

BASILDON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Basildon Parish Council held on the 11th March at the Village Hall in Upper Basildon.

Present: Mr Chadwyck-Healey (Chair), Mr Parsons, Mrs Greasley, Mr Gidden, Ms Cox, Mrs Mellor, Ms Coyle, Mrs Kilgour, Mr Greasley (Clerk)

Apologies: Mr Couchman

Members of the public in attendance: Mr Lowden

1.OPEN FORUM

None were raised.

2.DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were raised.

3.MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11th February having been circulated to members in advance of the meeting was signed by the Chairman.

4.PLANNING

The following planning applications were reviewed:

26/00081 – Willowcombe, Pangbourne Road, Garage Conversion and reconfiguration

The Parish Council reviewed the application and had no objections subject to the views of neighbours.

26/00227 – Froomes, The Triangle, Replacement Windows

The Parish Council reviewed the application and had no objections subject to the views of neighbours.

Confirmed Decisions

25/02822 Birchwood House, Kiln Ride – New driveway – WBC Refused, PC No Objection

5.GENERAL ITEMS

The Clerk confirmed that donation to Pangbourne Toilets had been made following agreement at the February meeting. Additionally, the Clerk has paid the Berkshire Stump company in advance of the meeting after issues with the cheque from last month were flagged.

The Chairman provided an update on the Parish Survey returns. In total, 40 were received, 17 electronically and 23 via paper copy as distributed with the Country Neighbour. Turnout was generally from those aged over 60 and the key requests were around a shop, general paths/walkway improvements and the re-opening of the Red Lion pub (see detail in Appendix A on the final page of these minutes). It was noted that the turnout was low, especially amongst those aged 40 and under and the Chairman concluded by asking Councillors to prepare for next month one area they would like to pursue and to consider how this could be publicised.

Councillor Gidden updated the meeting on the Village Green tree planting project and introduced Mr Lowden who would lead the project if his proposal was agreed. A quote for 8.5K has been received covering various planting initiatives on the Green (see Appendix B for plan), the highlights of which were 63 trees of various types and sizes which would give the village green a new function as an orchard and community space. It was noted that various considerations were taken onboard such as junction visibility, climate change in the selection of species and the need for an enclosed yet open space. Councillors raised questions around planting,

space and aftercare with Mr Lowden asked to also provide costs for ongoing maintenance. Additionally, Councillor Gidden confirmed that he'd actively sought volunteers to assist with watering and had the help of Councillor Chadwyck-Healey and various local residents. The Chairman requested formal conformation of maintenance (watering) arrangements before firmly committing proceeding to any purchase. This will be arranged and the Chairman confirmed authorisation can, if required, be concluded outside of the meeting by Councillors.

The Red Lion was discussed after Stonegate confirmed that the building was for sale again. The Parish Council will continue to seek updates and will engage as required.

The Chairman updated the meeting on the upcoming annual assembly. This will coincide with the May meeting and will start at 7:30pm following the general Parish Council meeting which for one month only will start an hour earlier than usual.

6. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR UPDATES

The District Councillor continues to work on local issues and offered the following in person report and attachment for the meeting:

Local News

Planning/enforcement issues

Tomb Farm (Berkshire Shooting School) – an appeal has been lodged with the planning inspectorate. Reps can be submitted to <https://appeal-planning-decision.service.gov.uk/comment-planning-appeal/enter-appeal-reference>. The deadline is 10th April 2026, note, anyone can submit reps, not just those who commented on the original application.

Appletree Cottage - I received an update on this from the planning officer: The applicant has been making amendments to address technical and planning objections this application. This has included changes to the design, as well as additional information. The case officer has accepted this amended information onto the planning file, in accordance with the duty on the Local Planning Authority to work proactively with applicants and developers to secure sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework

Both the Lead Local Flood Authority and Local Highway Authority have raised concerns. The officer is awaiting additional comments from the Highway Authority, who are reviewing the proposals alongside those for the neighbouring property, Garlands, which also have an application with the Council for a new dwelling (ref. 25/00625/FUL).

