

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2023

MINUTES of the Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting held in the Reading Room at 8pm on Monday 6th March 2023.

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME

Nigel Husband (NH), as Chair to the Parish Council, assumed the Chair for this Annual Assembly of Buckland Parish Meeting and formally welcomed everyone to the in-person meeting. NH introduced himself to the meeting and outlined the agenda.

NH explained that having dealt with the formalities, he would provide a brief Chair's update and introduce updates on the Parish Council financials and our village charity before inviting Dominic Sanders, our guest speaker to provide us with an Estate update to include how the Park Lake enterprise has developed since the last time this was discussed, just prior to its formal opening to the public.

NH introduced Buckland's Parish Councillors and Sheena Boyce, Clerk, to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to our two District Councillors Paul Potter and Simon Budd.

It was noted that there were 43 parishioners and 5 members of the public in attendance.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Martin and Stella Cantor. Matt Studholme.
Surrey County Council (SCC) Councillor Helyn Clack.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF BUCKLAND PARISH MEETING 2022

These had been displayed on the Parish Council Notice Board, published on the village website, and circulated to Councillors. The motion to adopt the Minutes as a true and correct record was proposed by Fiona Brindley, seconded by Simon Budd, and carried by the meeting. NH, as Chair, signed and dated the minutes.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

"Given the political chaos that central government has entertained us with over the last year the Parish Council has on the other hand done its best to "keep calm and carry on: and has effectively continued to progress a number of initiatives.

In the spring of 2022, surfacing work was carried out to improve the steep slope that runs adjacent to a section of the railway line between Lawrence Lane and Clifton's Lane. Agreeing a specification for the improvements required Sheena to spend many months negotiating with Surrey County Council. I should say that we should not call the improvements steps, as despite looking like steps and feeling like steps as far as the County Council is concerned if they were steps they would expect the Parish Council to take responsibility for them in perpetuity whereas as 'long sloping inclines supported by railway sleepers" they are happy to continue to fulfil their responsibilities !!!

When we met last May, this meeting gave its backing to a project to adopt the bus shelter sited opposite the village shop and to refurbish the roof. The shelter now has a handsome new hat of cedar shingles which we hope will extend its life for many years to come. As explained at the 2022 APM, the oak bus shelter was one of many donated to local communities across Surrey by Mr Strologo, a resident of Shamley Green to commemorate the silver jubilee of King George V. A plaque will shortly be installed to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II as agreed last year.

More recently the Parish Council arranged for the build-up of soil and vegetation from sections of the hard surfaced footways that run through Buckland alongside the A25 to be cleared. The Parish Council, working with SCC Councillor Clack, has continued to press SCC to complete more resurfacing to bring the standard of all the footways to match the section between the garage and Shepherd's Walk that was reconstructed in October 2021.

Please support the Parish Council lobbying by reporting any maintenance problems you encounter on the footways to SCC and asking MVDC to arrange a visit from the street cleaning team to clear any build-up of debris to help keep the footways clear.

Thank you to those of you who have taken the time to submit reports – please don't assume someone else will have reported a problem - it is much better for there to be multiple reports as the volume of reports highlights to SCC and MVDC how well used the footways are and will hopefully help Buckland to be prioritised..... so please continue to submit them.

We have been quite concerned that Mole Valley has now, for reasons only clear to themselves, having challenged the governments housing quotient, 'paused' the roll out of the new local plan policy document. Whilst we have no views about the political concerns in this regard, we do worry that in the absence of a current local plan, which effectively gives guidance in any potential planning appeal, that Mole Valley is vulnerable to sophisticated development proposals, that can now effectively avoid following policies which are not in place.

There is a recent example in Ockley where a development proposed for 60 new dwellings was recently approved by the Planning Inspectorate with a footnote suggesting that in the absence of a valid local plan, they had been unable to reach any other conclusion. I highlight this because I think it is all something we should all be concerned about and should be expressing our concern to our District Councillors.

I would like to thank everyone who turned out during the year to help at one or more of the three pond clearance events and the village tidy. Thanks are particularly due to Simon Elson and the Reigate Area Conservation Volunteers who led (and insured!) the pond clearance events and to Buckland Estate who kindly offer up assistance to support events and volunteer activity throughout the year.

We continue to manage village amenities which include:

- (i) arranging cutting of the grassed areas in the centre of the village
- (ii) recruiting volunteers to sign up for the RACV pond clearances.
- (iii) caring for the War Memorial, various benches, notice boards, the village sign, and the grit bins and now, additionally a bus shelter; and
- (iv) providing financial support to the village website.

As the amount of funded work from Mole Valley and Surrey reduces ever further, we are grateful to those local volunteers who quietly donate their time and expertise to help us complete tasks and deliver amenities that would otherwise require the appointment of paid resource:

I'd like to specifically thank Alan Pryor for his diligence in completing weekly checks of Parish Council maintained community assets and Martin Boyce, who, as our volunteer webmaster, works to ensure our village website is kept up to date, topical and interesting.

