

MINUTES of the VIRTUAL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF BERINSFIELD PARISH held on Monday 22nd June, 2020.

PRESENT : Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely, Chairman of Berinsfield Parish Council
9 members of the public
Annette Loveland, Clerk to the Parish Council
County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale,

1. Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor Robin Bennett.
2. **To receive the Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 29th April, 2019** . The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 29th April 2019 were approved.
3. **Report from Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely, Chairman of Berinsfield Parish Council.**
Thanked everyone for joining the virtual annual meeting of the Parish of Berinsfield.

Coronavirus pandemic Councillor Scott-Ely thanked everybody in the village who provided essential services to residents who required support during the coronavirus pandemic. He said he knew that the staff and volunteers at the Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre co-ordinated much of the community support, as well as continuing to provide their normal advice services, but there were also many residents who provided services to friends and neighbours who have not been able to leave their homes during the lockdown. The Community Larder has continued to operate with the help of its volunteers and Councillor Scott-Ely said this service has also been much appreciated by many residents.

On behalf of the Parish Council, Councillor Scott-Ely thanked everybody who had provided help to residents who required assistance during these unprecedented times.

2020 has not been a normal year in any sense with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March and the lockdown imposed by the Government to try and help the NHS and to save lives. The Parish Council has remained open and has continued to meet, albeit virtually, rather than in person. The grounds maintenance contractors continued to work to ensure that bins were emptied and the grass was cut so that residents could continue to use the recreation ground for exercise. The Parish Council does not yet know when the Government will allow the play areas to be opened again, but wanted to thank residents for respecting the fact that they had to be closed in line with the guidance from the Government. The Parish Council will arrange for the play areas to be inspected, cleaned and opened for use as soon as the Government directs that it is safe to do so.

The lockdown has also prevented the Parish Council from taking action with regard to providing the adult gym equipment and the scented meditation garden in the village. Residents were asked to vote on several suggestions put forward for the use of the funds from the Solar Farm and the adult gym equipment and scented meditation garden were two of the preferred suggestions that could actually be provided. As the lockdown continues to ease, the Parish Council will be obtaining quotations for the provision of these facilities in the village. The proposal is for the adult gym equipment to be located on the recreation ground, to the rear of the skateboard park and the scented meditation garden in the formal section of the Burial Ground.

Village Fete and Funfair. Caroline Wade and her colleagues again kindly arranged several events in the village in 2019, including the village fete. The Parish Council is grateful to Caroline and her colleagues for undertaking this and know that residents do appreciate all the hard work they put into organising events and activities throughout the summer. Sadly this year the owner of the fair decided quite early in the year to cancel his booking to visit Berinsfield in 2020 and in view of not knowing how long the lockdown would last, the decision was also taken to cancel the fete.

Village Litter Pick. The village litter pick that took place in 2019 was very successful. In line with many things this year, the litter pick planned for April 2020 had to be postponed. It may be possible for the litter pick to be held later in the year and if so this will be publicised in the village.

Neighbourhood Development Plan. It was agreed during 2019-20 to start work again on the paused Neighbourhood Development Plan. Meetings were held, but due to issues with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 it was paused again. A consultant was appointed by the Parish Council to assist with the Neighbourhood Development Plan and a grant has been obtained to cover the cost of engaging him. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 will be going for inspection in July, 2020, with a view to it being adopted by South Oxfordshire District Council and taking effect from the end of this year. It is anticipated that work will start again on the Neighbourhood Development Plan later in 2020.

Parking on pavements and grass verges. Unfortunately there continues to be a lack of car parking in the village, but parking on pavements causes problems for people using mobility scooters or pushing prams and buggies. By parking on the grass verges, particularly near to junctions, it causes visibility problems to drivers and could cause an accident if a driver's vision is obscured when pulling out from a junction. The Parish Council reiterated its request for vehicle owners to park their vehicles considerately.

Dogs fouling on public open spaces and pavements. One of major complaints made to the Parish Council is about dogs fouling on footpaths and open spaces in the village and dog owners not clearing up after their dog. There are lots of dog litter bins throughout the village, but if any residents feel there is an area that is not well covered, they should let the Parish Council know .

Hedges, shrubs and trees overhanging public footpaths. Occupiers of all properties are responsible for cutting back any hedges, shrubs or trees that grow in their gardens to ensure that they do not overhang public footpaths and cause obstructions for pedestrians. This includes paths that are at the rear of properties as well as the paths at the front and sides of properties. Failure to keep the public footpaths clear will result in Oxfordshire County Council issuing letters asking for the hedge, shrub or tree to be cut back and if this is not done promptly, they can arrange for contractors to carry out the work and the occupier will be responsible for paying for it. Residents' help and co-operation in keeping boundary hedges, shrubs, or trees cut back from public footpaths would be very much appreciated.

Berinsfield Emergency Plan. The Berinsfield Emergency Plan is on the Parish Council's website and is updated as and when necessary. Comments from residents are always welcome and will help to keep the plan up to date.

Pavilion. The pavilion is now sixteen years old and is still well used by the football clubs based in the village. The Pavilion has a kitchen, meeting space and toilet facilities and is available for hire during the day time and some evenings. Further information can be provided by the Parish Clerk, upon request.

Website

The Parish Council's website, www.Berinsfield-pc.gov.uk is available for use by any organisation in the village free of charge. It will shortly be updated to meet the need for it to be accessible. Information can be passed to the Clerk either in writing or via email and she will be pleased to include it under the Community Activities section of the website. Information from the Parish Council and other organisations is also placed on the two notice boards in the village, one outside the Information Centre on Fane Drive and the other just inside the gates of the Burial Ground.

