

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

80 Hewell Road, Birmingham, B45 8NF

0121 447 9893

exec@barntgreen.org.uk
www.barntgreen.org.uk



Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Barnt Green Cricket Club, B45 8LN on Monday 20 September 2021 at 7.00pm

Members present: Cllrs R Cholmondeley, C Hotham, J Jagger, J Nilsson, P Perry and M Roberts

In attendance: Worcs County Cllr A Kriss
1 member of the public
Executive Officer, Tracy Bodley

21/043 Apologies

Cllrs O Polton and S Whitehand

21/044 Declarations of Interest: Councillors were reminded that to ensure transparency and retain public confidence in the council's decisions they are required to -

- a) Keep their Register of Interests form up to date;
 - b) Declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) and any Other Disclosable Interests (ODI) in agenda items and the nature of those interests.
- None received.

21/045 To consider any dispensations

No dispensation requests were received.

21/046 Open Session Participation to hear from:

- a) **Members of the Public** – A representative from Barnt Green Sports Club gave a brief presentation on proposals to extend the sports club by increasing the number of hard courts using the land at the rear of Bittell Road Playing fields that it is on a long-term lease to BGPC from Birmingham City Council.
The representative gave an overview stating that the club was looking at ongoing lifetime improvements to the facilities which included essential and optional maintenance with some parts of the building being past its significant life.
Membership has been the greatest it has ever been and if an additional court was installed the club could employ a fulltime coach.
The club does have land available however use of this could limit potential future proposals for the building.
It was considered that the alcove at the end of the run of courts was the clubs preferred option with a request that BGPC approve agreement in principle for the Sports Club to approach Birmingham City Council to acquire the land.
- i) **Motion to move agenda item 21/052 c) as it is considered this item relates to discussion of those members present during the Open Session - Members of the Public**

RESOLVED: That as per Standing Orders item 10 vi. to change the order of business on the agenda, agenda item 21/052 c) be discussed at this point in the meeting.

Please refer to page 411 of the minutes.

The representative left the meeting at 19:25hrs.

- b) **Supporting organisations**, Alvechurch & Wythall SNT, West Mercia Police.
Not present.

c) Worcestershire County Councillor – Adrian Kriss (Beacon division)

Cllr Kriss reported that the deep cleaning and de-weeding of the roadside gutters has been carried out but in most part has been unsuccessful. Cllr Kriss has reported this to the relevant place team and asked for council members and members of the public to report these problems directly to him in order that he can retain pressure for maximum impact.

The County Officer involved with traffic surveys has reported that monitoring on Kendall End Road has resulted in recording a number of speeding vehicles, 3308 southbound and 3381 northbound with an average speed recorded as 31.5 and 32 respectively. It was reported that WCC were looking to ensure speed reduction through Cofton Hackett with the possibility of footpath widening and the introduction of a cycle lane to narrow the road in an attempt to slow vehicles down.

A request was made for historic speed measurement results in other areas village wide.

Cllr Kriss left the meeting at 19:46hrs

d) Bromsgrove District Councillor - Charles Hotham (Barnt Green & Hopwood)

Cllr Hotham reported on the following:

- i) There has been a new member appointment to the Climate Change Cabinet.
- ii) Sandwell Park Fireworks Display has been cancelled due to Covid implications.
- iii) £35m of a pot of £37m in Business grant funding has been given out with £1.4m now being offered on a lesser prescriptive basis to reach those who were unable to claim under the current rules.
- iv) The District Planning review has been delayed due to the cabinet reshuffle at Westminster.
- v) Planning applications received into BDC were approximately in an 8-week queue which was also the case for planning advice requests.
- vi) Town Centre plans have been drafted and submitted to support centres moving forward, with an outside company appointed in the interim to assist with BDC events.

21/047 To adopt previous minutes

- a) To approve adoption of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 19/07/2021.
- b) To approve adoption of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held 24/08/2021.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting be approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.
- ii) That the minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting be approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

21/048 Policy and Documents Review

RESOLVED: That the Risk Review Register be approved and signed by the Chairman.

