

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.00pm on Thursday 26th April 2018 in Friends Meeting House, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green

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

In attendance: Seventeen members of the public
District (and Parish) Councillor: C Hotham
Parish Councillors: R Briggs, S Harris, J Jagger, J Jellie, P Perry
Gill Lungley, Executive Officer, Barnt Green Parish Council

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from parish councillor S Whitehand and county councillor P McDonald.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 26th April 2017

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

4. Reports from local council representatives

a) Chairman's report

The Chairman gave a report which is attached at Appendix 1.

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

District Councillor Charles Hotham spoke on the following various subjects:

- The erosion of central government funding is leading to continuing financial difficulties for local government and the need for making efficiencies. At Bromsgrove DC there is cross-party agreement to lobby government for an improved settlement that will avoid the imposition of an apparent double-taxation upon council tax payers.
- Bromsgrove DC continues to face the financial consequences of the office move from Burcot Lane to Parkside, whilst the sharing of services with Redditch Borough Council means there are fewer officers working at Parkside.
- The prospect via the Hearn Report of a 'Barntchurch' settlement of up to 15,000 new homes is alarming (discussed in more detail at 5.1 below).
- BDC is to operate the outdoor market in Bromsgrove town centre.
- The new leisure centre in Bromsgrove is marvellous with a pool, climbing walls and variety of treatment rooms which generate income. The lack of a sports hall has caused concern and costs of building are being considered.
- New Homes Bonus will be less next year due to fewer new homes being built.

c) Report from County Councillor for Beacon Division

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

d) Parish Council Finances

A summary (attached appendix 2) of the parish council's accounts for 2017/18 was presented. The amount spent on Christmas lighting was queried: the higher cost during 2016/17 was due to the new detail lights purchased with the aid of grant funding; general agreement was in favour of the lights.

5. Open Forum

5.1 Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area Strategic Growth Study

A report carried out by GL Hearn into the availability of sites for housing development had identified the general (non-specific) area covering Barnt Green, Alvechurch, Lickey and Blackwell as having potential for up to 15,000 new homes.

District Councillor Hotham spoke about the report: his view, as an independent councillor, was at odds with the district council's decision to consult residents about the report's findings; he would prefer any public consultation to be based on the district council's own review.

In any case, funding has been made available to the Greater Midlands area to develop brown field sites in order to avoid building on Green Belt, which would mean any shortfall in housing supply would then be considerably reduced. It is a matter of being 'informed and concerned, rather than panicking'.

There followed some general discussion on housing need both locally and nationally.

5.2 **New footpath lighting**

It was known that production of the orange-coloured sodium lighting was being phased out, meaning the parish council must look for an alternative type of lighting. LED lights had been recommended as cheaper to run and providing a better, more focussed, brightness. The question was asked about how the change should happen, eg one at a time as the sodium lights fail, or all at once, or a street at a time?

The favoured option appeared to be to change all at the same time.

5.3 **New outdoor parish caretaker**

The Chairman was asked if the role of this new appointment included dead-heading the plants in the village centre planters and responded that it does.

5.4 **Village centre parking restrictions**

There was concern that the parish council was in favour of parking restrictions in Sandhills Road and Sandhills Lane, without any consideration of, or consultation with, residents. In response, the Chairman advised that this was based on a suggestion put forward at a meeting with village retailers which the parish council had agreed to investigate but that it was unlikely to progress without the support of the county councillor and was not an endorsement by the parish council.

Various other parking-related issues were keenly discussed relating to the differing needs of car owners as residents, shop-keepers, shoppers, public transport users, commuters, school parent etc. The parish council continues to seek solutions where possible.

5.5 **Outdoor gym equipment**

The parish council was considering the installation of gym equipment at Barnt Green playing field; the consensus at this meeting was that the proposed site was too remote, and the equipment would be used infrequently, except by younger children for whom it is not intended.

