



**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD REMOTELY
WEDNESDAY 25th NOVEMBER 2020 AT 7.30 PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:	B. Foster: C. Morris: C.Morgan: T. Potter.
Parish Council Clerk/RFO:	Mrs Christine Barlow
Ward Councillors:	Councillor Craig Rimmer (Pitsea South East Ward)
Public attendance:	5 identified.

Councillor Bernard Foster, Chair, welcomed all to the meeting and explained the virtual meeting protocol for the benefit of those members of the public who had not previously attended. All present were informed that the meeting was being recorded for the accuracy of the minutes.

68/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Robert Smillie

It was also noted that two Councillors had resigned in the previous week as a result of comments made on Facebook.

69/20 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTEREST: To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other pecuniary interests or non-pecuniary interests by members relating to any agenda items.

No Declarations of Members Interest were received for items on the agenda.

70/20 VIRTUAL PUBLIC FORUM: Residents are given the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions of the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk to identify any questions which have been sent to her, by email, from the public. The time allowed for this item is a maximum of 15 minutes)

A question was raised by a resident regarding the lack of action by Basildon Council in respect of dealing with unauthorised planning in the Parish. The resident asked if there was anything the Parish Council could do to identify unauthorised developments and possibly collate a list so that pressure could be put on Basildon Council to take action, due to the situation in the Parish in respect of what was perceived as illegal development had become more serious over the last four or five years.

Councillor Foster explained that there had been a change of personnel in Basildon Council Planning over the past 18 months which had resulted in different working methods. The problem being raised was not specific to the resident's own area but applied to other areas. He fully understood the residents' concerns and explained that the process of Enforcement by a local authority is time consuming

and often expensive. The Parish Council does consider the rate of progress is very slow but can only reinforce the need for more action at every opportunity, especially at frequent meetings with Basildon Council where the issue of Enforcement action is raised. The Parish Clerk advised that Enforcement issues that come to their attention are frequently raised with Planning. On each Planning Committee agenda there is a list which advises the public of what action is being taken on the various locations which can be viewed on Basildon Council Planning Committee meeting minutes.

Councillor Rimmer advised that to assist further, in the current climate with their investigations, Basildon Council would be deploying drones over the Borough to identify any illegal development sites, and Councillor Mackenzie (Ward Councillor for Pitsea South East) had asked for more Enforcement activity than was currently being undertaken due to lockdown. Councillor Foster and Councillor Rimmer offered to discuss the various issues raised with the resident and there was agreement to make contact.

71/20 MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2020.

The minutes of the meeting on 28th October 2020 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and would be “wet” signed by the Chair when possible.

72/20 WARD/COUNTY COUNCILLOR UPDATE: Time is set aside for Borough/County Councillors to address the meeting.

Councillor Rimmer updated Councillors regarding various issues of interest. He advised that the Christmas lights will be switch on in Pitsea Centre on 30th November and the Tree also would also be lit.

Prior to the meeting Councillor Rimmer having spoken at the Neighbourhood and Public Spaces meeting updated that progress on the build of Pitsea Swimming Pool had paused due to the pandemic but it is understood Basildon Council will finalise the preparatory work for the build in January and the first “spade” to start to build would be in September 2021, with the Pool opening hopefully in January 2022. Councillor Rimmer informed he would continue to lobby the Council until the Pool was fully operational and opened for use.

The derelict Pitsea Bingo Hall had encountered a second fire and Basildon Council were now looking at the site from the point of health and safety to the public and were in urgent talks with the owners regarding the future use of the site.

73/20 PARISH CLERK’S REPORT: The Parish Clerk to report on matters since the previous meeting on 28th October 2020.

The Parish Clerk advised that most of the previous month had been taken up with the Neighbourhood Plan and preparing a newsletter and questionnaire for the Neighbourhood Plan consultation, as well as day-to-day duties.

- A pro-forma invoice had been prepared and forward to Councillor Rimmer to to enable planters to be purchased and the finance for the project to be transferred

to the Parish Council account. The planters would act to: (i) assist in preventing parking on the verge adjacent to Ilfracombe Avenue (ii) create a focal point for people driving into the village from Pitsea.

