

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2021

MINUTES of the Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting (APM) held virtually on the evening of Monday 19th April 2021 at 7.45pm.

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

Nigel Husband (NH), as Chair to the Parish Council, assumed the Chair for this Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting. NH commenced by welcoming everyone to Buckland's first virtual meeting and explained that as the 2020 meeting, due to be held towards the end of March 2020 had been cancelled, this evening's meeting would be covering the two-year period since we all met up in the Reading Room for the 2019 Annual Village Meeting.

NH welcomed Simon Elson (SE), who not only provides expert advice in regard to the conservation of the village pond and the village ecology but also, with his hard-working team of volunteers leads our annual pond clearances. NH explained that as, with Simon's help, a review of the pond and green management plan is currently underway Simon had kindly agreed to provide an update for us this evening.

Before inviting SE to speak, NH introduced Parish Cllrs Michael Bourke, Ianthe Cox, Alan Horden, Debbie Jones, Alan Pryor and Julian Steed and Sheena Boyce, Clerk, to the meeting, outlined the role of the Parish Council, and provided an overview as to how the contributions of individual Cllrs and the Clerk come together. It was noted that there were 23 parishioners and 1 member of the public in attendance.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

SCC Councillor (Cllr) Helyn Clack and MVDC Cllrs Simon Budd and Paul Potter.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2019

These had been displayed on the Parish Council Notice Board, published on the village website, and circulated to Cllrs. The motion to adopt the Minutes as a true and correct record was proposed by Debbie Jones, seconded by Michael Bourke, and carried by the meeting. NH, as Chair, signed and dated the minutes.

4. SIMON ELSON : POND AND GREEN MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

SE, talking to slides, explained that:

- the current review is of a plan that initially focused on the Pond and was adopted in 2011 and was extended to include the Green when the first 5-year review was undertaken in 2016;
- during the term of the 2016-2021 plan, regular annual volunteer work parties have continued, with an emphasis on aiming to control rather than try to eradicate non-native species and reflected an acceptance that the water level in the pond will naturally rise and fall seasonally;
- the willow tree has been subject to regular inspection and tree works have been undertaken;
- data collection has increased with photographs of fauna and flora being posted on the village website and new species including Great Crested Newt (a protected species) and Caddis SP have been recorded using the pond;
- the recorded presence of Great Crested Newts had prompted a need for consultation with Natural England to ensure any proposed maintenance will be consistent with legislation and good practice. As the current approach appears to be providing a favourable habitat for a wide range of pond species including Great Crested Newts, it seems prudent to recognize that a maintenance programme which can be accurately described as "more of the same" will be less likely to generate concern from Natural England than any new initiative or approach;
- although mechanical clearance may appear to have an initial visual impact, there are concerns about its effect on the integrity of the puddled clay liner, and, the recorded presence of Great Crested Newts requires further restrictions and controls. Resultantly, the proposal is to increase the number of volunteer days now and for the term of the next plan;
- a series of three dates is being proposed for volunteer activity this year, one of which will be midweek: 15th August, 26th September and either 24th August or 7th September (an August date falling during the school holidays, the other falling shortly after schools restart); and
- based upon the work undertaken thus far, and subject to any feedback this evening, the 2021-2026 review is currently likely to be light touch and the aim is to table a draft plan for consideration by the Parish Council at a meeting later this year.

A resident queried what impact the willow tree is likely to be having on the pond citing advice taken from the internet that had suggested “*Most sources seem to indicate that a full-grown tree of weeping willow size, will absorb about 80 to 100 gallons of water a day*”. Widely varying views were expressed, ranging from removal of the tree to be actively considered to reduce pressure on water levels and a suggestion village greens do not need trees, to the tree being referred to as a magnificent specimen that should be safeguarded even if this is to the detriment of the pond. SE noted the different views and, responding to a query as to whether the roots of the willow tree present a risk to the integrity of the puddling, advised that without undertaking investigations it is not easy to make a judgement on this.

A resident, who lives on the Green, expressed his view that the aesthetic of the green could be improved if the water level were to be maintained at a higher level and asked for the “*acceptance that the water level in the pond will naturally rise and fall seasonally*” to be revisited. SE cautioned that the circumstances now are vastly different to those that facilitated water being added to the pond, when Hanson was processing sand at Park Pit, added to which the recorded presence of Great Crested Newt adds a further layer of complexity. Notwithstanding SE noted the resident’s request.

