

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF BERINSFIELD PARISH held on Monday 23rd April, 2018 in the Church Hall, Wimblestraw Road, Berinsfield, Wallingford, Oxon.

PRESENT : Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely, Chairman of Berinsfield Parish Council
20 members of the public
District Councillor John Cotton
Annette Loveland, Clerk to the Parish Council

1. To receive the Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 24th April, 2017. The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 24th April, 2017 were approved.

2. Report from Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely, Chairman of Berinsfield Parish Council. Councillor Scott-Ely thanked everyone for attending the Annual Parish Meeting and hoped that they would take the opportunity to express their views and concerns about the village. He stated that the Parish Council is always pleased to receive comments and, for that matter, complaints from residents as without this input the Parish Council may not know about problems in the village.

Defibrilators

The Parish Council has purchased a second Defibrillator which has been installed outside the Health Centre in Fane Drive. The first Defibrillator was installed in the porch at the Dental Surgery in Fane Drive and the Parish Council is very grateful to the Health Centre and Dental Surgery for allowing these vital pieces of equipment to be installed on their property.

New play equipment

New play equipment is on order and will be installed in the play area on the recreation ground in May 2018. South Oxfordshire District Council kindly provided a grant towards the cost of purchasing and installing the equipment.

Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme

The Parish Council has continued to work with the Community Investment Team from South Oxfordshire District Council. The consultation process has been completed and a master plan is being prepared and will be published in the near future. The scheme will include the provision of 1700 new homes, new school, community hub and improvements to existing infrastructure in the village.

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. Councillor Scott-Ely informed the meeting that his colleague, Councillor Fearneyhough has been attending meetings of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Action Group and would be giving a brief report later in the meeting. As yet the Parish Council has not felt it is in a position to make a decision to support the southern or northern route as details of these routes have not been published.

Berinsfield 60th Anniversary

The Parish Council is pleased to support the Berinsfield Village Fete to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the village. It will take place on 7th and 8th July, 2018. The Carnival Committee is working hard to make this an enjoyable weekend and Councillor Scott-Ely stated that he hoped everybody would attend and enjoy the event.

Dogs fouling on public open spaces and pavements. One of major complaints made to the Parish Council this year is about dogs fouling on footpaths and open spaces in the village and dog owners not clearing up after their dog. In an attempt to assist residents to clear up after their dogs, a bag dispenser has been installed at the Lay Avenue entrance to the recreation ground. Hopefully this will assist residents who walk their dogs and forget to take plastic bags with them. There are dog litter bins throughout the village, but residents were asked to let the Parish Council know if there were areas of the village that would benefit from having a dog litter bin installed.

Hedges, shrubs and trees overhanging public footpaths. Councillor Scott-Ely reminded residents that they were 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, they will arrange for contractors to carry out the work and the occupier of the property will be responsible for paying for it. Councillor Scott-Ely asked residents for their co-operation in keeping boundary hedges, shrubs, trees cut back from public footpaths.

Going Forward Buses. The Parish Council was pleased to hear that Going Forward Buses has extended its route to Berinsfield and will run a service from Berinsfield – Wallingford and return every Tuesday. The service started on 10th April and residents can use concessionary bus passes on the service. The bus will travel around the village, with the main stop being outside the Health Centre.

Berinsfield Emergency Plan The Parish Council has prepared an emergency plan to be put into action in the event of an emergency situation in the village. The plan identifies places of safety that residents could be evacuated to in the event of a fire, flood, explosion close to their home and these are the Church Hall, Berinsfield Community Association, the Pavilion and the Boxing Club. South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council would take charge of any major incidents in the village, but the Parish Council's emergency plan provides local information that would assist them.

One item that has not yet been covered in the plan is identifying any 4 x 4 vehicle owners in the village who would be prepared to assist by offering to tow vehicles that had skidded off the road in the village due to snow or ice. Anybody who wished to volunteer to put their name forward should contact the Clerk to the Council on Berinsfieldpc@aol.com or 01869 354135.

Pavilion. The pavilion is now fourteen years old and is still well used by the football clubs based in the village. The Pavilion is available for hire during the day time and some evenings and further information can be provided by the 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. Information can be passed to the Clerk either in writing or by e.mail 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 in Fane Drive and the other just inside the gates of the Burial Ground.

3. Financial Report

Copies of the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st March 2017 were circulated at the meeting for inspection. The accounts for the year 1st April, 2017 to 31st March, 2018 are currently being prepared ready for audit and this will be carried out in June, 2017.

