

Bishop's Itchington Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT

2013 to 2014



Bishop's Itchington Parish Council Review of 2013/14

The last year has been an incredibly busy one for the parish council. We have held 23 council meetings which is twice the scheduled number. This has been a direct result of the increase in the number of planning applications coming forward which includes the very contentious proposals for new housing developments in the village.

The council has played a significant role in the appeals process for the proposed wind farm between Bishop's Itchington and Gaydon, and also the Persimmon Homes housing development at the corner of Gaydon Road and Plough Lane. Both of these appeals were dealt with by public inquiries. The parish council applied for and was given Rule 6 status which enabled the council to play a full and active role in the inquiry. In the case of the wind farm, the enquiry lasted 2 weeks and was attended on most days by Cllr Kettle who presented the parish council's case against the proposed development. Cllr Kettle also attended the public inquiry in respect of the Persimmon Homes appeal and once again, presented the case for the parish council. The wind farm appeal has since been called in by the Secretary of State who will now make the final decision which is expected in August 2014. The Persimmon Homes appeal was upheld by the planning inspector who presided at the public inquiry and this means that this development of 81 new dwellings will now go ahead. In addition to the appeals, several planning applications have been determined by SDC's area planning committee which has also required the attendance and participation of a parish councillor.

With all the proposals for new development, there have been a whole raft of issues on which the parish council has been consulted. These have included traffic, highways, footpaths and landscaping. Councillors have spent a great deal of time discussing these issues and providing feedback to the relevant authorities and also developers. The council has been contacted by many residents who have raised concerns about the impact of new development and the council has worked hard to bring these to the attention of the relevant parties and continues to work towards viable solutions.

While planning matters have taken up a large proportion of council time over the last year, we have still had to continue with the day to day running of local services such as the grounds maintenance of greens, verges and other public open spaces. We also maintain the children's play area, the playing fields and pavilion and the cemetery and churchyard. The council is supported in this work by the parish clerk and a small team of people who include the cemetery manager, the litter warden, pavilion cleaner and play area inspector. The grounds maintenance is carried out by contractors.

Over the last year, the parish council has paid out £3,300 in grants to community groups. The council has supported the Memorial Hall, the Community Centre, BI Carnival Committee, Busy Bees, Bishops Itchington FC, BISA, Friends of the Yellow Land and BING. The council is always keen to provide help and support to village organisations in any way that it can. This could be by way of a grant or by providing advice or through membership of a committee.

Just recently the council successfully applied to have the Butchers Arms listed as an asset of community value. This list is maintained by SDC and means that in the event that the pub is offered for sale, the community will be given a window of opportunity to express an interest in buying the pub and time to raise the funds. It does not mean that the pub can never be sold or that it will always remain a pub but it does at least provide the chance for the village to save one of its greatest assets. Pubs are closing at an alarming rate all over the country which has resulted in a great social and cultural loss for many communities which no longer have a social hub. The council is keen that this should not happen to Bishop's Itchington.

We have seen some staff changes this year. In October 2013, Jenny Pickering retired from her post as cemetery manager and was replaced by Val Powell. In March 2014, Wendy Handy, who has been responsible for looking after the pavilion for many years, also decided it was time for her to leave. This job has been taken on by father and son team, Martin and Christian Cosgriff, who already work for the council as play area inspector and litter warden.

As we begin the new council year, we will be continuing to work with the developers for the new houses which are to be built over the coming months, to address any outstanding concerns that residents may have. We have recently held a meeting with WCC Highways to look at ways of improving traffic calming along the main road and these discussions will be on-going for some time. We have a new bus shelter on order and will soon be installing a community defibrillator machine. There will be many new planning applications to consider, not least the proposal for a solar farm on land off Plough Lane. We are also looking at repairs to the fence along the playing field, and various works in the cemetery. Overall, it looks as though 2014/15 will be another very busy year.

Alison Biddle
Clerk to the Parish Council

Reports from Village Organisations

Busy Bees

Busy Bees Pre-school is located in a private building on the school site. We are a sessional pre-school and take children aged 2-4 mainly from the village, but a few children travel from further afield.

We currently have 34 children on our register who attend a range of sessions throughout the week. From the term after their 3rd birthday children are eligible for 15 hours per week Nursery Education Funding and we try to deliver this flexibly thus giving parents /carers as much choice as possible. We are currently open 9-12 on a Monday and Friday and 9-2 on a Tuesday, Wednesday

and Thursday. We are also part of the Warwickshire 2 help programme, which offers financial support for some 2 year olds.

