Minutes of LWWH Annual Parish Meeting on 18th April 2019

The Parish Council of Leckhampton with Warden Hill

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 18th April 2019 at 7:35pm at Leckhampton Village Hall, Church Road. Cheltenham.

Attendees: Cllr Mears (Chairman), Henty, Ian White, Matthews, Parker and the Clerk

1. Apologies were received from Councillors Baillie, Dobie, Chris and Emma Nelson, Frings, Oliver, Regan, Cooke, Bickerton, Margaret White, Barker and Horwood.

2. The minutes the Annual Parish Meeting for 2018 having been approved by the Council at its meeting on on 12th July 2018 were approved by the Council as an accurate record.

3. There were no matters arising from the above minutes.

4. **Chairman’s report.** The Chairman then presented his annual report for 2018-19, which is included in the Annual report at the end of the minutes.

5. **Draft accounts for the year 2018-19.** The Clerk presented her report which is included in the Annual report.

6. **Provision for young people, recreational and play areas and other public open spaces in the Parish.** The Clerk presented Councillor Mrs. Regan’s report which is detailed in the Annual report at the end of the minutes.

7. **Brizen report.** Dr. J Underhill’s (Brizen Trustee Chair) presented her report on the activities of the Young People’s Centre report which is detailed in the Annual report at the end of the minutes.

8. **Any other matters.**

   There being no other business the Chairman thanked those present and closed the meeting at 21:11pm

A M Deane. Clerk to the Council.
1. Expansion of the Parish and Council

As reported last year, following the local referendum conducted by CBC in 2017 all of Leckhampton Ward was incorporated into LWWH Parish on 1 April 2018. This increased the number of electors and the tax base by 84%. The new Parish area is shown below. Part of the AONB land below Daisy Bank Road was also incorporated into the Parish. Like the Leckhampton Fields, this land has a network of public footpaths and is an important walking area for local residents with paths linking to Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common.

Not all of Warden Hill ward was included in the expanded Parish. Up Hatherley Parish Council wanted to incorporate all the unparished parts of Warden Hill ward along Alma Road into its parish. This made good sense for the area west of Alma Road which has close links to Up Hatherley and the residents there voted in favour of joining Up Hatherley Parish. But residents east of Alma Road voted narrowly against. Doorstep evidence suggested that these residents would have voted to join LWWH Parish if this option had been available. So the possibility of holding a second referendum for these residents should be kept in mind.

The enlargement has increased the number of Leckhampton councillors from five previously to eleven now. Together with the existing 7 members for Warden Hill this has brought the total size of the Council to 18 members, making this the largest of the five Cheltenham parish councils and twice the average size for a parish or town council in England. At the election in May 2018, there were nine seats to be filled with new members: seven for Leckhampton including the vacancy created by Yve Jowett retiring from the Council in May 2018, and two vacancies for Warden Hill created by Allan Knight retiring in June 2017 and Angela Swales in April 2018. It proved very easy to fill all 9 vacancies and indeed there were other well-qualified residents from Leckhampton offering their services on the Council if required. Given the difficulty that some other parish councils have reported in attracting a sufficient number of well qualified members this enthusiasm for joining the Council is good to report and is evidence of the value that residents see in having the Parish Council.
A major reason for expanding the Parish was to create an integrated team across both wards with all of the County and Borough Councillors for Leckhampton and Warden Hill being members of the Parish Council. This has been achieved and the unified approach has worked well over the past year. It provides good communication, avoids duplication, gives better representation, encourages initiatives and helps to make the best use of resources including the time of the Clerk and of members.

The enlarged Parish Council has a wide political breadth. Ten of its members are current or previous borough and county councillors or have stood for election, variously for the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Green Party and Labour. This diversity gives the Council a good balance and political neutrality and the Council has operated throughout the year as a team free of party-politics. The Council also benefits from having Cheltenham’s past MP, Martin Horwood, as one of its members, with his close knowledge of central government. He is also now standing for election as one of the MEPs for south-west England. So the Parish Council may soon also enjoy a link to Brussels and Strasbourg.

Arlene Deane has proved a very effective clerk over the year, not only in administration but also through her great enthusiasm and people skills. She took over as Clerk in January 2018 and the Parish Council was very pleased to confirm her permanent appointment in July 2018 after the completion of her 6 months’ probation.

Sadly, 2018-19 has also been a year of loss with the death of two longstanding members of the Council, both members for Warden Hill and living in Warden Hill. Councillor John Davies died in September 2018 and Councillor Peter Lynch died in December 2018. John Davies, who was quadriplegic for many years, also represented disabled residents. His severe disability meant that he was not able to play a major role on the Council physically but his fortitude, twinkling humour and wise observations were always an inspiration. Peter Lynch gave a lot of service over many years both to the Council and to the Brizen Young People’s Centre as one of its trustees. The Council is hugely grateful to both John and Peter for their contributions and is placing a memorial plaque for each of them on the new benches installed in the Salisbury Avenue play area. Peter lived in Salisbury Avenue and took particular responsibility for the play area and MUGA there. He lobbied for the refurbishment of the play area and it is sad he died a few months before the new play area was completed.