If following these comments, the officer is minded to recommend approval, the application will need to go to Eastern Area Planning Committee (as there have been more than 10 objections). At this point they do not know when that will be, beyond that they are aiming for determination by the end of May.

The Grotto - As you know, the dispute over ownership is delaying the Council from being able to take any enforcement action, I have chased to ask what is going on about this and will update asap.

Highways issues

Lower Basildon to Beale Park/Pangbourne footway - the Council are in favour of this proposal but it would need scoping out and funding and would also need the cooperation of Beale Park and I am in the process of setting up a meeting with them to discuss.

Speeding issues

The plans for a general roll out of 20mph zones have been put on hold for now, which actually opens a bit of an opportunity for other measures to combat speed/change speed limits to be implemented. I will speak to Michael Warren about this and keep the PC posted. The Highways event on 2 April (which I believe someone from the Parish may be attending) should help to clarify what might work best and what the best process is.

Provisional surface dressing programme 2026-2029

This is currently provisional and going for Individual Member Decision by the Cabinet Member on 27 March but currently the following roads/road sections are included:

2026-27 - Bethesda Street from Aldworth Road to Blandy's Lane

2027-28 - A329 from Hook End Lane to Park Wall Lane

2028-29 - Park Wall Lane from Bethesda Street to A329 Reading

Other news

The Downs school has published their response to the admissions consultation they ran. Children living in the catchment of the school attending Summitt Education Trust primary schools (currently Basildon and Compton) will have priority over others, but those not living in the catchment area will come behind other children living in catchment.

Council news 2026-27 Budget

This was passed by Full Council in February. The Council has had to go to the Government for more Exceptional Support Funding in light of rising social care and SEND costs and the new Local Government Finance Settlement under which authorities in wealthier areas such as WBC retain a lower percentage of their business rates. The request has been approved in principle.

As a result of the funding crisis, the budget was very tight

Members' Bids rounds are coming much earlier this year (April/May time). There will be new criteria in place which will be circulated soon – the amount is likely to be reduced from £5k to £4K and PC matched funding will not be required but can be used if wished.

7.FOOTPATHS, HIGHWAYS AND OPEN SPACES

The Clerk reported that there were no issues to report with footpaths or any open spaces; the Rospa inspection of the Wakemans play area will take place in April.

8.FINANCE – UPDATES

The following cheques were presented to the meeting:

Cheque	Payee	Purpose	Nett	VAT	Total
103753	R Greasley	Salary	428.13	0.00	428.13
		Reimburse – Berkshire Stump removal cost for Village Green	140.00	0.00	140.00
		Reimburse - Pangbourne Toilets donation	520.00	0.00	520.00
		Total>>>>	1088.13	0.00	1088.13
103754	Tactical FM – c/o Bibby financial	Grass Cutting (cost over 12 months)	288.50	57.70	346.20
103755	Tactical FM – c/o Bibby financial	Monthly bin emptying change	24.83	4.97	29.80
103756	West Berkshire Council	Bus Subsidy	1335.00	0.00	1335.00

The Council accepted cheque numbers 103753 to 103756 and the clerk confirmed the direct debit to HMRC and SSE.

The Clerk has arranged the internal audit to take place at the end of next month and will keep Councillors updated as to progress.

In the absence of the Clerk, the Chairman proposed a 3.5% pay increase for the Clerk; this was agreed by the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

A question around speedwatch and its progress was raised. The Chairman confirmed that an update will be given at the annual assembly as well as the Country Neighbour.

The meeting concluded at 8:30pm. The next meeting will be on the 8th April.

Appendix A

Village Survey 2026 - Question Responses from residents:

Age Categories (Under 20) -1, (31 - 40) - 1,(41 -50) - 8, (51 - 60) - 3, (61 -70) - 19, (Over 70) - 11

What is the best thing about where you live?

Peace and Quiet - 6, Rural area - 31, Dark Skies - 1, Footpaths - 9, Playgrounds - 1, Proximity to towns - 3, Trees - 1, Village School -1, Limited development of building - 1, Church - 2, Library - 1, Village Hall -1, Sports Facilities - 1, Community spirit - 4 Rural nature of the village; access to countryside; potential for community events: all these are highly valued.

