

Batheaston Parish Council

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Batheaston Parish Council held in
The Rhymes Pavilion on Tuesday 4th AUGUST 2015 at 7-45 pm**

Present :- Cllrs G Riley (Chair), P Blanking, C Bond, P Burcombe, N Clutterbuck, L Cook, V Drew, S Frayling, D Gledhill, S Hagen, P Jenner, C McCarthy, R Mimmack, H Smallwood and M Townley (Clerk)
In attendance: Cllr M Veal and Messrs W Beese, S Cast and P Johnston

C-977 Public Participation – W Beese

The Batheaston Society has “rescued” a burnt stump – the only remaining piece of the village Stocks destroyed by fire in the St Johns Church. It is intended to build a replica of the Stocks as made by John Cottle in 1833, hopefully in time for Society’s celebrations on 25th September.
The BPC owned the Stocks and permission sought to rebuild. This Meeting agreed and thanked the society for undertaking this project.

C-978 Public Participation – P Johnston

Mr Johnston gave an address re Traffic Calming and Village Development by the BPC and Committees, and his concerns as to their approach on these matters.
A copy of his address is attached to these Minutes.

C-979 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs E Adams, G Ward

C-980 Declarations of Interest

None declared.

C-981 Minutes of Meeting held 7th JULY 2015

Proposed	R Mimmack	}	RESOLVED (Unanimously)	- That the Minutes be formally approved as presented.
Seconded	S Hagen			

C-982 Matters Arising from the above Meeting

- (a) Additional cheque signatories are now being pursued.
- (b) No response from the B&NES solicitor about the election fiasco. Letter to Maria Lucas required. **RM**
- (c) RM attended the new “forum” pre-meeting which was well-conducted but with disappointing attendance from PCs. The first Forum Meeting set for September.

C-983 Pavement at the Shops

- (a) G Bottin advised today that the ‘gradient’ details have been finalised and that drawings should be available this week.
- (b) A company to complete the Safety Audit has been identified.
- (c) All businesses approached and, whilst pleased that, as ‘flat’ pavement is imminent, all are concerned about disruptive works affecting their businesses.

C-984 Receipt of Standing Committee Reports

General Purposes Committee – N Clutterbuck

- (a) There were no comments to recent minutes.
- (b) Standing Orders are in final drafts and should be circulated for the next BPC Meeting.
- (c) Some Councillors are not set-up for their Website email addresses. Being resolved. **DG**
- (d) The proposal to cover the Village by Teams in the 7 x different areas proposed and Village layout issued.
- (e) Proposals concerning possible leasing of the Gardens/Car Park/Toilet block issued for comment. Councillors need to consider and each Committee agree how to move forward.
- (f) Access to the Toilet Block made today and conditions and layout noted
- (g) Committees are reminded that a 6 x monthly review of Accounts is due and preparation of Precept requirements should now be being considered.

Highways Committee – S Hagen

- (h) Cotswold Area manager has advised that all post boxes will soon be repainted.
- (k) Advice on ‘weeds’ control sought from B&NES and action promised next week.
A trial of a “weed-ripper” might be possible.
- (l) Signs to control HGV traffic are being pursued. Cabinet Transport member should be advised of the problems with speeding/lack of adequate signs.
- (m) Survey completed recently of overlong stays in the Car Park – some 81% exceed the 3-hour limit.
The B&NES Cabinet agreed last week that the sign to legally enforce the 3-hour limits should be made.
- (n) B&NES asked to improve the Northend/Catherine Way signage.

