

PARISH OF BISHOPSTOKE

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly 2016 held at the Methodist Church, Bishopstoke on Thursday 21 April 2016 commencing at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr Anne Winstanley, Chair Bishopstoke Parish Council
Cllrs Parkinson-MacLachlan, Toher, Lyon, Brown, Harris and Thornton

10 members of the public were also present

In attendance: Mr D Hillier-Wheal, 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 21st Bishopstoke Annual Parish Assembly.

2. Presentation on Parish Councils 100 years ago

Mrs Joan Simmons spoke of the time before the formation of the current Parish Council. Back in Elizabethan times, Bishopstoke was a large Parish owned by the Bishop of Winchester along with Fair Oak, Horton Heath and Crowdhill. It was run by the Church and it raised money for roads, found work for the poor and collected rates from the rich – not too dissimilar to the Parish Council today. It had the power to fine people for taking sand, and for not clearing weeds.

In 1871 a government act was passed and it became a civil parish. Fair Oak separated off and Stoke Park left, and from over 3400 acres in Elizabethan times, the parish now only covered 500 acres. In 1899 we became part of Eastleigh, and from 1904 the Bishopstoke Rector served on Eastleigh Council. Things stayed much the same until the 1990's.

3. Presentation on the Campaign for a Parish Council

Mr Rod Simmons took up the story. The Bishopstoke Society was set up in 1990 with the aim of helping all residents of Bishopstoke. At the first meeting a committee was elected and the registered charity status was applied for. So many people were interested that a 2nd meeting was held with nominations for various activities. There were 68 members initially, meeting all over including in the Memorial Hall. Newsletters were produced and the group became involved in campaigning on the environment, looking at Natural History, holding events, dog fowling, tree protection orders and footpaths, to name but a few.

There were 2 years of village activities – clearing rivers, planting trees, renovation, a garden competition, guided walks. Speakers were invited to monthly meetings and Eastleigh Borough Council was approached for advice and help. The possibility of buying the old infant school was examined. It was discovered that some jobs could not be done as a charity, and so the Bishopstoke Community Association was formed. In fact at the 1995 AGM acquiring the infant school was top of the agenda.

Then a government suggestion for 5 new Parish Councils, including Bishopstoke, was made. In 1996, thanks mainly due to the Bishopstoke Society, Bishopstoke Parish Council was formed. The original chair was Pete Selby, who sadly died early on and was sadly missed. Stoke Park Woods was taken over by the Forestry Commission, the Bishopstoke History Society was born, and the Parish Council began its current journey.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Cossey, McKeone and Mignot.

5. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 31 March 2015

Copies of the minutes were available to those present at the Assembly and were on the Parish Council website. Proposed Cllr Toher, Seconded Parkinson-MacLachlan, **RESOLVED** unanimously that these be accepted as a true record of the 2015 Assembly.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 31 March 2015

There were no matters arising.

7. Chairman's Address and Annual Report

As we come to the end of the 5th term of office of Bishopstoke Parish Council, 20 years since the Parish Council came into being in 1996, I look back on 2015 for the Parish Council.

This was the second year that the Parish Council had responsibility for Bishopstoke Carnival, led by our excellent Assistant Clerk, Cheryl Taylor. Again a very successful event with pub quizzes, river float competition & duck race on the Saturday and procession and fete on the Sunday. The procession collection was divided between Age Concern – Bishopstoke (Christmas lunches), ARK Eastleigh (volunteer costs) and 12th Eastleigh Scouts (security locks). Work has already started on planning the 2016 Carnival which will be on 10-11th September. The Carnival is managed by a Working Group which includes non-councillors as well as Parish councillors. I'd like to give credit to all the individuals who take on responsibility for individual parts of the Carnival as well as the Working Group Chair and Assistant Clerk who have overall responsibility. Their individual efforts result in an excellent and well-regarded event, providing much pleasure to Bishopstoke residents and their visitors. This year we started work on a Neighbourhood Plan for Bishopstoke. In conjunction with 1st Wessex, who also wished to survey their tenants, a short questionnaire was distributed around the Parish seeking views on local life within Bishopstoke. The responses are the first step in developing a Neighbourhood Plan which will supplement the Borough Council's Local Plan. It will enable us to develop a shared vision of the Bishopstoke community and help shape its growth and the use of land over the years ahead.

We have started a dialogue with Eastleigh Borough on registering some Buildings of Community Value. The ability to do this arises from the Localism Bill.

