

# **BRILL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015**



### **INTRODUCTION**

This year we have again written an Annual Report, although this time it is expanded to include a review of the last 4 years, as the period of office for this council is almost over.

It has been a privilege for me to have been part of this small group of dedicated councillors for the past 4 years. Our Clerk and Financial Officer, Lesley Shaw, has ensured that we have kept to the task of improving village amenities. Just recently several villagers have gone out of their way to thank us for our efforts, which is much appreciated.

*Dave Munson, Chairman*

### **Review of the past 4 years**

Projects completed since 2011:

**The Bus Shelter** was built despite some opposition from local residents on the Square. It has proved to be both decorative and useful to those waiting for our occasional buses. Other uses have been as a shelter for cake stalls and singers welcoming the New Year. The building was entirely funded by a cash wayleave from Miller Homes for allowing the electricity supply from the Common to Colley Close.

**The Playing Field Path** was widened and resurfaced using funding from the Buckinghamshire County Council Local Area Forum (LAF). This path is now fit for purpose.

**The Jubilee Oak Tree** was planted on the Green in December 2012, to provide a living reminder of the Diamond Jubilee for HM the Queen. The first tree was provided by AVDC but it unfortunately succumbed to the gales of January 2013. A new tree was donated and this is now firmly established.

**Memorial Benches** around the village have been installed or renewed, particularly near the Windmill. This work has been part-funded by donations, with the balance from the PC. It is hoped to renew the seat on the Green next.

**The Moveable Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS)** again funded by LAF, has been monitoring vehicle speeds at 3 sites within the 30mph zone for the past year, in an effort to reduce speeding. Its electronic records show that drivers generally slow to close to the limit but, inevitably, there are those who persist in driving too fast. The maximum speed so far recorded was 60mph on Thame Road near the entrance to

Clarksfield Close. Do not be surprised if, as a result of the MVAS records, police set up a radar trap to catch offending drivers.

**The Memorial Hall Kitchen** has been upgraded with a new commercial cooker, fridge, freezer, microwave and water boiler, plus other equipment, again using funds from the LAF. The kitchen is now producing at least 180 lunches a day during school terms, feeding pupils at Brill and Oakley schools. This project is an excellent example of Brill people working together successfully, so thanks are due to all concerned.

**An AED Defibrillator** has been available for public use since July 2014. It is installed in a cabinet on the front wall of the Fire Station. The unit itself was funded by Brill Age Concern, while the cabinet was purchased from PC reserves and was installed by Bucks Fire and Rescue. While we hope that it is never required, the likelihood is that a life could be saved by prompt use of this device.

There follows a brief description of other projects which are on-going:

### **The Walks and The Windmill**

By the time you read this we shall have title in these two properties safely in the hands of the Parish Council, as completion of the purchase of the Walks and the simultaneous asset transfer of the Windmill is scheduled for Monday April 27th. A total of 66 households and individuals, plus 2 village groups, donated the amazing sum of £34,265 to make the purchase of the Walks possible. These donors form a true cross-section of the village and their generosity should be recognised by all. The PC provided the remaining £10,735 of the £45,000 purchase price from accumulated reserves.

Our records show that we began these negotiations back in January 2012, more than 3 years ago! Since then we have had a roller-coaster ride, dealing with different personnel at Bucks County Council and several different departments there all claiming an interest. Battling through all this, with distractions from minority interests within the village itself, has not been without its frustrations but the prize for the village is well worth it.

Following our major consultation involving the whole village we secured a clear mandate to proceed. The deal we have done means that the Walks will continue to be used as it always has been. We have also agreed with BCC that if any future Parish Council ever tries to sell the Walks then any overages (County Council speak for capital gains) will all go to BCC. This means that there will be no financial incentive to ever sell the land.

Management of the Walks will be performed by a newly formed group, composed initially from volunteers among the list of donors. They will be responsible for the management of the trees, scrub, grassland, pond and fences, with financial assistance from the PC. A formal management plan will be drawn up in due course.

We have also reached agreement with The Brill Society for them to manage the Windmill for the foreseeable future. They have exciting, imaginative and creative plans for its use and will be fund-raising for its maintenance.