- Despite assurances from Essex County Council regarding the repair of the Canvey Road bus shelter commencing 23rd November the repair had not taken place. The Parish Clerk had written to the Highways Infrastructure Officer and asked for the reason the work had not been carried out. She had received an email informing that there had been a delay in the manufacture of the new roof and the Officer was waiting for a revised timetable to carrying-out the work.
- Unfortunately, there was no update on the Old Church road underpass yet.
- A streetlight outside the Willows, Windsor Road had been reported to Basildon council as not working. (i.e. Basildon Council are responsible for repairing streetlights in the plotland areas whereas Essex County council are responsible for repairing streetlights elsewhere)
- An email from Councillor Patricia Reid , Pitsea Essex County Councillor for Pitsea, had been received asking for information regarding the Vehicle Activation Sign (VAS) in Pound Lane near to the chicane which was currently not working and had been dormant for some time. The Parish Clerk had provided the Councillor with some background history together with the fact that the Parish Council having pursued the same issue with Essex County Council three years previously were told there was no budget to repair the VAS signs. Councillor Reid had also been informed the same by ECC Highways and that the Vehicle Activation Sign maintenance falls within the Local Highways Panel Revenue Budget and whilst this would usually be something that they could arrange fairly quickly, the Local HP Revenue Budget has been exhausted for the current year and as such, they unable to carry out any VAS repairs for the foreseeable future. However, the Pound Lane site had been added to the list of VAS awaiting inspection and as soon confirmation is received that funds are available, arrangements will be made to inspect. The Parish Clerk confirmed she would continue to liaise with Councillor Reid in respect of any update.
- The 2021 Census was due to be carried out on Sunday 21st March 2021
- Essex County Council are trialling the use of electric scooters and carrying out a consultation over a period of 18 months.
- Councillor Foster advised that the past month had been busy, and he and the Parish Clerk had attended several meetings and reported on two, (i) The Association of Local Council (ABLC) Meeting on 17th November at which the protection of green spaces in the borough were discussed and (ii) The Basildon Local Councils Liaison Meeting the previous evening (24th November) at which the items discussed included (i) the Local Plan (ii) Planning Application Delegation changes (iii) Waste Management Changes (iv) A review of play areas and parks (v) Air Quality Pollution which has in part has held up the Local Plan. Basildon Council has a survey regarding capturing the views of residents which runs until 13th December 2020. This can be found on the Basildon Council website and is being undertaken by Essex County Council

74/20 FINANCE REPORT: The Responsible Finance Officer to report on the Parish Council's current financial position and other matters including:

(i) Summary of spending and income since the last meeting on 28th October 2020

Christine Barlow, Responsible Finance Officer, provided a summary report of income and expenditure since the previous meeting and provided a written and verbal report as detailed below:

	£
Balance at bank 28 th October 2020	21,478.90
Balance at Bank 20 th November 2020	20,452.67
Expenditure:	1,026.23
Income:	Nil
Expenditure Summary:	
(549) HMRC Emprs. NI (April – September)	87.65
(550) Clerks Net Salary (Sept) including Office Use	754.65
(551) Zoom Virtual Meeting monthly payment	57.56
(552) Picnic-in-the-Park Vouchers	75.00
(553) Clerks Expenses (Stationary/Equipment)	<u>51.37</u>
	1,026.23

A Bank Statement accompanied the report to verify the payments as presented and there were no matters arising.

(ii) To discuss and consider the Parish Precept amount for 2021/2022:

Prior to the meeting various accounts and reports had been provided to Councillors including a draft budget report for 2021/2022 (ii) half year balance sheet and (iii) Precept Calculations provided by Basildon Council based on Band D Tax Base provided by Basildon Council Finance (iii) Precept Report report by the Responsible Finance Officer.

Christine Barlow, Responsible Finance Officer, read out the report to the meeting (Appendix A) and advised that Basildon Council had informed that the Tax Base on which the Precept calculations were derived, was lower than in 2020/2021 due to the expected fall in the Council Tax collection rate as a direct consequence of Covid-19. She also advised that based on the budget forecast and the information received unless the Precept for 2021/2022 was increased the Parish Council finances as a result could show a deficit at the end of 2022. (Parish Council finances were not allowed to run into deficit). She suggested that to cover expected increases in the draft budget forecast the Precept should increase by £1.89 per annum based on the Band D Tax base provided. Although this would give the Parish Council an additional £1077.24 over 2020/2021 there would still be a need to apply for external funding for various projects to improve facilities in the Parish which the Parish Council had control over.