Council Tax 2018-19 The Parish Council has had to increase its portion of the Council Tax by 2.5% this year in order to continue to provide its services in the village. To explain what the Parish Council's portion of the Council Tax is used for a separate report had been prepared and was circulated at the meeting. The report also contained details of how much residents actually pay towards the £119,187.00 that is required to provide the Parish Council's services in the village. Councillor Scott-Ely explained that the Council Tax base is worked out on a band D property and there are only 13 band D and 3 band E properties in the village.

The majority of properties are in bands A – C and therefore the Council Tax raised on these properties is not as much as that raised in other Towns and Parishes who have more properties in the higher Council Tax bands D to H. Berinsfield also has a large number of properties where the occupiers are on a low income or claim benefits and are therefore eligible for the Council Tax reduction scheme. This also has an effect on the Council Tax base calculation as it makes it lower than the actual number of properties in the village and therefore when this is divided into the £119,187.00 required to run the Parish Council's services it makes the band D (and other bands) more expensive than band D properties in other similar Parishes in the District.

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 volunteers and staff of the organisations it has supported, in particular the Berry Youth Centre which will be open in the very near future and is a much needed facility for the young people in the village.

4. **PAGE (Parishes Against Gravel Extraction).** Mr. John Taylor attended the meeting in order to give an update on the work of the PAGE Group. Mr. Taylor explained that the campaign started in 2010 with two objectives, to reduce the amount of sand and gravel required to be extracted to the lowest amount possible and to protect the areas that the PAGE Group covers, Dorchester on Thames, Warborough, Drayton St. Leonard, Benson, Berinsfield, Stadhampton, Newington and Berrick Salome.

Oxfordshire County Council approved Part I of the Minerals Plan. The PAGE Group made the strongest possible case against the Mineral Plan, which included a county wide campaign with OXAGE to get the LAA (Local Aggregate Assessment) set at the 10 year average but with the Inspector's support Oxfordshire County Council were determined to set the level at 1,015,000 tonnes per annum. The latest LAA from the County which shows a 15% fall in aggregate extraction to 650K tonnes, primarily because Hanson have stopped production for the time being and gravel is being imported from East London and Somerset. This means that the 10 year average is down to 595K tonnes per annum which only goes to further support the PAGE case that no new sites are required in Oxfordshire to meet demand. In fact the existing land bank is sufficient to meet requirements over the next 19 years - well beyond the scope of this Plan. Oxfordshire County Council has gone out to ask for land owners/operators to nominate their land for sand and gravel extraction and there is a threat of new sites in the southern part of the county. Oxfordshire County Council will be considering the matter at their Cabinet meeting on 22nd May, 2018. There will be a programme of consultations leading to an independent examiner carrying out a hearing in 2020 with a view to the plan being adopted.

Mr. Taylor informed the meeting that the PAGE Group planned to continue as a Steering Group but will not be looking for financial donations from the Member Parishes this year. Should a new landowner put forward another site in the area they will call everybody together and may ask for further financial donations.

Members of the public pointed out that the land identified between Berinsfield /Drayton St. Leonard/Stadhampton was good agricultural land. Mr. Taylor informed the meeting that further information was available on the Oxfordshire County Council website <https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/new-minerals-and-waste-local-plan>. The Chairman, Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely thanked Mr. Taylor for attending the meeting.

5. **Oxford – Cambridge Expressway.** Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely introduced Councillor Brian Fearneyhough who had been appointed as the Parish Council's representative to attend the Expressway Action Group meetings. County Scott-Ely informed the meeting that as yet the Parish Council had not made a decision as to which route it would

support and would consider the matter when further information about the proposed corridors and routes became available.

Councillor Fearneyhough kindly gave a brief presentation on the current situation with regard to the proposed expressway. At the present time there are three corridors under consideration. The decision as to which corridor will be the most suitable will be made in July 2018, but no consultation will take place on the route until a decision has been made on which corridor to use. The National Infrastructure Commission and Highways England state that the preferred route would be the A 34 to Bicester and then the A 421 to Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. By taking this route only 32 miles of road would need to be made into a dual carriageway. The other proposed corridors would entail the road going across open country. Members of the public asked if there was information about the width of the proposed road and also pointed out that the existing A34 cannot cope with the current usage.

The Chairman, Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely thanked Councillor Fearneyhough for his presentation.

6. **Report from County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale.** County Councillor Lindsay-Gale had forwarded her apologies and had prepared a written report which was circulated to all present at the meeting. The contents of the report were noted and a copy will be filed with the Minutes.

7. **District Councillor John Cotton.** District Councillor Cotton attended the meeting and in answer to questions from members of the public stated that he was no longer Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council but he was still the District Councillor for the parishes of Berinsfield, Dorchester on Thames and Drayton St. Leonard.