The Council has co-opted two new members, Councillor Ro Baillie and Councillor Ian White, and is expecting to co-opt a third new member in May. This will bring the Council back to its full membership of eighteen.

2. Expansion of the Parish: allocation of reserves and major investments

The expansion of the Parish created the issue of how to deal equitably with the reserves of the old Parish. As agreed in 2017, these reserves, apart from those for the Brizen Young People’s Centre, were apportioned between Warden Hill and the Leckhampton part of the old parish in proportion to the extent that each area had contributed historically to the reserves through the precept. The Warden Hill portion has largely been used in the past year to complete the refurbishment of the Salisbury Avenue Play Area. This together with the Salisbury Avenue Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and other improvements in the Play Area has cost about £120,000 over the past four years, making it the Council’s biggest project since the building of the Brizen Young People’s Centre ten years ago. We were extremely grateful to the County Council’s Communities Fund for contributing £30,000 towards this cost and to Cheltenham Borough Council for contributing £18,500. It is very good that in these hard times we have together been able to provide these excellent new facilities in Warden Hill.

The reserves apportioned to the Leckhampton part of the old parish amount to around £32,000. This is being held in reserve mainly against the completion and improvement of the Leckhampton Fields Local Green Space (LGS) and anticipated infrastructure investments in Leckhampton. Importantly it also gives the Parish Council the financial strength to be able, if necessary, to take judicial review action over the LGS as discussed below in section 5.
Leckhampton Local Green Space as subjected to public consultation in January 2015 and as submitted to Inspector Ord, showing the boundary, the area identifiers used, the network of public footpaths within the Fields and the public access points. Routes along Kidnappers Lane, Farm Lane and Church Road, and across open land including Burrows Sports Field also form part of the footpath network. The area west of Farm Lane was subsequently removed when Tewkesbury Borough Council’s decision to approve development on that area, contrary to Inspector Ord’s preliminary findings, was validated by the High Court.

3. New secondary school and expansion of Leckhampton Primary School.

The draft Cheltenham Plan was agreed by the Borough Council on 11 December 2017. It included the LGS as examined by Inspector Ord in the JCS Examination in Public. The Cheltenham Plan also included a proposal from GCC to locate a new secondary school on the Leckhampton Fields, with the buildings on the Northern Fields and the playing fields on the GCC land in areas CF1 and CF2 within the proposed LGS.

Following a public meeting and consultation in March 2018, the Parish Council submitted a detailed analysis on the school proposal. This covered the likely catchment area, scope for students to walk and cycle safely to school and likely car traffic to and from the school. According to Tim Browne,
GCC Director of Education, the biggest shortfall in secondary school capacity is in the area between the Bourndside and Balcarras catchments, the so-called ‘Leckhampton Triangle, although lying mainly in Charlton Park ward. This area has a travelling distance of 1.5 to 2 miles to the proposed new school and national statistics suggest that for this distance a large proportion of students will come by car, particularly as there is no public transport or safe cycle routes. The Parish council has therefore repeatedly recommended to GCC and in its evidence to the Cheltenham Plan Examination that the right approach would be to expand Balcarras School sufficiently to cover the main shortfall in Charlton Park and to tailor the catchment of the new school so that 90% of students can walk or cycle safely or come from areas accessible via the bus routes along the A46.

The key traffic problems would arise from students travelling to the school by car via Church Road or via the A46 / Moorend Park Road junction. In its evidence to the Cheltenham Plan Examination, GCC Highways said that they could solve the A46 / Moorend Park Road junction problem by introducing a second in-going lane on the A46 south of the junction. They have refused to give any details of their proposal and it is hard to see how it can be feasible to introduce a second lane without compulsory purchase of part of the front gardens of the houses along the road, particularly as it is also intended to provide a new cycle track and footpath along the A46 to the proposed school. The Council conducted detailed measurements of the traffic flow through the junction in the morning peak period over many days from September to November 2018. These included a period when the road was being resurfaced and showed that if the traffic speed is reduced, either in the case of the resurfacing by the roughness of the temporary surface or by narrowing the traffic lanes to add an additional lane, the junction throughput falls greatly and the traffic congestion becomes dramatically worse.

The potential traffic problem is compounded by GCC’s decision to also expand Leckhampton Primary School from 420 pupils to 630. It is estimated this will add around 200 additional car journeys to and from the school in the 08:00 to 09:00 period (assuming double journeys for parents and single journeys for staff). The Parish Council made representation to GCC about the problem, supported by measurements of the traffic flow in Church Road over a period of about 10 days and by measurements of very high particulate air pollution levels outside the school during October and November 2018 (see Annex A for more detail).

