

# BLEADON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of Bleadon Parish Council's Annual Parish Meeting held as a Zoom Virtual Meeting on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021 commencing at 7.07 pm when the following business was transacted.

## **PRESENT**

Chairman G Williams together Mesdames A Davies I D Clarke K Hemingway S Hughes (Covid Group) M Sheppard together with Messrs H Boyce D Charman T Erridge (Rector) A Scarisbrick and R Tyson supported by the Parish Clerk Mr B Poole.

## **APOLOGIES**

District Councillor Mr T Porter

### **1. Welcome by the Chairman**

The formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **2. Minutes of the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting**

The chairman sought permission from those present to formally approve that the recently circulated meeting minutes were a true and accurate record of what took place in 2019. It was noted that the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting was not held due to the Covid-19 Regulations prevailing at the time. **APPROVED**

### **3. Annual Reports:**

#### **(a) Parish Council Chairman's Report**

May I welcome you to the Annual Parish Meeting of Bleadon Parish Council 2021. Before we begin the meeting proper may I ask that the clerk mutes us all and we share one minute of silence in memory of His Royal Highness Philip Duke of Edinburgh. (Died 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

This is my first report for the Parish Council and little did I think when I joined the Council just over two and half years ago that we would have had three different clerks, our membership would go down to four and that we would spend the last twelve months looking at each other on a screen.

I have to say that Covid 19 has caused us immense difficulty. Thank goodness that the clerk had providentially provided us all with a tablet. These have caused some problems along the way but at least in one way or another all members of the Council have had the opportunity to be present at the monthly Council meeting. Inevitably the Council has had to adapt its work during the last twelve months. We have been proactive and reactive as we should be but also unfortunately inactive.

For example our Neighbourhood Plan has had to be put on the back burner and subcommittees have not been able to move forward.

A large proportion of the Council's voluntary and professional resources was taken up with dealing with a large amount of sometimes contentious correspondence from a very few parishioners. This

did take away many hours of time from the clerk and from me which could have more profitably been used for the good of the village as a whole.

There was no May Fayre to enjoy, no Pantomime no 75th VE celebrations, no Village Hall activities, no Youth Club, no normal village life. Inevitably it has been more difficult for parishioners to speak at meetings to challenge to question to raise issues. Each meeting has invited them to do so but not everyone has the skill or the technology to make this possible. With restrictions easing we must hope that a more positive and inclusive contribution from parishioners will be able to return to normal in the coming Council year.

However all that is the negative side. On the proactive side, within a week of the first lockdown I called a socially distanced meeting in church. It was attended by the Rector, by me and by representation from the WI, the village cafe and the shop. What developed from that meeting was the village Covid group which has been and it is hoped will continue to be busy helping those who need it for whatever reason. The other good thing that came out of this group was that links were made with residents of Bleadon Hill which are intended to continue, with for example, their inclusion in the distribution of the Village News magazine.

We have been active in our protests to North Somerset Council about reducing the speed limit on the A370 through the village and for this the signs look good. It was very unfortunate and sad that the death of a young man at The Anchor exit to the 370 strengthened our pleas to North Somerset that improvements at that junction to include the installation of traffic lights, be undertaken as soon as possible. We will continue our pressure on North Somerset Council for these improvements.

There were many more villagers taking their daily exercise around the village this year and therefore a bigger audience for the work of the Council funded Bleadon in Bloom project. Brightly coloured tubs and a beautiful cross at the market cross were a source of pleasure for many and we thank all those involved.

In spite of the technological difficulties we have been able to hold most of our monthly meetings and have been able to carry out all the normal work undertaken annually by the Council.

A working group has been set up to identify ways in which the Council can be more efficient in the ways in which we carry out inspections and address the problems of local planning applications.

The Village magazine has been reinstated, there is a replacement shelter at the top of Celtic Way already being well used and a bench for rest and chat on Bleadon Road being installed the allotments have been occupied and productive and the play park has been in constant use since unit was reopened early after the original lockdown proving a very popular place for very young villagers. Our Ranger and Grass Cutters have been playing their parts too improving the way the village looks.

