

## BRIGHTWALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Meeting Held via Video Conference on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 7.30pm  
DRAFT MINUTES

### Present:

Shaun Orpen – Chairman  
Annie Agnew – Councillor  
Sue Sayers – Councillor  
Tim Wyatt – Councillor  
Christine Delahunty – Councillor  
Mike Cooper – Councillor  
Sarah Youldon – Clerk  
Clive Hooker – Downland Ward Councillor  
8 Parishioners

### MATTERS ARISING

**Chairman's Report:** S Orpen welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported on the year as follows:

“This will not be a year that any of us will forget in a hurry. The year of COVID Lockdown.

The first part of the year was focused on ensuring that we had the right protections and services in place for parishioners, especially the elderly and vulnerable.

Thanks to some wonderful volunteers, we put in place a weekly Prescription collection and delivery service. We found online delivery services for meat, fruit and veg at a time when getting a delivery slot from one of the major supermarkets proved challenging.

We were very pleased to welcome Laura Farris, our local MP at the time when the Newbury Racecourse vaccination centre went live. It was great to hear directly the tone of many conversations in the House of Commons on this important and very current topic.

Thankfully, the village quickly adapted to the new regime imposed by the Government. Church services were moved to “zoom church”, Parish Council Meetings were by “zoom” and the Village Hall effectively mothballed itself until it could emerge from the 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown.

Thankfully Community spirit was alive and well in the village during the year. We had a very colourful display of houses decorating themselves to commemorate VE Day Celebrations as well as an extended display of Christmas lights across the village.

A first for this year was a Christmas Tree that was put up by the Parish Council in the Church Yard and at the last minute were able to have a well-attended “socially distanced” outside carol service just before Christmas around the Christmas tree. The consensus is that this should become an annual event in the village.

The ASPIRE project continued to take up a significant amount of time, and I am delighted to say that Phase 1 of this project has now been approved and work has just started. Once Phase 1 is complete in a matter of weeks, the Improved physical amenity of the church now presents the village with an additional meeting space that can be used for a wider variety of events to support the school, the village as well as the church.

During the year we have a change of Councillors. Polly Swann stepped down after 14 years service on the Parish Council as Clerk and Councillor. We were delighted to welcome Christine Delahunty to the team as her replacement.

We did manage to do a very limited “village clear up” in the autumn with small discrete groups focused on specific projects. As always, the village looked a lot better and neater as a result.

Financially, against a forecast of £7,343, we ended the year with an actual spend of £7,338 and cash reserves of £12,370.”

**Chairman's Report:** S Orpen welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported on the year as follows:

“This will not be a year that any of us will forget in a hurry. The year of COVID Lockdown.

The first part of the year was focused on ensuring that we had the right protections and services in place for parishioners, especially the elderly and vulnerable.

Thanks to some wonderful volunteers, we put in place a weekly Prescription collection and delivery service. We found online delivery services for meat, fruit and veg at a time when getting a delivery slot from one of the major supermarkets proved challenging.

We were very pleased to welcome Laura Farris, our local MP at the time when the Newbury Racecourse vaccination centre went live. It was great to hear directly the tone of many conversations in the House of Commons on this important and very current topic.

Thankfully, the village quickly adapted to the new regime imposed by the Government. Church services were moved to “zoom church”, Parish Council Meetings were by “zoom” and the Village Hall effectively mothballed itself until it could emerge from the 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown.

Thankfully Community spirit was alive and well in the village during the year. We had a very colourful display of houses decorating themselves to commemorate VE Day Celebrations as well as an extended display of Christmas lights across the village.

A first for this year was a Christmas Tree that was put up by the Parish Council in the Church Yard and at the last minute were able to have a well-attended “socially distanced” outside carol service just before Christmas around the Christmas tree. The consensus is that this should become an annual event in the village.

The ASPIRE project continued to take up a significant amount of time, and I am delighted to say that Phase 1 of this project has now been approved and work has just started. Once Phase 1 is complete in a matter of weeks, the Improved physical amenity of the church now presents the village with an additional meeting space that can be used for a wider variety of events to support the school, the village as well as the church.

During the year we have a change of Councillors. Polly Swann stepped down after 14 years service on the Parish Council as Clerk and Councillor. We were delighted to welcome Christine Delahunty to the team as her replacement.