Neighbourhood Plan – R Mimmack

- (o) The proposals in (e) above are complex and much study required.
- (p) There is an enthusiasm to re-open a toilet facility and investigations progressing.
- (r) Recognise the discussions regarding the Batheaston Garden about more trees/removal etc. but need to progress the Lease Agreement first.
- (s) Julie O’Rourke will attend the 15th September Meeting
- (t) The Terms of Reference now need a wider remit to recognise Localism Act provisions, and being pursued.
- (u) A name change to Strategic Planning committee proposed to recognise (t)

Proposed	R Mimmack	}	RESOLVED -	That proposed name change be approved, and that the above Reports be accepted as presented.
Seconded	L Cook			

C-985 Protocol for Attending Meetings

- (a) A paper was presented that proposed guidelines for attendance at meetings outside of Council/Committee Meetings.
- (b) All Councillors to consider this paper for discussion at the next BPC Meeting. Any comments to RM. **ALL**
- (c) The BPC Chairman has proposed a meeting with the Batheaston Church Hall (BCH) group. However a small number of Councillors at the initial meeting would be beneficial.

C-986 Unaudited Accounts for May & June 2015

(a) Accounts for July still to be verified by Cllr Adams – and refer to Budget

	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	
Income	18445.61	1133.44	577.20	566.72	£ 447 more than Budget
Expenditure	2275.23	7964.87	1915.32	9747.10	£ 3765 less than Budget

(b) Special Payments

Play Area Bark Chippings £240

Proposed	D Gledhill	}	RESOLVED -	- That the July Accounts, and Special Payment, are
Seconded	C McCarthy	}	(Unanimously)	approved

C-987 BLA Situation

- (a) A full Report from the BLA on proposals is promised.
- (b) A joint working group to discuss these proposals was agreed.

LC/NC/SF/RM

C-988 Bath Preservation Trust

- (a) The Trust Committee meets every two months and 14 Parishes are represented Recent meeting on 21st July attended and comments include:-
- (b) The Bath Preservation Trust reviews all planning applications for the Bath area and comments when necessary. Parish Councils are requested to submit any planning issues that they are concerned about to the BPT, prior to the meetings.
- (c) Some Parish issues discussed and advised on were –
 - i A design brief for repairs and works to buildings in the Conservation area of Englishcombe (eg timber windows rather than UPVC).
 - ii Development of a site (conversion to flats) in Charlcombe.
 - iii Collaboration between B&NES and the developers of a housing development in Charlcombe, regarding access to a proposed new school.
 - iv Mobile home issues in Kelston.
- (d) We discussed proposed repairs to the walls in the Secret Garden and were advised to talk to Paula Freeland, Team Manager of Planning and Conservation, B&NES. Also to take a photographic record of the walls in their current state of repair.
- (e) On the subject of the new pavement surface, consultation with English Heritage was suggested and also to refer to B&NES Streetscape Manual (April 2005). Batheaston should also have a Conservation Area Character Appraisal (contact Joanna Robinson, Conservation Officer at BPT).
- (f) In addition, potential A36/A46 issues were discussed and the Network Rail Programme and it's affect on listed bridges.

C-989 Councillors – Representations & Concerns

- (a) Proposals for the Cycle Path are proceeding well and listing issued to Paula Spears (B&NES). Much helpful participation with P Fear.
- (b) Clearance of the River Footpath BA 2/5 in progress with, again, very helpful assistance from P Fear.
- (c) Social evening next Tuesday – with sister PCs.
- (d) Routines with the Handymen are being established.
- (e) The Cycle Path improvements were established with Bathampton to “complete” the installation. An Ecological Study is being commissioned. MV advised that the River Regeneration Trust is to enter into a joint venture with the Canal/River Trust so a source of funds?
- (f) Key-holders agreed for the Noticeboards
- (g) This Meeting agreed to recognise past services, with bouquet and card – on behalf of all residents. **GR**

C-990 Meetings Timetable

- (a) New programme issued to reflect HFL alterations.

C-991 Chairman’s Report

- (a) Nothing to add at this time

C-991 Clerk’s Report

- (a) A large-scale map of the village prepared for possible mounting in the Car Park. To be improved. **HS**

C-992 Press Release

Nothing at this time

C-993 Date of next Meeting :-

Tuesday 8th SEPTEMBER 2015 at 7-15 pm in The Rhymes Pavilion

Chairman.....Date.....

