

# Brimpsfield Annual Parish Meeting

MINUTES: of the Annual Parish meeting held in Brimpsfield Village Hall on Monday 20th April 2015 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: David Lonsdale, Roger Lock, Jane Parsons, Mark Foy, Tom Overbury, Andrew Ward and Simon Denman

IN ATTENDANCE: Kate Sales, Clerk

District Councillor N J W Parsons

10 Parishioners

## 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies accepted and received from County Councillor Nigel Robbins

## 2. Report from the Chairman Brimpsfield Parish Council Chairman (read by David Lonsdale)

Firstly, for those of you who have not already met her, I would like to introduce Katie Sales, our new Clerk. Katie joined us on 6th January and is an experienced clerk, working for a few other parishes as well as us. This year there have been a number of changes in the legislation which we have to follow, as well as new procedures for proper governance and stricter financial regulation. Katie's experience in these matters has been invaluable.

Now I come to the matter of our precept. At our October meeting we produced our budget for the financial year 2015-16. After discussion, we set the budget for 2015-16 at a total of £5050. If we had precepted for all of this amount, that would have been an increase of nearly 17% on the previous year's precept. However, we decided that this would mean an unacceptable rise in Brimpsfield's portion of the Council Tax, and consequently we precepted for a 5% rise, a total for 2015-16 of £4538.10; the additional finance coming from reserves.

I shall explain some of the larger items which affect our budget.

Fortunately, we are in the last year of a 3-year fixed cost contract for grass cutting so our budget has not changed for this. Brimpsfield costs us £160 and Caudle Green £770. The contract will have to be put out to tender later in the year.

Hire of village hall. We may have to hold more meetings to discuss planning applications and we have anticipated an increase in the hire rates, and thus we have budgeted for an increase in Village Hall hire costs from £75 to £200

Regarding insurance, earlier in the year we signed up for a 3-year deal at a considerable saving, but have assumed a small increase on this in case we needed to supply our new clerk with a laptop, which should be insured. However, this is still a saving of £100 over last year's budget.

In view of the upcoming election, there is a likelihood that we will have new councillors and we have budgeted an additional £140 for their training.

At the time of budgeting we did not have a clerk; I was acting in the role. We intended to recruit a new clerk and thus we budgeted for a full year's salary at £1800. This was in line with the official NALC pay scale. It also included an amount for pension contributions. Our previous clerk had been on a fixed salary, unrelated to the NALC scale, and consequently this budgeted amount was an increase of £421

We budgeted for a reduction in clerk's expenses as we believed that more of the work should be able to be carried out by e-mail, reducing the amount of car mileage required. This reduction was £150

We pay our clerk through an agency. Our previous clerk was paid once per year, but we felt that a new clerk should take monthly payments so we budgeted an increase of £128.

We budgeted for a laptop for a new clerk at £500.

We then had a considerable discussion about various grants. For several years we have made a grant to the Citizen's Advice Bureau and to the maintenance of Brimpsfield Churchyard. We are conscious that these grants are coming out of taxpayers money and it is important that taxpayers would want us to make these grants. We decided against continuing the CAB grant as so much advice is now available on-line. We also decided against continuing the churchyard grant, as we were aware that for two years the churchyard has been maintained by volunteer labour. In view of all the other increases we faced we did not feel we could continue this.

However, at the time we were aware that the Village Hall, which is an asset owned by the Parish Council, had severe funding problems, and would need an injection of cash imminently. We therefore agreed to make a once-off grant of £300 to the Village Hall to tide them over their problems, until a new committee was in place, after which the situation could be reviewed. I will talk more about the Village Hall in a few minutes.

The aggregate of the above figures was an increase of budget of £728. In the event, our new clerk has not required a laptop and her salary is not subject to pension contributions. This

should mean that our actual expenditure is less than budgeted, and thus our financial reserves may not be called on to balance the books.

