

PARISH OF BISHOPSTOKE

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly 2013 held at the Methodist Church, Bishopstoke on Thursday 14 March 2013 commencing at 7.30pm

Present: In the Chair – Cllr Anne Winstanley, Chairman of Bishopstoke Parish Council
Cllrs Brown, Hansell, McKeone, Roling, Snook, Thomas and Thornton

Three members of the public were present.

In attendance: Mr P J Storey OBE, Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council
Mrs C Taylor, Assistant Clerk to the Council

1. Welcome by the Chairman

Cllr Winstanley extended a warm welcome to all present at the eighteenth Bishopstoke Annual Parish Assembly.

2. Presentations by external organisations

In the absence of the Hampshire Mills Group representative, Mr Storey gave a short presentation on the renovation work recently completed on the Shears Mill turbine housing, reminding those present that what had started as the Parish Council's millennium project had concluded as HM The Queen's Jubilee project. He expressed some disappointment that the original plan to renovate the turbines to enable them to generate electricity for the national grid had not been possible because of difficulties with the Environment Agency in reaching an agreement on a suitable design of fish pass to protect the fish en route to their spawning grounds. However, what had been achieved had been made possible by generous grants from the National Lottery, our county councillors, Eastleigh Borough Council and Parish Council funds, and external donations. He paid particular tribute to J Bruno Construction and Renovation Ltd for their professional approach in completing the project on time and within the construction budget and stated his pleasure that this piece of Bishopstoke local history now much improved this entrance to the Bishopstoke conservation area. A formal opening of the site would be organised for later in the year.

Mrs Sadhbh O'Dwyer from the Family Book Tree outlined the concept of encouraging more people, especially younger people, to read more books. Her aim was to make Bishopstoke a haven for books and argued that fewer books in the home resulted in fewer opportunities in life. The scheme encouraged everyone to donate books for others to borrow at no charge. Any type of book was acceptable, except those out of date books relating to computers, and she emphasised how reading not only broadened the mind but also helped an understanding of the English language. She was looking for active involvement by the community in spreading the word and help with installing book drops for books to be easily made available to others. A book club had been started and would meet in the Toby Carvery and she was approaching local schools, other pubs and the churches to develop the concept further. All agreed the idea to be a good one and the Parish Council undertook to review the prospect of a book drop at the new parish office and elsewhere in the Parish together with advertising the scheme. More information was available on their blog at familybooktree.wordpress.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/FamilyBookTree.

PC Jeffrey and Ms Laura Fisher, the Extended Police Family Co-ordinator, demonstrated the Community Speedwatch equipment which the Parish Council had agreed to acquire when sufficient volunteers were forthcoming to operate the scheme. The necessary training would be given to those volunteers who would then work in teams of three to note the make and model of a speeding vehicle, its colour, gender of the driver and recorded speed on the device. This information would then be stored on a police computer to enable further alleged breaches of the speed limit to be recorded and the

appropriate follow up action to be taken. This action was by letter as this was a non-enforceable scheme successfully employed elsewhere in the Borough. It encouraged local people to tackle local issues. Following a series of questions from a member of the audience, the police agreed to come back with specific information on how the data recorded was stored and where, who had access to it and for how long was it stored.

3. Address by Mike Thornton MP

The Chairman then invited Mike Thornton, the newly elected MP for Eastleigh, to address the meeting. Mr Thornton thanked everyone for electing him to the Eastleigh seat and explained that although only in his first few days as an MP he had already been elected to two committees and that he was finding the work demanding but interesting and rewarding. He emphasised his priority was to represent the people of Eastleigh and that he wanted to encourage them to contact him at any time on any matter upon which he might be able to help. To facilitate this, he would be holding regular Friday surgeries in Eastleigh, details of which would be publicised.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Cossey and Toher.

5. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 15 March 2012

Copies of the minutes were available to those present at the Assembly and were on the Parish Council website. Proposed Cllr Hansell, Seconded Winstanley, **RESOLVED** unanimously that these be accepted as a true record of the 2012 Assembly.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 19 May 2011

There were no matters arising.

7. Chairman's Address and Annual Report

Following the Parish Council elections May 2012, which saw contested elections in all 3 wards, we have a mixture of new faces, who are all making great contributions to the Parish, and some re-elected councillors, including 2 who have been on the Parish continuously since 1996. All work well together to represent the best interests of the Village.

We have continued our regular support of village groups and organisations and other external organisations, and in the last year we have given grants to St Mary's Church (new heating), Bishopstoke Players (new stage lighting), Brookfield Residents' Association (Jubilee Event), Asian Welfare and Cultural Association (Eastleigh Mela) and HACB & Victim Support (volunteer expenses), .

Our major support goes to Bishopstoke Carnival both by helping to cover costs and also in supplying administrative support from our Assistant Clerk. We congratulate the Carnival Group on their very successful 2-day Centenary Carnival in 2012. I know they are planning to continue some of the new features of last year such as the Duck Race.

Our partnership with Hampshire Police to provide a dedicated PCSO to work in Bishopstoke also continues. The continued decrease in reported crime in Bishopstoke owes much to our dedicated Safer Neighbourhood Team with Sergeant Sandra Reid and the various PCs & PCSOs who cover Bishopstoke, Fair Oak & Horton Heath. We have also agreed to start a SpeedWatch scheme in Bishopstoke and are currently recruiting the team of volunteers needed for this.

