

East Bridgford Parish Council (PC)

2024 Annual Parish Meeting – Thursday 25th April 2024 at 7.30pm, in the Scout HQ building

Chair's Report

Introduction: Parish Council news including elections and the King's Coronation

Following elections in May 2023, a new Council began its 4-year tenure. Most Councillors were re-elected, but Cllr Stevens stood down and was replaced by Steve Coupland. The Council sends its thanks for her valuable service. Cllr Clarke was subsequently elected Chair and Cllr Storr Vice-Chair for 2023-24. This period coincided with the Coronation of King Charles III on May 6th, with a number of celebration events in the village that weekend, and a display was organised for the Post Office area. There was also a national Big Help Out event on the extra Bank Holiday on 8th May, including work in Springdale Wood organised by EBWBG and the Friends of Springdale Wood. Sadly, the Council recently learned of the death of former Councillor David Meylan. He was a very longstanding and dedicated Parish Councillor. As an architect, he took a great interest in the planning applications being considered, and the village Design Statement is a continuing testament to his work on behalf of the village.

Strategic Goals

The PC decided recently that it would be a good strategy to set and communicate annual goals for special attention based on both current priorities and those identified in the 2019 Community Plan, and there will be an opportunity to discuss & finalise these goals at the Annual Parish Meeting (APM). There are 6 goals, summarised briefly as follows:

- 1. Minimise and alleviate flooding on Kneeton Road.**
- 2. Butt Lane South and North - Ensure appropriate development.**
- 3. Play park upgrade to be completed.**
- 4. Protect Springdale Wood/Existing trees in the Parish and develop additional woodland.**
- 5. Support Youth Activities**
- 6. Maintain and improve Parish Council owned/leased assets**

These goals will be fleshed out as time progresses, but in the meantime, references to these will be shown as G1, G2 etc below to illustrate how they will apply. The Community Plan continues to play a part in these within its action planning stage, and issues such as traffic will still remain an ongoing focus (see below). Even so, the Council has limited responsibilities and even more limited authority to act in matters such as this, which can be highly frustrating for both Councillors and residents when problems with highways infrastructure in particular occur. However, apart from managing its own assets for the benefit of the community, it can also work to bring matters such as these to the attention of those people and organisations which do have those specific responsibilities and authorities to expedite matters or hold them to account when necessary. This type of issue can be

prioritised, as for example flooding on Kneeton Road (G1, see below). Arguably, the Council's main non-statutory function is supporting residents and organisations in helping to facilitate their aims or activities. One example this year is that the Care Group had funds available for a defibrillator to be installed outside of the Medical Centre, by courtesy of the practice. The PC agreed to support this and take on its on-going inspection and maintenance programme, to add to the one on Main Street by the old telephone box.

Flooding on Kneeton Road (G1)

A very wet autumn and winter has led to further misery for affected residents. The Council has worked to try and get the relevant agencies to urgently engage with finding solutions to this ongoing situation. Although it is taking place at a time when many other communities are under similar or worse pressures, it has been evident for a long time that the current infrastructure there is inadequate whether by design or by lack of maintenance or both. It needs investigation about its obvious lack of capacity and a longer-term study about how to dissipate or slow down the flow of water from further up Kneeton Road. There has been some welcome additional engagement with this process very recently and the outcomes will be kept closely under review.

At the time of writing, some work has been ongoing with the gullies and drains on Kneeton Road, together with a planned survey of their condition. An offer of a 'walk through' meeting with an officer from VIA is being arranged, plus follow-ups to other possible interventions.

Butt Close and the Pavilion (G3,5,6)

Sports clubs and other users of the facilities which are all on parish land have been able to continue activities as normal weather-permitting. The tennis club has resurfaced its tennis courts and has a very healthy all-age membership. It includes specific junior activities (G5). The bowls club maintains its own green, and serves members of all ages (including one Life member who is over 100 years old!). It also has sessions for pupils from St Peter's Academy, and the Scouts (G5). Although no senior football team currently exists, there has been a significant increase in junior football for both girls and boys (G5) as a result of the field being made available to Lowdham Colts who have joined EBSC. The cricket club project to install an all-weather wicket to support youth activities, supported by the PC, was concluded successfully, and there is coaching & matches available for junior cricket (G5). Some junior tag rugby has also taken place (G5). The long-standing Secretary of the East Bridgford Sports Club, Peter Cross, is standing down as he takes on a greater commitment to his flood-defence work. Although Peter lives in Lowdham, he has devoted a lot of time to the Sports Club and his expertise in securing grant aid was essential for the successful completion of the pavilion extension. He has also faced the challenges of the Covid lockdowns and overseen a welcome expansion of youth sport (G5) The Council thanks Peter for his fantastic contribution and sends its best wishes to him for the future.

