

## **BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Binfield Heath Parish Council Meeting held on Monday January 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 7.45 pm at the Bottle and Glass**

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Meeting of the Recreation Ground Charities & Allotment for the Labouring Poor Charity  
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**01/20 Recreation Ground** Inspections have taken place. The Recreation Ground has been quiet. The sandpit needs a new surround with a cover and other items need minor attention. The Clerk has struggled to contact Sandpit Covers. The Clerk was asked to obtain a quotation to replace the surround to the sandpit and put a strong spring on the gate. **(Clerk to action)**

**02/20 Allotments** The Clerk reported that one rent was still outstanding. There is one spare allotment

**03/20 Public Forum** No questions.

#### **The meeting of the Parish Council**

**Present** Cllr P Rollason, Cllr L Ransom, Cllr S Summerland, Cllr H Lacey, Cllr K Maher, Cllr D Bartholomew (OCC) and Cllr Rawlins (SODC). Norman Lane and Barney Double

**01/20 Apologies for absence** Cllr Sarah Fulton-Urry

**02/20 Declarations of Interest** None

**03/20 Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019** Cllr Ransom proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. This was seconded by Cllr Lacey. All agreed.

#### **04/20 Matters Arising**

106.19 The Clerk had requested that the light outside Heathfield Close should be adjusted and Barney Double confirmed that it was no longer a problem.

**05/20 County Councillor's report** Cllr Bartholomew updated the PC on recent local matters. His report is attached and can be seen on the website.

**06/20 District Councillor's report** This is attached and can be seen on the website.

**07/20 Public Forum/Correspondence** Norman Lane brought to the PC's attention the fact that water collects outside their house and that the water has caused the paving outside the bus shelter to rise and cause a trip hazard. This will be reported **(Clerk to action)**

Barney Double reported that the footpath along the rear of the recreation ground was very difficult to walk along with brambles across the path. This will be reported **(Clerk to action)**

An email has been received from a member of the public wanting to ascertain what is going to happen about the sewage problem in the village. A pump that pumps the sewage is apparently broken and awaits replacement. Meanwhile a lorry is working 24h to clear the backlog. The Clerk was asked to contact Thames Water to try to find out what is going to happen. **(Clerk to action)**

#### **08/20 Financial Situation**

08.01/20 The financial position was circulated.

08.02/20 The January accounts were presented. Invoices to the value of £1,416.68 were authorised for payment by BACS. These payments were proposed by Cllr Ransom and seconded by Cllr Lacey. **(Clerk to action)**

08.03/20 Councillor expenses: None this month

#### **09/20 Planning Matters**

##### ***New Applications***

P19/S4141/HH Removal of existing roof structure and construction of new roof at steeper 35degree pitch, to incorporate an oak-framed front entrance porch. Construction of a single rear extension and conversion of the roof space. Associated internal alterations. Tree Tops Dunsden Way Binfield Heath RG9 4LR A working party recommended approval of this application. Decision ratified. All agreed.

P19/S4261/FUL Amendment No 2-dated January 2020 Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of a two-storey 4-bedroom detached dwelling with basement and detached carport and a two storey 3-bedroom detached dwelling with basement and integral garage, both using retained access from Harpsden Road (updated bat survey received 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and access width confirmed and carport enlarged as shown on revised site plan received 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020) Bournes Farmhouse Binfield Heath RG9 4JT The Parish Council discussed their objections to this application

and a working party had prepared a response. This decision was ratified but with one abstention.

### ***Applications Granted***

P19/S3275/FUL Variation of condition 2 (drawings) - siting of air conditioning units; siting of external air source heat pump outside plant room; reposition of plant room external door; repositioning of pitched rooflights to side elevations; amended design of pitched rooflights to front elevation; omission of two flat rooflights to main roof; revised PV panel design to main flat roof and additional PV panels to pitched roof on south west elevation; on application ref. P18/S2663/FUL (Erection of new dwelling). (As amended by plans received 4 December 2019 to re-locate proposed air-source heat pump to the side of the dwelling.) Maple House Dunsden Way Binfield Heath RG9 4LE

P19/S4045/HH Single storey front extension. 10 Heathfield Close Binfield Heath RG9 4DS

P19/S4141/HH Removal of existing roof structure and construction of new roof at steeper 35degree pitch, to incorporate an oak-framed front entrance porch. Construction of a single rear extension and conversion of the roof space. Associated internal alterations. Tree Tops Dunsden Way Binfield Heath RG9 4LR

**Planning Appeals** P18/S2377/FUL Planning refusal by SODC in respect of Crowsley Park Farmhouse Annexe was appealed and the appeal is allowed.

