



**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 24th NOVEMBER 2021 AT 7.30 PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillors: B. Foster: C. Morris: S. Pegg:

Parish Council Clerk/RFO: Mrs Christine Barlow

Ward Councillor/s: None

Public attendance: Seven

88/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Parish Councillor Terry Potter: Parish Councillor Robert Smillie:
County Councillor Aiden McGurran: Councillor Luke Mackenzie (Pitsea South-East Ward and County Council Councillor) and Councillor Craig Rimmer (Pitsea South-East Ward Councillor) all of whom had previous County and/or Borough Council Meetings/engagements.

89/21 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

90/21 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES: To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 27th October 2021 and Chair to sign.

The minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on 27th October 2021 were **AGREED** as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed to confirm by Councillor Bernard Foster , Chair.

91/21 PUBLIC FORUM: To enable residents to raise issues of concern with Parish Councillors (The time allowed for this item is 15 minutes)

(i) **Streetlight:** At the September meeting a Burnt Mills Road resident commented that Councillor Mackenzie had agreed to look at the streetlamp opposite his property which had not been replaced. The resident advised that contractors had attended with a new lamp post and light and then driven off without carrying out the repair. **Action:** The Parish Clerk advised she would endeavour to contact Councillor Mackenzie and ECC for an update.

(ii) **Oil spillage:** The same resident advised that having raised an issue regarding a spillage of oil on the verge near the entrance gate to Bradfields Farm and concerns of contamination of the land and ditches, at a previous meeting, it appeared no action had

been taken to investigate the spillage. The Parish Clerk responded by advising that she had contacted ECC Watercourse Regulation Engineer, Basildon Council Street Scene Officer and the Environmental Agency and raised the issue and the matter was under investigation. **Action:** The Parish Clerk informed she would contact the relevant parties again and request an update.

(iii) **7.5 Tonne sign:** A resident commented that despite raising the matter the 7.5 Tonne sign adjacent to the junction of Pound Lane and turning into Burnt Mills Road being obscured by vegetation nothing had been done. It was pointed out that the issue had been reported to Essex County Council. The Parish Council would also make enquiries regarding ownership of the land as it was the Riparian owners' responsibility to keep their boundary clear of any obstruction.

(iv) The Parish Clerk was asked if she had received any photographs of the large lorries (more than 7.5 tonne) using Burnt Mills Road as a cut through, despite load restrictions being imposed. The Parish Clerk advised she had not received any photographs to date.

(v) **Noise complaint:** A complaint was made regarding a loud tannoy noise in the early hours of the morning and throughout the day reportedly coming from the Yodel Distribution Centre in Courtauld Road **Action:** The Parish Clerk advised she would raise the issue with Basildon Council Environmental Health Officers and ask them to investigate.

(vi) **Speeding Traffic in Pound Lane:** A resident, living in Pound Lane, reported that she had observed and recorded in November, 4126 cars which she considered to be speeding past her property and since June 2021 had recorded a total 20,170 cars, at random times over a period of 27 hours speeding through the Lane. Motorbikes were also racing up and down indiscriminately. Councillors informed that it was anticipated that, providing volunteers could be recruited the Parish Council would launch the Community Speed Watch Programme in the New Year along with some training for the volunteers.

(vii) **Dog bins:** A resident asked if a dog bin could be provided in Pound Lane. Councillor Foster informed the Parish Council had considered the installation of dog bins in the past, but the cost to the Parish Council of providing the bins, encouraging people to use the dog bins and getting the bins emptied by Basildon Council was not practical. However, Councillor Foster advised it may be possible to include something in the Neighbourhood Plan.

(viii) **Diversion signs:** Councillor Pegg commented that the Diversion Signs left by contractors in Lower Avenue had still not been collected by the contractors. The Parish Clerk advised she would endeavour to obtain a telephone number for the contractors and contact them.

(ix) **Elm Road:** Councillor Pegg also reported that a ditch which ran behind Elm Road to Burnt Mills Road contained an unidentified cloudy substance. **Action:** The Parish Clerk advised she would report the matter to Basildon Council Environmental Health department.

