

PITSTONE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 16 May 2024
at Pitstone Pavilion, starting at 7.30pm and concluding at 10pm

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: Cllr Nicholls (Chairman), Cllr Saintey (Vice Chairman), Cllr Weber, Cllr McCarthy, Cllr Mrs Crutchfield and Cllr Mrs Nash.
Parish Staff: Laurie Eagling (Clerk), Dave Burton (Facilities Manager) and Stephen Davies (Parish Assistant).
Arif Hussain, Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Member for Communities.
Gail Hudson, Buckinghamshire Council Local Partnerships Manager.
Buckinghamshire Councillor Peter Brazier.
Mark Robinson representing the Town Lands Charity.
Alex Razak representing the Ivinghoe & Pitstone Repair Café.
Barry and Sue Gregory.

Plus 12 members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Parish Councillors: Cllr Blunt, Cllr Hawkins, Cllr Dr Frearson and Cllr Mitra;
Buckinghamshire Councillor Town; Thames Valley Police and Mrs B Byrom.

AA1/24 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

See above. The Chairman officially opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He explained that an 'Annual Parish Meeting' is a local community meeting, and not a constituted meeting of either the Parish Council, Buckinghamshire Council, or the other bodies presenting. So whilst no resolutions could be passed, any issues that were raised during the evening would be taken back to the respective bodies for consideration.

AA2/24 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY held on 18 May 2023

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes were a true and accurate record, and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as such.

AA3/24 PRESENTATION BY ARIF HUSSAIN, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

Cllr Hussain introduced himself and explained his background. He gave an engaging and informative presentation about his current role as Cabinet Member for Communities and the work being undertaken with the Community Boards, partner engagement, devolution, community engagement & development, community support, the Armed Forces Covenant, community safety and equalities & inclusion.

Buckinghamshire Councillor Peter Brazier was introduced as the newly appointed Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities.

Cllr Hussain answered questions tabled by those present regarding the operation of the new Unitary body and how he sees Aylesbury Vale Association of Local Councils / Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils working with BC in the future.

There being no further questions, Cllr Hussain was thanked for his attendance and the enlightening presentation.

AA4/24 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Thames Valley Police had tendered their apologies. The crime figures provided were shared with those present. The Chairman offered to forward any questions to Thames Valley Police for response. No questions were posed in public, but residents were welcomed to contact the clerk individually if they preferred.

AA5/24 PRESENTATION OF PITSTONE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2024

The Chairman presented Barry and Sue Gregory with the Volunteer of the Year Award 2024 for many years of voluntary support to local organisations, the local community, and general help to neighbours. Examples included: Acting as a Trustee for the Town Lands Charity and the Williamson Trust, running the Pace stall, grass cutting and planters by The Crescent, and helping to obtain the official designation of the open space by The Crescent.

The Parish Council runs the Volunteer of the Year scheme to celebrate the unsung heroes within our community. Winners receive a framed certificate, card and £50. If you know someone who goes that extra mile and provides an outstanding voluntary service to the residents of Pitstone, please submit your nominations to the parish clerk so that they can be taken into consideration for the 2025 award.

AA6/24 REPORT FROM, AND QUESTIONS TO, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL WARD COUNCILLORS

Buckinghamshire Councillor Peter Brazier talked about the number of parishes within Bucks, the support he provides for Pitstone, and the upcoming boundary review where Pitstone would subsequently fall under Aylesbury and there would only be 2 councillors instead of 3, though the ward itself would stay the same.

No questions were tabled for Peter. It was confirmed that either Peter Brazier or Derek Town do attend all the Pitstone Parish Council meetings, so residents are welcome to come along and speak to them at any meeting.

Councillor Brazier was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

AA7/24 STEP-UP GRANTS FOR PITSTONE RESIDENTS

Cllr Nicholls spoke about the exciting new grant stream available to Pitstone residents, called Step-Up grants, funded by Pitstone Parish Charity. They are designed to relieve hardship, need or distress by enabling the long-term transformation of the recipient's quality of life in some way. This could be through removing barriers to enable an individual to pursue a life-improving opportunity that would otherwise have been unaffordable, or to complete some form of training or upskilling that will demonstrably improve their professional or earning potential, where funding is not available from another source.

Two display stands had been set up with literature and attendees were invited to speak to any member of the charity regarding the grants on offer during the refreshment break.