I need to remind you that we began the year severely undermanned. I need to thank those four members, Cllrs Clarke, Hartree, Scarisbrick and Sheppard for their time, effort and energy. We are sorry that Cllr. Hartree has since had to retire for health reasons. We wish him well and thank him for his many years of service to Bleadon Parish Council.

We were then joined by new Cllr Tyson who soon proved himself to be very supportive and keen to be involved. We were delighted to welcome back two previous Council members Cllrs Hemmingway and Sharman and just recently Cllr Davies and finally at our last meeting Cllr Boyce bringing us up to full complement for the first time in the year. All looks well for the year ahead.

We have been so lucky to welcome back our former clerk Bruce Poole. My huge thanks go to him as he has been such an enormous help to me in my first year as Chairman. Over and above the call of duty he is always at hand to give me telephone help and advice and has served as the Council rep on the Covid Committee.

It has by no means been a perfect year for Bleadon Parish Council. There has been a huge amount of strain and frustration as a result of having to wrestle with new technology but we have attempted to keep things going to maintain the village as a pleasant place in which to live.

## **(b) Bleadon Children's Play Ground Report**

The Parish Clerk pointed that this was an anomaly in as much that the Bleadon Children's Play Ground had for many years been designated as a charity despite the fact that the whole of income and expenditure was undertaken independently by the Parish Council. He confirmed that statutory annual report had been lodged and in the new council year a separate Playground Charity Meeting would be held as recommended by the Council's Internal Auditor.

The Chairman stated that this village facility has been so valuable during the pandemic. Apart from a short period it has been open for the very young in the village and it has been continually in use. It is certainly now in need of a face lift soon.

## **(c) Finance 2020-2021 & Budget Report 2021-2022**

The Parish Clerk sought exemption from going through the two reports line by line by the fact there were no members of the public (electors) present to report to.

## **(d) Coronation Hall Management Committee**

Councillor Scarisbrick the Council's representative on the Coronation Hall Management Committee read the following report on behalf of the Hall Chairman Mrs Betty Patterson.

Along with almost everything else, the Coronation Hall closed in March 2020 when the first lockdown came into force. The Management Committee worked hard over the summer to carry out a risk assessment and draw up protocols for its safe use once we were allowed to open again. This included marking up the two halls into two metre squares to facilitate social distancing, provision of hand sanitising facilities within the Hall and a set of Covid specific conditions that hirers must agree to adhere to when using the building. The Hall did reopen on 19<sup>th</sup> October for those hirers who were able to meet safely and a number of local groups did indeed restart. Unfortunately, Lockdown 2 then intervened and we had to close our doors again. We had hoped to open up again in time for Christmas but that of course never materialised.

The delayed AGM was held in October when the Treasurer presented his written report covering the Committee's audited financial accounts for the 2019/20 financial year. The Coronation Hall and the Jubilee Room have continued to be the focal point for many and varied village activities as well as a range of outside organizations and ad hoc bookings. Total income in the year was £23,796 and expenditure £12,778, a net surplus of £11,018.

The dedicated team of Kate (Bookings Officer), Bill (Hall Supervisor) and Jo (Cleaner) have assisted the Committee greatly in the smooth running of the Hall.

It is still the Committee's intention to fully refurbish the Coronation Hall kitchen to further improve the premises' attraction to hirers. Funds were regularly transferred to the dedicated Hall Improvement Account which, at year end, stood at just over £31,000.

The Committee Chair, Les Masters, decided to stand down after many years' service to the Hall in several guises as Parish Councillor, member, Secretary and Chair of the Committee. The Committee will be eternally grateful for his very significant contribution to its work and wishes him well for the future. The Committee elected Betty Paterson as Chair for 2020/21.

Once we are able to open up again, we will be well prepared to welcome local residents back to the Hall and we very much look forward to seeing everyone again.