21/049 Chairman's Report

The Chairman stated that the Community Walk held on Saturday 18 September was well attended by walkers on all three routes and the weather stayed dry. The after walk event held in Millennium Park was also welcomed, with the Chairman reporting that he would speak to the traders during the week to get feedback on sales.

A request was made to send thanks to the music entertainer.

21/050 Executive Officer's Report

The council was advised of decisions taken under delegated powers, updated on ongoing matters and relevant office communications were reported upon.

a) Station Lift Update	An update received on 17 September reporting that development and design work continues. The contractor Murphy and designer (Arcadis) are assembling asset information, remits and requirements and making assessments of the existing layout for suitability for installation.
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	<p>The contractor is embarking on a phase of surveys, including some intrusive survey work on the platform and car park areas to establish quality of foundations and suitability of services. Work will be undertaken predominantly on weekend night times when trains are not running. Some of this work may be noisy and as such a letter-drop to neighbours within a 200m radius of the station has been organised.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
b) Pollinator Site	<p>Following a complaint from a resident regarding the untidiness of the site instructions have been given to the contractor to carryout end of season clearance work.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
c) Safer West Mercia Plan for consultation with Communities - Consultation	<p>Launched on 11 August, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner is requesting communities to take part in an online consultation to assist in providing strategic focus. The link was circulated to members and is open until 01/11/21.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
d) Remembrance 2021 – Supporting veterans by displaying a Tommy	<p>The RBL catalogue was circulated to members who were asked to consider supporting the work of the British Legion by purchasing and displaying a ‘Tommy’ figure.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That BGPC did not approve the purchase of a ‘Tommy’.</p>

21/051 Finance

- a) To note the current financial position and bills for payment

RESOLVED:

- i) That the current financial position be approved.
- ii) That the list of August payments be noted.
- iii) That the list of September payments be approved.

- b) To be advised of any expenditure decisions taken by Executive Officer. A top up petty cash request of £149.51.

RESOLVED: That the top up request of £149.51 be approved.

- c) Office Lease Renewal – There were no further updates given, however it was noted that the invoice as listed in September payments covering the rental period September – December for the front office would be re-issued with an apportioned amount to cover the rear office once the lease had been signed. It was also requested that a record be kept of the number of visitors to the new office to gauge usage data for consideration when carrying out future rental reviews.

- d) Total Football:

- i) Review of Pitch Rent

RESOLVED: That the pitch rent be increased to £200.00 per term to include the sole use of a storage facility as detailed in 21/051 d) ii).

- ii) Permission to install lockable storage at Bittell Road Playing Field – a report was circulated to members in advance of the meeting detailing size, storage type and preferred location of the lockup.

It was suggested that by granting permission to a third party may have future land ownership implication, however the compromise proposed that BGPC purchase the storage facility and incorporate into the hire agreement.

RESOLVED: That the purchase of a storage unit 7ft x 3ft in size be purchased and installed at a suitable location at the playing field.

- e) External Auditor Report 2020/2021 – It was reported that the audit has now concluded with a request that a ‘thank you’ be recorded in the minutes to the EO for their hard work formulating the accounts.

- f) Consideration of a grant to Bromsgrove and Redditch Citizens Advice Bureau.

RESOLVED: That a grant of £500.00 be awarded to Bromsgrove and Redditch CAB.

21/052 Environment & Community Wellbeing

- a) Christmas Lights Switch On – The Chairman stated that the Switch on usually occurred the first Saturday in December rather than the last Saturday in November. It was reported the date had changed in 2019 to accommodate Small Business Saturday.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Christmas Lights Switch On date be set for 4 December at 5pm.
- ii) That Father Christmas be asked to switch on the lights.
- iii) That a brass band be booked to play prior to the switch on.
- iv) That Cllr Hotham would enquire with BDC as to funding the band.
- v) That the best dressed shop be organised.

- b) Wassail Walk – It was stated that a possible date for the event could be Monday 27 December 2021.

RESOLVED: That the EO would liaise with the Footpath Warden and Orchard Owner to see if they were agreeable to co-host the event.

- c) Barnt Green Sports Club – Discussed at 19:06hrs in accordance with minutes ref: 21/046 a) i).

In addition to a member of the public speaking on behalf of the Sports Club, a report was circulated to members with the agenda outlining proposals from the Sports Club.

