



BIDFORD-ON-AVON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14



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Message from Cllr. Fleming,, Chairman of Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council

I should like to welcome you all to my first Chairman's Report. It has been a great honour for me to have chaired the Parish Council and represented the local community in this last year.

It was with great regret and sadness that we lost one of the mainstays of the Parish Council early in the year when, due to ill health, Mike Gerrard took the decision to resign. As you all know, he has been a great supporter of Bidford-on-Avon and its residents for many years, representing the local community not only on the Parish Council but as the leader of SCAN, as well as assisting his wife, Heather, in her voluntary job as Village Liaison Officer. He is, and will continue to be, sorely missed.

The Parish Council was also sad to receive the resignation of one of its newer councillors, John Squire who, due to some changes in the work front, felt he would not be able to commit the time he felt was necessary to council work. I should like to take this opportunity to thank him for the work he did, especially on the Amenities Working Group.

And so we end this year two councillors short, but with the confidence that we shall soon be at full strength.

*After some very busy years, during which the Parish Council has improved the play areas round Bidford-on-Avon and Broom, we are now entered a somewhat quieter period. There is, however one exception: taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the Localism Act 2011, the Parish Council has agreed to develop a **Neighbourhood Plan**, which allows the local community to "**shape development in their area through the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan**". The wheels are already turning and a Steering Group has already been established. This is a 18 month long comprehensive project and the local community needs to come together to ensure the final document is a reflection of how residents would like Bidford-on-Avon to be in 20 years time!*

I trust that, once again, you will find this Annual Report informative

*Cllr. W Fleming
Chairman of Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council*



BIDFORD-ON-AVON PARISH COUNCIL
2013/14

Parish Council Office, Bramley Way, Bidford-on-von B50 4QG
Clerk – Mrs Elisabeth Uggerløse
Tel. No. 01789 778653/07718 628925
Email info@bidfordonavon-pc.gov.uk
Website: www.bidfordonavon-pc.gov.uk

Opening hours (to the public) Daily from 10.00 am – 3.00 pm except Thursdays, when the hours are 1.30 -4.30 pm. Please note this is subject to the Clerk's availability as she may be attending other meetings.

The Parish Council meets on the second Monday of the month (Consultative Planning Committee Meeting) and the fourth Monday of the month (Parish Council Meeting at the Parish Council Meeting Rooms, Bramley Way, B50 4QG
ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND WELL PUBLICISED

WHAT IS A PARISH COUNCIL AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

An oft asked question!

Parish and Town Councils, also know as local councils, are incorporated bodies, established by legislation in 1894 and are, believe it or not, the oldest type of local authority in England!

Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council, which includes the village of Broom and the hamlets of Barton and Marlcliff, was quick to establish itself: it has been in existence since 1895.

Like all local authorities, local councils can only do what is either required of them, or have the power to do.

Local Councils do have some statutory duties which include:

- It must hold at least three meetings a year, one of which must be the Annual Meeting of the council; Annual Meeting of the Parish Council
- It must also have a Code of Conduct. That confirms the obligations and responsibilities of councillors – a copy of this can be found at <http://www.bidfordonavon-pc.gov.uk/pdfs/documents/proc-codeconduct.pdf>
- It must employ an officer to discharge its duties and is responsible for the administration of the council's financial affairs
- It must prepare annual accounts that are externally audited
- It cannot publish, or support the publishing of, any material which may affect public support of a political party
- It has a duty to do whatever it can to prevent crime and disorder, and must take this aspect into account whenever it exercises its powers
- It is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. A copy of the Model Publication Scheme can be found at <http://www.bidfordonavon-pc.gov.uk/pdfs/documents/proc-publicationscheme08.pdf>

Until the Localism Act of 2011, local councils had limited powers, all set out by statute. In the event it wanted to do something it did not have the power to do, it could invoke Section 137, which allowed it to spend money on things it did not have the specific power to carry out, but would benefit the community. However, as is often the case, here was a drawback; an annual limit on how much could be spent under S137.

Then came the Localism Act 2011 which gave the General Power of Competence (GPC), which could be adopted by all councils that fulfilled the required criteria, and allows local councils do anything an individual can do. Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council fulfilled the criteria and adopted the GPC in 2012 giving it more flexibility in how it manages its work.

Over the years, in an effort to involve the local community, legislation, including the Localism Act 2011, has been passed giving local councils more powers and more responsibilities, as well as making them more transparent, open and answerable to the community they represent.

This has allowed Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council to take over the maintenance of the grass verges to ensure the village always looks its best. It is also always keen to adopt Public Open Spaces, and maintain to a good standard.

The main source of income for local councils is the precept, which is collected through the council tax. A precept is a tax charged on each property in the parish to fund all the activities undertaken by the parish council for the benefit of the community. It is important to note two things: local councils do not receive government grants and ALL the funds raised by the precept are spent locally.

The precept raised in 2013/14 was for £187,100 and this was supplemented by Stratford-on-Avon DC, which gave a Council Tax Reduction Grant of £23,830.00.

Other sources of income include:

- Allotments
- Burial Ground
- Car parking and events on the Big Meadow
- Lease of land to sports associations and youth club



THE PARISH COUNCIL

As with any local government body, Bidford Councillors are elected by its electorate. At the last election in May 1972 the following Councillors were returned:

- Michael Atkins
- Bill Fleming
- Mike Gerrard
- Joe Harvey (Broom Ward)
- Fred Hiscocks
- Mrs Joy Keeley
- Mrs Charlotte Randell
- Lee Pound
- John Squires
- Frank Spiers

Sadly, during the year we lost Cllr Squire who, due to work commitments, felt unable to give the Parish Council the attention he felt is required; and Cllr. Gerrard, for health reasons.

Parish Council matters are considered by Councillors at either the Consultative Planning Committee meetings, which deal with all planning issues, or the full Parish Council meeting. Both take place every month and are open to the public which is welcome to attend. There is a Public Forum item at both meetings, which allows attending members of the public to raise their concerns to Council.

Councillor attendance to the meetings is excellent – between 80 – 100%, demonstrating the dedication of the Council to its local community.

Councillors, and the Clerk, also attend regular training events to ensure they are up to date with new legislation. The Council is also a member of the Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC), which regularly updates the Council on relevant new laws and guidelines. The Council is represented at the WALC County Committee by the Clerk, Mrs E. Uggerløse, who attends the quarterly meetings at Leamington Spa as well as the branch meetings at Elizabeth House, Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC)

The Council is also well aware of the importance of the new Local Development Core Strategy and has been involved with the process right from the starts which was, believe it or not, 2008!! The absence of an adopted Core Strategy has created a planning vacuum which is being well exploited by developers, and a large number of applications for large developments are continually being submitted. As a response to this, the Parish Council approved, and supported, the development of a **Neighbourhood Plan**.



PROJECTS

1. Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

Another product of the Localism Act 2011, NP empowers the local community to decide, within the scope of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Development Plan (LDP) how it wishes its designated area to develop in the next 20 years.

Once it had agreed to proceed with a NP at its meeting of July 2013, the Parish Council applied for the Designation of the area in November 2013

(<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/files/seealsodocs/148502/Bidford-on-Avon%20Neighbourhood%20Area%20Application%20-%20Nov%202013.pdf>)

Map of the Designated Area is available at

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/files/seealsodocs/148501/Bidford-on-Avon%20Parish%20-%20Map%20of%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%20Area.pdf>

The Application was approved by SDC,, the Planning Authority.

The Parish Council applied for, and was awarded, a grant from the Community Development Foundation to cover extra costs such as a Planning Advisor and Consultation. In addition it has set aside some specific funding to cover the costs of this extensive, and important, project.

2. Big Meadow Toilets

It was recognised that a refurbishment of the toilets was necessary, especially after a large number of visitors had come to enjoy the pleasures on our great recreational area and the contract was awarded to a local firm.

3. Street Lighting

The “replacement programme” continued this year, with a further 5 street light columns being replaced at

- Courtway x 4
- Glebe Close x 1

The Parish Council also considered Part Night Operation – switching off the lights between midnight and 5.00 am. However, the results of the survey it carried out were inconclusive and, in view of the extra cost and the fact the operation would be irreversible, I decided against it.

4. CCTV

The monthly reports received by the Parish council show that the cameras have been an effective, crime reduction tool.

In view of this, when District Council advised that, due to financial savings, it would not be able to continue offering night time surveillance, the Parish Council agreed, together with some other local councils, to finance night time surveillance to ensure Bidford-on-Avon gets 24 hour CCTV coverage.



5. Communication

It is acknowledged that this is one of the hardest things for local government: **getting the message across!**

The Parish Council uses the traditional methods of posting notices on the Notice Boards, and this is important in a village with a large proportion of elderly residents who still prefer this.

However, in common with other local government departments, the website is becoming more and more the “go to place” to find information. For obvious reasons, it is a much more efficient way of having ALL the information, both from the Parish Council and local associations, in one place and is a requirement under current legislation as a way of operating an open and transparent council. The website address is www.bidfordonavon-pc.gov.uk

The Council offers a Weekly Information E-mail service: all those who subscribe (free of charge) to it, receive notification of any news, events etc every week, with the assurance that their personal details are not disclosed. In an effort not to clog up the recipients computers, there are no attachments; the email simply gives the link for each to access when and if they are interested in that particular news.