4. **Designation of the Local Green Space – location of the proposed new school**

Although GCC’s proposal in 2017 was to locate the new secondary school buildings on the Northern Fields, GCC changed its mind in mid-2018 and proposed instead to locate both the buildings and playing fields on areas CF1 and CF2 in the proposed LGS. Its reason was that the 5.9 ha of CF1+CF2 is enough space for both buildings and playing fields given that the school only covers school years 7 to 11 and there is no intention to ever add a sixth form. So attempting to use compulsory purchase to acquire land on the Northern Fields would very likely fail. The Cheltenham Plan examiner, Inspector Wendy Burden, concluded that land on the Northern Fields could be designated for the school buildings in the Cheltenham Plan but only if the school was needed specifically to provide the secondary schooling for the new housing on the Northern Fields. CBC concluded that this condition could not be met because even if the new school is needed to meet the general education shortfall in Cheltenham it cannot be argued that the school is needed specifically for the new housing given the proximity of the Northern Fields to Bourndside School.

Inspector Burden has also concluded that the new school can only be included in the Cheltenham Plan if GCC can find a solution to the problem of traffic congestion, as discussed earlier. GCC could still approve the school through its own planning committee but would be very vulnerable to legal challenge if the school were not included in the Cheltenham Plan. So the traffic issues could still prevent the school proceeding as proposed. At present, GCC seems to be trying to hide the issue by now saying that it does not know where students will be coming from to the new school and making totally unrealistic assumptions about how many of them will travel by car. This suggests that it cannot find a viable solution to the traffic problem.

5. **Size of the Local Green Space**

Following the findings of Inspector Ord, CBC planners and the Parish Council both expected that the LGS would be designated by the Cheltenham Plan examiner without any major difficulty.
Surprisingly, however, Inspector Burden has strongly questioned the proposed area of the LGS on the argument that the NPPF states that a LGS cannot be ‘an extensive tract of land’. Martin Horwood, who originally put the LGS concept forward in Parliament as the Lib-Dem environment representative in the Conservative-LibDem coalition in 2011, explained to Inspector Burden what Parliament had meant by the wording of ‘extensive tract of land’ and that the LGS area being proposed was entirely acceptable under the NPPF. However, Inspector Burden has also said that having visited the Leckhampton Fields (in mid-February) she does not feel the area is sufficiently special to justify such a large area of LGS. This is a somewhat puzzling argument. The issue of the specialness of the landscape of the Leckhampton Fields, which is what Inspector Burden could assess by looking at the Fields during a site visit, pertains to its status as ‘valued landscape’ where the quality and specialness of the landscape is the key factor. But LGS depends not on this but on the specialness to local people.

If Inspector Burden disagrees with the judgement of Inspector Clarke and the Secretary of State that the area qualifies as valued landscape, this is an issue for her to pursue with the Secretary of State. But it would be extremely unusual for her to question such recent findings and in any case it is not a sound argument for rejecting the proposed LGS. This is an issue that the Parish Council may have to challenge through judicial review if Inspector Burden persists in her view. The hope, however, is that by removing CF1 and CF2 and some other areas, notably the moat, which is already highly protected, and also private houses and gardens, it may be possible to reduce the LGS area sufficiently to make it acceptable. Inspector Burden gives little detail in her argument but it is possible that what she is really saying is that her site inspection leads her to think that there are some parts of the proposed LGS whose ‘specialness’ is not sufficiently compelling in her view to merit inclusion in the LGS. One might understand this view in relation to area CF1.

6. Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council aimed to submit the Neighbourhood Plan in time to meet the 24 January 2019 deadline for it to be considered under the 2011 NPPF rather than under the updated 2018 NPPF. However, the expert advice in December was that the Plan and particularly the sections on planning policy needed more work. Fortunately, the 2018 NPPF preserves neighbourhood planning and LGS very much in the same form as in the 2011 NPPF. So there is no great problem in delaying a little. Delay is also sensible given the continuing uncertainty over the proposed secondary school and over the designation of the Leckhampton Fields LGS. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is not the ideal instrument to actually designate the LGS, it will be important as an instrument for making refinements to what eventually emerges from the Cheltenham Plan and to the plans for development on the Northern Fields. There is a need to plant more trees and to renew hedgerows on the Fields. Possibly the new government ambition to reduce carbon emissions by planting huge numbers of trees may be helpful.

