



Bishopstoke Parish Council

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 24

### **Bishopstoke Parish Council**

**BPC**

**PO Box 716**

**Bishopstoke**

**SO50 0RQ**

**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.**

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# PARISH OF BISHOPSTOKE

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly 2023 held at the Methodist Church, Bishopstoke on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May commencing at 7.00pm

**Present:** Cllr Louise Hillier-Wheal (Vice Chair Bishopstoke Parish Council)  
Cllr Ralph Candy  
Cllr Andrew Daly  
Cllr Dave Francis  
Cllr Chris McKeone  
Cllr Dermot McKeone  
Cllr Andy Moore  
Cllr Gin Tidridge  
Cllr Anne Winstanley

2 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)  
Mrs Alex Luck (Assets Officer to Bishopstoke Parish Council)

*In the absence of Cllr Ray Dean, Cllr Louise Hillier-Wheal, as Vice Chair of Bishopstoke Parish Council, chaired the Parish Assembly.*

### **1. Welcome by the Chair**

Cllr Hillier-Wheal extended a warm welcome to all present at the Bishopstoke Annual Parish Assembly.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Anne Dean, Ray Dean, Geoff Harris, Martin Lyon and Mike Thornton.

### **3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 10 May 2022**

Cllrs confirmed that the minutes were an accurate record of the previous Assembly and they were accepted as such by a show of hands.

Cllr Francis asked that the hard work of the Council Officers and Councillors in preparing for, and dealing with the aftermath of, Storm Eunice in February 2022 be noted.

#### **4. Chair's Address and Annual Report**

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.

## **5. Presentation from Catharine Gale of Hampshire Swifts**

Catharine Gale gave a short but informative presentation on the plight of the swift. Swifts are in rapid decline in this country due to the disappearance of many of their nesting sites. Swifts are unusual in that they are not designed to perch on horizontal surfaces and landing on the ground would cause them real problems. However, they are perfectly made for clinging to walls and cliff faces, and often make their nests just inside the soffits and facias of local dwellings.

The swift eats and sleeps on the wing, and at 69mph is the fastest bird in level flight. Their chicks only leave the nest once – to leave permanently – and as preparation for their one way journey they regularly perform press ups to strengthen their wings.

In order to halt the decline in the swift population groups like Hampshire Swifts are trying to encourage homeowners and homebuilders to install swift boxes, or even specially designed soffits and facias with swift nesting holes built in. These are relatively cheap to purchase and Hampshire Swifts will visit your home to help install your birdbox for you.

Further information can be found at [www.hampshireswifts.co.uk](http://www.hampshireswifts.co.uk), or @HampshireSwifts on Facebook and Twitter.

Catharine ended her presentation by taking a number of questions from the audience.

## **6. Presentation of the Audited and Published Return for the year ended 31 March 2022**

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.

## **7. Presentation of the 2023 Bishopstoke Champion Award to Kieran Gillingham**

The Chair invited Pam Glasspool to step forward and say a few words about why Kieran had been nominated. Pam told us of Kieran’s long hours working to make the River Itchen a safer and better place for anyone that uses it, and his willingness to set up or be part of various groups aimed at protecting not just the river but also the local environment.

The Clerk then read quotes from Kieran’s nomination form:

“Kieran works for the Environment Agency, so has gained a wealth of knowledge about the river that is the central flow of our community in Bishopstoke. Even though his job is to care for the river, he willingly uses this knowledge for his voluntary work. He continually goes over and above his duties, by volunteering as a bailiff on the Itchen Navigation and he

has even set up 'The Itchen Navigation Preservation Trust' to help protect this wonderful river.

Many people from the community have witnessed the amazing amount of voluntary work Kieran puts into caring for our local waterways and the surrounding countryside/wildlife. Here are some words of a few of them:

"He's a keen photographer and local fisherman who probably knows more about the history and environment of the Itchen than any other living person." Pam

"Kieran is a marvellous human being. It was my pleasure to work with him on the Itchen dog step conservation project with Hampshire open water swimmers. He gave up so much of his free time to advise us and to dig chalk! He is so knowledgeable about the river and it has helped to inspire a culture of caring for the river." Rachel

"He works really hard to connect different groups, who are interested in the river, so that as a community we can seek to protect this precious environmental resource. His people skills, diplomacy, and his passion for wildlife and the environment benefit us all, and in particular the community of Bishopstoke." Ellie

"The work Kieran does for the river and surrounding countryside is amazing, giving us all the chance to enjoy it. He goes way beyond his normal duties and is a true champion." Simon

"Kieran is an incredible champion of Bishopstoke because of the work he does for the Itchen river. He gives of his own free time to organise a group of volunteers to keep an eye on the river and make sure it's as good as it can be for all of us." Sam"

Kieran then stepped forward and Cllr Hillier-Wheal presented him with the Bishopstoke Champion 2023 Award.