An address to Batheaston Parish Council - 4th August 2015

By P. G. Johnston 250 High Street Batheaston BA1 7RA

Traffic Calming

Before traffic calming was installed in the village this Parish Council fully supported recommendations to “*Promote traffic management measures on the old A4 and the through the Garden High Street compatible with the Vision Plan design objectives and not solely on traffic engineering principles.*”

This did not happen throughout the village and Parish Council (alongside B&NES Council) have subsequently failed to follow up with any monitoring or evidence-based studies of its effects.

Nor did it act upon its own assessment published in the 2009 Vision Plan that “*traffic calming measures have been introduced, but are largely ineffective against excessive speeds to the detriment of pedestrian safety, amenity and the character of the village*” (a view that is now being denied but only in unqualified terms).

In Summer 2014 a petition was presented to Parish Council giving independent evidence that one installation in particular was not legitimate, could not therefore have been subject to any meaningful consultation with B&NES Council, and could only have been enabled by this council’s unwillingness to spend time and effort in ensuring village residents were best-served by traffic calming measures.

Despite this, between then and February 2015 the matter was not once placed on any Parish Council or HFL Committee agenda or recorded as openly discussed at any level.

As a result of this inaction B&NES Council officers also continue, to date, to act unhelpfully on the matter for which there is now extensive record of intentional misleading in responses to elected representatives and refusals to address concerns of village residents. For example...

In June 2015 Parish Council Chairman wrote to B&NES Highways on the subject of further “consultation” and to remind of the Parish Council decision of 24th March 2015 recorded in its published minutes as H-606(c).

The reply stated: “*Parish Council recognises the potential link between the removal of the speed table and an increase in traffic speed*” in contradiction of previous Parish Council conclusions. This was misleading interpretation of the last paragraph of the Chairman’s letter which, in turn, made no reference to paragraph four of that letter specifically requesting full removal of the table. In addition the claim that, “*...Modifying the table would mitigate this risk of increased traffic speed, as well as addressing the concerns being expressed...*” is another highly selective and divisive reply that ignores features other than size which contravene regulations and guidelines and unequivocally fails to address mounting concerns.

Those concerns now include the effects of some current Parish Council members confusing previous decisions on traffic calming with personal opinions, in either ignorance or denial of the facts of the above, fuelling divisiveness and dishonesty.

Added to this are concerns that whilst only reactive measures have been seen as necessary to resolve this particular matter it has recently been deemed appropriate to be pro-active on other traffic calming installations, as evidenced in emails from members lobbying B&NES Council on 29th June 2015 which were not part of any published Parish Council agendas or otherwise discussed at any level,

in contravention of openness and transparency principles set out by the Batheaston Forward residents group upon which the majority of current Parish Councillors were elected in May 2015.

I therefore urge you to take the time and effort required to improve communications on this subject, significantly and transparently alter your relationships with B&NES Council officers in order they serve our local community and not vice versa, respect your predecessors’ decisions, and change a democratically unacceptable status quo without delay.

Prioritising Village Development

The following information is given as part of the ongoing process supported at numerous Parish Council meetings. It is a brief analysis of the published 683 residents’ Think Tank Suggestions.

Of the total 683 listed as “suggestions” 162 are not in fact suggestions and neither pertain to Parish Council remits nor specifically to the welfare or improvement of the village, a statistic which brings into serious question the reasons for such labelling of those inputs by its compilers.

Of all that are relevant to improvement of village community life the largest single grouping is 48.

These represent strong desires to resolve issues in provision of a new Village Hall facility as the topmost priority. It compares to 17 in favour of (re)opening the public toilets.

The overwhelming majority of the 48 favour renewal of the existing site with no significance given to extra car parking and the increases in traffic through the village this would inevitably encourage (e.g. SVG ‘proposal’).

Despite this Parish Council has spent substantially disproportionate time and effort in supporting the lower priorities centred around development of the toilet block and car park area. In its support of this (the Corbett design) as a singular village centre it therefore ignores the weight of concerns expressed and how the existing village hall and adjoining open space is already well-established if not as a ‘centre’ then certainly a significant whole community facility for both indoor and outdoor events.

82 inputs (“suggestions”) on private commercial concerns are the largest single subject grouping.

