

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PIRTON PARISH WAS HELD ON TUESDAY 29th APRIL 2025 AT 7:00 PM AT ST PETERS CHURCH, PIRTON.

PRESENT: J Butterworth (Chair), T Homer, D Skeys, I Butterworth, C Rawlings, A Wilkinson, A. Price, D. Price, E. Turner, L. Baxter and A Baxter

IN ATTENDANCE: County Councillor Linda Robinson, & District Councillor Liz Turier and The Parish Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES

District Councillors Rob Adams, J. Kitchener & P. Kitchener.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th April 2024 were reviewed, there were no outstanding actions.

The minutes were agreed to be signed by the Chair as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. REPORTS

(a) Parish Council

Mrs J Butterworth read the annual report as the Chair of the Parish Council:

Parish councils are the lowest level of local government in England, serving as a direct link between residents and other local authorities. They are responsible for a variety of services and play a key role in representing community interests, especially in planning matters. Our Parish Council represents 2 Parishes; the Parish of Drakes Broughton and Wadborough and the Parish of Pirton; 8 members for Drakes Broughton, 3 for Wadborough and 3 for Pirton. We meet on the first Thursday of each month in the Village Hall in Drakes Broughton, and members of the community are welcome to attend.

Unusually there have been vacancies for members for the Parish Council throughout the year; currently we have a total of 4 vacancies, 1 for Drakes Broughton, 2 for Wadborough and 1 for Pirton.

Planning has been a major area of focus this year, as it became “open season” for development in Drakes Broughton. During the year members reviewed and commented on a total of 31 planning applications, we have made representations at 7 of the 12 monthly planning committee meetings at Wychavon, as well as submitting comments to planning inspectors for 7 appeals where the decision reached by the Planning Committee had been challenged by the developer. Members also joined forces with other local Parish Councils to represent the community in meetings and the public hearing about the plans for the new town (10k dwellings) by the railway station at Parkway.

Planning this year has been a challenge, as until Wychavon District Council has the required land supply in place for development, there is little to stop planning permission being granted. We have lobbied everywhere including pushing hard with Severn Trent about the state of the foul drains in Drakes Broughton and remain optimistic that the long overdue infrastructure upgrade programme for Drakes Broughton is back on the project slate and will happen in the not-too-distant future.

The work to update the Neighbourhood plan continues and once this is in place it will be used to help shape development in the area and to determine planning decisions

The Parish Council received a satisfactory report on its 2023/24 accounts and have continued to work to ensure that finances are well managed. During the year we moved to internet banking, which has reduced costs and improved efficiency. We received a precept amount of £28k for 2024,

which has been spent as detailed within the annual budget. Plans are progressing to spend allocated S106 money (money that's made available from developers via Wychavon) to improve the playing field in Drakes Broughton. A small amount of the money was spent recently to improve the pedestrian entrance from Walcot Lane. In Pirton we welcome the grant from our County Councillor to fund a replacement picnic bench for the small playing field.

It has been a busy year with plenty of meetings to attend; subgroups meet from time to time with full council meeting every month. Things can only progress if there are people who are up for making them happen, and we're all really fortunate that they do what they do. My thanks go to County Councillor Linda Robinson and District Councillors Liz Turier and Rob Adams for attending our meetings, supporting our endeavours in the wider community, including representing us at Planning committee. I also owe a big thank you to the people in the community who aren't members of the Parish Council but have joined our subcommittees to share some of the workload associated with making things happen locally. I think the group who are working on the Neighbourhood plan deserve a special mention this year, as do the Open Space Committee who have been considering what's next for the playing field. We are grateful to the folk who quietly and reliably help keep things sorted in the communities – picking up litter, clearing fallen branches and turning out to open and close the car park gate in Drakes Broughton each day and we value the work of our lengthsman who continues to do a great job maintaining the verges and associated drainage along minor roads around our villages and moving the 4 Vehicle Activations signs that are owned by the Parish Council.

I also say a big thank you to Nikki our clerk and to all the Parish Councillors for everything they have done throughout this year. It's going to be another busy year, but hopefully it will be slightly less challenging than the last and we will continue to make solid progress with many Parish Council related things.

b) Worcestershire County Councillor - County Councillor's report

County Cllr. Linda Robinson gave her report as follows:

Good evening, everyone and thank you for joining us this evening. It is always a pleasure to come and talk to you especially as so many of you make the effort to attend.

Please feel free to ask me any questions arising from my report or anything else I may be able to help you with.

Proposed Local Authority Reorganisation Update

At present, Worcestershire has one county council, responsible for services including roads and social care, sitting above six district councils that run services such as bin collections and housing.

Following the publication of Labour's devolution white paper, our administration commissioned consultants PwC to provide an independent review of the options.

Scrapping Worcestershire's existing seven councils and replacing them with a single authority could save more than £20m a year whilst costing £11.9m according to their report.

They also suggested that an alternative option of splitting the historic county into two new unitary councils – north and south - could save £4.3m a year but would cost £16.9m,

Local politicians are currently divided over the two options, after the government asked council leaders to produce proposals to merge the county's two-tier system. Opinions are currently divided as to which option to follow.

Councils are required to produce a business case for changes by the end of November.

