

Minutes of Bradfield Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 15th April 2024 at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr. K. Dearing (Chair of Bradfield Parish Council), 21 parishioners, District Cllr. R. MacKinnon, Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).

Apologies: Apologies of absence were received from Jeremy Caddy.

1. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Friday 27th April 2023.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Friday 27th April 2023 were agreed and will be signed by the Chair.

2. Matters arising from the minutes.

No matters were raised from the minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Assembly.

3. Report from Bradfield Parish Council (Cllr. Dearing – Chair of Bradfield Parish Council).

Cllr. Dearing welcomed everyone to the meeting.

All parishioners are very welcome to attend the Parish Council meetings which take place on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm.

Cllr. Dearing thanked the Clerk, Helen Pratt and the Vice Chair, Andrew House (who had been Chair for many years) for helping and guiding her. All of the Councillors were thanked for their time, energy and enthusiasm for the Parish during the year.

During the year, your councillors have been:

- Kimiko Dearing – Southend Road – Bradfield PC Chair
- Andrew House – Southend Road – Bradfield PC Vice Chair
- Giles Allen – Stanbrook Close
- Geoff Allnutt – The Laffords
- Rosemary Balsdon – Dark Lane – Pang Valley Flood Forum Rep
- Kimberley Bishop – Admore Lane
- Steve O'Reilly – Heath Road – Bradfield Village Hall Rep & Planning
- Tim Wale – Tutts Clump
- Bob Wyatt – Southend Road – Bradfield Parochial Charities (Alms Houses) Rep

Mike Ashbrook, Paul Isherwood and Paul Henwood stood down during 2023; they were each thanked for all their hard work and commitment. At the annual meeting in May, Giles and Geoff were welcomed to the Council. Kimberley Bishop was later co-opted. All three have thrown themselves into the roles. Bradfield Parish is fortunate that many take an interest in what happens in the Parish and are willing to get involved.

Councillors have considered 65 applications through the year, an increase from 46 previously. More applications have been related to green energy, including biomass boilers, air source heat pumps and solar panels. Several applications were received for barn conversions; Bradfield PC objected to these because they were outside the settlement boundary. One of these applications has since been approved by WBC.

The Parish Council acts as the eyes and ears for WBC where development has taken place without permission from WBC, or if work does not reflect approval. Such instances are reported to the Enforcement Team at WBC, who will act according to the information given and the degree of 'harm' being caused. BPC's experiences with this process recently are disappointing and the outcomes questionable. Several decisions have been challenged during 2023/24. Whilst enforcement issues are openly discussed during meetings, they are not reported in NewsLink due to the nature.

BPC and the Village Hall Committee have met to discuss how best to work together and move plans for the Village Hall forwards. It was decided that an independent sub-committee (the Development Committee) of the Village Hall committee be set up to review the financial position and whether the plans for the hall were viable. At this point Christine Evans decided to stand down from the Village Hall Committee; BPC would like to thank her for all her hard work and endless dedication to the Village Hall project. Members of the Development Committee were thanked for their hard work on a challenging task.

The increase in potholes, not just within the parish but across the district have caused concern. The situation has not been helped by the amount of rain. Parishioners were reminded to report highway issues, including potholes to WBC via the "Report a Problem" website. Homeowners were reminded that markers in front of their homes (bricks, rocks, lumps of wood etc) are not only illegal, but can be dangerous for pedestrians. The homeowner is liable for damages or injury in the event of an incident.

Speeding has continued to be a major issue. In May 2023, every household within a 30mph zone was supplied with wheelie bin stickers to remind motorists of the speed limit. In addition, the PC has been working with WBC to secure the use of their speed indicator device (SID).

An increase in traffic has been noted on several occasions due to closures of the A4. This has increased the concern about parked cars on Southend Road, near the village shop, which have resulted in several collisions. The Parish Council and District Cllr. MacKinnon are trying to work with Sovereign Housing Association to resolve the problems caused by insufficient parking for some of their properties. Residents are also reminded not to park on the walkways as this causes a danger to pedestrians, by forcing them to walk in the road.

