

Minutes of Bradfield Virtual Annual Parish Assembly  
held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr. A. House (Chairman of Bradfield Parish Council), 10 parishioners, District Cllr. R. MacKinnon, Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).

Apologies: There were no apologies of absence.

Cllr. House welcomed parishioners to the 2021 Bradfield Parish Assembly. Cllr. House commented that there would not be a speaker or reports from the numerous groups and clubs operating within the parish as had been done at previous APA's. The light refreshments would also need to be DIY if required!

1. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019 were agreed and will be signed by the Chairman.

2. Report from the Parish Council (Cllr. House).

This report will cover two years of Parish Council activity because the programmed APA for 2019-2020 did not take place due to Government instruction for holding meetings and the restrictions put in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Your Parish Council continues to meet monthly on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. Meetings in May 2019 through to March 2020 were held in the Bradfield Village Hall Committee Room. Meetings from April 2020 through to May 2021 have been and will be 'virtual' meetings, held via Zoom. This has been an interesting challenge for Councillors, particularly in the early meetings, getting to grips with the technical aspects of equipment and connectivity and indeed the protocols of speaking and commenting initially all at the same time! Current Government legislation for public meetings expires on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 so our meeting on June 1<sup>st</sup> is planned to be a physical meeting.

The Parish Clerk for Bradfield for several years, Ms Julia Ives, retired from the Council due to poor health and ahead of the 'lockdown' coming into place, in March 2020. Our new Parish Clerk for Bradfield, Mrs Helen Pratt, has been in post since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and our June meeting will be the first opportunity that I will have had to physically introduce Helen to your Councillors. Yes, Councillors have been introduced and some will have seen Helen on screen during Zoom meetings, but we do have Councillors who attend our virtual meetings by phone line only. Helen has been a great addition and asset to the Council, bringing a wealth of up-to-date information as well as experience, helping to guide us through the technology involved with the Covid-19 legislation and restrictions.

I would like to thank your Councillors for their time, energy and enthusiasm for the Parish of Bradfield and for their continued help and support during the last two years.

Your Councillors for this reporting period were:

Mike Ashbrook - Cock Lane                      NAG Representative

Rosemary Balsdon - Dark Lane

Kimiko Dearing - South End Road      Vice PC Chair

Paul Henwood- South End Road      PC Footpath Officer & BVHMC representative  
Andrew House- South End Road      PC Chair  
Paul Isherwood - Bradfield Village      PC Incident Officer, Pang Valley rep  
Steve O'Riley - Heath Road  
Tim Wale                              - Tutts Clump  
Bob Wyatt                              - South End Road      Alms Houses rep

At this point previously, I have said 'we have vacancies. There was, however, an Election on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 for District and Parish Councillors and this included Bradfield Parish. As less than nine applied and registered an interest, all that did apply were automatically elected to the Parish Council. Three parishioners have subsequently volunteered and been co-opted onto the Parish Council, so currently we have a full complement of Councillors.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Paul Isherwood for his continued help before going to 'virtual meetings', in putting the notes together that appear in the Newslink each month, that I know so many of you read. They are only notes, and not the official 'minutes of the meeting'. The minutes are available on the Parish Council website, once approved.

Bradfield Parish is fortunate that many take a great interest in what happens within the Parish and are prepared to get involved. This has not changed during the Covid-19 restrictions with more parishioners attending some of the 'virtual meetings' than had attended the physical monthly Parish Council meetings. Many thanks also to those who volunteered to help and support the Bradfield Southend Village Stores by working in the shop as others were shielding and for assisting with the home delivery service that was set up and operated for many weeks.

Historically, planning has consistently taken the greatest amount of Council discussion times in meetings. The last couple of years have been no exception to that. The Parish Council are consultants to around 50 planning applications to West Berkshire Council annually. During the last twelve months there were 55 applications that your Parish Council commented on – we only objected to 13 of these, offering Support to 3 and No Objection to 39. The Parish Council is increasingly offering comments to WBC, for 'Conditions' to be applied to an approval, if it were to be granted, particularly where there are local reasons of concern. These comments have proved invaluable where Planning Applications have been taken to the Planning Inspectorate on appeal.

Applications have again been varied:

Single and two storey extensions, loft conversions, conservatories and orangeries, new build developments and 'change of use' applications. Retrospective applications, that is applications made to regularise what has already been done have also been made during the year. These are unfortunate occurrences particularly when permission is NOT GIVEN, and remedial action to reinstate or demolish is required. Listed Building applications and Planning Applications that also require a Listed Building application in tandem have been more prevalent this year. By far, Bradfield College has again been our biggest single client, in all respects, with Planning Applications, Listed Buildings Applications and certainly all the associated paperwork!

Not all planning applications are referred to Bradfield Parish Council for comment or consultation. A number of these applications are to discharge or comply with 'Conditions imposed', when permission is granted by West Berkshire Council or the Planning Inspectorate. Your Parish Council are commenting where applicable and appropriate on such applications, particularly with Planning Inspectorate decisions, where such 'Conditions' may or may not have been imposed.

There has again been several West Berkshire Council planning refusal decisions that have been taken to the Planning Inspectorate on appeal this year. To date only one GRANTING of permission has been received during the last reporting year.

