Minutes of the Blunsdon Parish Council Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 29th April 2019 at 7pm at Blunsdon Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Jankinson, Ainscow, Boyd, Keates, Morris, and Tayler and 7 members of the public.

1. **Introductions**

Cllr Jankinson welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

 **2**. **Inspector Andrew Bridge – North Swindon Policing Update**

 Inspector Bridge addressed the Assembly and gave an update on Community Policing for

 North Swindon – Blunsdon is part of this area.

 There are 4 PCSO`s assigned to the Blunsdon, Haydon Wick, St Andrews area – these should

 be visible in the Community and engage in local issues.

 Statistically, Blunsdon has a very low crime rate, however burglaries and domestic violence

 have increased, possibly because of increased reporting.

 In process of setting up a Community Safety Group for our area, Cllr Morris is Blunsdon

 representative.

 Moving forward the focus will be visibility and engagement through PCSO`s, responding to

 calls for service, Road Safety and Speedwatch and more preventative policing through

 problem solving approach.

 **3**. **Apologies for Absence**

Cllrs Collingwood and Selwood

 **4**. **Minutes of 2018 APA**

 Proposed by Cllr Boyd, seconded by Cllr Morris, all agreed, that they be accepted as a true

 record.

1. **Matters arising from 2018 Minutes**

1. Swindon Transport Plan is still not complete and available.
2. There is no plan at the current time for SBC to provide any mitigation at Cold Harbour.

However, there are some plans to make some minor improvements at this junction and in other locations across Village. (see Chair`s report)

1. 20mph restrictions, this was raised as question – now part of plans for traffic improvements. (see Chair`s report)
2. **Report of PC Chairman – copy attached**

The Chairman gave a summary of his report as follows;

1. He thanked all the Parish Staff for their hard work over the last year. He also thanked the Parish Councillors for their work during the year.
2. The precept for the year had been reduced again for the 2019/20 year.
3. CIL payments had been received, these help to support the finances of the Parish.
4. Key Planning applications were noted, more detail can be found in the Planning report.
5. Methodist Church and Hall – the PC have made progress with Methodist Hall bookings
6. Defibrillator – installed and operational.
7. NHP – an update on progress was given. Regulation 14 consultation due to commence. Open Day planned for 4th May 2019 at BVH.
8. The draft plans for traffic improvements in Blunsdon were outlined and copies of the plans were available for inspection.
9. **Other Reports – copies attached**

**Finance –** RFO provided Income and Expenditure Statement for 2018/19

 **Planning** – Cllr Boyd submitted a report detailing applications received over the last year.

 **Village Hall/Burial Grounds –** Cllr Boyd submitted a report summarising the activities

 undertaken over the last year.

 **Footpaths & Rights of Way –** Cllr Selwood submitted a report outlining works undertaken

 over the last year

**Recreation Ground –** Cllr Ainscow submitted a report of activity undertaken over last year. **Ward Cllrs –** no report received.

1. **Village Gateway Project**

The Chair explained that a piece of land adjacent to Ermin Street was to be made available

 as POS. Ideas for use were put forward:

 Zip Wire Park, Car Parking, Garden, Fitness Trail, Youth facilities, CH Junction

 improvements, Kick about/Basketball Hoop.

 This will be considered further as part of NHP consultation.

 **9**. **Question Time – and questions asked during meeting**

 What is happening with Tennis Courts? – Chair explained the plans to install a MUGA, with

 pitches, cricket nets and additional parking. SBC is delivering the project and it is behind

 schedule. The project is a joint venture with School, BFC and Cricket Club. The PC have

 contributed £50k to the project.

 Where on Broadbush are the additional 80 houses? Planning application received to deliver

 80 units on land at Turnpike which runs up to Broadbush.

 What is happening with Kingsdown Development – Chair explained that currently there is

 “Stale Mate” there are issues with transport assessment, landowners and delivery of the

 bridge, although it has been confirmed that £6million of Government funding has been

 allocated for the delivery of the bridge.