We continue our partnership with Hampshire Police to provide a dedicated PCSO to work in Bishopstoke. In October the County Council decision to bring in a 30mph speed limit all the way along Alan Drayton Way and Fair Oak Road was implemented. This arose from a residents' campaign that the Parish Council had supported. We are still trying to get a Community Speedwatch scheme in Bishopstoke and just need a couple more volunteers.

As well as these new initiatives the usual Parish activities have continued.

We continue an excellent partnership with Eastleigh Borough Council with regular discussions with our Local Area Co-ordinator, Min Partner.

We continue our presence on FaceBook. Notices of our meetings and press releases are posted on FaceBook as well as the noticeboards and local papers.

We have continued our regular support of village groups and other external organizations operating in the village with our grant programme. In the last year these have included Open Sight (provision of equipment for visually impaired residents with limited means), Asian Welfare and Cultural Association (Eastleigh Mela).

We have continued our support of YZone: the Brookfield Youth Centre, where the Management Committee (BPC, FOHHPC & EBC) have worked hard on additional ways to generate income, including appropriate hirings of the building, to overcome the reduction in funding following the County Council's withdrawal from standard youth work.

Our Armistice Service at the Memorial at 11am on 11th November has increasing numbers attending every year. Our travel token scheme to assist those unable to use buses and with no access to a family car continues.

We have considered the issues of parking along Church Road, particularly with construction traffic for the Mount site. It was acknowledged this was not a simple matter as parking restrictions may not help if the problems are just moved elsewhere in the Parish.

We also considered the question of electoral boundaries for both Eastleigh Borough and Hampshire County and welcomed proposals that would no longer split the parish as it is now. Looking forward, we anticipate an extension to Bishopstoke Cemetery, are already liaising regularly with Bellway to ensure the Parish gets what we expect, and more allotments, to deal with our waiting list, as well as some more recreation areas from the 2 Local Plan development sites on Church Road and Stoke Common Road.

I'd like to end by thanking our staff in 2015, Peter Storey and Cheryl Taylor, without whose dedicated hard work none of the above contributions to the well-being of Bishopstoke residents would have happened. At the end of 2015, Peter Storey retired after 11 years' service which had seen the Parish Council develop in many ways, taking on many functions from the Borough Council – allotments, cemetery, play areas and open spaces – and also getting a home in the Parish Office on Riverside. He has been succeeded by David Hiller-Wheal who is proving an excellent successor and has also taken on administration of the Carnival. Cheryl is now concentrating on managing the cemetery and allotments.

And finally, 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 2015

The key to local government accounting is the Annual Return. This document contains an analysis of the year's accounting together with explanations on significant variations year on year. It goes to the external auditors for examination and signing off. I am required to present to you at this Assembly the latest signed off Annual Return which is for the year ending 31 March 2015 - somewhat historical. However, I have a copy here should you wish to peruse it.

I think a short review of the finances for the year ending today is of more interest and where we go from here financially. We will end the year in a healthy financial position with a cash holding of some £163,000. This allows us to make preparations for the coming years. Significant costs over the next decade will include an increasing amount of tree maintenance, the possibility of establishing a permanent Parish Office, and the need for at least 4 of the play areas we have to be completely refurbished. The play areas alone will cost the council upwards of £150,000 over the next 7 years, and so we have begun the process of setting aside money for all these needs. In addition, the new Cemetery and allotments will be completed and will require buildings, fencing and so on. The reserves that have been built up will allow us to fund these projects as each becomes necessary. Beyond that, the usual full programme of capital expenditure continues around the community. In general terms I can tell you that what came into the coffers over the past year went out with in excess of £152,000 being spent on things such as the Carnival, allotments, grants to local organisations, play areas and so on.

The 2015 - 16 Precept and EBC top up grant totalled £146,741. As a result of changes in the way the Government now funds work in the local community, the 2016 - 17 Precept and EBC's top up grant will total £153,407; This increase is mainly due to the increased number of council tax payers in Bishopstoke. The increase for a Band D council tax payer will amount to only £0.81 per annum and will enable us to meet our obligations and many of your aspirations in the year to come.

My conclusions are that the Council's finances are on a sound footing and that we comply with all statutory and other regulation in their management. Thus we remain well-placed to continue to improve upon the standards of service provided and look forward to the new challenges of 2016 - 17. Thank you.

9. Public questions

Cllr Martin Lyon asked for clarification on what the “fixed assets” referred to in the audit return are. The RFO replied that they are everything from office equipment to allotment buildings and everything in between. Items that the Parish Council owns

There being no further questions, Cllr Winstanley thanked everyone for attending, declared the Assembly formally closed at 8.00pm and invited all present to enjoy the light refreshments provided.