

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. We will continue to work to improve the appearance whenever an opportunity arises.

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

Work was completed in May last year to replace the old rocking horse with a new piece of rocking equipment that meets current safety regulations. We believe that the renovation and safety modifications are now 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. It was agreed last year that we would bring the rent review forward from February of 2009 to September 2008 in order to use a 'real' figure when setting budgets for the coming year. Consequently, the new figure (based on the Retail Price Index at that time) may seem large in percentage figures. However, the current economic situation will be reflected in the review due in September 2009. We also feel that the rents we charge local users reflects our policy of encouraging use of the field (especially by young people) and are comfortable with the rents charged.

During 2008, we came to an agreement with Avonvale RFC to apply a rent reduction for 'lack of use' of the main pitch, dependant on the number of times they used the pitch during the season.

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	£389-00
Bathford Cricket Club	£127-00
Bathford Rangers Football Club	£127-00
Bathford Rangers Reserves F.C. (The Crown)	£127-00

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 has now installed a secure steel store for their field-work equipment between the trees at the far end of the field. The Amenities Committee had intended to replace the corrugated iron roof on the pavilion with a more suitable protective material when this was completed. Money for this project was precepted over the last two years. The club has now suggested a plan to replace the old building with a new pavilion in sustainable materials in keeping with the situation. The Amenities Committee will work with the club on this project that the parish council considers will be a further improvement to the playing field.

Field development

During the autumn of 2008, several young people and parents attended the October Parish Council meeting to ask for 'something for young people in the village'. As a result, at the next meeting of the Amenities Committee, it was agreed that we should look at a way to provide something for teenagers which would provide their own area and – importantly – something which they could be involved in delivering.

An area at the bottom corner of the playing field that is hardly used and is very overgrown was identified as suitable for the project. This area, with some combined effort, could easily be converted into a place where young people could take their bikes and cycle over hillocks. The area is only currently used by the guides, who use it in June and July for 'cook outs'. There was no reason why it should not be used all the year round whilst still accommodating the guides during the summer evenings. Following lively general discussion, agreement was reached that a group would meet to assess the site with a view to proceeding on a project.

Unfortunately, the feedback to the committee was that the young people did not really want a BMX area but a skateboard area. They also reported that the area was not large enough for BMX – despite thoughts on expansion onto the field itself.

At their meeting in March, the committee reiterated their decision, taken over a year previously, that they were not willing to endorse a skateboard area (for reasons stated at the time) and the issue was deferred to the Annual Parish Meeting for suggestions on a way forward, or for other ideas to be proposed.

ALLOTMENTS

Once again, the situation at the allotments is very good and the Wardens (Mike Smith and Martin Wright) continue to manage the allotments superbly. All allotments are taken (despite splitting many down to half plots) and we have a waiting list.

Allotment Charges

As we reported last year, we were in the process of reviewing the procedures to fix allotment rents for several years ahead whilst providing funds for any identified improvements to services for the ploholders. The new scheme was agreed last year and the allotment charges and costs are now 'ring fenced' into a separate accounting system. No allotment rent increases or water charges will occur until they are necessary to meet budget requirements and 'profits' of the account will be used to improve facilities for the ploholders.

Allotment tenancies

As announced last year, the committee and wardens investigated the issue of allotment tenancy documents for the protection of both the ploholders and the landlord. The documents were drawn up and approved and came into effect from September last year. We also agreed that new ploholders would be charged a deposit, which would be refundable on giving up their plot providing the plot was left in reasonable condition. If not, the deposit would be used towards the cost of preparing the plot for the next tenant.

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. During last year Councillor Ian Plain walked the village with the dog warden and, as a result, several notices were posted informing of the possible consequences of dog fouling. We would encourage all dog owners to clean up after themselves and make Bathford an even pleasanter place to live.

FINANCE

Throughout the year 2008 / 9 the Amenities Committee has continued to work within its budget. Along with other committees we have targeted less spending for the coming year in light of the current economic forecasts and our budget for 2009 / 10 is approximately 4.5% less than last year.

VILLAGE GREEN

Last year I reported that we were investigating the possibility of registering the land we know as the village green as an official green under the Commons Act 2006. Unfortunately, the green had already been registered by B&NES. During the enquiries made, we also discovered that the playing field had been registered by the Charities Commission some years ago.

PARISH PLAN BENCH PROJECT

This project was duly completed with the final installation being two picnic tables installed on the village green and the Playing Field. However, since then another bench has been donated in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Hall, formerly of New Road. This is to be installed shortly on the High Street.

Thanks are especially due to Councillor Hugh Baker, who led this project from its inception as part of the Parish Pan in 2005.

OTHER PARISH PLAN ITEMS

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 in 2005. 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.

GRANTS APPLIED FOR

British Legion Stairlift Appeal.

During the last year we helped the British Legion find a grant to assist their fundraising efforts for this project and, once the stairlift was installed we made a grant from the Parish Plan fund towards the cost.

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 within the budget constraints we have imposed, in line with other committees, in order to reduce our precept during the current economic climate.

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.