7. Appeal by Robert Hitchins Ltd

As noted in last year’s report, a planning application was submitted in February 2016 by Robert Hitchins Ltd for a development of 45 houses on the Orchards and Nurseries site off Kidnappers Lane. The Parish Council had removed this area from the proposed LGS in January 2015 because it was felt that it might be possible to allow a small development on this land if it was well screened and had a sympathetic rural character. The Parish Council has been in on-going discussion with Hitchins at their request about what sort of small rural-style development might be feasible. The Hitchins application however was for a high density suburban development totally unsuitable to the location.

The application was rejected by officers and by the CBC Planning Committee in April 2017. Hitchins decided to appeal CBC’s decision and the appeal was heard in February 2018 by Inspector Jameson Bridgewater, with the Parish Council as a Rule 6 party supporting CBC and giving evidence and cross-examining witnesses. The appeal was dismissed on 4 April 2018 and importantly in his findings Inspector Bridgewater agreed with the Parish Council’s evidence that the development would introduce ‘an incongruous suburban type development in a semi-rural area and that this effect would be particularly prominent when viewed from Leckhampton Hill where the semi-rural landscape can be full appreciated.’ This finding is particularly significant because CBC fought the appeal on the basis only of the damage to the valued landscape of the Leckhampton Fields.
particularly as viewed from Lotts Meadow. Based on CBC’s arguments, a bungalow estate might be acceptable because the roof height might be made low enough to be hidden by high hedges. However the finding in respect of the view from Leckhampton Hill, which is consistent with that of Inspector Ord, should hopefully rule out any suburban type of development on the site. This finding may also be useful in the context of any proposed development on areas R2 and R3 west of Robinswood Field. These are areas that CBC has included in the developable area in the Cheltenham Plan, contrary to the recommendation of Inspector Ord.

Robert Hitchins have recently submitted a new application for 25 houses instead of 45. This application seeks to address the reasons for rejection of their earlier application, but it still proposes an estate type development that is quite unsuitable for its impact both on the Leckhampton Fields and on the view from Leckhampton Hill. The Parish Council has submitted a strong objection based particularly on Inspector Bridgwater’s findings.

8. Pollution

As noted in section 3, the Parish Council has made measurements of the particulate levels outside Leckhampton Primary School on 24 days during the 08:00 to 09:00 period when children travel to school. The findings have been submitted to GCC in the Council’s evidence on the planning application to expand the School. The Council’s advice to GCC is that given the very high levels of pollution measured on a number of days and in the light of emerging government policies on pollution near schools, it would be unwise for GCC to press ahead with the proposed expansion without a much better understanding of the pollution problem at the school (see Annex A). The Council has also measured the average levels of NO2 pollution at various locations in the Parish using diffusion tube sensors which are sent each month for analysis in a professional laboratory. The results cover the period since August 2018 and show that the average NO2 levels are generally in the range 15 to 25 micrograms per cubic metre (ug/m3), but may exceed the EU permitted limit of 40 ug/m3 over the year at the intersection of Moorend Park Road and the A46.

9. Facilities for children and young people

The MUGA on the Council’s land in Salisbury Avenue has continued to be very well used and popular, although there has unfortunately been a serious recurrent problem of littering by some young people using the MUGA. It is hoped that CCTV can reduce the problem.

As noted in section 2, the Council has now completed the refurbishment of the Salisbury Avenue playground. This was opened by the Cheltenham Mayor, Bernie Fisher, in March and provides an excellent facility for children and parents in Warden Hill. The BMX track in Burrows Field has also proved extremely popular and an excellent facility, thanks considerably to Councillor Iain Dobie who strongly promoted the case for the track. Children use the track responsibly and quietly and it has proved a great success despite the many earlier concerns of local residents.

The Brizen Young People’s Centre continues to operate very successful both in providing youth work and in the use of the centre by other groups when it is not required for the youth work. It is the revenue from these other uses of the Centre that largely pays for the youth work so that only a modest contribution is required from the precept. In the year the Council has used some of its BYPC reserves from the precept to pay for refurbishing the flooring as part of the long term maintenance of the Centre. The youth work at the BYPC is covered separately in the report by Councillor Regan. The Parish Council has also given some financial support to the scouts and to local school activities in both Leckhampton and Warden Hill.

10. Coming year

Having been Chair of the Parish Council since 2013, I am standing down this May. I had originally intended to stand-down in May 2018, but have remained as Chair for this extra year in order to provide continuity whilst the enlarged Parish Council was establishing itself and whilst Arlene Deane was gaining experience as the new Clerk to the Council. I also hoped a year ago that the designation of the LGS would be completed by now but unfortunately this has not happened and achieving this designation is a major issue for 2019-20. But I am very pleased that the enlarged Council is operating well as a team, with determination to achieve much for the local community.
The Council is currently drawing up a list of possible initiatives and investments, including renewed emphasis on community care and on wider use of neighbourhood watch, building on the experience of Up Hatherley Council. The Council has also been considering how to communicate better with residents and particularly the need for improving the website, noting the very positive experience of Charlton Kings Parish Council with their new website.

