



**MINUTES OF BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27th NOVEMBER 2024.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Cllr. Sheelagh Pegg (Chair): Cllr. Colin Morris :
Cllr. Terry Potter : Cllr. Susan Moore: Cllr. Danny Lewis:

Ward Councillor/s:

Cllr. Christopher Hilliard (Pitsea South-East Ward)

Parish Council Clerk/RFO: Mrs Christine Barlow

Public attendance: Seven (7)

MINUTES

66/24 Apologies for absence:

Parish Councillor Sally McCornack: Parish Councillor Sue Edmondson: Essex County Councillor Aidan McGurran (Pitsea South-East)

67/24 Declarations of Member's interest: To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other pecuniary interests or non-pecuniary interests by members relating to any agenda items.

None received.

68/24 Minutes of Parish Council meetings: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2024 and Chair to sign.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2024 were accepted, by all present, as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed to confirm by Councillor Sheelagh Pegg, Chair.

69/24 Public Forum: Residents have the opportunity to raise questions of a general nature not discussed during the meeting. (The time allowed for this item is 15 minutes)

(i) A resident informed that a second incident of vandalism had occurred at St Margarets Church. On this occasion, the individuals, two teenagers aged 15 and 16 years old, had entered the Church through a broken window and destroyed items inside. However, it was reported the culprits had been apprehended and had been charged by the Police for the offences.

A Facebook “Go Fund Me” page had been set up after the initial occurrence of vandalism and had now reached over £10,000 in donations. Money raised would go towards installing CCTV and restoring damage not covered by building Insurance.

The Clerk informed that she had assisted the Church Warden in obtaining a CCTV quotation from Assured Fire and Safety, the same company the Parish Council uses for its CCTV in Westlake Park.

(ii) A resident enquired as to who had cut the highways verges on the London Road and in North Benfleet. The Parish Clerk informed that following a request to Basildon Council Officers it had been a joint exercise between Essex County Council Highways and ID Verdi. The encroaching shrubs from private land between Kelly Road and the London Road still remain outstanding and a request has been made for assistance from Basildon Council to prune the vegetation. This work, when approved, would possibly be undertaken by Basildon Council’s Pride Team.

(iii) Councillor Lewis asked if the streetlights in Pound Lane, which were not operational, had been reported. The Parish Clerk advised the lights 1 to 5 Pound Lane and the column on the corner of Page Road had been reported and had been identified on the ECC Highways website as not working. If the column numbers of any lights not working could be provided to her, she would report them on the Essex County Council website.

(iv) It was with sadness that one of the Parish Council’s volunteers, John Chinnrey, had sadly died recently after a short illness. Condolences had been passed on to John’s wife, Marian, by the Parish Clerk.

70/24 Ward/County Councillor update: Borough/County Councillors to address the meeting.

Councillor Hilleard advised he had been working behind the scenes since being elected in May and he had been catching up on his responsibilities as a Borough Councillor. He had noted the comments about the streetlights and would pass this information onto Councillor McGurran for his attention.

Councillor McGurran, (Basildon Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure) in his absence, had asked Councillor Hilleard to inform the meeting that proposed changes to rubbish and recycling collections will commence in the New Year. Basildon Borough Council Cabinet will discontinue the blue and white recycling sacks and in the short/medium term replace them with single-use recyclable bags. In addition at the December Cabinet meeting it would be announced that residual waste weekly collections would be re-introduced.

For matters in regard to Essex County Council issues, Councillor McGurran could be contacted via his Essex County Council email address:
cllr.aidan.mcgurran@essex.gov.uk.

Councillor Hilleard was asked if, after the initial roll out of sacks had been provided, further sacks would be provided free-of-charge. Councillor Hilliard was unable to confirm if this would be the case, would make enquires regarding

the new process and update on this.

71/24 PARISH CLERK'S REPORT: To update on business since the last meeting on 30th September 2024.

Verge cutting and pruning had already been covered in the Public Forum

- The Parish Clerk advised she had emailed Essex County Councillor McGurran for an update on repairs to footpaths in the Parish but to date had not received any reply. Councillor Hilleard commented that he had noticed the condition of some roadways in the area were also long-standing issues but appeared to now being addressed.
- The Clerk informed she was chasing for an update on repairs to the Vehicle Activation Sign (VAS) in Pound Lane which had being non-operational since before lock-down, despite several requests to repair. The matter had been reported at a Local Highways Panel meeting via a Councillor Representative from the Association of Local Councils on the Parish Councils behalf. Also, an update on a Highway survey undertaken in 2023 had been requested.
- Following the purchase of a new sign for the Junior Play Area and replacement Net Swing chains Basildon Council have agreed to install the sign and chains. The parts had been purchased as part of ring-fenced money for the repairs to the equipment in the 2023/24 accounts.

