

**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET
PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING
HELD AT THE BENBOW CLUB BOWERS GIFFORD
ON WEDNESDAY 31 MAY 2017 AT 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT:

Councillors: R.Smillie: B. Foster: T. Potter:

Parish Council Clerk: Mrs Christine Barlow

Residents present: 11

11/17 Introductions - To welcome all to the Parish Council Annual meeting.

Councillor Robert Smillie welcomed all to the Parish Council Annual Meeting and then stepped down as Chair.

12/17 Election of Chair.

Councillor Robert Smillie was proposed as Chair unopposed. **Proposed:** Councillor Sheelagh Pegg: **Seconded:** Councillor Terry Potter.

Councillor Smillie was re-elected to the position of Chair for the Parish Council year 2017-2018.

13/17 Declaration of Acceptance - Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office by elected Chair.

Councillor Robert Smillie signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Mrs Christine Barlow, Parish Clerk, countersigned the declaration as a true acknowledgement.

14/17 Election of Vice-Chair.

Councillor Bernard Foster was proposed as vice – chair unopposed. **Proposed:** Councillor Terry Potter: **Seconded:** Councillor Sheelagh Pegg.

15/17 Apologies for absence: Councillor Nigel Tyler due to work commitments.

16/17 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.

A declaration of interest was received from Councillor Foster in respect of Planning Application (17/00557/FULL) Sunnyview, Osborne Road, Bowers

Gifford, Basildon.

17/17 Appointment of Representatives – To appoint representatives to the following areas of interest:

The following Councillors were nominated to represent the Parish Council on the following external or internal groups:

- Parish Council's Planning Advisory Group – Councillors Foster, Tyler, Pegg and Potter.
- Association of Basildon Local Councils - Councillor Bernard Foster.
- Bus Transport Forum: Councillor Sheelagh Pegg.
- Basildon Council Liaison Group: Councillor Bernard Foster and Councillor Sheelagh Pegg.
- Other groups where applicable – None

Councillors were in full agreement to accept the nominations as stated unopposed.

18/17 Public Forum: To enable residents to raise issues of concern with Parish Councillors (The time allowed for this item is 15 minutes)

(i) A resident raised concerns regarding the long grass at the corner of Burnt Mills Road /Pound Lane which was causing a sight hazard. The Parish Clerk advised she had requested the corner to be cut earlier in the week and expected it to be done within the next few days.

(iii) A resident again requested a No Through Road sign for William Road leading into Westlake Avenue due to the fact drivers were unaware that William Road was not a cut through. The Clerk advised she had already made a request for similar signs to be erected in Highlands Road and Kelly Road but she would raise the requests again for all three roads with Essex County Council.

(iv) A resident stated that there were still parking problems in William Road. The Clerk advised the matter had been raised with South Essex Parking Partnership on several occasions but as with many highway problems it takes a long time to get addressed.

(v) A resident asked when the damaged net swing in the junior play area in Westlake Park was to be replaced. The Parish Clerk confirmed the swing would be replaced when the contractor was in the area as this was part of the quotation to reduce the cost of installation.

(vi) It was reported that there was a large pothole in the road near to the St Andrews Care Home bus stop. The Parish Clerk advised she would register a report on the Essex County Council Highways website.

(vii) Rubbish had once again accumulated outside Pound Lane News. The Clerk had been advised that a Section 34 notice had previously been issued to the shop keeper and a trade agreement between the shop and Basildon Council was now in force. The Clerk reported that on being advised of the problem she had already

contacted Basildon Council for more information on the arrangement.

- 19/17 Minutes of Parish Council meetings held on Wednesday 26th April 2017:** The Council to receive a copy of the Annual Parish Meeting minutes held on 26th April 2017 and approve the accuracy of the Parish Council Meeting minutes held subsequent to the aforesaid meeting.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Parish Council Meeting on 26th April 2017 were both duly signed by Councillor Smillie, Chair, as being an accurate record of each meeting with the **AGREEMENT** of all Councillors present.

- 20/17 Parish Clerks Report:** To report on business undertaken since the last meeting and agreed dates for Parish Council future meetings.

The Parish Clerk reported on the following business undertaken since the last meeting.

