

THE BITTON VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008, in the School Room, Church Lane, Bitton (7.30 for 8.00)

1. Welcome

The Chair of the meeting, Andrew Ward (AW), welcomed residents to the meeting and also Nick Pearce, a Police Community Support Office (PCSO) of Bitton & Boyd Valley Beat Team. The current Committee Members and other residents attending were invited to introduce themselves and those people interested in receiving information from meetings asked to complete their contact details for a Distribution List.

2. Apologies for Absence

These were received from Bridget Hetzel (Secretary).

3. Adoption of Minutes

AW read the Minutes for the AGM of 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007 to the attendees and requested agreement that he could sign these as a correct record. This was agreed by all present, formally proposed by Bob Willis and seconded by John Graham.

4. Appointment of Committee

AW confirmed that all existing Officers were willing to stand, whilst two committee members, Sandra Flower and Christine Thomas, advised the meeting that they wished to stand down. AW thanked them for their valuable contributions. AW asked for nominations from the floor to replace same, no nominations received. AW invited anyone who might prefer to discuss this further to see him at the end of the meeting. David McLaughlin proposed, Jill Gibson and Christopher Gallop seconded that the committee be re-elected en bloc.

5. Financial Report

The Treasure, Pete Sayers (PS), reported that the Credit Balance brought forward from 2007 AGM was £1,022.46. Outgoings during the year have been for Room Hire (costs are not negotiable), Bitton in Bloom (with thanks to John Graham) and other expenses £26.00. Income has been in the form of Donations, there has been no necessity to fund raise, however this could be considered if required. Current balance is £936.53.

6. Chairman's Report

a) No written questions had been received by AW

AW recognizes that some larger issues go way beyond the Association's power and authority, however, it can have lots of influence on smaller ones.

AW then reported on what had been achieved over the last year on **big** issues:-

**The Golden Valley Site** – good progress with Meetings and tours with owners and site architect. The site architect is due to return in December to update BVRA further. There are no current plans so no consultations necessary at this time.

**Brewery Lane Greenhouses** – A deteriorating site, which, unlike Intier, is very visible. Efforts to identify the owner have so far been unsuccessful. Nick Pearce (PCSO) is to follow this up with Chris Skelton his Senior Officer.

**Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (8,000 homes on green belt)** – there were no comments from the floor. Mike Thomas (MT) recommended that AW make representation to the Government Minister on behalf of BVRA stressing the real impact this housing will have on the green belt. AW reports that he has already written to Hazel Blears. MT raised concerns that in view of the current economic situation if the land is released it may be left in a derelict state.

**The Parish Plan** – AW reports good progress and thanked Cheryl Wright (CW) and John Graham (JG) for their involvement.

CW updated the meeting on progress and current position. Details to date are as follows:-

Bitton Parish Plan steering committee was established in December 2007 at the behest of Bitton Parish Council who are supporting the production of a Parish Plan by summer 2009 (Parish Plans usually take 12 – 18 months to come to fruition).

The Bitton Parish Plan will cover the whole of the parish – North Common, Oldland Common, Bitton, Swineford, Upton Cheney, Beach and Willsbridge, south of the A431 – a population of nearly 10,000).

The intention is for local residents, businesses, schools, retirement homes, older people's groups and other community/social groups to identify what they feel are the key issues locally and, taking account of everyone's views, publish an action plan to address these.

The project has been broken down into 5 main phases to ensure that everyone is heard:

- Initial consultation (5 public consultations events were held during the summer months and issues raised during these events were analysed and will be used to inform questionnaire and interview content)
- questionnaire survey and structured interviews
- data entry and analysis
- writing of the final report and action plan
- reporting back to the community

Volunteers are needed to assist with distributing questionnaires, interviewing and data entry in particular. If you are able to help, please contact Andrew Ward (chair of BVRA) in the first instance.

In answer to query from floor CW re-emphasised that the Parish Plan involves volunteers, not the council. Some views have been expressed which could go to inform the Parish Plan. The Parish Plan is long term; however the Committee will only run for a further 9 months

MT informed the meeting that the Parish Plan will indicate local needs and influence conditions relating to planning decisions within The Parish, once the document has been adopted by Bitton Parish Council.

Following adoption, planning applications must take recognition of the document and South Glos Council planning officers are required to make reference to The Parish Plan, particularly in drafting conditions relating to any planning permissions.

However, The Parish Plan cannot override the Core Strategy as ratified by the Government Minister, i.e. it has no powers to change the designation of land where a Minister has set a prescribed purpose such as housing, industrial, recreational etc.

**The Post Office closure** – failed attempt to keep open, the village is the poorer. Bob Willis (BW) has been in discussion with a postmaster with a view to setting up a temporary satellite post office. David McLaughlin is aware that some Churches in England have set up Post Offices, a comment made from the floor stated that the Minister of the Methodist Chapel had spoken about it. Jill Gibson queried an arrangement such as the visiting Library. BVRA to explore further.