### **10/20 Community Matters**

10.01/20 The Village Litter Pick is planned for Saturday March 8<sup>th</sup>. This will be put in the newsletter.

10.02/20 An Arboricultural Officer from OCC wishes to condemn the tree in the centre of the village. A meeting is to be arranged to discuss the tree's future. **(Clerk to action)**

**11/20 Highways/Transport and General Maintenance** Road closures **(Clerk to action)**

**12/20 Grants and Donations** None

**13/20 Neighbourhood Plan** Cllr Maher reported that he had attended the recent Eye & Dunsden PC meeting. He will follow the progress of the development of the EDPC plan. The Clerk was asked to contact John Howell to ask if his Private Members Bill was going to be re-presented at parliament. **(Clerk to action)**

**14/20 Matters for future consideration** Neighbourhood Plan; CIL money

The meeting finished at 9.55pm

**Date of next meeting: Monday February 24<sup>th</sup> 2020**

## **REPORT TO BINFIELD HEATH PARISH COUNCIL [JAN 2020](#)** **FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW** **GENERAL OCC REPORT**

### **OXFORDSHIRE IS NAMED TOP WASTE RECYCLER IN ENGLAND**

Oxfordshire has been named the best performing county council waste disposal authority in England for the sixth year in a row, thanks to residents' commitment to the environment. In 2018, residents recycled or composted a larger proportion of their household waste than the previous year, while the national average for recycling fell, according to new government figures. Recycling officers at Oxfordshire County Council point to residents recycling more of their food waste as an important reason for the increase. Nearly 20,000 tonnes of food waste was recycled in 2018-19 – up 6% on the previous year. The district and city councils operate the kerbside collections of household recycling and waste, which OCC then disposes of. Overall 58% of household waste was recycled in Oxfordshire last year, compared to 57% the previous year. The national average was only 44.8%, according to the new figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Individually, the five District and City Authorities in Oxfordshire have also achieved excellent results above the national average.

### **SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ARE IMPROVING**

Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has made progress in

Oxfordshire with senior leaders from the education, health and care services working effectively together. This was the finding of a recent Ofsted review of SEND services following a full inspection in 2017. In the report Ofsted described the leaders as having an 'aspirational vision' for children with special educational needs and disabilities and inspectors found that leaders across the education, health and care system were taking full responsibility to improve the service. "Accountability has been strengthened and there is now a helpful mechanism for overseeing improvement," the inspectors said.

### **COUNCIL PLANS TO IMPROVE ONLINE SERVICES AND REDUCE CYBER-THREATS**

As more people access public services on computers or mobile phones, residents will see real improvements after OCC revealed plans to 'future-proof' its digital systems as part of a two-year overhaul. Councillors approved a new information and communication technology (ICT) strategy, which will lead to investment in smarter, more secure systems and better customer services. OCC's website gets 370,000 page views per week and receives around 1300 online payments per week. A new online Blue Badge application process with credit card payments launched earlier this year. Since then, nearly 70% of applications are online - previously it was 40%. The county council has also signed up to the Government 'local digital declaration'. The declaration was made at the council's Cabinet and commits the county council to designing online services that meet the needs of residents, while protecting their privacy and security.

