

Beenham News - February 2021

Here we go again – Lockdown 3. The Parishes Magazine is not being printed this month, so this Beenham News is an update from the various village organisations. Thank you to the volunteers who will be delivering this newsletter around the Beenham.

The Parishes Magazine will be issued as an online edition. To be sure of getting your copy why not sign up to the Beenham Online Mailing List, either through the Beenham Online website or via this link <https://www.beenhamonline.org/email.php> .

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. The Notes of the Online Meetings held on 7th December 2020 and 11th January 2021 are on pages 7-12.

Vaccination Programme

The following update has been received from Paul Gomm, Practice Manager at Chapel Row Surgery.

The distribution of the COVID-19 Vaccinations is being handled by NHS England. Chapel Row Surgery is part of the West Reading Villages Primary Care Network (PCN) and we are providing COVID-19 vaccinations to our patients as part of a PCN organised service. We have been vaccinating Chapel Row Surgery patients at our PCN vaccination base in Pangbourne in the strict order of patients as determined by and advised by NHS England, following the inspection and approval of our vaccination site.

In conjunction with our PCN, Chapel Row Surgery commenced our COVID-19 Vaccination programme, as soon as NHS England advised us they would supply our PCN with the vaccination. The Chapel Row Surgery Doctors and staff have been very busy, at very short notice, organising the vaccination of our over 80 year old patients and then our over 75 year old patients. We have not as yet been informed when the next batch of vaccines will be supplied and the information we receive from NHS England, in order to continue a vaccination programme, changes every few days. We have no influence over when the vaccine will be supplied, or how much vaccine will be supplied and so we merely have to wait to be told we are being supplied and then our Doctors and staff have to react at often very short notice to advise the next relevant patient cohort, invite them to the vaccination centre and then organise the staff and equipment to enable the next batch of COVID-19 vaccinations to be given to our patients.

In view of the very short notice period we were given to vaccinate our over 75 year old patients, our Doctors decided to shorten the patient invitation process by using Social Media for the COVID-19 vaccinations we gave to our patients in early January 2021. Our Doctors are trying different methods and different formats to invite patients when we have been advised that we are being supplied with some vaccine and this is why the single point of our Practice Website, may not always be the only place for notifying patients of a COVID-19 vaccination being available.

The current advice on our Practice Website is still correct, in that patients should wait to be invited for a COVID-19 vaccination appointment, although we may use different methods to contact patients for their vaccination in the future. The invitation process for a vaccination will continue to depend heavily on the number of days between when the practice is advised vaccine will be delivered and the number of days within which the COVID-19 vaccine must be given.

This remains a very fluid situation and the Doctors and Staff at Chapel Row Surgery are operating in the very best interests of our patients, given the challenging distribution situation we are presented with by NHS England.

Beenham Primary School

What a strange start it has been to the start of my Headship at Beenham Primary School! On Monday we held a staff training day with plans to open the school on Tuesday and then received notice of school closures at 8pm that evening. It has been lovely to receive messages from people in the village, of support and thanks about the school and the staff team during what has been a challenging week for us all.

Whilst we remain partially open for critical workers and vulnerable children, most of our teaching and learning is taking part virtually. You can keep up to date with the school news, teaching and learning via our social media pages. @beenhamprimary is now on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Our school value of the month is hope, it seems somewhat apt now considering the period of lockdown we find ourselves in. I hope in the near future to meet more members of the local community and further develop the school's role within it.

Amy Donnelly – Headteacher

Beenham Pre-School

We hope that this finds you all safe and well! We had a fantastic end to the term in December with our traditional lunch and then later our Party and whilst Father Christmas could not join us this year he still managed to drop off a sack full of gifts!

As this goes to press we remain open to all of our families (not just Key/Critical Worker families) as stipulated by Government guidelines. Whilst Pre-School does of course feel different as we operate in lockdown we are still having lots of fun. We have some new families who have joined us after Christmas and our children have been kind and welcoming and it is lovely to watch new friendships being made. Our term began by asking "Why do some animals like the snow", and "Why do penguins have wings?" but our 'in the moment' approach to planning means that the children will inevitably take us in some unexpected directions!

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 approaching “FULL”. With our registration numbers rising we would urge anyone looking for high quality term-time childcare to contact us without delay. We already have a number of children booked in for 2021-22. 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

We are so proud of our award-winning setting ... why not come and see why for yourselves?

Beenham Village Events

Well, it has been a few weeks since we celebrated Christmas, as best we could, and so much has happened since.

Here’s a look back to how the village celebrated the festive season in “Covid times”. We nearly managed a carol concert with Beenham Wind Orchestra, but the change to Tier 4 meant that it had to be cancelled.

➤ **Beenham Christmas Tree**

The tree, carefully chosen and felled by the foresters of Greyfield Wood was erected in front of the school, by Graham’s team and decorated with the new lights purchased last year. We are leaving the lights on until Candlemas this year to give us a bit of cheer in January. I notice a few other lights have been left up as well 😊

We are so fortunate to have Peter and Mike in the village who kindly produced some films to enable us all to “Save our Christmas events” by viewing them virtually. Please visit <http://www.beenhamonline.org/bve.htm> to see the videos.

➤ **Father Christmas**

We were also lucky to be able to take Father Christmas around the village, socially distanced of course, in the light of the new restrictions. The Six Bells very kindly brought out warm spiced apple juice to set us on our way. Father Christmas was so pleased to receive letters from all the children who came out to see him. It was a super evening. Many thanks go to everyone who gave their time and good will to make it possible.

➤ **Advent Windows 2020**

It was the village’s second year of Advent windows. Thank you to everyone who came forward and made a window. There were two on some days! The windows were all amazing and creative and so individual. Louise from the BVE team made a beautiful Advent Walk for us all to follow; getting us out and about between Christmas and New Year for a good walk!

To see all the photos of the Advent windows please go to:

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

Beenham Victory Hall

As most of you will know, it would have been the 100th anniversary last year of Beenham Hall, the Club and the WI, so Happy New Year to you all and hopefully at some point we can

enjoy some of the celebrations that were planned but COVID put an end to! We were going to have such a joyous time.

January 2021 might not be shaping up quite as we had hoped but one thing we can all celebrate is the fact that it is also the 100 years celebration, from the 25th - 29th January, recognising the huge contribution that village halls and community buildings make to our communities and wellbeing, posted by Acre on Facebook. Go to our Beenham Community Groups to read all about it. Thanks to Chris Tomkins for spotting this, she has just joined the committee of the Hall at Beenham.

Sadly, although the Hall has been made COVID secure since August last year the regulations have made it very difficult for the regular groups and classes to continue to enjoy the facility. We know that they sorely miss the chance to meet up with their friends and colleagues and we hope they will return when they are able. The Hall will continue to be kept in a state of readiness until you return.

Nola Rice-Wood - Trustee Beenham Victory Hall

Beenham WI

Well, here we are in another lockdown but that doesn't stop members from keeping in touch through the wonders of modern technology. Our book group holds virtual meetings so is still able to enjoy lively discussions. January is the month when we would usually be debating and voting for the National Federation of Women's Institute's campaign for the coming year. An email to members has produced an overwhelming response in favour of supporting the resolution for a call to increase awareness of the subtle signs of ovarian cancer. Community life and friendships sustain us and it is these things we continue to cherish as the New Year evolves.

St Mary's Church, Beenham

Regrettably 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. If you do visit, please observe Covid-19 rules (social distancing, group size, hand sanitising etc.)

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 looking at what we can do to highlight Fairtrade Fortnight 2021 will take place from Monday 22nd February to March 7th 2021, Please check our Facebook page for details.

Janette Hammond & Tim LeBlond – Churchwardens.

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 separate 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.

Beenham Community Volunteers

Just a little reminder that **Beenham Community Volunteers** are still here. If you are worried about coronavirus, need help or want to talk, we are here. If you need help with shopping, posting mail, prescription collections etc, please **call 07917 818283** and we will do our best to help and support.

Your local library service

Theale Library and all other West Berks Libraries are offering a click and collect service during lockdown. You may make reservations or order a selection of books through the libraries webpage www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries. If you prefer you can call a library and a member of staff will help you do this. If your children are running short of books you can ask the library to choose a selection of 5 books for you. Online events and activities are detailed on the social media links below. The libraries are open with restricted hours and this is also detailed on the West Berks webpage.

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/WBerksLibraries/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/wberkslibraries/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WBerksLibraries>

The mobile library is also providing a click and collect service. You can order online or by phone. The next visit to Beenham are on Wednesday 10 February and 3 March at 3.15 to 4pm.

Did you know that you can get free online access to a wide range of newspapers and magazines (as well as books and audiobooks) through the library?

Liz Husbands - Senior Customer Service Assistant, Theale Library

Tel – 01189303207

Email – thealelibrary@westberks.gov.uk

Walking around Beenham

Are you getting bored of the same walks every day? At the moment it is so muddy that it is hard to find a walk that is not a battle to stay upright, but here are two ideas for new walks

around Beenham.

- The Beenham Online website (<https://www.beenhamonline.org/>) has 3 leaflets with details of walks around Beenham as well as local history. Look on the right hand side of the Home Page.
- John Steel has started a Facebook group where anyone can enter details of a walk that they would recommend. It covers the whole of West Berkshire, but there are plenty of local walks. Search for West Berkshire Local Walks in Facebook.

What is your favourite walk from Beenham? One of my favourites goes through High Wood to the next road, turn right up to Kiff Green, down through the woods and then up to Elstree School, through the churchyard to Douai and then home again. If you tell me your favourite walk I will include it next time.

Mobile Phone Reception in Beenham

I asked people in Beenham to tell me what their mobile phone reception was like. 30 people responded: thank you. The results are pretty much what you were expecting:

- ❖ Everyone in north Beenham (from the Strouds) had very poor reception on all networks.
- ❖ In central and south Beenham some people on O2 or Vodaphone got fair reception (but some did not)
- ❖ A few people in central/south Beenham on EE got very good reception
- ❖ Most respondents used Wifi connections for their phones (called different names). Some found it worked well, but for some it only worked for voice (not for texts).

I then searched for sites that give the mobile reception on a map, and I looked at signalchecker.co.uk and ofcom.org.uk . These sites use data from the mobile companies, and they try to paint a rosy picture. However, if you look at the maps you can see how very patchy it is around Beenham, and how reception can change over a very short distance. It did seem to show that reception was better for 4G, so if you have an older phone that does not handle 4G (or the phone has not been set to handle 4G calls) then it may be worth looking into it.

Looking at the maps it is clear that we are not alone. All the networks have very patchy coverage in the rural areas north of us. I know that Bradfield and Bucklebury have problems like us, and have not found a solution. At the time of the Royal Wedding a temporary mast was erected at Chapel Row, which improved reception considerably. Local councils tried to keep the mast permanently, but were not successful.

I know very little about mobile phone technology, but if an expert would like to summarise what can be done to help people with very poor reception then I would be happy to include it in a future newsletter (signal booster, WiFi Calling, LTE etc). Is it worth getting a new phone? The Parish Council will liaise with other local councils to lobby for improvements to the phone networks. Everyone can write to WBC and their MP to ask for action.

Six Bells Takeaways

The Six Bells is doing takeaways again (pre-orders only)! Fish & Chips or sausages on Fridays (4-8pm) and Burgers (beef or vegan) on Saturdays. More details on their Facebook page or phone 0118 9713368.

NOTES FROM THE BEENHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 7th DECEMBER 2020

Please note that these are unofficial notes of the main decisions taken at the PC meeting. They have not been approved by the council, and may be (inadvertently) incorrect. These notes do not cover some ongoing issues (if a decision has not yet been reached), and procedural issues related to the running of the PC are also omitted.

The formal minutes of the meeting can be found on the PC website at <https://beenham-pc.gov.uk/meetings/> . They are also posted on the Notice Boards when they have been approved.

Planning

There was one planning application for consideration:

20/02708/HOUSE Beenham Lodge, Cods Hill. Outdoor swimming pool. No objection.