(x) **Public Right of Way No 146:** A resident commented that the Public Right of Way which ran from Elm Road to Burnt Mills Road was overgrown and impassable and blocked with corralled horses. The Parish Clerk advised she had reported the matter to the ECC Rights of Way Officer in the past and would contact the Officer again for an update.

A resident reported that there were a number of streetlights not working in locations in the surrounding area outside of the Parish. The meeting was advised that any lights outside of the Parish Council boundary should be reported on the

Essex County Council website (<https://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us>) identifying the location and the number on the streetlight in question.

92/21 WARD/COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE: Time is set aside for Borough/County Councillors to address the meeting.

There were no Ward or County Councillors present due to attending meetings/events with their respective Borough or County Councils.

93/21 PARISH CLERK'S REPORT: The Parish Clerk to advise Councillors on business undertaken since the last meeting and any other relevant matters.

The Parish Clerk advised that since the previous meeting she had raised the following matters, including some of those reported in the Public Forum, with the respective organisations.

(i) The Church Road underpass refurbishment work had now started. The footpath though to Church Road had been re-laid and the Graffiti had been painted out. Further work to repair the lights had been postponed due to an issue with the carriageway above the underpass and further investigation but the Parish Council had been advised work was programmed to restart again in 2022 financial year.

(ii) As reported in the Public Forum, providing volunteers can be recruited again the Community Speed Watch Programme will commence in 2022.

(iii) MJ Memorials were working on The John Cole Memorial Stone, which was vandalised during the summer. Lengthy discussions had taken place between the Parish Council and a representative of the Grenadier Guards in respect of the inscription and it was anticipated a new stone would be put in place in the New Year.

(iv) It was intended to publish an edition of the Bowers Bugle newsletter in December.

(v) A poster asking for donations for a Christmas Giving Tree to be delivered to a vulnerable child this Christmas had been received from Rachel Newman , Basildon PCSO and this would be displayed in the Parish Council noticeboard.

(vi) An application for a grant to purchase equipment, currently on loan from a third-party for the Parish Council Handyperson Service, has been successful and an award of £2500 had been granted. A variety of jobs had been carried out over the last three months as part of the new service in order to improve various locations in the Parish. During the Public Forum part of the meeting, it was report that some of the Public Rights of Way needed to be cleared and this may be a project for future joint working.

94/21 FINANCE REPORT: To receive a summary of the Parish Council's current financial position and any other related financial matters.

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

A summary of the Parish Council's financial position was presented to Councillors, by the Responsible Finance Officer, as detailed below:

	£
Balance at Bank as of 22 nd September 2021	14,383.60
Balance at Bank as of 22 nd October 2021	22,753.96

	£
Expenditure:	2,011.05
Income:	10,381.41

Expenditure:

(611) HMRC Staff Tax & Emprs. NI.	454.55
(612) Handyperson Net Pay (20hrs per month) + Expenses	221.95
(613) Clerks Net Salary (Sept) Plus BB/Tel/ Office Use	765.55
(614) Savage Architectural – Westlake Park container repair	120.00
(615) PIP Entertainer	250.00
(616) Survey Monkey – Play Consultation	99.00
(617) Parish-in-Bloom Vouchers	<u>100.00</u>
Total Expenditure:	2011.05

Income:

Second Half- Year Precept	8,913.71
Picnic-in-the-Park Revenue	47.70
Fun Walk Sponsorship (Defibrillator)	1,170.00
Picnic-in-the-Park Resident Donation	<u>250.00</u>
Total income:	10,381.41

- (ii) To consider the budget forecast for 2022/2023 based on the figures presented and discuss the amount of Precept to be set for the fiscal year 2022/2023.

