

BIRCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 10th March 2021 via Zoom at 7.30pm

Present: Councillors G Daniels (Chairman), M Sargent,

C Morley, S Langfield, T Clark & R Hutchinson

M Hayes Parish Clerk & 2 members of the public

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the new Clerk Maxine Hayes. She expressed her thanks on behalf of the Parish Council to Phillipa Sewell for the past 4 years as Parish Clerk, she has been a huge asset to the Parish Council.

2. To agree the Minutes of the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting

RESOLVED: The meeting received and approved the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in 2020 as a true record.

3. Matters Arising from last year's meeting

No questions were raised at the 2020 meeting, but the Chairman updated the meeting on the following items:

School – The Council has kept in touch with both the Estate and County Council however there has been no progress on the transfer of the School to the Estate due in part to Covid restrictions and agreement to be reached over asbestos removal. The latest from the County was that it was exploring other options but has not expanded on what they are.

CITB – Discussions on the future of the site rumble on and I thank our Borough Cllr Chris Morley for keeping us up to date on this and doing his best to try to ensure that the swimming pool can remain open.

4. Bircham Parish Council Annual Report to 2021 Meeting

Thanks

This year has been a truly extraordinary one due to Covid-19 and I take this opportunity to thank all those organisations and businesses who have supported our residents during the ongoing pandemic. I also pay special tribute to all those individuals who have helped our residents with both weekly shopping and small acts of kindness which have made lockdown more bearable. Lastly, I think you will all agree that the roll out of the vaccine has been impressive and all those involved on both a national and local level have our gratitude.

Signed:

Date: 23/3/2022

Finances

This year the Council secured grant funding for the new Slide and the Trod. Further funding under the Community Infrastructure Levy has also been received from the Long Meadow development, which has enabled the Council to bring forward or carry out projects without raising the precept. The quarterly financial reports are published on the website, and monthly payments are listed in the Council minutes. The Council has set a budget for the forthcoming year, however, with careful use of its reserves, the amount households pay would remain the same as this year i.e. Band D property would stay at £47.41 per annum.

Parish Maintenance

The Council had done its best to keep the village clean and tidy by:

- relaying relevant issues to Norfolk County Council and Borough Council
- the employment of Malcolm Page for grass cutting and tidying the Spinney.
- supporting the work of volunteer Peter Hambly who looks after the village pond and its surroundings with great dedication.
- Reminding once again dog walkers to clear up after their dogs.

Playing Field

The equipment had once again been well used especially over the summer months. The Council is grateful to Cllr. Mele for ensuring the equipment was safe and passed ROSPA inspection. The Council also thanks Bircham Cricket Club for keeping the grass well maintained and congratulates the Club on the renovation of the pavilion. The playing field has been a real asset to the community in times of lockdown and the council continues its investment in the repair and replacement of the play equipment, notably this year a new, bigger and better slide.

Planning

The Council has reviewed 8 planning applications over the year. The main issue on planning has been the Meadow campsite which firstly operated under extended permitted development rights in the Summer, then the review of the full application which the Council decided on balance to object. That application has since been withdrawn, although permitted development rights still mean that camping would continue for a number of weeks.

Other items of note

- The Council has been able to carry on business as usual through Zoom meetings, although this has not been the same as meeting in person, and I am conscious that not all Councillors have been able to participate.
- The Council has continued its financial support of the Great Massingham Community Car Scheme who have continued to operate under difficult restrictions.
- The Council has contributed to the maintenance of the church yard at St Mary's Church, to allow the PCC to concentrate on raising funds for the necessary improvements inside the Church some of which have been completed.

Signed:

Date: 23/3/2022

- The Council is as always grateful to the Church for printing and to those that deliver the Newsletter to our homes. The Council gave a grant of £100.00 to help meet production costs.
- As previously mentioned, the Council has reinvested some of the funds received from the Community Infrastructure Levy in the Parish; projects thus far have included the new trod in Stanhoe Road in partnership with Norfolk County Council and the replacement of the footway lights units with LEDs.

Looking forward

Defibrillator – due to restrictions the planning training courses did not go ahead, so we are hopeful that in the forthcoming year this can be rescheduled. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Cllr Hutchinson who has been carrying out regular checks of the equipment on the Council's behalf.

Tree planting – The Council will be organising the planting of 15 trees in a corner of the playing field, the trees have been given to the Community by the Woodland Trust.

Recreation Ground - To improve the pedestrian access into the Recreation Ground from Lynn Road

Noticeboard – Replacing the Noticeboard in Bircham Newton

Pond – Continued improvements to the pond area including a replacement seat

Walks – To support Footpath Officer Cllr Langfield to keep the Rights of Ways and Green Lanes accessible and develop a project to promote walks to residents and visitors.

5. Bircham Community Speed Watch

Councillor Sargent reported that the speed watch group were not able to operate during most of the past year but are hoping to start again in April. The Bircham team needs more volunteers in order to do more checks and cover different hotspots in the Parish. The more the team does, the more local police support we get. He asked for anyone who might have some spare time and were able to join the group to contact him.

6. Bircham In Bloom

Bircham In Bloom has continued despite of the restrictions under Covid-19, although there was no competition this year residents were treated to the spring bulbs planted in 2019 and the blooming of the lovely rose beds in the Jubilee Gardens. The group's volunteers also planted and watered pots and baskets through the long hot summer months, hopefully a welcome sight on many a lockdown walk and appreciated by the many visitors. More bulbs were also planted this year at the Spinney as well as the introduction of both white and purple foxgloves. Planting at the Jubilee Gardens was further expanded thanks to volunteers' generous sponsorship.

7. Public Forum

No Questions. The meeting closed at 19.43pm.

Signed:

Date: 23/3/2022