

SWAINSWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report 2017/2018

Overview

In comparison with recent years this was a relatively uneventful year but during this period a variety of local issues which, in the main, were planning and highways related have been concluded.

As expected Mrs P Shutter left the Council after many years of service as a clerk and Councillor. Mr Tim Stuckes has been co-opted into the vacancy. In comparison with recent years Council activity has been relatively straightforward. However changes to the Audit Review procedures and the introduction of the new Data Protection Law (GDPR) has, temporarily, increased the clerical activity at year end.

Planning

There were twenty three planning items which included seven related to 'tree works', in a variety of locations. Prolific works continue at Beech House which were covered by five permitted planning applications. The activity at this property generated serious problems with vehicles as contractors parked along Tadwick Lane causing much frustration with residents.

A major development at Swainswick Primary school has been approved by B&NES. This proposal, Ref: 17/05354/FUL, is for the erection of two replacement classrooms following removal of existing modular classroom buildings. Parking may well be an issue again with this large project and the situation will be monitored over the duration of these lengthy works.

Three Enforcement procedures were initiated and these are still on-going.

Pitlands Farm

Enforcement investigating the potential unauthorised use of agricultural buildings for vehicle storage in relation to garage related works.

Four Winds Farm

Over 20 years ago an agricultural barn was destroyed by fire leaving just a metal framework. A replacement building has now been erected that is significantly larger than the original and did not appear to be for agricultural purposes.

The site is apparently being used by Bath & West Skips with many skips being sited at the location. Enforcement have been notified and the site has been visited. It is likely, at the very least that Planning and Change of Use applications would be necessary.

Beech House

In 2014 B&NES was informed that the garden curtilage had been extended into agricultural land. Following a change of ownership and extensive works this problem still exists. Enforcement have been reminded of this once more.

Park and Ride – Various Locations East of the city

After a considerable period of evaluation B&NES cancelled all proposals for this project. There had been extensive criticism from many quarters but the primary reasons given for the decision related to the difficulties and safety of access to the sites under consideration and the need to focus on immediate concerns of air pollution within the city.

Highways, Verge Maintenance and Footpaths

The cancellation of the Eastern Park & Ride brought focus on the road markings at the Gloucester Road/A4 junction. The 'temporary' revisions are still in place restricting the flow on outward bound traffic. This and the ongoing impact of the Deadmill Lane 'rat-run' on Larkhall, Ferndale, Brooklyn Road and Fairfield are unresolved and formal representations to B&NES have again been made.

The usual pattern of overgrown verges, footpaths and hedges was repeated but with regular contact B&NES, in the main, addressed most issues. Of note were the significant drainage problems along Tadwick Lane which were dealt with promptly with our primary contact, Peter Clark.

Bathavon Forum Meetings

A review of the structure of these meetings had been held and to make them more focused it was proposed to geographically split the meeting, separate ones being held for the northern and southern located parishes. Three meetings have been held and they are more productive than before.

Ward Boundary Review

The Boundary Commission is undertaking a review of B&NES electoral ward boundaries. During the consultation period there has been considerable reaction to this and the process has been extended. Recommendations will now be published in early August.

Notice Boards – Condition

The notice boards on the green and by the school are in poor condition and are to be replaced. The one by the green has been made and installed by a local craftsman, Stuart Feasey. He will progress the other one in due course. A contribution towards the funding came from the Alison Millar via the Ward Councillors Initiative scheme.

Administrative Changes

During the latter part of the year significant changes to procedures were scheduled. These were the introduction of a revised Data Protection Act, new external audit rules and, most recently, the need to publish members interests if relevant. As the Council has an operational web-site some of the requirements can be achieved by updating this. The government has recently been announced that Councils do not necessarily have to employ a Data Protection Officer which is a reversal of its original decree.

Finance

Our precept remains at £3000 per annum having been increased by £200.00 last year. With less expenditure this year we are financially secure with a respectable balance of £3692.00

The Audit for the year has been created and approved by Council on the 11th April and the new Certificate of Exemption has been authorised and sent to the external auditors, this being a part of the new audit procedures. The final papers are now being put on our web-site.

Jonathan Miles

Chairman of Swainswick Parish Council – June 2018