We have continued our support of YZone: the Brookfield Youth Centre, with changes to the agreement following the withdrawal of Hampshire County Council from providing basic youth work.

Our Armistice Service at the Memorial at 11am on 11th November has increasing numbers attending every year.

The highlight of 2012 must be the new building at Shears Mill showcasing our unique turbines. This work, done by local traditional building company, JBruno Construction and Restoration, has received

many admiring comments. The funding for this project, done on behalf of Bishopstoke History Group, came from a mixture of Lottery money as part of the Itchen Navigation Project, grants from our 2 County councillors for Bishopstoke, Eastleigh Borough who provided the display boards and the Parish Council. This started off as a Millennium project and finished as our Diamond Jubilee Project. We had also always wanted to restore the turbines to an operational state and generate renewable energy. But as there were long delays in getting agreement from the Environment Agency for a fish pass this hasn't been possible. But it may happen in the future if the Environment Agency find the funding for a fish pass, which they agree is needed here for the benefit of spawning salmon.

For the Diamond Jubilee we also planted 3 small oak trees on the Blackberry Drive open space. An appropriate location as this has been put forward as a Field in Trust for the Diamond Jubilee.

In 2012 we added 4 play areas – Stoke Common, Sayers Road, Otter Close and Templecombe Road - to our portfolio of services taken over from Eastleigh Borough, and will be taking over Glebe Meadow in 2013 and are looking to take on Blackberry Drive in 2014. We are planning refurbishment of the Stoke Common and Templecombe Road playareas in the coming year. Maintenance on these, and also the cemetery and closed churchyards at St Mary's and Oakbank Road are done to a high standard by our contractor, local garden maintenance company, Green Smile. Work has also been done on the trees and walls here when required.

There is only space for further burials in our cemetery for a few more years at the current rate of interments. In the Parish' response to consultation on the Local Plan we have raised the need for more cemetery space and also allotments. To ease the waiting list for allotments we now let half plots and also actively manage where plots are uncultivated.

We took over bus shelters from the Borough in 2011 and have started a policy of gradually installing new shelters where these are needed.

Our travel token scheme to assist those unable to use buses and with no access to a family car continues and will soon see an increase in the total value of tokens given for a year.

We have continued to operate a temporary Parish Office open from 11am-1pm every Wednesday at the Methodist Church. This is normally manned by our Assistant Parish Clerk, Cheryl Taylor. Do call in to see Cheryl about any issues that concern you. We have now agreed to a permanent office, which will be on land between The Anglers and the Memorial Hall, and will be erected in the next few weeks. This will be large enough to hold our meetings also and so our long partnership with the Methodist Church will soon finish. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Methodist Church for their hospitality since 1996. It is exciting that the Parish will soon have its own home and look out for information about when the Office will be open.

In conclusion, may I remind you that all Council meetings are open to the public and we very much hope that you will continue to attend.

8. Presentation of the Audited and Published Return for the year ended 31 March 2012

Copies of the audited Annual Return for 2012 were made available to those present. Mr Storey, as the Responsible Finance Officer, then explained that the key to local government accounting was the annual return. This document contained an analysis of the year's accounting together with explanations on variations year on year in excess of 15%. It went to the Audit Commission for examination and signing off. He explained that he was required to present to the Assembly the latest signed off annual return which was for the year ending 31 March 2012, which he duly did. He then gave a short review of the finances for the year about to end and where we went from here financially.

We were likely to end the year in a healthy financial position with a cash holding of some £130,000. This was deliberate as much of this had been ringfenced specifically for the new parish office, some more new bus shelters, upgrading play equipment, the conversion of arable land to a new Cemetery as the present Cemetery will become full within the next 4 or so years and hopefully for the provision of some new allotments. He generalise by stating that what came into the coffers over the past year went out with in excess of £100,000 going back directly into the community and this included £22,250 received from the National Lottery for the historic Mill upgrade.

The 2012 - 13 Precept of £130,000 included an element to enable us to take responsibility for four play areas not owned by the Parish Council with a corresponding reduction in the Borough's tax. The new year's Precept of £136,000 recognised the transfer of the fifth play area, Glebe Meadow, again with a corresponding reduction in the amount paid by Bishopstoke residents to the Borough. The net result was that the Parish Council, ignoring the transfer of funds from the Borough, had again held its Precept at the previous year's level, yet was still be able to meet its obligations and many of the Parish's aspirations. Mr Storey concluded by stating his opinion that the Parish Council's finances were on a sound footing and that we complied with all statutory and other regulations in their management. Thus we remained well-placed to continue to improve upon the standards of service provided and looked forward to the new challenges of 2013 - 14.

9. Public questions

Mrs O'Dwyer asked about her organisation's eligibility for grants from the Parish Council and was pleased to learn that when fully established the Family Book Club might well be eligible for grants towards their costs.

There being no further questions, Cllr Winstanley thanked everyone for attending, declared the Assembly formally closed at 9.00pm and invited all present to enjoy the light refreshments provided.