### **FREE NASAL SPRAY VACCINATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**

Parents in Oxfordshire are being urged to have their young children vaccinated against the flu this winter. Children aged two and three can have a free, quick and painless NHS nasal spray vaccine at their GP surgery. In addition, primary school children in Oxfordshire can have the nasal spray vaccine via the school nurse service. For more information on the NHS flu vaccine visit: [www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk)

### **HEALTHCARE TEAM WORK TO HELP OLDER PEOPLE RETURN HOME FROM HOSPITAL**

Age UK Oxfordshire has joined forces with the NHS to help older people keep well during the colder months in a project backed by OCC. Patients will be given specialist support by Age UK Oxfordshire staff to feel more confident on returning home from hospital and helped with accessing support in the community. Age UK Oxfordshire staff are based at the John Radcliffe Hospital. The support ties in with the health and social care system-wide 'home first' winter plan, which prioritises treating people closer to home and avoiding prolonged hospital stays. Supported by the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Oxfordshire County Council, and the South Central Ambulance Service, the system has encouraged this approach with initiatives such as additional support from HART services.

Contracted to work with the Trust for a year, the Age UK Oxfordshire team expect to assist with at least four discharges a day. The team are funded by Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

### **SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BINFIELD HEATH**

#### **SPECIAL THIRD READING BRIDGE MEETING FRIDAY 31st JANUARY 2020**

The chair at Sonning Common has called a meeting of parishes in my Division to consider a joint response to the situation in advance of the MP 'Summit Meeting' in March. I very much hope two representatives from each parish will attend. Please respond to the email sent by the SC PC clerk on 21<sup>st</sup> November if you haven't done so already.

Date and time: Friday 31 January 3.00pm to 5.00pm

Venue: Sonning Common Village Hall, Wood Lane, Sonning Common RG4 9SL

### **CLOSURE OF A4155 AT THAMES FARM JANUARY 2020 (TWO PERIODS)**

The A4155 between Station Road and the Thames Farm entrance was closed between 19.30 and 06.00 hours from 13th to 17th January (ref: TTRO T7290) and will be closed again from 27th to 31st January (ref: TTRO T7291).

### **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF A4155 AT TOWER HOUSE FROM 20 TO 22 JANUARY 2020**

This work was in fact completed over one night only from 21.00 and 05.00 on 20 January.

### **STREET LIGHTING ON A4155 IN RELATION TO THAMES FARM**

I have been in discussion with officers and it is now suggested that the number of lighting columns between Station Road and the Thames Farm entrance can be reduced from 19 to 13 without compromising safety. This will be a small improvement in terms of light pollution and urbanisation.

### **TTRO (T7191) TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE BETWEEN DUNSDEN GREEN-ARCH HILL**

A request has been received from Kier Clancy Docwra Ltd for a temporary road closure to apply to a section of the road between Dunsden Green and Arch Hill whilst new water connection works are carried out. A Notice is being made to implement the temporary closures and will operate from the 03 February 2020 up to and including the 07 February 2020. This is a 24-hour road closure. Access will be maintained for emergency service vehicles and for frontages within the closure area, subject to the progress of the works and liaison with the works supervisor. At the request of the PC I have asked for advanced warning notices to be put in place and Thames Water has agreed to do this.

### **SODC ward councillor's report – Binfield Heath - 27th January 2020**

Local Plan On the 7th of Jan 2020 Sue Cooper, leader of SODC received a letter from the Secretary of State ("SoS") Robert Jenrick regarding his temporary holding direction on the emerging Local Plan. Though there is no new direction or removal of the current temporary direction, the SoS has given a strong indication of the action he may take should the emerging local plan not remain in inspection. The letter can be found here:

