

## Bere Ferrers Parish Council

At the Annual Parish Meeting, held in the Parish Hall, Bere Alston on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### Present

Cllr. P. Crozier	Chair of the Council
Cllr. Dennis	Cllr. V. Grose
Cllr. D. King	Cllr. B. Lamb
Cllr. Leithall	Cllr. R. Maycock
Cllr. J. Maciejowska	Cllr. D. Pengelly
Cllr. C. Shaw	

### 589. Apologies and welcome from the Chair of the Council, Cllr. Peter Crozier

Cllr. Crozier welcomed HM Lord Lieutenant, David Fursdon, to the Bere Ferrers Annual Parish meeting. It is a special meeting as the Parish wish to celebrate the Gold medal awarded to our Bere Alston in Bloom group last autumn.

Cllr. Crozier also introduced the Mayor of West Devon, Cllr. Caroline Mott, together with representatives from Gulworthy, Cllr. Kate Royston, Buckland Monachorum, Cllr. Susan Woolacott, and Calstock, Cllr. Jim Walkhem. Unfortunately, Cllr. Philip Sanders was unable to attend the meeting.

### 590. Reports from the Council's Committees:

#### 1) Footpaths & Environment

Cllr. Dotty King, Vice-Chair of the Committee:

The Footpath & Environmental Committee have been working hard over the past 12 months, with the annual inspection of all the 99 footpaths in the Peninsula and completing reports and surveys on each footpath, which are sent to Devon County Council, ensuring the footpaths are kept open and safe for everyone to enjoy. All footpaths are clearly numbered with fingerposts and pointers so they are easily identified. The new Footpath Guide 2022 edition is also available to purchase from the Parish Council or several other outlets around the Parish. The guides included a QR code on the back page, which makes reporting any issues to the Parish Council easier. We have seen a few problems with landowners with footpaths that cross their land and these have been escalated to the Legal Department of Devon County Council to follow up and find solutions.

Moving on to environmental issues we are pleased that within the Parish there will be some electric charging points will be installed in Pilgrim Drive car park and we hope to increase this facility within the Parish. New Dog litter posters have been be put up around the Parish encouraging dog owners to be more responsible and clear up after their dogs.

Future workings being considered include; replacing stiles with self-closing gates, boardwalks being supported by metal runners, the lost paths scheme runs till 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026, wish to make more paths more accessible to those less mobile. Cllr. King then took the opportunity to thank all of the Committee members, Parish Workman and our Parish Clerk for all their hard work over the past 12 months.

#### 2) Open Spaces

Cllr. Dave Pengelly, Chair of the Committee:

A few projects done in the last 12 months, include the completion of entrance to the dog exercise field, permission given to the Bere Alston Allotment Association to plants some trees in the waste ground at the bottom of the allotments.

There has been discussed within the Council with regards to the Council paying business rates for the car park at Recreation field and the pavilion. Cllr. Pengelly has been in touch with a similar authority in North Devon, who have a similar setup with the football changing rooms and a car park and that Council do not pay business rates. It is something that the Council will continue to with West Devon Borough Council.

There was an issue with the litter bin place in Pilgrim Drive which was continually being used for household and required emptying every day. The bin has been removed now and so far, there are no reports of fly tipping in that area.

Memorial Garden in the cemetery had become overgrown and before it can be tidied up, we have given notice to residents to contact the Council if they have any concerns before the work is carried out.

There is a rat infestation at the Bere Alston allotments, so the Council ask that allotment holders do everything possible to help to eliminate the problem. The Parish Workman is now licenced to lay rat poison on the site.

The Committee are currently working on a large project to improve the playparks. The Council are about to spend £4,000 on improvements, this money includes a £1,000 donation from BARP which is the BERE ALSTON RECREATION PARKS charity.

Unfortunately, the trustees of BARP have taken the decision to wind up the charity, which was set up to improve the play parks in the village. Approx £30,000 has been raised over the last 6/7 years and spent in the play parks. There will be around £6000 left in the BARP account, £500 will be donated to the local school and the remainder will be donated to the Parish Council and ring fenced to be spent on the Play parks in Bere Alston. And in conjunction with that we have used that £5500 match funding and we have applied for a £10,000 grant from the National Lottery so hopefully that will, if we get the full whack give us £15,500 to spend. A subcommittee has been set up to recommend work which needs doing.