There was much debate regarding giving over the land currently used as public open space to a Private Sports Club given the community unless a member would be precluded from using the proposed facility.

It was stated that the alcove was well used during the day having 3 benches and a picnic bench and when the Sports Club were approached by BGPC some years previous with a proposal to spend s106 monies on a MUGA (a multi-use games area for different sports), requesting use of the club’s changing facilities, the application was vehemently denied as it was stated that it is for private membership only.

It was remarked that should the proposals include some shared use for the wider community then the request may be looked at more favourably, however if it was for sole use by private members then a number of councillors did not support this as the land would be a loss of public amenity. Should the Club wish to revert with an alternative proposal of shared mechanism then it may be supported.

Members further debated the pros and cons of making the alcove of Bittell Road Playing Field available for re-use by the Sports Club.

A vote was taken on the motion 'To consider approving an agreement in principle for the Sports Club to make further investigations into using the land', resulting in 3 in favour, 2 opposed and 1 abstention.

A request was made by Cllrs Hotham and Perry to record that they voted against the motion.

RESOLVED: That approval be granted in principle for Barnt Green Sports Club to make further investigations into turning the alcove into an additional hard surface court.

- d) Millennium Park Rough Sleeper – It was reported by the EO that further guidance had been requested from the Police but as yet a response was outstanding. Further discussion took place regarding the process to follow for eviction without breaking pertinent legislation.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Police guidance should be awaited prior to further action.
- ii) That legal advice be obtained failing a successful response from the Police.
- iii) That Cllr Hotham would seek advice from BDC relating to travellers camped on Council land without permission.

21/053 Planning Applications

- a) Members' response to the following consultations:
None received.

21/054 Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Next Parish Council meeting will be Monday 18 October 2021, 7pm, Barnt Green Cricket Club.

The meeting ended at 20:43hrs

Signed:.....
Chairman, Barnt Green Parish Council

Date.....
18/10/2021

Minute Reference 21/051 a) To note the current financial position and bills for payment.
 Bank Reconciliation 31 July 2021

Bank Reconciliation at 02/08/2021			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2021		104,006.27
	ADD Receipts 01/04/2021 - 02/08/2021		35,553.42
			139,559.69
	SUBTRACT Payments 01/04/2021 - 02/08/2021		23,712.16
A	Cash in Hand 02/08/2021 (per Cash Book)		115,847.53
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements		
	Petty Cash 31/07/2021	0.00	
	Cambridge Building Society 31/07/2021	64,187.34	
	Unity Bank Deposit Account 31/07/2021	50,329.35	
	Unity Bank Current Account 31/07/2021	1,780.84	
			116,297.53
	Less unrepresented payments		450.00
			115,847.53
	Plus unrepresented receipts		0.00
B	Adjusted Bank Balance		115,847.53
	A = B Checks out OK		

Bank Reconciliation 31 August 2021

Bank Reconciliation at 06/09/2021			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2021		104,006.27
	ADD Receipts 01/04/2021 - 06/09/2021		35,718.42
			139,724.69
	SUBTRACT Payments 01/04/2021 - 06/09/2021		26,866.73
A	Cash in Hand 06/09/2021 (per Cash Book)		112,857.96
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements		
	Petty Cash 31/08/2021	0.00	
	Cambridge Building Society 31/08/2021	64,187.34	
	Unity Bank Deposit Account 31/08/2021	48,329.35	
	Unity Bank Current Account 31/08/2021	341.27	
			112,857.96
	Less unrepresented payments		0.00
			112,857.96
	Plus unrepresented receipts		0.00
B	Adjusted Bank Balance		112,857.96
	A = B Checks out OK		

Minute Reference 21/051 a) To note the current financial position and bills for payment.