## (e) Bleadon Youth Club

Good evening everyone. A bit of background first, just in case some of you aren't familiar with how Bleadon Youth Club operates. Bleadon Youth Club is a charitable Trust set up around 53 years ago. There are five of us local Trustees. The Trust owns the BYC building and leases the land from the Parish Council. We pay the BPC £50 a year ground rent. We have just signed a new 60 year Lease agreement. Day-to-day management of the youth centre building and the youth club is undertaken by a Management Committee of volunteers. That committee can include two Parish Council representatives. We commission and pay for the running of the Thursday evening youth club sessions. That's currently serviced by the YMCA.

They provide the qualified leadership and run the youth programme. We liaise closely with the YMCA but it's very much a hands off approach from us on the management committee. Most of our effort goes into maintaining and managing the building, raising funds and generating income from hiring the building to other users. It costs around £5000 annually just to keep the building open and safe

Now onto what's happened over the past 12 months. The past year has certainly presented us all with plenty of challenges a few set-backs and for us some welcome opportunities. A chance to put the everyday activities on

pause and use the time constructively. A year ago Bleadon Youth Club were looking at ways to improve the interior of the building. To make it more welcoming and thermally efficient. We had £10k set aside from five years of fundraising. The first lockdown gave us the opportunity to carry out a thorough refurbishment of most the inside of the building. Without any interruption to normal activities, because there were no normal activities.

By the end of that first lockdown we had completed all the planned work and more. We had a brighter and more efficient building whilst still retaining its youthful appeal. The horrible roller shutter at the front entrance was scrapped. A new entrance door, handrail and lighting installed. Hopefully this has all made for a more practical and welcoming approach to the building. The walls inside were painted. The floors sanded and varnished in the main hall. A new thermally insulated ceiling installed with new LED lighting and sound system. The female toilets have been refurbished with new basins taps worktop and lighting. It's now much easier to clean and far more welcoming. One of the secondary benefits of removing the old suspended ceiling was that it enabled us to get rid of a lot of unused and unwanted junk and clutter. We decluttered the sports room, office and much of the loft. The building is now much more practical as a result. When the youngsters and other regular users returned in late September they all loved it.....briefly.

Unfortunately, the return to regular activity in the youth centre was short lived. I think we had about six weeks before the second Covid lockdown shut us down again But we haven't been idle. You will see that a large new storage shed has now been erected at the rear of the youth centre to accommodate all our May Day Fayre games and equipment. Hopefully, it's not looking intrusive or out of place tucked behind the building. This has prompted us to make a start on painting the outside of the building. The new more subdued colours have even prompted some welcome compliments. It's not boring beige. It's French Grey. And Vermont Grey at the front. Whilst the building has benefitted from the last 12 months I'm afraid that our customers have not.

Our last youth club session before the first lockdown was on March 19th. At that time we had regular weekly attendance of up to 28 youngsters. The club was thriving. During first lockdown the YMCA staff continued to provide support and activities for our youth club members via regular social networking apps. But take-up gradually diminished through the summer months. We were able to reopen the club in late September for limited face-to-face activities. Numbers were limited

to 15 max, so two sessions of one hour were introduced for the six weeks that we were open. The plan now is to return to a similar set-up on 22nd April. With two youth club sessions on a Thursday evening. For a brief period in the mid-summer we did see a return of some limited activity for our other users. The childminders were back on a Wednesday. The VETS table tennis club limited their participation to six people on a Wednesday evening. Our U3A music group were similarly restricted.

Like many small businesses the limited return to work last Autumn may have benefitted some of our customers but did little to generate sufficient income for us. It costs as much to run a building for six people as it does for 26. Fortunately, we have qualified for government Small Business Grants over the past 12 months. For the first time ever I'm grateful for us having to pay Business Rates on the property. From today we are able to open our doors again, but with significant restrictions on numbers and activities. Hopefully things will improve further in May and June. We can't wait to welcome you all back.

