



GREAT BARFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to Council: Mrs Joanne Lee c/o The Parish Council Office, Green End Farm,
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Report of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4th May 2021

As permitted by the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 the meeting was conducted online.

Councillors present: Graham Pendrey (Chair), Duncan Edgar, David Garrard, Di Ames, Jon Digweed, Derrick Folbigg, Tim Wood, Stuart Southall, Ann Lovesey MBE, Peter Ward

In attendance: Borough Ward Councillor Stephen Moon

Clerks: Joanne Lee and Anne Papé

AGENDA

In the Chair – Mr Graham Pendrey, Chairman of the Parish Council

1 Apologies for absence

1.1 No apologies were received. Councillor Pendrey chaired the meeting.

2. To receive and approve the minutes of the previous meeting:

Annual Parish Meeting – 16th April 2019

2.1 The minutes were accepted as a true record.

Proposed – David Garrard, Seconded – Ann Lovesey
Agreed by all.

3. To receive the following reports from Great Barford Parish Council

- **Chairman's report**
Chairman read his report. See Appendix 1
- **Financial report**
Anne Pape read her report. See Appendix 2.

4. To receive a report from Bedford Borough Council Ward Councillors

Councillor Moon read his report. See Appendix 3.

5. To receive reports from charities, school and organisations in the village.

The following reports were read out by the Clerk.

Church report written by Rev Graham Buckle. See Appendix 4

Great Bowls and Petanque Club written by Joe Lound-Keast. See Appendix 5

WI report written by Eunice Bradford. See Appendix 6

Community Events Group advised by Louise Geary. See Appendix 7

The following reports were also read out:

Neighbourhood Plan read out by Councillor Pendrey. See Appendix 8

Wöllstein Twinning Partnership read out by John Vincent. See Appendix 9

6. To receive questions from members of the public

6.1 Resident requested the Parish Council to contact Central Beds Council Highways department to action cleaning and unblocking the drain at corner of Barford Road to Blunham and Willington.

6.2 Clerk to contact resident regarding compiling the new honours board.

Appendix 1

GBPC AGM 2021 - PC Report

Due to Covid, and the imposed restrictions, we did not have an Annual Meeting in 2020, and a lot has happened in the last two years. So here's a list of some of the more significant topics:

2019 was an election year, which saw a change in Parish Council membership. We also welcomed Anne Papé back to fill the roles of Assistant Clerk and Finance Officer, to help out and partner Joanne Lee, in what has become an increasingly busy Clerk's Office.

With redevelopment of 59 High Street into flats, the Parish Council lost its office space and moved to a new rented workspace at 108 Green End Road. A new office, and a new start.

New play equipment was procured for the Jubilee Play Area in the form of a swing and slide.

After a few years absence, we re-established the Village Front Garden Competition.

Traffic issues, and particularly speeding continue to be of serious concern, so we had 30mph roundels painted on New Road and High Street. The Borough installed permanent Speed Indicator signs on New Road near the Woodpecker Close junction. And we purchased our own Speed Indicator Device (SID), which we have moved around the village to build up a record of traffic data.

Coronavirus brought a stop to the Parish Council physical meetings. After a delay, the Government introduced some temporary legislation to allow Local Authorities to meet by remote attendance online. Up to that point we had to be physically present at meetings, as dictated by the Local Government Act 1972 that we have to abide by – back in 1972, they didn't cater for the internet and video conferencing. Technology has moved on faster than our governing legislation. In the next few days, the temporary measures will cease, so while Covid restriction still exist, we may not be able to meet.

Covid VE Day Celebrations were "interesting" with Socially Distanced street parties.

With working at home, the Borough Planning Department didn't meet to discuss the more significant planning applications, only some simple applications able to be decided by a single officer had been determined. So many planning applications were awaiting decision, going back to late 2019.

The Neighbourhood Plan progress was interrupted by difficulties meeting during early Covid restrictions, but became reinvigorated mid 2020, with a concerted effort to work towards a conclusion. This has seen it go through its essential Public Consultation, a review of responses, and Final Draft. We have now been able to submit the Plan to the Borough, for them to take up the running prior to a Referendum in the near future. It's not there yet, but it is gaining weight, and we have started seeing it be referenced in some recently submitted planning applications.

Some Covid relaxation on movement led to an influx of visitors to our riverside Village Green, and all the associated mayhem, parking and litter problems that created. We have since provided additional litter bins on the Village Green, and requested additional parking restrictions to help regulate parking, and protect safe access/egress of Woodpecker Close.

The Village Hall car-park had a tidy up, with the bushes and trees being thinned out to create a brighter, open aspect, and making the area easier to maintain.

