

BUCKHURST HILL PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH ASSEMBLY OF BUCKHURST HILL PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT 7.00pm on THURSDAY 18 MAY 2023 AT RODING VALLEY HALL

001/22 **PRESENT**

Cllr K Williamson (Chairman)
Cllr M Vance
Cllr J Forker-Clark
Cllr D Saunders
Cllr R Kaul
Cllr R Church
T Ward (BHLGCIC)
J Page (BHRS)
P Foxtan (BHRS)
L Leszlyzynski (BHCA)
M Davies
Sgt. J Berwick
A Clark

In attendance: Mrs E P Petyt-Start (Parish Clerk)
Mrs L Tettmar (Finance and Admin Asst.)
Mrs L Davies (Admin and Projects Asst.)

002/22 **WELCOME BY CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Cllr Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

003/22 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies for absence from:-

Cllr Chambers Bagshaw
Cllr Weinberg
Rory Worthington, BH Parish History Recorder
Anthony Young – BH Memory Café
Elaine Carter- AA
Gill Wallis- EFDC Health & Wellbeing Manager
Mrs Anthony – Headteacher, Loyola Prep School
Cllr Peter Davey, Chairman, EALC
(Cllr Neville received during meeting)

Cllr Williamson sent good wishes to Cllr Weinberg for a good recovery following his operation.

004/22 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 19 May 2022 were approved as a correct record and authorised to be signed by Cllr Williamson.

005/22 **UPDATES FROM COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS**

There were updates from representatives of local community organisations:-

Buckhurst Hill Residents Society and U3A

Finances & Membership are stable although there is a lack of members on the committee and the society needs more help.

There have been a number of excellent talks, costs of speakers is rising therefore the society has not arranged as many talks as it would like to. One particularly good talk was 'women of note in BH' from Lynn Jones - with her historical information the society proposed to erect a heritage plaque for Violet Friedlander which has been supported by the Council.

ELHAP is the charity for this year – based in Woodford Bridge – a marvellous centre for disabled and disadvantaged children.

There will be a members mid-summer lunch, boundary walk (this Sunday) and Quiz evening

Members really enjoyed being part of the organisation and attending the Coronation event with their 4 games.

Mrs Page gave thanks to the Clerk for her organisation and energy regarding the event.

Bedford House Community Association

Work of the Adult Education centre continues to build upon all that was reported last year. Now all staff have been dementia awareness trained. There have been wellbeing talks in the spring and two Sunday socials so far.

The centre is busy planning a craft market and summer show. It will shortly launch its summer school programme. It is finalising its new programme from September.

It is seeking to launch a Community café, perhaps on Tuesday very soon for people with dementia and others.

There are over 500 site users per week.

BHLGCIC – Tim Ward

185 plots across 5 sites.

Thank you to the PC for their support and funds through the management agreement.

Last year the group completed the Easy Access Zone works which was funded by Essex Community Initiative Fund grant and also PC grant. This has enabled take up from older people and outreach with young people and children in a workshop format.

Drainage works have been undertaken at River Housing. New fencing has been funded by the PC at Forest Edge, River Housing and Monkshams.

This year the aim is to make access better and safer with plans submitted to the PC for Forest Edge and ramp at Palace Gardens

Open Day 12th August 12-3 pm at Monkshams – everyone invited

EPHING FOREST COMMUNITY POLICE

All of team dementia friends trained and using the Herbert protocol. Delivered training at St Johns Church too.

Crime has increased slightly with an increase in first floor burglaries and vehicle theft.

New PCSO Kitchener has joined the team but sadly PC Morgan will retire in September. Hopefully his replacement will be announced soon.

Sgt Berwick has been working with the Public Sector course students from New City College, out and about in the parish and other surrounding area conducting knife sweeps and crime reduction information delivery in the area.

Knife amnesty bins are available now and following the last three events over 300 knives have been collected.

Also, been visible at tube stations and conducting walk and talk with residents, promoting safety and gaining information for crime reduction e.g. lighting and visibility awareness then linking with other organisations to promote safer communities.

New self-defence sessions available and will be advertised on parish notice boards.

Cllr Williamson thanked all the voluntary groups and the Police for serving the community of Buckhurst Hill and its residents.

006/22 PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT AND REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Cllr Williamson advised the Annual Report was available and invited Chair of committees to present (all reports attached)

Chairman's Report – Cllr Williamson

Cllr Williamson noted the circulation of information from the 'Buckhurst Hill Residents Action Group' which is an unregistered anonymous group with a generic email. The messages are vile, anonymous and hiding behind anonymity is appalling.

