



**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET  
PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING  
HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2021 AT 7.30 PM.**

**PRESENT:**

<b>Councillors:</b>	B. Foster: T. Potter: C. Morris
<b>Parish Council Clerk/RFO:</b>	Mrs Christine Barlow
<b>Ward Councillor/s:</b>	Councillor Craig Rimmer (Pitsea South-East)
<b>Essex County Councillor/s</b>	Councillor Aidan McGurran
<b>Public attendance:</b>	6

**1/21 INTRODUCTIONS:** All present were welcomed to the meeting.

**2/21 ELECTION OF CHAIR:**

The first business of the evening was to elect a chairman for the current Parish Council year to April 2022 at which point Parish Council Elections would be held in May 2022. Councillor Bernard Foster was nominated and accepted the role unopposed.

**Proposed:** Councillor Colin Morris **Seconded:** Councillor Terry Potter.

**3/21 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE:** The signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office by elected Chair:

Councillor Foster signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chair.

**4/21 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR:** It was decided not to elect a vice-chair under the current circumstances. In the absence of Councillor Foster for a Parish Council meeting it was **AGREED** to nominate a Chair from those Councillors present at the respective meeting to take on the role.

**5/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillor R. Smillie: Councillor Claire Morgan.

By agreement, Councillor Smillie was currently on extended leave of absence. Councillor Morgan was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments.

- 6/21 DECLARATIONS 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.

None received.

- 7/21 PUBLIC FORUM:** To enable residents to raise issues of concern with Parish Councillors (The time allowed for this item is 15 minutes)

Parish Council Members and Essex County Councillor Aidan McGurran and Pitsea South-East Ward Councillor Craig Rimmer were introduced to the audience and welcomed to the meeting.

Residents in Kelly Road , who had recently experienced the installation of new telegraph poles by UK Networks, informed that notification from the company prior to installation was good and following the installation residents were asked to provide feedback regarding the work undertaken. UK Networks, as reported in previous minutes, had passed some of the old telegraph poles, which were being replaced in certain roads in the Parish, on to the Parish Council and they would then be re-cycled by the Parish Council

- 8/21 Minutes of Parish Council meetings:** To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and Chairman to sign.

Parish Councillors confirmed the accuracy of the previous meeting minutes and these were signed by Councillor Foster, Chair, to verify as correct.

- 9/21 Ward/County Councillor update:** Time is set aside for Borough/County Councillors to address the meeting.

Ward and County Councillors were invited to address the meeting.

Councillor Craig Rimmer (Ward Councillor for Pitsea South-East) advised that the recent Borough Council elections had seen a change of administration at Basildon Borough Council from the previous Labour/Independent coalition administration to an overall majority Conservative administration.

Councillor Rimmer advised that the Borough Council Annual General Meeting would take place the following evening (27<sup>th</sup> May) and the order paper would indicate that he would take on the role of Chair of the Leisure and Environment Committee with responsibilities for Countryside issues, Sports and Leisure, Waste Management, Refuse Collection and the Pride Teams , who undertook to deal with, for example, tidying up verges and overgrown vegetation. He advised that he was delighted to take on this role as it would enable him to help deliver the Pitsea Swimming Pool Project , which had been an important part of the Conservative's Group ambition whilst in opposition. The opening of the new pool was anticipated to take place in 2022. He advised that in line with his election pledge money would be set aside for improvements to Westlake Park and it was his intention to include the Parish Council and residents in discussions. (On this point he concurred with Councillor McGurran, that all parties had

agreed to improve play facilities across the Borough as part of Basildon Council's Play Review)

Matters were also pressing ahead to find a solution to regenerating the Pitsea Bingo Site. It was hoped that at the next Parish Council meeting he would be able to provide an update on action being taken as a result of talks the previous month on flooding in the Parish. Councillor Foster confirmed it was the intention of the Parish Council to contact residents in Burnt Mills Road to discuss the flooding issues.

Regarding play equipment the Parish Clerk asked Councillor Rimmer if the proposals included replacing the Net Swing in the Junior Pay Area, which had been the subject of vandalism and the baby swing which had been damaged by unknown means. Councillor Rimmer confirmed that this was the case.

Councillor Aidan McGurran confirmed that as a result of the May 6<sup>th</sup> elections he was the newly elected Essex County Councillor for Pitsea & Vange. He informed the meeting the Parish Clerk had his details and in addition they were also on the Essex County Council website. He was happy to take inquiries from members of the community and took the opportunity given to him to represent the people of Pitsea and the Parish seriously. Early discussion at County level had been held regarding the state of the roads and pavements in the Borough. Essex County Council had advised they were a million pounds underspent on the Highways budget and he considered this could have been better used to carryout much needed repairs and would be continuing to press the point for more to be done to repair potholes and pavements in the area. He also raised the issue with the County Council administration to press the government for a pay increase for all NHS workers in recognition for the work they had done over the past 18 months and would continue to lobbying all MPs to push for this.