A budget forecast and Precept Report (attached Appendix A) were presented to Councillors. The purpose of the report was to seek the approval of the Parish Council to set the Precept amount for the financial year 2022/2023. The draft budget identified income and expenditure for the half-year to 30th September and estimated income and expenditure to the end of the financial year to 31st March 2022 and estimated figures moving forward to 2022/2023. The report set out the recommendations from the Parish Council's Responsible Finance Officer for the 2022/2023 financial year and recommended an increase in the Precept amount based on calculations provided by Basildon Borough Council. The draft budget figures for 2022/2023 included income secured as part of a ringfenced grant to cover the wages of the Parish Council's Handyperson for a twelve-month period and anticipated grant funding from Basildon Council to assist the Neighbourhood Plan moving forward. The Responsible Finance Officer recommended in order to cover estimated future costs an increase of 9.69% in the Precept to cover increased costs for 2022/2023 was required. This amount would yield an additional £2045.40 but in real terms would mean an increase of £2.52 per annum on a Band D property from the current amount of £25.29 per annum to £28.17 per annum. Bands below Band D paying lower and properties in E,F,G & H paying slightly more.

Councillors discussed the recommendations but decided they were not comfortable with the recommendation, although they did recognise that an increase to cover rising costs was required and it was proposed to set the Precept increase at 5.69 % instead. In monetary terms this would provide an additional income of £1245.76 and the amount of Precept payable for a Band D property increased from £25.29 to £26.73 per annum an overall increase of £1.44.

Proposed : Councillor Foster Seconded: Councillor Pegg.

Therefore, the overall Precept amount for 2022/2023 was set at £19073.19 and **AGREED**.

- (iii) To discuss increasing the hourly rate of the Parish Council's Handy Person following the successful completion of his three-month contract.

The Parish Council's Handy Person had successfully completed a three-month probationary period with effect from 31st October 2021 and Councillors were asked to confirm their **AGREEMENT** to increase his hourly rate to the full rate of £14 per hour. Councillors were in agreement that the exercise to employ an additional member of staff to provide the Handyperson Service had proved very successful and the work undertaken to date of a high standard.

All Councillors were in **AGREEMENT** to the increase.

95/21 PLANNING: Councillors to review and comment on Planning Application/s under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 21/01493/FULL :

Proposed single storey side and rear extensions - Little Jem Bungalow, Southend Arterial Road, North Benfleet, Essex

Councillors had discussed the Planning application and their comments had been sent to Basildon Council prior to the meeting to meet the Planning timeframe. Councillors had recommended refusal on the grounds of:

(a) **Design:** The standard of design and the effects of the installation of a pitched roof instead of a flat would be more aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the original design of the property and the fact that it would appear the area/dimensions of the flat roof equal the total area of the original pitched roof and would questionably fall outside standards of good design.

(b) **The effects on the openness of the Green Belt:** The property appears closer to the boundary than 2.5 meters as stipulated in policy BAS GB4 and by filling the width of the plot to a greater depth it is considered would continue to degrade the visual openness.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 21/01477/OUT

Outline planning application for a new 70 bed care home, 42 assisted living units and 13 retirement bungalows/villas (all Use Class C2), together with vehicular access onto Ilfracombe Avenue, a new school parking area for parents and pupils of St. Margaret's C of E Primary School, new nature area, landscaping and communal facilities including a Day Care Centre and cinema room. All matters reserved except for access. - Land East of Ilfracombe Avenue, Bowers Gifford, Basildon.

To minute the Parish Council response in respect of the above planning application

The Parish Council had discussed the above application, taking into account residents comments made at a recent meeting with the developers and current

planning policy. Their recommendation was to refusal of the application on the following grounds:

(i) The site was within the Parish Greenbelt and therefore, by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) definition, is inappropriate development and has failed to prove the exceptional circumstances required to achieve consent.

(ii) Paragraph 130 of the NPPF demands a high standard of design that fits into the surrounding architecture. Whilst the lowering of grade by 1.2m is conciliatory and helps achieve an agreeable overall height, the use of flat roofing to consolidate this gain in height neither fits into the existing architecture of the area nor is it aesthetically pleasing. The natural constraints of this site prohibit the high standards of architectural design that are now the minimum level of requirement within both the proposals in the Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet Neighbourhood Plan and Basildon Borough Council's Local Plan.