*That being the end of business, Cllr Hillier-Wheal thanked everyone for attending and declared the Assembly formally closed at 7.37pm.*

## MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL 2021– 24 THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

### Itchen Ward

Cllr Ralph Candy  
Cllr Mark Kirby (from 15 December 2022)  
Cllr Mike Thornton

[Ralph.Candy@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Ralph.Candy@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Mark.Kirby@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Mark.Kirby@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Mike.Thornton@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Mike.Thornton@bishopstokepc.org)

*Cllr Susan Lynch (until 17 October 2022)*

### Riverside Ward

Cllr Andrew Daly  
Cllr Dave Francis  
Cllr Louise Hillier-Wheat

[Andrew.Daly@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Andrew.Daly@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Johanna.Francis@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Johanna.Francis@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Louise.Hillier-Wheat@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Louise.Hillier-Wheat@bishopstokepc.org)

### Stoke Common Ward

Cllr Anne Dean  
Cllr Chris McKeone  
Cllr Gin Tidridge

[Anne.Dean@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Anne.Dean@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Chris.McKeone@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Chris.McKeone@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Gin.Tidridge@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Gin.Tidridge@bishopstokepc.org)

### Underwood Ward

Cllr Ray Dean  
Cllr Dermot McKeone  
Cllr Andy Moore

[Ray.Dean@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Ray.Dean@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Dermot.McKeone@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Dermot.McKeone@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Andy.Moore@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Andy.Moore@bishopstokepc.org)

### Whalesmead Ward

Cllr Geoff Harris (from 24 November 2022)  
Cllr Martin Lyon  
Cllr Anne Winstanley

[Geoff.Harris@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Geoff.Harris@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Martin.Lyon@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Martin.Lyon@bishopstokepc.org)  
[Anne.Winstanley@bishopstokepc.org](mailto:Anne.Winstanley@bishopstokepc.org)

*Cllr Louise Parker-Jones (until 8 September 2022)*



## CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Good evening and welcome to the Parish assembly 2024. My name is Louise Hillier-Wheat and it has been my pleasure to serve this year as the Chair of the Parish Council, working closely with Geoff Harris as the Vice-Chair.

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. Bishopstoke Councillors work collaboratively with their aim being to make Bishopstoke a better place for each and every one of the residents.

This Parish assembly marks the end of this term of office and we say goodbye and thank you to Cllrs Ralph Candy, Ray Dean Anne Dean, Dave Francis, Martin Lyon, Chris McKeone, Dermot McKeone and Gin Tidridge who are choosing to step down. The new crop of Councillors will meet for the first time on May 14th and include some who are staying on, some who are returning to the council after a break and some who are new. We welcome them all and we look forward to all that will be achieved over the next term.

The councillors are ably assisted by the council officers and I thank them for their work. We are in the unusual position of having only our clerk remaining, with both Alex Luck already having left, and Sophie Thorogood about to leave us to take up her own Parish- we wish her every success in her new venture. To paraphrase Julie Andrews, we believe that when a door closes, somewhere a window opens and this unexpected situation has left us with a great opportunity to restructure our staffing structure and reshape it to better suit the business of the council. The new jobs will be advertised soon and we look forward to welcoming new staff to the team.

At last year's Parish Assembly we appointed our first ever Bishopstoke Champion – Kieran Gillingham, for his amazing volunteer work up and down the River Itchen. Our search for the next Champion begins in the summer so keep an eye out for that.

Grants given this year include £150 to Victim Support, £650 to ARK Eastleigh, £1,200 to Disability Challengers, £1,475 to Bishopstoke Methodist Church, £1,475 to MHA Communities Hampshire West and £1,000 to Eastleigh Borough & Romsey Mencap. Several of these organisations are here today to tell us how they have been helping others with the help of Bishopstoke Parish Council and we look forward to hearing from them. As a parish council, in May last year we honoured the coronation of King Charles III with a Big Lunch and sports day attended by around 100 residents. This year our sports day will be held on Saturday June 8th and will commemorate D-Day 80. Please pop that date in your diary. However, carnival did not happen and we need more volunteers if it is to go ahead this year- the proposed date is Saturday 7th September so please add that into your diary as well.

Armistice Day was unusual with a moving service taking place on Old St Mary's in the bright sunshine and was very well attended. Planning permission for the memorial to be permanently located there has been granted and we are just waiting for Winchester Diocese to give us the go ahead to install it in time for Armistice Day this year.

I am delighted to report that the new cemetery gates have been installed and look lovely.

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

As a council we have continued to provide access to litter picking equipment to local groups that are tidying up our community space.

In addition, we have continued to provide support to around 40 residents through our travel token scheme.

As last year I unfortunately have to say we are still waiting to move on the construction of new memorial hall but I believe that permissions to knock down the old hall has now been granted by EBC so the project is moving slowly. We very much hope that at the very least, the new wheels park will be in place by next years Parish Assembly.

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.

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-Wheat  
23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024

## 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

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We ended the year with £229,000 in the accounts, of which £122,000 was free reserves, with the remaining £107,000 being earmarked for projects such as Glebe Meadow redevelopment, new artwork at the Cemetery, and further funds for play area improvements.

Looking forward, the precept for 2023/24 came to £333,000, an increase of 20% on the 2022/23 year. In budget discussions this year Councillors saw the need to properly fund the Glebe Meadow & Memorial Hall project, as well as to begin setting aside funding for the renewal of Bishopstoke’s play areas and so the Councillors approved a precept rise of 15% for the year 2024/25, equivalent to an increase of £14.11 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 2023, and the newly submitted audit for 2024 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 2024/25. Thank you.

## PARISH COUNCIL STAFF

<b>Clerk to the Parish Council</b>	Mr David Wheal 07368 487464 <a href="mailto:clerk@bishopstokepc.org">clerk@bishopstokepc.org</a>
<b>Assistant Clerk to the Council (RFO and Allotments)</b>	Mrs Sophie Thorogood 07444 798083 <a href="mailto:finance@bishopstokepc.org">finance@bishopstokepc.org</a> <a href="mailto:allotments@bishopstokepc.org">allotments@bishopstokepc.org</a>
<b>Other email addresses</b>	<a href="mailto:cemeteries@bishopstokepc.org">cemeteries@bishopstokepc.org</a> <a href="mailto:carnival@bishopstokepc.org">carnival@bishopstokepc.org</a> <a href="mailto:assets@bishopstokepc.org">assets@bishopstokepc.org</a>

## 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](http://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 regularly 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.