

Bishop's Itchington

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



Bishop's Itchington Parish Council

Review of 2014/15

Overview

Although there have been fewer parish council meetings than last year, the council still met on 14 separate occasions and this was despite the fact that for the first time in many years the council did not meet in August or January. Once again, the reason for the extra meetings has been the increase in the number of planning applications coming forward some of which have been for large scale and controversial development.

There has been some significant expenditure this year. We have had to carry out some very costly repairs to the play area equipment; we have replaced the boundary fence on the playing field and have installed a community defibrillator on the wall outside the doctors' surgery. Extensive work has also been carried out to the hedges along Ladbroke Road and in the churchyard where the hedge on the north side has been replanted.

The parish council has paid out £5,000 in grants to community groups. The council has supported the Memorial Hall, BI Carnival Committee, 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.

We were very pleased to receive an offer of help from a small group of people who were keen to take on some gardening work in the cemetery. So far they have cleared the overgrown vegetation on some of the older graves which no longer have anyone to care for them and have cut back the overhanging branches around the edge of the burial ground to reveal some long lost graves. We are very grateful to all the volunteers for their help as it has made a real difference. We also had the ivy and moss removed from the chapel roof and gutters and weeds were cleared from around the edge of the building and the drains.

We have seen some more staff changes this year. Early in 2014, Wendy Handy resigned from her post as pavilion cleaner. She had done this job for many years but had moved away from the village some time ago and now felt it was the right time to move on to something new. We were very pleased when Martin and Christian Cosgriff stepped in to help. Martin and Christian already worked for us as play area inspector and litter warden respectively. However, in May 2014 we were saddened to learn of Martin's sudden death. He had worked for the parish council for a number of years and was a reliable and hard working member of the team and he is greatly missed. In September we were pleased to welcome Jules Kirton as our new play area inspector. Jules carries out weekly inspections and has recently completed his RoSPA certified routine playground inspection course.

During the last year we have received the good news that both the wind farm between Bishop's Itchington and Knightcote and the solar farm at Deppers Bridge have been refused on appeal. We are grateful to the many hours of hard work by councillors, volunteers and council officers in the fight against these developments.



As the new council year begins, we face the challenge of further large scale development proposals both in our village and on our doorstep. The district council's core strategy for the Local Plan has still not been approved, leaving us vulnerable to speculative planning applications and our own neighbourhood plan is still a long way from completion and needs more support from local residents. On a more positive note, those housing developments which are already underway in the village will provide funds towards improvements to the traffic calming along the main road. A public consultation is being held later this week following which there will be further discussion between the parish council and WCC Highways before the final scheme is drawn up. It is likely that planning and traffic will remain significant issues for the foreseeable future.

We will soon be saying goodbye to a number of councillors who have decided to stand down at this year's election. We would like to thank all of them for their contribution over the last few years and wish them well for the future. We will be joined by 3 new councillors from May 2015 and we look forward to welcoming them in due course.

Alison Biddle
Clerk to the Council

Properties

One of the areas of responsibility of the parish council is that of 'Properties', this being the maintenance and upkeep of areas such as the cemetery, the playing field, the church grounds, the Yellow Land and general open green spaces. Within the last 12 months we have actioned the following

- The cut and laying of the hedgerow in Ladbroke Road
- Removal and replanting the hedgerow within the church grounds
- Replacement of damaged/broken equipment within the play area
- Replacement of the playing field fence
- The setting up of a working group for the improvement of the cemetery
- The setting up of a working group to investigate the potential of replacing the sports pavilion.

Without the support of volunteers and employees of the parish council none of this would have been possible. BIPC would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved for their continuing support.

Cllr Alan Heatley

Planning

Dealing with planning applications is an important and frequent task. This year, we have dealt with no fewer than 30 planning applications of all shapes and sizes, including both residential and agricultural. So it has been a very busy year, dealing with on average 3 planning applications each month.