Councillor McGurran informed he had asked Councillor Bentley, now Leader of Essex County Council for a commitment from the County Council that there would be no Library closures and Councillor Bentley had confirmed there would be none. Councillor Rimmer also advised that due to Covid and the libraries being under threat of closure, there was the added challenge of encouraging the footfall back again. In an attempt to encourage this return and get people reading again a pilot scheme was being trialled in Noak Bridge. A book office had been opened where residents could pre-book to drop-off their books and pick up a new one. Councillor McGurran agreed with Councillor Rimmer regarding this approach.

Councillor Foster asked Councillor McGurran to encourage Planners to listen to the Parish Council and for the need for the County Council to do an about turn as far as Highways is concerned. Instead of building roads where there are no houses , and no need for the roads, to build roads where there is development and where the infrastructure is needed. It was perceived that currently ECC are working on outdated data from 2007. Councillor McGurran confirmed he also had an issue with Highways putting infrastructure where it was not needed and which will not fit into the landscape.

Councillor McGurran informed that Essex County Council was making their Locality Fund available to County Council Councillors in the different Wards. The available funds provided £10K to each area and enabled the respective County Councillors to nominate projects to be funded from the budget. More information would be available

in the forthcoming weeks. The Parish Clerk advised that they had benefitted from the fund via Councillor Rimmer and Councillor Hillier for the planters on the London Road in 2020.

**10/21 Parish Clerks Report:** To advise Councillors on business undertaken since the last meeting held on 28<sup>TH</sup> April 2021 and any other relevant matters.

The Parish Clerk updated the meeting on the following matters:

**(i) Item 122/20(iii) : Church Road underpass:** A further letter had been sent to Essex County Councillor Bentley, copied into local Ward and Essex County Councillors. A reply was still to be received.

**(ii) Item 122/20 (iv) Lighting in Windsor Road:** Basildon Council has advised that the problem with the light concerned is the “lighting unit” and UK Networks need to carryout the repair. Parts are on order and as soon as received the light will hopefully be repaired.

**(iii) Item 122/20 (iv) Planters, London Road:** The Planters are being delivered on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and will be strategically placed on the London Road highway verge adjacent to Ilfracombe Avenue to prevent indiscriminate parking on the verge. The planters will be free-standing and should not interfere with the underground utilities from discussions being undertaken. It is hoped to add another four planters in 2021/2022

**(iv) Item 127/20 Neighbourhood Plan:** Basildon Borough Council (BBC) had allocated a £50,000 budget, to help facilitate the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and/or Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) in the borough. The Parish Council had been notified of this grant in 2019 but the criteria for making an application was not available until 2021 although the Parish Council did, as part of this grant, apply for financial support via Councillor Gavin Callaghan and the leader at the time had promised an initial grant support of £10K towards the NDO but this had been had not been forthcoming. This amount could have later been reclaimed by Planning authorities from central government by Basildon Council.

The Parish Clerk had again written to Basildon Council and set out the financial support it would need to complete the Neighbourhood Plan and demonstrated this need against a set of guidelines provided by Basildon Council. A reply had been received requesting more information and the Clerk was in the process of writing a response. Councillor Rimmer confirmed he would follow up with Planning Policy regarding these funding issues and commented that he remembered being present at a Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (SPI) meeting when it was agreed for the £50k to go towards financially supporting the three Neighbourhood Plans in the borough. In addition, it was understood Local Planning authorities could apply for reimbursement of this funding from Central Government.

**(v)** The two vacant Parish Councillor posts had been advertised.

**(vi)** The red netting around the “Crimson King” tree in Westlake Park would be replaced with a metal frame, provided by Basildon Council, towards the end of the week. A resident asked if the rubber ties supporting the tree could be adjusted as they looked very tight. The Parish Clerk confirmed she would check.

**(vii)** The Net Swing in the Junior Play area was still under review, but the baby swing was broken and was now padlocked out of reach for safety reasons.

**(viii) Handyman/Handywoman Service:** Some interest had been received regarding the new post and a job application and job description had been sent out to each applicant who had requested information. A grant in the sum of £4160 had been successfully secured from Essex County Council Community Fund to support the new post. The closing date for applications was 12<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

In conclusion it was explained that Parish Council meetings, which were open to the public and press to attend, could no longer be held virtually due to the fact that a High Court Judgement had legislated that all Local Council meetings after the 6<sup>th</sup> May elections must be held in-person.