NH thanked SE for attending the meeting to provide the update, thanked everyone present for engaging in the discussion and asked everyone to encourage friends and neighbours to take part in one or more of the volunteer pond clearance events being planned for the late summer.

5. CHAIR’S REPORT

Pandemic

“Clearly the impact of the pandemic on the nation has been dramatic and certainly in my lifetime this crisis has been the nearest to a war footing I’ve experienced, however there have been many positives and certainly the generosity and community spirit shown by the village in numerous small ways has been both heartening, and at a practical level made the lockdowns very much easier to bear for many people than it otherwise would have been.

Right at the beginning it was clear the village has a good portion of older residents, a fair number of whom might describe themselves as vulnerable. The Parish Council organised a simple postcard mail shot to all households, to identify if anybody might need help, and asked if there were any of the community willing to volunteer if needs be.

We had an amazing response, and, within 48 hours, had 40+ volunteers offering to help and run errands for those who could not leave their homes. Debbie bravely volunteered to be the ‘clearing house’ for requests, set up a WhatsApp group and employed some organisational genius to the huge benefit to many in the community who found themselves marooned.

Certainly in the first lockdown when there was most need, there was a huge hive of activity and, frequently, more volunteers than tasks. Quite frankly this was great community spirit. I would like to thank and congratulate everybody who was involved, especially Debbie, and I hope when this pandemic is eventually over that we can celebrate this spirit and keep it alive going forward.”

Shell Garage

“When the village gets together it does help influence matters and a good example of this was the redevelopment of the Shell garage. Like many developments, the initial proposals tended to ignore many of the neighbouring concerns; however a small working group, principally drawn from the residents of Tranquil Dale, and helped by Sheena, over a series of months, built up a constructive and collaborative relationship with Shell’s franchisee and contractors. They managed to negotiate a number of significant concessions which benefited local neighbours and the village as a whole. The liaison, which continued throughout the construction last year, has enabled a stronger conduit between the village and the franchisee, operating one of our principal businesses.”

Roads and Paths

“As I think I’ve reported in previous years the purse strings that we used to rely on for many conventional maintenance issues within the village continue to be squeezed and we as a village, have had to take on responsibility for tasks that used to be managed by Surrey County Council.

By way of example, the footways alongside the A25, had gradually, over many years, become overgrown and in some places impassable. Over a period of 5 years the Parish Council has used its amenity improvement budget to gradually clear a substantial volume of soil and vegetation from the A25 paths.

With the initial backbreaking work completed in 2019/20, we now included a budget to keep the footways clear as a revenue item and Burleys are contracted to complete this work in addition to the grass cutting in the centre of the village.

The focus of our amenity improvement budget has switched to increasing accessibility of the footpaths on Buckland Estate land. SCC Clack has extended her support to this initiative which helped us secure sufficient matched funding to purchase a combination of kissing gates and latch gates to be installed in place of stiles, on land to the north of the A25 Reigate Road. With the help of a local resident, who approached the Betchworth and Buckland Society for a grant, gates have also been purchased to enable stiles on a popular footpath that links Buckland and Betchworth. A sizeable consignment of gates has been delivered to Buckland Estate and the Parish Council is grateful to Dominic Sanders for agreeing to contribute to this initiative by arranging to install them over the coming months to replace the current ageing stiles.

New Local Plan for Mole Valley

The principal topic of our last parish meeting was Future Mole Valley, the name MVDC uses when referring to the preparation of a new Local Plan for Mole Valley. The preparation of the plan has taken longer than indicated at the outset and the latest information received by the Parish Council advised us it is hoped the next round of consultation will be this summer. If, as MVDC has indicated it hopes will be the case, the consultation will be a Regulation 19 Consultation any representations submitted will be appended to the Plan for consideration by an Independent Inspector. When it is launched, we would encourage you all to review it, as we suspect there will be a number of changes in this next round that we should be aware of.

Buckland Park Lake

As you will know, activities at Park Lake continued during 2020, as well as possible, subject to social distancing and lockdown rules and I am sure there was some relief when The SHAC was recently able to welcome people back.

In addition the estate has been working hard to complete the proposed activities centre and restaurant, I understand that they are intending to open as soon as they are able once the restrictions have been fully lifted, I'm sure we will look forward to trying out the fruits of this labour.

