

## **Bredon and Bredon's Norton Parish Council**

The minutes of Bredon's Annual Parish Meeting held at Bredon Village Hall on **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023** at 7.00 pm.

### **Present:**

Cllrs Mr Nick Bradley (Chairman), Ms Karen Brooks, Mr Adrian Darby (District), Mr Matt Darby, Ms Katie Hall, Mr Adrian Hardman (County and District), Mr Neil Leyden, Mr Andrew Rhodes, Mr Declan Shiels, Mr Rob Sly and Mr Brod Whiting. Also, Mr Tim Drew (Clerk), Mr Adrian Bailey & Ms Jane Bailey, Ms Rosie Ballenger, Mr Mark Farey and Ms Ruth Sly.

### **1. Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Mr Kevin Falvey, Mr Ed Pyke and PCSO Julie Pardoe.

### **2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting Held 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022.**

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

### **3. Parish Council Chairman's Report.**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> May local elections will take place for Parish and District Councillors to be elected. Bredon Parish Council will not be a contested election due to insufficient candidates coming forward to require an election to take place.

Sadly, 3 sitting Councillors have decided not to stand for re-election, they are Ed Pyke, Neil Leydon, and Rob Bell, who will be sadly missed. So, I place on record my thanks and those of my fellow Councillors for the contribution each of them has made in their time as Parish Councillors. I also wish to personally place on record my thanks to Councillor Ed Pyke for his assistance over the last year acting in the capacity of Vice Chairman. Whilst it is sad for the Council to lose colleagues, this provides an opportunity for new Councillors to join the Council, bringing new energy and ideas to the Council, so I trust that the vacancies they leave will soon be filled. During the year, we saw Phil Handy step away from the Parish Council having spent many years serving the Council in the role of Chairman and Vice Chairman. I place on record the thanks of the Council to Phil for his many years of service, his experience will be missed by the Council. It was pleasing that the role left by Phil was filled by Katie Hall, who has quickly settled into the role.

It has been another busy year for the Council. Unfortunately, as with recent years, planning matters have continued to pre-occupy the Council's time and attention. This year did bring about a conclusion to the two applications to develop the site referred to "Land at Mitton" for the provision of 500 homes and a primary school. It was at last year's annual parish council meeting, I reported that these applications were to go before Wychavon District Council's Planning Committee the following week, having been running for 4 years in the case of the housing application. I am pleased to report that the Planning Committee decided to refuse the application for the 500 homes, which led to the withdrawal of the application for the Primary School.

However, the Developer decided to lodge an appeal against the Decision of the Committee, leading to a Planning Inquiry being convened over a two-week period at Wychavon's Offices during late October and early November 2022. The Parish Council successfully applied to be a Rule 6 Party at the Inquiry. I am pleased to report that the Parish Council's efforts, along with those of consultants we

engaged, plus members of the community in support, including our District Councillor Adrian Darby and the role of our District and County Councillor Adrian Hardman who represented Wychavon District Council at the Inquiry, led to Planning Inspector dismissing the Appeal. It was therefore the Parish Councils expectation that the next battle ground for this application site would be the South Worcestershire Development Plan which is due to be published in Summer 2023 for Examination in Public. Regrettably though I can report that the Developer has submitted a new application for the primary school, which the Parish Council will now need to consider.

On other planning related matters, the Parish Council continued its collaboration with Ashchurch Rural and Northway Parish Councils in appealing the Ashchurch Bridge over Rail application, for a new road bridge crossing over the Birmingham to Bristol main line, in a location between Bredon and Northway. The appeal process took us to the Court of Appeal in the Royal Courts of Justice in December 2022, again I am pleased to report that the Parish Councils were successful in getting the planning application quashed on each of the 3 grounds of appeal submitted. For the first time in many years, it has regrettably been necessary for the Parish Council considering the costs of defending the planning applications mentioned, as well as the potential to have to do the same with the latest Mitton application as well as the examination in public of the SWDP which proposed to allocate the enlarged Mitton site for 1,000 homes. The Parish Council as with everyone else must face the increased inflation costs which exist; however, the Parish Council has ensured that the increase is kept to a minimum and within the current inflation figures.

