

BETCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2023

MINUTES of the **BETCHWORTH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** held on **Monday 27 March 2023 at 7.30pm., Betchworth War Memorial Village Hall, Station Road**

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman (Julie Hardy) welcomed everyone to the Meeting and particularly our invited speakers, Inspector James Green our Borough Commander and Martin Clipperton as well as all of the local organisations who came along to display what they do.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Ashdown, Joosje Hamilton, Brockham Parish Council, Tim Kenny (The Poland Trust), North Downs Primary School, Barley Mow Residents Association, Betchworth United Charities.

3. SURREY POLICE REPORT

MV Borough Commander Inspector James Green gave an address to the meeting, the slides can be seen [here](#).

4. MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2022

Cllr Hardy stated that the minutes have been displayed on our website and invited members to propose and second. They were proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Karen Wilson before being signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Councillor Hardy gave the following report:

Parish councils are the first level of local government. They provide communities with a democratic voice and a structure for taking community action.

What does a parish council do? The main issues that concern us are planning, highways, traffic, community safety, housing, street lighting, allotments, burial grounds, playing fields, community centres, litter, war memorials, seats and shelters and rights of way.

Parish councillors act as ambassadors for their community, keeping everyone aware of local needs and concerns and reporting back on district, council and regional matters. They are not paid and give up their time for the good of their parishioners.

I would like to thank all of our councillors for their time, good counsel and (usually) good humour. A special thank you this year to Colin Rogers who has moved out of the village so will not be standing for election and a welcome to Robert Ashdown who joined us in May of last year.

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Thanks also to our two District Councillors, Paul Potter and Simon Budd and Our County Councillor, Helyn Clack who regularly come to meetings and help with our queries.

A huge thank you to Cheryl, our clerk. If I listed everything that she does we'd be here until morning.

So, what have we done this year?

We continue to maintain our open spaces.

This past year we planted 6 new trees on the Goulburn Green including the Platinum Jubilee tree.

We gave ongoing support to Re-Betchworth in the 3 year rejuvenation of The Orchard programme.

We maintained our allotments and burial ground, replaced rotten posts and re-varnished the pavilion.

We regularly inspected our playground.

We consulted on 5 consultations.

Ward boundaries, Gatwick expansion, Housing allocation scheme, Surrey Hills AONB Boundary review, Future of bus services.

We reviewed 24 planning applications.

We gave grants to;

Re-Betchworth, FABB, Betchworth Archives and Tiny Tots Toddler group.

We organised 2 litter picks (thanks Ed and volunteers)

We undertook the following projects / tasks

Installed Kissing gates (thanks to the volunteers who helped)

Purchased Jubilee trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative with Re-Betchworth.

Cleaned the War Memorial.

Installed a new defibrillator at the PO.

Held an official proclamation on the GG regarding the Queen's death and the new King.

HIGHWAYS (thanks to Graham and Robert for all their work)

Soon to be installed Gateways on Pebblehill and the A25 will welcome drivers to the Parish and hopefully encourage some speed reduction. These have been funded by the Parish Council with a contribution from SCC Chairman, Helyn Clack. Speed reduction to 30mph from Arkle Manor to Kiln Lane being implemented soon. Similarly funded.

Speed monitoring to Wellhouse Lane has supported reduction to 30 mph. Details of signage and costings are awaited from SCC highways.

We are re-visiting the speed on Pebblehill which we know has long been a huge problem. We hope to join resident representatives in meetings with SCC.

Graham has been trying to re-implement Speedwatch but we need more volunteers.

The Street Safety Improvement proposals in consultation with the School is to be submitted to Highways.

We were successful in being awarded a grant from GWR for local poster display. At the Station we have installed posters on each side of the platform with the rail history surrounding Betchworth, and they look great! A further display poster of local history is to be sited on the wall by Betchworth House. Both have been expertly designed by Councillor Wilson; thank you Ian.

We have a meeting on the first Monday of every month in The Hamilton room with an open forum that everyone is most welcome to attend. Unless you alert the Parish Council to problems and concerns we cannot do anything. We have a website and Cheryl regularly sends out information on the village email and on the WhatsApp Forum.

There are local elections this May. There are nomination packs on the PC table if you are interested.

We are also promoting 'The Big Help Out' in tribute to His Majesty The King's public service. The aim of The Big Help Out is to use volunteering to bring communities together and create a lasting volunteering legacy from the Coronation Weekend. This is a chance to pledge some time to support your village. No matter how little time you have to give, please sign up at our Parish Council table. [A copy of the pledge form can also be found here.](#)

6. BETCHWORTH PARISH ACCOUNTS 2022/2023

The draft accounts were displayed. Clerk Cheryl Sexton gave a brief report outlining income and expenditure over the past year:

So today I am here to briefly talk about the end of year accounts for Betchworth Parish Council.