More play equipment was added to Jubilee Play Area, with a “tipi” carousel, and the swings removed for Covid social distancing, have been replaced now that restrictions are being relaxed.

Christmas and the New Year saw extreme wet and flooding; a big concern for many close to the river, and much standing water at Green End as well. Fortunately, we survived what is one of the major flood events in living memory. Not quite 1947 levels, but it got close.

For older children, we installed a 25m “Zip-Wire” on the Playing Field, along the northern boundary. The field became very wet over winter, but has dried out now, so everyone can again enjoy the playing field facilities to their full.

East West Rail was until recently a “low key” subject, and very poorly promoted by EWR and the Borough. Everyone has now suddenly become aware of previous missed consultations and the now emerging route alignments, with north Beds communities up in arms about the impact it will have. Everyone is urged to get involved, and comment at all consultations.

And finally, at the beginning of 2021 we had a Parish Councillor resign to follow other activities. This created a Casual Vacancy, which set off the due process of notifying the Bedford Returning Officer. With no request to fill by election, we adopted a Co-Option process resulting in Jon Digweed becoming a Parish Councillor. In recent weeks, we have had another resignation, so have started the process again.

Appendix 2

Finance report

Income

The main income for the Parish Council is the precept. This is paid to the Parish Council by Bedford Borough Council and is funded by the council tax collected from each household in Great Barford. The precept for 2021/2022 will be £70,978. This will give a charge of £82.22 for a band D property. An increase of £4.35, 5.60%. An increase was needed due to a general increase in costs such as street lighting and staff costs and to undertake tree maintenance and general village maintenance which is required.

The Parish Council also gains an income from the allotments, newsletter advertising, the slipway and the graveyard. Bedford Borough Council makes a contribution to the Parish Council for cutting the grass verges (within the 30mph speed limit areas) throughout the year.

The Parish Council has received one Community Infrastructure Levy payment in 2020/2021, for £4220.35. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy that local authorities can charge on most new built development in their area in order to raise funding to carry out infrastructure projects. The Parish Council receives 15% of the CIL paid from liable projects in Great Barford. CIL is awaited from the new development on Roxton Road.

The Parish Council utilised a portion of the general reserve in 2020/2021 to carry out tree maintenance works, hedgerow maintenance and repairs to play equipment.

Expenditure

The Parish Council employs 2 part time members of staff. Tasks such as village maintenance, grass cutting and tree maintenance are undertaken by contractors.

The Parish Council holds ringfenced funds as

below: **Amount**

Average speed cameras donation	£3000
Village Hall car park maintenance fund	£10,000
6 months running costs	£35,489

The Parish Council has spent £18,433.89 of CIL funds in 2020/2021. The funds were used to purchase a zip wire on the playing field, the village green sign and the bollard on the path at the village green.

The Parish Council continues to hold a general reserve. The Parish Council remains in good financial order with the ability to fund unexpected repairs or to undertake/contribute to additional projects that may arise.

Appendix 3

Great Barford Borough Councillor Annual Report

COVID

It has been a strange year for all of us. The need to protect against Covid has meant that we have had more restrictions on our day to day freedoms than have ever previously been imposed, even in wartime. Sadly, that didn't prevent many residents being affected either by catching Covid or having relations, friends and colleagues catch it, perhaps fatally.

EAST-WEST RAIL

Now that the two detailed line options for the Borough Council's preferred route E have been published it is possible to see just how environmentally damaging they are. One will pass through Great Barford; extremely close to or through Northfield and Birchfield Farms and crossing the A421/C44 between here and Roxton. The other will be further away but both options will cause irreparable harm to the settings of Ravensden and Wilden as well as Great Barford and both will require deep cuttings and embankments/viaducts which will ruin the outlook for many and involve years of major civil engineering works for all of us. The end result will be a totally changed and vandalised landscape and ruined settings for many houses and families.

There is a growing awareness that the original consultation was badly flawed and misleading. The Council submitted a detailed recommendation for route E in a report which was claimed as council policy but was never seen by any committee, never voted on and certainly never seen by the communities most affected or the Councillors who represent them. The Council now tries to claim that it was not them but the Government who decided but last year at a meeting, a senior civil servant confirmed that the Bedford Borough submission was a significant factor in reaching the decision. Now that it has been realised that there are houses in Bedford that will have to be demolished the campaign against the preferred route E has suddenly gained additional support and the Council has now reversed its position and agreed, for the first time, to consult residents on the most important issue facing their various communities.