5.6 **Community Bus**

Cllr Hotham spoke about the proposals to introduce a bus service that would run in a figure of 8 constant route between Lickey, Barnt Green, Hopwood, Alvechurch, Rowney Green, Blackwell on Saturdays. This would be a 40 to 50 minutes' round-trip that may lead to less traffic on the roads and reduce the parking pressure in Barnt Green.

Funding is available for the scheme and for marketing it, but volunteer drivers are needed for the trial 12-week period.

5.7 **Other issues**

- **GDPR** Upon being asked if the parish council is prepared for the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation, the Chairman responded that there is currently a query about the role of a Data Protection Officer and the council is following advice from the Information Commissioners Office.
- **Public Toilets** Upon being asked about progress of public toilets in Barnt Green, the Chairman advised this topic has not yet been progressed.
- **Lifts, Barnt Green railway station** The non-installation of lifts at the station by Network Rail was mentioned. The Chairman advised that he had met with representatives of Network Rail and had written to various levels of government; the lifts would be installed but not until 2020 at the earliest.

The meeting ended at 9.35pm.

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Chairman

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Appendix 1 – Chairman's Report

**BARNT GREEN
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2018
Chairman's Report**

The last year has seen some successes, but there have been some disappointments. There are some threatening clouds on the horizon which could materially change the nature of Barnt Green as we currently know it.

I am pleased that the Council now has its full complement of 8 councillors with the co-option of Sam Harris earlier this year.

During the year, the council organised or supported a number of successful events: the Motor Festival, the Busking Festival, the Community Walk, the Christmas lights switch on and the Christmas Wassailing Walk. Thank you for supporting these events.

A disappointment was that March's snow led to the cancellation of the Sports Relief Fun Run, but I'm pleased that this has been rescheduled for Sunday 24 June.

The long standing mud problem with the footpath at the side of the Scout Hut has been greatly improved with the assistance of Worcestershire County Council's drainage experts.

It has been possible to deliver these and other improvements without increasing the precept – that's the parish council's funding from the council tax paid by residents.

It was disappointing that the play equipment in Parker's Piece was vandalised last summer and had to be repaired.

The lack of lifts at the railway station is a major disappointment when we are 3 years after the legal requirement for their installation. A date of 2020 is being given as a possibility by Network Rail, but no written commitment has been forthcoming.

The closure of the footpath over the railway at Cofton is close to its third year. A footbridge is to be installed, but the date continues to slip – it's now planned for the end of September this year.

Barnt Green is one of three village communities that sit between Birmingham and Bromsgrove or Redditch - the others being Blackwell and Alvechurch.

The stark threat to the future of all 3 was evidenced when a study, commissioned for the Birmingham Housing Market Area, recommended that the feasibility of a new settlement of 10-15,000 new houses alongside the railway routes between these communities be assessed further.

Meanwhile the Government has announced more assistance for the development of brown field sites which may help to alleviate some of Birmingham's estimated 30,000 housing shortage by 2031, which rises to 60,000 by 2036.

Bromsgrove District has its own housing shortage of around 2,300 homes in the next 15 years. This will mean taking some land out of green belt. Barnt Green and Lickey have been lumped together as one of 6 larger settlements which should take this shortfall, with an implied loss of green belt.

The sense I get from our residents is that new development has to be proportionate for existing communities, such as ours.

On a more heartening note, from the beginning of April this year the Parish Council has contracted with an Outdoor Village Caretaker to assist in keeping the village tidy and the vegetation under better control.

We have had, and continue to have, support from the younger members of our community who have helped with litter picking as part of their work under the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Thank you.

It is appropriate that I single out an individual who has given many years' service with litter picking and helping to keep the centre of Barnt Green tidy. Wendy Tricklebank has retired and I thank her for her support.

Finally, I and my fellow councillors are grateful to all the contractors and volunteers who have given their time and support to the Parish Council over the past year.

