

WHITCHURCH VILLAGE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF WHITCHURCH HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21st APRIL 2022 IN THE WVCA HALL

Present: Cllrs: N Kirk (Chairman), S Bryant, R Chandler, J Fox-Bowen, C Lewis, P O'Leary, P Orchard, Mrs S Dyer (Clerk) & District Councillor Paul May

2022/01 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING 21st APRIL 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2021, were agreed and will be signed as a true record of the meeting by Mr N Kirk - (Chairman)

2022/02 WVCA REPORT

No report – the Clerk did not request a report this year due to the response in 2021.

2022/03 CHAIRMANS REPORT - N Kirk

2021 proved to be an eventful year with lockdown ending we were able to resume to face to face meeting in June, this was welcomed by all Councillors.

We as a council were able to implement certain activities which had been cancelled previously due to Covid restrictions such as litter picking, Christmas Lights 'switch on' and lights competition which proved the most successful to date.

In conjunction with the welcomed refurbishment of the Black Lion, the Millennium Garden was subject to a clean-up and replanting by Councillors and volunteers, up lights have also been installed in the garden to make a feature of the tree, especially in the hours of darkness.

2022 will prove to be a busy year for the council with litter picks, Jubilee events, Have a Field fun day and Christmas events. We will also enhance the presentation of the village with more floral displays and seating installed.

May I, as the Chairman, thank all Councillors for all the time and effort they have put in during the last year, as we know this is done on a voluntary basis and if not for them this village would not function as well as it does.

A big thank you to Sue, Maureen & Jane for all their hard work this past year without their expertise and input we would certainly not be as organised and efficient as we are, again thank you all.

2022/04 FINANCE REPORT – N Kirk - Chair Finance Committee **Finance Report for the Year to 31st March 2022**

The total receipts for the year amounted to 101,957.16 at the same time expenditure came in at £68,729.81.

The balance in hand stands at 287,873.46 including the following:-

CiL funds: £136,319.22 of which £11,346.62 needs to be spent on relevant CiL expenditure by Oct/Nov 2022.

Cemetery income decreased slightly to £40,755.00 which is again a really good source of income.

Looking to the future it would be unrealistic to expect cemetery expenditure to remain consistently at this higher level.

A Reserves Policy has been recently agreed with £80,000 has been set aside for future cemetery maintenance when required and £30,000.00 earmarked for general reserves.

As part of our continuing focus of retaining a viable financial position, it was agreed that we should raise the precept by £2,000 to £40,000, this will be an increase of £2.08 per annum on Band D properties and a slight increase in all other bands.

The new bank account set up has proved to be invaluable with most payments now being paid online. Although there are still Councillors who need to register to be able to authorise the payments.

Finally the Finance Committee has complied with requirements to meet at regular intervals throughout the year to monitor expenditure against budget and report this back to the full council.

2021/05 FIELD AND CEMETERY REPORT – P O’Leary – Chair

During the last year the Playfield, Cemetery and Allotments committee met twice, The first meeting was on the 28th July 2021 which included our annual site visits to the 3 sites to discuss the inspection reports and make recommendations on the maintenance work required. The second meeting was held in January 2022 when the budgets for 2022/2023 were discussed along with the latest inspection reports reviewed.

The cemetery income for 2021/2022 is £40,755.00, the cemetery continues to be a valuable source of revenue for the Village Council. The cemetery is kept in good order due to the work of our contractor. Recent works completed at the cemetery include new fencing and gates around the skip and tree works which was required following the tree Inspection carried out in November 2021.

The playpark continues to be well used, and is regularly checked and maintained. In the last year new signage has been installed alongside a new round picnic table. We are having ongoing issues with one of the climbing frames installed last year and the Clerk & Chairman are both continuing to work with Mant Leisure to get this issue resolved.

2022/06 PLANNING AND TRAFFIC REPORT – T Griffin – Chair Planning & Traffic Committee

Since my last report a year ago, there really hasn’t been too many fundamental changes, so in some ways this year’s report serves as a summary of where we are to date.