The Parish Council is aware of the condition of Back Lane and Mariner's Lane, partially as a result of the increase in traffic from local road closures and diversions due to essential maintenance works at the Bradfield College. With more maintenance work planned at the College, requiring other road closures, BPC is in talks with both WBC and Bradfield Collage to try and mitigate the effects.

The high volume of rain has resulted in more roads being flooded. WBC have been out clearing drains and Thames Water have repaired several blocked or broken pipes.

Hedges and hedgerows continue to grow and need cutting back, rather than trimming. When felt appropriate, letters have been sent to residents. Hedges need to be kept cut back so that pedestrians can safely use walkways, motorists can see road signage and for visibility at junctions.

Dog fouling continues to be a problem on footpaths, footways, the cricket field and the Village field. Of particular concern are the routes used by children walking to and from school and at the college. There have been issues with one of the contractors who empties some of the dog waste bins and a new contractor will be starting this year. BPC will continue to monitor the situation.

BPC members have attended WBC District Parish Conferences and the Pang Valley Flood Forum. In addition, they have been consulted on numerous other topics.

Grants to local groups within the parish have totalled £3,300 this year, following written application to BPC detailing how the monies would be utilised. A further £17,500 has been granted to Bradfield Village Hall to match fund at Greenham Trust grant for the development project.

The Remembrance Day Service at the War Memorial was well attended with over 70 attendees. Thanks were extended to Bradfield College for the Honour Guard and bugler, to the 1st Bucklebury Guides and Bradfield Brownies who paraded their flags, and to all who placed wreaths at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. Thanks also to the Bradfield Social Club for the use of their car park and building and to the Bradfield Women's Institute who provided cups of tea and a wonderful selection of cakes to all.

The Bradfield Christmas Lights Perpetual Shield was awarded to the 'The Laming family' from 46 Southend Road Bradfield Southend. Everyone who took the time and effort to add some light to a dark, damp end of the year was thanked for their efforts.

Members of the public are welcome to express thoughts and concerns directly to BPC during the Public Forum at the beginning of the monthly Parish Council meetings. All those residents who have attended meetings were thanked for their active involvement in the Parish.

4. Bradfield Village Hall Development Committee.

See Appendix of reports.

5. Bradfield Village Hall Management Committee.

See Appendix of reports.

6. Report from District Councillor Ross MacKinnon.

District Cllr. MacKinnon apologised for being late arriving, having been at Westminster and dependant upon British Rail.

He reported that it has been an eventful year with elections and thanked those who had voted for him for a second term of office as Bradfield's District Councillor. District Cllr. MacKinnon is the leader of the opposition and keeping the current administration on their toes.

There is a general dissatisfaction with the planning service around the time to determine applications and with enforcement. During the last couple of weeks, it has been announced that WBC planning has gone into partnership with Capita to resolve some of the staffing issues.

In December 2023, the new administration announced their intention to withdraw the draft Local Plan from the inspector, however, the government intervened, and it is proceeding.

In January 2024, District Cllr. Lee Dillion, the leader took a sabbatical as leader to run as Newbury MP. District Cllr. Jeff Brooks is the new leader of the council.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments are payable on new developments, however, due to paperwork errors, in some cases they have been paid on extensions. It has been agreed that these errors will be corrected the monies returned at WBC's expense. Where parishes have received these funds, they will not be claimed back.

7. Reports were submitted in advance from the following organisations:

Reports are available in the Appendix at the end of these minutes.

- Bradfield Village Stores.
- Standby Volunteer Drivers.
- Bradfield WI.
- Gardening Club.
- Bradfield Cricket Club.
- Girlguiding in Bradfield.
- Bradfield Methodist Burial Board.
- Bradfield May Fayre.
- Bradfield PCC report.
- Thursday Coffee Morning.

- Friday Coffee Morning.
- John Simmonds Trust.
- Bradfield Historical Society.

8. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm.
Those present were invited to join in light refreshments after the meeting.

