

Minutes of the Bucklebury Annual Parish Assembly held at 7.45pm  
on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in  
the Victory Room, Bucklebury.

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Cllr. Dickens opened the Annual Assembly and thanked approximately 25 parishioners for attending. The guest speaker Inspector Alan Hawkett, was warmly welcomed to the meeting along with Dr. Lennox from Chapel Row Surgery.

Apologies: John and Ann Parascandolo and Georgina Woods.

**Local Policing – Inspector Alan Hawkett (Thames Valley Police).**

Inspector Hawkett is the Neighbourhood Inspector covering Hungerford, the Downlands and Pangbourne. He commented that there has been a spate of antisocial behaviour (ASB) in Bucklebury recently including arson, issues for local teenage girls and items being thrown into the road. The PCSO has identified three of the four people involved and visited their homes. They have been referred to youth prevention and fire prevention schemes. Work continues to identify the fourth person. For young offenders, the right intervention is considered to be better than arrest.

The incidents had been reported to the Police on 101/online and followed up by officers from Slough. Inspector Hawkett explained that there are departments in Reading and Slough who deal with calls in “slow time”, thus freeing up front line officers to respond to 999 calls. ASB does need to be reported, either on 101 or online, to build up a statistical picture of what is happening across the area. If there is a risk to property or a person and an immediate response is required, 999 should be called.

Inspector Hawkett commented that Thames Valley Police (TVP) owes communities an apology for the lack of engagement over the previous two years; there are a number of vacancies for PCSOs. Commitment in the Neighbourhood teams has got better and there should shortly be four new officers.

Crime figures in West Berkshire show that Bucklebury is one of the safest places in the area to live. Across the area, there were a series of burglaries at the beginning of the year. Following a combined operation, vehicles were spotted being driven dangerously and the criminals moved away.

There is one known county line in West Berkshire and a possible second, both of which are mainly operating out of Newbury. The Police are very aware of the threat this poses to vulnerable individuals and are working on it. Any drugs dealing going on, on the Common should be reported to the Police (using 999 if it is actually taking place).

Tasks are constantly being reprioritised and unfortunately, TVP can’t attend every incident. They work with the Fire and Ambulance Service and are often involved with cases involving mental health.

Using the SID equipment, purchased by BPC, high vehicle speeds through the parish have been recorded and it was questioned whether this would result in more TVP speed checks in the parish. The roads policing units will consider the figures and task more hours to the parish if they deem it necessary.

Following the cannabis factory being found in Briff Lane, it was questioned how such sites can be identified. Often, they involve large amounts of machinery and buildings are often booby trapped. Sometimes the police helicopter is used to measure the temperature of suspect buildings.

If antisocial use of 4x4s and motorbikes is witnessed, it should be reported to the police. Local police officers still have access to two 4x4 vehicles (one in Hungerford and one in Pangbourne). There is a policy that motorcycles are not followed, but they should still be reported. If you report a 4x4 or motorcycle incident on the Common, please also inform the Clerk or the District Councillor. Call handlers are not

necessarily familiar with TROs and the issues on Bucklebury Common, they are more used to dealing with burglary, rape and theft. Unfortunately, the call handling centres suffer from a high turn over of staff. It was questioned whether a marked police car being driven through the parish would have a good impact; whilst it would, TVP do not have the resources to do this.

On fly-tipping incidents, TVP work closely with WBC who normally manage any prosecution.

On the conclusion of Inspector Hawke's update on local policing, Cllr. Dickens thanked him for his time to come and talk.

### **Minutes of the Bucklebury Annual Assembly held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022.**

Copies of the minutes of the assembly held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were signed by Cllr. Dickens.

### **Chairman's Report – Cllr. Barry Dickens.**

The parish has enjoyed three social occasions in the past year:

- The Bucklebury Beerfest which was held on the August bank holiday weekend and made its best ever profit which contributes to the upkeep and running costs of the Victory Room.
- After a three year gap, the open air carol service was held at the chapel on the Common just before Christmas. This raised nearly £200 for the Newbury Food Bank.
- The Coronation of King Charles III with a get together at the Cottage Inn with lots of traditional activities and live music sets. The Bucklebury Events team and Gary (and his team) at the Cottage Inn were thanked for all their efforts.

A very successful scarecrow competition was organised and anyone driving through the Parish could not have failed to see the varied and colourful scarecrows adorning gates and fences.

Much of the year has been taken up with the WBC Local Plan and the impact on Bucklebury of a potential development of 1,500 houses to the north east of Thatcham. The "Bucklebury Says No" campaign group was formed and has worked closely with Thatcham Town Council, and Cold Ash and Midgham Parish Councils. Bucklebury submitted a series of objections mainly based on the environmental and ecological impact on the Common and the AONB. Despite objections based on the evidence underpinning the Local Plan, WBC submitted the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate. Following the change in administration at WBC, a reappraisal of the Local Plan is likely and it is hoped that this will include a more measured approach to the housing needs of West Berkshire and their implications on Bucklebury.

Following the pandemic, BPC realised that there are parishioners who would like more opportunities and benefit from more social interaction. The monthly coffee mornings in the Oak Room have proved very successful in fulfilling this need and have a growing attendance and positive feedback. The small meadow behind the Cottage Inn has also been made available with the addition of benches.

