

**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE BENBOW CLUB BOWERS GIFFORD
ON WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE 2014 AT 7.30 PM.**

PRESENT:

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

In attendance: Christine Barlow (Parish Clerk)
Councillor Keith Bobbin (Essex County Councillor)
Councillor Mo Larkin (Ward Councillor & Mayor)

Members of the Public: 12

17/14 Apologies for absence: Councillor Rose Griffin and Councillor Nigel Tyler

18/14 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

19/14 Public Forum: (The maximum time allowed for this item is 15 minutes)

(i) The Parish Council was thanked for their hard work in contributing to achieving the planning result in respect of the proposed development of Little Chalvedon Hall Farm and those present showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

(ii) It was reported and confirmed that the outstanding potholes in Westlake Avenue, Highlands Road and Kelly Road had now been repaired by the Highways Agency.

(iii) The condition of the chicane in Pound Lane was again raised by electors. The Parish Clerk informed that she had reported the condition of the chicane and the fact the Vehicle Activation Sign was not working to Essex County Council Highways several times without resolution. Councillor Foster stated he had also made a written request, as a representative on Basildon Council's Highways Panel, for urgent action to be taken in resolving this issue and had requested for alternative traffic calming measures to be considered.

(iv) Potholes in Burnt Mills Road and the condition of the road where it fell away at the edges was again raised

Action: Councillors asked residents to keep reporting Highways problems on the Essex County Council website, and they were continuing to also raise the same issues at

every opportunity.

(v) **Highways verges:** The highways verges in Pound Lane were overgrown and unkempt and people were walking in the road. The Parish Clerk had been advised that the verges would be cut the first week in July. The verges were cut under contract, on behalf of Essex County Council Highways, by Basildon Council contractors, twice a year.

Action: The Parish Council would endeavour to put forward a safety case to obtain funding for more grass verge cuts to be undertaken during the year.

(vi) **Sadlers Farm traffic:** Concerns regarding drivers not waiting for the filtration lights to change when turning right at the traffic lights in London Road into Pound Lane was again raised and concerns of a collision occurring as a result. Also safety concerns were raised concerning the sequence of lights at Sadlers Farm roundabout and the road layout at this very busy junction.

Action: Councillor Foster stated he had raised residents concerns at Basildon Council Highways Panel meetings and made Panel Members aware of the issues.

At this point Councillor Smillie welcomed Councillor Keith Bobbin, Essex County Councillor and Chair of Basildon Council Highways Panel.

Councillor Bobbin advised the meeting as follows:

- (i) He was meeting with a Highways Officer the following day (26th July) and would raise the issues from the meeting in connection with the traffic lights and the road layout during this meeting.
- (ii) Discussions were in hand regarding resurfacing Old Church Road following requests from the Parish Council. He had approached the Highways Agency for funding and the Basildon Council Highways Panel had also agreed to fund improvements and to make the underpass safe for users. It was understood also the pavement on the opposite side of the road to the school in London Road was to be repaired.
- (iii) There had been over 3500 complaints around the decision by Essex County Council to impose part-time lighting between midnight and 5pm across Essex and 280 of these were from Pitsea residents.
- (iv) Central government had given Essex County Council an extra £4.1m for Highways Maintenance and ECC had also added an extra £1.6m into the budget. Basildon and Harlow roads had been given a priority. The worst fifty (50) main roads would be repaired in the first instance and then minor roads including potholes would follow. There was also £1.5m in the budget for white lining. Members present reminded Councillor Bobbin regarding the poor condition of the Parish footpaths and the condition of the chicane and non- working Vehicle Activation Sign as reported in the Public Forum discussion. He confirmed he had been made aware of

the facts by Councillor Foster and confirmed he had asked for an assessment to be carried out regarding the chicane and surrounding area in Pound Lane.

- (v) Basildon Council had been awarded £3.5m of NHS England funding to promote Health Awareness.

20/14 Minutes of Parish Council Annual Meeting held on Wednesday 28th May 2014.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting, by those present, and they were signed accordingly by Councillor Robert Smillie, Chair.