At the pavilion, analysis at the end of the first year of electricity generation by the installed solar panels shows very positive results (G6, more details below). The Council has agreed to the installation, for electrical safety reasons, of additional external power outlets at the request of the village show committee which should be completed in May (G6). The village show last June was very successful and as a result, several organisations within the village

received donations from the proceeds. Later in November, the fireworks event returned successfully following late changes in its organisation.

The memorial benches around the field, and in the village, continue to be stained and renovated in a rolling programme. We are grateful to John Perring, our lengthsman contractor who is carrying out this work, and a number of other maintenance tasks. Recent funded requests for a further 2 benches, one on the field and one elsewhere are being progressed.

The plan to upgrade the play area has been delayed by the excessively wet weather this winter which meant that vehicle access would be impossible for some time (G5,6). In the meantime, the tangle logs needed to be closed (as a safety precaution resulting from lack of fall protection) awaiting a delivery of bark in the landing area when ground conditions allow. We continue to be grateful to Cllr. Bancroft for carrying out a weekly safety inspection which is supplemented by quarterly and annual safety inspections by qualified contractors. Residents are reminded that the play area is covered by a RBC PSPO which prohibits dogs from entering the area, and elsewhere another RBC PSPO requires all dog walkers to carry 'poo bags' at all times and to use them to clear mess from all public areas, including public footpaths.

The Council continues to be very grateful to all the volunteers who work so hard to put on events like those referred to above, or contribute to other things, like running the village hall, editing or managing the business of the village magazine, the Care Group and all the other group activities which take place in our community, and which make our village such an interesting place to live in.

Community Plan Highways, Traffic, Parking & Footpath/pavement issues (G6)

Confirmation has been received that the scheme for an improved junction where Kirk Hill joins the A6097, as part of a larger scheme of improvements along the A6097 in general, has gained Government approval. The compulsory purchase of some Council-owned land (G6) on the eastern side is going ahead to widen the exit, and the north-east verge of Kirk Hill will be also widened to accommodate an extension to the bridleway. The Council has requested a public meeting to discuss what happens when construction starts - increasing levels of disruption will be inevitable, but such a meeting would give an opportunity to learn about and contribute to the measures which will be put in place at various stages of the operation.

There are still issues regarding traffic and car parking, a major part of the Community Plan, especially on Kneeton Road, where increasing commercial & other traffic is impacting. Despite the surface of Main Street & Butt Lane being subject to many potholes, which are repaired from time to time, it has been made clear by VIA that resurfacing will not be taking place any time soon. Please continue to report potholes promptly on the NCC website 'Report a pothole' page. On traffic speed, a new Community Speedwatch scheme has begun this year, when a team of volunteers underwent training, and radar equipment was bought, paid for by the Council. Information is being gathered about patterns in the speed of vehicles on certain roads, and this is shared with the police. Initial reports show times when significantly increased numbers of journeys occur, and that approximately 4.5% of vehicles are exceeding the speed limit by more than 5mph at the point of measurement. This may not

appear to be a large number, but each instance is a potential incident with more serious implications than necessary.

The surface of the car park on Main Street is showing signs of developing depressions so will need repairing with granite pieces. An area of grass and saplings continues to be left to go wild until the autumn as part of the PC's response to the initiatives of the East Bridgford Wildlife and Biodiversity Group.

Fly-tipping incidents around the village continue to be relatively rare now, but occasionally crop up especially on Oldhill Lane (green lane). Please use on-line reporting to RBC if you come across any – Streetwise will clear it away and can use investigators to try and find evidence of where it came from. Residents should always check that firms clearing their waste have the relevant paperwork, especially a waste carrier licence or they may also be liable if their waste is subsequently fly-tipped.