Dominic Sanders (DS), Buckland Estate MD, accepted an invitation from NH to interject with a few words. DS advised the launch of the Buckland Park Lake website is imminent and confirmed the current plan is, government roadmap permitting, for Buckland Park Lake to open to the public on or shortly after 24th May 2021. DS hopes Buckland Park Lake will be a positive addition to the village that will maintain its unique selling point as a venue offering tranquillity and an opportunity to engage with nature whilst making the venue more accessible and delivering a reasonable return on the investment for the Estate. For now, access is only available to those who prebook activities through SHAC or are members of the Estate's Fishing Club.

Climate Change

Climate change is becoming a clearly more significant issue for us all. MVDC has declared a climate emergency which, whilst sounding melodramatic, reflects a call to arms for all public bodies including parish councils to review anyway that they might reduce the use of energy and contribute to the governments commitments to make the UK ultimately a carbon neutral economy.

The Parish Council completed a review of its rather modest activities and has committed to "actively think about climate change in every action Council takes by Councillors incorporating consideration of climate change into their everyday thinking".

We have welcomed the establishment of Buckland's "Low Carbon Network", initiated by Ken Caldwell, and are pleased to have been able to make the Parish Council's zoom platform available to host meetings. This group seeks to bring together interested parties within the village to share information about initiatives that individual residents may wish to consider as we all try to reduce our carbon footprints.

Climate change is a big subject with many diverse perspectives, and we'd encourage anyone who has an interest to join the group and contribute.

Closing Remarks

Finally, my final note is a simple request is for the remarkable contributions, big and small, that were prompted by the pandemic, be repurposed, as we come out of lockdown, to deliver a few more willing boots to community activities such as the Pond clearances. We are blessed to live in such a beautiful part of the English countryside, and I don't think it's too much to ask that where possible we each give a little bit back to make sure that what we all cherish is maintained going forward.

6. BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS

Sheena Boyce (SKB) presented a summary of the full year accounts for both 2019/20 and 2020/21 with a comparison against budget for the year ending 31st March 2021, copies of which had been made available to the Meeting via links provided via the Zoom chat function(see appendix).

SKB explained that the higher income reflected grants secured to support the amenity improvements being made to our local rights of way that NH had already outlined and a receipt that represents 15% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charged by MVDC on the redevelopment of the Shell garage and the conversion of part of Buckland Court stables into a dwelling. SKB advised the CIL receipt is being held in a specific reserve until such time as one or more suitable infrastructure projects have been identified and confirmed the Parish Council will consult with the village on any proposals prior to the funds being released.

7. BUCKLAND VILLAGE CHARITY ACCOUNTS

Financials for the years ending 31st December 2020 and 31st December 2019 were displayed on screen and made available to download. Debbie Jones, Clerk to the charity, provided the following update:

Our village charity (registered with the Charity Commission as “The Buckland Parochial Charity”) has been operating since 1889 when it brought together the entitlement to an annual grant from the Henry Smith Charity and several small local charitable endowments. The Henry Smith Charity was founded by Henry Smith, a Salter who was born in 1545 and died in 1628. A wealthy man who, having no family issue, created a number of charitable trusts for the relief of the poor and needy - amongst other beneficiaries the Henry Smith Charity makes grants to over 200 parishes.

Our Trust Deed is extremely specific regarding how the annual grant is distributed, “*The object of the Charity shall be to relieve, either generally or individually, persons resident in the area of the Parish of Buckland as constituted in the year 1889, who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress.*”

The Trustees apply for a Henry Smith Grant each year which is approximately £2,500. Additional grants are sometimes available. The Trustees are currently Liz Vahey (Trustee and Chair), Martin Cantor (Trustee and Treasurer), Amanda Oakes Smith (Trustee), and Debbie Jones (Trustee & Clerk).

The Trustees meet several times a year to discuss any needs that have come to light and agree the distributions. There were distributions throughout 2020 to a number of Buckland residents and some one-off donations, including payment of utility arrears in one case. The charity also aims to give flowers or plants to the recently bereaved or those who are unwell. It can be challenging to identify those that are in need in the parish – the trustees welcome any suggestions and consider all requests.

The Clerk’s contact details are on the back of the Parish Magazine and also on notice boards in the Parish. It must be emphasised that names of prospective and actual recipients are never divulged to any outside source.”

8. QUESTIONS

Before drawing the meeting to a close NH invited questions from the floor:

A resident who lives in Rectory Lane expressed concern about an increase in the number of walkers climbing a farm gate to exit a field (onto Rectory Lane) instead of using a perfectly serviceable wooden kissing gate and footpath. The resident asked the Parish Council to attach a “Do not climb this gate” sign to the gate. The Clerk relayed SCC Countryside Access advice that (i) notices installed by public bodies (including parish councils) should be limited to directional signs highlighting the correct routes for users to follow ; (ii) since SCC declared a climate emergency the Countryside Access team actively discourages the use of laminated signs and (iii) anyone raising other concerns or requests should be advised to contact the landowner. DS confirmed to the resident that Buckland Estate is the correct point of contact for the gate and field in question.

