

Bix and Assendon Parish Council

Clerk - Mrs. Jane Pryce, 56 Galsworthy Drive, Caversham Park Village, Reading, Berkshire RG4 6PP
Tel: 01189 475915 Email: jane@lindonpryce.demon.co.uk

The minutes of Annual Parish Meeting of the Bix and Assendon Parish Council held on 7th March 2016

Present:

Mr. R. Aitken, Mrs. I. Chantry, Mr. M. Beesley and Mr. W. Murdoch

Also present: Cllr. D. Nimmo-Smith, Mrs. S. Tomlin, Dr. R. Tomlin, Mrs. J. Pryce (JOP - Clerk) and 8 members of the public.

Apologies for absence: Cllr. D. Bartholomew and Ms. L. Thiesen

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 9th March 2015

The minutes were declared true and accurate and signed by the vice-chairman.

2. Chairman's Annual Report

Read Mr. R. Aitken, Vice-Chairman of Bix and Assendon Parish Council

My first Chairman's Annual Report

First let me introduce our new Parish councillors who started this year

Matt Beesley - Bix

Ina Chantry – Middle Assendon

and

Bill Murdock – Middle Assendon

And our new clerk Jane Pryce.

As a team we have achieved the following in the past year:

Defibrillators have been installed in the 3 Villages, one at the village hall and one each at the Rainbow Inn and The Golden Ball public houses.

Bill and Coral Murdock initiated this and it was facilitated by the Parish Council and achieved due to generous financial support from the Common Field Holders and the Village Hall.

Village Hall – the Parish council has been looking into the legal relationship between the Village Hall Management committee and the Parish council, who owns the hall. This is still ongoing, but at the present time we do not see there will be any fundamental changes but bringing the agreement from 1981 which ran out in 2009 up to date.

Stephanie Tomlins, Chair of the village Hall Management Committee, has kindly volunteered to provide the report of the activities over the past year.

Planning - After a couple of years of almost frantic speed and frequency of planning application, this past year has been relatively quiet and no major disputes have occurred. Bill will provide a more detailed update.

Broadband – Lee Wallis of Bix and Chris Chantry of Middle Assendon have been very helpful in investigating the progress of the implementation of faster broadband to the parish. However, nothing concrete could be done till it was known, what effect the “turn on” of the cabinet by the Smith’s Centre would have for the villages. This was finally turned on in January 2016 and since then broadband provision has improved in the Assendons, but not in Bix. The parish council is open to suggestions how it can help the parishioners in Bix, but nothing concrete has been put forward yet.

Allotments - Our clerk Jane has taken a special interest in the allotments and provided the allotment holders with a means for discounted gardening products. The parish is also looking into how it can improve the allotments, specifically protecting them from deer and rabbits.

Foot Paths - The Chiltern society has done a marvellous job providing the manpower to replace the old stiles with new kissing gates. Especially of note is the gates on the Rainbow Way which also led to the path being retraced to its original route.

Litter Picking – Our annual litter picking event was yesterday and this year combined with the Clean for the Queen initiative. As usual we had a good turnout, of the usual suspects, and in total we filled 30 bags in the parish, the majority of which was from the thoroughfares.

The Queen’s Birthday - It has been stressed by Tim Stevenson, The Rt Revd The Acting Bishop of Oxford not to overlap any activities with similar ones being organized by the church. With this in mind the idea is to combine the two village events into one – the village fête and the Queen’s birthday celebrations. As this would have to be a free event the parish council will donate to match the loss of income the fête generates from entrance fees. The Parish council, The Village Hall committee and the Church committee are working together to make this a memorable event.

I am confident I speak on the entire council’s behalf when I say that we are looking forward to another year.

3. OCC Report from Cllr. D. Bartholomew is attached

The subject heading are the OCC Budget, Proposals for District Unitary Councils, Third Thames Bridge and Broadband. There are two items relating specially to Bix and Assendon – Bix Duals Kerbing and Bix Duals Hedging.

Please see attached report for more detail.

4. SODC Report from Cllr. D. Nimmo-Smith

We've teamed up with the other district councils in the county and the city council to propose a devolution deal to the government, which would involve us creating three or four unitary councils, including one that would cover our two district areas. This would also mean that social services would be broken up and packaged out to three maybe four district councils. Discussion on this are

still going on and a conference was held on Friday/Saturday 4/5 March. The other counties are also considers this. Services will still be provided.

Last May David Nimmo-Smith and Charles Bailey were elected as SODC councillors and have 10 parishes with Woodcote split up between them. It was noted that there has been an increase in planning applications including issues with enforcement.

SODC is in the process of creating a Corporate plan (a statement of intent) and in this AONB it is to carry on with rural environment balanced with planning.