4. Financial Report

Councillor Scott-Ely reported that the accounts for the year 2019-20 were currently with the external auditor for audit. The accounts are available for inspection from 3rd June until 14th July 2020 by contacting the Clerk and notices to this effect are on the notice boards and on the website. The accounting statement and annual governance statement for 2019-20 are on the Parish Council's website for inspection. The balance carried forward to 2020/21 includes the £50,000 solar farm funds.

Council Tax 2020-21

The Parish Council has increased its portion of the Council Tax this year in line with inflation in order to continue to provide its services in the village.

Grant Aid

The Parish Council has been pleased to award grants to voluntary organisations in the village recently. In awarding the grants the Parish Council acknowledged the tremendous amount of commitment from the many volunteers and staff of the organisations it has supported.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk and Pavilion Caretaker for all their hard work during the year.

5. **County Councillor's Report.** County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale joined the meeting and had also provided a written report on the work of the County Council during the year, covering the following points :-

Highways.

i) Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council have committed to cutting traffic congestion and improving public transport into Oxford.

ii) Roadwork permits will be required by any companies who wish to carry out works on the highways. The companies will have to pay for the permit and will have to provide full details and timings of the works. The County Council hope to achieve a reduction in roadwork duration by approximately 10% per annum through this scheme.

iii) Improving Oxfordshire's roads. Repairs and improvements to Oxfordshire's roads including repairs to 34,000 potholes were carried out over the last year.

iv) Go ahead for full business case for project to reduce congestion into and around Oxford. The aim is to reduce the number of cars travelling into and around the city and encourage more people to travel by bus, walking and cycling.

v) Housing Infrastructure Fund. Confirmation was received that Oxfordshire would receive £2.8 million which will be used for upgrading roads around Didcot, the new river crossing and the Clifton Hampden by-pass.

Minerals and Waste.

i) In July 2019 the BACHPORT (Burcot and Clifton Hampden Protection of the River Thames) defended the green belt at Culham against Hills Quarries attempts to extract sand and gravel between Clifton Hampden and Culham.

ii) Minerals and waste sites approved in a draft plan for consultation. Two preferred sites were included in the draft plan for consultation, land between Eynsham and Cassington and Nuneham Courtenay.

A resident informed the meeting that the soil between Berinsfield and Drayton St. Leonard was good quality and that any houses should be built with renewable and sustainable material

Health.

i) County Council backed proposals for integrated health and social care system. The new joined-up health and care system will also cover Buckinghamshire and Berkshire West. In the draft plan the NHS and Local Authorities in the three areas have committed to planning health and care services around individual needs. GP practices will become part of a primary care network that serve communities of around 30 – 50,000 people.

Children's Services

i) Radical changes that improve the lives of families to be introduced in Oxfordshire. The family safeguarding model has been adopted where social workers work in small integrated teams centred around individual families in need, together with experts in specialist mental health, drugs, alcohol and domestic abuse services.

Education

- i) Culham and Clifton Hampden Primary Schools merged.
- ii) Free school transport for disabled young people was retained

Climate Change

i) Oxfordshire County Council works on action plan to go carbon neutral by 2030. The Council will replace street lights with low energy lighting over the next four years and a communication system allowing dimming of groups of lights when they not needed.

Infrastructure

i) Oxfordshire was named as the best performing County Council waste disposal authority in England for the sixth year in a row.

Budget

- i) County Council to invest funds in schools, transport, youth and street lighting in its 2020-21 budget.
- ii) Covid-19. As the impact of the virus was so sudden, on 24th March 2020, having set a positive, invest to save budget, the County Council immediately adopted an emergency footing, as is well rehearsed, to provide emergency services to Oxfordshire residents which has cost approximately £64 million. The Government contributed £32 million and it is hoped that they will contribute further funds to cover the shortfall in the budget.

County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale informed the meeting that she is Cabinet Member responsible for the Education Service and Cultural Services, which includes Libraries, Museum & History Services, County Music Service and the Registration Service. She said she was proud of the schools and their staff who have shown enormous flexibility and compassion and of the County Council staff for their commitment to help others.

County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale gave details of the activities she has provided funds for from her priority fund during 2019-20 which includes £2,000 for Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre and £2,000 for the Berry Youth Centre.

The Chairman, Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely, thanked County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale for attending the annual meeting as well as the monthly meetings of Berinsfield Parish Council and for all the work she has carried out on behalf of the village.

5. Questions.

Solar Farm Funds. A resident asked what the Solar Farm funds would be spent on. The Chairman informed the meeting that following consultation with residents it had been agreed that some funds should be spent on an outdoor gym and on a scented meditation garden. The Parish Council had been successful in obtaining a grant of £10,000 towards the cost of the outdoor gym which would be located on the recreation ground and the scented meditation garden would be located in the garden section of the Burial Ground.

Parish Council Meetings. A resident asked when it would be possible for the Parish Council to meet in person again. It was agreed that the Parish Council should follow guidelines issued by the Government with regard to gatherings. Reverend Teresa Stewart-Sykes, who was present at the meeting stated that it would not be possible for the Parish Council to use the Church Hall for Parish Council meetings until possibly September 2020.

Request for litter bin. A request was made for a litter bin to be installed by the seat on the open space at the junction of Fane Drive and Burcot Lane. This request will be considered by the Parish Council at its meeting to be held on 6th July, 2020.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending the annual meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.