



Bishopstoke Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 23

Bishopstoke Parish Council

**Parish Office
Riverside
Bishopstoke
SO50 6LQ**

This Annual Report has been produced with the intention of helping the residents of Bishopstoke become more familiar with the work of the Parish Council. The list of Councillors, Committees and other groups is given for the coming year, 2023-24

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PARISH OF BISHOPSTOKE

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly 2022 held at the Methodist Church, Bishopstoke on Tuesday 10th May commencing at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr Ray Dean (Chair Bishopstoke Parish Council)
Cllr Dave Francis (Vice Chair Bishopstoke Parish Council)
Cllr Ralph Candy
Cllr Andrew Daly
Cllr Anne Dean
Cllr Louise Hillier-Wheal
Cllr Martin Lyon
Cllr Chris McKeone
Cllr Dermot McKeone
Cllr Andy Moore
Cllr Louise Parker-Jones
Cllr Mike Thornton
Cllr Gin Tidridge

0 members of the public were also present

In attendance: Mr David Wheal (Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council)
Mrs Sophie Thorogood (RFO to Bishopstoke Parish Council)

1. Welcome by the Chairman

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

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Lynch and Winstanley.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 31 May 2019

Only Cllrs Anne and Ray Dean of those present had attended the previous Parish Assembly. They confirmed that the minutes were an accurate record and they were accepted as such.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Annual Assembly held 31 May 2019

There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's Address and Annual Report

Firstly, I would like to thank our Parish Councillors and staff for all their efforts, involvement and input to keep things moving forward during the last year.

The first two years of the pandemic have been very difficult for many of us and as with many public organisation's there had to be some changes in the way the Parish operates. We are now in the third year and the pandemic is still with us, but with restrictions being eased and hopefully the severity of Covid reducing we are hoping to move forward with projects and more community involvement.

Although several events have been cancelled the past two years, the Parish Assembly and the carnival to name but two. We are looking forward to this year's carnival events and some Jubilee celebrations that are being organised by the carnival working group. Unfortunately, due to the condition of the building the memorial hall has now been closed permanently and we are ever hopeful that with EBC's assistance, plans and possibly a start on the full Glebe Meadow project will be evident within the coming year.

The Parish Council's Travel Token scheme is still helping Bishopstoke residents that have transport difficulties and meet the criteria. We are still keen to welcome new applicants to the scheme. As with previous years the Council is keen to help local community groups and organisations with Grants where criteria and funds permit.

I believe the future for Bishopstoke is looking quite good. I hope that EBC will soon sort out the legal and administrative problems they appear to be having so the full transfer of, two allotment sites, several open spaces, the new cemetery and a community orchard, can go ahead. I feel there is need to make sure plans are in place for all the new sites soon in order that work can start on any site when it is taken on and any budgeting is in place.

6. Presentation of the Audited and Published Return for the year ended 31 March 2021

Part of the requirements of the Parish Assembly is that the last completed audit is presented. Thanks to the way the system works that means I am presenting the accounts for the year ending March 2021, which does seem a little odd as we sit here more than a year later. To go through the necessary details, the Council produces an end of year audit of our financial governance and accounts. This is then signed off by an auditor employed by the Council – known as the “internal” audit. The documents then go to the Council for final approval before they get sent to the “external” auditor. The external auditor scrutinises the accounts and sends back a report which either passes the Council or “qualifies” the Council. I am pleased to report that the audit for Bishopstoke Parish Council for the year ending 31st March 2021 found no issues or problems. The audit report is available on the Parish website if anyone wishes to see it.

I believe it is also useful to look briefly at the audited accounts for the most recent year. We ended the year with roughly £220,000 in our accounts, £56,000 of this was free reserves, with the remaining £164,000 being earmarked for projects such as the Memorial Hall, new artwork at the Cemetery, Burial Grounds projects unable to be completed during the year due to Covid delays, work due to parish-owned trees following the tree survey and various items of street furniture. As at 31st March 2021, the Parish Council were researching options to repair or replace the Memorial Hall roof, in order to re-open the building whilst the project for the new building continued. In June 2021, the Councillors took the difficult decision to permanently close the hall as the roof costs were financially not viable. The £100,000 earmarked reserve was released back into the accounts in 2021/22.

The 2021/22 precept came to £231,000, an increase of 0% had been approved by Councillors due to the impact of Covid on residents. However for 2022/23, to fund the level of expenditure budgeted, a precept rise of 20%, equivalent to £13.09 annually on a band D property has been approved. This will enable us to meet our obligations, meet some of your aspirations, and move closer towards having appropriate levels of reserves and funding.

In conclusion, as the audit for 2021, and the newly submitted audit for 2022 show, Bishopstoke Parish Council is on a sound footing financially, and complies with all statutory and other regulations in its management. So we remain well placed to continue to improve upon the standards of services provided and look forward to the new challenges of 2022/23. Thank you

7. Public questions

There were no questions from the public present.