Footpath closures frustratingly continue near the marina and on the cliff top due to landslip dangers. The Council is actively engaging with the authorities in an attempt to resolve this issue. Elsewhere, obstructions of footpaths or pavements occur from time to time so a database of adjacent landowners is being compiled. Problems at the end of College Street remain to be fully resolved.

Scout HQ (G5)

The Scout HQ, formerly the WI Hut, is due to have significant work done in the coming summer. The PC has previously pledged support funding up to £10000 to complement any grant funding for these necessary improvements (G5).

Climate change (G4,5,6)

The PC continues to investigate how activities at its assets or elsewhere in the parish impact on climate change and to invest in measures which have the potential to reduce or mitigate that impact.

The installation of solar panels at the pavilion was completed just over a year ago. In that time, it has reduced the energy cost to the Sports Club but also exported in excess of 6000kwh to the grid. Apart from the corresponding reduction in the pavilion's carbon footprint and contribution to reducing fossil fuel use in generation, when arrangements are complete, there will also be a significant return on the original investment (which was 50% grant funded) for use in other measures or community programmes (G6).

This year has also seen significant planting of trees in the parish (G4). Part of the allotment land has been fenced off with a new hedge and over 250 trees planted there, including a precious Sherwood Forest oak. Apart from the contribution to carbon capture, it is hoped the trees will also provide some shielding from noise and other pollution from the A46. The project was achieved with the assistance of the Sherwood Forest Trust. Planting was carried out with the help of residents and members of organisations such as the Scouts (G5). At Springdale Wood, progress is being made with plans to create a nature reserve there. A 5-year survey of trees on parish owned or leased land has taken place, and corrective actions will take place as required.

The Council was also pleased to learn that a local farmer has also planted a significant number of trees on his land between the village and the A6097.

Support to other organisations

A small grant was made to the Parish Magazine, towards printing costs and also the distribution of information materials to all households in December. This, together with the East Bridgford website and social media like the East Bridgford Community Facebook page, continues to provide an invaluable service to residents and visitors. A Donations Policy governs the process if a donation is being requested, details of which are available on the village website.

Precept

After a year in which the precept was held at its previous level to try and ease some of the pressure on residents from the cost of living, especially energy rates, the impact of inflation on its outgoings is such that the Council resolved to increase the precept for 2024-25 equivalent to just under 5% in round figures for a Band D property.

Capital projects(G5,6)

With the installation of the solar panels and all-weather cricket wicket being completed last year, funding is currently ring-fenced for the imminent provision of further outside electricity sockets at the pavilion, and the improvements to the Scout HQ. There is also a major upgrade to the play area being planned (G5,6).

Best Kept Village Competition and Open Gardens (G2,6)

The BKV, organised by CPRE, did not run again this year, but there were still volunteer-led 'spring cleans' as usual, the phone box was repainted (G6 : thanks to a neighbour for his voluntary labour), and the road sign planter boxes were filled with welcoming colourful bedding plants again. It is clear however that two main entry points to the village, Butt Lane and Kirk Hill are being and will be adversely affected by housing development work impacting on verges etc for some time to come. The Council will push for measures such as vehicle washing and restricted access for constructors' vehicles so as not to travel through the village (G2).

The Open Gardens event was very successful again, with many visitors from both inside and outside of the village. As a result of this, the Open Gardens team has been able to donate significant funds to projects and organisations such as the Nottinghamshire Hospice.

Planning applications and the Conservation Area

Each month, the PC as a statutory consultee considers planning applications of all kinds from small extensions to redeveloping sites. RBC as the planning authority makes the decisions and a brief report about this process is made monthly in the parish magazine. Residents are reminded that objections can be made online – those objections which focus on planning policies as published by RBC are more likely to be successful than any broad generalisation like 'loss of light' for example. Any development in the green belt is

automatically assumed to involve harm and will attract an objection unless clear grounds for mitigating that harm are specifically included. Much of the village falls within a Conservation Area where special rules for development, alterations and extra protection for trees apply. RBC consulted with the PC about the status of this area and its boundaries, and a revised policy has now been published by RBC.