Moving on to other matters, last year was the commemoration of the centenary of the start of the First World War. I would like to thank Councillor Roger Lock for his hard work in renovating the War Memorial. I am sure you will all agree that it looked very good at the Remembrance Day parade in November.

We have been concerned for some time that the Village Hall Management Committee has not been meeting regularly and that the hall appeared to be deteriorating. There had been little fund-raising effort and we were unsure of the state of the finances. According to the Deed of Trust which set up the committee in 1966, we were not able to intervene directly, but we assisted the acting Chairman in reforming the committee, and Councillor Lock is the new Chairman. He will present a report later on the Village Hall.

We are all very pleased that the Brimpsfield-to-Birdlip road, has finally been resurfaced. The road edges by the bridge over Brimpsfield Common have not yet been attended to and it took 18 months to get the worn-out road markings near the War Memorial to be repainted. In general we are not happy with the effectiveness of the method of temporary repair or potholes, and we have made our thoughts known on many occasions.

I would like to thank Councillor Mark Foyn and Councillor Mrs Jane Parsons for their continued support as our Snow Wardens, and I would also like to thank our Tree Warden, Mr Mike Colebrook, for his continued advice and guidance to help preserve our Cotswold environment. We hope that he might be prepared to continue to carry out this role in the coming year.

I would like to thank our new Clerk for all the help and guidance she has given us as we adapt to the new legal requirements which are now in place.

As you may know I am not standing for election this year. I have been a councillor for 16 years and chairman for eight. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, all of whom are volunteers, for their support and hard work.

*A parishioner asked on behalf of Peter Marychurch if the rut in front of his house, The Muzzards might be repaired as it was increasing in size. The Clerk had already reported this to Amey at the time of the re-surfacing of the road but it couldn't be fitted into the scheme of work. The new Area Highways Representative, Gillian Portlock had previously informed the clerk that she would be visiting all her new parishes to look at the roads. It was agreed that the Clerk would re-contact Gillian Portlock to see if she would like to meet with councillors when she visits.*

*The Chair informed the meeting that anyone could register a pothole on online at the County Council's website. Cllr Denman stressed it was important to state the size of the pothole as*

*anything under 300mm x 300m would not be filled, but any hole with a depth of least 75mm would be immediately attended to.*

*Another parishioner was concerned about the frequency of the inspections of the roads as the road through the village was a rat-run during commuting hours. The Chair informed the meeting that the parish council had asked for the road to be upgraded to a D Class so that inspections were made by Amey more frequently, but the request had been refused.*

*A discussion arose around the fact that the parish council may have a surplus of funds this year as some items no longer needed to be budgeted for. It was mentioned by a parishioner that perhaps the parish council would re-look at providing a grant again to the church for the maintenance of the churchyard as the church was a part of the local community and relied on grants to be able to perform its duties. The treasurer of Brimpsfield & Birdlip PCC, gave a brief oversight of the running costs of the church and how if it couldn't raise sufficient funds then there was a real likelihood that the church would close.*

*The Chair informed the meeting that the decision not to award a grant this year was not taken lightly but at the time the decision was taken the parish council felt with the limited resources it had it wanted if possible to support the Village Hall and not burden the parish with too large an increase in council tax. However if the parish council wanted to re-look at this item again in the future it could.*

### **3. Report on Cotswold District Council 2014 to 2015 Items for discussion (read by Cotswold District Councillor N Parsons)**

1. Referred to the Council Tax Guide 2015-16 for explanations of the following:
  - Reduction in direct government grant of £500,000. However even with this reduction from Government there will be no reduction in services to the public as the council had made considerable savings in back office services. These have been centralised and costs shared with West Oxfordshire District Council, Cheltenham Borough and Tewkesbury Borough Councils
  - Cotswold District Council has then been able to give residents a 5% reduction in council tax.
  - Charges frozen for the green bin service and parking charges
2. Emerging Local Plan
  - Strategic Site in Chesterton, Cirencester with other development concentrated in 17 main settlements. In total 7,600 new dwelling are needed by 2031 however most of these have already been allocated to the main sites already proposed. Only 400 houses are left to approve in the area by 2031.
  - Consultation on proposed Sites – Jan & Feb 2015. The responses to this are now being looked at.
  - New Rural Housing Policy proposed to protect rural sites but also allow careful development to take place.
  - Further consultation in the summer on Development Control Policies
3. A417 Missing Link: work progressing – funded in principle. Supported by