District Councillor Cotton informed the meeting that he was in agreement with how the consultation on the proposed Oxford – Cambridge Expressway was being handled and explained that the government wants the expressway to take some of the traffic from the major motorways around London and the proposal was that the project would be started in 2025 and be finished by 2030.

Councillor Scott-Ely asked District Councillor Cotton what would happen with regard to the Berinsfield community investment scheme now that the South Oxfordshire District Council has rejected its Local Plan. District Councillor Cotton explained that the plan would continue in its current form for a while and that amendments may be made. The earliest date that it could go to examination is February/March 2019. District Councillor Cotton explained that the delay with the Local Plan does not help with the land being purchased for the new homes in Berinsfield and that this would probably be handled by Homes England now. The Local Plan has to be in place in order to take the land out of the green belt. District Councillor Cotton was asked if the lack of a Local Plan would enable developers to step in and identify sites for development in the District, but he stated that he did not see this as too much of a problem as the only way land could be removed from the green belt is through it being identified in the Local Plan. District Councillor Cotton stated that South Oxfordshire District Council would eventually have a Local Plan. He also referred to the Housing Deal which was signed by representatives from all District Councils in Oxfordshire at Heyford Park in March 2018 to deliver £215 million investment in transport, infrastructure and affordable housing in Oxfordshire and said this could go elsewhere unless South Oxfordshire District Council had a Local Plan.

A Member of the public asked about the Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan which when prepared was looking for sites for 109 houses in the village and asked how this had grown to 1700 homes. District Councillor Cotton stated that the Berinsfield NDP was in limbo at the present time as it had not got through its public examination, but the principle of taking land out of the green belt in Berinsfield will stand. District Councillor Cotton was asked whether the funding associated with the Berinsfield regeneration scheme

would still be available for “front loading” facilities in the village. The meeting was informed that the funding was still available, but the dilemma is that there is no Local Plan to take land out of the green belt at the present time so this will cause a delay.

A Member of the public asked District Councillor Cotton about the provision of a secondary school in Berinsfield. District Councillor Cotton said it was an option in the original plan, but has now been removed. He said that there would be a Secondary School somewhere in the area, possibly Chalgrove, Culham or Berinsfield. District Councillor Cotton was informed about the problems school children from Berinsfield have in getting to Secondary School due to the lack of bus services in the village. A member of the public pointed out that a free school might be a possibility in the area. District Councillor Cotton indicated that he would like an all through school in Berinsfield, but it would need public support to lobby for this.

8. **Public Meeting**

a) **Potholes.** A resident asked who was responsible for dealing with the potholes in the village. The Chairman, Councillor Scott-Ely informed the meeting that Oxfordshire County Council are responsible, but the Parish Council has asked for a meeting with them to see if there is any possibility of this work being carried out by the Parish Council on an agency basis.

b) **Berry Youth Centre.** A resident said he was pleased that the Parish Council was supporting the new Berry Youth Centre by providing a grant.

c) **Parking on Footpaths in Berinsfield.** A resident asked if the Parish Council could do anything to prevent vehicle owners parking their vehicles on the footpaths in the village and in particular Colwell Road. The Chairman, Councillor Stuart Scott-Ely informed the meeting that this is a matter for the Police and the Parish Council would forward the information to them, but they have previously indicated that they do not have the manpower to deal with this type of complaint. Concerns were expressed by residents as to how emergency vehicles would gain access to properties when vehicles were parked inconsiderately on pavements and blocking the roads.

d) **Path from Spinney to bus stop on A 4074.** A request was made for the path that was covered with a mound of earth to be reinstated. It was pointed out that this was a direct route back to the spinney and the village when getting off buses from Oxford. Officers from South Oxfordshire District Council Community Investment Scheme were present at the meeting and informed the meeting that as the mound of earth was not a deterrent to pedestrians, South Oxfordshire District Council had agreed to erect a fence across the former path.

e) **Spinney Abbey Woods Close.** It was reported that syringes had been found in the Spinney Area.

f) **Street Light adjacent to Lodden Avenue Play Area.** It was reported that this street light was not working. The Parish Council will obtain the number from the street light and report it to Oxfordshire County Council.

g) **Telephone Box Colne Drive.** It was reported that the equipment had been removed from the telephone kiosk but that the kiosk was still in place and that the light was on. The Parish Council agreed to contact British Telecom to enquire when the kiosk would be removed.

h) **Damage to bollards on open space between Ock Drive and Colne Drive.** It was reported that a contractor had removed a bollard to gain access to the open space area and it had not been replaced properly. The Parish Council agreed to contact SOHA Housing about this matter.

The meeting concluded at 8.45 p.m. and Councillor Scott-Ely thanked everybody for attending and participating in the meeting.