Highway issues always run a close second to planning applications at Parish Council meetings. The condition of the roads and the footways (pavements to you and me) in the Parish, continue to raise concerns. My thanks to Cllr. Mike Ashbrook who collated responses from parishioners, to send to West Berkshire Council, about potholes in local roads and damaged footways, following requests for details in Newslink. Markers in front of houses – bricks, rocks, lumps of wood and so on still persist around the parish. These can be dangerous for pedestrians, particularly with a greater number of residents partaking of regular daily exercise around our rural roads, keeping socially distanced, as well as damaging to vehicles. They are illegal, particularly when within a small distance of the highway, removal is enforceable should they be deemed to be a danger to the highway, and the landowner liable for any damage or injury sustained in the event of an incident! Speeding continues to be a major issue on many of our parish lanes and within our villages. Roads of particular concern are Ashampstead Road in Bradfield Village and South End Road in Bradfield Southend. The Parish Council has borrowed the SID equipment from West Berkshire Council to monitor and record speeds on these roads and on Cock Lane. West Berkshire Council have deployed their 'Smart SID' for extended periods along these same roads. These machines can operate in ghost mode – essentially recording but not displaying to the motorist their speed, it's not that the battery is dead!

Hedges and hedgerows continue to cause concern. Letters requesting 'cutting back' rather than 'trimming' have been sent to residents, where appropriate, in both of the last two years. It is important that hedges are kept cut so that pedestrians are able to use pavements, motorists can see signage and to keep site lines at junctions visible and safe for all.

Cars parked on pavements, in particular along South End Road are an ongoing issue, often forcing pedestrians onto the road to get passed. Thanks to Pete Harrod for his support in the storage and replenishment of the parish salt / grit bins and to all those who treat the roads local to them, as and when required. It is worth commenting that the provision of the Grit / Salt is made for use on ROAD and FOOTWAYS, and NOT for use on Private Property! Thank you.

Dog fouling issues on footpath and footways still remains a problem, with particular concern being along routes used by children walking to schools and at the college, as well as our 'green areas' around the cricket green and village hall playing field. Increased dog ownership

and daily exercise during Covid-19 restrictions have impacted on the volumes of deposits on both footpaths and in the dog-waste bins.

There have been 'emptying' issues of the parish 'dog waste bins' from both of the Parish Council's contractor service operators during the year, Covid-19 related in both cases at different times, but hopefully the situation won't repeat.

Another situation that we hope will not repeat was the arrival of 'Travellers' on the Village Hall playing field. Bradfield Parish Council involvement was complicated but in conjunction with West Berkshire Council, Bradfield Village Hall Management and Thames Valley Police resolution was found. The Parish Council funded the purchase and installation of bollards and the high level gate to secure the village asset for the parish. These are to be gifted to the Bradfield Village Hall Management Committee.

Members of the Parish Council have attended West Berkshire Council District Conferences, meetings of NAG, the Bradfield Village Hall Management Committee and Pang Valley in both physical and virtual meetings during this report period. The Parish Council has been consulted and commented on numerous topics during this reporting period, including the HELLA submissions for Bradfield Parish and submitted comment on other Parish submissions that would have implications on Bradfield Parish. Most recently comments and suggestions were made regarding the updated settlement boundary proposals for both Bradfield Village and Bradfield Southend.

The Council has agreed to the purchase of a defibrillator to be installed in Tutts Clump and three public benches to replace the damaged, ageing and missing benches around the parish. Grants to local clubs and organisations, within the parish, have totalled almost £8000 this year. Awards have been made to reflect the requirements of clubs and groups and Covid-19 restrictions.

The Remembrance Day Service at the War Memorial did not take place this year due to Covid-19 concerns. Thank you to all who placed wreaths at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday, these have been secured against unwanted removal.

The Bradfield Christmas Lights Perpetual Shield has been awarded twice since the last Annual Parish Assembly. In 2019 it was won by 'The Harris Family', South End Road and in 2020 it was awarded to 'Hollywell Cottage', Rotten Row Hill.

The Parish Council welcomes speakers / members of the public to address the Parish Council in the Public Forum at the beginning of the monthly Parish Council meetings. This enables you to express your thoughts, concerns and wishes directly to the Council ahead of or in conjunction with pending planning applications.

The council would like to thank all who have written or attended the monthly Parish Council meetings, and who have voiced their concerns and thoughts during the year. Hedges, trees, bonfires and clean air issues, youth activities and facilities, speeding and road problems, building and planning applications feature heavily in the public participation. Please

continue to voice your thoughts and take such active involvement in your Parish. Thank you for joining with us on this virtual meeting this evening. Let us hope this will be a 'one off'.

Cllr. House was thanked for all he does for the Parish.

3. Report from District Councillor (who joined the meeting almost as it closed having been at another meeting).

District Cllr. MacKinnon commented that for WBC the last year had been dominated by COVID; the Community Hub had been set up and supported/liased with 89 groups within the community, the Public Protection Group have been on hand to advise and free school meals have been topped up for those suffering from economic hardship.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> March WBC agreed an increase of 3.1% on Council tax; this was one of the lowest increases across the country.

In May, "Facebook live" sessions started to be held; six sessions have been held to date, enabling councillors to engage with West Berkshire residents. West Berkshire Council meetings have been available to view on YouTube and have received 15,000 viewings. Central Government have provided 91 million to support the local area. This has enabled prompt refund of home to school transport in addition to other things.

A new Community Fund is making up to half a million pounds available for Community Needs. As a result of the DEPZ around Burghfield, the proposed Grazely garden village is very unlikely to be developed.

WBC has just published its Climate Strategy and has introduced a Public Green Bond scheme. A new plastic recycling scheme is being introduced.

There are redevelopment plans in place for Newbury town centre and for London Road. It is understood that Next will be moving into the building previously occupied by John Lewis.

4. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm.