found on the table near the door if people wished to take a copy away with them.
- 2.3. The Chair drew attention to the displays by village groups which had been put up around the room and she encouraged people to look at these during the coffee break.

### **3. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting**

- 3.1. Chair Shirley Beazer reported that the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting had been signed as a true record of the proceedings at a Parish

Council Meeting and had been published on the council's website. There was no objection raised from the floor with regard to the accuracy of the minutes of last year's meeting.

#### **4. Matters arising**

4.1. There were no matters arising.

#### **5. Chairman's Report**

- 5.1. Chair Shirley Beazer made a report covering a number of issues which had arisen during the past 12 months. The full text of the Chairman's report can be found on the parish council's website [www.bathford.net](http://www.bathford.net) or requested from the Clerk.
- 5.2. Items of particular note were the proposed closure of Bathford Post Office and the affect this would have on the village shop in terms of the opportunity to take on additional services. The building of three new houses by Somer Community Housing Trust would hopefully allow access to affordable rented housing to those people with existing local connections in need of social housing. It was reported that Somer were to organise an Open Day to provide information on the housing situation in Bathford and Batheaston.
- 5.3. The Chairman also paid tribute to two parishioners Jack Fielden and Doris Ingram who had passed away recently. Mr Fielden had made a significant contribution to the success of Bathford Link and the life of the parish. Mrs Ingram had celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday in October 2007 and had been living in her own home until very recently. Both would be sadly missed.
- 5.4. The annual accounts of the Bathford Consolidated Charities were noted.
- 5.5. The Chairman of the Parish Hall Management Committee, Prof Darryl Almond, gave a short report confirming that the hall was regularly used by a higher number of groups than ever before. The hall had been used on 49 occasions for one-off bookings and this put the hall in a good financial position and charges would not need to rise. Work to improve the fabric of the hall would continue with plans to replace the double doors this year. Prof Almond said that Anne Haworth was standing down as caretaker of the parish hall and thanked her for her hard work and expressed his appreciation for her role as booking secretary which she would continue to do. The election and membership of the Parish Hall Management Committee was proposed by Shirley Beazer and seconded by Prof Daryl Almond. The election and membership of the Committee was confirmed by a show of hands. .

#### **6. Overview Report from Amenities Committee**

- 6.1. Cllr Stan Cherry presented the report of the Amenities Committee. The full text of the report can be found on the parish council's website or requested from the Clerk.
- 6.2. It was noted that the playing field was generally in a good condition and a new piece of equipment had very recently been installed in the children's

play area for which a grant of 85% of the cost had been awarded by Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES). A new secure store for cricket equipment was to be installed on the field out of sight in the tree line. This would allow the dilapidated lean-to behind the cricket pavilion to be removed and improvements made to the condition of the pavilion for which money had been precepted.

6.3. It was reported that the allotments continued to be well used and Cllr Stan Cherry thanked the volunteer Allotment Wardens, Mike Smith and Martin Wright for their work in managing the allotments so effectively. The new rents had been agreed at a meeting of plot holders 3 days ago and he announced the annual charges for use of the recreation ground and allotment rents as follows:-

6.3.1. Recreation ground and allotment rent annual charges from September 2008

- 6.3.1.1. Rugby Club £366 per year
- 6.3.1.2. Other sports users £119 per year
- 6.3.1.3. Allotment full plot £14 (£7 for concessions)
- 6.3.1.4. Allotment half plot, £7.00 (£3.50 for concessions)
- 6.3.1.5. Water charge £3 per plot holder

6.4. Although the increase in allotment rent may appear to be high, Cllr Stan Cherry said that more benefits would be provided for allotment holders, such as the provision of a skip once or twice per year, and it was the parish council's intention to fix the allotment rent for 5 years, unless there was an expectedly large item of expenditure required on the allotments during that period. The parish council would also be drawing up a tenancy agreement for allotment holders on the advice of the Association of Local Councils from September 2008.

6.5. Cllr Stan Cherry went on to thank Cllr Hugh Baker for overseeing the very successful bench project. An additional 10 benches had been obtained for the parish as a result of this parish plan initiative, plus two picnic tables. The final phase of the project would be the positioning of three remaining benches and the picnic tables. One of the tables would be placed on the village green and the other on the recreation ground. Both would be secured with fixings which would allow the tables to be repositioned as necessary.

6.6. It was noted that the parish council was always keen to look for outside sources of funding for projects and to give support to organisations in the parish to apply for grant assistance. The BYTE youth theatre group and the Royal British Legion were two organisations that the parish council was assisting in their applications for grants from the Quartet community chest.