We have 5 members of staff who are all part time and very committed to the setting. Four members of staff have been with us for over 10 years. We have 6 directors, 2 of whom work at the setting and 4 of whom are voluntary, assisting as required. We are very proud of our highly qualified staff, we have 3 staff with degrees, one of whom is a qualified teacher and one has a degree in Early Years Education. Three members of staff are EYP's (Early Years Professionals) which far exceeds the national requirements for pre-school staff. We have organised a paediatric first aid course for all of our staff and have invited other local settings to join us as well as funding one of our directors and another lady who is on our emergency helpers list. With changes to the LA, less training is being organised by WCC and this falls to settings to arrange for themselves. By combining with other groups, in –house training becomes more financially viable.

We have a close working relationship with Bishops Itchington Primary School and visit the reception class weekly with our older children to ease their transition to school. We greatly enjoyed visiting the reception class recently to look at the chicks that they had hatched using an incubator. We enjoy being a part of the local community and recently had a visit from our local police community support officer, Katrina, who came along in her van. The children were able to sit in the back of the van and we enjoyed listening to the siren and watching the blue flashing light. We enjoy visits from Mrs Wingrove (reception teacher), Mr Hawkins (head teacher), and Mrs Tufty, who helps the children understand the need for road safety, and several parents who come in to read to the children. We have recently had a sponsored toddle and are looking forward to spending the sponsor money on new mark making resources.

Our contact details are in the Scene magazine. We are always happy to show prospective families around.

Claudia Potter

Bishop's Itchington Football Club

BIFC is a very active organisation in the village. We compete in two leagues – the Banbury and District Lord Jersey on Saturday afternoons with a first team and a reserve team, and in the Leamington Sunday League on Sunday mornings with one team.

Over the years we have enjoyed much success in various leagues, winning cups and trophies. Hopefully this will continue this season. The Saturday first team are in three cup finals and are in with a chance of winning or coming runners-up in the premiere division. The Reserves should finish in the top half of their division. The Sunday side are also in a cup final and could finish as champions or runners-up in their division, which would mean promotion for next season.

We use the Greaves Club as our headquarters, and they are our main sponsor. Even local football these days is an expensive business and financial support is much appreciated. We are also sponsored by Allwood Recycling Systems, run by Darren and Adam Wheeler, two young villagers, who used to play for Bishops.

The teams play on the village playing field and we are very grateful to the parish council for allowing us to use the pitches free of charge. We also use the pavilion, contributing to the running costs and upkeep. This building has been in place for 40 or more years and the football club, BISA and the parish council are beginning to look at a possible replacement, if funding can be found.

Finally BIFC is a very sociable club – just visit the Greaves Club on a Saturday after the matches, when all teams, home and away, share a pint and a bite to eat!

Pam Reason

Bishops Itchington Sports Association (BISA)

BISA is an organisation made up of people who have an interest in sport and improving sports and leisure facilities in the village. We were responsible for raising the money to build the floodlit tennis courts on the playing field ten years ago. The courts can be used for tennis, netball, five a side soccer and basketball. They are about to undergo cleaning, re-bonding and relining, with money part funded by WCC and our parish council.

Over the last few years we have been able to set up a very successful short mat bowls group which is now totally self sufficient. We raised the money to buy the equipment after identifying an interest amongst villagers. We have also bought equipment for badminton, which is held on Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall; tennis coaching for kids; basketball sessions and football training for youngsters. Unfortunately, at the moment, we are unable to provide the tennis and basketball sessions, due to a lack of people to run them. If anyone knows someone who would be able to help, we would be very grateful.

We take part in the carnival, running a game stall with a sporting theme and are planning to repeat the family picnic, barbecue and rounders that people enjoyed last summer. This will be held on the playing field in July. Come and join us!

Pam Reason

Bishops Itchington Nature Group (BING)

BING started life several years ago as the Biodiversity Action Plan Group, but that was such a mouthful and people weren't sure what it was all about, so we changed the name to something

simpler! Basically BING tries to improve the environment of Bishops for the residents and for nature. It is supported by the parish council.

Our first task was to begin clearing scrub on the Yellow Land, prior to the Heritage Lottery Fund project, which set the site up as it is today. Some of us are still involved with this project, managing the grassland for wildflowers, butterflies and other insects.

Then we thought to brighten up some of the verges around the village with planters. We made them using recycled pallets and have planted them up with a variety of seasonal plants, which either grow again of their own accord or we plant up again as the seasons pass. They need watering during the summer months and we hope that local residents living by each planter will keep an eye on them and give them a drink when needed.

Our third project was to investigate the far corner of the playing field. This was unmown and not very interesting from a wildlife point of view. We cleared it carefully to avoid damaging anything that might have been there. We then planted some fruit trees – apples, pears and cherries – some of which are old, fairly local species. A couple of benches, a desire path and some wildflowers have been added to make it a pleasant place to sit or wander and enjoy. We went a-wassailing in January to encourage the fruit trees to blossom and fruit well and have our fingers crossed!

