

**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET
ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE BENBOW CLUB BOWERS GIFFORD
ON WEDNESDAY 29TH MAY 2013 AT 7.30 PM.**

Present:

Councillors: R. Smillie (Chairman):
B.Foster: N. Tyler: R.Griffin: B. Wall:

Officer: Christine Barlow – Parish Clerk

Members of the Public: 30 members of the public

1/13 Election of Chair.

Councillor Robert Smillie was re-elected to stand as Chair for the 2013/2014 Parish Council year – unopposed.

Proposed: Councillor Rose Griffin: Seconded: Councillor Nigel Tyler

2/13 Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office by elected Chair.

Declaration of Acceptance signed.

3/13 Election of Vice-Chair.

Councillor Bernard Foster was re-elected as Vice-Chair for the 2013/2014 Parish Council year – un-opposed

Proposed: Councillor Robert Smillie: Seconded: Councillor Brian Wall:

4/13 Representatives to outside bodies – To confirm Councillors on the Parish Council’s Planning Advisory Group and outside bodies.

(i) It was **AGREED** by all present that the Planning Advisory Group should remain as: Councillors Foster, Wall and Tyler.

(ii) It was **AGREED** by all present that Councillor Bernard Foster should continue as the Parish Council’s representative at Association of Basildon Local Councils meetings - unopposed.

5/13 Apologies for absence - Councillor Barbara Williams – on holiday

6/13 Declarations of member's interest – To receive any declarations of interest by members on any agenda items.

None received

7/13 Nick Alston, Essex Police & Crime Commissioner – Essex Police & Crime Commissioner to advise on his proposed aims and objectives within the framework of his appointment and answer questions from electors on issues which affect the needs of residents and neighbourhoods.

Nick Alston, Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, was introduced and welcomed to the meeting. Mr Alston thanked all present for inviting him and giving him the opportunity to meet the Council and residents of Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet. He gave a brief synopsis of his background before taking on the role of Commissioner and his links with the Police and Essex and stated his role was to ensure the service provided by the Police was fit for purpose and to hold the Chief Constable to account. The role replaced the old Police Authority Board.

The Commissioner outlined his aims and objectives and explained his areas of focus were:

- Local solutions that meet local need.
- Policing to be more prompt and professional through collaboration and initiative.
- Partnership working with all organisations and the Police to make Essex safer and reduce crime and prevent the 'revolving door' syndrome in respect of re-offending.
- To be busy and making a nuisance of himself and providing active leadership.
- Reducing Domestic Violence and Abuse.
- Looking at Anti-Social Behaviour and taking a different approach to resolving problems by listening to the victim's voice and trying to understand ASB from the victim's perspective.
- Improving road safety and partnership working to reduce incidents of injury and death as a result of road accidents.
- Reducing youth offending
- Reducing re-offending and putting systems in place to prevent.
- Tackling criminal activity as a result of drink, drugs and mental health.

He informed that the element of Council Tax received in respect of Policing had increased by £4.77 per person but apart from Kent which paid 1p more Essex paid less for its Policing than any other county in England

He considered that the appointment of Steven Kavanagh, as the new Chief Constable of Essex, with his experience would deliver the aims and objectives he wanted.

The Commissioner opened up questions to those residents present:

Q: Has the old Committee structure gone?

A: Yes, it was no longer in existence. The cost of the old Police Authority Budget was £1.5M but it was expected that the cost of the new structure would be £1.2M which would include auditing. The Commissioner's salary could potentially be £85K. Recently a Deputy Commissioner had been appointed, whose salary was £55K and he was part of a support team of nine members all with a different role and many administration functions had been reduced.

Q: Councillor Griffin asked regarding the £300K expenditure by the old Police Authority Committee.

A: Mr Alston replied the expenditure was purely spent on expenses such as travelling expenses NOT travel expenses.

Q: Councillor Smillie raised concerns that there was no stability within the local force. As soon as contact was made with a Senior Officer the Officer moved on within a few months. Although the Parish did have some stability with PCSO's this was less than satisfactory as these also moved around.

