

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 26th April 2017 in Cofton Lounge, Parish Centre, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green

The Meeting was chaired by Cllr Robert Cholmondeley, Barnt Green Parish Council Chairman.

In attendance: Steve Hinton, Senior Ranger, Lickey Hills Country Park
Twelve attendees
Gill Lungley, Executive Officer, Barnt Green Parish Council

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from parish councillors C Hotham and J Jellie; P McDonald.

3. Presentation from Steven Hinton, Senior Ranger, Lickey Hills Country Park

Steve spoke about the outbreak of phytophthora ramorum that kills some tree species such as rhododendron, bilberry, larch, sweet chestnut. Three hectares of larch have been lost to the disease and proactive work is being undertaken to stop it spreading further.

The Lickey Hills are renowned for the bilberry which is part of an unusual ecosystem, so although the disease will almost certainly continue to be present the bilberry will not be deliberately destroyed and despite the threat it appears to be thriving.

The deforestation work has some positive side-effects in that the views across the countryside are returning! New planting of disease-resistant species such as oak, small leaf lime, cherry, and hazel is taking place, with many school children volunteering to take part. The intention is to return to coppice woodland and working with the natural cycle.

The cost of reacting to and taking measures to prevent the spread of disease is ongoing, borne by Birmingham City Council, with 80% of the budget spent on just the larch felling. Neighbours to the park will need to be aware of the threat to trees and shrubs which is likely to be ever present.

The Chairman thanked Steve for his presentation.

4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting dated 27th April 2016

The minutes were approved a true record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Reports from local council representatives

a) Chairman's report

The Chairman gave a report which is given in full at Appendix 1.

The parish council's finances for the year to 31/03/2017 were presented to the meeting (appendix 2). Two comments were made in relation to the planters along Hewell Road – (1) they are not being maintained properly so why keep them? And (2) they do not provide enough room for push-chairs to be safely wheeled along the pavement without sloping.

b) Report from County Councillor for Beacon Division

County Councillor Peter McDonald had sent apologies for missing the meeting.

c) Report from District Councillor for Barnt Green and Hopwood Ward

Coun Hotham had sent apologies for missing this meeting and the following report:

I am sorry I am not able to be with you tonight as this meeting clashes with Bromsgrove District Council's full council meeting.

It has been a difficult year for BDC with very significant central government funding cuts having been experienced. BDC have developed an efficiency plan to highlight how savings and extra income can be achieved over the next 4 years.

This shows that by using up all its reserves BDC can stay afloat for the next 3 years but in year 4 the situation looks extremely grim. At this point, rather than receiving a support grant from central government, BDC are being asked to pay an extra tax of £750,000 back to the government i.e. a negative support grant. Who knows what will happen?

The pointless move from Burcot council house to Parkside has been completed. However, it has emerged that the ongoing cost of the now empty Burcot council house is well in excess of £150,000 p.a. This cost effectively wipes out the latest increase in council tax for this year. So, the extra 2.4% you have been asked to pay this year is all going on an empty building, madness.

The new homes bonus scheme is being run again this year with around £170,000 available for worthy projects. Applications open on 8th May and must be submitted by 30th May. The maximum grant available is £28,800 and there is a simplified scheme for applications under £2,880. If you have a project in mind please contact me.

6. Open Forum

Comments from the floor:

- There has been trouble in Millennium Park with older boys playing football. This may not bode well if public toilets are sited there in the future.
- If the planters can't be well maintained then how will the proposed toilets be looked after?
- When will the lifts at the railway station be installed? The Chairman responded that the budget for the lifts has been approved and work is to start in the autumn.
- When will the new footbridge be installed for the footpath between Barnt Green and Cofton?
- Notices at the station are misleading: one says access to all platforms, another states access is 'step-free'.
- Is any remedial work planned for the pavement along Bittell Road, between 42 and 68?
- Horse droppings are being left on the Bittell Road pavement.
- Dogs should be on a lead when in Barnt Green playing field.
- Proposed outdoor gym might prove to be a 'white elephant'.
- The planters in Hewell Road need to be nearer to the edge of the pavement.
- Are there plans to install signs to the new commuters' car park, Fiery Hill Road?
- Will there be a height barrier to the new car park?
- What is happening with plans to distribute SmartWater to everyone?
- If we have concerns with use of the rail network we would have more impact if part of a Rail Users Group (RUG), such as the Bromsgrove RUG. We could also support the setting up of a station adoption scheme (leaflets available)
- Highways issues should be directed in the first instance to the County Councillor; it was suggested that the parish council should represent anyone who can't do that.
- With the increase in traffic is there any chance of a pedestrian crossing in Hewell Road?
- Parking continues to be a serious concern in the village centre.
- Could the parish council put parking proposals together to present to the county council?
- Could the traffic warden be asked to patrol more often / more regularly?
- What happened to the Virgin proposal to install a cable service?

The Chairman advised these points would be picked up by the parish council in due course and thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting ended at 9.40pm.

.....
Chairman
2018

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30pm on
Wednesday 26th April 2017 in Cofton Lounge, Parish Centre,
Sandhills Road, Barnt Green**

Appendix 1 – Chairman's Report

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2017
Chairman's Report**

I'll start with the composition of the parish council. There are currently 7 parish councillors, though there are positions for 8. Elections are not due until May 2019. In the interim, it is possible to co-opt to fill this vacancy. If anyone is interested, please contact Gill Lungley, the parish council's Executive Officer.

During the past year, the parish council supported the Open Gardens weekend in July, organised the Community Walk in September, co-ordinated the Christmas lights switch on with record numbers in Millennium Park, helped by the 5 new lights, kindly sponsored by Cala Homes. A 5 mile Mulled Wine Walk was organised by our Footpaths Officer, Simon Richards, on 27 December with more than 50 people participating.

Looking forward, as the Sport Relief Mile only happens in alternate years, a fun run is being organised on 7 May, supported by the parish council. A Motor Festival is being run on 2 July and a Busking Festival is being planned for 12 August. The Community Walk will be held on Saturday 23 September. During the year, cycle racks have been installed outside the Chinese take-away in Hewell Road. A new notice board and picnic benches have been placed in Parker's Piece. After a consultation outside the shops on 25 March and 1 April, the proposal for gym equipment accompanying the extension of the stone path in Parker's Piece was broadly supported.

There are some issues where there has been little publicity that have not been overlooked. The Parish Council continues to lobby for the installation of lifts at the railway station which should happen this autumn. The reopening of the footpath at Cofton should happen this year once Network Rail replace the crossing with a footbridge. We continue to work with Worcestershire County Council on improving the drainage on the footpath beside the Scout Hut.

The closure of the road under the railway at the end of Fiery Hill Road was disruptive and affected footfall at our shops. The revised junction is, though, a major improvement.

The Parish Council has completed the documentation for acquiring the car park on the Cala site at the bottom of Fiery Hill Road. It will be operated by

Cala Homes for 12 months before ownership transfers to the parish council. The intention is that it will be available for railway commuters.

The Neighbourhood Planning process moves slowly forward. The 15-year plan of Bromsgrove District Council has been approved. There is still a shortage of identified sites for housing development over this period. A review of the green belt will happen, most probably starting in the next 2 years. The challenge for the parish council is, against this backdrop, to draft a plan where Barnt Green retains its current character as desired by residents.

The Bulletin newsletter, published by the parish council, will in future be produced twice a year rather than quarterly. Instead, a half yearly page will be taken in The Village magazine which reaches a wider audience than just Barnt Green.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who both volunteer and undertake work for the parish council for improving and maintaining Barnt Green.