Having discussed the matter as a group it was proposed to increase the current precept amount on a Band D tax base from £23.40 per annum to £25.29 per annum. The Precept amount would increase from £16,750.19 in 2020/2021 to £ 17,827.43 in 2021/22, at a percentage increase of 8.08%.

Councillors were asked to confirm their agreement with a show of hands regarding the Precept as discussed. All present were in **AGREEMENT** with a show of hands and approved the decision.

75/20 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: 20/01445/FULL

The construction of two detached chalet houses with new access from Katherine Road - Land West of Elizabeth Villa Katherine Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon.

Councillors having discussed the planning application concluded that the application constituted inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that the proposal would also constitute overdevelopment of the site. All were in **AGREEMENT** with a show of hands.

76/20 PLANNING DECISIONS: Councillors to receive updates regarding Planning applications discussed at previous meetings and other relevant applications.

APPEAL: 19/00029/NOTICE: Sadlers Park, London Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon Essex SS13 2HD - Appeal against enforcement notice lodged by Basildon Council.

It was noted that the Parish Council fully supported the action of Basildon Council in this matter to remove unauthorised caravans from the site and a letter had been sent to the Planning Inspectorate to this effect.

PLANNING APPLICATION : Condition Notice Ref: 20/00646/COND (Planning Application No: 19/01324/FULL) Land Rear Of 215 Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford Basildon Essex. All conditions had been met and full consent granted.

PLANNING APPLICATION: 20/00524/LBBAS Little Coopers Wat Tyler Country Park Pitsea Hall Lane Pitsea Essex SS16 4UH - Remedial re-pointing works to chimney and replacement of nylon netting at opening with thin wire gauge netting – Granted.

In respect of the above application Councillor Rimmer advised that he had requested a condition be included in the application consent that netting should be “wildlife safe” mesh and this inclusion had been agreed.

77/20 BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: To update on matters in respect of the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan was continuing to progress but until there is a decision

regarding the Local Plan the Neighbourhood Plan could not move forward to be agreed. A public consultation had been planned for March 2020 but due to Covid-19 restrictions it had been postponed. Nevertheless, a shorter, three-week consultation with residents was now in progress and would run until 6th December. Residents were being encouraged to provide their views and comments via a questionnaire which had been delivered to householders and could be found on Facebook and the Parish Council website. On this occasion for reasons of safety a contractor had been engaged to deliver the Bugle newsletter and questionnaires by hand; this would normally be covered by volunteers. Nevertheless some residents had advised, for various reasons, they had not received the newsletter or questionnaire and as far as possible both were redelivered where addresses were provided. (As of the date of the meeting approximately 85-90 forms had been returned) A short video had been created by Councillor Foster, briefly presenting a summary of the facts of the Neighbourhood Plan. The video had received over 1000 hits and had been watched on-line by others. The video was a first attempt by the Parish Council and instead of costing £700-£1000 to produce the only "cost" to the Parish Council had been the time spent to putting together the video which was considerable.

A virtual meeting attended by over 40 residents had been held on 23rd November. A presentation was provided by the Parish Council's consultant and a question-and-answer session took place. These comments would be factored into the consultation and a newsletter published in the New Year with a summary of questions and replies.

The consultation was two-fold (i) to get feedback on proposals from residents and (ii) as a fore runner to the Local Plan Examination and Regulation 14 consultation later in 2021. Its aim was to find out what residents approved of or disapproved of in the Neighbourhood Plan proposals. At the Local Plan Examination the Parish Council must demonstrate to the Local Plan Examiner that the Neighbourhood Plan proposals were sound, could achieve it's the aims of the Local Plan and has the support of the community.

Councillor Rimmer commented that there had been a huge amount of work undertaken to reach the current position and this was a credit to all those involved and to the village.

Although the meeting was ending a resident asked if she could raise a couple of questions. Although not strictly protocol and not part of the Public Forum the Chair agreed on this occasion.

Q: The resident raised the question of parking outside the convenience Store in Canvey Road and raised concerns that now the shop was expanding this issue would increase. It was reported by the resident that the shop owner had recorded on social media that additional parking would be provided. The resident asked if the Parish Council knew where the additional parking would be?

A: The Parish Council was unable to identify where the extra parking would be placed as they did not have this information. The meeting was informed that the Parish Council had raised the same concerns several times with ECC highways and South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) without reply although they had

been able get the yellow lines repainted. When requesting to Basildon Council to consider the parking issue at the shop as part of the planning application the Parish Council had been advised by email that no problem had been found on the day of the visit by BBC Officers and they were unable to evidence a problem. The Parish Council would continue to raise the issue of parking with South Essex Parking Partnership in order to find a solution. Councillor Rimmer also offered to raise the issue with Basildon Council.

