

Bishopton Parish Council

Parish Meeting, 13th April 2011

Chairman's Annual Report

Bishopton Parish Council has had a full complement of Councillors this year until Cllr Penny Bence resigned in February 2011. There will be an election on 5th May 2011 when a new Council will be formed. As in previous years the Council has strived to maintain the Village Green and surrounding open spaces and address any concerns of residents. Good communications have been maintained via the web site which continues to be looked after by Daniel Wells and through regular flyers delivered to every household in the Parish. Councillors have attended meetings outside of the Parish and 4 PACT meetings have been held in Bishopton this year. Cllr Brian Jones regularly attends the monthly meetings and has been extremely helpful with solving problems and giving advice.

Village Green

As ever we have had to contend with problems with dog fouling, inconsiderate parking and damage caused either by vehicles or general wear and tear. The actual grass has benefitted this year from the stopping of excessive weedkilling by Darlington Borough Council and the continuing of strimming to tidy up areas left by Streetscene. We would have liked the Green to have been cut more often but are reliant on Streetscene for that. Signs have been erected on The Green to stop visitors parking and blocking access for residents. The posts around the Memorial have been refurbished and two areas of tarmac have been replaced. Continuing our policy of improving the look of the village for residents and visitors we have planted new trees to replace some that had been removed and purchased 6 oak half barrels for planting with seasonal plants as well as planting more bulbs. A number of residents have expressed their pleasure at the improvement to the Green and in particular to the flowering tubs. The dead sycamore tree near the Cenotaph has just been removed after a year of trying to get DBC to agree. We had to submit two planning applications and two complaints before it was eventually granted. Two of the three bus shelter in the village have become redundant and BPC have asked for them to be removed. One is in a particular poor state of repair. We are very pleased to see that the Village Green outside Manor Farm development has at last been repaired and the new access road created using cobbles to match other areas in the village. Another successful litter pick and general village tidyup recently took place and the Parish Council are extremely grateful to those residents that took part.

Our Village Green policy and procedures document was finally produced in November. This has been created to give guidance to residents on a subject that can be difficult and the Parish Council are very grateful for the help that they received from the Borough Solicitor in formulating it.

Highways issues

Speeding as ever is a problem for residents of Bishopton and the Parish Council continue (without much success) to try and improve the situation. Speedwatch was carried out 4 times earlier in the year. Between 80 and 120 vehicles were monitored on each occasion, of which 8 to 10 vehicles

were recorded at speeds of more than 35mph. Warning letters were sent to speeders. The Council have again asked DBC if it is possible to have speed indicators positioned in the village as a deterrent. The Parish Council has even considered purchasing them but is still waiting for the Highways Department to come back to them following our request. As with the rest of the Country pot holes have been a problem but Highways have been very good (again with help from Cllr Jones) in sorting them asap. We are still trying to solve the problem of flooding on the Redmarshall Road which when it freezes becomes dangerous. This also is in the hands of the Highways Dept.

Fly tipping has increased this year and we have had to report particularly the dumping of tyres to Streetscene on a number of occasions. They have always responded very quickly. With the increase in numbers at Bishopton/Redmarshall school parking has become a problem and DBC is working with the school to try and solve or improve the situation.

Unfortunately with the cut backs there is a question mark over our rural bus service. BPC has complained to DBC but we must just wait and see.

Planning applications

Planning applications can now be viewed by all on line but BPC have still requested to receive the paper copies so that they can consider them in greater detail and in particular look at the plans in full size.

A number of applications were received and considered and there was an appeal against a refusal for Grange Farm that was allowed. All the applications were granted by DBC despite in one instance, 11-17 High Street, the Parish Council objecting on the grounds that it involved making a new access across Village Green which is not allowed. DBC Planning Department do not involve themselves with Village Green matters and the proposed developers have been notified of the problem.

Proposed Wind Farms

Applications are now with DBC for a revised 6 turbines 125m in height at Moor House and 3 turbines 110m high at Newbiggin. The application for 3 turbines at Lambs Hill, Stillington was granted. SPAG continue to fight these applications and the next few months are extremely important for residents in the area.

Financial

Amongst other outgoings BPC funded a new boiler for the Village Hall and refurbishment of the Churchyard memorials, provided a Christmas tree and lights for the Village and donated to the Salvation Army when they came to assist in the Village carol singing.

Other activities

The lack of a football field causes much concern to residents and BPC have tried to find a suitable site. They have contacted local land owners and asked the school if the playing field could be used - all to no effect. This problem has gone on for many years and each Parish Council has tried its best to solve the problem. We will continue to do our best.

2 skips were provided free of charge by John Wade Skip Hire for household rubbish and we are very grateful for this.

Logs distributed to OAP's.

BPC have responded to complaints from residents about sheds 'springing up' by referring to DBC and the land within TFC has been a subject of much discussion and research including enquiries to the Land Registry and the Legal Department at DBC. We hope that any problems can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction asap.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to all members of the Parish Council who have given up their valuable time and contributed to the work of the Parish Council. A particular thanks must go to the Cllr Peter Wood who is not seeking to stand in the forthcoming elections and has served the Parish Council for more than 9 years, contributing tremendously to its work. He has served as Treasurer, Chairman and led many work parties as well as erecting the tree and lights every Christmas. Another mention must go to Mike Smith, our Clerk, who is leaving us after two years of hard work for the Council. We are most grateful to him for his contribution to the smooth running of the Parish Council. I am also aware that there may be other Councillors who will not be with us in the next term and would like to express my appreciation for their help and support during the past year.

L.F MacMahon

Chairman