Appendix

1. Bradfield Village Hall Development Committee (Nigel Neenan).

An independent Development Committee (DC) was set up early this year to review the new village hall project and its current funding situation. It reports into the BVH Trustees in consultation with the Parish Council. Its first task was to assess all possible funding scenarios to see if the project was financially viable. The committee is made up of local volunteers with facilitation and support provided by one member each from the Parish Council and the BVH Trustees.

At a recent joint meeting with both the BVH Trustees and the Parish Council the DC presented its detailed report with affirmed that even in the best-case scenario the current plan was not affordable. As a result, the trustees have taken the very difficult decision to discontinue the project in its current form, then being in full agreement with the DC conclusion.

However, this is by no means the end! This funding analysis is just the first phase. It is agreed by all that the current village hall is living on borrowed time and a significant investment needs to be made to ensure the future of a village hall in Bradfield. The BVH Trustees have therefore asked the DC to continue its work and provide a recommendation on how best to proceed, considering the needs of the local community, the user groups and any guidance from the Parish Council.

Spiralling costs, the impact of Covid on the allocation of grants have both contributed hugely to this disappointing outcome but the Trustees and the Parish Council remain determined to maintain a village hall facility in Bradfield. Your continued support and encouragement will be much appreciated as we go forward.

2. Bradfield Village Hall (Tony Powell).

The reason that I am doing this is because Christine decided to resign during the year. The amount of work that she has put into the hall over the years cannot be overstated. We all owe her a deep debt of gratitude for all that she did, especially those things that kept the hall running but were done behind the scenes and that many of us just took for granted. She was instrumental in getting the new hall project going and if West Berks planners and the village had got behind the project as put forward in the "2017 Vision for the Future" we would probably have a new hall now. Unfortunately, that did not happen and Covid and Putin's invasion of Ukraine changed things to such an extent that the cost to build a new hall is nearly three times what it was initially. We are very grateful to those people and organisations who have supported the project, and we hope that we can still move forward to provide a community asset that will enhance the village.

The Thursday coffee mornings and Saturday Markets show what can be done if there are dedicated people to run them. Here I need to thank Sam for her work with the latter, a role she has kindly said she would continue with as she has also resigned from the Management Committee. Again, we all must thank her for the many years of service that she has put in.

We know that we are going to have to work hard to keep this existing hall going for the time being, the roof needed repairing again after more wind damage and the heating struggles in really cold weather, it is not ideal for many who want to hire a hall but hopefully the Development committee will be able to guide us with a new plan, we need to thank them for coming forward and spending time on this.

We thank the Parish Council for their grant towards the ground's maintenance.

So let us hope that the weather is good for the May Fayre in a few weeks' time.

3. Bradfield Village Stores (Prepared by Helen Hyde).

The shop traded well in 2023, but the impact of increased food prices has forced us to increase our prices in turn. Many staple goods like bread, milk, fruit and veg etc. experienced price increases in 2021 and again in 2022 but that has accelerated this year with increased inflation. We are breaking even, but the shop must cover the losses of the post office each month. Last year, the Post Office cost the Association £2.2k in loss. Although our post office is busy, we receive very little back for each transaction so it's vital that we are used as much as possible especially while Royal Mail continue to encourage customers to buy their postage online. We were very pleased with the announcement that DVLA had changed their mind regarding the availability of services, in post Offices. Thank you very much to everyone that signed the petition.

We are pleased to report that our staff salaries are to be increased in April to reflect the updated National Living Wage; however, these additional costs have a direct impact on our financial situation which will affect our future profitability.

We continue to try and source as much of our fresh produce locally as possible. We also have a number of locally made crafts for sale which are very popular. To do our bit for the environment we now have a disposable vape bin and have introduced paper carrier bags.

We continue to support as many charities and local groups as possible including Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, raising £592 by selling their Christmas cards. We also raised £830 for Breast Care Now last year with our "Wear it Pink" day. We continue to support the Air Ambulance raising £244.36 and the Royal British Legion.

We would like to thank Bradfield May Fayre for their donation last year. We happily support local organisations and events by donating prizes and selling raffle tickets.