Planning

- **Government White Paper** – issued Aug 20, which is being drip fed into local authorities.
- **WECA** - responsible for the high level plans which will give ‘broad locations’ where growth will take place
- **Local Plans** will be completed by Local Authorities.
- **BANES** have submitted a Partial Update with hearings expected Spring 2022
- Indication that it is unlikely for Whitchurch to take more development, **but this is unconfirmed.**
- Public Consultations have been ineffective because of covid lockdowns called during the National Lockdowns
- Paul May, our Local Councillor, continues to engage with WECA & BANES
- We are willing to work with local action groups, whilst ensuring we formulate non-political views.
- The position of the Village Council remains unchanged ie
 - We do not want further incursion into Green Belt
 - We do not want our play park & allotments site to be turned into a road / roundabout.
 - We do not want to become an urban extension to Bristol
 - We want to retain our village culture & identity
 - We do not wish to see further flooding in our area which has been problematic at times.
 - Any Transport Plan must be joined up to any Housing plan
- The planning application for **Resourceful Energy Anaerobic Ltd** at Queen Charlton Quarry was declined by BANES. The effect of this expansion would have dramatically increased the number of heavy lorries on our local roads & likely to be a complete disaster for the Village. We objected on environmental

& road safety grounds. We will need to keep an eye on this in the event of appeal.

- Other BAU planning applications are viewed by the whole of the Village Council and managed accordingly.

• **Transport / Roads**

- The plan within JLTP4 to place a road through greenbelt fields & create worse congestion where it joins Whitchurch Lane from Washing Pound Lane is still on the table.
- We will continue to object strongly on the grounds of non - sustainability and environmental impact.
- With BANES declaring an 'Environmental Emergency' & the economical challenges facing the country created by the Covid pandemic, we question how such expenditure can be justified.
- Speeding cars & lorries remain a problem, especially on A37, Staunton Lane and Maggs Lane
- We have highlighted to BANES the junction of Woollard Lane & A37 as a prime concern which needs to be monitored closely.
- Flooding is a concern on Staunton Lane by the new roundabout. Reported to BANES.

With the considerable help & support from Paul May, we must continue to engage with BANES & WECA, keeping a very close eye on all matters affecting our Village.

2022/07 ALLOTMENT (Community Gardens) REPORT – T Griffin – Chair WVCG Site

- ✚ The play park upgrade was completed and because of the disruption to plot holders, WVC kindly reduced the annual rental (21/22) from £25 to £20.
- ✚ The increased foot-flow in the play park has led to parking difficulties for some plot holders and at least one long established tenant has left for this reason. It is likely that parking for plot holders will be made more challenging when further planned parking restrictions are implemented.
- ✚ At the February meeting, the Village Council voted to increase the Annual Rental from £25 to £30 WEF April 2022 for new applicants within the village and £40 for new applicants outside of the village. Plot holders who live outside of the village but who already have a plot will be asked to renew at £30.
 - Whilst any increase (Villagers 20%) is not particularly welcome, all current plot holders wholly acknowledge the support provided by the Council when investment is needed (eg padlocks paths, plumbing etc). Compared with other local sites the cost still represents good value for money.
- ✚ Neglected plots that are not utilised in accordance with the agreement are discussed with the VC clerk & as a result of this pro-activity we have no plots of concern, with new tenants installed quickly.
- ✚ The key padlocks on the entry gates became unusable through wear & tear & were replaced by combination padlocks which appear to be working well. (WVC expense)
- ✚ It is difficult to gauge how successful the site has been in the last 2 years because we have had no meetings. However visually, most plots appear to have been well maintained with plot holders happy with produce.
- ✚ There has been occasional minor vandalism on some plots.

Impact of Covid 19

- ✚ Since March 2020, WVCG has refrained from holding the usual meetings / socials. However, we have re-started meetings with the intention of holding socials / working parties as we see fit this year.
- ✚ Whilst there have been no working parties, thanks to the hard work over the years there have been no maintenance issues to address.

- ✚ Plot holders receive regular updates from Tony Griffin & are encouraged to raise any concerns

Regulatory, Financial & Social

- ✚ Because of COVID, we have not held an AGM for 2 years.
- ✚ We held an AGM on 7th March 2022. **Only 4 plot holders attended.**
- ✚ Finances stand at £383 & accounts independently reviewed annually by a former plot-holder.
- ✚ The current officers are Tony Griffin (Chair) & Andy Ford (Treasurer). We wish to bring the matter of succession to the Village council. Over recent years, notwithstanding COVID restrictions, we have seen falling attendances to meetings and social events. We are concerned that if one or both of us leave for any reason, there will be a challenge to the Village Council over the management of the allotments. Of course, we will do our best to stir up some enthusiasm, but it does appear that the eagerness of plot holders is waning.