A resident, who lives on the Green, asked whether the Parish Council might consider installing a Christmas tree in the village and suggested the Village Green as a suitable location. NH agreed to add consideration of this request to a future Parish Council agenda.

9. CHAIR’S CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you all for attending tonight and especially thank you to Simon Elson for giving us his pearls of wisdom as to how we can keep the village Pond for the future.

Whilst running meetings on zoom does reduce the commute, I do sincerely hope the 2022 meeting will revert to the more traditional setting of the Reading Room where we can all meet together as a group and ensure that everybody has still got legs.

I once again thank you for attending and I wish a very good night.

Appendices

- Buckland Parish Council Financials 2020/21 vs 2020/21 Budget and 2019/20
- Buckland Village Charity 2020 & 2019 Accounts
- Annual Report submitted by SCC Cllr Helyn Clack (previously circulated via the village email group and displayed on the main Parish Council Notice Board in March 2021)

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING : 19TH APRIL 2021

EXPENDITURE (Vat excluded)

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Parish Amenities

	Actual 2019/20 £	Actual 2020/21	Budget 2020/21 £	Variance Act vs Bud £
Village Green and Pond	2720	1874	3000	1126
Verges, Footpaths, Rights of Way	0	1249	1100	-149
Village Website : Hosting/licences/support	205	215	215	0
Maintenance parish assets	6	165	50	-115
Contingency	0	0	50	50

Subtotal 2931 3503 4415 912

Council Running Costs

	Actual 2019/20 £	Actual 2020/21	Budget 2020/21 £	Variance Act vs Bud £
Clerk Salary	9163	10255	9048	-1207
Council Training	350	225	600	375
Travelling Expenses	126	4	100	96
External Auditor / SLB	0	0	200	200
Internal Audit	130	100	145	45
SALC	185	198	198	0
SLCC	122	126	126	0
GDPR	35	35	35	0
Insurance	341	350	358	8
BPC mtgs - Room Hire	156	0	160	160
Parish Mtg Expenses	20	0	90	90
Office costs	476	766	700	-66
Contingency	0	0	74	74

Subtotal 11104 12059 11834 -225

Discretionary

	Actual 2019/20 £	Actual 2020/21	Budget 2020/21 £	Variance Act vs Bud £
Floodlighting to the Church	80	80	80	0
Subscriptions (Surrey Hills / GACC)	25	25	25	0
Amenity Improvements	3087	2942	1800	-1142
Local Support (S137)	0	0	0	0
Contingency	0	0	50	50

Subtotal 3192 3047 1955 -1092

Total Expenditure 17227 18609 18204 -405

INCOME

REVENUE INCOME

	Actual 2019/20 £	Actual 2020/21	Budget 2020/21 £	Variance Act vs Bud £
Precept	13771	14222	14222	0
Interest	35	7	0	7
MVDC grant re Localisation of Council Tax Benefit	822	845	845	0
MVDC grant re maintenance of areas for recreation	2127	2187	2187	0
CIL Receipt	0	5293	0	5293
SCC Member - Community Funding	0	1840	0	1840
Other contributions/donations/grants/local fundraising	1360	1697	0	1697

Total Income 18115 26091 17254 8837

Cash Balance / Unallocated Reserves : Inc / (Dec) 888 7482 -950 8432

31st March 2021	
Cash at Bank	22,101
Allocated Reserves	12,643
Unallocated Reserves	9,458

The Buckland Parochial Charity
Receipts & Payments Account
for the 12 months ended 31 December 2020

2019	<u>Receipts</u>	2020	2019	<u>Payments</u>	2020
£		£	£		£
	<i>Opening Bank Balances</i>			<i>Buckland Residents</i>	
806	Current	94	2,078	Miscellaneous Purposes	2,240
972	Reserve	2,953			
	<i>Other income</i>			<i>Support</i>	
589	COIF dividends*	601		Gifts & Plants	
3	Bank interest	1	500	Other support donations	
500	Donation			Bank Charges	24
255	Bank Compensation	250		<i>Closing Bank Balances</i>	
	<i>Grant received</i>			Current	1,079
2,500	The Henry Smith Charity	2,000	2,953	Reserve	2,555
<u>£ 5,624</u>		<u>£ 5,898</u>	<u>£ 5,624</u>		<u>£ 5,898</u>

***COIF Charities Investment Fund - Income Units**

The Charity holds an investment of 1,158.36 income units in COIF Charities Investment Fund, managed by CCLA. The value of these income units held at 31 December 2019 was £20,822 (2019 £19,565)

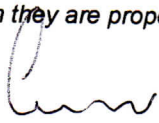
The Trustees have not needed to use their Reserves to enable them to meet special requests for support during the year, The Trustees believe their reserves are sufficient to meet all normal support payments until the next annual grant from the Henry Smith Charity is received.

