

PARISH OF BISHOPSTOKE

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly 2010 held at the Methodist Church, Bishopstoke on Thursday 11 May 2010 commencing at 7.30pm

Present: In the Chair – Cllr Anne Winstanley, Chairman of Bishopstoke Parish Council
Cllrs Hansell, McGuinness, McKeone, Pemberton, Roling, Shephard, Thornton, Toher and Uren

Five members of the public were present.

In attendance: Mr P J Storey OBE, Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council
Mrs C Taylor, Assistant Clerk to the Council

1. Welcome by the Chairman

Cllr Anne Winstanley extended a warm welcome to all present at the fifteenth Bishopstoke Parish Annual Assembly.

2. A presentation by Mr and Mrs R Simmonds on the Burial Grounds in Bishopstoke

Mr and Mrs Simmonds gave a presentation on the burial grounds and churches in Bishopstoke and their rectors starting with a comment that there was evidence that a church in Bishopstoke was mentioned in the Domesday Book. The most famous rector, Dean Garnier 1807 - 1869, was known nationally for his garden and arboretum. He rebuilt the rectory in 1808 and was instrumental in introducing gentry into the village who built many of the large houses that still exist. The earliest date of burial recorded in the village is 1686 and many Bishopstoke families have lived here for generations. For example, there are 19 members of the Dummer family buried in the village spanning 1695 to 1815 and a further 19 members of the Livingstone family.

With the growth in population with the coming of the railways, it was decided in 1890 to build a larger church further up Church Road from old St Mary's. This generated much controversy regarding future use of the old St Mary's and Mrs Simmonds read from letters of the day to illustrate this. However, some time between 1910 and 1934 the old church was demolished except for the tower and the land was transferred to Eastleigh Borough Council. The site was levelled in 1936 to make the area an open space for general enjoyment. In the early 1950s there were complaints about the general state of the area but no copy of the agreement with the Borough Council could be found and it was eventually discovered the necessary letter to the Council had never been sent by the then-rector so the Church remained responsible. However, the Borough's ownership was eventually resolved by Deed and the old church tower was demolished in 1965 after a fire lit by workmen took hold of the fabric and made it unsafe.

The adoption of the new church was not without its problems. There was upset at established village families having to sit with the new arrivals and concern that children from the school across the road would be put in danger when crossing to the church from the vehicles coming down the hill and the risks to the horses (!) when having to avoid the children. The medical officer of the day objected on public health grounds to burials in the new church grounds because of the solid bed of clay and the effect of gases released from the bodies on occupants of a new housing estate to be built nearby.

The new burial ground off Stoke Common Road was opened in the mid-fifties with the first burial in 1958. In 1967, it was proposed to level part of the burial ground adjacent to St Mary's except where a family protested and later in 1986 further levelling took place of graves adjacent to the main road. The broken tombstones were piled up near the road topped by a notice offering them as hardcore.

After questions and further comments, the Chairman thanked Mr and Mrs Simmonds for their fascinating talk and insight into part of the history of the village.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Bateman and Davies-Dear, the Police and Mr Roberts.

4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 12 May 2009

Copies of the minutes were available to those present at the Assembly. Proposed Cllr Thornton, Seconded Cllr Roling, **RESOLVED** unanimously that these be accepted as a true record of the 2009 Assembly.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 12 May 2009

There were no matters arising.

6. Chairman's Address and Annual Report

There have been no changes in Parish Councillors in the past year and the full set elected May 2008 work well together to represent the best interests of the Village.

We have continued our regular support of village groups and organisations and other external organisations, and in the last year we have given grants to Bishopstoke Parochial Charities, the Methodist Church, Age Concern, Bishopstoke Society, the Carnival, Vitalise, Home-Start and Victim Support.

We are continuing our partnership with the Forestry Commission for improvements within Stoke Park Woods for community benefit, including picnic benches & new notice boards.

Our partnership with Hampshire Police to provide a dedicated PCSO to work in Bishopstoke also continues. The decrease in reported crime in Bishopstoke owes much to our dedicated Safer Neighbourhood Team with new sergeant Mark Emery and the various PCs & PCSOs who cover Bishopstoke, Fair Oak & Horton Heath.

We have continued our support of YZone: the Brookfield Youth Centre. Our Armistice Service at the Memorial at 11am on 11th November has increasing numbers attending every year.