All the activity in the Stores would not have been possible without our hardworking team of both paid staff and volunteers and of course the Management Committee who give up their time to ensure the shop runs smoothly.

There are many people who contribute to the success of the shop and the P.O. Those not yet mentioned are, of course, our customers. We thank every single one of you. Please continue to support us in 2024!

4. Standby Volunteer Drivers (prepared by Jeremy Caddy).

The Standby service is based at Theale Medical Centre and serves the residents of the villages of Bradfield, Theale, Englefield, Stanford Dingley and Calcot. The service is designed to help clients attend medical appointments at local hospitals, general practices etc. The service is staffed by volunteers who provide office support and/or driver's roles.

The service is financed by donations from our clients and grants from various organisations such as Parish Councils and fund-raising organisations. We pay our drivers £0.45 per mile to cover the fuel costs. Our other main expenses are insurance, telephone costs, and DBS applications.

We were able to complete 239 appointments during the year which is slightly more than last year.

Our total income for 2024 was £4,493.58 which included a grant from Bradfield Parish Council of £600. Our expenditure for 2024 was £4,779.62 so we made a slight loss.

We are grateful to the Parish Council for their support.

5. Bradfield WI (Prepared by Helen Hyde).

2023 was our best year for new members, increasing from 40 to 60 – a brilliant result – we are always delighted to welcome new members.

Our year started with celebrating the Coronation. We've had a variety of speakers – including the hilarious Joyce Meader, with her history of knitting with the string underpants and the mermaids tail to name a couple.

We then explored the textiles of Jordan, enjoyed a lovely evening at the Douai Pavilion and a picnic at Barn Elms Lakes - a glorious setting.

In the Autumn, Emma from Mrs B's kitchen entertained us followed by a talk on the Falklands. In November Tom Morath from the Hawk Conservancy Trust kept us spellbound with stories of birds. Our Christmas party was the largest ever and rounded off a very busy and successful year.

We were out and about visiting John Lewis in Reading for a fashion bonanza and the wonderful Farley Railway Museum.

We've started a craft group – all members welcome.

We fielded a full team for the May fayre, serving tea and cakes to the masses and did the same following the Remembrance Day service. We had a stall in the village hall Christmas market, and we continue to look after the War Memorial each month.

We have completed our speakers programme for the coming year and are looking forward to entertaining, stimulating and fun evenings with friends – new and old.

6. Gardening Club (prepared by Tony Powell).

The new season is just starting for the Bradfield Gardening Club. Our first meeting for this year is on Thursday when we have over 80 people booked in to hear Chris Beardshaw talk on, 'Creating a Chelsea Garden for the NSPCC'. This will be followed by other interesting speakers each month up to September. We also have interesting garden visits planned, including our usual day's coach outing. Full details of our programme can be seen on the Club website (Bradfieldgardeningclub.org) or in our newsletter which is available in the village shop.

7. Bradfield Cricket Club (prepared by Helen Borthwick).

When one thinks of the English Summer cricket season, one likes to imagine a group of players out on a peaceful sun-drenched cricket field. This has not been the case in the last couple of years as the field has been frequently under water and the rain has battered down on the pavilion roof. Several of Bradfield's matches were casualties of the weather last year and it was really frustrating to get together three teams each Saturday only to have the fixtures called off. We appreciate that it is the same for all teams BUT it is worse when a cancelled game gets us 7 points and we might have beaten the opposition on those occasions and received 22 points!

Consequently, the club struggled in the Thames Valley Leagues but all three teams managed to avoid relegation and will go again starting next month.

Our mid-week squad were luckier with the weather on Wednesdays and had a successful season; they are looking forward to another summer of Twenty 20 cricket.

Our Junior Section continues to flourish, and we run teams across the Under 13 to Under 9 age ranges in the Berkshire league. Our popular 'All-Stars' skills course for the Under 7s is already fully booked on Fridays for this coming year and so we have added another course to run on Thursday evenings. It will be good to see all the youngsters (and their supporting adults!) returning next month on a buzzing Friday evening for practice and Social and BBQ sessions!