Cllr Robert Cholmondeley
Chairman, Barnt Green Parish Council
26/04/2018

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Appendix 2 – Annual Accounts

**BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL ACCOUNTS
FINANCIAL YEAR 2017/18**

Notes to the report of 2017/18 Receipts and Payments account:

1. These draft accounts are presented on a Receipts and Payments basis and have yet to be externally audited.
2. The impact of the precept for 2016/17 upon the Parish Council Tax payer was £62.58 per Band D Annual Council Tax payment.

For 2017/18, with an increase in the number of contributors to the funds due to the new houses off Fiery Hill Road, the Parish Council was able to keep the impact on the council tax payer the same as for 2016/17 at £62.58 per Band D whilst increasing the precept by £4,840.00. (Band D is the average; Band A is 6/9ths x Band D and Band H is 2 x Band D).

3. Other income variances:
 - a) Council Tax support grant, previously passed down to the parish councils by the Billing Authorities (the district councils) and provided to them by Central Government, has been scrapped.
 - 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 each year. The receipts during 2017/18 include refunds for previous years.
 - d) VAT refund demand for 2016/17 was received during 2017/18.
 - e) Miscellaneous income for 2016/17 included 'Shindig' event, New Homes Bonus grant for cycle racks on Hewell Road, Severn Trent Water contribution towards replacement bollards, sponsorship from Cala Homes for new Christmas Lights. There was less miscellaneous income during 2017/18, consisting of an insurance claim for damaged play equipment and county council contribution towards footpath maintenance.
 - f) Hire income for use of the playing field has now been separated out from 'Miscellaneous' income and is shown separately.
4. Expenditure variances:
 - a) Administration: the costs are fairly consistent between the two years apart from a reduction in training costs and a reduction in the cost of insurance cover which is due to a change of provider. There has been a significant increase in the amount of funding given to local community groups seeking support.
 - b) Communication: The Parish Council now issues only two Bulletins during the year, which are delivered free to all residents of the parish and takes a page in The Village magazine twice a year which reaches a far greater audience. The website was revamped during the year and as a result the ongoing annual cost will reduce considerably.

BART GREEN PARISH COUNCIL RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 2016/17 AND 2017/18, SUMMARY					
RECEIPTS	2016/17	2017/18	PAYMENTS	2016/17	2017/18
Precept received in current year	57,650.00	62,490.00	Administration	26,844.84	28,291.41
Council tax support grant	634.00	-	Communication	1,676.00	1,680.34
Interest	389.74	320.70	Millennium Park	2,668.04	1,573.94
Lengthsman Refund	1,500.00	2,776.00	Playing Field	4,551.92	4,735.70
VAT Refund	2,953.83	9,307.94	Environment	1,699.49	2,023.79
Miscellaneous	4,319.93	1,916.00	Footpath lighting	17,549.66	13,302.86
Hires (room / playing field)	355.00	860.00	Highways	3,200.00	2,500.00
			Events	1,949.20	2,610.32
			Capital projects	7,539.28	3,733.44
			VAT	7,077.75	5,448.18
Total Receipts	67,802.50	77,670.64	Total payments	74,756.18	65,899.98