## **7. Overview Report from Planning and Environment Committee**

- 7.1. Cllr Hugh Baker presented the report of the Planning and Environment Committee. The full text of the report can be found on the parish council's website or requested from the Clerk.
- 7.2. A total of 32 planning applications had been considered over the year. Of these, only 5 were opposed either on the grounds of unsuitability for the site and impact on neighbouring properties and/or detrimental effect on the Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the Bathford Conservation Area. For the most part, the Committee's views were in accord with those of B&NES planners but in a small number of cases little regard had been taken of local views and objections. This was particularly evident with regard to the work undertaken at "Lavington's Yard" on the A363 where the work was deemed not to require planning permission but has altered the appearance of the site.
- 7.3. Cllr Hugh Baker reported that the 3 new houses being built by Somer Housing Trust in Mountain Wood was well advanced. Plans for the redevelopment of the former "Tyndale" site had been unveiled by Future Heritage and the exhibition of the plans was attended by well over 50 interested parties from the parish. Comments on the design were on the whole favourable, but there was regret expressed that the development did not include "affordable housing".
- 7.4. Cllr Hugh Baker thanked Steve Mackerness for continuing to monitor the progress of the search for a Park & Ride site to the east of Bath which could have implications for the parish.
- 7.5. The publication of the Regional Spatial Strategy had raised an issue with regard to the proposal to build 1,500 new homes in the green belt to the south west of Bath. There was concern that if the Green Belt was breached in this area, then other parts of the Green Belt might be at risk of development. Bathford Parish Council had strongly supported parishes in the affected areas in their opposition to the proposals.

## **8. Overview Report from Highways, Footpaths and Lighting Committee**

- 8.1. Cllr Shirley Beazer presented the report of the Highways, Footpaths and Lighting Committee. The full text of the report can be found on the parish council's website or requested from the Clerk.
- 8.2. The meeting noted that despite the reduction in the speed limit on the A363 and the introduction of double white lines the accident rate on the stretch of road through Sally-in-the-Woods was still unacceptably high. The parish council would push for further safety improvements such as speed cameras or flashing lights to warn of the dangers. Changes to the road layout on High Street were to be carried out as part of the safe routes to school initiative including a reduction in the speed limit to 20 mph during school arrival and leaving times. It was noted that despite repeated requests by the parish council, B&NES had decided not to remove Priority Point 1 from Bathford Hill.

- 8.3. Cllr Shirley Beazer reported that with the aid of a grant from the Cotswolds Conservation Board and further assistance from Philip Harris and David Howells the last remaining milestone in the parish in need of repair had been refurbished. Thanks went to Philip and David for their commitment to this project and Cllr Shirley Beazer drew attention to the report and photographs on display.
- 8.4. It was noted that the repair of the footpath between Prospect Place and Dovers Lane was on the list of "major projects" to be undertaken by B&NES, but it was not known when work would start.

### **9. Overview Report from Finance & Administration Committee**

- 9.1. Cllr Susan Barclay presented the report of the Finance & Administration Committee. The full text of the report can be found on the parish council's website or requested from the Clerk.
- 9.2. It was noted that the council's income and expenditure for the year had met its forecasts. A new budget had been set for 2008-2009 year, resulting in an increase in the precept. The rise was attributable to an increase in the Clerk's salary to bring it in line with the nationally negotiated pay scale, no grants had been anticipated for 2009 and a reasonable sum had been precepted for the repair of the cricket pavilion.
- 9.3. Cllr Susan Barclay said that the parish council continued to explore opportunities for grant funding and she announced that since the budget had been prepared the parish council had been successful in receiving a grant from B&NES towards the cost of new play equipment. She reminded the meeting of the grant funding received in 2007-2008 towards the cost of printing the Bathford Bulletin which extended into 2008-2009.

### **10. Overview Report from Communications Committee**

- 10.1. Cllr Ian Plain presented the report of the Communications Committee. The full text of the report can be found on the parish council's website or requested from the Clerk.
- 10.2. Ian Plain reported that during last year it had been decided that in order to bring about the changes needed to the Bathford Bulletin in terms of its size and printing quality, the Bulletin should be edited within the parish. Since January 2008 an editorial team of 3 have been editing the Bulletin on a rota basis and from April 2008 the Bulletin was being professionally printed. The financing of the publication remained under the control of the parish council with financial support in the form of a grant from the Quartet community chest.
- 10.3. It was noted that a website had also been created [www.thebathfordbulletin.org](http://www.thebathfordbulletin.org), on which more information about village events, extended articles, items of local interest could be published, and from which copies of the monthly edition of the Bathford Bulletin could be downloaded.

- 10.4. Ian Plain said that anyone was welcome to get involved in the production of the Bulletin and invited people to submit photographs of local scenes or events for use on the front cover of the Bulletin.
- 10.5. During the coming year, the Communications Committee would be considering issues such as putting advertising in the Bulletin and other issues relating to communications in the parish such as the location of noticeboards etc.