**11/21 FINANCE REPORT:** To acknowledge and confirm the following:

(i) To receive a summary of the Parish Council's current financial position.

The Responsible Finance Officer presented a statement of account to Parish Councillors as follows:

	£
Balance at Bank 28 <sup>th</sup> March 2021	25,256.24
Balance at Bank 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	20,289.91
Expenditure:	4,966.33
Income:	Nil
<b>Expenditure:</b>	
(576) Clerk/RFO Financial Services Training (inc.VAT*)	84.00
(579) ONeillHomer - Consultancy Payment (inc.VAT)	3300.00
(580) Zoom Annual cost (inc.VAT)	143.88
(583) EALC/NALC Subscriptions	510.40
(576) Clerks Net Salary April Plus Office Use/Tel/BB	778.05
(585) Petty Cash	<u>150.00</u>
	4966.33

It was noted that a cheque for £52.50 has been received in respect of a Bursary payment for the Financial Services training undertaken by the Parish Clerk/RFO.

The financial statement was accepted, by Councillors present, as a true reflection of the Parish Council's current financial position.

In addition, the Responsible Finance Officer reminded Councillors that the Parish Council had been awarded a grant from Locality in the sum of £10,000 in June 2020 to undertake research on the viability of including Affordable Housing for Sale (AHS) as an element of its Neighbourhood Plan Policy. However, due to current Covid – restrictions limiting the Parish Council from completing all the evidence and consultation process needed to support their policy for Affordable Housing for Sale (AHS) they had been unable to complete all the work required by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and were having to return the underspent element of the grant which was £4,950 to Groundworks UK, the

government funding body. Paradoxically the Parish Council could re-apply for this same amount again in 2021 to complete any outstanding work.

**(ii) To approve the Accounting Statement for 2020/2021:**

Having been sent copied of the Accounting Statement for 2020/2021 Parish Councillors **AGREED** to approve the Accounting Statement as presented by the Responsible Finance Officer and Councillor Foster, as Chair, countersigned the documentation alongside the Responsible Finance Officer. A copy of the statement would be attached to the minutes and would appear on the Parish Council website. For information purposes the Parish Council Assets amounted to £94,209 but that included a substantial amount for equipment in Westlake Park which at some time in the future would need to be replaced or upgraded.

Councillor Rimmer advised that as part of Basildon Council's Play Review approximately £35,000 had been set aside to regenerate Westlake Park.

**(iii) To confirm the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2020/2021:**

Parish Councillors present **APPROVED** the appointment of Heelis and Heelis as the Parish Council's Internal Auditors for 2020/2021.

**(iv) To confirm the Parish Council's bank account signatories for 2021/2022:**

It was confirmed that the bank signatories for the financial year were to remain as, Councillor Bernard Foster and Councillor Terry Potter. As a precautionary measure Councillor Colin Morris **AGREED** to become a third signatory with the approval of Members.

The Responsible Finance Officer asked Members to reconsider the bank transfer payments system instead of the current cheque payment system which had been in place since the Parish Council's inception. The reason for this was that some organisations were no longer accepting cheques for payment. It was **AGREED** more discussion was required regarding any changes to the way payments were made.

**(v) To confirm the Parish Clerk's incremental payment for 2021/2022:**

This item was deferred to enable more discussion between the Members and the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer.

**12/21 Appointment of Representatives:** To confirm the appoint of Parish Councillors to the following areas of interest:

The appointments were confirmed as the status quo:

(a) Councillor Foster was appointed to represent the Parish Council at (i) The Association of Basildon Local Councils and (ii) Basildon Liaison Group. The Parish Clerk also attended both meetings.

(b) **BGNB Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:** Members of the Parish Council attend the Steering Group as advisory members. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is primarily

made up of Councillors and residents who have been participants since the inception of the Group. Any decisions made by the Steering Group members are referred back to the Parish Council for ratification and agreement.

(c) **Community Speed Watch:** Councillor Terry Potter

- 13/21 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: 21/00785/FULL**

Proposed part single, part two-storey front extension, single storey rear extension and external alterations - St Brelades, London Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon.

Councillors considered that currently most of the properties in this location on the London Road retained the building line alongside each other, but the planned proposals would extend this particular property beyond the building line and would dominate. Bringing the front of the property nearer the main road would have a detrimental effect on the street scene. Although there were no objections raised to the proposed rear extension, for the reasons stated the Parish Council recommended refusal.

