

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT THE BENBOW CLUB, BOWERS GIFFORD
ON WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2017 AT 7.30 PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillors: R.Smillie (Chair): B.Foster: T. Potter:
Christine Barlow (Parish Clerk)

Members of the Public: 10

1. **Welcome:** Councillor Smillie welcomed all to the Annual Parish Meeting.
2. **An overview of the Parish Council Year:**

Councillor Smillie gave a brief report on the Parish Council's year. He reported the year had again been a busy one and gave a brief resume of some of the activities and successes the Parish Council had accomplished during 2016/2017.

- The Parish had applied to Basildon Council and had been successful in designating the Parish as a Neighbourhood Area to enable the Parish Council to devise a Neighbourhood Development Plan and have a say where development was proposed. The work to enable the Council to achieve its goals had progressed over the year and was now gathering momentum and an application for a grant to fund the engagement a consultant to provide technical support had been submitted to funding organisations and was awaiting confirmation.
- Councillors had taken part in John Baron's Fun Walk in 2016 and the funding obtained from the sponsorship received had been ring-fenced for future projects.
- The Parish Council had lost one Councillor, Matthew Phillips, but had gained two in the guise of Councillor Terry Potter and Councillor Sheelagh Pegg.
- Councillor Foster had represented Parish and Town Councils on the Essex County Council Local Highways Panel (LHP) and had managed, with the support of the Panel, to get several issues in relation to the Parish resolved including agreement to install barriers at either end of Old Church Road.
- The Council had been successful in requesting more improvements in Westlake Park and a container had been introduced to assist the Parish Council with storage. Basildon Council had offered to fund the linking of the

sections of the perimeter path in the Park and agreement had been obtained for some new signs in the Park and/or around the village. The Parish Council had accepted Basildon Council's offer to fund a Dog Agility Course in the Park. This project had proved controversial, however, it was considered it was another activity for inclusion in the Park and there were a large number of dog owners that used the Park to walk their pets on a regular basis who would benefit from the activity. In addition another dog bin would also be installed.

- The Picnic-in-the-Park Event was enjoyed by those who braved the weather and hopefully the sun will shine for the event in September this year.
- The third 'Parish in Bloom' competition took place and the standard of entries was again very high with more residents taking part.
- A helping hand was given to St Margaret's school as they successfully created the longest Paper Chain for the Guinness Book of Records.
- Numerous planning applications were discussed at Council meetings and Councillor's comments when passed on to Planners with measured success in some cases.

Councillor Smillie thanked the Councillors and the Parish Clerk for their hard work during the year.

3. An introduction to Neighbourhood Watch: Guest Speaker Clive Woodward, Neighbourhood Watch Borough Co-Ordinator.

Councillor Smillie introduced guest speaker Clive Woodward, Neighbourhood Watch Borough Co-ordinator to the meeting. Councillor Smillie commented that since a resident had introduced a Bowers Gifford Crime Watch and Local Information page on Facebook there seemed to be more of an appetite to reporting incidents of illegal activity. He urged more residents to report incidents of crime to the Police in order to receive a better response from the Police in dealing with incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Clive informed that he represented the Basildon District on the Essex County Neighbourhood Watch Committee and Basildon was one of 14 districts in the County covered by Neighbourhood Watch.

He gave an overview of the work of Neighbourhood Watch and informed that Neighbourhood Watch was a National Charity, run by volunteers, and had been running since 1980 and the idea had been imported from America. The organisation had been supported until 2008 by the Home Office but due to the Credit Crunch this funding ceased. However, in Essex, funding of £10,000 was received from the Police & Crime Commissioners Office to cover running costs but this was shared between the 14 districts so did not go very far.

He advised the aims of the Neighbourhood Watch were (i) to reduce crime and the opportunity to commit crime. (ii) to help reduce anti-social behaviour and pass on good crime prevention ideas (iii) to help reduce the fear of crime and encourage neighbours to look out for each other and (iv) to promote good relationships with Essex Police. The process was a two-way communication between the Police and the community.

He urged residents to report incidents of crime by calling 101 despite how insignificant the incident might be and that reports could also be made on-line on the Essex Police website.

He was currently trying to map out where Neighbourhood Watch Schemes were in the Borough. Some areas he noted were well represented but for other areas there was a void and unfortunately Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet was one of these areas. The previous coordinator had moved away and they had been unable to recruit a new coordinator or Watch members to replace her.

The co-ordinator was a link between the Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer, the Police and the Community. Each week the NW Liaison Officer would email crime figures for the Borough to the co-ordinator who in turn would pass the relevant information on to Watch members. Clive gave examples of the type of statistics which would be circulated. He hoped that by attending the meeting this would encourage residents to volunteer to become part of the scheme and kick-start Neighbourhood Watch in the Parish. He advised he would leave some forms, with the Parish Clerk, for anyone who was interested in becoming a member of the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to complete.

Councillor Smillie commented the Parish Council had been trying to encourage recruiting to a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme for some time and thanked Mr Woodward for his presentation and attending the meeting.

4. Open Forum: An opportunity for residents to ask questions of their Councillors.

There being no other questions on any matters from residents to Councillors the Chair closed the meeting at 8.10 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending.