

Bredon, Bredon's Norton and Westmancote Parish Council

The minutes of Bredon's Annual Parish Meeting held by Zoom Video Conference on **Monday 26th April 2021** at 7.00 pm.

Present:

Cllrs Mr Nick Bradley (Chairman), Mr Richard Coghlan, Cllr Mr Adrian Darby (District), Mr Matt Darby, Mr Kevin Falvey, Mr Phil Handy, Mr Adrian Hardman (County and District), Mr Neil Leyden, Mr Ed Pyke, Mr Andrew Rhodes, Mr Declan Shiels, Mr Rob Sly and Mr Brod Whiting. Also, Mr Tim Drew (Clerk).

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received and accepted from PCSO Julie Pardoe.

2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting Held 27th April 2020.

The minutes having been circulated were **agreed** and signed as a true record.

3. Parish Council Chairman's Report.

For the second successive year this meeting is being convened via video conferencing software. Hopefully, this will be the last occasion that this will be necessary, as we transition to a situation where we are able to manage the impact of the pandemic through the delivery of the vaccine.

The pandemic has meant that as a society we have faced difficult periods over the last 13 months. Since the first lockdown, the Parish Council has adapted to deal with the pandemic, some of the measures have included the installation of hand sanitising stations on the playing field, to enable the play equipment open through the subsequent lockdowns.

In addition to these measures, the Parish Council has also installed hand sanitising stations in the Village Hall, as well as implementing social distancing measures therein, which has enabled the Village Hall to be open, where and when legislation has permitted. I would like to place on record my thanks to Councillors Kevin Falvey and Declan Shiels for the work they put into implementing these measures. Whilst I am conscious that several clubs and organisations have returned to using the Village Hall, I look forward to the coming months when the use of the Village Hall appears to be returning to pre-pandemic levels.

During the pandemic, the Parish Council has sought to assist Parishioners where they can, including donating to Bredon Community Care to help fund their work for local residents.

The last year has seen improvements to the playing fields, through the introduction of new play equipment in the form of new swings, which have been arranged and funded by Bredon Community Play and Recreation, with the Parish Council pleased to have been able help fund. My thanks go to Martin Miles and his band of volunteers at Bredon Community Play and Recreation for the work they do for our community.

This year has seen Jo Lawler step down as a Councillor, we thank her for the time and dedication she gave to the role during her time as a Councillor.

I am pleased to say that the role Jo vacated was quickly filled and I am delighted to welcome Ed Pyke on to the Council. Ed resides in Kinsham, so I am pleased that the Parish Council once again has a

resident of each of the 5 villages representing them on the Council, thereby ensuring that the views of the 5 villages are represented.

As reported last year, the Parish remains under the threat of major development, as the major planning applications we faced last year are still to be decided, being:

- 18/00771/OUT for 500 new homes on the site known as 'Land at Mitton', despite the application being submitted in April 2018, 3 years ago,
- 20/00008 for a proposed primary school on the same site is also yet to be decided, despite it being submitted 16 months ago.

In addition to these applications there are reviews Local Plans including the South Worcestershire Development Plan, which is proposing a strategic development on the 'Land at Mitton' site, extending the current application for 500 homes to 1,000 new homes on the site.

In the neighbouring District of Tewkesbury, the Tewkesbury Garden Town continues to progress with plans for 10,000 new homes, as well as provision of employment sites and a commercial centre. As part of the proposed Tewkesbury Garden Town, an application was submitted last year for a bridge over the railway line between Northway and Bredon, which was approved by Tewkesbury District Councils Planning Committee in March with the Decision now published.

At each stage of the process for each of these planning matters, the Parish Council has acted on the views expressed by Parishioners in the public meetings conducted prior to the pandemic and will continue to do so.

As can be seen, it continues to be the case, that the major issue the Council has faced in the last year outside of the pandemic, as is likely to be the case in the coming year, will relate to planning, with the extent and scale of these seemingly not abating.

Consequently, time has been spent liaising with our neighbouring Parish Councils, both within Wychavon as well as in the neighbouring district of Tewkesbury. It is heartening to know that these Parish Councils share our concerns over these proposed developments and are keen to collaborate on these issues.