- 14/21 Planning updates and comments:** To receive updates and comments on planning applications discussed at previous meetings.

**(i) Planning application No: 21/00452/FULL:** Demolition of existing bungalow and garage, and erection of a new detached chalet with detached garage - 101 Pound Lane Bowers Gifford Basildon Essex SS13 2HN - **Granted**

**(ii) Planning Application No: 21/00278/FULL:** Single storey rear extension with a revised roof design (pitched roof with Velux windows) to the earlier approval 19/00825/FULL - 5 Alpha Close Bowers Gifford Basildon SS13 2HZ – **Granted**

**(iii) Planning application: No: 21/00215/FULL:** Single storey side and rear extensions 20 Page Road Bowers Gifford Basildon Essex SS13 2HP - **Granted**

- 15/21 Councillor Vacancies:** To discuss the co-option of two Parish Councillors until May 2022.

The Parish Council had been unable to attract interest from the community to fill the two Parish Councillor vacancies, which had occurred in December 2020, despite continually advertising the role. It is hoped that when the date of the Local Plan Examination is published residents will realise that Parish Councillors can make a real difference and the Neighbourhood Plan will benefit the Parish and may encourage residents to come forward and take on the role of Parish Councillor. New Councillors will have the opportunity to understand how the Neighbourhood Plan proposals are being developed and also discuss the concerns of residents.

- 16/21 Neighbourhood Plan update:** To provide the meeting with a brief update with any information currently available.

Due to the coronavirus and recent elections the Neighbourhood Plan had made only limited progress and until the Local Plan Examination date has been published any decisions on the Neighbourhood Plan were at a standstill. Little had changed since the consultation held in November/December except the unavoidable financial implications mentioned in the finance report earlier in the meeting. Although some discussions were ongoing the Parish Council is only engaging with its consultant in a limited way due to constant changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and it had been decided to limit communication with their consultant as to do anything else at this stage would cost the Parish Council financially and be a waste of time until a date for the Local Plan Examination was announced. There have been no Steering Group meetings for a few weeks. However, in compiling the Neighbourhood Plan there are some innovative ideas coming forward which the Parish Council think will benefit the community and will come forward as policy when completed.

**17/21 Events 2021:** The discuss the dates and details for forthcoming events.

**Parish-in-Bloom:** It is proposed to hold Parish -in- Bloom again this year and hopefully there will be more interest than in 2020 as we come out of lockdown. Judging will take place in August and winners will be announced hopefully at the Picnic-in-the-Park Event.

**Spring Clean Event 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021:** The Event runs from 28<sup>th</sup> May to 13<sup>th</sup> June the Parish event will take place on 13<sup>th</sup> June and the Parish Council will endeavour to litter pick several areas in the Parish. Basildon Council is providing litter pickers, high viz jackets and rubbish bags and will collect the rubbish collected. Several residents have already volunteered to take part. Anyone who joins will be provided with a certificate of attendance. Families can take part and there will be games for the younger members to enjoy whilst collecting the litter. If any resident would like areas covered, they will be encouraged to contact the Parish Clerk or a Councillor. The more volunteers who come along the more areas can be targeted.

**Picnic-in-the-Park - Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August:** The entertainment for the event has been booked and arrangements are progressing. More information will be available over the coming weeks and ideas for inclusion in the event were welcomed. A newsletter will be delivered to publicise the event.

**18/21 Date of next meeting:** To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting as 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

The Parish Clerk advised that the next meeting of the Parish Council would take place on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 7.30 pm. in the Benbow Club, 77 Pound Lane and she provided the dates of monthly meetings for the year to April 2022, in line with current protocol. All meetings will take place on the last Wednesday in the month at 7.30 p.m. unless prior notification is provided. There dates are as follows:

**2021:** 30th June: 28th July: 25th August: 29th September: 27th October: 24th November : 8th December (earlier than normal due to Christmas)

**2022:** 26th January: 23rd February: 30<sup>th</sup> March : 27th April



## Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2020/21 for

## BOWERS GIFFORD &amp; NORTH BENFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2020 £	31 March 2021 £	
1. Balances brought forward	8,348	11,390	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	16,042	16,750	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	8,010	27,169	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	12,290	10,054	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments			Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	8,720	28,565	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	11,390	16,690	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	11,390	16,690	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – <b>To agree with bank reconciliation.</b>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	94,054	94,209	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings			The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council as a body corporate acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.  N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.
		✓	

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2021 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.  
Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval



Date

25/05/2021

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

25/05/2021

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE  
11/21

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



Signed ..... Councillor Bernard Foster, Chair.

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021