

To consider “Bigger Community” ideas and agree actions

Council Meeting 4 July 2023

Background

On 24 April Colin Stride, a local resident, submitted an email to the Clerk, Cllr Kirkby and Marianne Foster (on behalf of St Mark’s Church), asking for “Bigger Community” to be added to the PC agenda on 2 May and the next Parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting.

On 25 April Cllr Kirkby replied to say we look forward to receiving Colin’s thoughts on “Bigger Community and Communication” but that it won’t be on the PC’s 2 May agenda. Colin was advised that we already had a full agenda as the meeting was the Annual Council Meeting.

The “Bigger Community” ideas were received on 26 April, which confirmed it was Colin’s take on the community in Oliver’s Battery.

The Cllrs were invited to an informal meeting on 5 May to discuss the ideas and start considering which aspects the PC may be able to support, considering the priorities, time and cost implications relative to our other commitments and our resources. The Clerk responded to Colin with Cllrs initial thoughts on 16 May.

Cllr Kirkby had an initial meeting with Marianne on 18 May to discuss Colin’s ideas. Another meeting took place on 30 June, a few days after Marianne had met Colin to provide him with feedback from the Church/PCC.

“Bigger Community” Ideas Overview

There is a lot of information and ideas and the main topics are:

- working together
- common storage space
- communication, including noticeboards, newsletter, websites
- local shops

Key Conclusions

Regarding working arrangements, the various groups are not considered to be factions and the current arrangements continue, on the whole, to work well.

Regarding storage, the current storage arrangements don’t appear to be a problem. Not having a 'common storage area' does not prevent a catalogue of useful assets.

Regarding more noticeboards, more community noticeboards throughout the parish are not considered the way forward with publicising events and activities. For example, the PC and many, if not all, of the other community groups have email Contact Lists. There is also a multitude of lampposts and telegraph poles throughout the parish. The bus shelters are also conveniently placed in the parish to supplement noticeboards.

However, there is support in principle for a larger replacement lockable noticeboard at the local shops.

Regarding the banner framework, there is support in principle to increasing banner framework near St Mark's.

Regarding newsletters, it is not feasible to combine the three publications. Discussions have already taken place with BF&OBCN editor about working more collaboratively. It's not clear why this did not happen before.

Overall, it is not considered there is a need for a radical review of the existing communication facilities or to completely revise the facilities.

Regarding working together, the PC, St Mark's and community groups already work together. A PC representative would not have any authority to "come up with a common solution and implement it in a timely fashion" without approval of the proposal at PC meeting (this will be the same for St Mark's).

Regarding the local shops, the PC has previously engaged with the tenants of the shops, regarding improvements, with little or no success.

Regarding grants, the PC has agreed a budget that already requires grants for its priorities for 2023/24. It should not be forgotten that there is a resource implication to obtaining grants.

Proposals

There is support, including from the Church, to increasing the banner framework.

Although there is support in principle to a larger replacement lockable noticeboard at the local shops, the Church have arranged a larger replacement of the noticeboard in front of St Mark's (which was unsafe). The Church propose to continue to allocate space on the new noticeboard for PC and community use. Given this development, no action is proposed on noticeboards.

Regarding improvements at the local shops (spruce up the whole frontage of all the shops - the Shops look very tired and for instance, hanging baskets in the summer, Christmas lighting with prewired permanent lighting points in the winter would give a much more inviting look & feel to the Shops; future of the PO; paint the white wall area between PO and Butchers with a mural (Wendy Brammal local Artist for instance). There is an expectation that any approach should be made by the PC.

Recommendations

Cllr Kirkby to discuss the feasibility and cost of increasing the banner framework with Peter Arnold (the person who installed the current framework) and report to a PC meeting.

Cllr Kirkby to explore the idea of a mural with Wendy to establish if she is interested and an approx. cost, and an update could be brought back to a PC meeting, before any discussion with the building's owner (Imperial Homes).