

Beenham News – March 2021

This summary of local news, and notes of the February Parish Council meeting, is being delivered to houses in Beenham whilst the Parishes Magazine is not being printed. The March issue of Parishes Magazine will be available online, and can be accessed at www.awb.org.uk and then choose Letters, Notices & Magazine.

If you have any local news for the next edition please send to p.mcewen@beenham-pc.gov.uk.

Nothing in Beenham News should be taken as the opinion of the Parish Council.

Roadmap out of Lockdown

The government has just announced their provisional roadmap for coming out of lockdown (subject to the infection rates staying low).

The key dates for Beenham are:

- 8 March – Schools reopen (maybe a staggered start)
- 29 March – “Stay home” is ended. Two households can meet outside. Easter Egg hunts with the grandchildren!
- 12 April – Shops, hairdressers, gyms, swimming pools and outdoor hospitality reopen.
- 17 May – Indoor hospitality and indoor sport reopen. Some crowds at sporting events. It is likely that the School Hall and Community Room will be opened for some bookings. Indoor mixing up to 6 people or 2 households will be allowed.
- 21 June – Most restrictions now lifted.

Vaccination Programme

What a difference a month makes! Last month the vaccination programme was just starting, but now the 65-70 cohort is almost complete, and the age for invitations is starting to go down. The over 70s were mainly vaccinated by our GPs, using a base at Pangbourne. The strategy has now changed and people in the 65-70 age band had to book online at a choice locations including Tilehurst Pharmacy and Basingstoke Fire Station (I understand that a big centre will be opening at Madejski Stadium soon). We went to Basingstoke, and had excellent service with no waiting. The GPs are now concentrating on vaccinations for Cohort 6 (age 16-64, at risk).

If you have problems with making an appointment, or getting to the appointment, please contact your GP Surgery or Beenham Community Volunteers on 07917 818283. Beenham Community Volunteers can also help with practical problems, or if you just need somebody to talk to.

Beenham Primary School

Beenham School Rises to the Challenge

It's such a pleasure to be able to report some good news in these difficult times, especially when it relates to our local school. Just as our new Head Teacher, Amy Donnelly, was

taking over at the start of January, the country was again placed in lockdown, but she and her team immediately adapted to the new situation by providing a full service of remote teaching using a new “Class Dojo” platform. Parents and children love it, and all our home-learning pupils have engaged with it, without exception.

It's fair to say that the school and its staff have been a textbook example of our Value of the Month: Resilience! Of course, we all look forward to the day when the children can learn and play together again at school.

In preparation for this, the children who are attending school are helping to renovate our Peace Garden (donations of plants would be appreciated!), and planting wild flowers in cooperation with Greener Beenham. We're very fortunate to have these facilities, which, along with our Forest School, allow the children to learn about nature, while helping their mental health and well-being.

Beenham Pre-School

Covid-19 remains a challenge being faced by all early years settings such as ours. We are following government expectations and trying to remain open for all of our families who may wish to attend (not just critical workers and vulnerable children) but with reduced staffing this can prove tricky. We are certainly looking forward to a time when we can welcome all of our families back and enjoy being together again in one big happy “bubble”. Whilst Pre-School does of course feel different as we operate in lockdown we are still having lots of fun. We have of course been planning activities around the topic of Winter but as is always the case in a child-led setting the children had other ideas and so we followed their interests into a world of colours and 2D/3D shapes. As we write this we are spending the week thinking about who we love and how we show love to our family and friends in honour of St Valentine ! Our random acts of kindness and friendship are being displayed on a board for all to share and we are exploring lots of malleable resources on a Valentines theme.

We continue to work with our very robust covid-19 risk assessment and have extra staff hours in place to ensure that the room and resources are all thoroughly cleaned and rotated. We pay close attention to new government and educational guidelines as they are released and update our approach accordingly. The children are all expert hand-washers and have adapted well to the changes.

We are now officially “FULL”. With our registration numbers rising we would urge anyone looking for high quality term-time childcare for September 2021 onwards to contact us without delay. We already have a large number of children booked in for 2021-22. If you would like to be added to our waiting list for spaces for the current academic year (up to July 2021) then do let us know in case any spaces open up.

Please do look at our Facebook page and Twitter feed (@beenhampre) if you would like to see more of what we have on offer and do get in touch if you would like to come and meet us ! To book a socially distanced out of hours visit or to learn more please contact our Manager, Paula Read. Telephone: 07793 116937 Email: info@beenhampreschool.org

Beenham Village Events

Here is taste of the events that we hope to bring to Beenham in spring/summer 2021.

➤ **Scarecrows**

The theme for this year's Scarecrow Festival is Key Workers. You might decide to make a scarecrow of your favourite teacher or a nurse or doctor you know, or perhaps your imagination will run to a "key worker" in fiction, for example Dr Elephant from Peppa Pig, a firefighter from Fireman Sam's team, or Miss Honey from Matilda or maybe you'll choose a historical character, such as Mary Seacole or Florence Nightingale. Whichever personality you choose, let's hope Beenham displays its usual amazing creativity and our Scarecrows act as a worthy tribute to the key workers who have kept us all going over the last year.