Apart from the usual planning applications for extensions and conversions, we have also had to deal with two very large ones: the solar farm at Elms Farm, Plough Lane, and the Gladman application to build 105 houses at the back/side of the Knightcote Grange estate (Scowcroft Drive). With planning applications like these, which affect the whole village, it's vital that we make sure proper public consultations take place, so we know what you think about them, and whether you want them or not.

Considering planning applications for the parish is only one part of our job though. If we support or object to any planning application and it's referred to SDC's Planning Committee, then we're expected to send someone to speak for or against it. This we have done on each and every occasion, and there have been several of these, as anyone who's watched either the live or recorded webcasts of these meetings will have seen!

Then there are those other, equally important and far-reaching planning consultations, such as the proposed Core Strategy, the proposed development at Gaydon and Lighthorne Heath, and the alterations to Junction 12 of the M40, upon which our views are sought. The Supplementary Planning Document for the Gaydon and Lighthorne Heath development and the impact that this would have on the B4451 involved us in meeting and consulting with the upper echelons of SDC.

Yes, it's been a very busy year planning-wise but, we hope, a very beneficial one for the village.

Cllr Judith Christian-Carter
Vice-Chairman, Parish Council



Reports from Village Organisations



Busy Bees

Busy Bees are the busiest we have been for several years with children attending more hours. In January, Claudia Potter left as manager after many years and is staying on as bursar and director. Busy Bees is now being managed by Olivia Whatcott and Anna Wakelin, both have Early Years Professional Status and Olivia is a qualified teacher. We have been joined by Caroline Bance who is also a qualified teacher with Early Years Professional Status. We have been able to purchase several resources for outside from fundraising activities and our next project is to refurbish the remaining outside area.

Claudia Potter, Director

Bishop's Itchington Football Club

Sponsored by Greaves Club, Allwood Recycling Solutions and Lettings Avenue

BIFC has been playing football in the village for about 90 years. At the moment, we have three teams – 2 play on a Saturday afternoon in the Banbury League and the other plays on Sunday morning in the Leamington League.

We have recently enjoyed several seasons of success and this one is no exception. The first team played in the Lord Jersey Cup final, narrowly missing out on penalties; they are still in two more cups – the final of the Banbury Charity Cup and the semi-final of the Bethal Cup and will finish in the top half of the Premier Division. The Reserves played in the Eric Morris Cup final and after a really good game just lost out. They are one match away from the end of their league programme and if they win that they will finish as Division 3 Champions. The Sunday side are runners-up in Division 1 and are in the final of the Cancer Cup.



The Club has a good social side, using the Greaves Club as its headquarters and always has a really enjoyable presentation evening at the end of the season with individual awards as well as any silverware won by the teams.

We'd like to thank the parish council for their support over the years in allowing us the use of the playing field and pavilion.

Pam Reason, Secretary

Bishops Itchington Sports Association (BISA)

BISA exists to improve sports and leisure facilities in the village. It has been around since 1997. It is made up of representatives from various sports, and individuals with a special interest in sporting activities. The aim of BISA is to identify the need for improvements and to raise the funding so that they can be set up in the village. They don't necessarily run the activities themselves.

Its main responsibility is the floodlit courts on the playing field, which were refurbished last year. The playing surface was cleaned, treated, sealed and re-lined to allow tennis, netball, five-a-side soccer and basketball to be played. New backboards for the basketball hoops have recently been purchased.

The courts are free for village people to enjoy, unless they want a specific booking and/or the floodlights, when a small hire charge is made. People or groups from other villages can book the facility for a slightly higher fee.



Other successful activities have been short mat bowls and badminton. The bowls is played on Wednesday and Friday afternoons and badminton is on Wednesday evenings, both in the memorial hall.

We are supported by the parish council, for which we'd like to say thank you, and this year we are holding various fundraising social events to give ourselves a good financial platform and raise our profile. We will have a game at the carnival, a family picnic/BBQ on the playing field in July and a Question of Sport Quiz in October. Please come along and support these events and find out more about how we work. We have, unfortunately, had to cancel a Hambridges' meal in the Blue Butterfly Café, due to circumstances beyond our control but hope to re-arrange this at a later date.