There being no further questions, Cllr Dean thanked everyone for attending, declared the Assembly formally closed at 7.10pm.

MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL 2023– 24

Itchen Ward

Cllr Ralph Candy
Cllr Mark Kirby
Cllr Mike Thornton

Ralph.Candy@bishopstokepc.org
Mark.Kirby@bishopstokepc.org
Mike.Thornton@bishopstokepc.org

Riverside Ward

Cllr Andrew Daly
Cllr Dave Francis
Cllr Louise Hillier-Wheal

Andrew.Daly@bishopstokepc.org
Johanna.Francis@bishopstokepc.org
Louise.Hillier-Wheal@bishopstokepc.org

Stoke Common Ward

Cllr Anne Dean
Cllr Chris McKeone
Cllr Gin Tidridge

Anne.Dean@bishopstokepc.org
Chris.McKeone@bishopstokepc.org
Gin.Tidridge@bishopstokepc.org

Underwood Ward

Cllr Ray Dean
Cllr Dermot McKeone
Cllr Andy Moore

Ray.Dean@bishopstokepc.org
Dermot.McKeone@bishopstokepc.org
Andy.Moore@bishopstokepc.org

Whalesmead Ward

Cllr Geoff Harris
Cllr Martin Lyon
Cllr Anne Winstanley

Geoff.Harris@bishopstokepc.org
Martin.Lyon@bishopstokepc.org
Anne.Winstanley@bishopstokepc.org

COUNCIL COMMITTEES & WORKING GROUPS (2023/24)

Assets Committee

Finance Committee

Planning Committee

People Committee

Greening Campaign Working Group

Carnival Working Group

Glebe Meadow Working Group

Communications Working Group

Village Trails Working Group

Councillors are co-opted on to other committees and working groups as the need arises

VICE-CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Good evening and welcome to the Parish assembly 2023. My name is Louise Hillier-Wheal and it has been my pleasure to serve this year as the Vice Chair of the Parish Council. Unfortunately, Cllr Ray Dean, our Chair, cannot be with us this evening so the honour of speaking passes to me.

The purpose of the Parish assembly is to give the electors- yourselves- an opportunity to hear about the activities of the Parish Council over the last year. And so I shall begin.

I will start by thanking the Cllrs for their hard work this year - every one of them is here as a volunteer and gives up much of their time in the tireless pursuit of wanting the best for the people of Bishopstoke. Thank you to Lou Parker-Jones and Sue Lynch for their service to the Parish council- they both stepped down during the year and we welcomed Cllrs Geoff Harris and Mark Kirby in their places. From attending meetings to racing ducks to counting bins and litter picking to setting precepts, the Bishopstoke councillors do all they can to make Bishopstoke a better place for each and every one of the residents.

This year the council were saddened to hear of the passing of Angela Roling who was a councillor for Bishopstoke - serving Parish, Borough and County councils at various times from 1999 to 2018. Our condolences were passed to her family. The Cllrs are aided by a team of officers and there have been changes in this team as well. David Wheal the Clerk and Sophie Thorogood our Responsible Finance Officer are still in post, but we have said goodbye and thank you to Jen Wilkie and imminently we lose Cheryl Taylor who is leaving us after more than 13 years of service - thank you to her as well. We welcomed Alex Luck to the team, who joined as assets officer in September 2022. I would like to thank them all for their hard work this year.

Achievements this year

In the last year we have celebrated the Platinum jubilee with a picnic, but this was followed by the sad death of the Queen. This meant that Carnival was cancelled as a mark of respect - we are hopeful that the Carnival in September (17th September- please save the date) will go ahead.

The Platinum Jubilee brought grants from Bishopstoke Parish Council to the following organisations:

Eastleigh Citizens Advice Bureau;

Eastleigh Gurkha Nepalese Association;

Bishopstoke History Society;

Life Education;

Asian Welfare and Cultural Association (Eastleigh Mela);

Victim Support;
Highbridge Conservation Group;
Bishopstoke Women's Institute;
Challengers;
Arrow District Scouts;
MHA; and finally Spotlight.

In addition, as part of the Jubilee legacy there are the Jubilee benches around the footpath on the Brookfield estate.

Looking now at some of the play areas in Bishopstoke:

At Brookfield we have installed additional benches, picnic benches and bins around the open space on Blackberry Drive and have undertaken a revamping and updating of the play area.

We have installed a brand new timber trail at Otter Close play area.

As an incentive to provide fun and free activities for families in Bishopstoke over the school summer holiday, we set up the "Play Area trail" which had a competition element and culminated in one family winning vouchers to spend the day at Winchester Science Centre.

From play equipment to community resources, we move to Defibrillators. This year we have installed Defibrillators at Bishopstoke Methodist Church, Stokewood Surgery and Bishopstoke Community Centre, with Underwood Road allotments and Bishopstoke Cemetery still to come.