21/14 Appointment of Representatives – To appoint representatives to the following interest groups:

This item had been deferred from the previous meeting on 28th May 2014.

- **Parish Council's Planning Advisory Group** – Councillors Foster, Tyler and Guenigault were confirmed as advisory members on the group which researched planning applications for discussion at Parish Council meetings.
- **Association of Basildon Local Councils & the Basildon Council Liaison Group** – These two meetings were linked and it was **AGREED** by all present that Councillor Foster should continue as the Parish Council Representative on both groups. Councillor Guenigault or Councillor Griffin, having expressed an interest, would act as a substitute if Councillor Foster was unable to attend, Parish Council business allowing. The Parish Clerk also attended the Basildon Council Liaison meetings.
- **Bus Transport Forum** – Councillor Wall had previously attended this Forum, which meets four times a year. It was **AGREED**, unopposed, that Councillor Guenigault would take on this role on behalf of the Council.
- **Other groups, where applicable** – There were currently no other formerly constituted groups.

22/14 Policing: Local Police Officers to attend and inform of policing activities for Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet.

PCSO Emma Spurr was on holiday and unable to attend.

23/14 Parish Clerk's Report – to update on relevant business and correspondence received since the last Parish Council meeting.

- (i) The funeral of Councillor Wall had been attended by Councillors and many residents. The families chosen charities were Essex Air Ambulance and the Royal Navy Lifeboat Association (RNLB) and any donations collected on behalf of the family would be passed on by the Parish Clerk.
- (ii) National Grid representatives had agreed to attend a further Parish Council meeting

to update.

- (iii) The Annual Return had been completed and submitted to the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, to be approved.
- (iv) Details of road closures affecting the A130 & A1245, Rayleigh Spurr, had been received from Essex County Council with effect from 1st July. Closures were expected to last seven (7) days.
- (v) Essex County Council had advised that the adoption of the modified Replacement Minerals Local Plan would be considered by Essex County Council Full Council on 8th July 2014. The full plan could be viewed on the Council's website www.essex.gov.uk/MLPexamination.
- (vi) Notification to attend an Emergency Planning workshop on 22nd July at Hullbridge Sports Centre had been received and it was left open for Councillors to attend if they were able to.

All other updates would be included on the meeting agenda.

24/14 Finance – To accept a report from the Parish Clerk on the Parish Council's finances and to discuss amendments to the Parish Council Financial Regulations and agree changes to the Bank mandate.

Balance at Bank as of 25 th June 2014	£55,584.89
Payments	£2521.19
Credits	£00.00
 <u>Payments</u>	
FitzPatrick Woolmer (Noticeboard Replacement)	£1719.04
Basildon Council – Election Fee	£82.90
Petty Cash cheque (unpresented in 2013/2014 account)	£100.00
Clerks salary – May (Net)(includes statutory office allowance	£539.25
Heelis & Lodge - Internal Auditor Fee	<u>£80.00</u>
	<u>£2,521.19</u>

(ii) **Parish Council Bank Mandate** - It was **AGREED** by all present to add Councillor Guenigault as a signatory on the Parish Council's bank account.

(iii) **Amendments to the Parish Council Financial Regulations** – The Parish Council's Internal Auditor had recommended that the Parish Council should amend their Financial Regulations in line with new guidelines received from NALC (National Association of Local Council) as a result of government changes in legislation. A copy of the NALC document had been obtained by the Parish Clerk and passed to Councillors present prior to the meeting. The Parish Clerk advised that all Councillors would need time to consider the document and fully review its content for further discussion. There were some points, however, which Councillors felt they could make a decision on.

Internet banking - It was felt that insufficient safeguards were in place currently in respect of internet banking transactions in respect of bill payments.

Bank Standing Orders in respect of salary payments - It was **AGREED** a standing order to be set up for the Parish Clerk's basic salary payment and any additional expenses should be paid by cheque. Payments should be checked and verified by two Parish Councillors at the next available opportunity.