We did manage to do a very limited “village clear up” in the autumn with small discrete groups focused on specific projects. As always, the village looked a lot better and neater as a result.

Financially, against a forecast of £7,343, we ended the year with an actual spend of £7,338 and cash reserves of £12,370.”

#### **Village Hall Report:**

A Britnor Guest was pleased to report that users were starting to come back to the hall, including the Children’s dance group which was not only back, was growing too. Financially the hall has had to survive without the income from 2 fetes now and minimal hire income so fundraising would be crucial. The team were currently working hard on fundraising ideas and it was reported that some exciting event plans were in progress with more details to follow in the Brickleton News.

#### **ASPIRE Update:**

S Orpen reported that phase one work had commenced off site. It was noted that there would be some disruption in the coming weeks as services need to be connected in the road. Plans were in place to keep the school and residents informed on timings. S Orpen was pleased to report that an application for £5,000 match funding had been successful, the matching £5,000 would need to be raised by October. This money was specifically for the Community Support role, and would secure the position for 2 years. The team would welcome input on the role and also requested a Councillor take part in discussions.

#### **Broadband:**

T Wyatt raised the question on providing Fibre to the Property (FTTP) broadband access to the village as a whole. During the Gigaclear connections several years ago, only properties without the BT fibre to cabinet and those being passed on the way were offered the Gigaclear fibre option in line with the contract with WBC. With the growing number of home workers plus more general reliance on the internet and requirement for greater speeds it was suggested that the PC should work to see if the whole of the village could have a FTTP option for the future. Eliminating the current inconsistencies, this would also then give everyone a choice of provider. General agreement that this should be investigated. Clerk to initiate conversation with Gigaclear and report back. Discussions were had on the alternatives of 5G and Starlink access, but all agreed a FTTP option would be worth pursuing.

#### **Footpaths:**

Following much discussion in the village about a new Permissive Footpath at Malthouse Farm, the owner joined the meeting to explain the new path. The owner explained with a young family and their own pets, walkers coming through the centre of the garden was far from ideal and by creating the new permissive path he was hopeful that the majority of the users would choose to use this route around the woods rather than through the garden. Since moving in they had found a small number of people completely off the designated footpath, roaming the woods, making camps and stray dogs wondering their garden. An article is planned for the May Brickleton News to explain the reasoning and the new route to a wider audience. Some concerns were raised

Brightwalton Parish Council Clerk – Sarah Youldon

about signage and discussions on improvements had taken place with WBC and implemented. Additional discussions were ongoing with WBC on the new stile. Concerns were also raised as to whether the original footpath would be lost, owner reassured that there were no intentions to officially re-route the designated right of way. It was generally agreed that the new permissive path created a pleasant walking route.

Discussions continued on the general state of footpaths, with parishioner raising concerns about the conditions on footpaths across fields. M Cooper explained that with modern equipment it is just not feasible to not plough or plant the rights of way that frequently run diagonal across farmland. He went on to explain that in law farmers are required to re-instate paths within 7 days, and most did this far quicker. It was agreed that the past year had seen a substantial increase in use and in complaints, and more tolerance and communication was required from all parties. In regards to maintenance of stiles etc, faults can be reported directly to WBC on the 'Report a Problem' page. WBC is also currently running a consultation on rights of way – details can be found on their website and the village website.

**Dog Bins:**

A request to install two dog bins on Ash Close and Long Lane had been received. In line with previous discussions PC agreed that street furniture should be kept to a minimum in a rural village, in addition it was agreed that bins don't solve the problem of people not picking up and as this was the 5<sup>th</sup> request – all in different locations – if this was granted where do you stop? Resident had offered to empty bins themselves, but all agreed this was only a short term solution and would become a PC responsibility with the cost at £234 per bin per year this would quickly become a financial burden. A parishioner also made the point that they felt non-dog owners shouldn't be paying through the PC precept for those that choose to have dogs. Request refused, Clerk to feedback.

There were no further comments or questions, the Parish Council thanked the parishioners for their input.

**Meeting closed at 8.44pm**

**The remaining 2021 Parish Council Meetings will be held:**

12<sup>th</sup> July, 13<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> November