[www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/20200107%20Letter%20from%20the%20Secretary%20of%20State%20South%20Oxfordshire.pdf](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/20200107%20Letter%20from%20the%20Secretary%20of%20State%20South%20Oxfordshire.pdf) The following are my views and not those of cabinet or council. The letter shows that the Secretary is considering action to a) force the plan through himself, or b) hand over that responsibility to county. This decision seems more political than logically linked to past precedents. Firstly such action has in the past been reserved for authorities who have repeatedly failed to put Local Plans in place over an extended period and the practical reality is that SODC have consistently put plans in place, have a valid (Core Strategy) Local Plan in place until 2027 (a plan made NPPF compliant before adoption), and have a huge 9.75 year Housing Land Supply! It follows that SODC are in the upper group of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in England. If all LPAs who had not adopted a new Local Plan within 5 years were to face directions from the SOS, then most would be under direction! It might also be noted that following the adoption of the Core Strategy in December 2012, delays, plan problems and internal dissent were essentially all characteristics of the period prior to May 2019? The rushed eLP2034 draft plan has many flaws. According to the UK Gov's "standard method" formulas SODC should be liable for FAR less housing – including unmet Oxford needs - than the Oxfordshire Growth Deal ("OGD") provides (perhaps 15k for South Oxon plus 2k of Oxford unmet need). The OGD is based upon the out-of-date and much-challenged 2014 SHMA report. The OGD proposes 22.8k (being 17.8k for South Oxon plus 5.0k of unmet Oxford housing need). Despite this context eLP2034 proposed a supply of 32.6k dwellings – almost 10k higher even than the high OGD numbers. Other issues include problems with policies on housing mix, density and climate change. (Past Core Strategy policies on house-building and insulation standards and renewable energy generation were abandoned!) Thus far, the new SODC administration has followed a thorough and reasoned process rooted in its democratic mandate. Cabinet was given 4 options by officers, of which only 2 remained on the table following further inspectors' and officers' advice. The two remaining were both

considered carefully with full understanding of implications and full confidence with the robust Housing Land Supply a good defence against speculative development could be maintained. Cabinet made a recommendation to withdraw the plan. In doing so it set out a reasoned approach which it should be noted that, over 5 years, would save £1m against the status quo and would be £1.6m cheaper than a regulation 19 revision. The approach proposed was to deliver supply that would meet the OGD requirement. Accordingly and detailed in minutes of both council and cabinet meetings, a constructive resolution on HIF funding was sought from MHCLG. Council has made no formal decision on the emerging local plan as it wasn't given the opportunity to - by the temporary Direction! Therefore, the intervention is unjustified, not least from a procedural point of view. What it does suggest is the lengths that the SoS is willing to go to intervene in local democracy to achieve other aims. Whilst the SoS has powers of direction for extreme cases he is certainly not supposed to intervene for party partisan purposes. However, he is being hectored by the Conservative leader of OCC – championing high growth, HIF infrastructure and suggesting that the draft eLP2034 should remain in examination. There is view from some in Oxford that vast growth – including substantial inward migration - is desirable and that the losses of character and the special nature of our area are an expendable price worth paying. However it is very far from clear what net benefits might bring to existing local residents. Moreover a full direction would it seems transfer power to County at Oxford – which would fit with past suggestions of centralising power. There is also a wider debate about regional imbalances in the UK and whether ultra-growth and inward migration to the overheated and overcrowded South East really make sense? That debate also relates to the “under review” Ox-Cam Expressway and whether it would, if built, come through South Oxfordshire – at vast extra cost and threaten to add burdens to the A34. The main case made for it going south of Oxford is simply as a vehicle to pour large-scale development into south Oxfordshire. The seismic results of the district elections in May were clear. To my mind this threatened intervention would set a dangerous precedent - with our local democracy at stake. The MHCLG website states the following on its front page :-

“What the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government does The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s (formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government) job is to create great places to live and work, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area.”

Sue Cooper is asked to reply by the 31st January. Update; Sue Cooper’s response has now been made – seeking a meeting for a pragmatic resolution. It can be found here:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Letter%20to%20Mr%20Jenrick%20in%20Response%20to%207%20Jan%20Letter.pdf> Council Finances SODC’s financial situation is difficult, following years of holding down council tax to levels well below the national average. (SODC has £121 for a Band D property, the national average is at £180 - and that average includes many districts in much lower-cost areas for staffing etc.) The council has a revenue deficit of about £3.3 million and this is expected to grow to around £6m over a 5 year period. The council raises some £7m per annum from council tax. Comparative statistics show that SODC is already a very efficient and low-spending council compared with its peers and has relatively low staffing numbers. In the past UK Gov has encouraged councils to increase delivery of new housing and provided a “New Homes Bonus” (MHB) with payments per new home completed. initially the bonus was worth around £9k per home – spread over 6 years - but then the government reneged and reduced payments to be over 4 years with a value reduced to c£6k; it also excluded a “baseline %” of new homes from counting towards it! In part, it was offered as a help against cuts in past central “rate support grants” from central government. However it has long been feared that this “bonus” would come to an end. (I recall David Buckle advising me of that in about 2013!) Prudent councils treated it as a bonus and kept their council tax increases in place to protect long-term viability. In South Oxfordshire past administrations took a more risky approach with a series of reductions, nil increases or too small increases in council tax which has now left SODC cruelly exposed. In December the UK Gov announced that the year 20/21 will be the last year for NHB with only the year one payment being made for new homes in the 2019-20 year. After that the bonus payments will cease. A different and possibly much less valuable scheme is being mooted to succeed it, but the

