

Boldre Parish Council - Annual Assembly held on 17th April 2023

The following parishioners attended this Annual Assembly either in person or via Zoom:
Mrs Kempe, Rob White, Dan Poole (Zoom)

Boldre Parish Council Members present were:

Oliver Moore, Alison Bolton, Jacqui England, Patrick Kempe, Jo Humphreys, Sherwin Small, Vincent Slattery, Pamela Keen and Eileen Morton.

Plus Victoria Thomas (Parish Clerk)

Introduction

Parish Council Chairman Oliver Moore opened the meeting welcoming everyone to this year's Parish Assembly. His report is shown below:

The minutes of the last Annual Assembly, which was held on 11th April 2022 were approved by the Parish Council. They are available on the Boldre Parish website for reference.

Chairman's Report for 2022-23

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Boldre Parish Assembly 2023.

I'm glad to see you all here, both in person and virtually.

In addition to the day-to-day activities the Parish Council carries out such as ensuring that community facilities are maintained, reviewing planning documents and working with other bodies, the council tries to make longer term improvements to the community.

In the past year, the key focus for the Parish Council has been developing the recreation ground, primarily to facilitate the relocation of Pilley Community Stores. Over the past year, fundraising has been our key activity. In the past 12 months we have managed to raise over £36,000 from a combination of grants and most importantly, donations from our parishioners, community groups and businesses. With the current cost of living squeeze hitting both grant providers and our community, it has been amazing to see how generous people have been able to be. This £36,000 added to BPCs capital funding of £22,000 has given us a working budget of £58,000.

With this money we have been able to make a purchase order with Redlynch, our chosen equipment provider. Due to the poor weather over January and parts of March, the start of the installation has not happened as quickly as we had hoped. We are expecting work to start in late April/early May and expect it to take approximately three weeks. Whilst we are frustrated that the play area is not in place now, we are looking forward to having it available for the summer! We have not been idle during this delay, and have made progress in turfing the grass bunds with wildflower turf. We hope this will make an interesting "wild play" feature incorporated with the more traditional play equipment, as well as providing habitat for insects.

There has been a lot of effort put into this project from all of the Council. However, I would like to take this opportunity to specifically thank Sherwin, Jo and Patrick who form our amenities group for their tireless energy in driving the project forward. We are still looking for approximately £3000 toward the project in order to complete the proposed fencing and landscaping and will be continuing to identify funding sources for this.

Another major event in the past year was the Queens Platinum Jubilee. The community picnic was a great success, with a lot of the community attending. We even had a return of tug of war which is a traditional Boldre sport. We had glorious sunshine which made the day extra special and I think it was enjoyed by all. This was a real community effort and could not have been such a success without a lot of

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hard work. I have to thank Eileen and Jo for their efforts organising, and Patrick and Sherwin for their displays, as well as all of the community organisations who were involved and made this such a success. I think it was a memorable event for all and marked the platinum jubilee appropriately. A request from Parishioners following the extended power cuts this year was an Emergency Plan. Vincent took up this challenge and we now have a first version published on our website. We are still looking for volunteers to act as contacts for the plan, as well as ideas on how we can expand this further and make it more useful to the community.

Looking at our other activities in the past 12 months, we continue to work closely with community groups in the Parish. In the past year we have been glad to assist the Pilley players by offering them storage facilities in our sports pavilion for their production equipment. We were also happy to make a grant toward temporary staging for their performances. Our partnership with Lymington Sprites continues to go from strength to strength, with the contract for pitch usage renewed for another year. We have also made grants to St Johns and St Marys to assist with the upkeep of the graveyards there. We have made repairs to the bus shelter in Norley Wood to address the failing in the roof structure. We have also had repairs made to gates from Burnt House Lane to the recreation ground and at the entrance to Hudson Davis Close, and the installation of a new notice board outside Boldre War Memorial Hall. We also actively participate in the planning process, though not always to our satisfaction. A most recent explain was our concerns over the replacement for the footbridge at Norley Wood ford which was granted despite our objections.

Whilst reflecting on the past year, I wanted to take a moment to pay tribute to Councillor Lester Mortimer who recently passed away. Lester's contribution to the Council and all his efforts in the service of the Parish will be greatly missed. Always robust in debate and willing to roll his sleeves up and get involved, his absence will be felt both by Councillors and the wider community. Key things which come to mind include his work maintaining and reporting Highway issues, his knowledge of Health & Safety for our amenities and events, and fundraising for the play area. This only reflects a small part of the efforts he made as part of the council and his dedication to our activities.

