

**BRIXTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY MARCH 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 AT 7.30 PM AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Present: Cllr Cane (chairman), Cllr Hitchins, Cllr Wills, Cllr Searle, Cllr Tapper**

**Apologies: Cllrs Hart, Foweraker, Lang, Aylett and Martin and the Police**

**There were 8 members of the public in attendance plus District Cllr John Squire and the Clerk.**

**1. Approval of Minutes from the last Annual Meeting.**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2010 had been recently circulated again to all councillors. Cllr Hitchins proposed and Cllr Searle seconded that they be signed as an accurate record of the meeting. Unanimously approved.

**2. The Chairman's Annual report (Councillor Basil Cane)**

1. Sherford further delayed due to UK economic climate. 106 agreement not completed by SHDC.
2. Final breakthrough on A379 pathway with DCC, Environment Agency and Kitley with an agreement. We hope that the path will be in use in the summer of 2011. Joint working group with Yealmpton councillors have yet to raise the funds for some of the work.
3. Our Village Green continues to impress and there was a delightful Christmas tree with real snow this year!
4. The village suffered badly from snow and ice for the first time for very many years. Parishioners will be pleased to hear that we have now agreed with DCC for 4 more grit bins at strategic places in the village. A vehicle towed spreader is under consideration for Brixton and Wembury for next winter.
5. The Parish has instigated an interest in helping those in our community with memory loss. Liz Hitchins is leading the project with Wembury, Yealmpton and Newton & Noss. Thanks to Liz for this initiative which will also bring local parishes closer together.
6. Work continues on the Parish Plan. We are now at the analysis stage prior to creating a plan to be printed and circulated to the parishioners
7. The "Friends of Brixton Play Spaces" started a major scheme to revamp all village play areas. The first one will be complete by the end of March 2011 with the others to follow. More funds need to be raised in order to move onto the next phase of work. Thanks to Liz Hitchins for all her fund raising work.
8. Work has started on Village Emergency Plan.
9. Thanks to Cllr Elaine Tapper who has taken on the P3 coordination role with DCC
10. We are delighted that Mr Cox has returned to School. Falling roles are a concern that Cllr Hart is reviewing with the education team at Exeter
11. The 'Welcome Pack' for new parishioners is nearly complete
12. The planning application from Viridor for an incinerator plant at New England Quarry was opposed by BPC. This application yet to be assessed by DCC.
13. The SHDC Local Development Framework proposal for land to the NE of Venn Farm for some 50 houses has been accepted by the Government inspectors.
14. Councillor Hitchins has launched a "Community Partnership" proposal in an endeavour to pull various parts of our society together.
15. 2011 is election year. You can see for yourselves that a lot has been achieved this year and we look forward to more parishioners putting their names forward for election on May 5<sup>th</sup>.
16. 2011 will be challenging financially for all. Fortunately, SHDC have said that they will not cut any front line services thanks to the financial foresight of the officers.

And finally, thanks to all the councillors for their work in the last year, to the Clerk for his invaluable support and to Graham Searle for our wonderful website. The ongoing support from County Councillor John Hart and District Councillor John Squire is appreciated as always.

Councillor Hitchins proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for his quiet and effective role as Chairman.

### **3. The County Councillor's Annual report (Councillor John Hart)**

Apologies from Councillor Hart who had emailed the Clerk with the following key points:

1. There has been no respite in the County workload since the Conservatives gained control last May.
2. In spite of the £54million savings required by Government, there will be no DCC Council Tax increase for 2011/12
3. I am delighted to have been able to support the parish with "Play space" funding
4. Pleased that at last the pathway joining Brixton and Yealmpton is to be a reality
5. The new grit bins supplied by DCC should help to alleviate mobility problems if we ever get a repeat of the snow and ice last winter
6. I am endeavouring to get the road up Red Lion Hill to Deep lane junction to be added to the 'primary gritting route' for next year.

### **4. The District Councillor's Annual report (Councillor John Squire)**

1. Thanked Cllr Cane for his kind words: it is always my intent to serve the District.
2. Shared Services with West Devon District Council continue to be developed. There have been discussions about a merger between the two District Councils but this is unlikely to happen in the short term.
3. The Sherford 'new town' development has made no further progress with an impasse developing between Redtree, the developers, and SHDC over the 106 agreement. SHDC are not allowing the concessions sought by the developer.
4. SHDC has achieved significant savings for next year's budget. The District council tax element will not increase next year. Front line services will not be reduced. Some savings have been achieved by a radical restructuring of the senior management team.

### **5 The main subject for this Annual Meeting was "Parish Councils: Why vote? Why stand?"**

- a) This was introduced by Councillor Basil Cane. Cllr Cane emphasised the need for parishioners to vote in order to ensure the continuation of the democratic process. Council needs younger members to get a better cross section of the community but time is clearly a difficulty for adults with young families. Please encourage everyone to join in Parish activities.
- b) Cllr Hitchins explained why we have Parish Councils and what they can do for the community. The NALC website, under the section 2011 elections, will give all the information to those seeking greater detail. The Parish Council is part of English local government and covers both rural and urban communities. There are 9000 Parish Councils in the UK !