Distributions from The Henry Smith Charity grant are made in accordance with their requirements.

The income from the investment in COIF Charities Investment Fund is applied for the benefit of beneficiaries or added to reserves as appropriate.

The above accounts have been reviewed by me and I confirm they are properly and fairly presented.

Date: 6 February 2021



M Cantor ACIS Trustee
& Treasurer

**CLlr Helyn Clack, Dorking Rural Division,
Beenleigh, Russ Hill, Charlwood, Surrey, RH6 0EL**

 07817 745843  helyn.clack@gmail.com  <https://www.facebook.com/cllrhelynclack/>

8th March 2021

[County Councillor Helyn Clack, Dorking Rural Division, Surrey County Council - Annual report 2020/2021](#)

I have been your County Councillor representing the County Division of Dorking Rural for the last twenty years. Dorking rural Division covers eight parish councils across many communities in the southern villages of Mole Valley including Beare Green, Betchworth, Brockham, Buckland, Capel, Charlwood, Hookwood, Leigh, Newdigate and Ockley at Surrey County Council.

The last year has been a year like no other. COVID19 has been challenging for everyone in different ways – loss of those dear to us, restrictions on our freedoms, huge changes, lack of social contact and financial worries. But throughout people have come together. Our communities have stood up and show remarkable generosity and care for our neighbours and those less fortunate. Across Surrey all agencies have worked together to guide the county through the pandemic. Our Councils – County, District and Parishes - the police, health services, Surrey Fire and Rescue, our schools and thousands and thousands of volunteers. Our County Council's Public Health Team have shown leadership right from the moment we had the first UK contracted case in February 2020, setting up a Surrey wide response to the pandemic within 48 hours of lockdown, handling over 10,000 calls, sourced, sorted and delivered over 10 million items of PPE to the frontline and delivered over £10million in grants to help care providers deal with the impact of Coronavirus.

To protect the NHS and each other, our Government told us we should stay inside and only go out for essential journeys, we should not hand deliver leaflets or knock on residents doors or attend meetings as we normally do, so we have all got to grips with Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor and Whatsapp social media platforms, meeting online and posting articles of interest.

To ensure we can continue to meet with residents, we have all had to 'go digital', using Zoom or Teams or other platforms, we have learnt to put up our digital hands, stay mute until asked to speak and turn off our cameras to improve connectivity when broadband is struggling. Many of the County Council Staff are working from home, some have been redeployed to support the vaccine delivery project or fill in for others when staff have gone sick from COVID19. And working from home is a struggle for those with families and children all vying for their time.

Locally, I have represented residents at Gatwick Airport, as Vice Chair of GATCOM, the airports regulatory body and as Vice Chair of the airport's noise management board (NMB). I will continue to make sure your voice is heard.

I have continued to work together with our dedicated parish councillors and district councillors, I have:

- Worked to give local villages more say on County services including, highways maintenance, speed reduction, clearing vegetation and youth services.
- Lobbied against unsustainable and unsuitable developments such as energy schemes, mineral extraction and housing development on flood areas
- Listened to and lobbied against inappropriate event licencing applications
- Devolved more power for decision making to local communities, through our Surrey Local Committees

Over the last two years, I have been honoured to have been the Vice Chair of Surrey County Council meeting many of the amazing voluntary organisations in Surrey who help to deliver County Council services to children and young people, older and elderly folk, countryside and environment. I am proud to live and work in this beautiful county division made up of our many rural villages and communities and appreciate the work that parish councils do and the important role they play as well as listening to your views and of all Dorking Rural residents.

Helyn Clack

Contact Helyn on her mobile  07817 745843 and follow her on Twitter  @helynclack

Promoted by Kevin Corcoran of Helyn Clack and printed by Mole Valley Conservatives, all of 212 Barnett Wood Lane, Ashted, Surrey, KT21 2DB.