**Traffic through the village** – AW reports progress on pavement widening in High Street. This should make it safer by slowing the traffic. JG comments that on a previous plan the road was shown to be straight. Plans are currently on view in High Street locations.

AW then reports on some actions taken over the year on **little** things that can make day to day life in Bitton even better:-

**Communication** – regular reports in Parish Magazine on BVRA actions (thanks to Bridget Hetzel) encouraging feedback.

**Community** – Flicks in the Sticks planned for 17<sup>th</sup> October in Schoolroom (thanks to BH, Shirley Day and others) 60 tickets available at reasonable charge.

**Litter** – ‘Just pick it up’ habit spreading (thanks to all); AW wants everyone to encourage others.

**The look of our streets** –

- Willsbridge roundabout painted because we made a fuss!! ( thanks to Christopher Gallop)
- Eight out of twelve unsightly and unused posts removed from our streets (thanks to AW)

**Flower tubs** – more beautiful than ever and hanging baskets (thanks to JG). JG noted that it has been a bad summer. He queried whether it would be possible to consider permanent stone tubs. MT suggested that a formal letter be written to Sharon Robbins, Clerk to Council, stating that BVRA are planning to make Bitton in Bloom more attractive and requesting financial aid towards tubs and flowers etc. BVRA to action.

**BVRA presence at Church fete** - (thanks to Tony Boulton for manning stall). AW also thanked CW for her involvement in the management of the fete.

**Farewell gift to Joe, Postmaster at the Post Office** - made by a representative group of BVRA members.

**Keeping in touch with South Gloucestershire Council** – (thanks to MT) BVRA appreciate his help.

**Meeting with the Police** – AW attended a Police ‘surgery’ in a ‘container’ at Bitton Railway station where he was given a good welcome. Nick Pearce (NP) (PCSO) was invited to attend this AGM.

NP expressed pleasure in attending this AGM, he welcomes more people to attend the surgery to discuss police related issues and would like to hear more positive comments.

NP states that some issues are not being reported and confirmed that any calls made to the 0845 4567000 number (Portishead, manned 24 Hours) are dealt with. All calls are recorded so as to build up a library of incidents and an ability to give high priority to 'hot spots'

Geoff Francombe commented on the lack of follow up following a contact he had made when the surgery was held at the previous Torrance site.

AW thanked NP for his time in attending

MT raised awareness to the Safer Stronger Community Group, aimed at Local people working together with other Agencies to improve communities. The next public meeting for Boyd Valley & Bitton areas is Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2008 7.00pm – 9.00 pm at The Meadows Primary School, Bath Road, Bitton. MT suggested that it would be good if a BVRA member could attend. He is aware that representations in other villages have not been very strong.

There were no further questions from the floor. AW closed the AGM.

AW then led an Open meeting with a discussion on Making Bitton even Better, aiming to involve both committee members and other residents with a timed/structured outcome.

The following issues were discussed:-

- **Speed Limits** – traffic calming/chicanes/camera/mini-roundabout at Golden Valley exit - it was noted that when the Ring Road was built that the A431 would be downgraded, nothing has been heard since.
- **Loss of visibility** (especially Church Road exit onto A431 by Brewery Hill due to Uncut hedges –comment raised re footpath from Bitton to Swineford badly silted up/overgrown causing restriction in walkway. It was noted that the council has dealt with the matter in recent days.
- **Unauthorised signs** – request for consistency
- **Social Activities** – a request for more events to enable newcomers and existing residents to meet was welcomed. One suggestion - Pub quiz. Forthcoming "Flicks in the Sticks repromoted - posters to advertise are in production. This is the first of many to be planned; suggestions for other titles welcome with the aim that refreshments served fit the film.
- **Village shop** – "service has declined" – "glorified off-license". It was noted that Jones as a group are open to flexibility, might they be open to suggestions? Organic bread is now in stock. Nick Pearce (CPSO), with his senior office, will be speaking to local shops requesting they do not sell eggs and flour to children/young people in the Halloween period.
- **Bitton in Bloom** – JG recommends we capitalize on this; the village as a whole seem to be supportive. Ideas suggested:-  
'Open Gardens' in the summer to raise community profile – Anne Boulton and Gwen Roache offered to investigate/organize this.  
Village Christmas tree – possible site River Bridge/Garage forecourt. This may require Council permission, Brian to investigate further. Sponsorship by local garden centre worth investigating.  
Christmas wreath competition (a successful idea seen in another village)

- **Open Buildings** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in September Heritage are open days in South Gloucestershire. Should Bitton be in the publicity run?
- **Bath/Bristol cycle track** – Sustrans have recently carried out a survey of cyclists using the route asking if the railway is interfering with their usage of track. Local transport plans cover this facility into Bath.

Discussion completed AW thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.