I am pleased to say that some of the costs associated with the Council Tax increase are also targeted to be spent in positive improvements for the benefit of the community, with some of these already being delivered. These include in reaction to the increase heating costs has seen the introduction of a 'Warm Room' once a month at the Village Hall. Not only does this event provide a warm room, but it also provides an environment for people to meet and socialise as well as receive a warm meal. Regarding this initiative the Parish Council wishes to express its thanks to those members of the community who assisted in providing donations towards this initiative and to Councillor Adrian Hardman who provided a discretionary grant from his District Council budget. I also wish to thank Councillor Declan Shiels and his volunteers who help organise and run the warm room events.

The Village Hall has this year provided a location for Ukrainian refugees who have used this as a meeting place to socialise with each other and be provided with English classes, the Parish Council is pleased to be able to gift them the use of the room. This year has seen some minor improvements to the Village Hall, including improvements to the lighting, further work is soon to commence in decorating parts of the exterior of the hall, with other work planned to take place in the coming year.

Speeding has been a long-standing concern of the community, during this year to address this issue the Parish Council purchase five Vehicle Activated Signs which have been placed at locations across the Parish (Bredon's Hardwick, Glebe Field, Park, Cheltenham Road, Kinsham Road). The introduction of these signs appears to have influenced the speed of vehicles passing through the Parish. With these signs also providing the Parish Council will valuable data that will assist the Parish Council in analysing and challenging traffic surveys, so it is the Parish Councils intention to procure further vehicle detection hardware to be able to undertake its own traffic modelling. In addition to addressing the speed of vehicles within the Parish, the community has received a significant improvement for pedestrians in the village with improvements to the footpaths around Queensmead and the inter connector between Bredon and Westmancote. A massive thanks must go to our County Councillor, Adrian Hardman for supporting the Parish Council in lobbying for these improvements.

Last summer the playing fields and the main car park were subject to an incursion by members of the traveller community, who were seemingly intent on making this their base for several weeks. Thankfully, due to the efforts of the Police we were able to get the travellers moved on that evening, but we need to remain vigilant. Consequently, the Parish Council has purchased height restriction barriers for the car parks, which will soon be installed with the intention of preventing a repeat of this situation. In addition to the barriers other improvements are being considered for the main car park, to restrict access to the playing field as well as enhancing the car park.

I cannot mention the playing fields without placing on record the Parish Council's thanks to the members of Bredon Community Play and Recreation who continue to maintain the play equipment at the park as well as arrange activities for children such as Play Rangers. Bredon Community Play and Recreation play an important community role, who have been chaired by Martin Miles for many years. Martin Miles has now decided it is time to stand down from the role and offer someone else the opportunity to take this role forward. I therefore place on record the thanks of the Parish Council to Martin Miles for the many years of hard work he has put into the role of Chairman of Bredon Community Play and Recreation and we look forward to working with Martin's successor to maintain and enhance the play facilities.

Parish Councillors give their time voluntarily to work on the Council, this is a significant commitment for them to make for the benefit of the local community, I therefore wish to place on record my thanks to each and one of them for their time and commitment during this year, I look forward to continuing the good work that has been achieved in the coming term.

The Parish Council is fortunate to be able to draw on the support and good work also of in addition a small but select group of staff members:

- Jo Lomasney - Village Hall Manager
- David Gray – Lengthsman
- Tim Drew - Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

I wish to place on record the thanks of the Parish Council for the work the three have done tirelessly for the Parish Council and the Community.

The Parish Council is fortunate to be able to rely upon the support and assistance of our District Councillors Adrian Hardman and Adrian Darby. I place on record the Parish Council's thanks for their efforts over the last year. Councillor Darby after many years acting as District Councillor for the Westmancote ward has decided not to seek re-election, we wish Adrian well for his support and assistance over the many years he has acted as District Councillor for the Bredon Hill Ward. Councillor Adrian Hardman is standing for re-election of the Bredon Ward, which due to recent boundary changes sees the Parish fall entirely now within this ward. As well as wishing Adrian thanks again for the work he has done this year in his dual role of District and County Councillor, we also wish him well and every success in the forthcoming elections in the hope that he will continue to act as our District Councillor.

Thank you for your time this evening and giving me the honour over the last year of acting as Chairmen of the Council, it continues to be an honour and a privilege.

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

It gives me great pleasure to be able to be with you tonight. I'm sorry that my attendance has been a bit of a miss during the course of the year, but I try and keep a firm eye on events in my home village.

The County Council is in reasonable heart after Covid 19; maybe recovering from the disruption caused and is trying to embrace new ways of working; so we don't expect staff being in five days a week, but we do hope they will be in three or four.

We have just set the budget for next year and the financial outturns was within our expectations, but it was still showing a considerable overspend in both areas of social care and so we were delighted by two things happened. one was the delay to social care reforms and the other was the amount of support the government put into adult social care. In Worcestershire faced some problems common across the Country but the message in Whitehall has finally been received but if you don't have an efficient social care system; you run large numbers of backlogs which affected the health system. on top of that we were delighted to receive and over 3,000,000-pound grant for roads maintenance. One of the big factors in the budget was that the pension fund is now 100 percent funded and hence we can level off our contributions to it.

Moving on to more local issues I am delighted that we were able to do the phase of footway works in the main village to Westmancote, and this means that we have now done the whole of Main Street and the payment is now of a reasonable standard and I was delighted with the result and the level of usage. We have plans to do some further footways work up on the Cheltenham Road to Kinsham as we gently try to improve that section as well. The winter was reasonably kind and with only a little snow, but a surprising amount of frost and I was pleased with the way that we gritted the village. it is also the year in which the school changes in the Pershore pyramid were agreed at the County Council and these will come into effect in 2025/6. This will see the closure of the middle schools and the extension of the high school. The rumour mill is working overtime, but the County Council has no plans to change the structure in the Evesham pyramid currently.

I have been delighted to be able to assist various village organisations with my local members divisional fund such as the jubilee celebration, the repairs to the school roof, the outward-bound association, and Bredon care and transport have all benefited from this fund over the course of the year.

Moving onto the district front it has been a really challenging year with planning matters to the fore and I am indebted to the assistance of the parish council and especially the Chairman; in dealing with the major application and for their support over trying to regulate it the position at castle view. Both of these matters are still ongoing, and I suspect have been dealt with in some detail by your chairman's report so I will not restate what he has already talked about. An interesting challenge for the District Council will be it change to the waste collection service over the next two years so that it is in line with the environmental act which was passed last year which is dedicated to boosting recycling in many shapes and forms, but at a cost to the Council. Wychavon continues to be in a very sound financial position which as chair of the audit committee I have just signed off the accounts for and we are very lucky that 30 years of thrift leads us in a sound position. Looking forward the changes to the planning regulations means that I will be endeavouring to see the numbers of houses built in the district fall since Wychavon's population is now some 130,000 people, up 30 % in 20 years.

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

All last year meetings were held face to face in the Council Chamber at Wychavon with the exception of meetings on Zoom of the Joint Advisory Panel (JAP) which continues to oversee the long-protracted Review of the South Worcestershire Development Plan.

To deal with planning matters first:

### **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. Last year I reported that 'there has been a further delay and the final draft of the plan will now only be presented for public consultation this July and August with submission to the inspector in November.' If only that had proved true. The consultation on the final version of the plan was only completed on 23 December, and produced so many responses that officers are still collating them. The independent examination may not start until well into the summer, say five months later than I forecast last year, with the consequence that the plan is unlikely to be adopted until well into next year. This is extremely serious because the latest calculation showed that Wychavon at the end of 2022 does not have a five-year housing land supply. The consequence of this is that the existing SWDP's housing policies are out of date, and applications outside the village development boundaries cannot be resisted. Westmancote is likely to be better placed than most Wychavon villages, or indeed of the rest of Bredon Parish except for Bredon's Norton, as it lies within the AONB. The consultation draft of the SWDP still contains an allocation of 1000 houses at Mitton, despite the fact that a planning application for the first 500 houses was refused by the planning committee on 28 April 2022, and the decision was upheld on appeal by the planning inspector on traffic grounds.

### **Planning Committee**

These take place each month and I attended all but two of them. Only major items and applications which the local member considers to be controversial or in which he has an interest are taken to committee. Last year there was one of the former in Westmancote, the extension to the Cottage in Chapel Lane. The Parish Council had objected to this, and I tried to support their view. However, despite my arguments against, this plan was approved. All the other Westmancote applications were minor and were approved under delegated authority to officers. Much the most important decision taken by the committee was the refusal of 500 houses at Mitton, referred to above.

### **Tewkesbury Garden Town**

Plans for this very large new settlement of 10,000 homes which will stretch from Aston Cross to Mitton received a setback this year when the planning approval for the new road bridge over the railway, 'the Bridge to Nowhere' was overturned in the Court of Appeal on 7 February 2023. Whether Tewkesbury Borough Council will be able to once again give itself permission for this is still not clear. 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 was adopted 8 June 2022.

### **Budget**

Wychavon once again froze its council tax this year. The Liberal Democrats had proposed two amendments to the budget.

1. Funding for training community volunteers We proposed that £25k be moved into the community budget from reserves for each of the 2 years 2023/24 and 2024/25. This would be used to support necessary training costs for volunteers and specialist posts as bid for by key community voluntary organisations in Wychavon.
2. More effectively manage wetlands and introduce natural flood management where appropriate We proposed £500k over 4 years to fund an officer post along with project funding in order to work with partners, including the Environment Agency, Worcestershire County Council and appropriate voluntary organisations, to • further the use of sustainable drainage techniques, particularly in our strategic settlements

- further the use of natural flood management (NFM) techniques
- further the implementation of wetlands in line with the Intelligently Green Plan
- support the Natural Networks project, increasing biodiversity by effective management of wetlands and washlands and assisting in flood alleviation.

We were not successful in persuading the Conservative majority to support our amendments, although members of the Green party did vote for them.

### **Election**

I will not be standing this May as I feel my age has caught up with me. Therefore, this will be my last report as your District Councillor. I have served 25 years as Councillor for South Bredon Hill, which has included Westmancote for some of that time, and will now cease to exist as I leave it. Both Westmancote and Kemerton are now to be included in Bredon Ward. During that time, I have been particularly concerned with planning and I will still continue to keep an eye on the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review. Now that I am no longer a Wychavon member of the Joint Advisory Panel, I will be free to object to the allocation of 1000 houses at Mitton. I feel very strongly about the likely impact on nesting curlews, one of Britain's most threatened breeding birds, although I have to acknowledge that this argument did not cut much ice with the inspector at the appeal against the first 500 houses, and that the parish council's transport witness was much more effective.

### **6. Police Report.**

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

In the last 12 months the number of incidents has remained low for the whole Bredon area, but SNT are aware that there have been pockets of persistent issues.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) has been the main issue. After the incident of youths setting light to toilet paper at the sports club a number of individuals from the village have received Anti-social behaviour notices and have been spoken to by officers. We are aware that some of these individuals had continued to cause issues and we are increasing patrols especially at weekends and evenings. We have received a report of graffiti and one resident has reported several incidents of unwanted door knocking. We are also aware that there are youths who are visiting the village and are possibly school friends of these youths. If anyone is identified as causing an issue, then they will be dealt with appropriately and robustly.

Residents in the area of Bredon Lodge have also suffered from ASB from another resident. This matter is now being addressed by Rooftop Housing and we are not aware of any recent issues. There have been regular multi agency meetings regarding the residents at the site at Castle View. At the beginning of this year there was a joint visit to the site where Western Power and Wychavon Council addressed some concerns and issues. The visit lasted approximately 2 hours and whilst police attended our presence was to support the other agencies and there were no issues. Any Castle View reports to the Police can be anonymised. We have not received any recent reports of ASB in the local pubs or businesses within the area linked to residents on the site. We still have a Problem-Solving Plan in place.

The team is changing again, and PC Daren Riley has now been promoted to Sergeant and will be off to a new role in custody.

The new Safer Neighbourhood Officer will be PC Molly Keeler. Claire Doughty is now working alongside myself as PCSO's for the area. Julie Pardoe is now back to full duties.

We are hoping to start attending events and coffee mornings again now we are back up to full numbers.

We would request that any incidents are immediately reported to police either online, via 101 or obviously 999 in an emergency. Any reports

## **7. Questions from The Floor.**

Mark Farey stated that anti-social driving through Bredon's Norton is still an issue and Speed Radar signs are required as there are no footpaths and there are numerous horses, dog walkers and hikers. The Transport & Organisations Working Group will continue to lobby for signs but recognise that road heights and verges have been highlighted as problems to installation. Cllr Hardman will follow up with Barry Barnes of Worcestershire Highways to arrange a visit.

The Police & Crime Commissioner, John Campion, has been invited to attend the parish council's September meeting and it is hoped residents and parishioners will use this opportunity to raise police related issues.

Cllr Sly asked for solutions to the high traffic levels through the Bredon Hill Villages, used as rat-runs due to increasing congestion on the A46 and M5 Junction 9. Gloucestershire and Worcestershire County Councils are starting consultation with National Highways this summer, but there is disagreement at present on M5 Motorway Junctions 9 and 10.

Cllr Darby gave an update on Curlews in the parish which is a principal nesting site south of Birmingham.

Cllr Bradley responded to a question from Rosie Ballenger, relating to the number of caravans and situation in adjacent fields at Castle View, and updated the meeting on the current live planning applications.