It is more than a year since the SODC Crowmarsh building burned down and it is likely the site will be sold off from housing. The present SODC offices are at Milton Park. Depending on the Unitary debate and possible merger with South and Vale District Council, it would be likely that new office would be located at Didcot.

Reading third bridge – Wokingham Borough Council are conducting an impact traffic model, looking at the rural roads from Goring to Nettlebed to Henley through to Caversham Park village where the bridge would be located.

WM – asked about keeping enforcement officers.

A member of the public asked about Henley bridge particularly HGVs going through Henley. DNS explained, at present, there is no money for a new bridge. Air quality in Duke Street, Henley was very poor and displacement of traffic was discussed.

5. Village Hall Annual Report

by Mrs. S. Tomlin, Chairman of the Bix and Assendon Village Hall Committee

The Bix & Assendon Village Hall is a registered charity and is run by a committee of managing trustees who are responsible for the day to day running of the hall and the general control and management of the administration of the charity.

Last May at the AGM, both Sue Bailey-West and Trevor Crane resigned their posts as Chair and Project Manager respectively. It has been quite a difficult task to recruit more members and at the moment we have 5; Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Bookings Secretary and a co-opted member who would like to be elected at our next AGM in May. It has been agreed we will make a concerted effort via advertising in The Link magazine and posting on The Bag to recruit more committee members. Representatives from associations and clubs who hire the village hall on a regular basis will also be asked if they would like to come along and be elected as members.

CARE AND MAINTENANCE

There hasn't been too many maintenance issues this year thank goodness, just the general repair projects that come up from time to time. All the safety licences are up to date. Our cleaner Jo Hopping continues to do a sterling job in keeping the hall spick and span. Unfortunately there is the ever perennial problem of hirers not leaving the hall in the condition they found it. The main problem is rubbish not being taken away as they asked to do in the Hiring Agreement and as we do not have a waste clearing contract, the committee have been discussing the possibility of adopting the

unpleasant situation of keeping back a proportion of the hirer's deposit. We have yet to make a decision.

BOOKINGS

The community hirings have been very buoyant recently, with both evening, week-end and out of term bookings. These are varied; weddings, children's parties, quizzes, societies all enjoying the facilities that the hall offers.

MONTESSORI NURSERY

The Montessori nursery continues to go from strength to strength. January of this year saw 19 more children enrolled. The breakdown includes 4 from Bix and the Assendons, with another child enrolling in April and children from other local villages including Nettlebed, Park Corner, Turville, South End and Henley.

FINANCIAL

The Financial accounts are healthy with the most recent bank balances being: **£13,267.69 in the current account and £20,273.67 on Deposit**

Accounts for last year showing an excess of income over expenditure of £10,171.18 this is before accruals and prepayments.

Recent figures for Community hire:	£ 3,665
School hire:	£12,632
Expenses:	£ 6,126

The audit of accounts will be started during the week commencing this week.

PROJECTS

The committee have been in discussion regarding financing of community projects. We financed the purchase of the defibrillator which has been installed on the hall wall facing the car park. The committee have also agreed to purchase 8 pop-up gazeboes for the church fete in June and there are other projects under discussion.

CONCLUSION

I was elected as Chair at our September 2015 meeting so for me it's still very much a learning curve, but with a supportive team and hopefully more recruitment of committee members we will be able continue to maintain and run this wonderful facility on behalf of the whole of the communities of Bix, Lower and Middle Assendon.

6. Henley Municipal Charities Annual Report

by Dr. R. Tomlin, Bix and Assendon's parish council representative

Henley Municipal Charities 2015 – 2016

Henley Municipal Charities (HMC) comprises the following individual charities, The Almshouse Charity, The Relief in Need Charity, The Educational Charity, The Bridge Charity and the Church Charity.

The management of the HMC is the responsibility of the trustees, who are 13 in number and include 2 Ex-officio trustees (the Mayor of Henley on Thames and the Rector of St Mary

the Virgin Church, Henley on Thames) 3 Nominative trustees one from each of the Parish Councils of Bix and Assendon, and Rotherfield Greys and from the Town Council of Henley on Thames, and 8 Co-opted trustees.

The day to day running of the HMC is carried out by the clerk who liaises with the chairman, treasurer and committees of trustees who oversee particular areas of activity i.e. grant applications from educational establishments, planning issues, property development. Trustees are responsible, by rota, for carrying out monthly visits to all the almshouse residents to report on the state of the properties and the health of the residents. Trustees meetings are held monthly.

Rents are received from 8 properties in Henley on Thames and the income is applied to meet the objectives of each of the named charities.

The areas of benefit for the HMC are the parishes of Bix, Rotherfield Greys and the Town of Henley on Thames

Almshouses The HMC is responsible for the administration of 23 almshouses (9 for double occupancy and 14 single) that are situated in Church Avenue, Western Close and Vicarage Road, Henley on Thames. Five properties are currently vacant awaiting renovation. Currently there are 24 residents.

