

BIRCHAM – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2024

Minutes of the meeting held at the Social Club on 15th May 2024 at 7.15pm.

Present: Cllr Gloria Daniels – Chair of the PC, chairing meeting; Simon Bower (Parish Clerk) and approximately 14 members of the Public, including Councillors.

2024.01

Cllr Daniels welcomed all to the meeting.

2024.02/03

The minutes of the previous meeting on 26th April 2023 were accepted as a true record and duly signed.

2024.04

Cllr Daniels presented the Annual Report from the Parish Council – text in Appendix.

2024.05

Chris Fellowes presented a report from Bircham in Bloom – text in Appendix.

Bryan Shaw commented for the Speedwatch Group. The Speed Awareness Module ("SAM" sign) had been in place long enough to complete a second run of the sites. The results were similar to the first. They showed the main problem area was from the 30mph sign to the South of Gt Bircham as far as the shop. A meeting taking place on 17th June at which Bircham would report this in an attempt to eliminate excessive speeding. Chris Morley suggested reporting this to the new Police and Crime Commissioner.

2024.06

Speeding was raised, and it was noted this was a problem with there being a lack of pavements. The Avada development did include a footway, which would only be on one side of the road. Chris Morley suggested that CIL could be used to pay for a pavement.

Meeting closed at 7.37 pm.

Appendix – written copies of reports (may not have been read verbatim)

Parish Council:

THANKS

During the year we had an election. Nine Councillors stood again David Howell & Barry Mele stood down.

We co-opted Lisa Palmer and Clare Wright-Thompson to complete the Council.

Since then, Malcolm Sargent has resigned and the co-option process for his replacement is ongoing. I would like to thank them all for their many years of dedicated service to the village. I would like to express our particular thanks to Malcolm for the introduction and administration of the Community Speed-watch in the village and the whole Parish Council for their diligence throughout the year.

PARISH MAINTENANCE.

The Council has done its best to keep the village clean and tidy by:

- relaying relevant issues to Norfolk County Council and The Borough Council
- the employment of Malcolm Page for grass cutting, tidying the Spinney and general maintenance. We also have two other contractors we can call on.
- supporting the work of volunteer Peter Hambly who looks after the Tofts Pond and its surroundings with great dedication. We have also had a high level of moles this year, which Peter has dealt with most satisfactorily.
- Also, many thanks to Councillor Hutchinson for carrying out regular checks on the defibrillator equipment on the council's behalf.

PLAYING FIELD

The Playing field has once again been well used, especially over the summer months.

The Council, is, as always, grateful to Councillor Rayner for ensuring the playing field equipment is safe and passes inspection.

The Council also thanks Bircham Cricket Club for keeping the grass on the playing field well maintained.

Special thanks must also go to the Cricket Club for generating such an interest in the Village Cricket Teams. We now "field" many teams in the senior and youth sections.

PLANNING.

The Council reviewed 18 planning applications over the year, many more than normal. The main application of 12 houses on the site to the south of the village has been reviewed on a number of occasions and we are satisfied thus far with the accommodations that have been made.

OTHER ITEMS OF NOTE.

- The Council increased its financial support of the Great Massingham Community Car Scheme, which is well utilised by Bircham residents.
 - The Council also contributed £400 to the maintenance of the church yard at St. Mary's.
 - The Council is, as always, grateful to the Church for printing and distributing the monthly newsletter, and gave a grant of £100 to the Church to help meet production costs. The Bircham Times started during the year and is an informative and pleasing read.
 - We gave £400 to the Social Club for accommodating the Post Office and Library on the car park.
 - Despite continued enquiries from the Parish Council, no more information has been forthcoming from the Norfolk Education or the Estate regarding the future of the school.
- It is pleasing to note that a constructive relationship is developing with the new Sandringham Deputy Estate Manager, and we are working closely with him over the flooding problems in Church Lane.
- The council are still funding the Bircham in Bloom group. Thanks are given to the whole of the group for their hard work in enhancing the look of the village..

COMPLETED PROJECTS

New Notice boards at the bus shelter and at Bircham have been installed, not only do they look better, but they are much easier to use.

We held a Councillor training session in the Social Club, which was very informative.

We have a new Council website, there are still some things waiting to be transferred but the system is much clearer, and easier to navigate and maintain.

-We installed the "Gym Equipment" in the Playing Field, this was possible by the utilising of available grants.

-We gave £500 each to the Church and Social Club to support celebrations for King Charles Coronation.

We agreed for the WW1 Memorial ceramic Poppy Wreath and the accompanying Chronicle associated with the names on the War Memorial, to be housed in a viewing stand in the Church. Thanks to Pierre Spake for organising the stand.

LOOKING FORWARD.

We have agreed to put a new Local Map and Information board to replace the existing one in the Spinney. We are awaiting quotes.

We have been looking at providing Allotments, there is still no final decision as we are awaiting costs, but it does look unlikely that we can afford this project. The Clerk attended a training session on "providing allotments"

We have formed a working group to look into adding items to the Children's Play Equipment area.

Bircham in Bloom

1 - Activities

- General maintenance, cutting back and tidying-up of BiB planting areas which include Jubilee Gardens, War Memorial, the Village Signs, the Bus Shelter, Churchyard Entrance, Playing Field Entrance, School Entrance, and Spinney (over 15 areas).
- New planting to a number of areas including the Playing Field Entrance, the Churchyard Entrance, the War Memorial, the Fring Triangle and to Village Signs.
- Cleaning of village signs.
- Compost bins in the Churchyard.
- Bee and Butterfly Hunt.

2 - New initiatives - BiB have asked the Parish Council to look at the options for planting to the triangle of land at the Fring Road/Snettisham Road junction (which BiB refer to as the 'Fring Triangle') so it could be enhanced with planting. BiB propose the planting of native plants (species to be decided). BiB aim to keep maintenance of this area to a minimum. Also, BiB would like to consider this as an initial trial area and if successful, utilise what we've learnt to plant other similar areas in the village. This land is owned by the Borough Council who have proposed a licence agreement to the PC which BiB have commented on.

3 - Membership and status - we've held eight meetings in the last 12 months. We currently have 13 active members. We are seeking new members, particularly from Bircham Tofts and Bircham Newton as all current members are from Great Bircham. New members will also help us take on more. BiB currently remains a sub-committee of the PC, but this will be reviewed again at the end of 2024. Terms of reference for BiB remain to be agreed.

4 - Communications - regular updates in the 'Bircham Times', the Village Facebook page and the BiB tab on the PC website. Regular summaries of our meetings are being published in the Bircham Times.

5 - Fund raising - £250 Councillor Community Grant. Fund raising event at the Church Autumn/Winter Fair.

6 - Financial position - as at 2nd May 2024, BiB's account balance (as agreed with the PC) is £1,411.89 comprising £1,252.34 held by the PC and £159.55 held in cash. BiB consider they have sufficient funds for this tax year 24/25, but would like the PC to consider a further grant of £800 for the next tax year 25/26.