AA8/24 PITSTONE COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME

A display stand had also been set up with literature about the Pitstone Community Car Scheme, which provides a vital service to help residents get to their medical appointments, and attendees were encouraged to volunteer as drivers if they were at all able. Stephen Davies, the scheme coordinator, was available to speak to residents and answer any questions during the refreshment break.

There then followed a refreshment break, with the opportunity for the members of the public to speak to Arif Hussain, speak to any of the parish/unitary councillors or any of the other guest speakers, speak to the representatives about the Step-Up Grants or Car Scheme, purchase a Hedgehog Highway Surround and view the Pavilion facilities if they weren't already familiar with the new building.

AA9/24 FIRST ANNIVERSARY UPDATE FROM ALEX RAZAK OF THE IVINGHOE & PITSTONE REPAIR CAFE

Alex talked through a fascinating presentation explaining what Repair Cafés are, how the scheme works, the type of repairs that can be undertaken, how much carbon had been saved over the year (8,543 kg – the equivalent of flying 54,000 miles) and the volume that had been saved from landfill (1,090 kg) by the scheme. 314 successful repairs had been carried out. Alex thanked the parish council for their support of the scheme over the year.

The Repair Café can now fix a wide range of goods including phone screens, jewellery repairs, ceramics, electricals, sewing, mechanical, welding and woodwork. The café alternates between Ivinghoe Hub and Pitstone Pavilion. Residents were encouraged to pop along with any items that needed fixing, or just to see the scheme in operation and have some refreshments from the café. There are no fixed charges for repairs or refreshments, but donations are welcome to cover running costs.

No questions were raised for Alex. Alex was thanked for attending and for her presentation.

AA10/24 REPORT FROM, AND QUESTIONS TO, PITSTONE TOWN LANDS CHARITY AND WILLIAMSON TRUST

Mark Robinson, trustee for the charity, explained the history and purpose of the two local charities and how they were supporting the local community. The Williamson Trust had been able to make payments to those of retirement age during the winter. The Town Lands Charity had now extended its remit and was supporting residents of all ages (e.g. by working with Brookmead school), by reaching out to organisations supporting residents (e.g. the foodbank) and working with local charities that support local people (e.g. Rennie Grove).

Mark explained that requests for assistance had surprisingly continued to fall despite the cost-of-living crisis, and explained how people could contact them, in complete confidence, if they were in need of assistance.

A question was tabled regarding how residents could register with the Williamson Trust and details were provided. Mark was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

AA11/24 REPORT FROM, AND QUESTIONS TO, PITSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Nicholls introduced the parish councillors and explained the changes in membership since last years' assembly, along with the various committees and external bodies that members undertake. A report was provided on the activities undertaken during the previous 12-months in relation to core parish council services including: additional litter picking staff, problems with dog fouling, Christmas lights, the play areas and skate park, the recreation ground & the need to fell the Swedish Whitebeam due to rot at the base, the pavilion, public seating and memorial benches, the allotments, the car scheme, Pitstone Parish Post and grass verge cutting / right of way maintenance under devolved services from Buckinghamshire Council.

A number of special projects were also undertaken during the year including: providing assistance to Ivinghoe & Pitstone United Cricket Club with the purchase of their new covers, grants provided to Pitstone Memorial Hall Charity and Brookmead School, the £2,000 donation from a production company filming in Pitstone quarry that had been passed straight to Ivinghoe & Pitstone Scouts towards their new scout hut, progress towards the provision of bus shelters along Westfield Road and the installation of wildlife information panels at the Local Wildlife Site on Westfield Road to highlight its importance as a precious place that needs to be treated with respect.

We continue to push Nicholas King Homes to resolve the issues with the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). Sadly, they have not been very cooperative. Buckinghamshire Council refused their retrospective planning application to confirm the existing design and we are now waiting for NKH to confirm their next steps. Buckinghamshire Council continues to work with Taylor Wimpey, Croudace and Bellway regarding the adoption of these developments, and the parish council will hopefully be able to adopt the streetlights and play/open space facilities in Tun Furlong in due course.

We are aware of the proposal for the restoration of the Pitstone hill quarry and are monitoring the situation. The proposal would provide public access for walking and wild swimming, but it also involves importing large amounts of inert waste to partially restore the hillside. No formal planning application has been submitted. We will make residents aware when this changes.