I also wish to thank each and every one of our residents we see "volunteering" to complete many other tasks around the villageseriously though, there are often tasks awaiting completion so if you would be willing to help out by taking on a small task as a Parish Council volunteer please let Sheena know.

On this subject as I mentioned in the article in the latest parish magazine, the four yearly "election" of Parish Councillors has come around again. Contested elections are held in parishes where there is competition for the number of places available on the Parish Council – in the case of Buckland we have seven positions available for Parish Councillors.

Whilst there has not, to my recollection, ever been a contested election in Buckland, we do have a specific reserve established to pay for an election in the event eight or more individuals submit nomination papers. In my recent article I invited anyone interested in becoming a Parish Councillor to take the opportunity to have a chat with me, one of my fellow Councillors and/or to our clerk and to consider coming along to next week's Parish Council meeting.

Buckland Parish Council is not politicaleach of us is simply trying to contribute to village life.

If no more than seven individuals stand to become a Parish Councillor, the election will be an uncontested election. If fewer than seven individuals stand, the Parish Council will, in time, look to co-opt additional members to bring the number of Councillors up to seven.

The current cohort of Parish Councillors has been in place for the last four years and some have served for considerably longer – please don't let this put you off. The “four yearly election” does rather bring this matter to a head as regardless of whether the election is contested or not, this democratic process leads to Councillors appointed being considered elected.

If a vacancy arises during the four year term the Parish Council can co-opt a new member who will, in the main, have effectively the same role as an elected Councillor. However, for so long as the Parish Council has more than two thirds of its members elected and employs a qualified clerk, it can adopt a “general power of competence” which gives the Parish Council more administrative clout and is seen as evidence the Parish Council has been democratically appointed. In effect we will be seen to be ‘competent’ in the eyes of the principal authorities and this can help us exert greater influence on matters further up the tree.

Accordingly, if any of you feel you would like to help, especially if you have a specific interest that you would like to help the Parish Council with, do talk to us and/or come along next Monday (13th) to see how we run things and establish whether or not this is something that is for you.

Finally, what is planned for the next year? When the Parish Council set the budget for the 2023/24 financial year it decided, given the current cost of living pressures not to increase the value of the precept. To balance the budget this has limited the funds available for discretionary spend. So the focus for the coming year will need to be on volunteer activity.

We will continue to update you through parish updates and to provide links to consultations as they are launched and as and when MVDC decides to restart its Local Plan examination we will keep you appraised.

We remain alert to the potentially serious implications of not only Gatwick Airport's plans to fully utilise its northern runway but also, perhaps even more impactful will be the review of airspace across the south east. We owe our thanks to Ianthe Cox who diligently attends workshops and presentations arranged by Gatwick Airport and to the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign, without whose expertise and contacts we would quite simply be lost. Relevant updates will continue to be included in parish updates.

In the meantime, we encourage you to make regular visits to our village website to keep abreast of topical updates and events being planned.

And on that note: I will conclude by passing you to Sheena who will present Council's accounts for the past year.”

5. BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIALS

Sheena Boyce (SKB) presented a summary of the forecast full year accounts for 2022/23 with a comparison against budget, copies of which had been distributed in the Meeting (see appendix).

SKB explained that the higher expenditure had reflected:

- (i) Surface improvements to a local footpath completed towards the end of the prior year but not invoiced by Surrey County Council until after the 2021/22 year end;
- (ii) Conservation kerbing installed alongside the north edge of the village green, funded in part from reserves set aside over two years and a grant of £1,000 from SCC Councillor Helyn Clack; and
- (iii) Improvements to the bus shelter that were mainly funded from £4,205 prior year receipts of Community Infrastructure Levy, topped up with donations (gratefully received) of £1000 from SCC Councillor Clack and £500 from the Betchworth & Buckland Society.

SKB outlined how the value of the precept relates to the numbers that appear on Council Tax bills. SKB explained why, despite Council not asking for any increase in the absolute value of the precept, the Parish Council portion of the Council Tax will show an increase of 6.9%.

SKB, having invited, but not had any questions suggested anyone with a query could speak to her after the meeting or contact her later.

6. BUCKLAND PAROCHIAL CHARITY

Debbie Jones, Clerk to the charity presented Financials for the year ending 31st December 2022, copies of which had been distributed in the Meeting and provided the following update:

“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.

We also on occasion receive donations from Buckland residents.

Our Trust Deed specifies 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

Liz Vahey	Trustee & Chair	Martin Cantor	Trustee & Treasurer
Amanda Oakes Smith	Trustee	Debbie Jones	Trustee & Clerk

The Distributions

The Trustees meet several times a year to discuss any needs that have come to light and agree the distributions. There are regular quarterly distributions to a number of Buckland residents and one off purchases and/or payments for specific needs. We also aim to give flowers or plants to those residents who are unwell or in need of cheering up.

It can be challenging to identify those that are in need in the parish – the trustees welcome any suggestions and consider all requests. It must be emphasised that names of the recipients are never divulged to any outside source.”