What facilities provided by the council do you

use? Village hall - 22, Footpaths - 34, Benches - 7, Post Office - 7, Dog bins -1, Emery Down Wood - 2, Playgrounds - 15, Football pitch - 10, Recreation Ground - 7, Tennis - 6, Church - 2, Cafe - 1, Horticultural Soc - 3, Library - 3, Gym - 4, Village Green - 1, Buses - 4, Noticeboard - 1, WI -1, Cycle station - 2. Leisure activities are valued and employed by a significant number. Recreation ground facilities are also in high demand. Activities subsidised by the PC are also valued.

What could the council do to make life better?

Shop - 8, Pub - 3, Repair potholes - 5, Put on events - 3, Improve lighting - 3, Improve bus service - 3, Oppose contentious planning applications more vigorously -1, More benches - 1, Groundsperson at rec - 1, create a 'dog only' area - 1, Reduce speeding - 10, Cut back hedges - 2, Improve footpaths - 7, Improve parking at the school - 1, Traffic control - 2, Restrict new housing - 3, More play equipment at the rec - 1, More encouragement for dark skies -1, more support for the church - 1, Youth club - 1. The desire for some form of community centre - pub, shop, events - is considerable. Speeding, and its reduction, is of considerable concern. Improving, and by implication, maintaining footpaths is a concern for many.

What would you like to see MORE money spent upon?

Pangbourne Road pavement - 2, Wakeman's playground - 3, More bins at the VH -1, A cafe - 1, Wider placement of Speedwatch groups - 6, Dog litter bins - 4, Hedgerow survey - 1, A pond -1, A bus shelter at Captain's Gorse - 1, Road repairs - 4, Traffic calming - 5, Community events - 3, Pub - 1, Shop - 6, Link to rail station -1, Improved pitch at rec - 4, Groundsperson at rec - 1, Planting around village - 7, Encouraging cycling - 1, More footpaths - 9, Sign cleaning - 1, Improving road surface - 6, Support for food vans -1, Post Office - 1, More buses - 3, Youth Club - 3. No response - 3 The quality of road surfaces and the matter of speeding through the village are significant concerns. Paying greater heed to the natural world - planting, more pedestrian access, hedgerows - are of considerable interest.

What would you like to see LESS money spent upon?

Pangbourne Toilets – 1, Street lights -3, Bike repair station – 4, Parking bollards at the school – 1, Primary school fencing – 3, Gym – 4, DEI – 1, Planning process – 1, Playgrounds – 1, The church – 1, Library – 1, Supporting Several of these are beyond our control of course. A significant number of the pub campaign – 1. No Response -11. No Responses here.

What are the biggest concerns or threats to the village?

House building – 8, Rude cyclists – 1, Lack of volunteers -1, Lack of public transport - 3 , Parking at the school -1, Bonfires – 1, Loss of social cohesion – 3, Lack of police presence – 1, Travellers – 1, , Speeding – 6, Loss of shop and/or pub – 7, Encroachment on the settlement boundary - 2, Fly tipping – 1, Poor roads - 4, Loss of library – 1, Increase in street lighting, Poor phone signal – 1. No response – 1 The major concern relates to house building. There seems to be an acceptance that replacing older properties with new ones and maintaining the footprint is agreeable; house building resulting in additional footprints is not. Again, the disappearance of a social hub, such as the pub or a shop/cafe, is a significant concern. The lack of pavements, and the accompanying concern about speeding, is notable.

Additional comments

Inconsiderate parking around the primary school – 3, Reopen the pub – 11, More community events needed – 7, A walking bus from the school – 1, Subsidise the PO and the cafe if needed – 1, A hard surface at the rec where children can cycle – 1, An organised litter pick – 1, Speeding – 1, Positive comments about the council – 2, No response - 5 There is a clear desire for some form of regular community event: no one mentions the market but... The pub continues to be a matter of concern but how this might be resolved – and even how many would really support it if it did reopen – remains unclear.

Appendix B

Village Green – Proposed Plan as presented to the meeting by Mr Lowden