Butt Lane Housing Developments (G2)

The start of construction of the proposed developments off Butt Lane is looking imminent. In respect to Butt Lane South, this was significantly increased by Redrow from the original 45 houses specified in the RBC Local Plan (2) to what many believe is an inappropriate total of 59 houses. EBPC strongly objected and the application was rejected by RBC. Alterations were subsequently made to the application by Redrow, resulting in a proposed development of 42 homes and the developer arranged to meet with Councillors about that and ongoing maintenance issues when it is built. However, an appeal to the National Planning Inspectorate against the rejection of the original application for 59 houses was also made by Redrow, and the Inspector's decision to allow the appeal was received in March. This came with the news that Redrow has also been the subject of a take-over bid by Barratt. The planning permission still has a number of attached conditions which will need careful monitoring when construction begins.

On Butt Lane North, where permission was granted some time ago, recent conditions discharge notices and consultation about road-naming would suggest it may soon commence.

Springdale Wood, Bridgford Street meadow, rewilding & biodiversity (G4,6)

The Council leases the wood from the Woodland Trust, but the CIC group East Bridgford Wildlife and Biodiversity Group (EBWBG) manages it for the benefit of the community, together with volunteers from the Friends of Springdale Wood. A number of trees sourced by the PC from the RBC free-tree scheme have been planted in the wood or put in a 'nursery' at the allotments by members of the Friends of Springdale Wood.

Bridgford Street meadow is also leased, from the Southwell Diocese, and managed by the EBWBG. The end of the bridleway which runs through this area will be affected by the Kirk Hill junction changes as some land is compulsorily purchased for road widening, but a safety improvement is planned whereby the bridleway will continue on the north-eastern side of Kirk Hill to avoid walkers and horse-riders crossing at the junction.

Allotments (G6)

The Council manages these which are situated on Butt Lane. Tenants pay a small rent each year based on the area of land and are subject to a newly revised annual agreement. There is a small turnover of tenants each year with a currently small waiting list of people who wish to have one. A community area for allotment holders has been created out of a reorganisation of two plots which had become derelict (G6). Anyone interested in joining the waiting list should write to the Clerk. (See also the section about climate change above)

Remembrance Day & Feast Sunday

Acts of Remembrance and wreath laying took place again this year, with the parade from the Car Park to the church on Remembrance Sunday at 10.30am and services at the memorial at 10.50am and 6pm on Feast Sunday, both of which entail a road closure for the duration.

Conclusion

By necessity, this report cannot give a comprehensive account of everything which happens in such a vibrant village as ours. Some issues remain frustratingly difficult to resolve but the Council is committed to doing its utmost on behalf of the community. As an example, some residents on Croft Rise who use mobility aids approached the PC about difficulties they face because of a lack of dropped kerbs. Following a letter to Highways, with support from the Care Group and our County Councillor, the response was rapid and the dropped kerbs have been installed.

Although it is also impossible to note all of the many activities, and the efforts of villagers and other organisations in contributing to the life of the village, a flavour of these can be given by the following list : responding to consultations and changes in legislation, maintaining memorial and other seats, weekly monitoring & safety inspections of the Play Area, arranging for surveys of and works to trees on parish land, reporting fly-tipping, occasional cleaning & maintenance of information boards, the defibrillator and the telephone box 'book swap', managing the allotments on Butt Lane and dealing with concerns raised by residents.

The Council is grateful for the time given by Councillors, the elected County & Borough Councillors who regularly attend its meetings & take an active interest in parish issues, the work of its employee, contractors, and the internal auditor. Last but not least, we continue to be fortunate to have numerous individuals and organisations in our parish who willingly help out in many ways.

Appendix – Financial summary 2023-4

£ rounded	31/03/2023	31/03/2024
1 Balances brought fwd	79125.12	68,960.93
2 Annual precept	43325.00	43,370.00
3 Total other receipts	17086.93	101,600.82
4 Staff Costs	15150.90	18,576.95
5 Loan interest/capital repayments	0.00	0.00
6 Total other payments	55425.22	104,498.23
7 Balances carried forward	68960.93	90,856.57
8 Total Cash and Short Term Invest	68960.93	90,856.57
9 Total Fixed Assets	867933.84	937,753.23
10 Total Borrowings	0.00	0.00