Debit card - The Parish Clerk to contact the Parish Council bank and discuss with them regarding the issuing of a debit card to cover unexpected expenses which the Parish Clerk would incur, in connection with her duties, including payments via petty cash. It was suggested that the debit card should have a value of £100 - £200 in discussion with the bank.

Expenses - It was **AGREED** for out-of-pocket expenses to a maximum value of £50.00 to be paid to each Councillor for small sundry items i.e. print cartridges and stationery used in connection with Parish Council business and reimbursed, to the individual Councillor, by the RFO/ Parish Clerk on production of a receipt. Any expenditure above this amount would have to be agreed at Council meetings.

Mileage - Parish Councillors will have the ability to claim mileage whilst undertaking Council business in line with HMRC guidelines at a rate of 45p per mile up to 10,000 miles. A mileage claim form would have to be completed with details of the journey and then presented to the Responsible Finance Officer/Parish Clerk for payment. Where possible Councillors would be encouraged to car share or use public transport. A record of all payments would be kept by the RFO /Parish Clerk and would be sent to HMRC at the end of the financial year.

Action: The changes as discussed would be made to the Parish Council Financial Regulations with immediate effect and Councillors would review the NALC guidelines and agree further changes at a future meeting.

Proposed: Councillor George Guenigault. **Seconded:** Councillor Bernard Foster.

25/14 Little Chalvedon Hall Farm Appeal – To comment on the decision by Secretary of State to dismiss the appeal by Meridian Strategic Land in respect of Little Chalvedon Hall Farm.

Councillor Smillie confirmed the decision of the Secretary of State to uphold Basildon Borough Council's refusal to grant planning permission to build on green belt land at Little Chalvedon Hall Farm. However, some land, as yet undisclosed, within the Parish is in the proposed Core Strategy Local Plan and in time it was inevitable some land already identified (i.e. small infill in the plotland areas and areas in North Benfleet) would be earmarked for housing development.

Subject to the developers not going to appeal at the High Court any new development would be dependent on the decisions by Basildon Council's current administration in agreeing the Local Plan.

The Parish Council had recently met with Basildon Council Policy Officers to look at how the Parish Council could take forward a Neighbourhood Plan, the process and costs involved. Council Officers offered advice and support if the Parish Council chose to go ahead and Councillors will now consider the points raised at the meeting and the options available to them. The implication of a Basildon Council Local Plan not being in place needed to be considered before any decision was taken.

26/14 Councillor Wall – To discuss a memorial to Councillor Brian Wall.

The Parish Council discussed an appropriate memorial to Councillor Wall who had died suddenly in May. It was considered a plaque on one of the new seats that had already been ordered for Westlake Park would be appropriate, as Councillor Wall had spent a lot of time in discussions involved with the Park project and on community issues. The Parish Clerk, as was the required protocol, had already contacted and obtained agreement from Basildon Council Cabinet Member for Leisure Services, Councillor Kevin Blake, and Hugh Reynolds, Basildon Council Countryside & Parks Manager for a plaque to be displayed.

Proposed: Councillor Smillie **Seconded:** Councillor Foster.

All Councillors **AGREED**.

Action: The Parish Clerk was asked to make enquiries regarding the purchase of a plaque and Councillors would agree the wording.

27/14 Planning - Councillors to review and comment on Planning Application/s under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2011 – SCREENING OPINION Application No: ESS/25/14/BAS/SO

Proposal: Commercial and Industrial Waste Transfer Station (75,000 pa)

Location: Land to the north of Hovefields Court, Hovefields Avenue, Basildon, Essex

Essex County Council, as an authority, had concluded that a request had been made for screening between the Transfer Station was not required as the site was not significant enough to require a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.

28/14 Planning decisions and comments – To receive updates and comments on decisions in respect of planning applications discussed at previous meetings.

Planning permission to erect a double garage & gym/store at Beira, Harrow Road, North Benfleet, Essex (14/00472/FULL) had been refused by Basildon Borough Council.