During the year, work continues to progress with the Natural Networks project, which has led to improvements to a neglected corner of the playing field, as well as work starting on the Glebe Field. I thank Councillor Declan Shiels for the work he has done on this project, as well as the volunteers who have come to his assistance to carry out work when the call has gone out for help.

For the second year, hopefully bringing some joy during lockdown, the Parish Council installed a Christmas tree on the lawn to the front of the Village Hall. Thanks go to Councillor Kevin Falvey for sourcing and organising the trees erection and decoration.

This year the Council has also taken a step forward in embracing the use of technology with the purchase of collaboration software in the form of Office 365, which has led to the introduction of official Councillor email addresses. My thanks go to the Technology and Media team in implementing this, especially Councillor Rob Sly, who took it upon himself to set up and test the software as well as setting up computers for Councillors.

It should not be forgotten that the work of the Parish Council is undertaken by Councillors who give their time voluntarily to serve their Parish, I wish to thank them all for the contribution to the work the Parish Council has undertaken during this year.

However, a lot of the work the Parish Council does, could not be easily accomplished if it were not for the support and assistance of others, which includes that of Councillors Arian Darby and Adrian Hardman. I wish to place on record my thanks and those of the Parish Council for the work and assistance provided to us.

If that was not enough, Councillor Adrian Hardman also acts as our County Councillor. I am conscious that he has provided valuable assistance to the Parish in the last year, through local member grants to assist with Covid related projects. I personally wish Adrian well in the County Council election, as the Parish would be a poorer place were it not for him championing the Parish at County Council level.

This is evident from the work done over the last year, which has seen the adoption of footpaths within Queensmead and their resurfacing, as well as the pavement resurfacing works which have taken place to Church Road, Blenheim Drive, Kinsham and the lane between the Dock and Back Lane.

As a Council we are also fortunate to be able to be count on the services of employees who work hard to deliver the services of the Council, who include:

- Jo Lomasney who manages and keeps the Village Hall operational,
- David Grey our Lengthsman for the work he does keeping the village looking resplendent,

Our Clerk and Financial Officer, Tim Drew for managing the day to day running of the Parish Council and implementing the instructions of the Parish Council. I extend my personal and sincere thanks for the support and assistance Tim has provided me this year and in previous years.

Finally, the last year has showed how fortunate we are to live in such a beautiful location and amongst such a wonderful community. It has been my pleasure to serve the community and work with Councillors who care passionately for the parish and its community and dedicate themselves to preserving and improving our Parish.

4. County and District Councillor, Mr Adrian Hardman's Report.

It is with great pleasure that I can give you my annual report using a system that at this time last year I would not have anticipated that I will be able to use or indeed knew of.

It has been a year that the County Council has been dominated by one issue that had emerged just before last year's parish council meeting as a real threat. That is the question of responding to the global pandemic which is COVID-19. This has dominated the activities of the County Council for the past year with three lockdowns; and tragically some 370 deaths in our care homes; and over 830 deaths in our hospitals. In a national context the death toll of 127,000 is more people than live in Wychavon. At peak of the pandemic in the third week of January 2021 we had some 3480 cases reported in a day and some 290 people in hospital suffering from the virus. Currently the position is much improved with only some 9 cases per 100,000 in the District in the past week and no cases reported in the area around the hill.

During the course of the crisis in my role as cabinet member for adult social care I saw myself engage in areas I could not have imagined; taking up the offer of a Worcestershire businessman of half of his

airfreighted containers so that we as a County Council could fill it in Hong Kong with PPE; making the decision to open up our care homes just as Gloucestershire were closing theirs; and booking hotel bedrooms so that we could break the train of infection by placing people in a hotel room for 10 days before sending them back to their care home, after discharge from Hospital.

Those with learning disabilities in our County had some of the hardest times during lockdown because they were especially vulnerable to the virus with over 40% all those who caught it dying and hence, we made a very early decision in March to close the resource and contact centres which meant in many cases their families had to pick up the slack and lost all contact with their friends; and routine. The great news is that some 98% of the over 60s are now vaccinated, due to the efforts of Herefordshire's Kate Bingham as Chair of the Vaccine Committee and we are starting to move to the over 45's.