Here in Brixton we have 770 dwellings with about 1400 residents. In spite of the small size, we have the same powers as Ivybridge Town Council. Brixton Council is determined to involve local organisations into the 'big society' and also to get closer to local parishes. The "Play spaces project" has been a good example with a lot of money raised and the first new play park opening in March. The pathway between Brixton and Yealmpton is under the control of a "Joint Working Group" and again funds need to be raised.

The Council wishes to improve the quality of life here in Brixton: less speeding traffic, less noise pollution, better hedges etc. Our funding of £13000 comes from a 'precept' paid by you through the SHDC council tax.

**c) Cllr Wills. What does a Parish Councillor do ?**

A Councillor is required to attend General Council Meetings once a month. The Agenda is usually the same format for each meeting :- Open Forum, Police Report, Devon Councillor Report, District Councillors' Reports. This is followed by Councillors giving reports on local issues & projects. Just to list a few :

Memory café, Village Welcome Pack, Village Emergency Plan & lately Parish Council Elections on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2011.

Another area that is included in these meetings is Planning. This is handled by a Sub Committee. All planning Application Sites are visited by at least three members of this Sub Committee. The applications are discussed openly and informally. Sometimes neighbours are involved. Following this, the sub Committee present their recommendations to the full Council. The result is forwarded to the South Hams District Council for their final deliberations and decisions.

The agenda ends up with any correspondence received by our Clerk that needs to be discussed.

I hope that you can see from this very short summary of a typical Council Meeting that we do not come here just to look good. There is much work to do and much is discussed.

However that isn't all that a Councillor does. When you a Councillor there is a lot to learn. There are courses to attend: some in the evenings, some in the afternoon and some all day. Subjects include :- Training for New Councillors, Planning, Finance, etc.

Other duties include joining various sub committees :-Planning, Brixton / Yealmpton Footpath, Community Partnership, Sherford Development to again name but a few.

These are some of the things that a Councillor does. No doubt I have managed to miss something out. Above all, all of us try to have personal contact with the people of this village. We listen to their views. We hear their problems. Sometimes we hear their moans. That is all a part of the commitment that we as Councillors have to the community. We cannot move mountains. We can only serve and do our best for our village.

**d) Councillor Graham Searle gave us a cameo of "Life as a councillor".**

My time on the Council has been fairly brief but certainly frantic !!

Our obligation as councillors is to keep in touch with parishioners at all times. It is so important to listen to others and present the group view to council and not just ome's own view. This involves stopping and chatting on the way to the pub or the post office.

Planning applications are interesting where we review the applications, meet the applicants and even look at the options. However, we can only make observations - decision making lies with SHDC.

I sit on various groups: Elize Hele & John Lanyon Trust, Pathway joint working group, etc. We need good ears and broad shoulders to serve the parish!!

The information about the council and its councillors are on the village website

### **e) The Clerk explained the rules about becoming a councillor**

- You must be over 18 years old
- You must be a British Citizen
- On the Brixton Parish Electoral role
- Have never been declared bankrupt
- Never been convicted of any offence or have received a sentence of imprisonment
- Do not work for Brixton Parish Council

If any of you wish to apply to be a candidate on May 5<sup>th</sup> you must complete the necessary application forms available for the Election Office at SHDC (Tel: 01803 861234). The closing date for applications is noon on April 4<sup>th</sup>. They must have been received at the Election Office and ‘approved’ by that date. (Do not trust the post!)

### **6 Any other business.**

- a) Dementia services. Cllr Hitchins reported that the first meeting with interested parties and DCC had taken place on Feb 16<sup>th</sup>. In order to provide the services needed by the carers and sufferers, they will be asked to state their needs. A ‘steering group’ is to be set up. Next meeting Mar 16<sup>th</sup>.
- b) A379 Pathway. Last meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. DCC have now offered to provide and install a bridge walkway over Silverstream and adjacent to the main road free of charge. It has therefore been decided to create the full pathway and drop the idea of an ‘interim’ path.
- c) Play Spaces. The new play area is to be officially opened on March 19<sup>th</sup> at noon.
- d) History Group. At the first meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Chris Burt the historian from Yealmpton will speak on “Cofflete – the house that disappeared”. Graham Searle would appreciate old and/or new village photographs.
- e) Mr Trower expressed his personal view that any money spent on the new A379 pathway would not be money well spent because of the gradients involved.
- f) Mr Oates expressed mixed feelings about the pathway options but as Sustrans were clearly unable to deliver their “dream” route, he was in favour of the ‘deliverable’ option.
- g) Lobb Lane. Following a complaint, Cllr Cane will get the area cleaned.
- h) Flower bed by Lodge Gardens. Two parishioners have kindly agreed to plant this area to provide some good colour for the summer.

**The chairman closed the meeting at 8.46 pm.**

**Minutes prepared by M J Stickland, Clerk to the Council**