The Council are also on **Facebook** (Bidford-on-Avon) and **Twitter** @Bidford_PC and it publishes a regular **Newsletter** in The Connection Magazine.

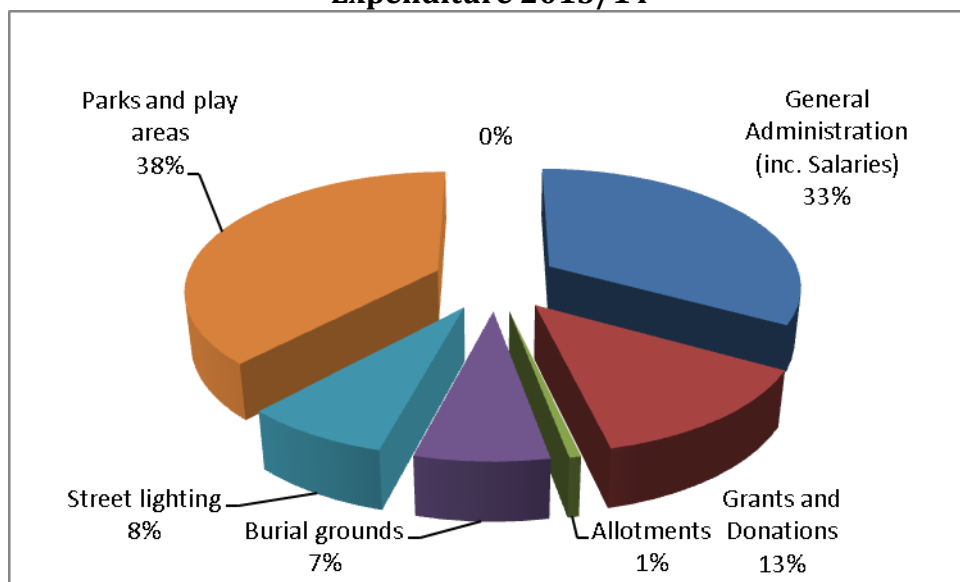
6. Partnerships

- **Bidford Rural Cinema** – this is a partnership between the Parish Council and the Crawford Memorial Hall. It has been running since November 2007 and screens two films every month (closed in August). The aim is to offer local entertainment to all age groups within the village, at affordable prices. We are grateful to Warner’s Budgens for their support.
- **Bidford Community Library Ltd. (BCL)** – although BCL is now an independent social enterprise company, it is still very much a local community endeavour, supported by the Parish Council who ensured its survival when the library was threatened with closure. A **BIG THANKS** is owed to **Mike Gerrard** who, together with the Clerk, successfully campaigned to keep the library in Bidford-on-Avon: a vital service for the many elderly residents and a source of learning for the younger members of the community.
The current Directors are continuing the efforts to make BCL a Community Hub and offering a variety of services within the library.
- **Bidford-on-Avon Parish Council** was selected as one of the councils to participate in a new flood prevention scheme known as **Pathfinder**, which is collaboration between the National Forum, Warwickshire County Council, the Parish Council and local residents. The aim of the scheme is to help local residents, affected by floods, to become more resilient.
As a result of initial meetings, **Barton Flood Group** and **Bidford Flood Group** have been created. They have been working together with representatives from WCC and the National Flood Forum and will be holding their first Multi Agency meeting later in the year.