Your Borough and Parish Councillors are actively engaged in this issue and are involved with an action group consisting of borough and parish councillors and residents with a range of relevant expertise which is campaigning against the choice of route E – aided by Richard Fuller MP. It has identified both cost and engineering flaws in the case for the route, defects in the consultation process (not least the secretive approach to costs which has led to the cheapest route option at the initial consultation becoming the second most expensive with no explanation) and alternative routes which will adversely affect fewer people yet retain the same economic benefits. It has started the lobbying process and is actively campaigning. The website for the group is: www.bfare.org.uk

It is vital that all residents get involved, not just in the latest consultation about which of the two options is least damaging, but in supporting the campaign to have the whole process reopened so that the choice of Route E can be examined on the basis of full rather than partial or misleading information.

PLANNING AND HOUSING

The attempts by developers to impose badly designed and inappropriate estates on Great Barford are continuing. The last Local Plan has imposed an extra 500 houses between now and 2030 but allowed the village to decide where they should be placed. The Neighbourhood Plan (NDP) has, with the support of the residents, decided on the preferred location. That hasn't stopped the developers who are trying to get three separate estates in land between

Roxton, Addingtons and New Roads; two sites have gone to appeal as the developers are trying to get their sites approved before the NDP takes full effect. Because the proposed developments are contrary to the Local Plan and the NDP they should be rejected (as similar appeals have been earlier this year in Willington and in Renhold) but it is important that local knowledge on issues such as the inadequacy of the Addingtons Road/High Street junction is emphasised in responses to the Planning Inspector.

Another planning related issue that affects many residents is the unregulated growth of activities on the New Road nursery site. The intensification of noise, dust and smoke emitting operations, often operating at highly anti-social hours, has been going on for many months with the relevant Borough enforcement officers apparently doing little to prevent it. Unfortunately the enforcement powers are very weak but detailed evidence of breaches gathered by residents was seemingly being ignored. There are now some signs of progress as, at the time of writing, the site owners have withdrawn the planning applications they had been forced into making; that means that for the first time enforcement action, including the use of stop notices is now a realistic possibility. Much of the credit has to go to the residents affected who have been monitoring and recording the uses of the site.

BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES

As with all employers the Borough has had to have staff work from home wherever possible at the same time as reorganise to cope with the increased demands caused by the pandemic. The needs of the vulnerable, those who had to self-isolate as well as the problems for those in care or homeless were a priority as were the many areas in which the Borough managed government programmes; all the while routine services such as rubbish collection had to be maintained.

It soon became clear that the Borough is fortunate to have a committed and professional workforce which was able to meet the additional demands although the incredible efforts of the voluntary organisations and dedicated individuals acting within their communities should not be overlooked.

As the pandemic diminishes in intensity, at least for the time being, things will slowly return to normal although there is likely to be many changes such as an increase in home working. Many jobs and businesses have been lost and for many residents things won't be quite the same again.

For the Borough Council the pandemic has placed a huge strain on the already strained finances. Reductions in council tax, business rates and rents as well as lost fee and parking income together with increased costs will increase future budgetary pressure without government support. This year the Borough has been able to avoid significant service cuts, unlike many Councils, with an increase in Council Tax of 3.74%.

Stephen Moon
Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant

Appendix 4

All Saints Church

As with every other organization, 2020 has been a difficult year for All Saints. We have been like yo-yos, in and out of our church buildings for regular worship, and unable to hold our usual fund-raising events that support the church on a weekly basis.

With a disrupted service schedule, our income has followed the same pattern, although some of our regular worshippers have either donated electronically or saved what they would normally give and donated as and when able.

We have launched an on-line market, which has replaced our normal Saturday morning market for the time being, and when we are able, the two will be run side-by-side. We have also recently launched a monthly draw to further enhance our income.

During the times we have been unable or chosen not to be in our churches for worship we have been holding Zoom services. These have been advertised on the community Facebook pages, and we have seen a good uptake from across the four parishes. These have also been recorded and the recordings have also been made available through Facebook.

We have also seen an increase in the number of funerals, some of these in church, and some at Bedford Crematorium.

The roof has recently been inspected, as we are experiencing a lot of noise and a number of leaks into the church. In order to have the roof replaced we will need to fund raise. We will do this in various ways, and we are still waiting for budget quotes, but it is likely we will need to raise about sixty thousand pounds, some of which will be raised by obtaining grants.

Any help that the parish council can give would be appreciated.

We look forward to a year when can open fully.

Rev Graham Buckle
Priest in Charge and Rural Dean of Biggleswade.

Appendix 5

GREAT BARFORD BOWLS AND PETANQUE CLUB

Why is the club such a valuable organisation in Great Barford?