details of that are very vague and unclear. In the longer past SODC prudently put NHB receipts into reserves. However, in more recent years SODC has been using all of current year bonuses AND then funding a growing deficit – as central grants and current NHB fell – from reserves. There are limited reserves and this cannot go on! Another financial pressure faced is that the 5 Councils outsourcing contract with Capita has not delivered the savings promised when it was announced with a fanfare some years ago. Indeed, through mutual exigency by SODC and Capita, many services are now having to be brought back in-house at the council. Non-disclosure agreements prevent me from saying more about this. This situation is inherited, and the council will be faced with drastic consequences if hard choices aren't implemented. Options are also constrained because past risky decisions over council tax cannot now be corrected (as council tax increased are capped at £5 or a maximum of 2%).

December Council Meeting – motions passed. The last meeting of 2019 was a very busy one, with several motions being debated and passed as well as some more “business as usual” items. Local Government Structure Four motions related to the most appropriate governance models and structures for our local authorities, taking into account both the importance of local democracy and decision-making and the need to be financially sustainable and cost-effective. The previous administration at SODC had supported the concept of “One Oxfordshire” – a single unitary authority for the whole county. However there is now recognition that this would be far too large an area to provide effective governance and would lose the close connection and knowledge that SODC has with its residents and localities. The data upon which the previous position was approved is now out-of-date, and so Council approved a motion which would effectively withdraw our support for the concept of a single Oxfordshire Unitary Authority and ask our officers to explore alternative governance structures that protect and enhance the democratic link to local communities. Previously, the suggestion was that many staff positions could be “saved” with more distant and with broad-brush decision-making - less focussed on local detail. Whilst this might seem to work in a spreadsheet, it increasingly seems obvious that it would not work in real life and would simply centralise power in distant Oxford. Secondly, it has become very clear since the elections last May that the Council is in a poor financial position. This is the result of a combination of factors, including an over-reliance on one-off “New Homes Bonus” payments, central Government cuts, the decision of the previous administrations not to increase the SODC portion of the Council Tax in line with inflation (year after year), and the lack of any commercialisation plans to generate revenue in new and innovative ways. As a result, our Band D Council tax charge is some £60 lower than that in comparable authorities, and there is a gap of about £3m between our income and our expenditure every year. Clearly this is unsustainable! It should also be noted that the “One Oxfordshire” proposition to centralise power in Oxford was based on the presumption of sharp increases in council tax for South Oxfordshire to equalise council tax across the county. It would also have implied the acquisition of SODC’s financial reserves (Revenue and Capital ones – the latter from historic sales of council housing.) In addition to working very hard to create a responsible and sustainable budget for the coming few years, Council has now also asked officers to explore the implications of a full merger with the Vale of the White Horse and to bring their findings back to a future meeting. Since South Oxon and Vale already share an administration team (and offices) this approach is likely to provide savings from reduced duplication - without significantly reducing local knowledge and focus. Both districts are of a rural character. Any decision would take into account both future financial sustainability and the need to protect local democracy and decision-making. Thirdly, a motion was passed to emphasise that, while we support the concept of regional – and county - planning for biodiversity and environmental sustainability matters, as well as for public transport infrastructure, we believe that all decisions relating to site selection for employment and housing developments should be made by the local Planning Authority (i.e. SODC). They should be made at an all-Oxfordshire Oxon 2050 or OCC level. Finally, a motion was passed to ask the Constitutional Review Group to consider if a move to a committee-based structure (as opposed to the “strong cabinet” one) would be a more effective system of governance for the Council. Supporting votes for 16- and 17-year-olds Council passed a motion expressing its support for the enfranchisement of 16- and 17-year olds, and asked that the Leader write to Ministers and local MPs