(iii) The work undertaken by the applicants in an endeavour to reduce St Margaret's C of E Primary School parking problems at school times is recognised and appreciated. However, it is felt that the effectiveness of any partial reduction to resolve this issue is impossible to judge and without parking enforcement, will have limited effect and usage. This section of London Road is also often congested or static, and to introduce an unknown number of vehicles into such an environment is considered potentially dangerous, and currently the only element of Highways concern recognised as unacceptable.

(iv) The Parish Council considered that although this type of development is welcome within the Parish, the placing of this facility on this site is inappropriate and there are more appropriate sites where it might be included as an integral part of the Neighbourhood Plan and the community.

(v) The site was not selected as part of the Publication Local Plan and the 2020 Neighbourhood Plan scoping report, identified this particular site as significant in the avoidance of coalescence with Pitsea, being the only natural boundary break between the areas post Local Plan development.

The above views of the Parish Council had been forwarded to Basildon Council Planning Officers for consideration in order to meet the prescribed timetable date.

96/21 PLANNING UPDATES AND COMMENTS: To receive updates and comments on planning applications discussed at previous meetings.

Planning application No: 21/01466/FULL: Installation of an awning to the west and south elevation of commercial building. Burwood Works Windsor Road Bowers Gifford Basildon Essex SS13 2LH – Refused

Planning Application No: 21/00328/LDCE: To establish the lawfulness of the Construction/ Occupation of a dwelling house for more than 4 years - Elm Trees, 2 Elm Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon Essex SS13 2LY – Granted

97/21 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE: The Parish Council Chair to appraise the meeting on any new progress.

A link has been provided to the Parish Council by Basildon Council regarding an assessment document by Essex County Council Highways for an upgrade of Pound Lane. The aim by ECC was to solve the existing problems with Pound Lane and the surrounding infrastructure. The document was available for public view on the Basildon Council website within Local Plan documents (https://www.basildon.gov.uk/media/10777/PSD035-Pound-Lane-Technicalnote/pdf/PSD035_Pound_Lane_Technical_Note.pdf?m=637699287102370000)

The Parish Council had received the Technical Report with mixed scepticism. Councillors and Steering Group members would be reviewing the documentation and discussing its content at the next Steering meeting. It was also proposed to review the findings of the assessment with the Parish Council's consultant and an expert on Highway matters which would identify any impact of the report on the Neighbourhood Plan.

98/21 DEFIBRILLATOR UPDATE: To update Councillors regarding the funding.

Funding over recent months has resulted in the Parish Council being able to purchase two Defibrillators for the Village. The Fun Walk Sponsorship Fund raised £1270 and a Facebook "Just Giving Page" set up by the family of Charlie Baldwin of Westlake Avenue, who sadly died recently, had resulted in a further £1377 being raised. In addition, a further £500 has been received from a local businessman recently to boost the funding. Further money had also been pledged. The London Hearts Charity organisation had provided a very competitive quotation and following a discussion they had reduced their original quote for the Defibrillators by a further £100 each. The cost of the two Defibrillators is now £2,566.00 but installation costs will still need to be added.

99/21 LOCAL HIGHWAY SCHEMES 2022-2023: To identify potential Local Highway Schemes to be put forward for funding in the fiscal year 2022-2023 via Essex County Council Local Highways Panel.

Due to Essex County Councillors not being present it was not possible to discuss with them the schemes which could be included in the Local Highway Schemes for 2022-2023. More information was needed but in their absence, based on previous information, it was suggested that support might be provided for (i) the repair of the Vehicle Activation Sign or installation of Speed Cameras in Pound Lane and Burnt Mills Road (ii) A Traffic Regulation Order in Pound Lane (ii) A location sign for Westlake Park (iii) the installation of footpaths on verges in the north of the village for the safety of pedestrians **Action:** The Parish Clerk to contact the respective Essex County Councillors and enquire if the areas suggested were part of the Local Highways Panel remit.