Our accounts for 2021/22 were fully audited and approved in September.

Our draft Accounts for 2022/23 are now almost complete with a couple of days to go before the Financial Year End which is on Friday. These accounts will be internally audited in April by Mulberry and Co, before being sent to PKF Littlejohn for external audit.

Today I will just walk through the highlights of last year, these are currently displayed on our website should you wish to look at them in more detail. If you do have any questions please do speak to me during the course of this evening or indeed contact me.

So starting with Income:

The Precept amount received from MVDC increased slightly from the previous year. I would like to take this opportunity to explain that the Precept should cover the running costs of the council, over previous years the precept has not covered this and money has been used from the current reserves, but as the running costs continue to increase we now need to start bringing them in line, hence the increase that you will have seen in your council tax bills for this year (which will be reflected

in next years accounts). This is also a requirement for audit as we need to show that the two are aligned.

The income for the burial ground has dropped since last year, obviously this is something that we cannot control but we have taken this into account for budgeting purposes for the coming year, as you can imagine it is very hard to predict!. Bank interest has increased due to the interest rates so we have been able to benefit from this by ensuring that we hold our reserve in the savings account. We were lucky enough this financial year to have received a grant of £2,000 this was following a successful bid which we made to Great Western Railways and we have used the money to create a beautiful poster on the history of the Pebblecombe area which is now situated at Betchworth Train Station.

The overall income received for 22/23 has decreased significantly from the previous year this is due to the large grant that was awarded in 21/22 for Community Infrastructure Levy money.

Moving to expenditure, administration costs increased (8%), this is due to the overall increase in costs for subscriptions, insurance, hosting etc but we are pleased to say that we will be making some savings as we have moved back to The Hamilton Room for our monthly meetings and we will continue to look at streamlining where we can.

Spending of S137 money was high this year, (to remind you what this is, the council needs to have a legal power to spend any money, S137 enables local councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure and is reported separately.) this year we were delighted to be able to offer a grant policy to allow local organisations to apply for a grant. We were happy to award a number of grants to successful organisations, these grants allow these groups to deliver their key objectives for the community, more information is on our website or please ask for more details.

We have fulfilled a couple of capital projects this year. The first being the cleaning of the war memorial, this was completed at the beginning of the year by an approved specialist, the pavilion in the Burial Ground has also been restored back to its original state and has been made weather and bird proof. We were also delighted to work with Re-Betchworth to provide the jubilee trees for the 'Plant 70 trees' initiative which we hope that many of you benefited from. And we are currently waiting for the installation of the new Village Gateways which should be in situ next week.

The Parish Council continue to budget to cover all capital expenditure from their reserves, the CIL money which we also have will be used in accordance of the guidelines and all future capital spend will be presented back to full council for approval and documentation. We continue to adhere to the Financial Standing Order which is on display on our website.

Final audited accounts will be posted onto website later in the year.

Our Finance Group is chaired by Councillor Colin Rogers and is accompanied by Julie our Chair, our Vice Chair Ed Winter, Councillor Ian Wilson and myself as RFO. Our budget is set annually and reviewed regularly.

Internal Auditors Mulberry and Co were scrupulously thorough when auditing our accounts last year, and as such the Finance Group have agreed to retain their services. We continue to be very grateful for their support.

Copies of the revised approved draft unaudited accounts (based on 31/3/22) are now available on the website ([please click here](#)).

7. PRESENTATION BY GUEST SPEAKER – Martin Clipperton

Martins slide is attached [here](#).

8. Interactive session – Meet the local organisations.

Cllr Hardy thanked Martin for his presentation and invited attendees to walk around the tables that were there from the following organisations:

- Family Activities from Betchworth & Buckland (FABB)
- The Betchworth & Buckland Society
- The Arts Society
- The Betchworth Tennis Tournament
- The Betchworth Operatic & Dramatic Society
- St. Michaels Church
- The Betchworth Bellringers
- Pebblecombe WI
- Buckland & Betchworth Choral Society
- The Hamilton Room
- Betchworth Village Archives
- Re- Betchworth
- Brockham Green Horticultural Society
- Betchworth Parish Council

Cllr Hardy on behalf of Betchworth Parish Council would like to thank all the organisations that attended and took part. Please also look at the reports from all of our local organisations [here](#).

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9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked all of those attending and closed the meeting at 9.30pm.