

St. Mary Bourne Parish Council

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**Minutes of the 2018 Annual Parish Assembly held on
Tuesday 24 April 2018 in the Village Centre at 7:30pm**

Present: The Chair, Cllr David Peart and Cllrs Bridget Culley, Tony Grunsell, Ray Randall, Tony Styles and Hugo Wurzer, Members of the Flood & Emergency Group Sarah Cooney and Clem Jones, BDBC Cllr Graham Falconer and the clerk Jo Exelby.

In attendance: Members of the Flood & Emergency Group, Sarah Cooney and Clem Jones, BDBC Cllr Graham Falconer and the clerk, Jo Exelby.

Members of the Public in attendance: 40

Time for Community Presentations: The assembly started with an opportunity for parishioners to review written presentations from the following local groups:

- Hampshire Constabulary
- Two Rivers Medical Partnership
- Two Rivers Patient Participation Group
- Testbourne Community School
- St Mary Bourne Primary School
- Friends of SMB School
- St Mary Bourne Parish Council Broadband Group
- St Mary Bourne Village Centre
- St Mary Bourne Village Shop
- Stoke Village Fund
- Hill & Valley
- St Peter's Church
- St Mary Bourne Community Support
- St Mary Bourne Community Library
- The Lunch
- St Mary Bourne United Charities Trust
- Holdway Almshouse Charity

The chair opened the meeting by thanking the organisations and individuals who had produced presentations and noted that copies of any of the information supplied could be obtained from the clerk.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllrs Katie Dixon, Phil Jeffery and Carole Whitlock, HCC Cllr Tom Thacker, Lorraine Cousins.

2. The minutes of the 2017 Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday 2 May 2017

Having been previously circulated among the councillors, **Cllr Culley** proposed that they were a true record and should be signed. The proposal was seconded by **Cllr Randall** and unanimously agreed by the councillors present.

3. Presentation on the Watercress & Winterbournes project by Maggie Shelton of Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

There was a slide presentation and talk by Maggie Shelton introducing the Watercress & Winterbournes project.

4. Borough Councillor's Report

Cllr Falconer gave the following report:

Borough Councillors: The Ward of Burghclere, Highclere and St Mary Bourne which includes Ecchinswell, Newtown and Ashmansworth parishes has two councillors, Graham Falconer and John Izett. The Boundary Commission will finalise its report by November but the outcome is already virtually certain: BDBC will be converted to three-councillor wards and the restructure will see a reduction in the number of councillors from 60 to 54. This means that councillors will have a significant increase in the number of residents they serve. It is anticipated that our Ward will include East Woodhay and also an extra parish such as Hurstbourne Priors. There will have to be an "all out election" in May 2019. I do not know what benefits this new structure will provide.

John Izett is Portfolio Holder for Property and is a member of the Cabinet. Graham Falconer is Vice Chairman of Scrutiny, a member of Audit and Accounts and the Performance Panel and a reserve on EPH and Disciplinary.

Bank Top: Further to residents' concerns about the removal of asbestos an Enforcement Case was raised yesterday, 23 April, and the principal environmental health officer of BDBC visited the site this morning in company with the developer and the contractors. The officer was satisfied that the contractors are adhering to the agreed plan and to H&S standards and that there should be minimal risk to the residents or the contractors.

Neighbourhood Plans: Congratulations to St Mary Bourne for the adoption of its NP. These really are being included in the planning process although I have a problem at SMB because the Inspector inserted a clause stating that redundant farm buildings must be on the market for 9 months, which is now rendering development almost impossible and makes no sense. Our planning department is analysing it as a matter of urgency to get a work around as changing an NP is a practical impossibility.

Other Planning items: I have been involved with three planning applications in this parish where there is some contention and we have Batsford which has planning permission for a set down point but we are trying to get funding.

This week we have received notification from West Berks that two applications have been submitted for Sandford, one for 1,000 houses and the 2nd for 500 houses so we can expect a resurrection of the battle of highways and transport.

Bells Meadow: Further to efforts to get restoration of hedges and plants it was established that contrary to previous statements Hyde Housing Association will remain as the Registered Housing Provider and it will not be taken over by Sovereign.

Elsewhere in the Ward: In Highclere the Westridge Studio which was left to the parish has been awarded £82,000 for building works. Ecchinswell Hall and Burghclere's Portal Hall benefitted from LIF funding and there is a project for reducing social isolation – toilets and a kitchenette at the church.

Finance: Public finance continues to be a problem and BDBC raised the council tax by the maximum but BDBC's share of council tax is £6.7m. 82% goes to Hampshire CC, the police and fire services.

BDBC has £500 million of assets and a pension liability of £80m. During the year we have embarked on the new investment strategies which are reducing the cash from £167m to £40m. These property and growth investments are already seeing an increase in returns from 1.6% to over 6%.

Highlights: £300m of private funding has been secured to redevelop the Leisure park and to add a Retail Outlet which will create jobs and bring in additional visitors to the borough. Basing View has secured the AA which will move into a new building and a new Hotel complex.

5. Parish council annual report

Cllr David Peart, chair of the Parish Council, gave the following report.

I'd like to again thank all of those individuals who in one way or another are involved in the many activities that take place within the parish. The many clubs that are run on a regular basis, friends of the School, supporters of the Church and Village Centre and of course the many volunteers that give their time to the shop. I'd like to welcome our new clerk, Jo Exelby, to her first Annual Parish Assembly.

I would now like to mention the other work of the parish council.

Highways: We are still suffering from a huge number of potholes that still remain to be attended to, but unfortunately we are constantly being told by Hampshire Highways that their budget constraints are such that they are only able to deal quickly with what are deemed to be emergency repairs. HCC has also reduced its funding of new signage, street furniture etc. and set up a system for Community Funded Initiatives. What this means is that they will help with the feasibility and construction of any improvements that we want to make, but the parish council has to find the money to pay for them. We are in discussions with Hampshire Highways regarding a number of improvements we'd like to make and are also looking to secure funding.

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The clearing of grips and gullies continues to be carried out as part of our Lengthsman budget. Thankfully the Lengthsman scheme is being continued by HCC for this year at least and the parish council is also getting extra revenue from this as Jo continues to be the administrator for the 14 parishes involved in our cluster.

Grounds Maintenance: The parish council oversee the maintenance of the Recreation Ground, Lake and War Memorial etc. Premier Grounds and Garden Maintenance continue to be our preferred contractors who carry out this work and I would like to thank them for their excellent work during the last year. I would also like to thank Mr Tarrant for continuing to keep our streets clean and Mr and Mrs Foote for again organising the recent litter pick around the village and Lisa Wood for doing the same in Stoke.

Our footpaths are generally in a good state of repair, but if you come across any problems with paths being blocked or damage to stiles and signs please make Jo aware.

Planning: During the last year 39 applications were considered by the parish council a big increase on the previous year, 38 with no objection. BDBC approved 33 of them, 1 was refused and 5 were withdrawn.

Batsford: We have been talking about this for longer than I care to remember, but planning consent was granted at the end of last year on the piece of land at the corner of School Lane and Batsford where the intention is to provide a set-down and pick-up area to be used at either end of the school day to help alleviate the traffic congestion that occurs in School Lane. We are currently trying to get confirmation that S106 monies are available to fund this work and then we can finally get started.

Flood & Emergency Group: The group continues to meet about once a quarter to continue dialogue with the various agencies in an attempt to explore and invest in flood defence schemes to minimise the risk of flooding in the future. As well as councillors we have two co-opted members in Sarah Cooney and Clem Jones and I thank them for their valuable input.

The HCC Pathfinder Project which I mentioned in my report last year identified various locations down the valley from Vernham Dean to St Mary Bourne that require remedial work to be carried out in order to hopefully prevent future flooding.

Following the granting of a Flood Risk Permit by the EA in October last year, I am pleased to report that work has now been completed to remove the silt from the river bed from the SSE Sub Station on the B3048 to the main bridge at Stoke. We appointed Keith Pegden a local contractor to carry out this work and I'd like to thank Keith and his team for an excellent job. Alongside this work we also managed, after much discussion, to get HCC to clear the silt and assorted rubbish from under three of the bridges down the valley – a task that hadn't previously been carried out in living memory!

There is still work to be done including the restoration of the river bank in a number of places as well as more complex projects such as the upsizing of culverts under roads.

To help with this remedial work the parish council has been successful in securing funding from a number of sources. This was mainly made up of contributions from DEFRA/EA Natural Flood Management Fund, which as I mentioned earlier is being held on our behalf by HIOW Wildlife Trust and the SSE Resilient Communities Fund.

However, we have also had contributions from HCC Community Challenge Fund, Southern Water and Vitacress Salads and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their valued and much appreciated support.

I would also like to thank Sarah Cooney for all of her time and support in helping to put these bids for funding together – it was no easy task.