As well as regular property maintenance recent activities involve upgrading and renovation, including turning adjacent small single occupancy properties into larger ones suitable for couples. A review of single occupancy properties in Church Avenue has been undertaken and planning and listed building permission has been granted by SODC. This work which will expand the living accommodation on all the ground floors will start in mid 2016. The landscaping of the grounds of Western Close is now completed.

Grants Grants were given to local state primary schools , the Henley Youth Festival , Music in the Meadows, Christmas grants to almshouse residents , the Mayors Christmas party , the Christmas parcels fund , and for the cleaning costs of several properties. The Church Charity gave its annual grant for the update and repairs to the Church Wardens of St Mary the Virgin Church.

Dr Richard Tomlins March 2016

Questions about finance were asked and Richard Tomlins confirmed that the charity funds are healthy thanks to rents received on 8 properties in Henley.

7. Planning Annual Report

by Mr. W. Murdoch, Chair of Planning Sub-Committee

WM commented that there seems to be conflicting reports of quiet or busy for planning applications. There have been 25 planning applications this year of which 13 were granted and the rest to be decided and 1 withdrawn.

There have been 3 or 4 enforcement issues, responding to DNS comment of problems in this area, that enforcement officers are expensive to employ and to keep. There have been many cases of building without permission and enforcement has proved very difficult. South and Vale district council have been helpful.

Witness Farm applied for retrospective planning and have several times and been turned down. An application was made for a certificate of lawful development which the parish council refused and then was granted by SODC

An applicant wants to bridge the Assendon Spring with the familiar problem of who owns the spring and who owns the banks.

8. Police Matters Annual Report

by Mrs. I. Chantry, Police Liaison councillor

Henley Police Station

It was announced in December 2015 that the front counter at Henley Police Station is due to close. Our nearest Police Station with opening hours will be Reading and Maidenhead. The argument put forward is many front desks were not being used enough.

If people want to contact the police in a non emergency situation they should dial 101, if the public wish to make contact they can also use the Thames Valley Alerts as well as find information and advice on the website. For those people who do not have access to the internet the police say they will visit them at their convenience.

For further information visit www.thamesvalley.police.uk

It is worthwhile joining the Thames Valley Alerts as you can tailor the messages you receive to your needs, issues specifically related to the countryside eg dog thefts, break-ins etc.

There have been attempted break-ins to houses locally and a number of thefts from outbuildings and sheds. The police recommend marking property and taking photographs of items particularly if they are of significant value either monetary or personal.

The majority of crimes appear to be opportunistic but are still planned in the context that the perpetrators have planned to carry out a crime but are looking for a possible victim. This reinforces the importance of locking windows and doors, sheds and garages.

I would recommend that information on how to join Thames Valley Alerts is sent out on the BAG.

9. Assendon Spring Report

by Mr.R. Aitken, Vice-Chairman of Bix and Assendon Parish Council

The levels in the aquifer were below seasonal norms and there was absolutely no prospect any kind of run in the current season. Hopefully that will continue. There is plenty of warnings before a rise, would be available. The Oxfordshire County Council OCC 2001 carried out work which if needed, would be pressed to do again.

10. Footpath Annual Report

By Maggie Templeton, Chiltern Society Area Secretary

BIX AND ASSENDON FOOTPATH ANNUAL REPORT

NOVEMBER 2015

Gates to replace stiles: The Rainbow Way, Middle Assendon

This project, undertaken with funding from TOE2 and supported by the parish council, is now completed. Four wooden kissing gates replace old stiles, and the path has been realigned, at the end nearest the Rainbow, to its correct definitive line. Following completion of the project, the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers (from the Chiltern Society), returned for a further workday to improve the surface at the entrance of the path (again closest to the Rainbow) as there had been reports of trip hazards and uneven ground.

Many thanks not only to TOE2 and OCC for their funding, but also to the two landowners for their support and encouragement for the project.

JANUARY 2016

Nettlebed Estate

At the beginning of December, a large party of Chiltern Society volunteers met at Bromsden Farm on the Nettlebed Estate, at the request of the landowner, to reinstate a number of paths following major forestry work. On Bix 13, debris was cleared and the waymark post was reinstalled. On Bix 10, a new waymark post was installed. On Bix 25 bridleway, the section nearest to Bromsden Farm was cleared of young trees which were invading the path and overhanging branches were cut back to give clearance for horses. Bix 26, another bridleway, was substantially widened to the minimum

requirement of 2 metres and, again, overhanging branches were removed. Three gates on the estate were re-hung to make they close correctly, two fallen trees were removed and brambles were cut back.

Maggie Templeman

Chiltern Society Area Secretary

The full Parish Council meeting followed the Annual Parish Council meeting.