

**BISHOPSTONE PARISH
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Thursday 1st March 2007 at 7.30 pm.**

MINUTES

- 1) **Present** : Parish Councillors : E R Draper (ERD) Chairman,
N T Barter (NTB),
B C Draper (BCD)
T W Long (TWL),
J F Murray (JFM),
Neighbourhood Police PC Peter Jung
County Councillor : Tony Deane

There were 4 other people present, Mr R Barrett representing the Montgomery Coal Charity, Mr & Mrs R Abbott and Miss B Denny.

- 2) **Apology for absence** : None.
- 3) **Declarations of Interest** : There were no amendments to those previously registered.
- 4) **Minutes of the 2006 meeting** : NTB proposed approval, seconded by BCD. Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2006 were approved and signed by the Chairman.
- 5) **Matters arising from the 2006 meeting minutes** : None
- 6) **Parish Council Chairman's report for 2006/2007** : The Chairman (ERD) reported that the council had completed a year without a Parish Clerk and that unfortunately two Parish Councillors had resigned since the last Parish Meeting. Unconnected with this was the official reduction of the Parish Council from 9 to 7 Councillors approved by Salisbury District Council. The Chairman asked the Acting Parish Clerk (TWL) to complete the year's report. The year had opened with two major issues outstanding – speed limits and the Three Horseshoes. The latter, whilst leaving unresolved dissatisfaction amongst some villagers, was now closed and the Council had taken no further action. Speed limits were still an ongoing issue however with the latest development being the review of the county against the new government guidelines. The Parish Council had the aim of pressing for the C12 High Road to be a priority case for action.
- Other important issues faced by the Council this year had been :-
- the warning of floods that proved to be a false alarm
 - the effects of flooding by surface water and the ongoing efforts to achieve improved drainage
 - the resolution of the threats caused by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 because the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 had determined that all of the applications for modifications to the definitive map had been after the cut-off date for being successful. The result was that the Rights of Way that had always been Byways Open To All Traffic remained so but that everywhere else in Bishopstone remained a footpath or a bridleway.

- the slow launch of a sub committee to manage and promote the Recreation Ground
- the expansion of the village web site by a more active participation from the Parish Council
- the inevitable involvement of the Parish Council in the bid by Wiltshire County Council for a unitary status council for the county and the opposition to this by Salisbury District Council.

7) **Parish Council's accounts for the past year and observations on the current year** : The Responsible Finance Officer (JFM) reported :-

"I am pleased to advise that the Council's accounts for the period ended 31st March 2006 were subject to both internal and external audits respectively by Mr C J Atkinson and the government appointed firm of Mazaars LLP. Neither party raised any material issues.

As required the statutory requirement that the accounts be open for inspection by members of the public was duly met by the placing of notices on the village notice boards giving details of where the accounts could be inspected and between what hours. Under this requirement the public are given the opportunity to inspect the accounts and supporting documentation over a stated period of 20 working days.

As to the accounts themselves they reflect income for the period of £ 4,031 and outgoings of £ 5,527.

Income is principally comprised of the precept that we receive from the Salisbury District Council amounting to £3,600. Precept is the council's share of the council tax (I calculate that on a Band D property our share of council tax amounts to just over 1%)

Exceptional items of expenditure during the year were various works done on the playing fields £950 and the supply of two village notice boards at a cost of £861.87. The latter item was financed out of a bequest left to the village by the late Mr Finn Murray.

I have brought with me a copy of the accounts should anyone wish to review them at the conclusion of this meeting."

8) **District Councillor's Report for 2006/2007** : The District Councillor (ERD) reported that one year ago he had just completed a most enjoyable year as Chairman of Salisbury District Council.

This had been followed by his appointment to Chairman of the Western Area Planning Committee. He was not too happy that planning decisions were being made by delegated powers ; but government targets and finance policy had made it necessary.

With the opening of the fourth Park and Ride site at London Road the programme was complete. Salisbury District Council had to finance the running cost of the scheme and this had been mainly covered by city parking fees until now. In future the Council faced an inevitable reduction in city parking so the scheme would have to be financed from central funds.

A major issue had been the vote by council house tenants to stay in Council ownership when the Council had started procedures to transfer ownership to a housing board.

The Council offices had to be modernised to satisfy Health and Safety legislation. ERD stated that he had not been happy with the proposal to build the Bourne Hill complex and had voted against it, preferring an alternative like moving out to Old Sarum.

Council tax would rise by 4.9% in 2007.

Finally, of course, the discussions about the bid for unitary status had occupied the Council in its objection to Wiltshire County Council's action.