72/24 FINANCE REPORT: Responsible Finance Officer to provide a summary of the Parish Council's financial position and advise on other relevant finance matters.

(i) To receive an update on the Parish Council's current financial position.

A monthly report was provided to Parish Councillors in respect of income and expenditure as follows for the period to 27th November 2024.

	£
Balance at Bank as of 22 nd October 2024	30,814.61
Balance at Bank as of 27 th November 2024	25,894.10
Expenditure:	5,570.51
Income:	650.00
Expenditure:	
GM Staff Wages (October 2024)	224.00
Clerks Net Salary + Office/Tel/BB Allowance (October 2024)	897.25
(RCOH) Invoice – NDO Consultancy Payment	3,600.00
ANSVAR Annual Insurance – Business Services at CAS Ltd.	<u>849.26</u>
	5,570.51
Income:	
Fun Walk Sponsorship	630.00
Fun Walk Sponsorship (Cheque)	<u>20.00</u>
	650.00

Councillors were informed that £8,000 of the current account balance was ring-fenced for work being undertaken in regard to the NDO by the Parish Council's consultants Oniell Homer.

The total amount of sponsorship raised by The Fun Walk was £850 and it was anticipated that an additional amount would be received from The Fun Walk Trust's business sponsors. It was AGREED at a previous meeting that any monies raised would be further earmarked for replacing essential equipment in the Junior Play Area.

The Responsible Finance Officer informed the Parish Council she had received a quotation for renewal of the Parish Council Insurance from Insurance Brokers, Gallaghers, in the sum of £1,222. The company were unable to provide a reduction in cost and a more competitive quote from ANSVAR (part of the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group) had been obtained, thus reducing the premium to £849.26 and providing the same level of cover. In addition, the premium cost would be fixed for three years. Councillors were in **AGREEMENT** with this arrangement.

(ii) To discuss and consider the Precept amount for the financial year 2025/2026 based on the Draft Budget Forecast for 2025/2026

An income and expenditure breakdown was provided to Councillors for the period 1st April to 31st October 2024 together with Bank Ledger payments, a Parish Precept Calculator for 2025/26 and a Draft Budget Forecast and recommendation Report (attached Appendix A). The report advised that in order to cover expected costs in 2025/2026, an increase of approximately £5.00 per annum based on a Band D property calculation provided by Basildon Council was required to cover these costs. This would increase the amount payable on Band D properties from £36.00 per annum to £41.49 per annum. The overall amount of increase for Bands E- H would be slightly higher and below Band D would be less.

The Chair pointed out that due to the Parish Council setting its Precept exceptionally low at its inception in 2010, it had become difficult over recent years to keep up with increasing costs without the support of additional external grant funding for projects, which were of benefit to the community but not covered by existing local authority contracts. This had been successful in some respects but was becoming more difficult to obtain. Councillors agreed to defer any decision on the Precept until the December meeting in order to consider the information provided.

Councillor Hilleard suggested that in respect of funding some may be available from the new Area Committees and if the project met the criteria the Parish Council could apply.

(iii) To appoint an Internal auditor for 2025/2026 Audit.

The Responsible Finance Officer requested the Council to appoint their Internal Auditor for the 2024/2025 Annual Audit. Heather Healis, of Healis and Lodge,

had carried out the Internal audit of the 2023/2024 and the RFO suggested Heelis and Lodge be re-engaged to carry out the Internal audit of 2024/2025. Councillors present **AGREED** with the recommendation.

Proposed: Councillor Sheelagh Pegg: **Seconded:** Councillor Moore.

73/24 PLANNING: To receive comments on Planning Applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended):

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 24/01243/FULL: Demolition; repair works; construction of new buildings.

Change of use from agricultural to Classes E.(a), E.(b), E.(g)(i)(ii)(iii), and F.2(b); and provision of related infrastructure including: boundary treatments, landscaping, car, and cycle parking, upgraded vehicular and pedestrian access, servicing, and other associated works - Bradfields Farm, Burnt Mills Road, North Benfleet, Basildon

The application was to replace existing buildings, redesign the farm buildings and improve existing facilities including creating a retail unit (Farm Shop). Although Councillors raised no objections, in principle, but concerns were raised regarding any increase of traffic using Burnt Mills Road as a result of increased business in the Farm Shop and the lack of any information concerning allocated parking for customers on the site.

The Parish Clerk was asked to contact Bradfields Farm for more information regarding the concerns raised. It was however **AGREED** to inform Basildon Council Planning, subject to the matters raised, the Parish Council were not opposed to the application in principle.

74/24 PLANNING UPDATES AND COMMENTS: To receive updates and comments on planning applications discussed at previous meetings.

The meeting was informed regarding the following notifications received.

PLANNING APPLICATION APPEAL (under Householders Appeals Service): REF: APP/V1505/D/24/3354989) against Basildon Borough Council's decision to refuse planning permission 24/00653/FULL - Raised roof form to provide first floor accommodation including replacement single storey front extension and single storey rear extension - 1 Lawrence Road, Bowers Gifford – Pending decision.