In normal times the club has held social events and activities for the community, the members of the club have always taken an active part in village activities and the facilities have been available as a resource for village organisation and individual use. We had many plans to continue to offer, and grow, the sporting, personal, social and community activities, and at the highest standard, last year. We are already discussing what we might be allowed to do this year. Fortunately, we had been able to open for a short time and in a limited way for our members. This has been a boon for their moral and optimism. Whatever, you can be sure that the Bowls and Petanque Club intends to be part of the “new normal”, and we hope we will be a force in the renewal of the community.

What makes the Club such a Premier Sporting Facility?

The facilities we have built up over many years, the active participation of the members and standard of players, continue to ensure that the Bowls and Petanque club is successful and highly esteemed.

Why have we been successful?

The Officers have continued to work under difficult conditions for the Club, by the obligatory email and Zoom meetings. So many of our club members have given of their time and expertise maintaining the clubhouse and tending the green. The members were able to take part in internal competitions because we supplied hand sanitiser and members brought wipes to disinfect the locks on the gates. All equipment was sanitised before and after use. The number of players at any time were limited to maintain social distancing. The club house remained closed, apart from accessing the toilets and other essential items although, for a short time and with stringent application of the personal protection rules, the bar was able to relieve the spirits (in both senses!). We have played 113 matches to decide the Club's 9 internal competitions, in a much more competitive way than last year. At least 18 different members participated. We have only 34 "Playing members" signed up this season (11 ladies and 23 men). Considering there has been 2 injuries, and 6 non-participations due to a variety of reasons (Covid-19 / health / work / other), this has reduced the available playing members to just 26. Based on the above notes, a minimum of just over Two thirds or (18/26) of the available playing members took part over the Finals weekend.

We all need a reminder of what we achieved the year before and what to look forward to: We retained the Brian Taverner Memorial Cup; The Men's EBL (Div. 4) B Team came within a few minutes of a 100% record, winning 13 out of 14 matches, and finishing as champions, 5 points clear of the second placed team; The A Team (EBL Div. 3) found themselves surprise leaders with 3 games to go but lost all of those games to finish 5th and now face the prospect of two matches against the B Team next year; In the Over 60s League we struggled all year after promotion to Division 1 last term, and finished second from the foot of the table, returning to Division 2 when the league returns; The Ladies League had struggled to put out a complete team, but recruitment of new players augers well for future competitiveness; We had a full calendar of Friendly games played with the result that we won 10 and lost 7.

What problems do we have?

As usual, the most pressing and troubling threat comes in the lack of numbers: number of members, number of people using our activities and numbers of spectators at events. We have produced regular reports in the Barford Bugle and, in other ways, tried to spread interest in the Club. We all hope that the relaxation of Lockdown will produce renewed and successful interest in participation in our activities. We will continue with our efforts, of course, to attract

members and publicise/spread the word about our deeds. We would be grateful for any assistance the Parish Council and other organisations in the parish can possibly offer.

As a club I'm hope we have learned a few lessons and will handle the next world crisis better!

Joe Lound-Keast

Appendix 6

Great Barford WI Secretary's Report 2021

We have had some interesting speakers this year but sadly due to the covid 19 virus and lockdown we have unfortunately not been able to meet in the normal way.

Zoom meetings were organized and members enjoyed some very interesting speakers covering a number of different subjects. Hopefully in the not too distant future we will be able to socialise again and enjoy our monthly meetings in the bowls club.

In August our President arranged a cream tea in her garden for Debra Clark and Enid Leveritt who were celebrating special birthdays. It was a lovely warm day and a great success.

We managed to hold a couple of committee meetings at local garden centres but unfortunately that could not continue, so we decided to meet on zoom instead.

The organized walks proved very popular, but again they have had to be postponed until restrictions ease and we are out of lockdown.

This year has been challenging for members and the WI, but we look forward to a summer when we can meet our family and friends and enjoy WI life again as we knew it.

This concludes my report.

Appendix 7

The Events Committee advised that they are currently looking into a Fun Day in the summer 2021 in conjunction with the Parish Council.

Appendix 8

GBPC APM 2021 – Neighbourhood Plan Report

A lot has gone on since we were able to last report at the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting.

NP Committee Members

The membership make up had expanded again to 14 members, then remained stable with:

- 6 Parish Councillors, and
- 8 Residents
- plus a Professional Consultant

Meetings continued on a regular monthly basis, until March 2020, when the Covid Lockdown hit us all. Being unable to meet in person, we went into abeyance for a few months, hoping restrictions would ease. They didn't, so from July 2020 we started virtual meetings on Skype, and have been ever since.