We are open to suggestions for other projects and are keen to welcome new recruits. We meet every other Sunday morning between 10.30 and 12.30. Tools, coffee and biscuits and good company are provided.

Pam Reason

Friends of the Yellow Land

This group was set up with support from the parish council as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund project to restore the Yellow Land (part of the quarry spoil heaps) to limestone grassland (a very rare habitat in Warwickshire). The site is very important for several rare butterflies that breed there. These are green hairstreak, grizzled skipper, dingy skipper and most important of all, the small blue. This species depends on kidney vetch for food, which grows in abundance in and around the site. Until recently, the Yellow Land was the only breeding site in Warwickshire for this small butterfly.

The group manages the site by taking out hawthorn and blackthorn scrub re-growth during the winter months. This is important to keep the areas of grassland open to the light. The grassland itself, which is full of flowers, has to be cut and raked off at the end of the summer to ensure that the flowers return the following summer.

Several events and guided walks have been held and will continue throughout the year. These include butterfly and orchid walks, renovating the bug hotel, a moth night, trapping and identifying small mammals, mini-beast hunting and a photography session.

As there is an overlap of people who belong to both groups, Friends of the Yellow Land work in conjunction with BING. Work parties are held on some Sunday mornings, 10.30-12.30.

Pam Reason

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Since March 2013, the Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG), consisting of 3 parish councillors and 6 residents, has met 24 times; taken a stand at the July 2013 village fete; and carried out two opinion surveys (questionnaires) in July and October 2013. Throughout this period the NPG has received regular support and advice from the parish clerk.

Information on the plan's progress has been published in The Scene; on a dedicated Facebook page; and the parish council web site.

Designation status has been granted to the parish and, in April 2014, funds were allocated by the charity named 'Locality' to enable the plan to be progressed. These funds will be used to hold focus group sessions in April and May, and present the outcome of the sessions to residents in either June or July. They will also fund the artwork, printing and production of the plan itself later this year.

The NPG's timetable is to have the plan ready for submission to Stratford District Council (SDC) in December 2014. Assuming it is approved, following a consultation process undertaken by SDC, and passes legal scrutiny it will be returned to the parish for referendum to be held.

March 2015 has been set as the target date for the referendum and if the plan receives majority approval from residents it will then have statutory status.

John Beer

Memorial Hall

The Memorial Hall is managed by a small committee on behalf the trustees; the parish council. The hall is regularly used by a variety of groups including Rainbows, Brownies, Cubs and Scouts, Baby and Toddler, Bowls, Line Dancing, Senior Residents and Crafty Cuppa. In addition to this the hall is hired for parties and one off events.

In the last twelve months the small committee has put considerable effort into raising funds to refurbish the hall. The events have included several musical evenings and a Spring Fair. In the next few months we will be hosting a fashion show and an acoustic folk evening.

The reason for the fundraising is simply that the Memorial Hall is not just a village hall it is a memorial, gifted to the people of the village by the Lakin family in memory of the men who gave their lives for their country in The Great War. The hall was designed to be a centre of entertainment for the whole community; it was originally fitted with cinema equipment that was considered at that time to be state of the art.

The hall is 93 years old this year and looking a little tired; the committee have decided that as the centenary of the Great War approaches it is only fitting that the hall undergoes refurbishment. This is the drive behind our current fundraising efforts. Our initial projects include; refitting the kitchen, plaster boarding the main hall (this would include boxing in the unsightly pipes) and painting all areas of the building. We will then move onto modernising the toilets and making the garden more accessible.

The Memorial Hall Committee will be seeking funding to assist the financing of the refurbishment; we are committed to restoring this memorial to our fallen men back to a modern hall to be used by the villager as a centre for meeting and entertainment.

Carolyn Went

St Michael's Foodbank

In March we launched our foodbank in the village as part of St Michael's Church working alongside the main charity, The Trussell Trust. The foodbank serves Bishop's Itchington, Harbury and smaller surrounding communities.

Food poverty is something that can happen to anyone. Today people across the UK will struggle to feed themselves and their families. Redundancy, illness, benefit delay, domestic violence, debt, family breakdown and paying for the additional costs of heating during winter are just some of the reasons why people go hungry. Trussell Trust Foodbanks, provide a minimum of three days emergency food and support to people experiencing crisis, ensuring that the right professional agencies are engaged to offer advice. A voucher scheme operates to allow access to food given freely by the professional agencies dealing with frontline care in the community. Care professionals can be health workers, doctors, parish clergy, social workers, citizens advice bureaus, housing agencies, Sure Start children's centres and schools.

We very much look forward as a church to helping those who find themselves in the unfortunate position of being unable to have enough to feed themselves over the coming months.

Clive Purser