We responded on behalf of the village to the Luton Rising application to expand Luton Airport from 18mppa to 32mppa. We also ran a survey to see what interest there was in having a footpath from the Westfield Road roundabout down to college lake. We received more responses than any other survey, over 450. We are analysing the results and have started to speak to Bucks Council about what may be possible. It will be difficult because the route has a number of complications and part of it is also in Hertfordshire. We do not expect anything to happen quickly, but we will do our best to find a way forward.

The council produces a budget intended to fund our normal activities, as well as accruing funds for specific purposes. This budget is used to calculate the amount of the precept that is collected on our behalf as part of your council tax bills. This year our total expenditure budget was set at £309,651. The precept was set at £172,430, which equates to £122.69 per year for a band D property. This is 2.86% increase, which is just under £3 per household per year.

The following questions were raised:

- **Bulk dog bin deposits** – Could the parish council please put an article in PPP reminding residents not to deposit carrier bags of poop in the bins, as they then overflow and can't accommodate the normal deposits.

- **Fly Tipping / Waste** – Could the parish council please put an article in PPP about fly tipping of garden waste, the BC waste wizard, the parish council's Reduce/Reuse/Recycle information, promoting Greatmoor.
- **Toddler Skatepark** – Could the council consider if it was feasible to install a dedicated skatepark for toddlers/young children.
- The parish council was asked to explain about the vegetation clearance on land owned by Safran and along the BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) between Queen Street & Grange Road.
- The council provided an update on the outstanding planning applications submitted by Nicholas King Homes for further residential development on the sites originally earmarked for a children's day nursery and restaurant/pub/café.
- The council explained about the protections applied to the Chiltern Beechwoods in Ashridge and the impact this was having on local residential development applications, as none could be granted by Buckinghamshire Council until suitable mitigation measures were in place to protect the ancient trees.
- The council provided an update on the current National Trust Ashridge Estate consultations on Protecting Our Roots which seeks to reduce the impact along Monument Drive by providing alternative visitor hubs/facilities.

No further questions were raised for the Parish Council.

AA12/24 REPORT FROM, AND QUESTIONS TO, PITSTONE PARISH CHARITY AND PITSTONE RECREATION GROUND CHARITY

Dave Nicholls provided an update on the history and purpose of the Recreation Ground Charity which looks after the Recreation Ground, which is also a registered village green. The Parish Council as a body is the sole trustee. The public have the right of access for exercise or recreation. The charity manages the site and raises funds where it can. This is primarily by charging businesses and other organisations that use the land. For example, the football clubs and cricket club. All funds are used for maintenance. In practice the charity relies on support from the Parish Council.

The Pitstone Parish Charity was created in 2004. It was formerly known as Allotments for the Labouring Poor and owned land adjoining the recreation ground. The Parish Council as a body is the sole trustee. In 1970 the Charity Commission allowed some of the land to be licenced for use by the Recreation Ground Charity. This is the land on which the play equipment and skatepark now stand. This land was purchased by the Parish Council in 2020. The other half of the charity's land was sold to Nicholas King Homes as part of the PDA development. This raised just over £1.2m. This year we have concentrated on refining the types of grants the charity will distribute and putting together a set of policies and documents to guide the process. These are the Step-Up Grants that were explained earlier. Thank you to all councillors who took on this work over and above all their usual council duties.

A question was raised regarding whether there was any help available to residents to complete the Step-Up grant application form, and it was confirmed that there was.

No further questions were tabled for the charity.

AA13/24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Two questions had been submitted electronically ahead of the meeting and these were conveyed to those present:

- What opportunities were being taken to encourage wildflowers in the parish / verges
- To express support for the potential path from Westfield Road roundabout to College Lake

One question was posed, asking if it would be possible to apply cycle path decals along Westfield Road and it was confirmed that this had already been ordered through Buckinghamshire Highways for installation by the two bus shelters and up by the maintenance gate into the Local Wildlife Site. Additional metal signs for the lampposts were also due to be installed.

No further questions were tabled by those present.

AA14/24 CLOSURE OF MEETING

The chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting, especially the guest speakers for their contributions.

The Vice Chairman also extended thanks to the Facilities Manager, Dave Burton, and Car Scheme Co-ordinator, Stephen Davies, for their support both during the evening and to the parish in general through all their diligent work on behalf of the parish council.

There being no further business to be transacted, the chairman closed the meeting at 10pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chairman

DRAFT