9) **County Councillor's Report for 2006/2007** : County Councillor Tony Deane reported :-

"General

The County Council has kept a relatively low profile throughout the year, however the government audit police (Audit Commission) has carried out proscribed checks and recently they have awarded the County a four star rating (****). Reminiscent of primary school it means that they consider that the County Council is successful in delivering services across the board. This rating is an improvement on last year, when it would have been termed excellent.

Parish Stewards

This year has seen the introduction of Stewards in yellow landrovers and equipment. The service is a marked improvement on Parish Lengthsmen and so far one has only heard compliments about what they do & how they do it.

Unitary

There has been much comment on a new unitary Council to replace the County & District Councils in Wiltshire with one authority, which would cover the same area as the PCT. An audited financial exercise has shown that there is a potential £15m per annum saving for one authority instead of five.

The decision will be made by government sometime in March with another consultation period afterwards and if it goes ahead implementation will probably be in 2008.

The main draw back is reduction in elected representation of the people.

Presently there are 244 elected District & County Councilors; the proposal is for 98 only.

Budget

The County Council is likely to remain within its budget for 2006-7. Savings were made in most Departments to cover for a predicted overspend in DACS (Department of Children & Adult Care) this is a growth area for care. The department abuts the PCT's with services & the financial problems in PCTs has meant a critical look at practices that had developed, some of these have been modified in line with statutory requirements to reduce costs.

The Council tax increase for 2007-8 has been kept just below the government determined capped level of 5%. This means along term problem with services as government keeps legislating for more services without providing finance from the national exchequer.

Regional Government.

Apparently there is one. It is unelected, all-powerful as it fixes budgets for most things especially highways projects and the region reflects the needs of the EU in governing England. I am told ignore it at your peril, as it is increasingly powerful, i.e. if you do not adhere to their rules you suffer.

Highways

County is still investing in maintenance; there is a 13-year-old backlog, which we are trying to pull back on.

Police

Wiltshire Constabulary has re-organised their method of policing which now includes 128 Community Police Officers, current strength is 90 and apparently it is proving to be difficult to recruit and retain CPO's.

The latest report from Wiltshire Constabulary shows an increase in crime levels of most categories, it is explained as the result of a changed method of reporting. The cynics of which I am one wait to be convinced.

E government.

This is to be encouraged, as it will reduce the paperwork going to re-cycling.

If you have time it is well worth looking at WCC intranet (the County website) and I would also recommend <http://www.vision-news.tv> for local views on a broadband TV system.

- 10) **Neighbourhood Police Report for 2006/2007** : PC Peter Jung reported that Wilton Police Station had once been a Sergeant and 8 Constables. It was now a base for the Neighbourhood Police Teams of 3 Police Constables with their 3 Police Community Support Officers. The police were now left alone to get on with the job and spend more time on the area. In our parish the PCSO was Bev Richards. The result of the re-organisation and its aim was that people would see their police more often. Personal contact would improve with a personal contact phone and e-mail.
There was a downside in that emergency response now came from Salisbury and those officers could not be expected to have the same local knowledge.
An additional development would be for police tasking groups to be developed to focus attention on local issues.
- 11) **Village Hall Management Committee Report for 2006/2007** : The Committee Chairman (NTB) reported that all the volunteers who had worked on the new toilet block had to be thanked. The year had seen a lot of events especially the recent Burns Night celebration which had been such a success. All of those events were to raise funds for the new entrance to the Hall work on which would be starting shortly. The Village Hall was grateful for all the donations and grants it had received.
- 12) **Parochial Church Council Report for 2006/2007** : The representative (NTB) reported that it was not possible to hold services at St John the Baptist every Sunday. In future it was clear that more lay help would be needed for the church.
- 13) **The Rev. Augustus Montgomery Coal Charity Report for 2006/2007** : The trustee Mr R Barrett reminded the parish that the charity had three trustees – The Rector, Revd Canon David Henley, Mrs Jill Bebbington and himself Mr Reg Barrett. The charity's income came from shares and its purpose was to help people in real need in the parish by means of cash grants.

After a period some years back when no grants were paid there had been six paid in the past year. This had been partly due to the greater awareness of the charity in the village and to the proven confidentiality shared by the trustees. The latter point was emphasised by Mr Barrett who asked the meeting to inform a trustee if they knew of any person in the village who may be in need of help, on the understanding that such a case would remain in strict confidence. TWL proposed and JFM seconded that Mr Barrett should continue as the Parish Council's trustee for the charity. All agreed.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.53 pm

Signed as an accurate record :

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CHAIRMAN

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DATE