Any new local authorities could be up and running as early as April 2028, following elections in May 2027.

This will inevitably be a hot topic for County & Districts moving forward.

Worcestershire Parkway

Worcestershire Parkway has recently celebrated its fifth anniversary with plans to build a single storey car park above the existing facility as demand increases.

The proposed Worcestershire Parkway new Development has gone through its examination in public as part of the revised SWDPR. (still subject to review). I attended the examination in public at the Guild Hall in Worcester and expressed concerns over infrastructure. I strongly believe that any new development should be infrastructure led and hope that this will be achieved sooner rather than later in the plan.

Worcester's new school and hospital multi-storey latest

PLANS for a new secondary school and a multi-storey car park next to Worcestershire Royal Hospital have been approved by Worcestershire County Council. Whilst not in your catchment I noticed on the site visit its proximity to Crowle which might increase future options.

The new school and car park were approved by the county council's recent planning and regulatory committee of which I am currently vice-chairman.

The secondary school is expected to welcome its first cohort in 2028.

The multi-storey car park would be built to address long-running issues with the availability of parking at the nearby hospital, by offering 850 more spaces for staff, patients and visitors.

Guy Kippen, associate development director at Prime, commented: "Securing planning approval is a major milestone in delivering a sustainable solution for parking and access to Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

"By working collaboratively with Worcestershire County Council and local stakeholders, we will ensure that parking and access improvements reduce congestion for all users.

"Now we have achieved outline planning consent, we will progress with the detailed design required for a reserved matters application. As part of this, we will keep the local community informed."

A new exit road onto the A4440 Nunnery Way has been approved for visitors to reach the car park, as well as giving emergency vehicles a new specialised route to reach Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

On Newtown Road, a new access road dedicated to serving the school will be built to help manage school-related traffic and minimise its impact on the area.

A spokesperson for Worcestershire County Council added: "The approval of this hybrid application ensures a strategic and comprehensive approach to traffic management, benefitting the hospital, school, and local community while delivering a biodiversity net gain on the site."

Secondary, Primary and First School Places for September

Worcestershire County Council received 6,592 applications this year and everyone who made an application for a secondary school place has received an offer of a place.

9 in 10 of Worcestershire's children will be starting secondary school in their first-choice preference in September.

Parents are also being reminded to apply for school transport for their child/children as early as possible for the September 2025 school term. This applies to secondary and middle school places.

For more information, please visit the apply for school and college travel assistance pages of the county council website: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/schooltransport.

Linda reminded Pirton to use the hard fought for Pirton Polling station! (Notice from Rob Adams)

There were no resident questions put to the County Councillor.

c) District Councillor

District Councillor Liz Turier gave her report as follows:

This year seems to have flown by. It has been good to see the Sanctuary Estate just about finished – or so I thought, until I saw that they are digging up the bottom part – I understand from residents it is to improve drainage, and the roads are not finished, so that something I will look into next! However, the proposals to enhance the playing field are progressing and so is the Neighbourhood Plan., which is great.

You don't need me to tell you that this year has been dominated by planning applications for housing, which have been granted basically because Wychavon doesn't have a 5-year housing plan.

The situation with Severn Trent is ongoing but I have to congratulate Janet Butterworth and the Parish Council for their absolute terrier like concentration and effort to make Severn Trent come up to scratch. They have been and continue to be amazing.

It appears that the South Worcs Development Plan Review – which was examined at the Guildhall in March, will not be accepted (or possibly not accepted!) until the end of the year. This also means that we will not have the 5-year housing allowance until then either, so we will be open to development which we would normally not have to accept. The new Neighbourhood plan will give us more strength, which is why the Parish council is working as quickly as possible to do it.

I don't know who or what is responsible for this situation in Wychavon, but I do know that it isn't the villages, but you are the ones who are having to live with the consequences.

In the meantime, we will have to battle on and try to influence Wychavon Planning officers at the early stages to take notice of our comments of layout, design/access etc if it seems unlikely that the application will be refused.

Thank you for your support this year. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can help in any way.

5. ANY MATTER AN ELECTOR WISHES TO RAISE

Derek Skeys read a note sent in from P Kitchener: *I'm hoping to capture the history and stories from people who have lived in Pirton village. There are no grand ideas to publish anything but just to save the memories before they are lost over time. Then they can be used in the future. I have a list of questions to act as a starting point and responses can be given in writing or verbally. I can record the person speaking or take notes. If you are interested in sharing your stories, please email me on swanbrook2020@gmail.com*

Laura Baxter advised that she was impressed by the WCC Highways swift response to her Highways report regarding the breaking up of the road at Pirton bank, the second repair being much more robust than the first.

Tina Homer advised that two potholes formed and remain after the recent Severn Trent work on a leak near Stone Villa. It was thought the work was not complete and residents at Pirton House Farm were still in touch with Severn Trent.

6.DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PARISH OF PIRTON – Neighbourhood Plan & representation on the Parish Council.

E Turner – gave an update on her involvement in the shaping of the Pirton side of the Neighbourhood Plan, Lizzie advised that residents would be consulted and asked for their input in the near future.

Janet Butterworth advised there was a member vacancy for Pirton on the Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 19.40