Accommodation -Cllr Saunders

Finance & Establishment Committee - Cllr Vance

Planning & Environment Committee –Cllr Kaul

Recreation & Community – Cllr Clark

007/22 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

- Q) Is it problematic for Cllr Williamson (and other PC councillors) to respond to residents when they're also District Councillors
- A) Cllr Williamson advised he has taken the view he is allowed to listen and may not always be allowed to given opinion but can assist and advise on process

Q) Haven't seen coffee with cops advertised or happening recently

A) Essex Police will share adverts

Q) Have the Police been fining speeding motorists

A) they have been enforcing speed limits and conducting speed watch as part of duties in addition to the Speedwatch group

There was a discussion around TruCam and the necessity for it to be delivered by official, trained bodies to use only.

Comment

Thank you to voters for following new law requirements and taking photo ID to the Polling Station

There being no further business the Chairman thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting at 8.02pm.

Chairman

Date

Buckhurst Hill Parish Council



PARISH ASSEMBLY 18TH MAY 2023

2023 Annual Report

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Amazingly another Civic year comes to an end, it really doesn't seem like twelve months since the last Parish Assembly. During that time we lost our beloved Monarch Queen Elizabeth II and crowned our new Monarch King Charles III.

In my last report we were looking forward to the Platinum Jubilee event, which was a tremendous success. It was a collaboration between the Parish Council, Buckhurst Hill Residents' Society and Buckhurst Hill Football Club. Following this success we held our Coronation Event on the 8th May which was also a brilliant afternoon and I very much hope that this will now form the basis for a regular summer event, highlighting the best of Buckhurst Hill working together for the Community. The Parish Staff and the volunteers are the backbone of these events, I was very pleased with the attendance and the variety of stalls and entertainment that was available. A very big thank you to all that assisted with the event and all those that attended. We have a very good grounding now in running these events and hope to make next years' event even better.

The Community Fish and Chip Lunch in November was a huge success and is my favourite event of the year. The young people from Roding Valley High School who assisted were inspirational and a credit to their school and parents, as were the singers from the Loyola Preparatory School who entertained us.

Our Christmas Tree Community Celebration on the 2nd December was very well attended and was an excellent start to our Festive Season.

I was delighted with the installation of our Covid Memorial, which has a bench at the top of Queens Road and dedication plaques on the flower bed at the junction of Palmerston Road and Kings Avenue.

Following a lengthy recruitment process we again have a PCSO employed by this Council to make all areas of Buckhurst Hill safer. I am sure you will all be seeing him patrolling the parish.

Our SpeedWatch group are working hard and I thank them for all they do to reduce speeding on our major routes. The Leisure Gardens are still being run by an excellent group of dedicated people with the Parish assisting where they can. Thank you to all of the other groups within the Parish that makes this such a special place to live.

I am not happy with the progress we have made with the halls and the relocation of the offices, this is very important to us and we must make sure that we make the right decisions. The work we have done this year should give us a firm background and detailed knowledge to make those important decisions.

Thank you to all the Staff, Volunteers and fellow Councillors who have made being Chair such a privilege and a pleasure.

So as always still work to be done and all of your Councillors are available to listen to your ideas or concerns.

Cllr Ken Williamson, Chairman of Buckhurst Hill Parish Council

ACCOMMODATION REPORT

The Accommodation Committee have this year concentrated a large portion of our efforts on ensuring our facilities and community assets provide best value for residents. This year has seen a comprehensive review carried out of both of our community halls to understand what repairs are required and what we believe our residents would like these halls to provide in the coming years.

An extensive repairs programme has been discussed and is currently being finalised for the Woollard Centre. This is to ensure that the hall is in the best possible condition for those that use it and to minimise running costs over the coming years.

The Roding Valley Hall has seen an extensive consultation carried out between Councillors and an architect who has previously completed designs for a replacement hall on this site. We have some exciting ideas about what this facility could provide residents in future years. However, due to significantly rising construction costs, this project is currently at the feasibility stage so that we can ensure we don't expose the Parish Council to unnecessary costs unless we already have these earmarked for this centre. In any case, the building is – due to its age – starting to cost a significant amount of money to run and heat so there will come a point when replacing it will be the right thing to do for the community.

The Parish Offices have for a number of years now been located within the local architect's office at the top of Queens Road however we do understand that these offices are not the most accessible for residents. We have recently created a Working Party to look at other options and potentially moving this back to the Library which should also reduce costs to the Parish Council. We look forward to reporting back to residents in the near future with any progress we are able to make with this.

Cllr David Saunders – Vice Chairman of the Parish Council

FINANCE AND ESTABLISHMENT REPORT

The Finance & Establishment Committee has met several times during the last civic year.