100/21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting as 8th December 2021.

The next meeting would take place on 8th December 2021. This date was a little earlier than normal due to the Christmas period.

NB: Note added after the above meeting:
8th December 2021 meeting cancelled due to government Covid – 19 guidelines.

**APPROVAL OF BOWERS GIFFORD & NORTH BENFLEET PARISH COUNCIL
PRECEPT 2022/2023**

AGENDA ITEM NO: 94/21(ii)

MEETING: PARISH COUNCIL

DATE: 24th NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT BY: RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Council for the setting of the Council's 2022/23 Precept thereby allowing the submission of the Precept Request Form to Basildon Borough Council and the setting of the Parish Council Precept Amount

2.0 Background to the Report

2.1 The Council is required to set its Precept each year in accordance with statutory requirements and the local timetable set by the council tax billing authority Basildon Borough Council.

2.2 An email was received from Basildon Borough Council Finance Officer on 3rd November 2021 formally requesting notification of the Council's Precept for the 2022/2023 financial year. This information is provided to Parish Councillors for discussion at their Parish Council meeting on 24th November together with estimated figures for the financial year to 31st March 2022 and a budget forecast for the year 2022/2023.

2.3 This report requests the Council to formally set the Precept and therefore the Parish Council proportion of the Council Tax for 2022/2023, and, in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, provides assurance to the Council in doing so, regarding the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of the Council's balances and reserves.

2.4 Once the Precept is agreed the Clerk to the Parish Council will sign the required documentation which will be forward to Basildon Borough Council Finance Officer by email to confirm the amount of Precept agreed by the Parish Council and which will be payable by "chargeable" Council Tax households within the Parish of Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet with effect from 1st April 2022.

3.0 2022/23 Precept

3.1 The Council Precept represents the amount that is required to be raised from council taxpayers in Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet to meet the estimated gross cost of providing Parish Council services in 2022/2023, after deducting the income

expected to be received and incorporating a prudent contingency sum to cover unexpected costs.

4.0 2022/2023 Parish Council Tax

4.1 The Council Tax Base is the statutory calculation of the number of 'chargeable' households for each parish in the county and is used by Basildon Borough Council to calculate the council tax in each area. (See breakdown at bottom of the page)

4.2 The total number of properties is adjusted to take account of the number of households in receipt of council tax benefits, discounts and exemptions, as well as any empty properties, and the council tax collection rate.

4.3 The Parish Council Tax is calculated by dividing by 9 the Council Precept by the Tax Base figure. This provides the Band D Council Tax figure.

4.4 The draft budget as presented and attached takes into consideration, where possible to predict, the income and expenditure expected in 2022/2023 but in the light of costs to be incurred in respect of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan care should be taken in the light that any expenditure is estimated and could increase or decrease over time. The Handyperson Service which is currently grant funded and is in its' infancy has proved successful to the community and there would be a benefit to continue this initiative via the Council budget after current funding has been exhausted.

5.0 Recommendation:

5.1 In order to meet estimated costs for the financial year 2022/23 it is recommended that the Precept amount for a Band D property is increased by £2.52 from £25.29 to £27.81 per annum an overall increase of 9.96%. and which will yield a total of £19,843.83 per annum, an increase of £2,016.40 per annum over 2021/2022 in order to retain the level of finances year on year .

5.2 The rationale behind the proposals is that overall costs which include staff costs, insurance, maintenance, equipment replacement, day to day running costs and events are increasing year on year. Grant applications have been successful over the years cannot be relied upon, going forward, to fund the Neighbourhood Plan and rising costs without a substantial increase.

Total number of properties within Parish as provided by Basildon Council

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
60	26	138	216	166	119	25	4	754

NB: The recommendation, as above was noted but Parish Councillors decided to set the increase at a lower amount of 5.69% on a Band D property - Item 94.21 (ii)

Signed Councillor Bernard Foster, Chair

Date: 26th January 2022