Two long standing councillors have just retired; John Brims and Anne Hillerton. John continues to chair the Victory Room Committee and was the driving force behind the refurbishment. He was also Vice Chair of BPC for many years. Anne spent many hours managing the playpark and the BMX track. Their contribution to BPC will be missed.

Graham Pask retired as our District Councillor after serving as our Ward Councillor for 36 years. Previously to that he was a Bucklebury Parish Councillor. Graham was an exceptional councillor who was hard working and always available and approachable. As a token, BPC will be planting an Amelanchier tree at a location of Graham's choosing in the parish. Graham was thanked for all he has done for the people of Bucklebury.

Graham responded that he had promised his family that he would retire after completing his last term of office. He calculated that he had sat through approximately 440 BPC meetings alone. He considers it to have been a pleasure and a privilege to be Bucklebury's District Councillor.

He congratulated Chris Read on being elected and warned him that he had a steep learning curve!

### **Report from the Chapel Row Surgery – Dr. Lennox.**

Services provided by the Chapel Row Surgery have to change to meet the demands of the changing World. Generally, the population works well with the Surgery.

Access to the service is a major issue. The aim is that anyone who attempts to access the service is contacted within 24 hours and those who need to be seen in person have an appointment within 2 weeks. Emails should be responded to within 24 hours. All, of the approximately 250 telephones calls each day are triaged and treated appropriately. The Surgery has a social prescriber, pharmacist, paramedic and two new foundation stage 2 doctors (who are a similar grade to those you'd see in an A&E department) as well as GPs.

Currently the dispensary is small, but dispenses to a large number of people. Shortly, the dispensary will be swapping with the waiting room and adjacent front room, to give a larger dispensary.

Members of the parish asked that emails be in plain English and not in scientific terms. It was questioned why statins have to be dispensed on a monthly basis; this is decreed from above.

It was questioned how the new dispensary will be quicker; the process will be more streamlined.

The paramedic will see patients both in the surgery and at home, as well as overseeing transfer of care.

The two young gentlemen who are frequently seen at the dispensary window are very much appreciated by the parish as a whole and were thanked for their work.

Cllr. Dickens thanked Dr. Lennox for updating those present and for what the Surgery provides.

### **District Councillors' Report – District Cllr. Chris Read.**

District Cllr. Read thanked parishioners for voting for him in the recent elections. The new council will be voting on what the Council Executive have planned at their full Council meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> May.

It is expected that the Public Examination of the new Local Plan will start in September and last 6 weeks. Inspector William Fieldhouse has been appointed who is well known for work in urban areas. The new Executive think the case for North East Thatcham is flawed. Thatcham Town Council and neighbouring parishes oppose the plan on the escarpment towards Bucklebury. Thatcham is prepared to take several hundred homes on smaller sites with more infrastructure. District Councillors have looked for more sustainable sites which might take about 750 homes elsewhere. Up to 500 more new homes are proposed for sites within Newbury and other settlements which planners are "keeping up their sleeve". For "Viable Villages", an average of 10 new houses are being proposed per village, but only if and where local people need and want them.

The Council intends to write to the Planning Inspector to request a pause of 3 months in the inspection process for the Local Plan. This would give the opportunity for the Council to consider modifications, if the Planning Inspector agrees.

The new council will be proactive with the Rural Business Forum which will give WBC understanding of how rural land managers have to adapt to climate change. The Council will be more relaxed about new homes in the countryside which are Zero Carbon. Water saving measures on large housing estates and better on-site flood protection are both supported by the Council.

Other immediate areas of focus which have been raised include:

- Stopping the waste of public money. The building of the sports hub at Monks Lane has been terminated and football will be bought back to Faraday Road.
- Potholes will be fixed properly first time, and dangerous ones within 72 hours.
- The Green Bin Tax will be removed and kerbside recycling of green waste will be reestablished without cost to residents. This will be phased in with the charge removed for those most in need first.

- Get the Council to Net Zero by 2030.
- Provide care packages as early as possible through earlier initial care assessments.

District Cllr. Read concluded his report by thanking BPC for their attention and looks forward to working with them.

### **Finances.**

The Clerk reported that the total balance on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 was £84,842.21 which was increased to £90,870.62 by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The increase is largely to cover the cost of opposing the Local Plan.

During FY22/23, WBC Members Bids were received to cover 50% of the cost of the CCTV system at the Memorial Hall, two defibrillators and picnic benches. VAT was reclaimed from several years to December 2022 which totalled £6,316.27.

Salaries increased from £8,208.70 to £11,571.29 in line with Local Government Association guidelines and corrected the pay levels, there having been no increase for a number of years. Whilst the removal of the five streetlights in Burdens Heath (the only streetlights in the parish), was controversial, the standing charge and electricity had increased massively and the lights themselves were obsolete. Defibrillators do have running costs, including new batteries and pads. During the year, one new defibrillator has been purchased and installed.

BPC had raised concerns that although there appears to be large reserves, these are decreasing (even without the costs of opposing THA20). The Clerk thanked John Brims for a lot of work to make various financial projections. The precept was increased this year to build a fund to oppose NE Thatcham and it is anticipated that it will be reduced next year.

The Clerk thanked Erica Tipton for agreeing, once again to carry out the internal audit of BPC.

### **Conclusion of the meeting.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 9.25pm.