Cllr Robert Cholmondeley
Chairman, Barnt Green Parish Council
Annual Parish Meeting, 26/04/2017

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 26th April 2017 in Cofton Lounge, Parish Centre, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green

Report of 2016/17 Barnt Green Parish Council - receipts and payments					
Presented to Annual Parish Meeting 26/04/2017					
		2015/16		2016/17	
Receipts	Precept received	57,200.00		57,650.00	
	Council Tax Support Grant	1,379.00		634.00	
	Interest	484.38		389.74	
	Lengthsman Refund	1,382.00		1,500.00	
	VAT Refund	5,260.41		2,953.83	
	Miscellaneous	2,151.05		4,674.93	
		Total Receipts		67,856.84	67,802.50
Administration	Staff Costs	16,150.28		16,070.24	
	Chairman's Allowance	343.00		150.00	
	Office Running costs	7,098.89		7,024.51	
	Training/Publications	168.46		657.85	
	Meetings/Refreshments	27.00		28.00	
	Subscriptions	847.86		748.89	
	Insurance	1,026.92		1,036.16	
	Auditor Fees	415.00		420.00	
	Legal Fees	200.00		183.00	
	Loan repayments	-		-	
	Election costs	89.70		-	
	Donations	-		-	
		Administration Costs	771.61	27,138.72	526.19
					26,844.84
	Communication	Newsletters	980.00		980.00
Website		736.00	1,716.00	696.00	
Millennium Park	Park Mowing	756.00		784.00	
	Park Maintenance	1,049.88		1,556.54	
	Park Safety Inspections	140.00	1,945.88	327.50	
Playing Field	Field Mowing	1,822.88		2,551.46	
	Field Maintenance	1,338.96		1,672.96	
	Field Safety Inspections	140.00	3,301.84	327.50	
Environment	Hanging baskets	416.25		616.68	
	Planters	786.67		695.67	
	Environment maintenance	784.61	1,987.53	387.14	
Street lighting	Street light maintenance	3,196.95		4,073.79	
	Street light electricity	2,256.42		2,257.53	
	Christmas lights	5,640.74	11,094.11	11,218.34	
Highways	Lengthsman charges	2,000.00		2,000.00	
	Highways	210.00	2,210.00	1,200.00	
Miscellaneous	Events	904.15		1,949.20	
	Section 137	-			
	Exceptional Items	-		4,568.00	
	Fixed Assets	5,607.40	6,511.55	2,971.28	
VAT spent	VAT	4,915.95	4,915.95	7,077.75	
	Total Payments		60,821.58	74,756.18	
	Cashflow		7,035.26	-6,953.68	

Notes to the report of 2016/17 payments and receipts account:

1. These draft accounts are presented on a payments and receipts basis and have yet to be audited. See paragraph 5 below for more information relating to the annual audit of the parish council's accounts.