Meetings

The Neighbourhood Plan has moved on significantly. In late 2019, we had arranged to get all the site promoters to present their visions at a single event, held in the GBPA School Hall. This was followed by a feedback consultation event at the same venue.

By the time we had reviewed comments, we were into the New Year and just starting to bring things together; continuing to draft the Neighbourhood Plan main document, and compiling all the supporting material. Then Covid hit, and we couldn't continue to meet at the Village Hall due to the restrictions.

You might think so what? Just use Zoom, or Skype. But it wasn't that simple; as a Local Authority, we are governed by the Local Government Act 1972, and that to have a meeting meant you had to be physically present – when the 1972 Act was implemented, they hadn't foreseen a future internet. We had to wait until the Government caught up, and introduced some temporary legislation to allow remote attendance at meetings.

Skype was a new experience we had to come to grips with, but we had to continue meeting somehow to discuss, make decisions, and keep developing the plan, ready for a Public Consultation.

Grant Funding

We were able to still make a successful application for more Government backed Grant Funding. This continued to cover our ongoing expenses such as: Venue hire; Commissioned Reports, including the Green Infrastructure Plan; and our all important Consultant.

Towards Public Consultation

Having refocused our efforts to draft documents, we had to produce a scoping report for a Strategic Environmental Assessment and commission a Habitat Regulations Assessment, to add to our own Assessment Reports.

Small working parties prepared the necessary documents and organised the Regulation 14, Pre-Submission Public Consultation. The Reg 14 had intended to have Drop-In Sessions with

Displays at the Village Hall, but with Covid, this was rearranged to be conducted primarily as an online exercise, with some hard copy material available for those without internet access.

The representations received were reviewed, and compiled into the Consultation Statement Report. Some common themes came to light, raising concerns that were addressed by amendments to the Plan and some Supporting Documents. Everything was then checked to confirm the final drafts and we made them available on our website.

In the last few weeks, we have been able to submit the final draft documents to the Borough Council, to check what we have done. They have now organised their own Pre-Examination Consultation to receive comment, before commissioning an External Examiner and ensure our Plan meets all Basic Conditions criteria. If found sound, it will then go to a Referendum, to be voted on by the local electorate.

Hopefully all goes well, and our Neighbourhood Plan is adopted. It will then support the Bedford Local Plan when deciding future development and planning applications in the parish – note: although not yet adopted, it is already being referenced in some recent applications.

Appendix 9

Annual Twinning Partnership report to the Parish Council. April 27th 2021

My last annual report was in April 2019, as we all know much has changed since this time.

Early 2020 was looking good for a short while, however Covid 19 cancelled normal proceedings for the whole of 2020 at least half of 2021.

We are now proceeding to plan for resumption of activities for 2022 with a planned visit from Wollstein over the Jubilee weekend.

Graham Prigmore our treasurer and I have been in contact with the Village Hall booking person Louise Geary, to secure the Hall.

As the Village Hall is central to our needs when entertaining the village guests we have as a committee asked for the regular May Bank Holiday weekend to be pre-booked for the next 8 years in advance, taking us up to 2028. Pre-booking to this extent may seem a little extreme, however as we have learned, the hall is booked on our regular date next year for another event, hence the need to move our dates to the Jubilee weekend.

Of course all of these dates are verified with our guests in Wollstein making sure they are able to travel on said dates. We have also asked that the pre-booking is noted in the diary in order that other planners of events are able to see the dates booked and plan some flexibility. You may think, Wollstein can travel at any old time, not so! They have school holidays, public holidays and so forth which need to be considered.

I will labour the point once again, the current committee and partnership hosts here in Great Barford are merely the current custodians of a Village Twinning Association with our twin Village Wollstein in Germany since 1978, I hope the residents and the Village Hall committee agree that the availability of our village hall is paramount in the future partnership twinning dates.

2022 will be our 44th anniversary, In the early 1980`s Wöllstein named two new streets after their two twinned towns / villages, Great Barford Strasse and Barsac Alle` for their French partners. I would like to re-iterate my request in last year`s report that with all the new building envisaged in Great Barford perhaps this could be an opportunity to reciprocate and name a new street here in Great Barford after our twin town? "Wollstein Way" I hope the Parish council will consider this no cost opportunity and promote their 44 year old officially twinned organization with positive support.

The Twinning Partnership belongs to the village and, as always, it welcomes anyone to join us. Occasionally, we hold well advertised free social evenings with cheese and wine or a beer if you prefer. For contact details please visit us on our website at greatbarfordtwinning.org.uk or our facebook page.

John Vincent, Chairman