CDC. Local Enterprise Partnership has the funding and this is their priority regarding transport improvements. Research on routes is underway and parishioners can see view the progress of this project online at the County Council's website.

#### 4. Waste Collection & Re-Cycling

- Ubico - This is working well and since it started it has made substantial savings. Ubico was set-up by Cotswold District Council and Cheltenham Borough Council and is a non-profit organisation.
- Recycling at 60% - top 10 in England. The district is performing well
- Fly Tipping. Residents can report this online and the aim is to try and clear sites within 2-3 days of notification.
- Roadside Litter. A new local fund for Ward Councillors is available to fund environmental projects to help clean up black spots.

*A parishioner asked whether Kemble Airport was being considered as a strategic site for housing. Cllr Parsons replied that a proposal was being looked at currently but this would affect the Chesterton site already proposed. The Kemble site might not be suitable as it would be a development out on its own with no supporting infrastructure and sewage system. Chesterton was the preferred development as it would be linking into the existing community and town with bus and cycle routes and footpaths.*

*Cllr Denman asked when the Local Plan might be able to demonstrate its 5 year housing stock so to stop developers using this clause in the National Planning Policy Framework as a presumption to build. Cllr Parsons replied that hopefully towards the end of this year it might be able to move towards submitting it to the Planning Inspectorate.*

*Cllr Overbury informed the meeting that presently volunteers were clearing litter themselves and disposing of it in their own waste collections. Cllr Parsons informed them that if they contacted Monica Stevens and George Larger they would be provided with sacks, rubbish grabbers and a regular waste collection service.*

#### **4. Report form Gloucestershire County Councillor Nigel Robbins - (this was read out by David Lonsdale)**

1. In securing a promise of funding to solve The Missing Link (A417) we have to realise that a new government might renege on this commitment. We received verbal assurances when we signed up to the plan that the question of noise (high speed wheel noise compounded by concrete surfaces) would be addressed at the same time as the construction of new carriageways. The Highways Agency (or whatever they now call themselves) have started to scope the issues. I doubt if they will depart from the Brown Route proposal.

Again, we had assurances that the old Birdlip high street would not be re-opened for construction traffic. I suppose we need to safeguard your roads against that possibility. Despite what has been asserted, getting this project on to the short-list was a collective effort (the LEP put in the final proposal) and I am sure that suggesting the closure of the right turn to Leckhampton would not have assisted the process.

2. Contracts for the 2nd stage of the Fastershire project for better broadband are to be awarded by May 13th. The key contacts at Shire Hall are Clare Edwards on 01452

328303 or Dawn Thompson. I would have to guess their e-mails. For those who continue to have a poor service there is a sense that patience will be required because the plan is to have everybody eventually on high speed access.

However, as the decisions on how the connections are to be made and where the new contractors are going to concentrate their energies for the Cotswold project will be made by the firm, not by GCC I see no harm in lobbying the appointed company, with evidence of significant business needs (home-based self employed, for example) which, if not satisfied, will frustrate employment growth.

3. I was advised a month ago by Highways staff that a review had been launched by GCC into the contract with Amey, which is now 12 months old. To be conducted by a former respected Highways Manager. This was contradicted in the Chamber when I raised it recently; apparently they were helping Amey out, not reviewing their progress! Given the widespread concern about their performance it would do no harm for the BPC to write asking why there has been no full-scale review of the Amey contract now that a year has passed.
4. The School Place lottery is underway. If local demand greatly exceeds capacity please advise me. I cannot influence the allocation process but I am willing to press for capital grants to expand capacity in popular primary & secondary schools. No report provided at the time of printing.