As a community we commemorated Armistice Day for the last time at the current site next to Bishopstoke Memorial Hall. The memorial is now in storage ready for the next phase of the memorial hall project and hopefully the memorial will be installed in a new location in time for Armistice Day 2023.

As a Parish council we have:

Introduced the Bishopstoke Champion award – with the very first one being presented this evening.

Supported the next stage of the Bishopstoke Neighbourhood Plan as it was submitted to the Borough to decide whether it needs a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Appointed a contractor to design and install new gates at Bishopstoke Cemetery

Continued to provide access to litter picking equipment to local groups that are tidying up our community space

Supported the "As One" campaign alongside St Mary's church to encourage the creation of modern street associations across Bishopstoke.

Joined the Greening Campaign to support local residents in making a difference to the environment and climate change.

Signed the Civility and Respect Pledge, joining over 1100 other Councils across the country to tackle bullying, harassment and intimidation aimed at Councils, Councillors and Council staff.

Continued to provide support to around 40 residents through our travel token scheme.

Held a community celebration “Coronation Big Lunch”- just two days ago!

As I mentioned above, we are very keen as a Parish Council to get a new memorial hall built and after a frustrating lull have just restarted meetings to get this project moving - building a new hall and revamping the whole of Glebe meadow to include a new wheels park, play area, picnic area and paths.

We are still working with the Borough Council to potentially receive the allotment sites at Bow Lake Gardens and Sewall Drive - making sure that any commitment to new assets we make is financially manageable. We are also waiting to receive the Cemetery extension and open space at Sewall Drive, and the Community Orchard, woodland and play area around Bow Lake Gardens. Again, we are working hard to ensure that any assets we do receive do not negatively impact on the financial position of the Council. All of these are in the hands of the Borough Council as to when and if we are offered the sites - we will keep you updated as to further developments.

This is the final year of this Council leading up to elections in May 2024. If anyone is interested in becoming a Cllr please take a look at the Parish Council website, or contact our Clerk directly.

Thank you all for attending and once more I extend my thanks to the volunteer councillors who do so much to make Bishopstoke the splendid place that it is.

Cllr Louise Hillier-Wheal
9th May 2023

RFO's REPORT

At each Parish Assembly, we present the last completed audited accounts. This means tonight I am presenting the accounts for the year ending 31st March 2022.

Every year, the Council produces an end of year audit of our financial governance and accounts. This is then signed off by an auditor employed by the Council – known as the “internal” audit. The documents then go to the Council for final approval before they get sent to the “external” auditor. The external auditor scrutinises the accounts and sends back a report which either passes the Council or “qualifies” the Council. I am pleased to report that the audit for Bishopstoke Parish Council for the year ending 31st March 2022 found no issues or problems. The audit report is available on the Parish website if anyone wishes to see it.

We ended the year with £270,000 in the accounts, of which £124,000 was free reserves, with the remaining £146,000 being earmarked for projects such as Glebe Meadow redevelopment, new artwork at the Cemetery, defibrillator grants, street furniture and a large reserve for play area improvements received in the way of a grant. The play area improvements programme began in the Summer of 2022 and is almost finished.

Looking forward, the precept for 2022/23 came to £281,000, an increase of 20% on the 2021/22 year. Due to the cost-of-living crisis and inflation impacting predicted expenditure costs, the Councillors approved a precept rise of 20% for the year 2023/24, equivalent to an increase of £15.68 annually on a band D property. This will enable the Council to meet their obligations and move closer towards having appropriate levels of reserves and funding.

In conclusion, as the audit for 2022, and the newly submitted audit for 2023 show, Bishopstoke Parish Council is on a sound footing financially, and complies with all statutory and other regulations in its management. So, we remain well placed to continue to improve upon the standards of services provided and look forward to the new challenges of 2023/24. Thank you.

PARISH COUNCIL STAFF

Clerk to the Parish Council

Mr David Wheal
Tel: 07368 487464
Email: clerk@bishopstokepc.org

Assistant Clerk to the Council (RFO and Allotments)

Mrs Sophie Thorogood
Tel: 07444 798083
Emails: finance@bishopstokepc.org
allotments@bishopstokepc.org

Assets Officer (including Cemeteries)

Mrs Alex Luck
Tel: 07368 695648
Emails: assets@bishopstokepc.org
cemeteries@bishopstokepc.org

PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Parish Council has a website containing information on the Parish, contact details for Councillors and staff, and copies of past meeting agenda and minutes. It also contains information on local organisation contact details and links, and much more. The site is being updated continuously and we welcome suggestions from the general public to assist us in our desire to continue to improve the website as a central resource for community information.

The website address is: www.bishopstokepc.org

The Parish Council is also on Facebook.

PARISH NOTICE BOARDS

There are nine notice boards situated around the Parish. These are updated fortnightly by the Clerk to whom any notices of general interest should be sent; alternatively, notices may be e-mailed to the Clerk, posted to the Parish Office or left with any Councillor.