## **Tea Dance**

A monthly tea dance started in Brill in January. Brill Parish Council was successful in securing some financial support for the initiative from Angela Macpherson, Buckinghamshire County Councillor. This meant that admission to the first tea dance was free.

The tea dance offers sociable fun for everyone. The numbers attending increased from 18 in January to 28 in February. £3 admission for two hours live music, sequence and modern dance, social banter and refreshments. 'What's not to like' I quote from one of the soon to be regular attendees. Please check the Parish noticeboard for dates throughout 2015.

Dance tuition will be given from 1.30 - 2pm, starting from Tuesday 19th May - Tea Dance 2 - 4pm. All abilities including beginners very welcome.

## **Update on S106 Money: Funding Sport and Leisure in Brill**

We are pleased to report that we have continued to support community projects to use the S106 funds granted to the village from the Colley Close development.

3 years ago we donated £10,000 to the Scruff Appeal, which raised funds for the completely new changing rooms now in use at the Sports and Social Club.

In the last year we have purchased and installed outdoor table tennis adjacent to the Sports and Social Club, paid for new mats and bowling machine for use in the cricket nets, and purchased a Kubota mower to keep the King George Vth Playing Field tidy.

Currently we are funding the upgrade of the football pitch on the King George Vth playing field. This will result in a new larger pitch, measuring 80 x 50 yards, which will be used for U11 and U12 9-a-side football, as well as touch rugby.

## **Budget/Precept**

The Clerk has worked very hard to keep spend within budget, indeed reducing spend in the following areas - insurance, general maintenance, bin emptying and street lighting. The present Parish Councillors have been committed to their term of office and therefore there has not been an interim vacancy giving rise to an election. This has also meant the funds allocated to elections have not been spent.

The precept has seen a slight increase for 2015 - 2016 to accommodate the maintenance of The Walks. It is prudent for a healthy Parish Council to maintain a reserve at a level equal to that of their annual precept.

The financial statements on the next 2 pages give the performance against budget for normal expenditure, plus the many extraordinary items of expenditure incurred through the past year. You will note that most of the extraordinary expenditure was funded by grants from external bodies, at zero cost to the village.

Total Bank balances are at an artificial high in the Bank reconciliation statement because the purchase of the Walks will not be completed until 27<sup>th</sup> April, while donations of £34,265 have been banked. Hence the reserve to be carried forward from 27<sup>th</sup> April is actually £81,088.02 - £42,627.20 = £38,460.82.

## Brill Parish Council

### Budget Position 31st March 2015

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Spend</u>	<u>Variance</u>	
Audit	300.00	333.40	-33.40	
Computer	100.00	82.50	17.50	
Insurance	2,000.00	1,696.87	303.13	
Legal	600.00	0.00	600.00	
Membership	300.00	282.40	17.60	
Office Rent	800.00	1023.56	-223.56	
Phone	600.00	586.95	13.05	
Print	500.00	252.50	247.50	
Salary	7,000.00	6,429.09	570.91	Clerk worked within contracted hours
Stationery	400.00	43.49	356.51	
Training	400.00	0.00	400.00	
Bins	1,100.00	644.80	455.20	
General Maintenance	1,500.00	606.30	893.70	
Common Maintenance	2,800.00	2352.19	474.81	£848 ELS grant
Grass cutting	2,000.00	1,670.00	330.00	
Street Lighting	3,200.00	2,516.96	683.04	
Donations	1,500.00	1,357.80	142.20	Includes £100 to allotments
Play Around Parishes	200.00	0.00	200.00	Not used this year
Hall Grant	2,500.00	2,500.00	0.00	
Election Reserve	2,000.00	0.00	2,000.00	No election
Loan repayment	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00	Not used this year
<b>Total Precept</b>	<b>30,800.00</b>	<b>22,351.81</b>	<b>8,448.19</b>	
<b>Reserve Spend</b>		<b>Reimbursed</b>	<b>From</b>	
MVAS	1,401.47			
Defibrillator	1,366.75	841.75	Age Concern Brill	
Cricket	5,219.55	5,219.55	AVDC S106	
BMH Kitchen	5,428.08	5,404.00	BCC LAF grant	
Table tennis	1,587.32	1,587.32	AVDC S106	
Kubota mower	8,711.00	8,711.00	AVDC S106	
Post Office	1,830.00	1,200.00	BCC LAF grant and	
		315.00	Brill Oil Buying Club	
BMH electrics	825.00	825.00	BMH	
<b>Total Reserve Spend</b>	<b>26,369.17</b>	<b>24,103.62</b>	<b>2,265.55</b>	<b>Net Reserve Spend</b>

