

## **BOBBING PARISH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE PARISH MEETING**

**Held on Wednesday 4 May 2022**

**Present:** Cllr. R. Ball - Chair  
Cllr. R. Morgan-Brown – Vice-Chair  
Cllr. G. Herbert  
Cllr. P. French  
Cllr. N. Clare

Samantha Gray, Clerk  
Borough Cllr. Hunt  
Borough Cllr. Hampshire  
Borough Cllr. Woodford

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies received from Parish Cllrs. Randall and Major, and Borough Cllr. Mike Baldock.

#### **2. Chairman's Review**

Parishioners will be aware that Bobbing Parish covers part of the communities of Bobbing including Howt Green, Rooks View, Watermark Development, Key Street, Keycol and Bobbing Hill plus parts of The Meads and The Grove. It also covers some areas to the West of the Parish. However, a review has been instigated under the Community Governance Reviews under the Local Government and Public Involvements in Health Act 2007. This means that the boundaries of the Parish can be examined in view of changes or developments within the Parish. This is not immediate and will be looked at over the next year.

The year under review (2021-2022) started still under the restrictions imposed under Covid. Meetings were initially conducted under Zoom but slowly these were lifted. At first masks were worn which did present difficulties for those who were aided by lip reading. It was a relief to be back to pre-Covid days. However, it has highlighted how important the internet has become. Government departments both national and local now communicate almost exclusively by emails etc. Hence when we switch on our computers hardly a day goes by without us being fed with loads of information not just with local information but national as well. There have been a number of changes in the make-up of the Parish Council during the year. We started the year with one vacancy, so we were delighted to be joined by Mr Peter French who has always shown an interest in the Parish and regularly attended meetings. Unfortunately, at the end of the review year we find ourselves with two vacancies. We are not alone in this as there are a number of Parish councils in Swale who have vacancies and with a number of councillors declaring that they will not be standing at the next election (2023) it is very worrying.

In October our Parish Clerk of many years, Mrs Lynda Ives, informed us that she was retiring in the New Year. She was also the Clerk to Iwade Parish which she was also leaving. Parish Clerks with her experience are few and far between. It was decided with Iwade that we would advertise for a clerk for both positions and we were fortunate to have some quality applicants apply for the posts. Interviews were conducted jointly by Iwade and Bobbing, and we were delighted to appoint Mrs Samantha Gray to be clerk to both parish councils. She joined us full time in March this year.

As usual throughout the year, as statutory consultants, we were asked to comment on thirty planning applications. In most cases these were straight forward with it seems an increase in the number of parishioners extending their properties. However, some of these applications were complicated and occasionally it was felt that the Parish Council was asked to comment on applications outside of their experience and we needed to rely on professional bodies for guidance. Some applications were quite emotive, and we can only look at what our parishioners are commenting as to the effect any application would have on their surroundings.

Traffic as always figures highly in Parish meetings. It is extremely disappointing to find that Bobbing Parish is in an area of high pollution levels though perhaps not surprising in view of the levels of traffic and congestion in this area. Levels of traffic which seem to be increasing every year. This can only be set to worsen with new developments coming online.

Bobbing is unfortunate in that it has some of the busiest roads in Kent going through it. Both the A2 and the A249 are often gridlocked, not helped of course by the road improvements at Stockbury however necessary they are. We are expecting more changes to Keycol roundabout and the various lane changes already incorporated have not met with unanimous support. However, we have not as yet had the final plans for this roundabout. The Bobbing Apple/MacDonald's junction on the Sheppey way continues to be negotiated despite frequent meetings and we are assured there will be some changes. It seems that there will be some funds available in the future but there is no timing given and plans as to exactly what is going to happen. This is important as the Parish Council keeps stressing there have been a number of fatalities in this area. The closing of Simpsons level crossing has caused consternation, as it was frequently used. However, Network Rail have made it quite clear that they have no intention of opening it again because of a number of dangerous incidents. After some meetings they have agreed on a diversion and are now negotiating with various landowners. We have had no indications of timing for this.