Much will need to be done in the coming year on the housing development on the Northern Fields and the proposed new secondary school, if it goes ahead. More extensive measurements are needed of pollution levels, particularly in Church Road and near the A46/Moorend Park Road junction. Further traffic surveys are also needed. All this will require a great deal of time and effort.

The Neighbourhood Plan also needs to be finally submitted once there is sufficient clarification over the Cheltenham Plan and the LGS, and also over the proposed new secondary school. Submitting the neighbourhood plan will be the start of the major process of public consultation and eventual examination.

Some local residents have volunteered to help with improving the Leckhampton Fields once they are finally designated as LGS. Leglag has also been thinking about its future role and it may make sense through the Parish Council or Leglag to set up a ‘Friends of the Leckhampton Fields’ charity, like FOLK.

There are other ongoing initiatives on traffic and speed monitoring and yellow lining to prevent dangerous parking on some corners. Also important are the warden roles covered by various members on footpath maintenance, flood risk, snow, public transport and public spaces. The Council is also updating its emergency plan and its standing orders and more members are being trained in handling the larger number of planning applications following the expansion.

Councillor Dr Adrian Mears CBE
Chairman

**Draft accounts for the year 2018/9.** Copies had been circulated

The Clerk reported that for the 18/19 financial year the Council received the sum of £69,543 and paid out £97,656.08, leaving a deficit of income over expenditure for the year of £28,113.08. With a bank balance carried forward from 1/4/18 of £81,518.71 this left reserves as at the end of March 2019 at £53,405.53.

The precept for the year was £63,745.00

The majority of the council’s spend in the year was related to environmental improvements and in particular the completion of the Salisbury Ave Play area refurbishment. We are awaiting a £10,599.99 vat return for that spend and also a £15,000 match funding grant as part of County Councillor Iain Dobie’s Children’s Activity Fund allocation. This brings the Council’s spend on the project to £38,000.

For S137 donations the Council spend from precept income was £5,942.00, covering donations to:
- BYCP £4,000 (this covers 2017/8 and 2018/9)
- Sue Ryder £1,000
- In Bloom Warden Hill £300
- Friends of Leckhampton Hill (FOLK) £100
- Warden Hill scouts £250
- Warden Hill Table Tennis lessons £242
- St Christopher’s Church £50
Other items of interest are as follows. Audit charges were considerably less than the previous year as was Neighbourhood planning spend. There will be an increased NP spend during 19/20 FY in readiness for completing the plan for formal consultation.

Increased budget items were memberships and in particular GAPTC due to the increased number of those on the electoral role in the increased parish, approx 6902 on the electoral roll for 18/19. The Council has invested £351.96 during the financial year into monitoring of air pollution. Seven months of data has now been captured and there is a further five months of monitoring left for the 12 month study to complete.

Other items such as Insurance, website management and hall hire have increased.

The Brizen contingency account the parish council hold is in the process of being closed and funds have been transferred to the parish’s main account and to the Brizen maintenance account held by the parish council. £16,000 is now reserved in the main account for major repairs to both the car park and the inside of the building, if needed. These transfers are shown as receipts in the accounts.

Income into the Councils Brizen Hall Account for the year was £15,629.98.

Arlene Deane
Clerk

Green and Open Space Report 2018/19

The Salisbury Avenue Play Area
After the Parish Council agreeing to an upgrade of this toddler’s area a small working group along with the Clerk identified a company Proludic Ltd to completely re design and renew the site. The work was completed this year to a very good standard and officially opened by the Mayor and the Parish Chairman and County Cllr Dobie. Since the completion the area is very popular with local residents and highly praised. The funding was gained from the Parish and County Councillors contribution.
The MUGA area attached to the toddler area is heavily used by older children and unfortunately the continuing concern over the amount of litter spread over the whole field is disturbing and it is proving difficult to find a solution, although Parish Councillors are having talks with the CO OP but they cannot be held responsible for actions outside their business.
We are still waiting for larger litter bins to be installed, if positioned nearer the MUGA this may have a better result regarding the litter problem.
The successful Table Tennis sessions set up and supported by Cllr Oliver are to continue during this summer.

Brizen Recreation Field
This site off Up Hatherley Way is very popular with wide use from the surrounding areas. We have seen further use over the past year from a trapeze company and also a cycle training route for young people.
Green Spaces
In Warden Hill we have many small grassed spaces that are maintained by the Borough Council throughout the year but as reported last year residents are continuing to damage these green spaces by driving their cars over them and causing deep ruts, in one instance two pavement slabs have been placed to enable them to drive over the damage. I believe this is possibly a County Highway issue.