I would like to emphasize the considerable contributions from the rest of the Open spaces team, Cllrs. Dotty King, Virginia Grose. Colin Shaw, Richard Leithall and during his time with us Paul Graham Drury have all made significant contributions, and I thank them all for their help and support over the last year.

### **3) Plans & Highways**

Cllr. Ralph Maycock Chairman of the Plans & Highways committee, gave his report:

The committee meet on the first Tuesday of the month and undertake some site visits, if required. The Committee looks at applications from tree felling/pollarding, conservatory erection, building of extensions, change of use, new builds and new estates. This year there has been a significant application for a proposed new Coop store to be built at the gateway to Bere Alston.

The Council report back to West Devon, our recommendations or rejections of any applications we receive. All applications are viewed with sympathy to what is already in the villages and surrounding areas and in accordance with details laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood plan has been in place for 4.5 years and has been instrumental in planning decisions for the Peninsula since. Applications have had to be modified and rejected on the back of the wishes of our community. It has played and continues to play key role in the expansion of the Woolacombe road development. The plan has also been cited in applications put forward in neighbouring parishes who are still working on their own plans and been cited as a model plan in Westminster. Our Neighbourhood Plan subcommittee is currently undergoing its five-year review as is required, this is a refreshment of text to keep the plan fresh and up to date, however this does not change the tenure of the plan. As a committee we will always look to needs of the community as a whole and make our recommendations for the benefit of all and will continue to do so over the next 12 months.

### **4) Finance & General Purposes**

Cllr. Leithall, Chair of the Finance & General-Purpose Committee:

The Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&PG) are held on the penultimate Tuesday of most months, a week before every Full Council meeting.

#### Financial Management

The Committee prepare the Annual Draft Budget to be presented and approved by the Full Council. Every month, the Committee monitor the Council's spend against this budget, and I am pleased to report that overall expenditure has been kept within the approved budget.

#### Policies & Procedures

Much of the committee's work are necessary routine business. This includes the review and update of Parish Council management documents and policies, including the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Internal Control Statement, Equality and Diversity Policy, Lone Worker Policy, Donation Policy. Council's Data Protection Policy, Grant Award Policy, Reserve Policy, Debit Card Policy and Risk Management.

Buildings Inspections

The Committee is responsible for inspecting all buildings, except those covered by the Open Spaces Committee. Therefore, F&GP have inspected and/or considered inspection reports for, the Parish Hall, which is leased to and managed Bere Alston Regeneration Partnership (Beregen) and four bus shelters

Parish Toilets

F&GP have overseen the ongoing maintenance and cleaning of the Parish toilets at Bere Alston and Bere Ferrers and carried out routine inspection. Unfortunately, earlier last year (around March/April) there was a spate of vandalism in the toilets at Bere Alston and consequently they were closed early as a temporary precaution.

Operating efficiency

We have initiated and/or facilitated efficiency improvements to the Council's financial administration by introducing the use of a Direct Debit Card to be used for low value (typically online) ad-hoc purchases, instead of using petty. Smart meters have been installed in the Parish Hall and the Sports Pavilion at the Recreation Field.

Value for Money – Purchased Goods & Services

Quotes were obtained for Council's insurance, which verified that our existing provider remains complete. A new telephone and broadband provider has been selected offering better value for money.

The Parish Council's Website has a new more modern look, and also updated with new templates to make it more user friendly for those using smart phones or tablet computers.

Cycle Stands

At the request of Full Council, we checked for necessary permissions and oversaw purchase and installation of bicycle stands at Pilgrim Drive Public Car Park in Bere Alston, and at Weir Quay.

Cllr. Peter Crozier:

It has been a relief that the covid measures have relaxed and everyone has been able to start getting back to normal. The Council always has ambitions to improve the villages. We are looking into increasing car parking provision on Bere Alston which is continual nightmare for those that have no off-road parking. Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet – it will involve time, money and liaison with other parties to bring to fruition.