The highlight of last year was the introduction of the Ladies section. Since forming, they have grown in number and over the winter months they have been extremely successful in a number of competitions. Bradfield Ladies Cricket Team is on the Berkshire Map!

The facilities at the club are superb and we offer a good standard of hospitality to visiting teams. The playing surface and surrounding outfield are well-maintained by volunteers under the leadership of our Head groundsman, Tim and are appreciated by both local and visiting spectators and players.

The club is also used by other local groups and has a growing number of Associate Members, some of whom come to watch the matches and support the teams. Others attend our social events such as the quizzes or get involved in other ways.

As the club moves forward, we are always looking for members whether it be playing, officiating or helping. We are part of the Bradfield community, and our superb facilities and setting have been much admired and, we hope, will continue to be appreciated by all those who visit the Cricket Club.

8. Girlguiding in Bradfield (prepared by Vicky Pratt).

1st Bradfield Rainbows is an ever-growing unit and excitingly has a growing waiting list. Having adjusted well to Rainbows now starting at 4 years old the unit spent last summer visiting Rushall farm and Thirtover Place. Over the Autumn and Spring terms they completed the Turtley Tastic Challenge Badge and the Adventures in the Dark Challenge Badge. This coming term we are looking forward to completing the Teddy Bears Picnic Challenge Badge and get outside and exploring!

2nd Bradfield Brownies have been going from strength to strength over the last year with new volunteers joining the team and new Brownies regularly joining the unit. They've had visits from lambs, a vet, celebrated World Thinking Day and most excitingly awarded multiple Brownie Gold awards which are the highest award a Brownie can earn.

1st Bucklebury Guides have also had a busy year spending lots of time outside last summer cooking and preparing to attend a festival style camp in the New Forest. In the past year, we've also visited Theale Fire Station, Code Ninjas, IKEA, Thirtover Place and getting out and about in the local area. We had a sleepover in February and one of our Guides went on a Girlguiding Southwest England trip to Jersey this Easter!

All three units enjoyed a District trip to Beale Park last year and are looking forward to attending Girlguiding Southwest England's Activity Day 'GLOW' in June.

We will be at the May Fayre this year so if you have any questions or want to pop by and say hello please do!

9. Bradfield Methodist Burial Board (prepared by Andrew House).

It has been a relatively quiet year for the Bradfield Methodist Burial Board, Tutts Clump in 2023-2024. During this time, we have had one addition to the resident congregation at Tutts Clump. Following a lifelong association with Bradfield Methodist Church, he now is reunited with his mother and numerous members of his extended family at Tutts Clump.

The post and rail fencing has been replaced, and together with the entrance gate, have been repositioned closer to the parking area. This enables easier access for visitors and more substantial gate posts now support the heavy metal gate.

Thank you to the local volunteers for their help, and to Bradfield Parish Council for your grant support towards the upkeep and maintenance of this local facility.

10. Bradfield May Fayre (prepared by Rosemary Balsdon).

We are looking forward to the 40th Bradfield Mayfayre on Bank Holiday Monday, 6th May after a successful one last year. A total of approximately £10,000 was distributed to all the local organisations in 2023. As it's our 40th anniversary we are hoping to gather a few of the previous May Queens and her attendants over the years to have a celebratory get together and come along.

The object of the Mayfayre is to be a local community get together event which is good value for money and enjoy some traditional pastimes. Maypole dancing, bar tent, teas, ice creams, plate smashing, games for the kiddies etc. etc.

We are very grateful to all the Mayfayre Committee both old and new. We always need more volunteers to take on minor and major roles. We need a large pool of dedicated individuals before and to help on the day. A lot of time and thought goes into the preparation of a show including dealing with the ever-increasing compliance requirements year on year. Our villagers' generosity and loyalty make our task of providing vital funds and donations to local community projects, charities and voluntary organisations much easier. We always hope to gather a good amount of money to distribute afterwards.

A special mention and thanks must go to our Mayfayre 2024 sponsors including Bradfield College, Parkers, Renegade Brewery, Steve Waters, Andrew Dawes of Boot Farm and McVeigh Parker in helping us meet our objectives.