Representatives of BISA, BIFC, the parish council and interested individuals have recently met to look at the possibility of raising funds to build a new pavilion for the whole village to make use of. Watch this space!

Pam Reason, Secretary

Bishops Itchington Nature Group (BING) & Friends of the Yellow Land

These two groups have amalgamated for ease of working and because there was an overlap of members from each and the aims were very similar. We hope everyone now knows where the Yellow Land is situated and will visit it at least once this summer. The best time is in May and June when the kidney vetch is in flower and the small blue butterfly is on the wing. However, all through the summer months there are lots of different butterflies, flowers, insects and birds to be seen.

There will be free family events during the coming months. We started in the Easter holidays with mini-beast hunting and bird nest building. In May and June there will be a couple of guided walks to look for the butterflies and flowers (hopefully lots of orchids!). In August, a moth trapping evening is planned and a sunset photography session. We are open to suggestions for other events so if anything else grabs your fancy do let Pam know.

Work parties are usually held every other Sunday morning (weather permitting!). Most of the winter ones are on the Yellow Land, keeping the hawthorn and blackthorn re-growth in check. However, BING also looks after the planters around the village and the mini orchard in the corner of the playing field. BING was originally called Bishops Itchington Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Group but not many people knew what on earth this was about, so we changed the name to something easier to understand!

We have been asked to look at a couple of ponds just off Plough Lane to see if we can improve the biodiversity (that word again! – it just means the amount of different species in an area). This project would run alongside the other ones that we are involved with.



Come and join us at one of the events or if you fancy getting more involved come along on a Sunday morning and get your hands dirty, have a chat, a cup of coffee and a biscuit!

Pam Reason, Co-ordinator

Neighbourhood Development Plan

It's a free for all! We're besieged by builders! Houses are too expensive! Where will our kids live?

These are all phrases you will have heard recently. Every day we are reminded that the village is changing around us, whether we are in favour or not. Since 2011, Stratford District Council has received planning applications for over 250 new houses in this parish. Does that meet the needs of the village? Does the community want all these houses?



What is a neighbourhood development plan and why should we have one?

The Core Strategy is Stratford District Council's plan to deliver around 11,300 new houses across the district, for the period 2011 – 2031. We have the opportunity to define the development that can or should take place in Bishop's Itchington, by producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). An NDP has the same weight as the Core Strategy once it is approved. It is an important document and can influence planning decisions. For this reason, NDPs are likely to be challenged by aggressive developers, so they **must** stand up to scrutiny.



Did you know that in November last year, Gladman lost an appeal in Winslow, Buckinghamshire because their proposal for 200 houses conflicted with an NDP? In that particular case the district council didn't have a 5 year housing supply so its own local plan was no defence.

Since last April...

Last summer, we began to draw together the basis of the plan based on community responses. In October, we asked Stratford DC's neighbourhood planning officer to review it. The news was not good. Only 10% of households returned the questionnaires, which is not high enough to base the plan on. We took independent advice on this and it has been confirmed that we need more people to respond – the closer we can get to 50%, the stronger our case becomes. We need the data to back up the plan, or it simply won't have any value.

So, what next?

We are going to get things moving again with the Bishop's Itchington's own NDP, but we need your help. Everyone is invited to our next meeting, which will be held in the community centre on 14th May, at 7pm. It will be quite informal, but we would like to hear your thoughts about the development in the village and your ideas for the future. Wherever possible we'll do our best to answer your questions too.

For anyone who would like to participate in the process and join the team, please come along, introduce yourself and have a chat about how we can work together. Whether it is just for a few minutes or longer, you are all welcome.

Because we need more responses than we had last time round, we will shortly be circulating a new and more detailed NDP survey to all houses in the village. If we get enough responses, we can continue with the process.

If you want to know more you can visit the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BINDP. You can contact us through the Facebook page, by email at bindp@hotmail.co.uk or via the parish clerk.