A: The Commissioner explained that the Chief Constable was in charge of Policing and the movements of Police Officers but he recognised there was a need to cut down on 'churn' whilst giving officers the opportunity to gain experience in different roles. Every Ward had a local Police team and PCSO and the Police website was updated fortnightly regarding changes. He understood not everyone had the internet but Parish Councils could help with the flow of information through their noticeboards. Policing meetings throughout Essex were also being held raising different topics and the general public could attend and ask questions.

Q: Councillor Griffin and Councillor Wall commented they had, had different experiences with police responses to incidents of crime. Councillor Griffin experience was poor and Councillors Wall was good.

A: Nick Aston accepted that sometimes the public experienced different levels of service and acknowledged this needed to be addressed. He stated that the new 101 service is being improved but urged residents to give feedback on Police response via the Police complaints procedure in order that failing areas of work could be identified and steps taken to improve systems. He urged residents to report crime or suspicious incidents no matter how insignificant.

Q; Councillor Foster stated that the Parish Council had been looking at traffic calming and the only department that had refused to meet with Councillors or give any assistance was the Police Traffic Section.

A: Mr Alston advised that with the implementation of the 'Snoopers Bill' and new technology a number of initiatives were being carried out to catch individuals carrying out criminal acts in connection with car crime, speeding and incidents of road safety. He would make an action point note and ask Adam Pike from the Traffic Police to make contact with the Parish Council.

Residents argued that, in certain circumstances, there was an unwillingness of the Police to tackle certain individuals regarding some criminal activity and the perception was that often the Police would turn a 'blind eye' to many incidents in relation to certain groups of people. It was also considered that areas which had less crime would get a lesser response and visible police presence.

The Commissioner asked the PCO's present how they felt about the comments. The Officers stated that the reduction of Officers has had an impact on the areas they could cover at any one time and they had to give priority to reported incidents and often were redirected from a lesser incident if a major incident had to be dealt with.

The Commissioner said he had noted the meetings comments and would take these back to his Senior Officers.

Q1: Chris Barlow, the Parish Clerk, asked, in relation to the Police 'Speedwatch Scheme', if the Commissioner's Office would help after residents had received training with the cost of purchasing equipment to enable the Parish Councils and residents to work in partnership with the Police on the scheme e.g. the cost of a laser gun was £1200. The high cost of purchasing the equipment was prohibitive to some Parish Council's whose budgets were small.

Q2: Councillor Smillie also asked what happened to drivers who were caught speeding and who receive letter after letter and ignore all, are they still prosecuted?

A: The Commissioner replied that statistics showed that very few ignored the letters and most drivers moderate their behaviour after a visit from the Police in such cases. Drivers, in extreme cases are prosecuted and his understanding was that the Speed Watch scheme was effective. In answering the question of the Speedwatch and the cost of purchasing equipment the Commissioner stated that although his New Initiatives Fund was oversubscribed there were other pots of money available and if the Parish Council wrote to him he would consider any such proposal.

Q: Councillor Griffin raised the question of parking on double yellow lines, in particular the London Road and the corner of William Road and asked if the Police could get involved where cars were causing an offence. Residents also stated that cars, including Police cars, were parking on pedestrian crossing zig-zag lines.

A: The Commissioner stated this was a difficult area and that the Borough Council also needed to be involved in any action. He said he would note the comments from the meeting and take up the matter with the relevant personnel.

Q: A resident stated that as Traffic Police were now under pressure to improve their crime figures why is the focus always on the driver and where there are incidents it is also the motorists who are always at fault. Why is the design of the roads not taken into account?

A: Mr Alston informed that Essex County Council was responsible for road design and the Essex Roads Policing Team were experts and understood the needs of design. The emphasis is now more on road safety in the South East instead of the North of England and Neighbourhood Watch and Crime stoppers were making a difference.

Residents present stated they were concerned about the impact of more developments on policing, crime and road safety.

The Commissioner **AGREED** to raise the question with Essex County Council. Highways Department.