**Keith Pyke**

**(f) Bleadon Village News**

**(g) Bleadon in Bloom**

**(h) Village Covid-19 Group**

I lead the Bleadon Help Network formally and until recently called the Bleadon Coronavirus Help Group. Ian Heppenstall was the Group coordinator when it started in mid Feb. There was a couple of Priests letters and then some leaflet drops to get the message round about the Group and to call for volunteers. Ian got sick mid-April and so I took it on from then. I covered Bleadon Village and Janice Horrigan looked after the people and the volunteers on Bleadon Hill.

There is a Whats App group for the Volunteers and initially it was busy for requests for shopping and prescription pick-ups etc. but gradually it had gone silent because the helpers and those needing support have buddied up. When we test to see if the network is still there, it is with 21 helpers on WhatsApp and others who are set on by a phone call so community spirit is alive and well in Bleadon.

I do weekly calls, on Zoon with North Somerset Council as part of something called North Somerset Together. There are 44 Groups such as ours in NS and this is an opportunity to learn about where we can get other support from for our communities. We also get referrals from them and from the Shielding Service which can sometimes be quite complex to support. There is concern about what would happen to our vulnerable people should there be some kind of bad weather event electrical outage or local flooding. I know that there is a plan developing in the Parish Council for Crisis and Emergency Planning and I would very much like to be part of that please?

I have taken to occasionally phoning some of the people on my 'patch' and, as lockdowns have got more and longer I have found some desperate situations brewing behind closed doors with carers becoming exhausted, etc. When the pandemic is all over the problems will only really start to become apparent with lots of mental health, depression, anxiety, loneliness issues etc. This will need a different kind of care-maybe this is something the Church is well equipped to handle. The stats indicated that we had 70 vulnerable households and about 30 volunteers.

## **Sara Hughes**

Firstly I would to thank everyone who has in any way contributed to the "Covid Help" Activity in Bleadon and record the way the "good heartedness" of so many people shone out so brightly. To notice the organic way in which the help came into being and the real value and hope for the future in this. This happened naturally as a joint Bleadon Village AND Bleadon Hill body of activity. To define my ongoing expectation that the "Help network" will focus on enabling communication and information sharing, rather than strategic planning or decision making.

In Bleadon we have many organisations already providing valuable activities and support that enhance the wellbeing of members of the Bleadon community and there is not any intention to "reinvent the wheel" or devalue what is already happening, but rather to connect enhance and encourage. It is clear that through the "help" activities, we have regularly discovered individual people who have fallen through the net! Who clearly benefit from contact and support but do not initiate asking for it! It should be acknowledged the need to recognise and value everyone's personal autonomy, but also seek to recognise where help is likely to be valuable and offer it sensitively even though it is not asked for.

From the many discussions that followed the main point that stands out in my memory is the need to recognise how the help activity has happened in a way that works across both Bleadon PC and Weston TC areas and that this needs to be sustained within future organisation initiated by Bleadon PC and others.

## **Tim Erridge - Rector**

### **(i) Roads**

After a difficult year people have been enjoying walks through the village and surrounding areas especially along the River Axe south of the A370. Older residents find it difficult to cross the A370 because of the speed of motorists. The Parish Council are pressing North Somerset Council together with Somerset County Council to get the speed limit reduced from 50 mph to 40 mph together with an island by the Hairdressers and Bridge Garage. Funding is limited but donations from businesses might be possible but rest assured Bleadon Parish Council will put pressure on both councils for a positive outcome.

The fatality by the Catherines exit is a more complex issue. Traffic Lights were promised to us by a previous District Councillor but unless we can obtain money from a 106 Agreement or CIL then we might wait a long time.

Mary Sheppard

### **(j) Churchyard**

At last the South East wall of the churchyard has been repaired and the scrub around the Bier House has been cleared. Our thanks goes to Mark Howe and his team for keeping it looking clean and tidy. Also thanks to Brian Robinson for looking after the Church Clock.

Mary Sheppard

### **(k) Allotments**

The pandemic has prevented some allotment holders from tending their allotments but I am glad to say are all occupied looking good. Currently we have a waiting list of 2.

Mary Sheppard

**4. Open Forum**

**Questions, comments, news and views**

**5. Date of next Annual Parish Meeting**

**This will be held at 7pm on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in the Coronation Hall.**