BART GREEN PARISH COUNCIL				
Financial Report of 2017/18: Receipt and Payments				
Presented to Annual Parish Meeting 26/04/2018				
RECEIPTS	2016/17	summary totals	2017/18	summary totals
Precept received in current year	57,650.00		62,490.00	
Council tax support grant	634.00		-	
Interest	389.74		320.70	
Lengthsman Refund	1,500.00		2,776.00	
VAT Refund	2,953.83		9,307.94	
Miscellaneous	4,674.93		1,916.00	
Hires			860.00	
Total Receipts	67,802.50	67,802.50	77,670.64	77,670.64
PAYMENTS				
ADMINISTRATION : Staff Costs	16,070.24		16,969.10	
Chairman's Allowance	150.00		200.00	
Office Running costs	7,024.51		6,528.94	
Training and Publications	657.85		163.00	
Meeting Rooms and Refreshments	28.00		39.00	
Subscriptions	748.89		821.62	
Insurance	1,036.16		759.93	
Auditor Fees	420.00		420.00	
Legal Fees	183.00		-	
Grants and Donations	-		1,550.00	
General Administration Costs	526.19	26,844.84	839.82	28,291.41
COMMUNICATION Newsletters	980.00		800.00	
COMMUNICATION Website	696.00	1,676.00	880.34	1,680.34
MILLENNIUM PARK Mowing	784.00		1,055.00	
MILLENNIUM PARK Maintenance	1,556.54		392.44	
Park Safety Inspections	327.50	2,668.04	126.50	1,573.94
PLAYING FIELD Mowing	2,551.46		2,324.10	
PLAYING FIELD Maintenance	1,672.96		2,285.10	
PLAYING FIELD Safety Inspections	327.50	4,551.92	126.50	4,735.70
ENVIRONMENT Hanging baskets	616.68		455.00	
ENVIRONMENT Planters	695.67		1,114.50	
ENVIRONMENT Maintenance	387.14	1,699.49	454.29	2,023.79
FOOTPATH LIGHTS Maintenance	4,073.79		3,942.18	
FOOTPATH LIGHTS Electricity	2,257.53		2,401.41	
LIGHTING Christmas lights	11,218.34	17,549.66	6,959.27	13,302.86
HIGHWAYS Lengthsman charges	2,000.00		2,500.00	
HIGHWAYS Miscellaneous	1,200.00	3,200.00	-	2,500.00
MISCELLANEOUS Events	1,949.20		2,610.32	
N'hood Plan/ capital projects 2016/17	4,568.00		-	
FIXED ASSETS	2,971.28	9,488.48	3,733.44	6,343.76
VAT spent	7,077.75	7,077.75	5,448.18	5,448.18
Total Payments	74,756.18	74,756.18	65,899.98	65,899.98
Net cashflow surplus/deficit	6	- 6,953.68		11,770.66

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- c) Millennium Park and Playing Field: the 2016/17 park maintenance costs included tree surgery work to the oak tree, and in 2017/18 tree surgery work was required at the playing field. The apparent reduction in costs of safety inspections for 2017/18 is because the annual safety inspection by RoSPA for 2018 has not yet been accounted for.
- d) Environment: fewer hanging baskets were purchased for 2017/18 but two new 'beehive' tiered planters were purchased and are sited at each end of Hewell Road. Plants and planting is provided by Where Next Association.
- e) Footpath and Christmas lighting: One new Christmas light was purchased in 2017/18, to add to those bought in 2016/17 which were sponsored in part by CALA Homes (see 3e above); the scheme involved children from the school in a design competition.
- f) 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 almost nil net cost to the parish council. However, changes to the invoicing system means that part of last year's costs have been included in this year's payments. Last year's costs relate to the purchase of cycle racks (costs covered by New Homes Bonus grant) and to replacement pavement bollards.
- g) Events: During 2016/17 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. During 2017/18 the parish council supported the annual Barnt Green Fun Run, hosted a successful Motor Festival, supported a fledgling Busking Festival, two community walks and a new-style Christmas Lights switch-on.
- h) Capital projects / Exceptional items: the 2016/17 amount shown of £4,568 relates to the installation of stone footpath across Barnt Green playing field.
- i) Fixed Assets: items purchased during the year include replacement play equipment and two new planters.
- j) VAT: the amount of VAT paid has decreased due to the purchase of fewer capital items. There are special arrangements for parish councils to reclaim the VAT on all purchases that are described as for non-business purposes.
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 4th June – 13th July 2018. To view the accounts in person please contact the office. A summary of the unaudited accounts will also be available on the parish council's website during that period: www.barntgreen.org.uk

~End of report~
Gill Lungley
Responsible Financial Officer
11/04/2018