**BRILL PARISH COUNCIL**

**BANK RECONCILIATION – FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2015**

**Balance as per Bank Statements at 31 March 2015**

Current Account	£ 45,784.11
Deposit Account	£ 35,303.91
Total Bank Account	£ <b>81,088.02</b>
Net Bank Balance at 31 March 2015	£ <b>81,088.02</b>
Add Value of Investments	Sold
<b>Total Cash &amp; Investments</b>	
<b>At 31 March 2015</b>	<b>£ 81,088.02</b>

**Cash Book**

Opening balance 01 April 2014	£ <b>45,073.60</b>
Add: Receipts	£ 95,156.43
	£ 140,230.03
Less: Payments during Year	<u>(£ 59,142.01)</u>
Closing Balance per Cash Book	
At 31 March 2015	£ 81,088.02
Add: Value of Investments	Sold
<b>Total Cash &amp; Investments</b>	
<b>At 31 March 2015</b>	<b>£ 81,088.02</b>

**Prepared by Lesley Shaw – Clerk & RFO**

**Potholes and water leaks**

Unsurprisingly potholes and water leaks are two subjects not mentioned by any of the party leaders in the run-up to the forthcoming general election, but are subjects discussed by the parish council on a regular basis. The County Council tell us there is no money to fill in holes in their roads, whilst Thames Water doesn't seem too bothered that it has holes in its pipes.

However, after numerous e-mails and telephone calls, white circles appear around the potholes and blue lines show where water is pouring from the ground (although why there is a need to mark these with coloured paint is not clear as the problems are quite obvious.) Eventually men appear, fill holes, dig holes, repair holes and refill holes. The (w)hole cycle then begins again.

### **Street lighting**

Unlike potholes and water leaks, streetlights are far easier to deal with. Mostly the lights work, but if they go out a man comes along and replaces the bulb. The cost of lighting the streets of Brill is however quite considerable, so the parish council is presently assessing whether it would be worthwhile changing to low energy lighting. An inspection of the existing lights will be made in the coming weeks and the council will then decide whether it is financially viable to make the change.

### **Working with Trinity Health**

The Parish Council has been working closely with Trinity Health, making a Councillor available to participate in their patient participation group. The information day for elderly and carers was supported by the Parish Council and a range of advice was available from Community Impact, Age Concern, local clubs and societies and financial bodies providing information on tax for the elderly.

The Clerk encouraged suggestions for future support and social groups. One of the positive outcomes of the day was the monthly tea dance.

### **The Common**

Over the years Brill Parish Councils have always wrestled with the (literally) thorny problem of management of the Common. Currently, thanks to the labours of 3 groups of people (Brill Village Herd, Friends of Brill Common and the Common Volunteers) plus 7 Dexter cattle and now 6 Bagot goats, the Common grassland is looking better than it has since sheep grazing ceased in 1995. So, a vote of thanks is due to all those involved with volunteering to maintain the Common.

It is a pity that there is not better co-operation between the various groups of people who do this work, but we are where we are. Maybe the new Parish Council will be able to bring people together more effectively.

One task which the new PC will have to consider is revisiting the Common Policy Document. This set of rules is given to each household residing on the Common and it details what can be done in terms of track repairs and vehicle parking, plus much more. The crucial points to remember are that the Common belongs to the entire village, not just those who live on it, with the PC acting as the guardians of the Common.