- (i) She advised it had once again been a very busy month during which she had (i) met with Councillors and residents on the Neighbourhood Plan (ii) met with consultants in their Offices in London and (iii) with Parish Councillors met with Officers from Basildon Council to update on Basildon Council Officers on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan (iv) along with Councillor Pegg had met with Offices from Essex County Council Flood Protection Team and the Environment Agency to discuss flooding issues in the plotland areas. (v) and had prepared and completed the Annual Audit of accounts.
- (ii) Following an enquiry to Essex County Council highways the Clerk advised that she had been informed that work to install barriers at either end of Old Church Road including repair of the underpass would commence on 5th June and that the work should be completed by 20th June.
- (iii) Basildon Council's Crunch (Mobile Tip) Service would be in Westlake Park on 10th May from 9 a.m. – 12 noon but the service will not take liquids or hazardous substances.
- (iv) As a result of the Annual Parish Meeting and some publicity a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator had been recruited to cover some of the Parish. Neighbourhood Watch volunteers were needed in all areas of the Parish and two volunteers had subsequently come forward but more were needed. An article on Neighbourhood Watch would be placed in the Parish newsletter.
- (v) The Council had been notified that the Essex County Council Transport meeting would be held on 19th June in Chelmsford. The Clerk to provide Councillor Pegg, as the Council's transport representative, with details of the meeting and the agenda.
- (vi) A letter had been received from the Basildon Mayor's Office inviting Councillors to the Mayor's Civic Service on 26th June 2017 at St Martins Church. Councillors were asked to advise the Parish Clerk if they were

attending.

- (vii) The Clerk updated the Council to changes to the highways contractor for verge grass cutting. English Partnerships, who cut the highways verges previously around the Parish had merged with also sent an email and spoken to ID Verde concerning the overgrown vegetation at the junction of Burnt Mills Road & Pound Lane and been informed that the summer prune schedule of the rural verges in North Benfleet would commence in early June.
- (viii) The condition of footpaths in Kelly Road had been recorded on the Essex County Council Highways website.
- (ix) The Clerk reported that there had been a burglary in Clarence Road and the theft of a vehicle in Pound Lane.
- (x) Councillors were asked to sanction the Clerk attending a training session - Marketing Master Plan Class - in Great Dunmow on Saturday 10th June run by the Essex Association of Local Councils. A bursary to reduce the cost of the course by 75% to the Parish Council will be applied. Councillors raised no objections to the Clerk attending the course.

21/17 **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:
17/00557/FULL**

Proposed single storey side extension – Sunnyview, Osborne Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon

Councillor Foster had previously declared an interest in the

Councillors could not understand why the planning application referred to building an extension on a parcel of land that was not in the applicant's ownership and that the proposed side extension seemed to increase the property from a two to three bedroom dwelling instead of just adding a single extension. It was unclear from the information received if there were any restricted covenants on the land to limit development and it was also considered that the application might also constitute over development of the site.

However, subject to the above comments, the Parish Council raised no objections to the application and would leave the decision whether to grant or refuse to the Planning Committee.

21/17/1 **Planning decisions and comments** – To receive updates and comments on decisions in respect of planning applications discussed at previous meetings.

17/00464/FULL: Proposed single storey rear extension - 75 Highlands Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon Application: **Granted**

17/00344/FULL: Proposed construction of a detached chalet dwelling - Land Between The Whisperings And Celandine, Osborne Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon – Application: **Refused**

Further details regarding the applications could be found on Basildon Council's website by logging onto the planning portal.

22/17 Finance Report: The Responsible Finance Officer to advise on:

(i) The Parish Council's current financial position was advised as follows to Councillors present.

	£
Balance at Bank 21 st April 2017	16,089.41
Balance at Bank 26 th May 2017	23,502.28

Expenditure

Clerks Salary (April)	649.51
EALC/NALC Annual Affiliation	457.62
Dave Newman Contractor *(Bench Installation)	480.00
*Invoice issued to Essex Records Office for Payment.	

Income

Grant - Groundworks UK (Neighbourhood Plan)	9,000.00
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The Clerk advised that the Essex Records Officer had informed that they had not factored into their estimates the cost of installation of the Sonic Bench, a sum of £120.00. The Clerk asked Councillors to consider covering the additional cost from the Parish Council budget. Having considered this request Councillors **AGREED** to cover the installation cost of the Sonic Bench.

Proposed: Councillor Terry Potter **Seconded:** Councillor Robert Smillie.

(ii)The Internal Audit had been carried out satisfactorily on 10th May 2017 by Heelis & Lodge and copy of the Internal Auditors report was presented to Councillors (Attached Appendix A). There was one minor recommendation from the report regarding reflecting the receipt of the external auditors report in the minutes. This recommendation was noted by the Clerk.

(iii)To confirm the Parish Council's bank account signatories for 2017/18.

The bank signatories were confirmed by all present as: - Councillor Bernard Foster, Councillor Nigel Tyler and Councillor Sheelagh Pegg. It was noted that despite Councillor Pegg having taken a completed Mandate Form to the Pitsea Branch of Barclays Bank in order to register her as a signatory on the Parish Council's bank account and the local branch confirming to the Clerk that the forms were sent to the Mandate Team they appeared not to have reached their destination and may have to be completed again. The Parish Clerk was investigating the matter with the Mandate Team at Barclays.

23/17 Neighbourhood Planning: To update on the progress of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

As reported in the financial report a grant had been obtained to fund the cost of progressing a successful Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. A consultant Neil Homer from RCOH Limited, a London based firm with vast experience of successfully achieving Neighbourhood Plans across the country, had now been engaged and a meeting to set up a Task and Finish Group, made up of Councillors and 6 residents, had been held on 25th May. In order to obtain further the views of residents regarding development in the Parish a series of exhibitions/drop-in type sessions were to be held to put forward the vision and the aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. The exhibitions were seen as a simple way of informing residents of the development options available to the village, (i) where the village could be developed (ii) where development should take place (iii) what the plotlands would look like if developed and what the alternatives to H13 might be. It was anticipated that the preparation and activities to progress this stage of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan would take approximately six weeks and it was important for as many residents as possible to visit the exhibitions and express their views on the proposals. A short survey would be prepared asking residents to complete it and the survey would also be included in the next Parish Council newsletter and on the Council website where it could be completed online. There may be an opportunity of dropping the survey into local shops to be collected as well. More update on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan would be given at future meetings.

24/17 Flooding: To minute discussions with Essex County Council and the Environment Agency in connection with finding solutions to flooding in the Parish.

Councillor Pegg advised that Essex County Council had completed their surveys for the Essex Management Plan for the whole of Essex and had identified parts of Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet as a Critical Drainage Area. As a result Essex County Council now acknowledged that there is critical surface water flooding in some parts of the village. Parish Councillors and the Clerk had met with Officers from the Essex County Council Flood Team and Officers from the Environment Agency to discuss solutions and identify where money needed to be spent to reduce or illuminate flooding especially in the plotland areas. The Parish Council had received assurances that despite the village containing less than 850 properties they were still a priority area. The 'Where Water Goes ' project undertaken during 2016 had identified the location of many water courses and ditches and the information collected would be beneficial in helping to build a picture of the problem areas. As a result of work carried out in previous months as part of the Critical Drainage Area, some ditches had already been cleared and non-

operational water pumps in the plotlands replaced together with other mechanical devices to shred offending material. A portfolio and report compiled by Councillor Pegg logging the history of flooding had been sent to Essex County Council to identify the long term problems being experienced by residents. The next steps were for Essex County Council to analyse the data they had received and obtained from their own surveys and report their findings back to the Parish

Council. In addition Parish Council would try to set up a further meeting with Anglian Water to discuss matters further.

- 24/17 Changes to Local addresses:** To update on any progress to change the details of local postal addresses in the Parish.

Following an approach from a resident the Parish Council had been working with the Royal Mail and Basildon Council to identify errors within the village postal addresses indicating residents addresses living in Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet and not identified as living in Pitsea. The process to date had been very slow, currently taking approximately eighteen months but as a result of meetings with Basildon Council over that time some of the addresses identified as incorrectly stated had been changed on the Basildon Council data base. Once all the changes had been completed and the agreement of Basildon Council obtained to enable the changes to be made Royal Mail will consult with residents on their views. The consultation would take six weeks according to information received.

- 25/17 Parish-in-Bloom:** To discuss holding the Parish-in-Bloom Event in 2017

Following discussion it was **AGREED** by all present to hold the Parish-in-Bloom again in 2017 using the same categories as in 2016. It was **AGREED** to have a three judges and for judging to take place at the end of July / first weekend in August. The event would be advertised in the next Parish newsletter.

- 26/17 Date of next meeting** - To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 28th June 2017 at the Benbow Club, 77 Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Appendix A

HEELIS & LODGE

Local Council Services • Internal Audit

Internal Audit Report for Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet Parish Council – 2016/17

The following Internal Audit was carried out on the adequacy of systems of control. The following recommendations/comments have been made:

Income: £17,131

Expenditure: £13,249

Reserves: £9,161

Annual Return Completion

Section One: Yes – to be signed

Section Two: No – draft figures available

Section Four: Yes

Proper book-keeping

Cash Book, regular reconciliation of books and bank statements.
Supporting vouchers, invoices and receipts

All were found to be in order. LGAs137 and VAT payments are tracked and identified within the year end accounts. The cashbook is referenced providing a clear audit trail. Supporting paperwork is in place and well referenced.

Financial regulations

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Tenders

Appropriate payment controls including acting within the legal framework with reference to council minutes

Identifying VAT payments and reclamation

Cheque books, paying in books and other relevant documents

Standing Orders in place: Yes

Reviewed: 30/9/2015 (Ref: 70/15)

Financial Regulations in place: Yes

Reviewed: 29/6/2016 (Ref: 25/16)

VAT reclaimed during the year: No Registered: No

General Power of Competence: No

Financial Regulations and Standing Orders in place. Financial Regulations have been updated to include the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Risk Assessment Appropriate procedures in place for the activities of the council

Risk Assessment document in place: Yes

Insurance was in place for the year of audit. The Risk Assessment was reviewed on 25/5/2016 (Ref: 11/16 – 4). Bank signatories were confirmed on 25/5/2016 (Ref: 11/16 – 3).

The Council have satisfactory internal financial controls in place. The Clerk provides financial reports to council meetings. Councillors are provided with information to enable them to make informed decisions.

Fidelity Cover: £150,000

The level of Fidelity cover is within the recommended guidelines of year end balances plus 50% of the precept.

Transparency Code Compliance for smaller councils with income/expenditure under £25,000. Smaller authorities should publish on their website from 1 April 2015:

Smaller Council: Yes

Website: www.essexinfo.net/bgnb-parishcouncil/

- a) all items of expenditure above £100
Published – Yes
- b) end of year accounts (By 1 July)
2016 Annual Return, Section One Published – Yes
- c) annual governance statement (By 1 July)
2016 Annual Return, Section Two Published – Yes
- d) internal audit report (By 1 July)
2016 Annual Return, Section Four Published – Yes
- e) list of councillor or member responsibilities
Published – Yes
- f) the details of public land and building assets (By 1 July)
Published – The Council owns no public land or buildings
- g) Minutes, agendas and meeting papers of formal meetings
Published – Yes

The Council meet the requirements of the Transparency Code.

Budgetary controls Verifying the budgetary process with reference to council minutes and supporting documents

Precept: £14,346.66 (2017-2018) Date: 14/12/2016 (Ref: 105/16)

Good budgetary procedures are in place. The precept was agreed in full council and the precept decision and amount has been clearly minuted. The Clerk ensures the council are aware of responsibilities, commitments, forward planning and the need for adequate reserves. Budget papers are prepared to ensure councillors have sufficient information to make informed decisions. Budgets are monitored during the year.

Income controls

Precept and other income, including credit control mechanisms

All were found to be in order. Income controls were checked and income received and banked cross referenced with the Cash Book and bank statements.

Petty Cash

Associated books and established system in place

A satisfactory petty cash system is in place with supporting paperwork. VAT is identified where applicable.

Payroll controls

PAYE and NIC in place where necessary.
Compliance with Inland Revenue procedures
Records relating to contracts of employment

PAYE System in place: **Yes**

The Council continue to operate RTI in accordance with HMRC regulations. All supporting paperwork is in place and a P60 has been produced as part of the year end process. The Council are aware of their staging date for the pension regulations and have taken the appropriate steps.

Asset control

Inspection of asset register and checks on existence of assets
Cross checking on insurance cover

A separate asset register is in place. Values are recorded at cost value. The total value of assets are recorded at £73,208.

Bank Reconciliation

Regularly completed and cash books reconcile with bank statements

All were in order. The bank statements reconciled with the end of year accounts and bank reconciliations for all accounts.

Year-end procedures

Appropriate accounting procedures are used and can be followed through from working papers to final documents
Verifying sample payments and income
Checking creditors and debtors where appropriate.

End of year accounts are prepared on a Receipts & Payments Basis.

Sole Trustee

The Council has met its responsibilities as a trustee

The Council is not a sole trustee.

Internal Audit
Procedures

The Council reviewed the effectiveness of the internal audit as part of the Risk Assessment at a meeting held on 25/5/2016 (Ref: 11/16 – 4).

The Internal Audit report was considered by the Council at a meeting held on 25/5/2016 (Ref: 11/16 – 2).

External Audit

The External Auditor's report was considered by the Council at a meeting held on 26/10/16, however the minutes do not reflect this.

Recommendation: *To minute the consideration of the External Auditor's report.*

There were no matters raised by the External Auditor in relation to the 2015-2016 External Audit.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

- The Annual Parish Council meeting was held on 25/5/2016, within the required timescale. The first item of business following introductions was the Election of Chairman, in accordance with Standing Orders.
- There are no additional comments/recommendations to make in relation to this audit.
- I would like to record my appreciation to the Clerk to the Council for her assistance during the course of the audit work



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10 May 2017

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