Q: The resident asked when the land which had been put forward for the development in Alpha Close, where she lived, be determined as suitable for development?

A: Councillor Foster advised that initially Basildon Council had assessed the land in this location, in the Local Plan, as suitable for the development of 34 houses. The Neighbourhood Plan considered this number was excessive, but every site put forward as part of the "Call for Sites" has to be assessed the same for suitability and included or eliminated. Having the site included in the Neighbourhood Plan was just one of a series of steps that had to be considered before every location was accepted or rejected for inclusion. The development at Alpha Close has to follow this same procedure as all the other sites, large or small, before it a decision could be taken for development or not.

Q: The same resident asked if residents would be notified by letter before any development took place.

A: The Parish Clerk advised that over 100 sites had been independently assessed. Each site based on a set of criteria and each site broken down into areas of suitability and areas which were unsuitable. Those sites considered suitable for development were then sub-divided into the areas indicated in the Bugle newsletter as part of the current three-week consultation and residents now had the opportunity to provide their views regarding the locations proposed. Once completed all the comments received on each location would be considered using the same format.

Q: The resident asked if the Parish Council had approved the locations. As a point of clarification, the resident was advised that the Neighbourhood Plan assessment process had identified the land in Alpha Close in the same way as other sites being put forward. Basildon Council in their Local Plan had also identified the land. Residents now had the opportunity in the current consultation to complete the questionnaire and provide their points of view regarding **all** the sites. There would be other opportunities for residents to be consulted, but the current consultation was an important step in this process.

78/20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: To confirm the date of the next meeting as 9th December 2020

The next meeting would be held virtually via Zoom, on Wednesday 9th December 2020 at 7.30 (N.B: The Parish Council meeting on 9th December 2020 was cancelled and therefore the minutes of the meeting were signed at the next scheduled Parish Council Meeting which was held on 27th January 2021

Signature Cllr. Bernard Foster, Chair
27th January 2021

**BOWERS GIFFORD & NORTH BENFLEET PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT
2021/2022**

AGENDA ITEM NO: 74/20(ii)

MEETING: PARISH COUNCIL

DATE: 25th NOVEMBER 2020

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 2021/22 Precept thereby allowing the submission of the Precept Request Form to Basildon Borough Council and the setting of the Parish Council proportion of the Council Tax.
- 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 4th November 2020 formally requesting notification of the Council's Precept for the 2021/2022 financial year. This information was provided to Parish Councillors prior to the Parish Council meeting on 25th November 2020. A Income and Expenditure Account as of 30th September 2020, a forecast of expected expenditure to 31st March 2020 and an estimated Draft budget for 2021/2022
- 2.3 This report requests the Council to formally set the Precept and therefore the Parish Council proportion of the Council Tax for 2021/2022, 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 2021

3.0 2021/22 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 2021/2022, after deducting the income expected to be received and incorporating a prudent contingency sum to cover unexpected costs.

4.0 2021/2022 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.

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 the Council Precept by the Tax Base figure. This provides the Band D Council Tax figure. The Parish Council has been advised by Basildon Council Finance Officer the Band D tax base is lower than last year, due to the expected fall in the Council Tax collection rate as a direct consequence of Covid-19.

4.6 The draft budget as presented and attached takes into account, where possible to predict, the income and expenditure expected in 2021/2022 but in the light of costs to be incurred in respect of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan care should be taken in respect that consultancy cost have not been calculated.

5.0 Recommendation:

5.1 In order to meet estimated costs for the financial year 2021/22 it is recommended the RFO recommends that the overall Precept amount, for a Band D property, is increased by a minimum of £2 per annum to cover unexpected costs in connection with the Neighbourhood Plan and also Parish Council election which might come forward as part of any Governance changes from Basildon Council. This would increase the total precept to £17,827.43 or 8.08% and equate to £25.29 per annum for a Band D property

5.2 The rationale behind the proposals is that in 2021/2022 the overall costs which include staff costs, insurance, maintenance, equipment replacement, day to day running costs and events is increasing year on year. Cost for the Neighbourhood Plan would need to be covered and Grant funding may not be available to cover. Grant applications for Parish Projects have been successful over the years, but the success of future applications cannot be guaranteed.