

Bishopton Parish Council

Parish Meeting 17th May, 2017

Chairman's Annual Report

Bishopton Parish Council has worked with only 6 Councillors for most of the year and we are ever hopeful of someone coming forward to make up our full compliment. Our Clerk, David Thorman continues to support the work of the Council in an extremely efficient and effective way. We also receive the support of our local Borough Councillors Brian and Doris Jones and Steve York. Brian has had busy year as our Mayor and we are very grateful for the continued help that they all give us.

Parish Councillors represent Bishopton at various meetings and we continue to support our Village Hall and St Peter's Church.

We keep in touch with our residents in various ways but still mainly with flyers and e-mail. Residents are always welcome at our monthly meeting and attend quite regularly with queries which we make every effort to answer.

Registered Village Green

Every year the Village Green is inspected and any areas that need attention are identified. This is an ongoing job and apart from some major work near recently renovated houses and a footpath that needs resurfacing all of which need funding, the smaller jobs are kept on top of.

A new bench in memory of Sam Tunney was purchased by the family and replaced the old bench in the Cenotaph area.

Following cuts by DBC we now pay to have the leaves collected from the VG in the Autumn and then Streetscene collect the piles. Whilst this is an expense we feel that it is worth it to keep the grass in reasonable condition and the VG looking good over the winter. It also means that less areas have to be reseeded in the Spring.

New residents who will not have been involved in the consultation and subsequent new policy on the Registered Village Green have all been written to so that they are aware of the complicated law that governs our role in being custodians of the VG.

Annual Litterpick – This was not as well attended as in recent years despite the very generous offer of free bacon sandwiches from the Village Hall Coffee Shop ladies but those that did turn out did an excellent job and worked extremely hard to cover all the roads surrounding the village. Thank you all. Tidying up was also done in the village itself and I must mention the help provided by Ian and Jayne Robins in collecting all the litter left on the roadside by volunteers - no mean feat!

Whilst some jobs are now having to be paid for we still have some loyal volunteers who do odd jobs around the village when requested. A big thank you to them.

Planning applications.

A number of planning applications were received during the year and the PC considered them and responded to DBC accordingly. All planning applications are now viewed on line.

Highways Issues

Our speed monitoring equipment has been used all year and the statistics carefully monitored by our Clerk. In September we had a talk from someone from Community Speedwatch which is another method of trying to control speeding traffic. Letters are sent by the police to any vehicle caught speeding. We sent out a flyer in February asking for volunteers to come forward to be trained and put in place some monitoring. Unfortunately we have had no responses so far.

Local Bus Service

At last a bus service was reinstated to Stockton in August. This was much appreciated but unfortunately was withdrawn in November. We are now back to only have a service to Darlington on one day of the week. Our Clerk has written on a number of occasions to Stagecarriage to try and get them to consider including us in the service but they do not respond. During their campaign we contacted all the Mayoral candidates and I am sure we will be following this up during the year. The outline planning application that has just been passed to build 9 houses in Cobby Castle Lane has included within it a Sec 106 agreement to contribute between £5,400 and £8,100 to help fund the bus service 20 to Darlington beyond December 2018 when it is due to cease.

Financial

David Thorman is our responsible Financial Officer and will report separately. We are very grateful to Peter Wood for his help at audit time and whenever we need financial advice.

Playing Field

The consultation process that was carried out to all residents indicated that 80 % of residents were in favour the Parish Council going forward with plans for a new playing field. 69% had no concerns with the proposed location. Since then we have been talking to residents with concerns, getting quotes for equipment, seeking advice from other villages with playgrounds, consulting experts from Stockton Borough Council and before moving forward we had a meeting with the Head and Governors of Bishopton/Redmarshall C of E School. We now are talking to DBC, with a planning application the next stage in the process. We were very pleased to receive a donation of £400 from the Village Hall Coffee Shop to go towards equipment for the playing field.

To apply for funding for equipment we need to set up a group called Friends of Bishopton Playground and recently asked residents to come forward if they were interested. So far this has not got off the ground so the plan is to go ahead with the plain grassed field for which we have funds and look at equipment at a later stage.

PACT (Police and Communities Together)

The PACT meetings as we know them have now unfortunately ceased and been replace with something called MEGAPACT which will take place every 3 months. Bishopton is included in the meeting held in Middleton St George. Councillors are not happy at the lack of contact with police as it was felt that this was the whole point of the meetings

Wind Farms

BPC is represented on both the Lambs Hill and Moor House Liaison Committees. Lambs Hill Wind Farm went live in January and Moor House is in the process of being built. We are at present applying for a grant from the Moor House Wind Farm community fund (10K available per year to communities) to complete some repair work on the Registered Village Green.

Parish Neighbourhood Plan

BPC has been looking at producing a PNP. This is a long and arduous job. We had a meeting with Cllr York (DBC) and David Sheen (Middleton St George NDP Chair) in July last year to discuss the possibility of producing the plan. Following some initial ground work done by our Clerk, Cllr Melaney took on this project and has done a great deal of work towards a draft plan. He attended a Neighbourhood Planning Event at Durham in April. There is still much work to be done and funds to be applied for.

Other activities

The Parish Council again provided a Christmas tree for the village which volunteers kindly erected along with lights throughout the village. Once again BPC paid for Fishburn Brass Band to come and play carols for residents around the tree. It was a most enjoyable event and well attended.

A poppy wreath for Remembrance Sunday was provided and placed on behalf of residents by the Parish Council.

Fly tipping has been reported on a number of occasions. This problem seems to be growing and the amounts dumped getting bigger. The dog warden has been contacted when responding to residents' complaints of dog fouling and residents given the contacts details so that they can report directly.

Skip Provision - Unfortunately due to the skips being overloaded and filled with banned objects BPC has had to withdraw this service. We have warned residents of the possibility of this happening and in August it was so bad that we had to ask for another skip to be brought as a matter of urgency to fill with the extra objects. Arrangements had to be made to dispose of the prohibited items. The cost of this (we now have to pay) facility has become too much for BPC's budget and we cannot expect or find volunteers to clean up after items have been dumped and the bin overloaded.

Finally, I would like to thank all Councillors for their continued support and hard work in serving the interests of the parish. Special mention to our Clerk, David Thorman who continues to support BPC's work in the most efficient and thorough way.

Lindley MacMahon - Chairman