WBC Help for those affected by the Pandemic

District Councillor advised that WBC has a COVID Hardship Fund that is available to residents. There is also a fund available for businesses/organisations that have had loss of income due to the pandemic.

Details are available on the WBC website.

A4 Junction

The Clerk and Councillors have again raised the A4 Junction with WBC. They have responded:

- The police records (which are the records used by WBC) only have one recent accident at this junction, in January 2019. The police only record accidents that they attend and a personal injury has occurred.
- WBC were asked if the white lines and signage could be improved. WBC said that there was no budget for this work at present.
- WBC said that it was not possible to ban a right turn for vehicles going east, as the alternative route involves driving to the Theale roundabout and returning.
- Other solutions could be a roundabout or traffic lights, but no budget was available.

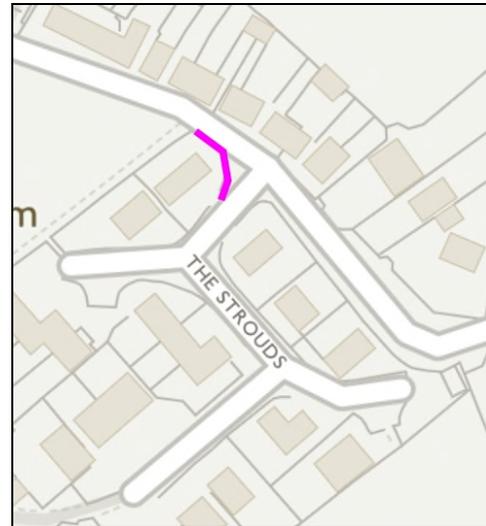
The PC asked the Clerk to write to WBC to highlight how dangerous the junction is, and more accidents will occur.

Speeding

We will be combining with Aldermaston, Padworth and Brimpton to buy a Speed Indication Device (SID). At this meeting the PC approved the funding for the SID.

Parking

A proposal was submitted at the meeting for short lengths of yellow lines at the junctions of Stoneyfields and The Strouds with the main road, as shown below. The proposal was for one side of the road, as cars only parked on one side, but the lines could be installed on both sides. Please can we have your views.



Community Facilities

The Community Room and School Hall are closed whilst we are in Tier 2 (except for Pre-school), but they will reopen for organised groups as soon as allowed.

Victory Hall – Land Registration

The PC is the nominal owner of the Victory Hall, but it has never been registered. The original conveyances for the land are not available. The PC agreed to appoint a solicitor to register the land.

License to Manage Land from WBC

The open spaces between Stonyfield and Church View, and also outside the School, are owned by WBC. The PC held discussions with WBC to decide if we should lease the land from WBC, so that we have more control. This proposal would make the PC fully liable for the land (including unauthorised encampments), so the PC decided not to proceed with this proposal.

Mobile Network

Problems with the mobile networks are frequently raised with PC. They seem to vary significantly throughout the village. We would like to do a survey to see what the current status is like. If you would like to take part please email p.mcewen@beenham-pc.gov.uk, with Mobile Survey as the subject. Please just include:

- Location. Choose North (around Six Bells), Central (around the School), South (around The Stocks), or Other.
- Network Provider (O2, EE etc.). If you use a small company please tell me which network they use.

- Quality of Service. 5- No real problems. 4 – Only rare problems (as long as I stand still!). 3 – Have to be in the right place. 2- Sometimes I don't get incoming or outgoing calls. 1 – Totally useless unless I use Internet connection.
- Brief comment (if you like).

Wildflower area on Rec

Greener Beenham have proposed a wildflower area on the Rec. PC asked them to make a presentation to a future meeting with more details.

Finance

- PC had invited request for small grants to local organisations that have been affected by COVID. The following grants were considered:
 - Beenham Primary PTFA Book Fund. £250 approved.
 - Beenham Tea Party Christmas Cake Project. £100 approved
 - Beenham WI, for litter picking through the village. £400 approved.
 - Victory Hall, compensation for lost revenue. PC said that WBC should first be approached to see if grants would be available. PC agreed to reconsider the request when the result of discussions with WBC was known.
 - Future grants to BVE will be increased by £150 to cover registration of the Beenham Online website (which is being taken over by BVE).
- PC approved a contract with A D Clark Ground Maintenance for emptying 12 litter and dog waste bins on a fortnightly basis. This is currently done under contract with WBC, but is not satisfactory.
- It was agreed that PC should register with The Good Exchange. This will facilitate some payments where match funding is available from Good Exchange (Greenham Trust).
- The draft budget was discussed. It will be finalised at the next meeting. At that meeting the proposed Precept of £18,300 for next year will be tabled for consideration and approval. This is unchanged from this year.

GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The Parish Council has a fund for small grants to local organisations. If you would like to be considered for a grant (particularly if your normal methods of fundraising are not possible at the moment), then please get in touch by 31st December,

NOTES FROM THE BEENHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 11th JANUARY 2020

FRANK WOOD

Frank Wood has reluctantly tendered his resignation from the Parish Council, due to ongoing health concerns.

The Chairman and the Council thanked Frank for his contributions to the Council and to life in Beenham.

So there is now a vacancy on the Parish Council. This is the chance you have been waiting for!

Planning

There was one planning application for consideration:

20/02872/HOUSE Hillfoot Cottage, Beenham Hill. Garage extension with addition of first floor. Neighbours raised some concern about the height and form of the extension. PC will ask WBC to consider carefully whether this will have an impact on neighbouring properties, and whether it is overdevelopment.

A4 Junction

The PC has made further representations to WBC about the safety of this junction, but received an unhelpful reply. The District Councillor then raised the matter with WBC Senior Officers, and was assured that the problem was being looked at. WBC now accepts that their previous statement that only one accident has occurred recently was inaccurate, as it only included accidents investigated by the Police.

Speeding

We will be combining with Aldermaston, Padworth and Brimpton to buy a Speed Indication Device (SID). The SID has been ordered. It is likely it will first be used at Aldermaston Wharf, which has a major problem with speeding.

Parking

A proposal was submitted at the December meeting for short lengths of yellow lines at the junctions of Stoneyfields and The Strouds with the main road. No comments have been received from parishioners.

The proposals will now be sent to WBC for their comments. A final decision on the lines has not been made yet.

Playground

The playground on the Rec is still open, but this may be changed by government regulation. Please read the notices at the playground, and ensure that the spirit of the lockdown is

adhered to. In particular:

- No more than 8 children under 12 years old.
- Children to be supervised to ensure that social distancing is maintained.
- Wash/sanitise hands after use.

Consultations

Three documents have been issued for public comments (some by end January). Anyone can review the documents online and submit their comments.

- i. Health and Well-Being Strategy <https://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/JHWBS>
 - ii. Local Plan Review to 2037 (emerging draft)
<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/localplanreview2037>
 - iii. Mineral & Waste Local Plan – <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/mwlpps>
- The Local Plan Review sets out which areas may be available for development in the period up to 2037. None of the sites in Beenham for housing or industrial development that had been suggested by developers have been included in the plan.
 - The Plan includes a major development of North East Thatcham for 2,500 houses (including 1 secondary school and 2 primary schools). The site will be either side of Harts Hill Road, with a narrow buffer between the new development and Upper Bucklebury and Cold Ash.
 - The Minerals and Waste Local Plan shows where aggregate extraction and waste handling may happen in the future.

Mobile Network

A survey of the quality of mobile reception in Beenham is being carried out. It is not good news! Discussions with Bucklebury and Bradfield PC show that they have similar problems (and have not found a solution yet).

WI Bench

A meeting is being arranged to agree the location of a bench that the WI wish to provide as a commemoration of their centenary. The bench will be on the grass area outside the school.

Finance

- The Council approved the Precept for next year to be unchanged at £18,300. This is the money that is added to your Council Tax bill, and then passed to Beenham Parish Council to fund their activities.

- The Victory Hall have asked the PC to assist with repairs to the car park outside the hall. The PC said that it was the responsibility of the Victory Hall to maintain the car park, but they would consider any detailed request for assistance. The first step would be to obtain a cost estimate.
- A grant request from Beenham PCC for £600 to support the parish newsletter was approved.

The next Parish Council meeting will be online on Monday 1st February, 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/>