Here's hoping the rain stops and the sun shines on us again and we all enjoy a fantastic afternoon and catch up with friends and neighbours. If anybody would like to join the jovial band of Mayfayre helpers, please speak to any of the 'hi-viz' stewards on the day.

11. Bradfield PCC report (prepared by Tony Powell).

The great news from the church is that our new Vicar, Steve Newbold was licensed last Wednesday. We warmly welcome him and his wife Caroline to the parish along with the parishes of Stanford Dingley and Bucklebury that he is also responsible for. These parishes are soon going to be formally joined as one benefice which is the formal church term for such an area of ministry.

The church has not been idle since the Rev Jules Gadsby moved on. The Rev Lynn Bliss has been doing a wonderful job of holding the fort, and in our church, there are many people who are involved in taking or organising services and keeping the show on the road. We had a lively Easter service at the end of last month but there are also quieter and more reflective afternoon services, 'Christ in the Quiet' which usually happen monthly. Do contact the parish office if you have any needs as we are there for members of the parish at all times of year.

We hosted the annual Tearfund Big Quiz last autumn which has become so popular that we need to use the village hall to fit everyone in. Another event is the very popular afternoon teas to which anyone is invited.

We are looking forward to an exciting year ahead with Steve and Caroline at the helm.

12. Thursday Coffee Morning (prepared by Nigel Neenan).

The coffee club is open every Thursday morning in the village hall, 10 am till 12 noon and all are welcome. We serve refreshments as well as homemade cakes and occasionally hot sausage rolls and tea cakes. A drink and piece of cake costs £4, and the proceeds go towards the upkeep of the village hall. We have been running for over 2 years now and have a regular clientele including some of the canine variety. Its run by three ladies, Ann, Emma and Dot who also bake the cakes. Special mention must also be made to Tony Powell who without fail provides at least one of the cakes that are sold every week. Feedback is consistently good regarding the quality of the food offered and the fact that the morning provides a friendly social venue for local people to get together. We are always on the lookout for anyone prepared to bake and donate a cake so if you fancy doing this, please come along to one of the coffee mornings and get to know us.

13. The Coffee Club - Friday Coffee Morning (prepared by Andrew House).

The Coffee Club continue to meet fortnightly on Fridays from 10.30am – 12.30pm in the hall at Tutts Clump Methodist Church. It's non-contributory and with no age requirements or limits, it's open to Anybody and Everybody in a warm and friendly atmosphere. There is plenty of lively chat, the opportunity to try word searches, adult colouring, seasonal arts and crafts, nail painting, reading book loans / exchanges, raffles with loads of prizes and so much more.

Thank you to Bradfield Parish Council for your continued grant support that enables free access to a safe and a warm welcoming space for community and friendship for all.

14. John Simmonds Trust (prepared by John Bishop).

It is 40 years since John Simonds died, a nineteen-year-old, full of life with, of course, hopes for the future. The immediate response by a small group of people in the village was to set up a Trust based at the derelict farm at Rushall Manor. And what a journey it has been since then, with enormous support from the Cumber family who own the site and generosity from surrounding family trusts and local people. Thousands of children have experienced the wonders of the countryside on farm and woodland visits and camps over the years. Many children's lives have been enriched, and for some it has been transforming. There are those who have camped overnight as part of their DoE Award. Others have been on scout, guide or Christian youth camps, {with the bonus of an opportunity to be baptised in the River Pang}. Many on school visits will have measured the velocity and more of the river and studied the rich aquatic life beneath the surface. For others Rushall Manor has been a place for family celebration or reflection, a place which always demonstrates the fullness and diversity of creation from the bluebells in the spring to the mystery and colours of autumn in the ancient oak and hazel woodlands. It was a major achievement to rethatch the barn this year and we are always grateful to loyal support we receive from the Parish Council and our local community.

15. Bradfield Historical Society.

Bradfield Historical Society has gone from strength to strength over the last year. At the last meeting, on Silchester, there were over 100 people. Speakers are fully booked for this year, and the following year. People come along from well beyond the parish. The website is strength of the Society.