### **11. Presentation by PCSO Greg Doyle**

- 11.1. PCSO Greg Doyle introduced himself as the PCSO covering Bathford and as such he could be contacted direct about issues of concern and his role was to try to resolve local problems. He said that he was looking at improving ways of engaging the community and to meet people who didn't necessarily get involved in parish meetings or neighbourhood watch. He said that a number of volunteers had come forward to participate in the neighbourhood speed watch initiative and he would be taking this forward in discussion with the parish council.
- 11.2. PCSO Greg Doyle also referred to the PACT meetings (Partners and Communities Together) which were held every 6 months to try to address the issues which the community viewed as the most urgent to be solved. It was hoped that the next PACT meeting would be held in June in Bathford.
- 11.3. Greg Doyle encouraged participation in the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and invited people to approach him in the coffee break and look at the leaflets he had brought along on neighbourhood watch and crime prevention.

### **12. Presentation by Bathford Enterprise For All (BEFA) on the future of the village shop**

- 12.1. The Chair of BEFA, Maureen Breeze, addressed the meeting on the plans to expand the services of the village shop in view of the likely closure of Bathford Post Office. She said that decisions on the future direction of the shop would be taken at BEFA's AGM in the following week, but she wanted to use this opportunity to give residents an idea of the choices facing BEFA.
- 12.2. The shop was currently operating on a break even basis, although it was reliant on grants and fundraising to meet major expenses. The shop was much more than just a grocery store, it regularly supported other events in the village by selling tickets for events, making charitable donations, and as an outlet for local crafts and business.
- 12.3. Maureen Breeze said that BEFA was exploring the notion of a virtual post office which could offer services such as selling stamps, becoming a PayPoint, parcel services and possibly internet access. She said that if BEFA did expand then a significant financial commitment would need to

be made initially and this would be a big leap of faith as it was not known how the closure of the post office would affect customer flow to the shop.

- 12.4. Maureen Breeze concluded by saying that a feasibility study was being undertaken which would be presented to the members of BEFA at their AGM and a public meeting was planned for the first week in June to enable residents to comment on any proposals.

**The presentation by BEFA was followed by a coffee break of 20 minutes.**

**13. Proposals for which written notice has been given**

- 13.1. No proposals had been received.

**14. Open Question and Answer Session**

- 14.1. There was an observation from a parishioner that the precept for 2008-2009 had risen well above inflation and suggested that the parish council should cap any increase in line with inflation. Cllr Susan Barclay said that the parish council worked hard to keep costs down and looked to save money where it could. Last year's precept had been 5.5% below the previous year and therefore the parish council did not increase its precept year on year. The budgets were set in accordance with the work that the parish council forecast that it would need to carry out in the year. Money had been precepted for the repair of the cricket pavilion in 2008-2009 and no grants for this or any other schemes were anticipated. The council said that it would take the parishioner's comments on board when setting the budget for next year and the meeting was assured that any increase in the precept would be kept to the minimum required to meet the parish council's commitments.
- 14.2. Concern was expressed by a parishioner that dog walkers were ignoring the signs stating that no dogs were allowed on the playing field and asked how this matter could be enforced. It was accepted that the parish council had no effective powers with regard to this problem and it was a matter of educating dog walkers and relying on their cooperation. The issue had been raised with the local rugby club and additional signs placed in the clubhouse. The PCSO said that this was not a matter for the police but he did confirm that it was an offence not to clean up after your dog. He recommended reporting any incidents to the dog warden at B&NES. The point was made by other parishioners that they would not like the majority of responsible dog walkers to be penalised as the result of the actions of a few inconsiderate individuals.
- 14.3. A parishioner asked whether the letter box could be reinstated in the door of the parish office. It was agreed that the parish council would consider this, but in the meantime a note would be put in the Bathford Bulletin reminding parishioners that post for the parish council could be left in the post office.
- 14.4. Ward Councillor Martin Veal addressed the meeting on the issue of post office closures from the point of view of the local authority. It had been felt that the closure of post offices was a done deal, although a post office

could reopen in the event of a change of circumstances. He said that B&NES was looking at the possibility of combining a council outreach service, eg the mobile library, with a post office outreach service.

14.5. Cllr Martin Veal also went on to say that although Lambridge is on the table as a Park & Ride site the emphasis had shifted to there being a Park & Ride to the east of Bath rather than Lambridge being regarded as the only option.

14.6. Cllr Martin Veal also reminded parishioners that if they were unhappy with a service provided by B&NES then they could contact any one of the three councillors elected to represent the Bathavon North ward.

**15. Formal Closure of Meeting**

15.1. Chair Shirley Beazer thanked Margaret Hawkins and Joyce Helps for preparing the refreshments and thanked PSCO Greg Doyle and Maureen Breeze for their presentations.

15.2. The meeting was formally closed at 9.20 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....