The council wish list extends to improving or replacing the current Pavilion at the done, as it is well below the standard expected by today's sports teams. There have been talks with the Football Clubs to this end. The focus has to be on diversity and inclusion, which means they were encouraging the clubs to start female teams.

This will be crucial element to be acceptable to the grant awarding bodies where the majority of the funds will come from. Residents often remark that our public spaces are a credit to our workman Steve Hingston who works hard cutting grass and making sure our green spaces are special to the villages. I also thank Jane and Luke who look after the public toilets and look after the litter bins when Steve is on annual leave.

I have to thank my fellow Councillors for diligent input to their committee work and their thoughtless in the pride we have for the Parish. A final thanks for Caroline Metcalf, Our clerk, for the excellent way she taken on and has tackled the challenges during a difficult time.

Questions from the public:

One member of the public had a question regarding the state of certain roads. Cllr. Crozier discussed that some were to be worked on in the next few weeks, including Denham Bridge Road.

A Trustee of Beregen also spoke to the crowd and discussed that they are actively looking for new people to join and/or provide your skills to Beregen, to please get in touch with the Trustees.

**591. Mr. Clive Charlton, Chair of the Bere Alston History Group**

Cllr. Lamb introduced Mr. Clive Charlton, Chair of the Local History group, who gave the audience a short talk and slide show of the history of the Parish.

After his talk, Cllr. Lamb thanked Mr. Charlton for his presentation.

## **592. Presentation of awards**

Cllr. Crozier paid tribute to two members of the community, Jeanette Englefield and Liz McQueen, who were instrumental in forming a Britain in Bloom Group, chairing the Committee and responsible for coordinating entry and efforts and encouraged the community effort which included involving the local school, Scouts and Brownies. There is now a welcoming entrance to Bere Alston and the streets are adorned with planters and hanging baskets.

In 2019 the highest marks ever records for first time entrants, resulted in a Silver gilt award. Judges remarked that it was the greatest amount of community involvement they have never seen for a first-time entrant and were just two points short of a Gold Award. In 2021 another Silver Gilt for the large village category was awarded. A cup was also presented for Are in the Neighbourhood for two displays created by Jeanette Englefield depicting a woman in two halves, each covered in flowers and placed at either end of the road on the judge's route. The judges declared it a 'lovely lifting of spirits' following the difficult 18 months of Covid.

In 2022 a Gold Medal was achieved in the Large Village category, together with a second Gold for coming first out of all the Large Villages in the South West, an area covering Penance to Swindon.

Dr Frances Howard must also be mentioned, as she was awarded a Community Champion certificate for her specialist environmental contribution to the village by completing a survey of hedgehogs, moths, and wild flowers, together with the erection of 14 swift boxes. Two private gardens and the village community allotment also received Community certificates. The baton has now been passed to Anne Sheringham and the work for Bere Alston in Bloom continues.

Cllr. Crozier then invited the Lord Lieutenant to present the Freedom of the Bere Ferrers Parish to recognise the enormous commitment Jeanette Englefield and Liz McQueen have made to the community.

The Lord Lieutenant then presented awards to the following individuals:

Mrs. Helena Rogers, for her long service to the Parish Council, playing of music in the churches and for many years being the Editor of Bere Link magazine and Bere Ferrers Footpath Guide.

Mrs. Linda Freeman, for organising a volunteer service in the Bere Alston area to shop, deliver, and generally chat to those residents who were lonely during the Covid lockdown.

Mrs. Caroline Clark, for also organising a group of volunteers in Bere Ferrers and Weir Quay to deliver, shop and generally help people in need during the lockdown.

After presenting the awards, the Lord Lieutenant gave a speech, firstly giving those present a description of his role as the King's representative in Devon and that it is a privilege to present awards such as those tonight on behalf of the King. The Lord Lieutenant said he is well aware how a Britain in Bloom group can make to a community. It therefore appropriate that his first visit to the Bere Pensiula should be to present awards and thanked the Council for inviting him to attend.

Afterwards, Mrs Crozier presented the Lord Lieutenant with a bouquet of flowers and a basket of local produce.

Cllr. Crozier thanked the Lord Lieutenant for joining us today, the members present for attending and finally the to the WI for providing refreshments after the meeting and closed the meeting at 8.58 pm.

Signed by the Chair

Date 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023