expressing this view (as it is clearly not in our gift to implement this change). Should the Votes at 16 campaign succeed, this would bring England into line with Scotland and Wales and would empower young people to better engage in society and influence decisions that will define their future.

**Improving Cycling and Walking Infrastructure** The last motion of the meeting, passed unanimously, related to the need for a much more strategic and joined-up approach to the planning of healthy transport alternatives to the private car, recognising the wide range of benefits to health, well-being and the environment. In partnership with other local authorities, the Council is now required to develop a Strategic Active Travel Network and to prioritise cycling and walking in all planning policy. Council Tax Base for 2020/21 Council is required by law to agree the Council Tax base for the 2020/21 year; this is the calculation based on the number of dwellings in the District and the various discounts or surcharges levied according to a range of factors (single occupancy, disability entitlements, council tax rebates etc). The dwellings are then converted to “Band D equivalents” to reflect the range of property sizes in each community, which gives the Council the number of dwellings per settlement on which to base its tax budget. Across SODC for 2020/21 there are 61,432 dwellings forming a “Band D equivalent tax base of 57,848.5. In Binfield Heath, for example, there are 287 dwellings which convert to a tax base of 326.3; this reflects the fact that many dwellings in Binfield Heath are above band D and that there are modest levels of rebates. The tax base is the figure at parish and district level that will now be used when setting the revenue budget and for calculating the various component parts of the Council Tax for other elements such as OCC and TVP. As a simplified illustration, if the tax base were 60k (rather than 57.8k) and council tax on a band D were £50 higher, this would yield an extra £3m of receipts. Economic Development Team receive Impact award The South and Vale Economic Development team have received the Institute of Economic Development (IED) 2019 Impact Award. This national award recognised the team’s “Stronger Economy – Start-Up project”, which resulted in more than 87 new businesses start over an 18-month period. This followed the work of the team in providing support to people who wish to start a business and/or be more productive. A number of week-long, free, pop-up business schools were held to support new and existing businesses, including one in Berinsfield. The Pop-up Business School returns 27th-31st January at Didcot Civic Hall. It’s free and you can attend any or all of the days, just register at [www.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/didcot](http://www.popupbusinessschool.co.uk/didcot) Chair's charity concert Parish Councillors and residents may be interested to know that the Chair of SODC, Cllr David Bretherton, is hosting a charity concert on Friday 7 February to help raise funds for his two chosen charities - Earth Trust and Red Kite Family Centre in Thame.

Taking place at Cornerstone, the evening will be full of variety and plans to showcase local talented people including singers and dancers, as well as a few surprises for an evening of fun. Tickets cost £12 per person, £10 for concessions and are available from Cornerstone's website. South Oxfordshire Community Lottery. The SOCL lottery operates on the principle of raising money in the community, for the community – empowering local groups to generate vital funds in an effective way, while enabling players to support the causes they want. Tickets cost £1, with 60p going to good causes and the local community. Players can choose which local good cause/s they support when they purchase tickets and prizes range from free prize draw entries to a £25,000 jackpot.

Our district council set up the lottery as we give around £1 million through grants to the district’s voluntary and community groups each year and know that there’s great demand for financial support. SODC does not receive any of the proceeds and from every ticket sold:-

- 50p goes to registered good causes and 10p into a general fund, which supports the voluntary sector in South Oxfordshire
- 20p to the prize fund
- 17p to Gatherwell, the external lottery management operator that runs the lottery on our behalf
- 3p to VAT

With the lottery now well established the next steps are to promote its growth and local roots. A review is looking at linking awards to the localities who provide most support.

Leigh Rawlins  
District Councillor