

**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET  
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT THE BENBOW CLUB BOWERS GIFFORD  
ON WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2015 AT 7.30 p.m.**

**PRESENT:**

**Councillors:** R.Smillie (Chair): B.Foster: M.Phillips: G.Guenigault

**In attendance:** Christine Barlow (Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer)

**Members of the Public:** 7

**103/15 Apologies for absence:**

Apologies were received from Councillor Nigel Tyler due to a prior engagement. Councillor George Guenigault, although present at the start of the meeting was unable to remain due to business in connection with his impending move out of the district within days. He was thanked for the work he had undertaken during his time as a Parish Councillor and wished the very best in his new surroundings.

**104/15 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 were received.

**105/15 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 commented that having approached Pound Lane from Burnt Mills Road in the dark there was no indication that the junction was a T- Junction. The resident also remarked that the street light adjacent to the junction in Pound Lane was also not working which made the corner very dangerous. She noted that on referring to their website Essex County Council were aware of the street light not working but appeared to have taken action to carry out any repair. The resident enquired if a T-Junction sign could to be installed at the junction of Burnt Mills Road and Pound Lane.

(ii) Concerns were once again raised regarding the condition of the grass verge around Exchange House, Pound Lane and the vehicles parked on the verge. The Parish Council advised that the matter had been raised on several occasions with the Police, Basildon Council Planning Enforcement, South Essex Parking Partnership and Essex Highways. Each of the former stated it was a matter for Essex Highways who appeared to ignore all reports. In addition residents advised there had been quad bike racing once again in North Benfleet causing a danger

to traffic.

(iii) A resident enquired if, following path resurfacing works in Highlands Road, any other pavements were to be resurfaced. The Parish Clerk advised that she had, after making enquiries, been informed by Essex County Council that work was to be carried out in Una Road but despite reporting its poor condition on several occasions, she had been advised it was not the intention to carry out repairs to either Pound Lane or London Road at the present time. Essex County Council, had advised that current resurfacing was remedial action to ensure pathways were repaired before they fell into a state of extreme disrepair.

(iv) A resident asked if there was any information of when the zebra crossing in Pound Lane would be repainted.

(v) A resident informed that she had reported, on the Essex County Council Highways website, regarding a hole in the road at the junction of Pound Lane and Bowers Court Drive.

(vi) The meeting was advised that the path was uneven at the corner of Pound Lane/Page Road causing a dip in the tarmac and becoming filled with rain water during period of heavy rain water causing it to be a blind trip hazard.

(vii) A resident asked if there was any update regarding carrying out repairs to Alpha Road. The Parish Clerk informed that she had been advised Officers from Ringway Jacobs had carried out an inspection but she was unable to update further regarding any proposed repair work.

**Action:** In response to the above concerns residents were advised many of the issues raised at the meeting and at previous meeting in connection with Essex County Council Highways had been raised repeatedly over previous months without response from Essex County Council. In order to support any action taken by the Parish Council residents were asked to keep reporting issues on the County Council website. The Parish Council would continue to pursue these matters at every opportunity and where possible look at other lines of enquiry to resolve issues satisfactorily.

An exchange of views was undertaken regarding the proposals for a waste disposal premises in Courtauld Road and lorry parking on the bend opposite the Yodel Factory in Courtauld Road. The Parish Council had made both Essex County Council and Basildon Council of their disapproval of granting any future planning applications regarding these locations.

**106/15 Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015:** Council to approve the accuracy and content of the minutes of the previous meeting and the Chair to sign.

The Chair amended Page 2 item (v) to read Pound Lane and not Bowers Court Drive and the Chair initialled the amendment. The remainder of the minutes were **AGREED** as an accurate record of the previous meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November and

Councillor Robert Smillie signed to confirm.

**107/15 Parish Clerk's Report:** The Parish Clerk to report and update on Parish Council business.

(i) Tickets were on sale for "A Christmas Carol" play at St Margaret's School on 16<sup>th</sup> December.

(ii) An email had been received from Jenna Sicheri, Community Payback Officer, informing the Parish Council regarding the work undertaken by the Community Payback Teams.