In Bloom for Warden Hill
Since the “In Bloom for Warden Hill” Committee folded after 10 years of beautiful displays and prize winning entries into the Heart of England, a new group has emerged after much hard work from Parish Cllrs Oliver and Nelson they have enabled the Warden Hill estate to maintain its colourful flower display throughout the coming year and are supported by local residents.

Weavers Field
This is well used by mainly dog walkers and it would be good to see more use by young children although parents are reluctant because of the dog mess to let their children onto the hill. The Council has removed a dog bin from the top field and it will be replaced by two bins one on each entrance. We are grateful to John Putley for all the time and care he gives in looking after this area completely voluntarily. I am working with John to get some wild seeds sewn and some bat boxes installed.

Anne Regan
Parish Councillor.

Report on The Brizen Young People’s Centre – April 2019
Youth Club and Outreach
It has been another busy and varied year for the youth groups. The numbers for the Senior sessions have been particularly strong, regularly attracting numbers in the high 40s. The group is well established and have even asked for longer sessions as they feel they have nowhere local to spend time with their friends. This is something that the trustees are keen to explore, taking into consideration cost and also staff availability from CMAS, our youth work providers. The Junior numbers have fluctuated over the year and at times been very disappointing. Members of the trustees recently met with Dan Tipp (CMAS Gloucestershire Director) and the new Youth Work Manager, Lyam Galpin to discuss their concerns. Lyam has only recently taken over this role, and we were impressed with his commitment and pro-active approach which has already seen a new, invigorated Facebook page, improved communication and 1200 leaflet drop to local primary schools and businesses. Further to the amendments we made last year to the Service Level Agreement to try and address the numbers, we have now added an additional clause which includes financial reparation if numbers do not increase.

The Junior sessions consist of more activities whereas the Senior sessions are more discussion based, reflecting the age, interests and concerns of the young people attending. Over the course of the past year, Junior sessions have included sports and games on the MUGA and Brizen field, arts and crafts sessions (where I’m reliably informed that making slime is very popular!), and lots of cooking. The children attending these sessions have been more towards the lower end of our age range (8/9 years old) and so the focus has really been on fun activities and making friends. It is pleasing to see that some of the young people who attend the Senior sessions also attend the Junior sessions as Peer Mentors.
The Senior sessions, as you would probably expect, are more focussed on topics appropriate to their age range – most are year 10 and 11 (between 14 and 16 years old). Topics covered this year include exam pressures, equality and diversity, sexual health, sexting and consent, substance abuse, and next steps (apprenticeships, college applications etc.). The Seniors also enjoy cooking and have learnt about budgeting and shopping for ingredients as well as discussing healthy eating. These activities may seem on the surface simplistic, but many of our young people do not have these opportunities or adults at home willing to encourage, support or teach them.

There have been three further Bournside outreach sessions with small groups of young people identified by Pastoral staff at the school as needing extra support. They have, again, been very well attended and feedback has been positive. The sessions are initially driven by the young people with support from the youth workers but some of the topics covered include anger and managing emotions, staying safe online and age-appropriate work on drugs and alcohol.

We were saddened to hear from Dan in March that one of our previous Seniors had passed away at the age of 19. This is the second bereavement of a peer that Seniors have experienced and the youth workers continue to support them where necessary.

**Fundraising and Grants**

We held our now annual quiz night in October which raised additional funds for the young people and are currently planning a Bingo night for July 6th (put the date in your diaries!). We are hoping that the local community will support us with the Bingo night as enthusiastically as they do with the Quiz night! As always, we are grateful to the local businesses who support us with our fundraising endeavours.

We were lucky enough to be chosen by Waitrose as one of their Green Token charities in December, which raised just over £200. In past years we have successfully bid for part of the Positive Activities Fund, but this year it hasn’t been available as CBC has run the No Child Left Behind initiative instead. If you haven’t read the report, which is available on the Borough Council website, I would strongly encourage you to do so as it gives a lot of insight into the background of young people across the town and the vital work that youth clubs such as Brizen do.

**Brizen Centre**

The centre, with the Parish Council’s support, has been able to continue with improvements and refurbishments this year. The whole centre was painted in June, we have replaced the fridge and hob in the kitchen and will shortly also have a new cooker, following a slight delay from the suppliers. In the next week, the floor is being completely refurbished which will make a big difference to the hall. There have been some small replacements of locks on cupboards, repairs to the seating and an ongoing leak fixed in one of the toilets. We have also had a baby changing unit fitted and intend to make the toilets unisex.

Finally, the trustees were all very saddened by the passing of Peter Lynch in December. Peter loved being part of Brizen and we were always grateful for his support and commitment as a trustee and also as de facto caretaker of the building, always willing to meet tradespeople and hirers to lock and unlock. We miss his presence at our meetings and plan to mark his contribution in some tangible way at the centre.