 The 20mph zone is not enforceable? The Chair confirmed that this was the case, and that it

 was better to have signs to encourage slower driving than not.

 Where are the Borough Councillors? The Chair explained that although he had not heard

 from them, they were in Purdah – a period of time before elections where their political

 activity is limited.

 Will the reports be on the WEB? The Clerk confirmed that they would be.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

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 Chairman, 20 May 2021

## Chair’s Report 2018/19

Well having emerged from the ‘Beast from the East’ at the start of last year and finished with the highest temperatures on record for April this year we can say that like the weather, life in the Parish Council is also unpredictable. However the crew of steadfast volunteer Parish Councillors and the tireless efforts of Tracey Judd, our Parish Clerk and Rachel Smith our Finance Officer have smoothed out many of the ‘bumps’ along the way. I cannot thank them enough for the work that they do, along with Mark Jones and Paul Schofield our Groundsmen, to keep this Parish looking good and working well. This is a testament to the achievement of 2nd place (narrowly missing 1st ) in the CPRE Best Kept Village competition for 2018. Well done to them and to our proud residents.

Other successes over the year have been with Speedwatch who work hard to keep the Parish roads safer. Also Blunsdon Football Club who just missed winning their League One Championship and got to semi-finals of 2 cup competitions this season. Thank you and well done.

Finance and Governance

Having pared the Parish Precept to the lowest we could without affecting services, we examined all costs and with prudence we have managed to reduce the Parish Precept by 12% this year. There has been a silver lining to the ‘cloud’ of development that has hung over the Parish and some developer contributions have allowed us to begin some investment in the infrastructure that the Parish so badly needs. We have focussed the first stage of investment on traffic and road safety and have arranged for some work to be completed on Ermin Street, Turnpike and around the Village core. A Pelican Crossing to help join our new developments and enable them to cross more safely to the High Street. A Toucan crossing close to the Turnpike roundabout, double yellow lines at the Cold Harbour end of Turnpike Road, a speed-reducing chicane on Ermin Street and a widespread 20 mile an hour restriction around the village core. Details of these schemes have been published and are available to view at the Parish Office behind the Methodist Church. We are also assessing further schemes to mitigate the ‘barrier’ that Ermin Street represents, ‘softening’ it’s appearance and at the same time improving road safety further using landscaping methods. Money for this was derived from the Tadpole Farm development.

Planning

Planning is probably the major aspect of the PC’s work – adding our comments to the planning applications we receive. However, because the Borough Council do not have a five year housing land supply (in fact it’s at about half that which is required) developers have continued to take advantage of the planning authority’s vulnerability. Policies which protect open countryside and green space are significantly weakened and hence the plethora of planning applications around a much sought after location.

This year, added to our lovely village of 603 dwellings (2011 census), we now have developments with permission for 232 dwellings:

* 100 houses on Blunsdon Hill (was the hotel golf course) – refused by SBC but won on appeal
* 70 houses east of Sams Lane – opposed by the PC and many, many residents
* 52 houses (37 of which approved) on the Thames Water site
* 10 houses approved at the western end of Kingsdown Lane

With the approved and mostly built developments from last year of 256 dwellings, and the pending applications for 43, 8 and now a further 80 houses on Broadbush/Turnpike it will give us a total of 613 dwellings since 2015 – more than doubling the 2011 number. This does not include the 1,650 house already consented in the Kingsdown Development.

Swindon Borough council launched the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) document which outlined and assessed sites offered by local landowners for potential development. The shock to us all was that land around the Parish offering around 4,300 potential dwellings was assessed by the Borough as ‘suitable’ for development. The residents’ responses at the Open Day that the PC arranged were vociferous to say the least and were passed back to the Council clearly commenting that the current infrastructure was not coping with the pace of development so there was no way that it could support that many dwellings without a major change to the road system.