Long Term Planning Group: The process to establish a Neighbourhood Plan began as far back as 2011. It was voted on in a referendum within the parish in February of this year with 86% of those who voted being in favour. The Plan was then adopted by BDBC in March, which finally concluded the process. The plan will be in place until 2029 to provide a framework for any future development within the parish

I'd like to make special mention of the commitment and determination shown by Andrew Shegog, Katie Dixon and the other members of the committee past and present and to thank them for all of the hard work that went into this long and somewhat challenging process.

Superfast Broadband: Following on from an open meeting last year and our attempts to try and keep the parish advised as to where we are with the availability of superfast broadband, I would like to thank Clem Jones in particular for the huge amount of hard work he has put in liaising with and constantly questioning the likes of BT and Openreach for answers and keeping the parish updated. Clem has provided a detailed update for this meeting and as always is happy to take any questions you may have.

Finance and the Precept: Jo will present the accounts in summary later. I just wanted to mention that the council decided that there would again be no increase in the precept for this financial year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Borough and County Councillors for their work on your behalf and the support they continue to give to the parish council.

I would also like to thank all of your parish councillors for the support they've given to me over the last year and for giving their time, effort and dedication in trying to keep our parish the special place it is.

Can I just remind you that there are Borough Council elections taking place on Thursday 3 May. There should also have been a parish council election on the same day, but unfortunately this will not now take place as there were insufficient candidates to force an election. There were only 7 nominees for 9 places on the council. I find this very disappointing as I believe the council should have a mandate from the electorate and this is not achieved by an uncontested election. Again, there will have no representatives from Stoke or the other hamlets although the parish council will have the option of co-opting 2 more councillors.

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There are three 3 of your present councillors not standing for re-election and I would like to thank them on behalf of the parish for the time and effort they have put in during their time on the council.

However, I can't let this moment pass without mentioning one of those councillors in particular for his outstanding contribution to the parish council and to the parish as a whole during his years as a councillor. I mean of course Cllr Ray Randall who first became a councillor in 1973 – 45 years ago.

It gives me great pleasure to present Ray with this engraved vase as a token of our appreciation for the service he has given to our community and a remarkable career as a parish councillor. Thank you from us all Ray, you will be missed, but of course we do have Gwen joining us on the council.

6. Presentation of the Parish Council draft accounts for 2017/2018

The clerk presented a summary of the receipts and payments for the year ended 31 March 2018 compared to 2016 and noted that the parish council held reserves of about £28,000 at the year end.

7. Questions from parishioners

The Gangbridge: The bridge parapet is in danger of falling into the river. When will it be repaired?

The chair advised that Hampshire Highways have it on their list of repairs.

The Walworth Road (C23): The road is now in a dangerous condition. When will repairs be undertaken?

Cllr Styles noted that he had had success getting Hampshire Highways to undertake repairs by sending lots of photographs and emphasizing the “danger to life”. Cllr Wurzer agreed that pressure has to be applied ‘en masse’ so parishioners should continue to report the potholes on the HCC website.

Rope Yarn Lane: When will it be reopened and who will be responsible for removing the obstructions?

A parishioner advised that 24 April 2018 was the closing date for written representations to the Planning Inspectorate and so a decision could be expected shortly. The chair noted that as soon as there is a final decision to make a definitive map modification order, HCC will make an enforcement order to remove the obstructions, which should be no more than a day's work.

Footpath obstruction at Bells Meadow: Any news on when it would be removed?

The chair advised that the parish council had been trying to get it removed and that the matter is in the hands of Hyde Housing's solicitors. He added that he did not believe that the question of ownership was relevant anyway as a landowner cannot deny access to a right of way. Cllr Culley added that she believed the issue would be resolved fairly soon now, as the previous land owners are now back in the country.

Cllr Randall thanked the people of the parish and his current and previous councillors for their support during his long tenure as parish councillor. He said that it had been an honour to serve the parish and that it had brought him many other opportunities: as a school governor, in the cricket club and with the Village Centre. He thanked the parishioner who had nominated him for attendance at The Queen's Garden Party and expressed regret that he could not attend, as he had already been. He recommended that parishioners consider standing as parish councillors.

Finally, the vice chair Cllr Bridget Culley expressed her thanks on behalf of the parish council and the parish for all the work the chair puts in on behalf of the community.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:00 pm.

These minutes are subject to approval at the 2019 Annual Parish Assembly.