#### **5. Report from the Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee (read by Roger Lock)**

Following some concerns regarding the management of the Village Hall and the fact that the building is an asset and the responsibility of the Parish Council, it was agreed in January 2015 to establish a new committee to manage the building and to report back to the Parish Council. The new committee has currently nine members including representatives from the main organisations who make use of the hall on a regular basis.

The Committee established the need to identify issues and set short, medium and long term goals.

In the short term there is an urgent need to attend to the fabric of the building and work has already started on this and members of the Parish will be asked to help out on a working party on the 16th May. Health and safety issues have been addressed with new fire extinguishers etc. installed and PAT testing has been completed. A working party of volunteers undertook an audit of all items in the village hall.

Financially, however, the Village Hall has little funds which do not cover the outgoings. The Committee has looked at the charging structure which has not been revised for the past five years to bring it into line with current rates. This includes differentiated rates for winter and summer to take into consideration heating costs. In the medium term the Committee will be looking to promote the hall as a viable meeting hub for the village to develop community cohesion and help to raise funds. In the spring a historical day with old photographs from the village will be held. Other fund raising events being considered are a race night, wine and cheese evenings

and perhaps a community open night once a week.

In the long-term it is apparent that there are long term problems with the structure and repair of the hall. There is a possibility that asbestos is within the hall's structure and the building is not energy efficient. Ultimately the building will need replacing within the next five to six years. To this end, the Committee is currently seeking possible sources of funding. Any funding and proposed development will need to be helped and supported by people who have the skill-set to promote the project. The Chairman has already met with Barbara Pond (Community Assets and Enterprise Adviser), from GRCC who has been most helpful and has recommended that, with her help, a "Village Plan" is drawn up. It is hoped that Barbara will be invited to speak on this to the Parish Council in the near future.

*A parishioner asked whether the committee could secure a lottery fund to aid the re-development of the village Hall. Roger Lock replied that there were a number of tranches available and these were being looked into. A consultation would take place with the community to discover how it would want to see the project going forward.*

*Presently the Deed of Trust is with solicitors at the county council to determine exactly what the responsibility of the Parish Council is towards the Village Hall.*

### **Report from the Chairman of the Brimpsfield Parish Charitable Trust ANNUAL REPORT 2014 to 2015 (read by Keith Prentice)**

The trust was set up in 2009, to remove from the direct control of the Parish Council, management of charitable donations made to the Parish of Brimpsfield and Caudle Green. Two serving parish councillors must serve on the Trust Committee with at least one independent trustee. The committee is currently made up of Keith Prentice (Chairman), Mike Colebrook, Roger Lock and Tom Overbury.

The Trust manages and distributes charitable income to the benefit of parishioners on one-off projects with no ongoing financial commitment.

The funds available stand at £9,937.51 (accounts are audited by an independent examiner). Annual donations to the trust have ceased.

There have been two recent requests for support which are being processed by the committee. One is from the Village Hall Chair to assist with plans for the Village Hall and one from the Vice-Chairman of the Parochial Church Council to help with some work in Brimpsfield's churchyard.

The BPCT committee has decided that once these applications are dealt with the Trust will be wound up.

*Cllr Denman asked if a Defibrillator was under consideration by the Trust. Mr Prentice informed the Council it was not.*

*A parishioner asked whether the Trust would be wound up quickly and Mr Prentice confirmed the process was underway but at present could not give a date. The parishioner asked whether it might be worth keeping the Trust active in case future donations were given. Cllr Overbury (also a trustee) informed the meeting that it cost money and time to run a trust even if it was dormant as annual accounts etc still needed to be submitted. However if the parish in the future ever received donations then a new trust could be established. Cllr Lock informed the meeting that the Village Hall was a charitable trust in its own right and could hold any funds it itself might receive.*

### **Any Other Business**

No other matters were raised.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm and the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.