**Action:** To invite Jenna Sicheri to the January Parish Council meeting.

iii) The Clerk had requested an update, from Basildon Council, on the progress of amending incorrect locality addresses as it has been several months since Councillor Foster and the Parish Clerk had met with Basildon Council Officers. It was noted that some addresses had been changed on the Basildon Council records but no further update had been received from them or the Royal Mail Address Management Team in connection with any further consultation of the proposed changes.

iv) The Parish Clerk had spoken at length to Neil Costen, Basildon Council Planning Enforcement Officer, regarding issues in respect of illegal acquisition of land across the Parish.

v) The date of the Basildon Council Liaison meeting had been rearranged for 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016 but this clashed with the Parish Council Meeting and Basildon Council has been advised of this fact.

vi) No volunteers had come forward to help with the Youth Bus project and without more help the project may have to be reconsidered. The next session would be on 10<sup>th</sup> December in Westlake Park. The details had been published on Twitter, in Parish Council noticeboards and website.

**Action:** It was **AGREED** to consider reviewing the project given the lack of response for volunteer help and possibly deferring the Youth Bus Project until April 2016 when the nights would be lighter and more volunteers might be recruited.

vii) The Parish Clerk is to re-arrange the "Where Water Goes" project training for mid - February 2016. An article regarding the project had been included in the Autumn/Winter edition of the Parish newsletter.

viii) Basildon Council Mobile Crunch Service will be located in Westlake Park on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

**108/15 Finance Report:** The Responsible Finance Officer **to** advise on the Council's current financial position.

Chris Barlow, Responsible Finance Officer, advised Councillors there had been some additional income of £440 as a result of the Fun Walk Sponsorship Bonus Pot and a £200 cheque for the Special Achievement Award from Essex Association of Parish Council's (EALC).

The figures were advised as follows:

|                                       | <b>£</b>      |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Bank balance as of 20th November 2015 | 8,630.85      |
| Interim balance at 9th December 2015  | 7,930.46      |
| <br><b>Summary</b>                    |               |
| Expenditure                           | 1,121.39      |
| Income                                | 421.00        |
| <br><b>Expenditure</b>                |               |
| Clerks Salary+ Office Allowance (Oct) | 565.39        |
| Transparency Code Training            | 15.00         |
| Newsletter printing                   | 395.00        |
| Leaflet printing                      | <u>146.00</u> |
|                                       | 1,121.39      |
| <br><b>Income</b>                     |               |
| EALC Special Achievement Award        | 200.00        |
| Fun Walk Sponsorship Bonus Pot        | <u>221.00</u> |
|                                       | 421.00        |

Chris Barlow, informed Councillors of new legislation relating to the Annual Return which was completed by all Parish/Town Councils at the end of each financial year. The new Transparency Code affected Smaller Parish Councils whose income amounted to under £25,000. For all Smaller Parish Councils in this bracket the need for an Annual Return to be completed and verified by an External Auditor would no longer be required. If all income was over £25,000 this would still have to be undertaken. The new legislation will come into force in April 2016 and will affect the Audit carried out for 2016/2017.

Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Parish Council currently fell into the category of Parish Councils whose turnover for the year was under £25,000 and there were also new proposals regarding the way internal auditors were appointed. The Parish Council could appoint their own internal auditor or if they considered this to be onerous could agree to opt-in to a new scheme run jointly by The National Association of Local Councils, Essex Association of Local Councils and Society for Local Council Clerks. The New Regime would appoint an internal auditor to carry out the internal audit for a nominated small sum. This decision by the Council must be taken by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 and the agreement would tie in the Parish Council into the agreement for five years.

Copies of the proposals had been received the previous day by the Parish Clerk at a training session on the new Transparency Code and the Clerk asked Councillors to consider the information and an item would be included for discussion at the January meeting.

Councillors were further advised that funding had been allocated by government to cover any additional costs for implementing the Transparency Code and for downloading all the required documents under the new legislation on the Parish council website. Chris Barlow asked for permission to apply for the funding available to cover the costs.

**Action:** Councillors confirmed they would consider the document presented to them and discuss the New Transparency Code at the next Parish Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Councillors also confirmed that they were of the opinion, as funding for implementing the Code was time specific, that an application should be made as soon as possible for the funding to cover any additional costs.