29/14 Progress report on Parish Council projects – to receive updates on:

(i) **Village Fete** – Councillor Griffin, although not able to attend the meeting, had provided an update on progress to date in respect of meetings held to discuss the event and a lot of work had been accomplished behind the scenes to progress arrangements.

In summary (i) There were currently 20 stallholders and other organisations attending (ii) a timetable of arena events and organisations performing at the Fete were in progress. (iii) various fun activities were being arranged and many local charities and organisations had agreed to attend. (iii) raffle tickets were now available. Each stallholder was being asked to provide a raffle prize. (iv) a number of competitions were to be held including craft, flower arranging and a Hybrid Rose and Floribunda Rose competition to be sponsored and judged by Alton Garden Centre and entry was free. (iv) all who were attending would be encouraged to dress in the costume of the era 1914 – 1960. (v) more volunteers were required on the day and any offers to help should contact Councillor Griffin.

A grant application for £1000 had been completed, by the Parish Clerk, in connection with Basildon Council's Fund in Commemoration of WW1, to obtain funds towards the Village Fete activities.

Councillor Guenigault said he had also approached the Cherrydown Veterinary Surgery to ask if they would attend and undertake some Free Dog Chipping.

Councillor Foster was proposing to make a cake in the shape of a WW1 tank with a view to linking it to the WW1 Theme 1914 -1918 and encouraging attendees to "Guess the Weight" of the cake. Those present thought the idea was a good one and Councillor Foster said he would try and develop the idea.

(ii) **Westlake Park Improvements** – the project is moving forward and Councillors had met contractors and Basildon Council Officers on site. The whole project, the Outdoor Gym, the access road and the gates was anticipated to be completed by the end of July beginning of August, but was subject to change in timescales and availability of contractors and equipment. The Parish Clerk asked the Council to re-confirm the colour of the gates and lettering as green and gold respectively. The side gate at the Park had been removed for safety reasons because the hinge had sheared off.

Action: Councillors confirmed and **AGREED** the colour of the gates was dark green with gold lettering.

A picture of each piece of equipment was made available. A design of the finished area had been requested from Wicksteed but had as yet not been received.

(iii) **Parish in Bloom** – the event had been advertised for some time and Councillor Mo Larkin had been asked to judge the competition and all present **AGREED** to this suggestion. Councillor Larkin confirmed she would be delighted to take on this role.

The Parish Clerk confirmed she would produce a flyer to incorporate the Village Fete, Parish in Bloom and Councillor Vacancy which would be delivered to households as soon as possible.

As previously discussed the Bowers Bugle would be published the first week in August and Councillor Guenigault had agreed to assist the Parish Clerk with the publication of the newsletter.

30/14 Feedback on meetings attended by Councillors - To briefly update Members on meetings attended by Councillors.

- **Neighbourhood Planning Meeting:** Previously discussed in Item 25/14.
- Councillor Guenigault had attended two training sessions run by the EALC (Essex Association of Local Council's) in regard to Planning and a Councillor Training Day. Councillor Guenigault had enjoyed both sessions and found them both informative and beneficial. He would be attending part two of the Councillor Training Day on 10th July.
- Councillors had met during the month to discuss the Parish Council Fete.

31/14 Social Media sites – To discuss and review the Parish Council's position on using social media as a tool for increasing communication.

Councillors discussed the merits of Twitter and Facebook but felt that such sites unless strictly regulated were dangerous. Councillor Smillie felt that the matter should be discussed more broadly when all Councillors were present. He considered strict safeguards needed to be in place and more consideration was needed before making a decision. Councillor Foster stated that whilst he and Councillor Wall had been out and talking to electors they had found very few people actually used Twitter or Facebook. It had been minuted, at a previous meeting, that the Parish Council had previously been approached by organisers of a site called "Streetlife" in connection to linking it with the Parish Council. The site based on locality and users mainly lived in the areas of any discussion or topic.

Action: The Parish Clerk was asked to obtain more information regarding the site and what safeguards were in place for the Parish Council as an authority and how it could be moderated to the needs of the Parish Council.

32/14 Date of next meeting - To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 30th July 2014 at the Benbow Club, Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford.