

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL BAWDESWELL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 6TH MAY 2021

The meeting was held under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 via Zoom.

Present: B.Cunliffe (Chair), P. Lilwall, A. Toomey, K. Ewing, A Hartley-Walder and J.Mallen

Mrs. J Boxall (Clerk)

Members of the public – 0

Cllr Bill Cunliffe opened the meeting at 7.15pm and gave the following report on behalf of the Parish Council.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020 / 21

I would first like to start by putting on public record my thanks and appreciation to all our Bawdeswell Parish Councillors who have steadfastly attended all meetings and worked tirelessly to ensure Bawdeswell is the village we all want it to be.

Together we have fought planning applications whenever necessary, we have done all in our power to ensure the public areas we are responsible for were properly maintained and we have carried out our responsibilities for maintaining the church grounds and its perimeters. We have diligently undertaken all duties we were required to perform, endeavoured to improve things that need improving and planned for the future of our village.

All seven Bawdeswell Parish Councillors are united in their determination to make Bawdeswell a great place to live. I am proud to be Chairman of a very strong council.

Finally on the thanks and appreciation front, I know all my Councillors will want me to thank Jo Boxall our Parish Clerk. She has steered us through stormy waters, nudged us in the right direction when we needed it, and always with smiles and skill so that most of the time we didn't even realise we were being nudged. Jo we thank you and are so grateful to have you as our clerk.

Over the last 12 months Bawdeswell Parish Council, like so many other organisations, has been subjected to CoVid restrictions. We have had to have Zoom Parish Council meetings for every one of our meetings. They ensured the PC were able to discuss matters and attend to their duties but I believe there is no substitute for 'In Person' meetings and we all look forward to the time we can meet in person at the Village Hall.

During the last 12 months the PC undertook to make plans for additional car parking spaces that would meet demand when multiple events were taking place in the hall, on the bowling green or on the recreation ground. We now have a plan for future car park improvements.

It was however, decided that the priority should be to try to solve the problem of the car park flooding, for which the last 12 months has probably been the worst ever. We have now authorised a local builder to replace the French Drains and install a pipe to divert all surface water to a main drain in an adjoining field. This work is to be commenced in July and it should solve the flooding problem at long last.

Another project was to erect fencing at the back of the churchyard, a PC responsibility. That work should commence shortly and the Council is grateful to the Friends of Bawdeswell Church for donating one third of the cost of the fencing, and also to Mr Rodway of Saxon Meadows for also donating one third of the cost.

This Council has spent much time in discussing and debating planning applications. We are committed to objecting to all applications outside the Settlement Boundary and have had some successes in our objections. However, Breckland have often totally disregarded the PCs views and I attended a meeting with the head of Breckland Planning and District Councillor Bambridge on Tuesday with Councillor John Mallen to discuss the situation. The meeting was frank but polite and I believe progress was made, however time alone will show

whether there is any change in Breckland's position. I have received emails from both Gordon Bambridge and Simon Wood saying they thought the meeting was useful.

It has been a difficult year for the Village Hall. The coronavirus restrictions have had a massive effect on bookings. For long periods during Lockdown, the hall could not be used. This obviously affected the income necessary to run the hall. Thanks to governmental donations and other donations, the Hall Trustees, with careful management of funds were able to keep the hall in its pristine condition, and be able to prepare for when the restrictions are lifted. The closing of the hall did not of course just affect the hall finances, it affected all the local people who enjoyed the many and varied events offered. The Hall Trustees are keen to prepare for re-opening and all villagers will be eager to return. The Trustees are fortunate to have a solid volunteer base to assist in the smooth running of all hall bookings.

Bawdeswell Heath has had a very busy year with many local people using the heath for walking exercise during the Covid restrictions and for dog walking. Unfortunately there has been some unwelcome activity by BMX cyclists trying to turn the heath into a racetrack but the Heath Trustees will continue to try to maintain the heath as the beauty spot it is, even though they have very limited funds.

Our church, All Saints has also suffered from the Covid restrictions, by sometimes not being able to open at all, to fewer people at funerals and weddings and always with social distancing and no singing by the congregation. Slowly as the restrictions are lifted there will be more and more people able to attend. Whilst governed by the restrictions, the church still needed to be cleaned, still needed flowers when appropriate and still required the organising of the weddings and funerals, so thanks to all those responsible for keeping the church available and a pleasure to visit.

Bawdeswell Store has again proved to be a real asset to ours and many other local villages. It remained open and was vital for all those in lockdown. The staff supervised the social distancing and the management made sure the shelves were always full. I wrote to McColls to thank the store staff and in particular the manager. The result was that Bawdeswell Store was the subject of an article in the McColl's Magazine. I like to think that that might have been one of the reasons Morrisons decided to take over our store with an intent to make the store a weekly shopping experience, as well as being a convenience store.

Well I like to think so.....

The Bawdeswell Garden Centre kept open whenever possible, and we are grateful to all their staff for enabling that to happen.

The PC have in the last 12 months, linked all the grassed areas requiring cutting, namely the recreation ground, the churchyard, the millennium garden, Adams Pit and the grassed areas of Bluebell Rise. This work will be undertaken by one contractor which is financially advantageous and much more manageable. We would like to thank Ken Bush who for many years did some of our grass cutting, and we wish him a happy retirement. Also thanks to Peter Good for maintaining the grassed area and plants on the Village Green. Over the years he has made the Village Green a lovely centre of the village and we thank him for doing so.

The Bawdeswell youth football team was also seriously affected by the CoVid restrictions, however, Jamie Snell and his team of helpers, have just re-opened their training sessions and we wish them well and good luck in the forthcoming season, now just months away, hopefully.

The Community Car Scheme had to cease operating at the beginning of lockdown due to the social distancing regulations. However, there were still people needing to get to the hospital and to surgeries for treatment, and Jackie was able to arrange transport in conjunction with Breckland Council. This Covid Contingency Scheme will end on 17th May (subject to the proposed lifting of restrictions) so arrangements are in hand to re-establish our Community Car Scheme once again.

The Reeves Tale continued to be issued throughout the covid restrictions so many thanks to Ann Toomey and her assistants and delivery team, for keeping us up to date with what's on in Bawdeswell and Foxley.

It has obviously been a very bad year for Kenny at The Workhouse Pub. He has done everything he could to remain open but the restrictions were so severe that most of the time he was closed. We all look forward to his being able to re-open fully , outside and in, and enable us to benefit from having a drink in good company.....

It is very difficult to look at the last year without feeling sad.

Many of our friends in the village died, many suffered having relatives pass away, many missed not being able to visit their close relatives and friends and many were not able to have the weddings and funerals they would have preferred. In these circumstances there is nothing wrong with being sad when reflecting on the last 12 months, but.....

What the last 12 months has proved, is that we live in a caring community and that our village has a wonderful community spirit.

Want some examples, then remember when an elderly Bawdeswell lady was cheated out of £190 by a team of so called gardeners, she paid by cheque and the bank would not cancel it. Two local benefactors together gave the lady the £190 it had cost her. That's a caring community.

When a Bawdeswell lady needed to visit her dying husband in N&N Hospital, her only means of getting there was by a taxi firm who were still operating during Lockdown. The taxi fare was £60 return. The PC paid for two trips a total of £120 after which, her husband sadly died.

That's a caring Parish Council.

We had the young homeless couple who were given a new flat in Bluebell Rise by Flagship, but coming from Hotel accommodation they had no furniture whatsoever. They walked into our church one Sunday morning begging for help and within two days they had a bed, fridge, table and chairs, cooker, curtains, cooking utensils and cutlery.

That's a caring community.

Another PC initiative is the Bawdeswell and Foxley Helpline, which has contact via email to well over 80 villagers of Bawdeswell and Foxley. It kept everyone up to date with local news, shops open, shops doing deliveries, arranging for young villagers to get shopping for elderly residents. It also had room for some very old jokes and funny pictures. That's a Parish Council caring for the community.

We have a caring community together with a caring Parish Council.

So despite the sadness we can also be positive and look to the future with confidence. This Parish Council will do its utmost and play a major part in the village's future.

In the coming year we will do all we can to improve where improvement is required, speeding in the village is a problem which we already have in hand, and to address activity needs for local teenagers. We will of course continue to listen to the concerns of our parishioners.

Bawdeswell is a great village occupied by good people who can rest assured that their Parish Council will continue to work tirelessly to make Bawdeswell the village we all want it to be.

Bill Cunliffe

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 19.30pm