**109/15 Precept for 2016/17:** To update the Parish Council on the Local Council Tax Scheme grant for 2016/17 and the implications on the Precept figure for 2016/17.

A revised budget account and figures adding Basildon Council's Local Council Tax Scheme figures had been provided to Councillors for information and consideration.

The Local Council Tax Scheme (LTCS) grant from Basildon Council for 2016/2017 which had been considered at a meeting by Basildon Council Members on 3<sup>rd</sup> December provided details of the grants available to all Parish /Town Councils in the district. The Parish Council LTCS grant, based on Band D figures, amounted to £1018.71. This amount was a reduction on the 2015/2016 of £152.15. Chris Barlow stated that although the reduction was small she believed that the grant from Basildon Council would reduce considerably over the years due to government subsidy cuts and that Councillors should consider this when setting the Annual Precept and future budgets.

**110/15 Planning -** Councillors to review and comment on Planning Application/s under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

**110/15/1 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 15/01428/FULL**

The change in the use of land to a single pitch residential Gypsy / Traveller Caravan site, together with the formation of a hardstanding, construction of a utility room and erection of boundary wall and gates. Land adjacent to: The Willows, Lower Avenue, Bowers Gifford, Basildon Essex SS13 2LZ

Councillors considered the application and it were in agreement there were no special circumstances to grant planning permission. The land was not

considered to meet infill policy in plotland areas and was inappropriate development in the Green Belt and in contradiction to Basildon Council's current policy including BAS GB1/GB2/GB3/GB4/ GB6/GB8.

There were several areas within the application regarding the change of use which were questionable and gave rise for concern.

(i) The applicant stated in his application that work had not commenced on the site, this statement was incorrect. The land had already been cleared and over-height fencing together with over-height gates had been installed. Although a landowner can rightfully fence off his land, planning permission has to be sought and approval obtained before the installation of any such building works can take place.

(ii) There was evidence that a number of constraints have been imposed on the land over the years and these appeared still to be in force. Currently in Lower Avenue the openness of the land was maintained and this plot of land was one of a number that provided significant and essential open space between larger developed properties.

(iii) The land was not considered to be appropriate for a Traveller/Gypsy site in the true meaning of the law and therefore the planning application should be refused and conditions imposed on the landowner to remove the over-height fencing to prevent further illegal development of the site.

**110/15/2 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 15/01356/FULL**

Construction of 2 no. amenity buildings and 2 no. stable buildings. - Sadlers Park, London Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex

Councillors noted that there was already a breach of Enforcement Notice for part of the Sadlers Park site in respect of unlawful use of the land and encroachment. There was also an outstanding planning application which may have a bearing on any decision in regard to this application. Councillors commented that:

- i) They considered there were no special circumstances to grant the application.
- ii) The location was unsuitable
- iii) There were safety issues with locating the stable block near to a busy junction and main thoroughfare
- iv) There were safety issue for motorists if boundary fences were not maintained and any horses escaped or strayed onto the carriageway and become a danger to traffic.
- v) The area is Green Belt and therefore the application was considered to be inappropriate.
- vi) It would also appear, from the drawing, that existing plots on the site would be lost which would be against the existing need for

Traveller/Gypsy sites.

**Action:** It was **AGREED** that the points made were the views of the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk was asked to forward these to Neil Costen, Basildon Council Planning Enforcement Officer, for inclusion as comments in regard to the application.

- 111/15 Planning decisions and comments:** To receive updates on decisions in respect of planning applications discussed at previous meetings.

None had been received at the time of the meeting.

- 112/15 Community Event 2016:** To agree the date of the Picnic in the Park Community Event in 2016

Councillors discussed the need for setting a date for the 2016 Community Event and **AGREED** that it should take place on a Sunday in the later part of June, if possible, and the Parish Clerk was asked to undertake some research for external funding.

It was suggested that an Event Committee should be set up and Councillor Smillie said he would be prepared to Chair this Committee.

- 113/15 Feedback on meetings attended by Councillors:** Councillors to provide a brief update on meetings they have attended.

Councillors had not attended any meeting in the previous two weeks.

- 114/15 Date of next meeting** - To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting.

The date of the next Parish Council meeting was confirmed as 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at The Benbow Club, Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford and all present were wished a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.