Cllr Adam Dugmore, BINDP Group

Memorial Hall

The memorial hall is managed by a committee and 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.

During the last year we have continued to raise funds to refurbish the hall. We have hosted a variety of fund raising events including musical evenings, two fashion shows and a Christmas raffle and there are plans to run three or four events before the end of the year.

The kitchen has been replaced; quite a job but it has made a big difference to the hall.

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. Due to that link with the Great War the committee decided that the hall ought to be a centre for people to come together on Armistice Day. We had no idea whether people would come along or not. It is fair to say that the committee were overwhelmed by the number of people who attended and the generous feedback we were given. Fund raising is hard work but seeing so many people (over 80 of them) all coming together to remember those lost in the wars simply revitalises the effort.

We are currently identifying funding streams to assist in the refurbishment project and hope by the next village report that we have another big piece of work completed to make the hall a more attractive venue for people of the village to hire for their celebrations.

Carolyn Went, Memorial Hall Committee

Editorial note: The memorial hall is managed by a committee of managing trustees appointed in accordance with the governing document provided by the Charity Commission. They are responsible for the day to day management and administration of the hall. The parish council is the custodian trustee which means that it has been appointed to hold the title to the property and this is the council's sole function in respect of the hall.

Bishops Itchington Primary School

We finished the summer of 2014 on a high note with some excellent Keystage 2 SATs results. We had above national average rates of progress in reading, writing and numeracy. The juniors performed a stunning version of the musical play, 'Shakespeare Rocks' to very appreciative audiences in the last week of term.

In the autumn term the whole of Keystage 1 and 2 studied the World War I. We visited the new World War I galleries at the Imperial War Museum and the children took part in a workshop examining original artefacts. As part of our project to mark the centenary of the war we worked on a large clay mural telling the story of how the war affected Bishops Itchington with the artist, Ros Ingram. The children drew sketches of objects related to the war and then created them in clay. We hope that the mural will be erected on an outside wall around Easter time. The children produced some exciting writing based on their work on the war and their pieces were published by Scholastic in a book in the New Year.

Our Christmas Fair was a tremendous success with over £1000 being raised for the school by Fobips. Many thanks go to Nina Harper and her Fobips team for their tireless work in organising the fair. As usual we used the fair as a learning opportunity and each class designed and made products to sell with the junior classes learning valuable lessons about profit and loss and team work.

We had an Ofsted inspection just before the end of the term. We were delighted with the findings of the report which was a very fair reflection of all the excellent work done by the school. We achieved a 'Good' grade in all the 4 areas and came out with an overall grade of 'Good'. The full report is available on the school's and Ofsted's website.

We've had a packed sports programme over the year with children representing the school in football, cross country, gymnastics, athletics, swimming, archery and tennis. Our football team performed superbly, winning the Small Schools' League for the first time in the school's history.

The school continues to build on previous success and has now had WiFi installed and has purchased 40 Mini I pads which will be used to enhance learning throughout the school. Our thanks go to FOBIPs who provided the funding for the I pads.

Richard Hawkins, Head Teacher

Bishops Itchington Carnival

The July carnival continues to be a huge success thanks to the committee members, the very many volunteers and everyone who joins in the fun both during the day and in the evening.

To raise funds to make the carnival day possible a number of additional events are held throughout the year:



- Christmas Tree Lights Switch On at the end of November, is a real favourite for many of us, well supported and the stars are a fitting tribute to those no longer with us.
- The Race Night continues to be a great night with many race goers and gamblers alike!
- Monthly pop quizzes held in the Greaves Club on the 1st Friday of each month.
- The summer 21 mile bike ride for the more energetic!
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Each year monies raised are split between the carnival and a number of village organisations and a registered charity. In 2014 those who benefited from a donation are:

- MacMillan Cancer Support (Annie's Angels)
- Scene
- Busy Bees
- The Scouts

Teresa Andrews, Carnival Committee