7. GUEST SPEAKER : DOMINIC SANDERS, BUCKLAND ESTATE

Dominic Sanders provided an interesting update on recent activity at Buckland Park Lake and outlined future plans before concluding by announcing a plan to invite village residents to “drinks and nibbles” at Buckland Park Lake towards the end of the summer.

8. CHAIR’S CLOSING REMARKS

NH expressed thanks to all for attending tonight for what he hoped had been an interesting evening that would sponsor further discussions and debate about what Buckland’s residents want Buckland to be. To that end, NH repeated his enthusiastic invitation for anyone who has an issue they consider the Parish Council needs to be aware of to attend a meeting and for anyone interested in becoming a Parish Councillors to get in touch. NH thanked Dominic Sanders for speaking and Debbie Jones for coordinating the light refreshments to follow. NH concluded the meeting by inviting everyone to stay on to continue topical discussion and enjoy light refreshments.

Footnote: Thanks also due to each of the residents who assisted with the refreshments and with the setting up and clearing away in the Reading Room.

Appendices

- Buckland Parish Council Forecast Financials 2022/23 (unaudited)
- Buckland Village Charity 2022

END

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING : 6th MARCH 2023

EXPENDITURE (Vat excluded)

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Parish Amenities

	Actual 2021/22 £	Forecast 2022/23	Budget 2022/23 £	Variance Act vs Bud £	Budget 2023/24 £
Village Green and Pond	2189	4662	3065	-1597	3200
Verges, Footpaths, Rights of Way	2700	2535	2700	165	2700
Village Website : Hosting/licences/support	314	528	300	-228	500
Maintenance parish assets	51	245	90	-155	100
Contingency	0	0	100	100	100

Subtotal	5254	7970	6255	-1715	6600
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Council Running Costs

	Actual 2021/22 £	Forecast 2022/23	Budget 2022/23 £	Variance Act vs Bud £	Budget 2023/24 £
Clerk Salary	9422	9758	9725	-33	10200
Council Training	32	25	200	175	600
Travelling Expenses	27	42	50	8	50
External Auditor / SLB	200	0	200	200	210
Internal Audit	110	110	115	5	115
SALC	200	199	199	0	199
SLCC	130	144	144	0	146
GDPR	35	35	35	0	35
Insurance	350	383	375	-8	450
BPC mtgs - Room Hire	234	160	160	0	160
Parish Mtg Expenses	0	30	30	0	30
Office costs	829	695	947	252	764
Contingency	0	0	100	100	100

Subtotal	11569	11581	12280	699	13059
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Discretionary - funded from 2022/23 precept

	Actual 2021/22 £	Forecast 2022/23	Budget 2022/23 £	Variance Act vs Bud £	Budget 2023/24 £
Floodlighting to the Church	80	139	130	-9	130
Subscriptions (Surrey Hills / GACC)	75	30	25	-5	30
Amenity Improvements	1628	974	1000	26	0
Local Support (S137)	0	0	0	0	0
Contingency	0	0	0	0	0

Subtotal	1783	1143	1155	12	160
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Bus shelter roof funded from CIL reserve	5705
ROW - Resurfaced footpath from specific reserve	3125

Total Expenditure	18606	29524	19690	-1004	19819
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INCOME

REVENUE INCOME

	Actual 2021/22 £	Forecast 2022/23	Budget 2022/23 £	Variance Act vs Bud £	Budget 2023/24 £
Precept	14868	16505	16505	0	16505
Interest	2	53	0	53	0
MVDC grant re Localisation of Council Tax Benefit	862	888	888	0	924
MVDC grant re maintenance of areas for recreation	2231	2298	2298	0	2390
CIL Receipt	86	0	0	0	0
SCC Member - Community Funding	2045	1000	0	1000	0
Other contributions/donations/grants/local fundraising	363	625	0	625	0

Total Income	20457	21369	19691	1678	19819
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Cash Balance / Unallocated Reserves : Inc / (Dec)	1851	-8155	1	674	0
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	31st March 2022	31st March 2023
Cash at Bank	22,445	15,750
Allocated Reserves	15,316	6,514
Unallocated Reserves	7,129	9,236

The Buckland Parochial Charity
Receipts & Payments Account
for the 12 months ended 31 December 2022

2021	<u>Receipts</u>	2022	2021	<u>Payments</u>	2022
£		£	£		£
	<i>Opening Bank Balances</i>				
1,079	Current	733		<i>Buckland Residents</i>	
2,555	Reserve	3,168	4,846	Miscellaneous Purposes	2,575
	<i>Other income</i>				
613	COIF dividends*	629		<i>Support</i>	
0	Bank interest	8		Gifts & Plants	
	Donation			Other support donations	
	Bank Compensation			Bank Charges	
	<i>Grant received</i>			<i>Closing Bank Balances</i>	
4,500	The Henry Smith Charity	4,500	733	Current	2,658
			3,168	Reserve	3,804
<u>£ 8,747</u>		<u>£ 9,038</u>	<u>£ 8,747</u>		<u>£ 9,038</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 2022 was £21,053 (2021 £23,496)

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:

**M Cantor ACG Trustee
& Treasurer**