The Blunsdon Neighbourhood Plan is finally nearing completion with its first consultation on policies (Regulation 14) happening in the next few weeks. It is a strong document reflecting the views of the residents and their desire to keep the area and the Village as a Village and to try to protect it from being engulfed by urban sprawl. Please make sure you have your say about the shape of things for the future.

Community

The Church has worked hard through the year to raise funds and to bring the community together. It was lovely to hear the bells pealing during the County competition. There was a cinema event and a barn dance in the church and as always the monthly ‘Coffee and Cake’ book sale and this year two quizzes and the amazing Village Weekend event with Vintage Fashions, Scarecrow Trail and Open Gardens. At Christmas we had the ‘Walking Advent Calendar’ which was, like all of these events, amazingly supported by the community.

We finally installed the defibrillator on the Village Hall and trained members of the community including 10 Blunsdon Scouts in its use.

We had the War Memorial restored with a partial grant from the War Memorial Trust.

We finally agreed to take over the running of the Methodist Church and Hall and installed the Parish Office at the rear of the premises and without any detriment to the use of the Village Hall, bookings have steadily grown and more importantly we have kept the lovely old building in use.

Our gratitude goes to Mr John Clifford from the Blunsdon House Hotel who kindly donated 120 chairs to the Parish which have replaced the aging plastic ones in the Village Hall.

We struggled through the morass that was GDPR and Tracey, our Parish Clerk, did a fantastic job to ensure ours and your data is protected.

The Village Magazine burst into colour like the flowers in spring and continues to keep us up to date with what is happening around the Parish.

From the new Hillside development we have taken over a brand new play area and we have now let the range of allotments that Hills provided which are already springing into life. There will soon be more allotments on offer from the Blunsdon Heights development, including one specially built for less able residents.

Our Community Assets continue to provide enjoyment and entertainment – the Church, the Heart in Hand, the Village and Methodist Halls, the Recreation Area, the beautiful open spaces and conservation areas, the views in and out of the Parish and the overarching tranquillity and rural ambience. We will continue to support and enhance and invest in these where possible.

Ian Jankinson – Chairman – Blunsdon Parish Council.

**BLUNSDON PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2019**

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

During the period 6th April 2018 to 15th April 2019 the Council considered 58 planning applications as follows :-

 Extensions, garage conversions etc 28

 Small developments of five houses or fewer 15

 Larger developments of over five houses 7

 Industrial/agricultural buildings 8

The Parish Council supported 31 applications and opposed 27 .

`The Borough Council approved 32 applications and rejected 4 (2 were withdrawn).

Of those refused two were taken to appeal and approved by the Government appointed inspector.

The approvals include four major applications for the building of 243 houses as follows :-

 Hill Cottage (golf course) site 100 houses

 Thames Water Board site 37 “

 Sam’s Lane site 52 “

 Holdcroft site 54 “

We are expecting an application for another 43 houses on land adjacent to the Holdcroft site and whilst not falling within the last year there are 1650 dwellings, with infrastructure, approved to be built on the Kingsdown site (NC5).

From the above you will see that within the next five to ten years we can expect another almost two thousand houses to be built in the Parish.

**BLUNSDON PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2019**

**VILLAGE AND METHODIST HALLS AND BURIAL GROUNDS**

**VILLAGE HALL.** The hall continues to be well used with 12 regular hirers and 33 casual hirers last year. During the year the following works were completed :- # Additional insulation was installed in all the roof spaces with a noticeable improvement in the temperature in the building during cold spells. # All external woodwork and the railings were painted # A defibrillator was ordered and installed on the outside of the building and resident volunteers were trained to use it.

**METHODIST HALL.** By agreement with the Methodist Church Council, the Parish Council assumed responsibility for the administration of the Methodist Church Hall in July. This included the conversion of a store room at the rear of the building into a Parish Council Office, providing our Clerk with a secure place of work for the first time since the division of the parish when we had to vacate the office in Redhouse. Lettings of the hall are increasing and there are currently 6 regular hirers.

**CHURCHYARD.** We continue to be responsible for grass cutting, tree work, maintenance of the grave stones and the boundary walls.