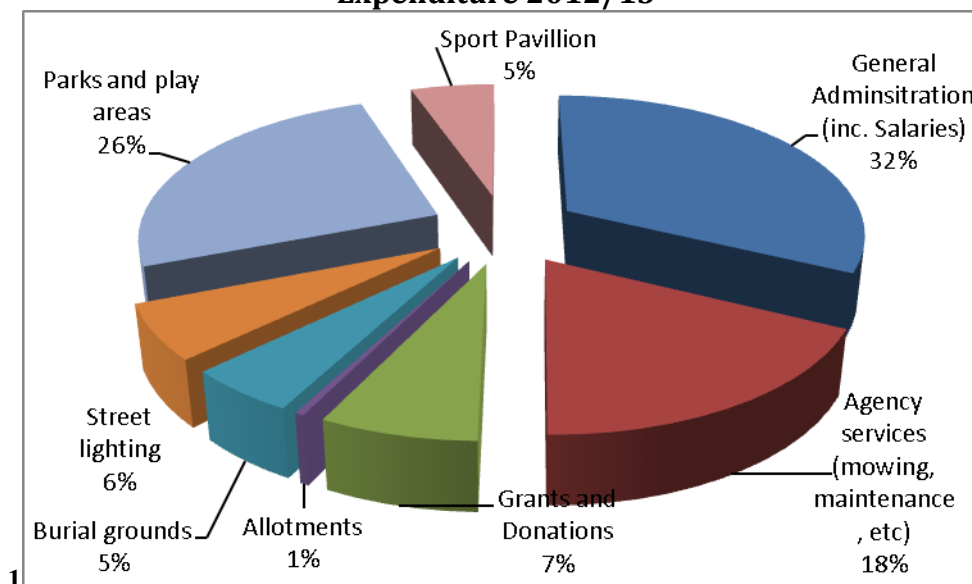
THE PRECEPT – HOW IS IT SPENT

These charts give an idea of the breakdown of the various items paid for by the Precept, as well as a comparison with last years expenditure.

Expenditure 2013/14



Expenditure 2012/13



- **Parks and play areas**

This represents the largest expense of the Council, which has a number of Open Spaces areas to maintain, namely:

- **The Big Meadow/Monie Meadow** – this, popular, 26 acre recreational area by the rivers is **leased** by the Council from the Alice, Duchess Dudley Charity Trust.

The Council is responsible for the maintenance of the area including:

- Gate keeper
- Grass cutting
- Tree maintenance
- Play equipment
- Waste collection
- **Jubilee Close**
 - Grass cutting
 - Play equipment
- **Kings Lane, Broom**
 - Grass cutting
 - Play area
 - Play equipment
- **Marleigh Park**
 - Grass cutting
 - Play equipment
 - Fence
- **Millers Bank, Broom**
 - Grass cutting
 - Tree maintenance
- **Sports field at Dugdale Avenue**
 - Grass cutting
- **The Leys**
 - Grass cutting

The Parish Council also carries out the grass cutting and verge maintenance in the village as well as of smaller open space areas; and it carries out weekly inspection of the play equipment.

- **General Administration**

This is the second largest expenditure and includes:

- Staff salaries
- Councillor/Clerk training
- Communication
- Insurance
- Professional fees
- Subscriptions
- Office administration costs



- **Grants**

The Parish Council is keen to assist the local community and, each year, allocates funds for this purpose.

It has been running a **Participatory Budget Scheme** for three years – this allows each community, Barton, Bidford-on-Avon, Broom and Marlcliff, to decide how to spend £500, for their benefit. This year the Participatory Budget was used to:

- **Barton** - purchase furniture to use when organising their very successful summer events
- **Bidford-on-Avon** - £500 was given to the Youth Club
- **Broom** – purchase of plants for the Millers Bank “Broom Riviera”
- **Marlcliff** – purchase of an extra pump to assist with the removal of surface water

Local associations/groups who feel they are in need of extra funding to help them run a better service, or offer new ones, are encouraged to apply for grants on a quarterly basis. The Parish Council considers each application very carefully before deciding if and how much to grant. In 2013/14, it awarded the following grants:

○ Acorns	120
○ County Air Ambulance	120
○ VASA	120
○ Samaritans	370
○ Westholme Ct. Luncheon Club	60
○ Bidford Church Cottage Trust	500
○ Bidford Vintage Gathering	320
○ Bidford Youth Club	2,176
○ Bidford Cricket Club	750
○ Bidford Health Centre	3,000
○ Broom Village Hall	1,500
○ Bidford Primary School	1,500
○ Dances of Universal Peace	500
○ Bidford Community Library	5,000
○ Citizens Advice Bureau	3,909
○ Warks & Northants Air Amb	850
○ Bidford Senior Citizens	500
○ Evesham Sea Cadets	500
○ Icknield Court Residents Ass	126



- **Street Lighting**

This covers the cost of street light replacement; annual maintenance and the electricity. It also covers the cost of repairs due to adverse weather conditions, vandalism etc.

- **Cemetery**

This covers the cost of maintaining all three cemeteries:

- **Grange Road**
- **Salford Road**
- **St. Laurence, closed churchyard**

- **Allotments**

Costs cover rates, water and some maintenance

INCOME

During the year, the Parish Council has received some grant funds:

- **Community Development Fund**
for the Neighbourhood Plan Scheme
£6,075
- **Stratford DC**
towards the Grass Cutting contract
£3,034
- **Stratford DC**
towards flood alleviation work
£450

Elisabeth Uggerløse
Clerk to the Parish Council
2014

