

Parish Council update report: August 2021

The first 'in-person' meeting of the Parish Council since January 2020 took place on 9 June 2021 with four Parish Councillors and the Clerk meeting together and complying with 'the rule of six' which still applied at the time. It was a strange experience with everyone sat at individual desks, spaced well apart in the village hall, all wearing face masks and with windows and doors wide open (with some distractions from outside on the recreation ground). Although not ideal circumstances, the important business on the Agenda was all undertaken.

Since then, the July meeting has also taken place in the main hall and it is anticipated that the next few meetings may also take place there (rather than in the smaller upstairs room) to ensure adequate space and ventilation. Details of meetings will continue to be posted on the noticeboard in the High Street as well as on the community website.

Following the focus on Climate Change at the Annual Meeting in May (originally planned for 2020) a group of volunteers has met to explore ideas and actions. More information is attached at the end of this report (and also in the Parish Magazine) but it is recognised that more new faces are needed for this issue and it is hoped that the community will rise to the challenge. Please contact Petra Norris, Parish Clerk, via 07943 536065 or buritonparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk to let us know if you might be interested.

The Council has produced a draft 'charter' to ensure our own activities consider climate change and to encourage others to act appropriately. Details are on the community website and comments are welcome for consideration at the Parish Council meeting on 27 September.

The Council's other major initiative, to help pollinators and other wildlife, featured prominently at the Village Show in August with another group of volunteers contributing expertise and enthusiasm. More details are provided in the central pages of the Parish Magazine and it is hoped that lots of people will want to take part over the months ahead.

There have been many positive comments about how the new mowing contract is leaving longer grass at the edges of the recreation ground for pollinators and other wildlife. The area has to be cut at least once a year (or else the grasses form a thatch that wild flowers can't penetrate) and all the cuttings have to be raked away (or they alter the soil fertility and encourage fast-growing species to grow rather than wildflowers). The Council is arranging the cutting for September and hopes that many parishioners will join a 'Community Hay-Day' by bringing rakes and wheelbarrows afterwards. More details will be available nearer the time.

Another Buriton initiative has also attracted attention and praise recently. Work relating to keeping our Dark Night Skies was show-cased in an on-line event for parish councils in April and led to enquiries from other parts of the South Downs National Park and beyond. And the BBC's World Service visited the village in July to record a special feature. Thank you to everyone who ensures that lights use lower wattage bulbs, only shine 'where' needed (downwards and shielded from neighbours) and only shine 'when' needed (using timers or proximity sensors).

The Council has eventually been able to appoint a contractor to repair the remaining pot-holes in the village hall car park (programmed for Friday 3rd September) – something which had seemed impossible to arrange during the Covid restrictions – and we are also trying to retain the phone box in the High Street as a home for the defibrillator.

With the changes in Covid restrictions regular users of the Village Hall have returned and other enquiries are being received. The first few months of the Financial Year have seen small deficits of costs over income so please encourage friends and contacts to use our well-equipped hall. And some ideas have been received about making better use of the Changing Rooms – but more expressions of interest would be welcomed. Please contact Petra Norris, Parish Clerk, via 07943 536065 or buritonparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk.

In recent months the Council has arranged for abandoned vehicles to be removed, for vegetation on some Rights of Way to be cut by County Council volunteers, for Network Rail to refund costs unnecessarily incurred by the Parish Clerk (although we are still pursuing payment for damage on the recreation ground) and for a new lengthsman to tackle other small tasks in the parish. If you are aware of jobs that might need doing, please contact the Parish Clerk. A summary of a wide range of achievements during 2020/21 appears elsewhere on this website.

Climate Change and Buriton

The focus on Climate Change at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May has led to a group of volunteers beginning to explore ideas and actions.

It's realised that while Covid-19 has shaken us all, threats posed by global warming have not gone away. Major scientific reports show that human activity is changing the climate in unprecedented and sometimes irreversible ways. Reports warn of increasingly extreme heatwaves, droughts and flooding, described as a "code red for humanity".

Climate change could affect future life in Buriton in a wide range of ways: more storms, periods of drought, fires affecting farmland and food supplies, water shortages, effects on nature and changes in population movement as low-lying areas near the coast are threatened by rising seas.

Responses to these challenges will require both mitigation (taking actions to reduce the severity of climate change) and adaptation (adjusting to live in new conditions) and the group identified some potential next steps with a focus on domestic measures and transport.

Ideas included: seeing if thermal imaging equipment could be borrowed so that households could find out how they could save energy costs; sharing expertise that already exists in the parish (including homes which have already installed energy saving measures); a demonstration of electric vehicles; considering some sort of event to help people identify grants and subsidies; circulating examples of useful websites; helping the school and the parish council take more actions.

The Parish Council has subsequently produced a draft 'Climate & Nature Charter' to ensure its own activities consider climate change and to encourage others to act appropriately. Comments on the draft, which is on the community website, are welcomed.

But it is also realised that more support, new faces and fresh blood are needed for this sort of activity and it is hoped that the community will rise to this challenge. Everywhere needs to do its bit.

Please contact Petra Norris, Parish Clerk, via 07943 536065 or buritonparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk to let her know if you might be interested in joining the group or helping with ideas, activities or actions.