With the elections in May 2023, a number of our Councillors are not standing for election. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillors Patrick Kempe, Eileen Morton and Jacqui England for all of their efforts in this past electoral cycle.

Keeping with the theme of changes to the Council, in December our longstanding Clerk Peter Lock retired from the Council in December. Peter has been part of the Council for over 7 years and has given sterling service throughout his time with us. Peter joined the council at about the same time I did and it was always a great experience working with him. He always looked to go above and beyond what was required and has been key in driving many of our projects to completion as well as keeping on top of the day to day business of the council.

With Peters retirement, I am very pleased to welcome Victoria Thomas to the Council. She's had a big task to take on but has approached it with energy and enthusiasm. It's been great to see some different ideas come into the council and I look forward to seeing how these can improve how we work.

Looking forward to the next 12 months, I would like to start by mentioning the precept that forms part of the council tax. The precept for next year has been set at £30,493. This is approximately 55 pence per week for a Band D home (the middle band) and is included in the total council tax each of us bears. For this the Council runs and maintains the recreation ground, the seats across the Parish and the greens in Boldre & Portmore. It helps with funding for grants to applicants representing local organisations or wider organisations which bring benefit to the Parish. Through this regular precept, the council is able to budget and build reserved to pay for major capital items such as play area equipment. In the financial year 22/23, BPC increased the precept by approximately 3% due to inflation pressure, for financial year 23/24 the precept has been increased slightly from the 22/23 budget at around 4%.

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A continuing factor in the increase is a general increase in costs, both in terms of the contractors we use and the safety and other regulatory requirements the council has to meet in order to provide safe facilities for use.

Over the last two years we have heard very clearly from a number of community groups about issues with traffic volumes, speeding and the status of the highway surface. The Council has continued to report potholes and write to riparian owners to address hedge encroachment. Whilst we have made some progress engaging with Hampshire Highways regarding drainage around Rope Hill and Boldre Bridge, we have not made sufficient progress on traffic volumes and speeding. We have agreed with William Gilpin for them to approach Hampshire Highways about speed controls around the school but we have not held the proposed community meeting on speed. The main reason for this has been that Hampshire County Council have been reviewing their overall strategy which is in its final stages of completion. As a result of this, it has not been possible to get Hampshire attendance confirmed for any community meeting pending the completion of the strategy review.

With the new council only having six members at this time, we will be looking for volunteers to join the Council. I think it's really important that the community understand that every councillor is an unpaid volunteer and there is a limit to how much time people have available. I would encourage Parishioners to actively engage with Hampshire Highways to report highways defects to the benefit of all.

On a more positive note, we have the upcoming coronation event this year to look forward to. BPC is joining with a range of community groups to celebrate the crowning of King Charles and it looks like being a great event. We will also see the completion of the play area and it will be great to see this facility restored.

In the next year, BPC will be looking to increase its community engagement. Victoria is currently working with the Community Shop to schedule a regular surgery so Parishioners can speak to her directly. We have also scheduled a first aid training course for the community, and hope to have more if there is demand. BPC will also be working with BWMH to install an external cabinet for our defibrillator to make it more accessible in an emergency.

I'm sure you'll be glad to hear I'm coming to the end of this speech. On reflection, I think BPC has achieved a lot and I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds. As I am not standing as a Councillor in May, I wanted to close this presentation by saying a big thank you to all of the Councillors past and present, as well as our Clerks Peter and Victoria, our Groundman's Adrian and to Mr Roger Bell for all of their hard work throughout my involvement with the Parish Council. For those councillor taking up positions in May, I wish you the best of luck for the future and will be happy to continue to assist where time allows.

I would welcome any questions you have.

End

There were no questions from the public.

The council reflected upon working objectives for the next year at Boldre Parish Council.

It was agreed that once the focus from installation of the new play area is completed as a council a focus should be put upon community engagement.

The council gave votes of thanks to the Amenities Group, which were unanimously supported.

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The meeting ended with Councillor Bolton sharing her outmost gratitude to the Chairman as he moves on from Boldre Parish Council in May. All council members unanimously joined her in praise and we formally thank Councillor Moore for his time at the Council.

In conclusion, Cllr Moore closed the meeting at 19:30

Signed.....

Date.....

Cllr Vincent Slattery Chairman, Boldre Parish Council