**CEMETERY.** We continue to be responsible for the maintenance of the area and the boundary walls. We have had discussion with the developer of the Sam’s Lane site about the possibility of the development of that area including an extension to the cemetery, and those discussions will continue. We have placed an order for the re-lettering of the War Memorial.

**Recreation Committee Report – APA 2019**

It was lovely to have the weather during the summer of 2018, but this proved challenging for the Football teams when they started playing again in August due to the cracks that appeared. The Parish worked with the Football Club and the Grounds Maintenance contractor to have the cracks filled to make a safe surface for the children and adults  to play on.

Following my report given in 2018 where the contractor of the recreation ground assured the Parish that an improvement would be seen during the 2018/19 season, this has certainly come true as the contractor has made real progress to satisfy the needs of all that use it especially the Cricket Club, with that said we are working in the future to provide better maintenance to the field working with experts to ensure it is safe and durable as we move forward.

On a slightly negative note we have had a couple of issues with parking in Sutton Park with users of the recreation ground but we are actively working with all concerned to keep these issues to a minimum.

The parish is closely monitoring the recreation ground with the respect of dog walking as it has been noticed that some owners do not pick up after their dogs. This has to improve to ensure a safe environment to all that enjoy the public open space.

The pavilion has undergone some electrical works to ensure it meets the required standards.

APA – PUBLIC FOOTPATH REPORT

The Parish is not directly responsible for the maintenance of public footpaths or rights of way in the parish, this remains with the Borough Council.

The Parish Council has taken an active interest in maintaining our excellent public footpaths through the village, and the surrounding countryside.

During the past year we have reported a number of issues to Swindon Borough Council and attended a rights of way meetings with other parishes, to ensure we are represented.

As a result of this involvement, including support from the ramblers association, some of our projects have been prioritised.

These include the replacement of the dilapidated bridge adjacent to Water Eaton Copse, and the imminent replacement of another foot bridge nearby.

We have reported an issue where a resident injured their leg in a trench across a field footpath adjacent to the Ridge. This has not been fully resolved at this time.

It is worth noting that we do work with the Borough Council in a constructive manner, and if we are over bearing with our requests the council will tend to close footpaths, which we try to avoid as this would lose the amenity for potentially a long period.

Ian Selwood

Blunsdon PC

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| BLUNSDON PARISH COUNCIL – APA 2019 |  |  |  |
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| FINANCIAL STATEMENT |   |   |  |
| 2018/19 | INCOME | EXPENDITURE |  |
|   |   |   |  |
| TOTAL BALANCE FORWARD | 121113.25 |   |  |
|   |   |   |  |
| Precept | 76875.00 |   |  |
| Burial Ground | 8729.50 | 12203.18 |  |
| Recreation Areas | 24238 | 19897.91 |  |
| Pavilion | 1397.50 | 2049.78 |  |
| Village Hall | 26717.50 | 23188.47 |  |
| Methodist Hall | 1466.92 | 585.54 |  |
| Allotments | 652.56 | 202.00 |  |
| General Admin | 20132.67 | 29178.10 |  |
| Defibrillator (grant received) | 500.00 | 600.00 |  |
| CIL \* | 53586.54 |   |  |
| Staff costs (including Inland Revenue payments, pensions etc) |   | 62889.06 |  |
| Interest earned | 282.76 |   |  |
|   |   |   |  |
| **TOTAL BALANCE AT YEAR END** |   | **184898.16** |  |
|   | 335692.20 | 335692.20 |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| *\* Community Infrasatructure Levy receipts, generated by new developments.* |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| The Parish Council has been able to reduce this year's costs to residents yet continues to maintain |
| facilities and services to a high standard.  |  |  |  |
| Allocated funds are held for works associated with the extension of the Cemetery, adult fitness | of the Cemetery, the provision |
| of adult fitness equipment, a new MUGA (multi use games area), support for a Village fete, and |
| additional litter and dog waste bins. |  |  |  |