Against this backdrop I have been impressed by the way that the parish council and the residents have managed to remain positive, at once stepped up and formed their own community self-help group which Linked Into the County councils own "here to help" scheme. Well done, Neville, Declan, and team.

The County Council did its best to keep services running during be locked down and managed to restore most of them during the summer but our facilities for the disabled, for instance, were severely affected. We did manage to keep the household waste disposal services going and the bus service did still call in the village.

Education of the pupils of Bredon has been severely affected by school closures and the lockdowns, and I have directed a small grant towards the school to help with catching up. Domestic and adult social care has continued to operate throughout this year, but the staff have had to learn new skills to stop the spread of the infection. Work on the highways has been sporadic due to the lockdowns but by large we have managed to keep the road network to a reasonable standard and works have been carried out. Footway repairs have been carried out in Kinsham, Dock Lane and at long last in Queensmead and we are planning to do Queensmead 3 next which is the Cheltenham road and then Queensmead two which is the centre of Queensmead I hope within the next 12 months. But the issue of the village interconnectors between Westmancote and Kinsham is still to be resolved. County Council funding is directed at areas with inside a 30 mile an hour limit. We will be surface dressing the repairs that we have done on the main section of the village highway in June now.

The weather has been yet again rather severe, even snow in April. We have had a very wet autumn and winter which has led to disruption in the Bredon Hill area. While we still have work to do on flood mitigation on the highway towards Bredon, we have done a considerable amount of this work over the past 10 years. And I would applaud the efforts of the parish council has put in over the years so that the flooding even when we had as much rain as we had in 2007 did not cause the same scale of trouble.

As district councillor the main issues that have been concerning me have been the Mitton bank development and the emerging SWDP plan which will set the housing numbers at locations for the next 10 years at least. I continue to try to stop the garden town plan to build 10,000 houses on the edge of ah Parrish. This is of course on top of the normal day to day planning applications, bin collections, and fly tipping issues that emerge in the village from time to time.

I am optimistic that next year we will see a return to a more normal way of life. It has been a privilege and an honour to be in your councillor for the past four years and I hope that you will consider re-electing me in May.

5. District Councillor, Mr Adrian Darby's Report.

Since the lockdown in March last year following the outbreak of Covid-19 all meetings both District Council and the Joint Advisory Panel overseeing the revision of the South Worcestershire Development Plan have been held remotely. This was first done by telephone conference, but we quickly changed to Zoom which was also used for the meetings of the parish councils in my ward. Once we had all mastered the use of Zoom things went comparatively smoothly although we were not able to hold our usual site visits before planning meetings.

Planning matters:

Revision of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP). This is the plan prepared jointly by the three district councils of Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon, which was finally adopted in February 2016 and is required to be updated after five years in operation. There was a public consultation on the preferred options version of the plan in December 2019. This included provision of 1000 houses at Mitton, 500 of which were to meet Tewkesbury Borough's needs under the duty to cooperate. As a result of this consultation some sites were ruled out and some new ones inserted. However, the whole process has been delayed by the pandemic and the final draft of the plan will now only be presented for public consultation this October and November with submission to the inspector in March 2022. The independent examination will take from May 2022 to January 2023, with the inspector submitting his report in March 2023 and the adoption of the new plan in April 2023. However, at this stage there was a need for a technical appraisal of the sustainability of the preferred options version of the plan and this was produced early this year. A public consultation on this appraisal was held which ended on April 19th. I had made various comments on this in respect to Mitton in meetings of JAP, and online to the consultation. I see that the parish council has made a much fuller response which covers some of the same points.

There was a flurry of activity during the year when the government consulted on a new method for calculating the number of houses which local authorities would have to provide. In the case of the Revised SWDP this would have meant that Wychavon's requirement would double. Happily, this proposal caused a storm of protest from Tory MPs and was scrapped.

Tewkesbury Garden Town. Plans for this exceptionally large new settlement of 10,000 homes which will stretch from Aston Cross to Mitton are progressing steadily and were given a significant boost by the granting of planning permission for a new road bridge over the railway to the north of Northway, linking Hardwick Bank Road with Aston Fields Lane. The original justification for this scheme was that it would make use of a considerable area of brownfield land at the Ashchurch MoD site, but we are now told that most of this will not be available and that the new town will have to extend east of Aston Cross. The Garden Town is a strategic allocation under the Cheltenham, Gloucester, Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy and therefore does not fall under the Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan, which had its examination in public earlier this year. I appeared (by Zoom) at this for Kemerton Conservation Trust to argue that special recognition should be given to the landscape and biodiversity of the Lower Carrant Valley. I hope that some recognition will be paid to this in the planning of the Garden Town.

Westmancote Planning Applications. As ward member I have the right to ask that an application which would ordinarily be determined by officers be taken to the planning committee. I only do this if the matter is controversial, and last year I did so once in Westmancote for a house in the garden of The Pound. This was a resubmission of an earlier application which had been refused on design grounds, with the position and size of the proposed house altered to meet the refusal reasons. There were a number of Westmancote objectors, and I asked for it to go to committee so that they could

make their case. However, they were unable to persuade members of the committee and the application was approved.

The application which has caused most public response in Westmancote is described as in Kemerton although it is in fact just in Bredon. This is the application for a Gypsy/Traveller Pitch at Long Furlong Allotments on Kemerton Road, Bredon. However, I own half the access to this site and have therefore declared a prejudicial interest and will not be taking part in the decision when it comes before the planning committee on Thursday.

Other District Council Matters:

Councillors' Discretionary Fund. I was awarded £500 to give to organisations suffering difficulties as a result of Covid 19. I awarded half each to the two primary schools in my ward at Ashton under Hill and Overbury.

Budget. Wychavon once again froze its council tax this year. The Liberal Democrats wanted to go further and earmark £1million of the council's reserve for exceptional help to those suffering particularly severely from Covid but we were unable to persuade the Conservative majority to do this.

Intelligently Green Plan (IGP). Wychavon produced a plan to meet the threat of climate change and other environmental issues. With other Lib Dem members, I voted against this on the grounds that the measures proposed did not go far enough. In particular, the extra housing proposed in the SWDP Review would create substantial further carbon dioxide emissions which would not be offset by the proposals in the IGP.

6. Police Report.

In PCSO Julie Pardoe's absence, Cllr Falvey read the following report on behalf of the Pershore Rural North and South Local Policing Team:

The last 12 months have certainly been different in the policing world and has brought with it new challenges. Halfway through 2020 we had a new call recording system installed which has taken a lot of adjusting to and is not user friendly when it comes to producing reports such as these. That said due to COVID the crime figures have been skewed and to compare the figures to the previous 12 months would not achieve anything.

I have reviewed the last 12 months and there are only a handful of incidents the majority were reports of anti-social behaviour reported by a single resident, this is being dealt with alongside other agencies including mental health. The village did have a few incidents of catalytic convertor thefts which was a general issue throughout the area at the time, several arrests have since been made. As ever speeding through the village has been flagged as an issue along with evidence of drug taking in the sports car park. SNT have been out and carried out targeted patrol.

We have had several COVID breaches reported to us. All reports were taken seriously and were dealt with via the four E's 'engage, explain, educate, enforce'. None of these have gone to enforcement.

As a team we are grateful to everyone who has followed government guidelines and stayed at home, however we have been made aware and have dealt with visitors to the area who have travelled from further afield causing disruption and concern to the residents of villages surrounding Bredon Hill."

There is a website www.police.uk where you can enter your postcode, and this will give you the crimes by month for your area. I'm not sure if this will be of any use to the PC for future reference.

7. Questions from The Floor.

Several issues were raised and discussed including the 540-bus route and the Kinsham to Bredon pathway.

The Chairman asked Cllrs Darby and Hardman to pass on the parish councils thanks to both Worcestershire CC and Wychavon DC for their excellent and supportive performance during the Covid-19 pandemic.