However, they are neither relevant to Parish Council nor comparable to other data.

In the current proposal it appears that while some of those 82 inputs on retail development may have been selected to influence design elements (e.g. “*Convert toilets into another shop or cafe*”) others have been selectively ignored (e.g. “*Smarten up shop parade*”).

As a result there is no validation of efficacy for any ‘build it and they will come’ Parish Council support.

Despite this, and in support of its numerous presentations, further Parish Council encouragement of a proposal/design clearly outlined in the 2009 Vision Plan and who’s success relies wholly upon commercial development has been given.

It is unquestionably significant that the 82 opinions on personal retail preferences have been given precedence over the remaining 601 listed and in particular the combined 107 suggestions for opening Public Toilets (17), Community & Landscaping (42), Village

Hall as 'Village Centre Site' (48), in pursuit of fulfilment of Vision Plan objectives for a commercially-driven 'single centre' development.

Alternatively, inputs across different sub-groupings linked as concerns for improvement of the whole community number 145. Of these only 5 specifically refer to the car park / public toilet site.

This alone confirms the skewing of data in presentations to match predetermined design criteria.

One overarching suggestion (not applied to proposals) even predicted this outcome in recording "...*The summary of the 'Batheaston Vision Plan' was extremely subjective and made large assumptions about support from the village, clearly trying to put forward a particular agenda.*"

Furthermore, in addition to an undermining absence of a robust Business Case, no studies have been prepared on long-term effects of the Corbett design agenda upon either the immediate vicinity or wider area - the character and setting of the village. For example...

The new bridge and path championed in the 2009 Vision Plan has subsequently made the proposed village centre site its North/East focal point destination [A]. The South/West end has no destination point [B] in merging with Mill Lane to facilitate journeys to or from further destinations. In other words, as a designated route, it currently has a point A but no point B.

Whilst aligned with design objectives to "...*turn Batheaston into a popular destination*" and "*It is hoped ...improvements to the area would increase footfall, improve existing business and attract a broader range of retail opportunities...*" these fundamentally conflict with many Think Tank suggestions for Community & Landscaping (a large percentage of residents dissatisfied by the bridge and path were also revealed at the 2015 AGM) - e.g. "*Activities that bring the whole village together*" / "*Landscape area around cycle path*".

Support or progression of an urban or semi-urban style development design reliant upon retail operations (e.g. commercial boat hire) is therefore not merely failure to incorporate broader concerns it is also failure to fully consider its effects upon both the character and setting of the village, recorded as 145 various suggestions in Think Tank feedback and by the 2009 Vision Plan as "*97% felt it was*

important to maintain character and appearance" in which it is made clear in virtual unanimity how residents already enjoy the very wide range of retail opportunities in the city of Bath and being able to return to the comparative quiet of Batheaston.

The proposal to further alter the environment of the Northern riverbank [A] to a commercially driven/funded one may also lead to further and possible major developments in the rural village setting [B] because of the new connecting riverside path.

If supporting [A] no reasonable objective arguments could be made against incremental or irreversible developments of [B] wholly conflicting with the many environmental concerns expressed. No verified evidence has been given that this or any other long-term implications have been factored into the design presented to and endorsed by Parish Council and it is therefore an incomplete and divisive concept, in antithesis of the Think Tank consensus.

This briefest of analyses indicates quite clearly that following the Steering Group's 2007/8 pre-consultation for the 2009 Vision Plan with "*principal organisations and major employers in the village*" a plan to favour commercial retail-led development of a new and singular village centre over other residents' concerns has been transposed onto Think Tank data and without amendment. Such selective interpretative action taken by a very small number of individuals provides no mandate and is anathema to principles set out by the Batheaston Forward residents group upon which the majority of current Parish Councillors were elected in 2015.

Whilst this evaluation is critical of currently supported proposals and process there are simpler, less costly, more positive and appropriate alternatives for Parish Council to consider that are more in-line with residents' Think Tank inputs. To avoid further enabling of divisiveness resulting from the currently supported proposal I urge you to diligently include those considerations in your decision-making.