APPEAL REF: APP/V1505/C/24/3346842 ENFORCEMENT NOTICE: 24/00037/NOTICE - Land at Sadlers Park, London Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex SS13 2HD - **ALLEGED BREACH(ES):** Failure to comply with conditions one (1) and two (2) of planning permission granted on appeal ref app/v1505/c/02/1089677 which states respectively: (condition 1) – 'not more than four mobile homes and four touring caravans shall be stationed on the site at any one time' and (condition 2) – there shall be no more than three residential plots on the site and the eastern half of the site shall always be kept as grassland.

The Parish Council had sent their response to the Planning Inspectorate reconfirming previous objections.

Planning Application REF: 24/01064/LDCP: To establish the lawfulness of the use of the land in garden for siting a mobile home for use ancillary to the main dwelling – Badachro, Burnt Mills Road , North Benfleet, Basildon Essex SS12 9JX – **Granted**

75/24 NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDER: To update on Technical Support provided by AECOM and advise on the progress of the NDO.

A request had been made to Locality, a government funded Neighbourhood Planning Organisation, for Technical Support regarding a more specific NDO Flood Risk Assessment in the plotlands. The application had been successful, and AECOM had been appointed to provide the aforementioned Technical Support under the umbrella of Locality at no cost to the Parish Council.

The Parish Clerk had met via Zoom with AECOM, their Associates and Parish Council Consultants, ONiell Homer, in order to discuss and identify information required as part of any elements of the revised Flood Risk Assessment Report. At this meeting the Clerk reported that a previous study in 2018, known as “ Where Water Goes “ and involving volunteer residents from the community, had mapped water courses across the Parish on behalf of Essex County Council and this might prove particularly useful. Information regarding this report was provided to AECOM to assist with the current assessment.

An email had been sent to the Leader of Basildon Council, Councillor Gavin Callaghan, to request a meeting in order to bring him up to date with the Parish Council NDO process but to date no reply had been received. The Parish Council would also like to meet with its Ward Councillors to update them on the NDO and Councillor Hilleard was asked to assist in brokering this arrangement.

76/24 BASILDON BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18): To discuss the publication of the Local Plan consultation from 18th November 2024 – 12th January 2025

Councillor Morris expressed concerns , on behalf of the Parish Council, that the timing of the consultation, despite the two-week extension, was ill conceived over the Christmas period when residents would likely show very little interest in making comments in respect of the on-line consultation. It was felt that more publicity was needed to highlight the importance of responding to the consultation. Comments to this effect would be included on the Parish Council website as additional support.

Concerns were raised that land, in the emerging Local Plan identified as H8 and H23, to the west of Bowers Gifford, would coalesce the Parish with Pitsea and the Parish would lose its own identity. The National Planning Policy Framework stated that the Green Belt should be protected but the Draft Local Plan proposals removed the principles of protecting the Green Belt covering the Parish, completely. Concerns were also raised regarding the numbers for development in the plotland areas which were considered to be incorrectly stated.

Councillor Morris also considered the views of the community had been disregarded in the Draft Local Plan proposals.
Councillor Hilleard was asked to interject and request a meeting was held locally in regard to Basildon’s Draft Local Plan proposals.

77/24 PARISH COUNCIL SUMMER EVENT 2025: To set a date for the Parish Council Annual Summer Event in 2025 and discuss any other event proposals.

(i) Annual Parish Council Event:

The date of the Event was **AGREED** as agreed as 3rd August 2025

(ii) Change of domain name:

It was the intension of the Parish Council to move from its current Gmail domain address and website host e-voice to a .gov.uk address and managed website to maintain best practice and professionalism. A move to the website will give the Parish Council more credibility and any visitor to the website or recipient of an email will know communications are secure and legitimate and they are engaging with an official part of government.

The new address and website will also meet the requirements of WCAG 2.2 AA which at the moment our free website does not meet. There will be initial start-up costs of around £800 but some costs could be offset or reduced via a small grant of £100, streamlining, and in-house training. There will also be ongoing costs estimated to be around £300 per annum.

Having received two written quotations from a list of Appointed Registrars from Gov.UK the RFO had contacted other Clerks who had used or were using the two suggested companies and recommended Aubergine having consulted the Chair and Vice-Chair. The RFO put the recommendation to Parish Council and all present **AGREED** to the move and appoint Aubergine.

Proposed: Councillor Morris **Seconded:** **Seconded:** Councillor Danny Lewis

(iii) Parish Newsletter: As a conclusion the Parish Clerk advised a newsletter would be published before Christmas.

78/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: To confirm the date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 18th December 2024.

Signed Chair, Councillor Sheelagh Pegg

Date: 27th November 2024