The council are still working on increasing the number of defibrillators in the Parish. It is hoped that we can also get a bus shelter on Sonora way. Our efforts to get the Post Office to increase the number of Post boxes particularly near the shops on the Meads (it would seem to be logical place) has been refused. Parking on pavements is still a problem in the area. We have managed to get the PCSO's involved in trying to eliminate this. There have been a number of changes of our PCSO's this year. Hopefully we can keep them long enough to get to know them and they to be really familiar with the problems on the Parish. We have also got a new Community Warden who is now finding her feet. Our thanks go to them all.

Finally, there are a number of changes coming to the Borough Council this year. As well as a new leader they are going to introduce cabinet committees. These will no doubt take a little time to bed in but should I am told give Parish Councils an opportunity to have more of a say in what is going on in the Borough. However, that is no good if we do not have sufficient councillors. There seems to be a dearth of people prepared to volunteer to help the community. I accept that there is more to being a councillor than appearing at council meetings and it can be very frustrating in trying to get things changed – particularly time wise. Changes do seem to take a long time! However hopefully there are some parishioners out there who really are concerned at what is happening locally and can see their way to joining us. Many thanks to the clerk and all the Councillors who have done that extra to keep things running smoothly.

### 3. Hall Review

After all the uncertainty with Covid and the new rules and regulations Covid brought for us, it's a pleasure to be able to say thank you to the Parish Council for supporting the hall in the building of the new toilet facilities and alterations in the small hall. What a difference they make and the feedback from hirers is pleasing to hear. It does highlight the need to bring our main hall kitchen up to standard especially regarding the hatch which we feel is not very safe, so we ask hirers to not use it or at their own risk. The builders have some snagging to attend to and our final payment has yet to be made but what a difference.

The regular hirers are steadily returning although they report memberships are down and with the costs of energy rising steeply are concerned that they may not be able to afford the increase we may have to make. We have some evening availability during the week and weekends are seeing a rise in children's parties especially since Iwade hall appears to only be hiring to regular users. We recently hosted their Food Fayre at Bobbing. We will endeavour to keep price increases to a minimum, but we are all aware how expensive services are getting. We still operate under the Temporary Events Licences as most parties allow guests to bring their own drinks now.

The hall claimed all Covid grants that were offered which was very welcome. The government made it a fairly simple process and it helped enormously. As mentioned previously, the main hall kitchen hatch requires urgent replacing together with new fire doors into the main hall from the main entrance. These do not close properly and are not fit for purpose. We will need to try to obtain grants to help with these costs.

This year, as before, Swale Borough Council is assisting us with not charging any rates which as a charity assists us massively. We are grateful for their continued support of local facilities in the community.

Once again very many thanks to the parish council for their continued support with this parish asset. I very much believe it is invaluable in serving both the local community and the wider one.

4. **W.I. Review**

This year Bobbing W.I. celebrated its 75th Birthday and considering the past two years of restrictions and lockdowns, that is no mean feat! It was reassuring when in September 2021 we were, at last, able to resume face to face meetings. We started with a Harvest Social to catch up with all events of the past two years. Our Meetings have continued monthly with a reasonably high attendance for each night. During that time, we have had craft sessions, quizzes, a Tai Chi session, a jolly Birthday Celebration with the “Up the Creek” Ukulele Band from Whitstable and a lovely Christmas meal and again we were able to hold our yearly fund raising “Murder Mystery” in October which again was very well attended.

As with other groups, Bobbing W.I. has tried to maintain our community presence and we have planned a varied programme for the rest of the year. We meet the second Wednesday of each month (except August) at Bobbing Village Hall at 7.15 p.m. and new members are always welcome.

5. **Any other Reviews Received** - None received.

6. **Questions/Comments from Parishioners** – None received

**The meeting closed at 07.40 p.m.**

These minutes are certified to be a true and just record.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_