Dr J Underhill
Chair
Brizen Young People’s Centre Trustees
Annex A

Parish Council’s evidence to GCC on the proposed expansion of Leckhampton Primary School and the implication for the proposed new secondary school on Farm Lane

1. Traffic congestion

The traffic problems with the proposed expansion are serious given the very bad congestion in Church Road in the morning traffic period and the way the traffic flow is already disrupted by traffic to the school and by parents manoeuvring vehicles. Church Road is also a key route to the proposed new secondary school on the GCC land at Farm Lane. If the expansion of Leckhampton primary caused Church Road to become impassable in the school-run period this would have a big impact on the viability of the secondary school, particularly if there were many students coming to the secondary school from the Old Bath Road area and Charlton Park ward. The secondary school is only included in the Cheltenham Plan on the proviso that the traffic problems can be solved, and this proviso has been confirmed by Inspector Burden in examining the Plan.

Solving the traffic problem depends on several factors but strongly on whether the mitigation proposed by Gloucestershire Highways of adding a second in-going lane on the A46 at the Moorend Park Road junction will increase the throughput of the junction sufficiently. At the transport session in the Cheltenham Plan Examination, Gloucestershire Highways proposed that the second in-going lane could be accommodated within the existing road width by making the lanes and pavements narrower. However, we have measured the road and pavement widths and we doubt that it is possible to accommodate the two lanes without unacceptably narrowing the pavements and the lanes. There is a problem with narrow lanes that the traffic will flow more slowly and this can negate much of the benefit of having two lanes. The impact of slower speeds in greatly worsening the long A46 traffic queue and travel times was starkly demonstrated last autumn when the A46 was resurfaced and cars were approaching the junction more slowly because of the rough road surface. The narrow lanes would also leave no room for cyclists and that means cyclist would have to be in line with the traffic, again slowing the vehicle speed as well as increasing the danger. Therefore the two lane scheme may require compulsory purchase of land from front gardens of the houses on the west side of the A46 so that the traffic lanes and pavements can be made sufficiently wide. There is then the issue of whether compulsory purchase would succeed, particularly because there is a potential alternative of expanding Balcarras School in order to cover the shortfall in secondary school places in Charlton Park.

The Leckhampton Primary expansion could turn out to be the critical factor in determining whether or not the secondary school is viable. This is something that should be carefully checked from traffic modelling at this stage. We are aware that the Paramics traffic modelling by Gloucestershire Highways covers the local traffic system including Church Road, Hall Road, Kidnappers Lane, Leckhampton Road and Moorend Park Road as well as the A46. Has this modelling been used to inform the decision about expanding Leckhampton Primary, and what is the model showing?

The other key question is what can be done realistically to encourage parents to bring children to the school on foot rather than by car. Because the expansion will increase the catchment radius of the school, many of the 210 extra children may have to travel three-quarters of a mile or more to the school. Although the statutory walking distance for primary pupils is two miles, national statistics suggest that at least half of the 210 children are likely to come by car. Parents tell us that they just do not have the time to walk their children a considerable distance to and from the school, especially if they are working parents as the vast majority are. According to government statistics, Cheltenham has one of the highest employment rates in England for parents with dependent children: 96% for fathers, 89% for mothers in 2017, extrapolating to >90% for mothers in 2018, with at least a half of mothers with primary school children in Cheltenham likely to be working more than 30 hours per week (reference: Families and the labour market, England - Office for National Statistics).

The primary school reception-year allocations that you have recently published suggest that even in this bulge year there are 34 reception places still unfilled at Cheltenham primary schools within 2 miles of Leckhampton Primary (Lakeside - 17, Naunton Park - 7, St. John’s - 9 and Warden Hill - 1).
There are also 12 unfilled places at Shurdington Primary. When planning permission was granted for the 377 houses being built west of Farm Lane it was on the basis that primary school children from that development would attend Shurdington Primary. But we are aware that the builders are promoting the new houses on the basis of being accessible to Leckhampton Primary. So the spare capacity at Shurdington Primary may be relevant to the need to expand Leckhampton Primary. You are also currently planning to expand Warden Hill Primary School to three form entry, which would add another 30 reception places. So even though the educational case to expand Leckhampton Primary may be strong based on its OFSTED outstanding rating and its popularity with parents, it is still not absolutely essential to proceed with the expansion if the traffic problems dictate otherwise.

2. Pollution levels near Leckhampton Primary School

The Parish Council also has grave concerns over the levels of pollution at the school and the threat to the future health of the children there. GCC made a spot measurement of the pollution levels outside Leckhampton Primary School in March 2017. This showed an average level of NO2 of around 110 micrograms per cubic metre (ug/m3) over the 08:00 to 09:00 period whilst children were travelling to the school. This level was twice as high as that measured by GCC at any other school and is worryingly close to the EU short-term exposure limit of 200 ug/m3 over an hour, not permitted to occur more than 18 times in a year. In the past year we have installed a network of NO2 sensors at various locations in the Parish including in Church Road. These provide measurements of the average NO2 levels, but unfortunately we have been unable, for technical reasons, to make any further spot measurements of short-term exposure to NO2 near the school over the 08:00 to 09:00 period. We have, however, been able to make accurate measurements of pm10, pm2.5 and pm1.0 particulate levels at the school over the 08:00 to 09:00 period and these do show alarmingly high levels of particulate pollution on many days.