From the PC's point of view, it is immensely frustrating when people living on the

Common flout the rules by using inappropriate materials to repair their tracks. Road planings (which are expressly forbidden) were very recently used to repair the track to Norcotts Kiln. The 3 householders there have been contacted and asked to either remove this surface or cover it with Type 1 aggregate.

### **Devolution**

Buckinghamshire County Council would like to devolve grass cutting services to the town and parish councils. Brill Parish Council obtained quotes to carry out the work and considered working in a cluster with other parishes.

It was, however, decided by a majority vote that Brill would not commence with the services in April 2015 as it was generally felt that there is no financial benefit to forming a cluster and the cost to carry out the service, with or without forming part of a cluster, would exceed that of B.C.C.'s contribution within the first year.

### **Play around the Parishes**

We agreed to fund the Aylesbury Vale District Council's 'Play Around the Parishes' event again this year, and arranged for it to be during the Easter Holidays, after feedback from local parents. This event was 2 hours of free supervised play, including bouncy castles, outdoor games and face painting amongst the activities. We put some effort into advertising it and were pleased that it was well attended, with about 50 children and their parents enjoying the activities.

### **Community Action Day**

The Clerk represented Brill Parish Council at the Community Action Day at Lord Williams School. This was an opportunity for the pupils to explore what was available within their communities. The pupils presented their findings to the group with suggestions on what additional facilities they would like to be made available. Their suggestions expanded across all people profiles.

As a result of the findings from the pupils from Brill, the Parish Council is looking at opportunities for youth and film clubs as well as more support being available for the elderly in their homes.

### **Dogs**

There has been much debate and head scratching over how to prevent dog fouling, particularly on the playing fields, and how to protect people from unsupervised dogs running into the children's play area and the churchyard. We have done our best to try to encourage people to control their dogs and to pick up after them, putting up more posters around the village.

The Church has put up signs to remind people to keep their dogs on leads and we have spoken to local dog owners several times about this issue, many of whom are proactive in clearing up dog mess and reminding others to do the same. We have debated re-fencing the churchyard to prevent loose dogs getting in, however due to the hedges in this area, which dogs can get through, we decided this would be futile.

### **Brill Post Office**

It is proving to be a time-consuming exercise to bring the post office back to Brill. The PC and the Sports and Social Club have been working together to make it happen but, as yet, there is no prospect of a resumption of post office services any time soon. Positive action resulted in a grant from LAF for the small infrastructure changes which have taken place. However the current stumbling block is related to opening hours and staffing.

### **Brill Village Spring Litter Pick**

The second village litter pick took place on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March. A dedicated team of volunteers, including a number of wives and mothers who should have been celebrating Mother's Day, walked the highways of the parish collecting another mountain of general litter and larger items that had been discarded over the past twelve months.

This is such a worthwhile and gratifying event, so much so it would be a good idea to carry this work out twice a year in the future. Please look out for information and join a worthwhile event that can make us all proud of our village.

### **Hedge cutting**

You may have noticed that the hedgerows on the road sides in the parish have been trimmed during the winter months. The overgrown hedges had become a danger to motorists and pedestrians alike, impairing visibility and damaging passing vehicles, so an investment was made to ensure the safety of our parishioners.

This is not a legal responsibility of the Parish Council to maintain the hedgerows of the parish, it is however the responsibility of the landowners whose boundary hedges adjoin a public highway.

### **Donations**

Brill Parish Council has continued to support local initiatives, donating money to the P.C.C. to support maintenance work on the burial grounds and the URC in support of the library and community room projects.

Money has also been donated to Brill football club, encouraging local youth into sport, and the Royal British Legion to purchase a poppy wreath in remembrance of our war heroes.

**The Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May at 8pm in the Sports and Social Club. Please do make the effort to attend, as it is your opportunity to hear reports on the activities of village groups.

This year we have asked **Gigaclear**, the company providing 'ultrafast' fibre broadband service to rural communities, to attend this meeting.

**The Clerk's contact details** are: 01844 238662 or [brillparish@btconnect.com](mailto:brillparish@btconnect.com) and there is an answer phone when the office is closed. Normal opening hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9.15am until 12.45 pm in the Old Library Room.