Recognising the importance of dealing with public funds a major part of this committee's responsibility is to monitor and check all aspects of the Council's finances and assets as well as risks. It has a responsibility to ensure that our Finances meet the exacting demands of the annual audit and assessment of management risk. I am happy to report that such demands have been met to the auditor's satisfaction and my thanks go to the RFO and office administration.

Further with the support of your fellow councillors and office staff we have also completed our annual Governance and Accountability returns for 22/23 ensuring proper practices are in place.

It is this Committee that initiates the setting of the Council's budget and future spend. We are all experiencing the difficult living situation with the cost of living crisis with high energy costs food inflation and social challenges before us, I am therefore very pleased to report that following the prudent fiscal policies of this Committee the Parish Council has been able to operate with only a small 1% increase on the Precept (Parish Council Tax) around the price of a cup of coffee for a band D property. This small increase follows many years of Council Tax Freezes and hopefully provides some relief to all our residents in these difficult times.

This means going forward that the precept for 2023/24 year will be (Band D property charge £67.98)

The budgeted net expenditure for 2023/24 will be in the region of £353,337.

Our income apart from the Local Council Tax comes from hall hires, magazine advertisements, and share of rent for the Roding Valley Recreation Ground, investments or bank interest and grants and I am happy to report these remain healthy

I am also happy to report our reserves - Cash at the Bank remain healthy. This in turn allows the council to not only fulfil its financial commitments but also allows for us to plan future projects that will benefit the town these include proposed Playground, Halls Repairs, Climate Emergency, Street Lighting, Traffic calming measures, Memorials, preparation for a Neighbourhood Plan and investigating a town centre regeneration plan.

We continue to support our venerable members of society and provide Christmas parcels as well as contributing to a local charity. Finally, we also continue to finance keeping our library open a couple of days a week.

We are keenly aware that we have a responsibility to spend YOUR money wisely, there is the continued maintenance of our amenities e.g., halls, allotments, playgrounds and open spaces, events for residents e.g., Christmas on Queens Road and of course in this special year we will be financing and supporting the Coronation Event as well as the ongoing running expenses.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their support and contributions, and the Council's Finance Officer for all her hard work in managing the finances as well as the Clerk and Administration & Finance Assistant who works with her.

Cllr Marshall Vance, Chairman of Finance and Establishment

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT

The Planning and Environment Committee exists to give an advisory decision on all planning applications and the occasional license application and any relevant responses for others matters such as the boundary review.

Over the year, there have been various committee meetings and lots of planning applications reviewed, with Councillors taking out time to attend a high proportion of these meetings in person. The Committee meetings were initially organised fortnightly but for greater efficiency and ensuring compliance with District Council deadlines, these are now held in 3 week cycles.

When commenting on planning applications we like to hear from both applicants and local residents so that we are able to hear from all those that it affects. Whilst we do try to visit each address and view from the road, it is sometimes difficult to appreciate every aspect that could potentially affect adjoining neighbours. Therefore, by having residents attend the Committee Meetings, or contacting us via the Parish Office prior to the meeting, we are able to get the best insight in to what other matters we should be looking in to for residents.

One matter which has been brought to our attention recently by one of our Councillors, Cllr Jane Forker-Clarke, is the extensive enabling works and ground alterations which appear to have been undertaken at Luxborough Lakes. Around this area already suffers from significant flooding during winter time so any works to local embankments which could affect the water runoffs should be avoided without the necessary permissions and Environmental Agency approvals. We understand that Epping Forest District Council have recently issued an Enforcement Notice which is the correct process to follow when works are knowingly carried out illegally and without the necessary planning permission.

Cllr Rashpal Kaul
Chairman of Planning and Environment

RECREATION AND COMMUNITY REPORT

I am pleased to announce that the Rec & Comms Committee, together with support from the Parish Clerk and her team, The Buckhurst Hill Residents Society, Buckhurst Hill Football Club & all the willing volunteers who have helped us resurrect the schedule of popular events provided for our residents over the past year.

Events held include:

The Platinum Jubilee Event in June 22

Seniors Fish & Chip Lunch & entertainment in Nov 22

Christmas Tree Lighting & Christmas songs event in December 22

Our most recent event - a very successful King's Coronation Event, held on 8 May 23, which raised considerable sums for our local charities.

The Clerk and her team are also responsible for the smooth running of everyday things - such as checking our playgrounds, benches, flower boxes etc, etc. All the things that make Buckhurst Hill a more pleasant place to live.

The Committee is really looking forward to progressing the installation of a much needed creative play area at The Hornbeam Rd site. EFDC have now agreed the lease in principle and things should now move forward.

Cllr Jane Forker-Clark
Chair of Recreation & Community, Parish Councillor, Buckhurst Hill East