A copy of the measurements has been emailed to Tim Browne. They were made on 24 mornings in the period from Friday 12 October 2018 to Friday 30 November 2018. On each occasion, 15 samples were taken covering the full hour 08:00 to 09:00, each sample being over a period of 4 minutes. Three of the 24 days occurred during the October half-term holiday and they showed the particulate level that one might expect for the peak traffic period in this busy road. The average pm2.5 levels over the hour were 17ug/m3, 10ug/m3 and 4ug/m3 respectively on the three days during half-term. These levels should be compared against the EU permitted pm2.5 level of 25ug/m3 and the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended permitted level of 10 ug/m3, those permitted levels being for the average level over a year rather than just during the peak traffic period. For primary school children the WHO limit is the appropriate level to use taking into account that pm2.5 particulates accumulate in the body over a lifetime causing cumulative harm and are also more threatening to children because their lungs and bodies are developing.

On many of the school days the measured pollution levels of pm10, pm2.5 and pm1.0 were very much higher than during the half-term holiday. For pm2.5 the average level over the hour was 26 ug/m3 on Monday 29 October, 36 ug/m3 on Thursday 15 November, 47 ug/m3 on Thursday 1 November, 70 ug/m3 on Thursday 22 November, 79 ug/m3 on Monday 26 November, 117 ug/m3 on Friday 16 November, 126 ug/m3 on Monday 5 November, and a colossal 140 ug/m3 on Friday 23 November.

In the detailed data provided to Tim Browne, the individual 4 minute samples on the days with high pollution levels show the pollution levels building up steadily over the 08:00 to 09:00 period to reach a maximum level at about 08:40 and remaining flat or declining slightly towards 09:00. This correlates with the degree of congestion and the way that the traffic to the school causes the traffic to build into long slow moving queues in both directions. Without the school traffic the vehicle flow is much faster with queues moving alternately in each direction rather than locked together. So it is a reasonable hypothesis, but no more than that, that the high pollution levels build up because the cars move so slowly and spend much more time near the school.

The data shows a large variation in pollution levels from day to day. This does not seem to correlate with particular weather or wind direction and is probably due to various degrees of atmospheric inversion or air flow trapping the pollution near ground level. Church Road is narrow with houses on either side very close to the road and this adds to the risk of vehicle pollution being trapped. However, on some of the school days the measured pm2.5 level was quite low. So the average
exposure of children at Leckhampton Primary will depend on how many days in the year have conditions that cause the pollution to be trapped near ground level. More measurements need to be made at various times of the year and also in summer when photolytic decomposition of the NO2 emissions will add to the particulate levels.

We have not made any further measurements at the school since 30 November, but we are planning to recommence measurements shortly. However, we have checked the sensor against DEFRA standards and confirmed that the measurements are accurate. Again to put the measurements at Leckhampton Primary into perspective, London has an average pm2.5 level of 12 ug/m3. So if we worry about the health of school children in London we also need to worry about Leckhampton Primary. Of course, the levels at Leckhampton Primary will not be as high over the whole day as they are in the peak traffic period. But 08:00 to 09:00 and particularly 08:30 to 08:50 when the levels in Church Road are highest (peaking at 169 ug/m3 from 08:40 to 08:48 on 23 November) is the time when children are arriving at the school.

The threat to school children from traffic pollution and particularly from pm2.5 has been highlighted in the press very recently. The Times on 9th May 2019 carried the front page headline 'School air pollution scandal' and has launched an urgent campaign for a new clean air act including proposals for temporary traffic bans outside schools at drop-off and pick-up times. It would be possible to exclude non-resident cars from around many primary schools including Warden Hill Primary between 08:00 and 09:00. But it would be impossible to apply this to Leckhampton Primary because Church Road is a major traffic route round Cheltenham.

It therefore seems to the Parish Council that it would be dangerous to proceed with the expansion of Leckhampton Primary without more information about the pollution and a plan of what to do if further measurements demonstrate that the health hazards to children at the school are unacceptable. Certainly it seems unwise to rush into expanding the school or extending its catchment since that would promote more travel to the school by car. GCC also needs to consider the impact of the expansion on the viability of the proposed new secondary school if it is located on the GCC land at Farm Lane, particularly if that school is intended to cover the shortfall in secondary school places for students living in Charlton Park.