The Scarecrow Festival will be held in June – more details to follow.

➤ **Beenham in Bloom**

Beenham in Bloom is back this year, looking to find the best planters or front gardens visible from the road. More details of dates etc will be issued later, but get planting!

➤ **Sunflower Festival (in collaboration with Greener Beenham)**

To put some summer smiles into Beenham, some sunflower seeds will soon be delivered to every household in Beenham. We ask that these, along with any others you may have, are planted in your front gardens to create a happy, cheery appearance in the summer months.

➤ **Band on the Rec**

Beenham Wind Orchestra tried very hard to perform in Beenham in 2020, but to no avail. A date has been set for the Band on the Rec of Friday 9th July. We do hope that it will be possible this year.

➤ **Beenham Summer Fayre**

The Summer Fayre needs lots of forward planning to book the main attractions. Everything is still uncertain, so it not possible to make firm plans at the moment. We hope that some form of summer event will be possible in July or September. Watch this space!

Beenham WI

We're looking ahead to the time when we'll be able to come together to enjoy our postponed centenary celebrations. In the meantime, like everyone else, we make do with whatever means are available to continue some of our activities as best we can.

Book club is thriving online with participants relishing lively discussions every month. Margaret, our president, keeps us up-to-date via email with Berkshire and National Federation matters as well as members' birthdays, whilst litter picking has been incorporated into our exercise routines.

The prospect of warmer days with bulbs pushing up through the cold earth nurtures hope for nothing but blue skies ahead.

St Mary's Church, Beenham

Our church remains closed for services for the foreseeable future due to the issues of keeping everybody safe during the pandemic. However, the church is open from 10 am to 4 pm on Sundays and Wednesday for anybody who wishes to visit for private prayer.

We are offering our local on-line services alongside services regionally and nationally which are available usually on Sunday mornings. For details of YouTube Services and Zoom meetings please contact Jane Manley (0118 9712891 jmanley.awb@gmail.com). We also have a Beenham Church Facebook page which we will post updates and information for Beenham.

We are hopeful there will be an Easter service, indoor or outdoor depending on the weather. We will update as soon as possible

Greener Beenham

Greener Beenham continues to deliver free range eggs from Beechwood Farm every Saturday morning around Beenham village. If you would like eggs delivered, £1.50 for 6, please call 07917 818283 and we will happily include you.

Although it was never the intention, we have accidentally made a profit due to the popularity of the service and the fact the pandemic lasting longer than we expected. This money has been spent on fruit trees and wild flowers which have been planted around the village – see below.

Greener Beenham have now completed the planting of 8 saplings donated by the Woodland Trust and 14 fruit trees and a magnolia tree. With any luck we will have some blossom and bees in the spring. We were only able to purchase these trees because of the profit from the sale of eggs during the pandemic.

We would like to send a huge thank you Greyfield Wood for donating wooden stakes, tree ties and wire to protect the new saplings.

A special shout out to Chris Apsey for all his help, without whom we would have struggled with the planting in lockdown.

Greyfield Wood

Twenty-five years ago, Chris Penley and others set up the Beenham Investment Group Ltd, (BIG), to buy the lease for Greyfield Wood. The initiative succeeded and BIG has managed the woodland ever since.

Recently the directors and the shareholders of BIG decided to change the company structure from a limited liability company to a community interest company. The new company is called Greyfield Wood CIC. The major difference between the two companies is that BIG has shareholders and share capital, in contrast to the CIC which has neither, but will have members. In terms of managing and maintaining the woodland, we expect the future to be a continuation of the past, with more direct involvement of local inhabitants.

Greyfield Wood is well known to many in the village and surrounding area as a place to walk and relax. It has excelled in that respect during the lockdowns of the past year. Looking to the future, the woodland will need support from local residents for its maintenance and development. We consider that a community interest company is the

best means for gathering that support.

We have work to do in the next few months to complete the changeover. Solicitors will be involved and fundraising activity is already underway to raise the money that will be needed. We will be undertaking a recruitment drive, encouraging village residents in particular to support the excellent social amenity that the woodland provides by becoming active members of the CIC.

2021 Pea sticks and Bean Poles - from Greyfield Wood, Beenham

*For all gardeners, we are now able to supply **pea sticks**. These are silver birch and/or hazel and cost £5 per bunch. In addition, we are also taking orders for hazel **bean poles**. These are 8-9 feet long, in a bunch of 15 poles, at a price of £10 per bunch.*

*All items can be collected from **Greyfield Wood**.*

Please contact Adrian Stacey (0118 971 2153) or Ken Ewen (0118 971 2856) to order.