We have also continued our support for Bishopstoke Carnival and have agreed to provide administrative support to the volunteers of the Carnival Group as required to ensure that our well - regarded Carnival is able to continue.

We now have high hopes of a successful outcome with the Shears Mill project. There has been agreement from the Environment Agency for a fish pass and funding from Eastleigh Borough Council to construct the fish pass. Not only will the completed project showcase our unique turbines, but it will also generate renewable energy.

We have taken on responsibility for St Mary's churchyard, which is going through the process of becoming closed to new burials. Local garden maintenance company, Green Smile, have done the work and the standard of their work has received many plaudits. Over the last year we have been in extensive negotiations with Eastleigh Borough Council over 'transfer of functions' and on the 1st April we took over responsibility for Bishopstoke Cemetery, old St Mary's churchyard on Oakbank Road and the allotments on Jockey Lane and behind Underwood Road. Green Smile Ltd have been contracted to do the maintenance of the Cemetery & old St Mary's churchyard and we have already received praise for the standard they achieve. We will soon start talking to the Borough about taking on play areas, open spaces and bus shelters next April.

To deal with our increased responsibilities we now employ an Assistant Clerk, Mrs Cheryl Taylor, and also have a temporary Parish Office open from 11am-1pm every Wednesday at the Methodist Church. Do call in to see Cheryl about any issues that concern you. We are looking at having a permanent Parish Office in the future.

In conclusion, may I remind you that all Council meetings are open to the public and we very much hope that you will continue to attend.

7. Presentation of the Audited and Published Return for the year ended 31 March 2009

Copies of the audited Annual Return for 2009 were made available to those present, as were copies of the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2010. Mr Storey, as the RFO, explained the procedure whereby the contents of the most recently audited Annual Return were somewhat historical but confirmed this was the norm. The document contained an analysis of the year's accounting together with explanations of variations year on year in excess of 15%. It went to the Audit Commission for examination and signing off. He was pleased to confirm there were no observations were raised by the auditor.

Mr Storey then gave short review of the finances for the year just ended and comments on where we go from here financially. We ended the last year in a healthy financial position with a small increase in our cash holdings of £2,714 on a total income of £88,177. This basically meant all the money that came in went out - and he was certain this was how it should be as there was no wish to pay council tax for no purpose.

This year there will be a significant increase in income as a result of the transfer of responsibility for management of the allotments and Cemetery from the Borough Council. Some £37,950 has been transferred from the Borough to the Parish to fund the management of these two assets in the first year. Thus the anticipated income for the current year was in the

region of £ 135,050 which comprises council tax, allotment rental charges and Cemetery burial income and any grants or other income received. He emphasised that the transfer of these responsibilities would not impact on the Bishopstoke electorate as from this year what would have paid to the Borough Council for these assets would now be paid to the Parish Council and there was a decrease in one charge and a corresponding increase in the other.

This year's precept of £85,000 was an increase of £2,000 on last year's, that is equivalent to an increase of 0.60p per year for a Band D council tax payer, to allow for inflation and the employment of an assistant clerk and this when added to the Borough transfer brought the total available for meeting the expenses of the Parish to £124,950 over the year. It remained the Council's intention to plough back a significant amount of this into the Parish and it is also our aim to make the allotments and the Cemetery self-financing in the long term.

Mr Storey concluded by stating that the Council's finances were on a sound footing and that we complied with all statutory and other regulation in their management. Thus we were well-placed to continue to improve upon the standards of service provided and looked forward to the new challenges of 2009-2010.

8. Public Questions

Concern was expressed at the lack of development of The Mount site and the frequent attendance on-site of the Police. The Chairman stated that the Borough Council enforcement team and Police were doing all they could to encourage the developer to make the site secure until work started but no date had been published as yet.

In response to a comment on Shears Mill, the clerk explained that planning continues with the turbine renovation. The Environment Agency had now approved plans for a fish pass designed to protect the fish from the rotating turbine blades and funding had been found for this to be installed after which the silt covering the turbine blades could be removed and inspection of the blades undertaken. It was the intention to replace the old tin shack with a permanent wooden structure to enable passers-by to see the restored turbines working and read about the history of the Mill as well as provide as permanent parish office on-site.

There being no further questions, Cllr Winstanley declared the Assembly formally closed at 8.30pm with all present invited to enjoy the light refreshments provided.