Plans for 2022/23

- ✚ Maintain good appearance of site & plots via working parties & regular reviews.
- ✚ Look critically at succession planning for officers.
- ✚ Continue the open positive relationship between WVCG & WVC
- ✚ In collaboration with WVC, consider
 - Raising the height of fence between play park & allotments to improve security.
 - Reinforce & repair safety netting on cricket club side.
 - Any other improvements to maintain or enhance the site.

We are, as ever, very grateful to the ongoing support of Whitchurch Village Council

2022/08 WARD COUNCILLORS REPORT – Paul May

1. Introduction.

This has been the second year of pandemic which has affected legally how the parish can behave and also the Unitary Authority. The reliance of Banes on its enormous property portfolio and tourism has hit Banes quite hard despite significant support being allocated by government.

This includes adult social services and childrens social services/SEND support. These two functions represent some 80% of council expenditure so are significant. Mental and physical health pressures have grown during lockdowns and they have shown just how valuable voluntary people are within communities.

Banes council have put great energy into the climate emergency and the ecological emergency.

Within these priorities many other council services have suffered especially issues re access in buildings.

Virgin Care have been supporting many people so the council considered extending their contract until they were taken over just days after the council agreed to do so.

This issue is still to be resolved.

This report highlights mainly local issues.

2. A village under pressure.

Despite the defeat of the JSP the threats of inappropriate development remain. Working with the Parish Council, the WV Action group and the South Bristol Wrong road group I have kept pressure on Banes Council to know we are here and will defend in the strongest terms our communities wishes.

We have had councillor Tim Ball cabinet member for development, Sophie Broadhurst new director of sustainable communities, Dan Norris new metro mayor,

regular informal and formal contact with the head of planning and direct briefing sessions with the banes leader.

The strategic planning function was transferred to WECA after the JSP failed and despite considerable pressure they still refuse to consult with us. As a result I have pushed the Banes Council to postpone their draft SDS until after the Banes partial Local Plan Update is approved. This has been listened to and will be achieved. Once approved the LPPU will protect our area for up to 5 years having successfully argued that the core strategy increased the village size by 50% and other areas needed to take development not our village.

The Parish, action group and SBWRG need to keep working together with Banes council to maintain the pressure that banes and our village need to keep the green buffer between us and Bristol. Clearly from recent comments by the metro mayor he feels the city needs to expand into greenbelt so I keep pressing Banes to stop this happening.

Assuming the draft SDS is put back as requested by me formally then the banes negotiating position improves but this does not remove the threat completely. I am pressing for the road/corridor to be removed from JLTP5 and that the SDS does not progress without that commitment.

This all takes lots of calls, meetings and pressure to do my best for the village. The chances are that this may not stop all the pressure but everyone knows we are here and where other areas are quiet we will not be.

If and when the SDS emerges working with the Parish council we will need to make sure residents are kept informed and involved.

3. Local Issues.

Working with the parish we submitted a successful bid under the phase 1 liveable neighborhoods scheme. The priority is a safe access to the new village play area and safer footways for pedestrians/prams/disability scooters.

I have attended every parish meeting during the last year and pass my thanks for their help and cooperation. Their own annual report shows progress made in many issues and as things arise for banes I follow them up, copy in and report back to the Clerk. It is an important part of my role to be accountable to the democratic process of the Parish council.

4. Thank you.

Whitchurch Village is a lovely village that has grown positively due to the Hamilton Way and Horseworld developments. It is important that new residents feel the parish council and its local banes councillor listens and learns from them.

I appreciate the support residents have always given me. Thank you.

One member of the public arrived at

2022/09 POLICE REPORT

The Clerk read out a report from PCSO Jasmine Baker who covers the Hengrove/Whitchurch area, which included the total number of crimes and anti-social behaviour. She is happy for anyone to contact her with any local issues.

The Police report from the Chew Valley Area Forum meeting in February was also read out, as this covers the rural areas of the village.

2021/10 QUESTIONS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions received.

Meeting Closed at 7.15.p.m.