Six Bells Pub

The Six Bells is a family owned pub owned by the Woods/ Hopes family. We bought the pub at the end of August 2020, knowing we were not out of the woods on COVID 19. So we set about the renovations and improvements we wanted to carry out - no time like the present when trade was going to be adversely impacted anyway.

The business is managed by owner and chef Luke Woods. Luke has been head chef at a number of restaurants in Reading and central London but his heart has been in running his own business and The Six Bells became a great opportunity for him.

We have modernised and opened up the kitchen, refurbished the function room into the pub's main restaurant and refurbished all the bar areas. We are about to open a village shop which will temporarily run from the main bar while we do more work on the snug bar and we have completely remodelled and refurbished the toilets area. The four letting bedrooms have had a facelift and we look forward to welcoming guests for the best breakfast in Berkshire! Next stop the beer garden as the weather improves. The roof is also on the agenda.

We were fortunate to be able to open the restaurant for a few weeks before we were locked down and had fabulous feedback from diners.

We were less fortunate in being ready to reopen the main bar the very day we were put into tier 4 in December but the hard work has been done so we are in the starting blocks for reopening.

During lockdown we have been doing takeaway fish and chips, burgers, veggie options Fridays and Saturdays and more recently changed Saturdays offering to Sunday lunch which has had a great reception. Valentine's Day was a highlight with delicious starters and desserts to make the day special.

We are hugely grateful to Beenham village for the tremendous support and encouragement we have had from so many residents who we see as the heart of the pub going forward. We have lots of ambitious plans but the village can rest assured that the pub will remain a village asset as we are very aware of how important the village is for us as a business but also how important the pub is to the village.

Planning Application – Flexistay Hotel

A new application has been submitted for the development of the Flexistay Hotel just opposite the A4 junction. This proposes turning the existing hotel building into 20 1-3 bedroom flats, and the construction of a new 3/4 storey block to the right of the hotel for a further 20 flats. All flats will be affordable under the RentPlus scheme.

Full details are available on the WBC website at www.westberks.gov.uk then choose “View Planning Application” and enter 21/00080 under “keyword”. You can submit comments on this application (by 5th March) through this website, or by email to planapps@westberks.gov.uk.

The application was received after the February PC Meeting, but will be considered at the PC meeting on 1st March.



NOTES FROM THE BEENHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON 1st FEBRUARY 2020

Public Forum

A Parishioner raised a concern about the proposal to have no-parking lines at the junction of Back Lane and Stoneyfields. He thought that parked cars help to slow traffic at this location, and removing the parked cars would make it more dangerous.

A similar opinion had been expressed by another parishioner by email.

Planning

There were no new planning applications this month.

Some further details (Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment) had been submitted for the proposed scaffolding depot next to Anchor Vans (20/01895/COMIND). The PC repeated their previous objection that the site would be a visual and noise intrusion.

Parking

Details of possible yellow lines at two junctions have been circulated in previous notes of PC meetings. Some comments have been received (see above). The proposals have been submitted to WBC for their comments.

Nothing will be decided until a proposal has been finalised and issued for public consultation.

Beenham Primary School – Relaunch Project

A project to enhance and develop the school has been launched, led by the governors. The PC has been invited to join a working party, and three councillors were nominated to join this working party.

The PC is very supportive of the school, and will assist with any plans that the working party may develop. A thriving school is at the heart of a thriving village.

Mobile Network

Over 30 people responded to a survey of mobile reception in the village. A summary of the results was included in the February Beenham News.

The District Councillor said that he would speak to WBC, to see if there was anything that could be done to pressurise the mobile companies to make improvements. The PC will also liaise with neighbouring PCs, who have similar problems to ours.

WI Bench

WI submitted details of a bench that they wish to install on the grass area outside the school. The PC have no objection to this proposal. An application will now be made to WBC for approval, as they own this land.

Litter Picking

The WI do an excellent job litter picking in "Beenham Village". Some other kind parishioners have helped by collecting litter in other places such as Aldermaston Wharf, Grange Lane, Beenham Hill, Bourne Lane etc. Some problems have been reported in disposing of the litter that has been collected. WBC is minimising this type of work during the lockdown, but any major items that you find (eg fly tipping) can be reported on the WBC website.

The Parish Council is very grateful for all this hard work, and will investigate ways to help in disposing of the rubbish.

If you would like to coordinate litter picking in Beenham then please contact the Parish Council.

The next Parish Council meeting will be online on Monday 1st March, starting at 7.00pm. All parishioners are welcome to attend, but please contact the Parish Clerk beforehand if you wish to speak.

Full details of the Councillors are on the website at beenham-pc.gov.uk/councillors/ .
All correspondence to the council should be addressed to the Parish Clerk.

Parish Clerk: Jennie Currie

Tel: 01635 580190

Email: clerk@beenham-pc.gov.uk

CR Bookings: Paula Read

Tel: 07793116937

Email: info@beenhampreschool.org

New Parish Council website:

www.beenham-pc.gov.uk

Beenham Community Website:

<https://www.beenhamonline.org/>