7/13/1 Neighbourhood Policing update - PCSO Emma Spurr gave a policing update of criminal activity in the Parish and advised there had been one attempted burglary in Highlands Road and urges residents to double lock UPV doors, close blinds at night, where possible install security lights and not to leave valuables on view in cars in an attempt to reduce incidents of crime. She advised that crime was increasing across the district of Basildon and urged residents to report anything suspicious by contacting 999.

8/13 Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 24th April 2013 - Council to agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th April and the Chair to sign as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair. One amendment was requested to Page 2 (viii) as follows “ in as much as although there were two dedicated PSCO’s for Pitsea South East Ward and one part-time PCSO for Craylands all officers covered the whole of Pitsea and Bowers Gifford.

9/13 Finance Report – The Responsible Finance Officer to advise on:

(i) The Parish Council’s current financial position was:

Bank Balance as at 24th April 2013	-	£22,070.69
Bank Balance to 29th May 2013	-	£20,982.07

Payments:**£ 1,088.62**

(ii) The Internal Audit was carried out on 24th May 2013 and all was in order.

The Internal Audit Report had been circulated to all Councillors. There were a couple of minor recommendations by the Auditor and these had already been implemented i.e. (i) The Parish Council Risk Assessment had been amended to include all Parish Council Assets and (ii) a register of all Assets was now kept by the Parish Clerk. A copy of each had been distributed to Councillors prior to the meeting.

In addition, the Internal Auditor, Heather Heeles, was happy to note that the Parish Council's Financial Regulations had been amended in accordance with the minutes of 24th April 2013.

The Parish Council Responsible Finance Officer presented for approval:

- (i) The Internal Audit Report
- (ii) The Annual Governance Statement
- (iii) The Audit Plan – Reviewing the effectiveness of the Internal Audit for the Parish Council.
- (iv) The Parish Council Asset Register
- (v) The revised Risk Assessment

All Councillors present **APPROVED** the documents as presented

10/13 Bank Account signatories – To reconfirm the Parish Council's bank account signatories for 2012/13.

The bank account signatories were confirmed as Councillors Williams, Foster and Tyler. All present **AGREED** the signatories should remain the same for the forthcoming Parish Council year.

11/13 Councillors to review and comment on Planning Application/s under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

11/13/1 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 13/00386/FULL

203 Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford, Basildon SS13 2JS - Regularisation of Powder coated aluminium stables to replace dilapidated stables.

The application was discussed and based on the information available Councillors objected to the planning application on the grounds that the building was inappropriate development, in as much that it was materially larger than the dwelling it replaced and the height and depth was in excess of that permitted.

11/13/2 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 13/00411/FULL

4 Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford, Basildon SS13 2HF - Proposed single storey side extension and a new pitched roof over dwelling - Revised application.

Parish Councillors discussed this revised proposal and felt that the previous grounds for Basildon Council refusing the previous application had now been revised. The Parish Council could not therefore see any reason for objecting to the application. All Councillors were in **AGREEMENT** with the comments.

11/13/3 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 13/00399/FULL

25 Ilfracombe Avenue, Bowers Gifford, Basildon SS13 2DR - Proposed front porch with cat slide roof and traditional timber opening doors.

Parish Councillors discussed the application and stated that their only comment was that the proposals did extend beyond the existing building line and that the proposals were of an individual appearance. It was up to Basildon Borough Council to grant or refuse the applications and that any objection might come from neighbours who may object to certain aspects of the plans but Councillors did not have any grounds for objection. All were in **AGREEMENT** with the points as discussed.

The Parish Clerk confirmed she would forward the Parish Council's comments to the relevant Planning Officer.

11/13/4 Notification of decisions by Basildon Borough Council, as a Planning Authority, regarding previously discussed planning applications.

- 127 Pound Lane(13/00246/FULL) – single storey rear extension
Permission granted
- 13 Una Road – Raise roof of dwelling to provide first floor accommodation and convert a bungalow to a chalet (123/00281/FULL)
Permission granted
- Land West of Adelaide Cottage , Osborne Road (12/00620/FULL)
Appeal submitted against the decision to refuse permission.

12/13 Date of next meeting - Wednesday 26th June 2013 7.30 p.m. at the Benbow Club , Pound Lane