2. The precept for 2015/16 raised £62.11 per Band D annual Council Tax payment; the precept for 2016/17 whilst showing an increase of £450, raised £62.58 per Band D annual Council Tax payment.
3. Other income variances:
 - a) Council Tax support grant, provided to the district council by Central Government, has been reduced and for 2017/18 will be zero.
 - b) In line with the national picture, interest rates are low and the amount of interest raised via deposit and savings account has reduced.
 - c) The Lengthsman scheme continues via Worcestershire County Council who will refund up to £1888 for each of 2015/16 and 2016/17.
 - d) VAT refund demand for 2016/17 has been applied for but not yet reimbursed; amount expected for the year is £7100.
 - e) Miscellaneous income for 2017/17 included 'Shindig' event, New Homes Bonus grant for cycle racks on Hewell Road, Severn Trent contribution towards replacement bollards, sponsorship from Cala Homes for new Christmas Lights.
4. Expenditure variances:
 - a) Administration: some savings under this heading, countered by a significant increase in training costs due to three new councillors during the year and the Executive Officer's (EO) Continuous Professional Development support to meet requirements for General Power of Competence and Award Scheme.
 - b) Communication: little change during 2016/17 but expect changes in 2017/18 – an increase to allow for website upgrade, and decrease due to reduced costs of newsletter (2 x Bulletin & 2 x The Village).
 - c) Millennium Park: increase due to tree surgery costs incurred to maintain the oak tree in good condition and as safety precaution to park users.
 - d) Playing Field: maintenance costs increased due to extra work required including cutting of car park hedge, filling-in of ditch, extra strimming, removal of barbed wire fencing at stream etc.
 - e) Environment: hanging baskets cost increased 2016/17 due to extra number of baskets ordered in support of the Open Gardens event on 2nd/3rd July 2016. Overall costs decreased 2016/17.
 - f) Footpath and Christmas lighting: maintenance costs will increase as the existing lights fail; now an obsolete system and the parish council expects to be running a replacement scheme from 2018 onwards. Electricity costs will rise; the PC has negotiated a fixed rate scheme for the next 18 months. New Christmas lights were purchased, which were sponsored in part by CALA Homes (see 3e above); the scheme involved children from the school in a design competition and provided excellent feedback.
 - g) Highways: the Lengthsman scheme continues to be appreciated by the parish council and residents, and as this is a delegated service via Worcestershire County Council, there is nil net cost to the parish council. The increased costs relate to the purchase of cycle racks (costs covered by New Homes Bonus grant) and to replacement pavement bollards, part costs recovered (see 3e above).
 - h) Events: The parish council supported a Shindig / Live and Local event during 2016/17 which provided a small surplus of £86.90. Other events during the year included support for the Sport Relief Fun Run, Open Gardens event, two community walks and the Christmas Lights switch-on.
 - i) Exceptional items: the amount shown of £4,568 relates to the installation of stone footpath across Barnt Green playing field; this could also be included in the next section as a Fixed Asset.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 26th April 2017 in Cofton Lounge, Parish Centre, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green

- j) Fixed Assets: items purchased during the year include office furniture, noticeboard and picnic tables for Barnt Green playing field.
- k) VAT: the amount of VAT paid has increased due to the purchase of more capital items. The parish council can reclaim the VAT on all purchases that are described as for non-business purposes; the VAT reclaim has been submitted for 2017/17 but not yet re-paid.
5. The full version of the parish council's accounts may be inspected at the parish council office during the audit period, expected to run from 5th June – 14th July 2017. A summary of the unaudited accounts will be available on the website during that period. To view please contact the office.
6. A copy of the council's bank reconciliation to 31/03/2017 and explanation of reserves is attached.

BANK RECONCILIATION		FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2017		
Authority name and reference		BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL		
Prepared by: Name	GILL LUNGLEY	Date:		
Role (Clerk/RFO etc)	CLERK/RFO			
Approved by: Name	ROBERT CHOLMONDELEY	Date:		
Role (RFO/Chair etc)	CHAIR			
Balance per bank statements as at 31 March 2017		£	TOTAL £	
List balances on all bank accounts plus petty cash floats at 31 March 2017:				
Unity Current account		1146.05	1146.05	
Unity deposit account		9581.24	9581.24	
Cambridge Building Society		54516.60	54516.60	
Petty cash		200.00	200.00	
Less: any un-presented cheques at 31 March 2017: (normally only current account. List date, cheque number & value. Use separate list if needed)				65443.89
Date: 31/03/2017, BACS payment ref v228		521.10	64922.79	
Add any unbanked cash at 31 March 2017: (List date & amount received)		0	64922.79	
			0.00	
TOTAL - NET BANK BALANCES AS AT 31 MARCH 2017			64922.79	

Reserves	£
(a) Precept/rates and levies	57650
(b) Balance carried forward	64923
(c) Amount of balances less total earmarked reserves (b - d)	39923
Ratio of balances less earmarked reserves to Precept/rates and levies (c/a)	0.69
(d) Earmarked reserves: Completion of playing field footpath £5,000 (total cost expected IRO £20,000; either build up fund and/or apply for grant funding to reach amount required) Footpath lighting replacement of obsolete equipment, £20,000 rolling programme.	