August payments to note

August Payments				
Voucher	Description	Net	VAT	Total
66	Grass Cutting - Millennium Park	180.00	0.00	180.00
67	Cutting Verges - Hewell Road	64.00	0.00	64.00
68	Room Hire	50.00	10.00	60.00
69	Grounds maintenance at playing field	266.72	53.34	320.06
70	Annual Website Hosting	120.00	24.00	144.00
71	Salary	1,490.61	0.00	1,490.61
72	Pension contributions	182.65	0.00	182.65
73	Annual governance accountability return	300.00	60.00	360.00
74	Landline and Broadband	39.27	7.85	47.12
75	Outdoor Parish Caretaker	450.00	0.00	450.00
76	Continuous Footpath Energy	13.49	0.67	14.16
77	Dusk to dawn	243.31	448.66	291.97
		3,400.05	604.52	3,604.57

September Payments to approve

September Payments

Voucher	Description	Net	VAT	Total
78	Landline and Broadband	39.27	7.85	47.12
79	Grounds maintenance at playing field	266.72	53.34	320.06
80	Lengthsman Work	112.50	0.00	112.50
81	Lengthsman Work	180.00	0.00	180.00
82	Grass Cutting - Millennium Park	120.00	0.00	120.00
83	Cut hedges and strim path	65.00	0.00	65.00
84	Cutting Verges - Hewell Road	32.00	0.00	32.00
85	Pension contributions	186.67	0.00	186.67
86	Salary	1,514.39	0.00	1,514.39
87	PAYE Qtr 2	1,020.12	0.00	1,020.12
88	Petty cash top up	149.51	0.00	149.51
89	Continuous footpath lighting energy	12.94	0.65	13.59
90	Dusk to dawn footpath lighting energy	225.61	45.12	270.73
91	Office Rent	1,237.50	0.00	1,237.50
92	Outdoor Parish Caretaker	450.00	0.00	450.00
		5,612.23	106.96	5,719.19

Minute Reference 21/051 b) Petty Cash Top up reconciliation.

Monzo Reconciliation up to 06/09/2021				
Date	Description	Supplier	Expenditure	Deposit
	Opening Balance			0.59
18/05/2021	BGPC Topup			199.41
				200.00
21/06/2021	Monthly Subscription	Adobe	15.17	
30/07/2021	Online Communication Subscription	Zoom	14.39	
04/08/2021	Hand sanitiser for Community Walk	Amazon	11.97	
16/08/2021	Community Walk Banner	Banner Warehouse	57.73	
16/08/2021	Community Walk Flyers	Vista Print	20.69	
21/08/2021	Monthly Subscription	Adobe	15.17	
30/08/2021	Online Communication Subscription	Zoom	14.39	
		Sub-Total Spend	149.51	
		Balance		50.49
		Top Up Request		149.51



**Bromsgrove
& Redditch**

Annual Report

2020 – 2021

A Year of Challenge and Change

With grateful thanks to our funders...



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Alvechurch Parish Council
Belbroughton Parish Council
Catshill and North Marlbrook PC
Fininstall Parish Council
Lickey and Blackwell PC
Tutnall and Cobley Parish Council

Barnt Green
Bournheath Parish Council
Cofton Hackett Parish Council
Hunnington Parish Council
Romsley Parish Council
Wythall Parish Council

*For period April 2020 to March 2021



A few words from our Chair of Trustees

The last year has been challenging in many ways as we have adapted our services during the pandemic and operating in a changing landscape to continue to support our clients. We are grateful to our staff and volunteers who recognised the need to respond quickly to changing circumstances and to offer our services through a variety of channels and work with partner organisations to provide workable solutions.

With a significant increase in demand by people accessing our services and seeking our help we have been able to offer our services through multi-channel solutions. We have learnt new ways of operating by use of virtual meetings and built rapport with clients through a range of technology.

We continue to be indebted to Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council for their continued and vital financial support to enable us to continue to meet local needs.

Our Chief Officer retired in April 2021 after 40 years of dedicated service to the Citizen Advice Organisation and we wish her a happy retirement. We welcome a new Chief Officer in September 2021 to lead our organisation in its next chapter.

We also thank our partners, supporters, Trustee Board and our knowledgeable and dedicated staff and fantastic volunteers who have continually adapted how they offer support with a positive stance and attitude.

Without this support we would be unable to continue our services for individuals in challenging positions with a variety of needs. During this unprecedented year I am proud that as a team we were able to step up to the challenge and respond to immediate needs and respond flexibly.

We will continue to adapt and deliver our impartial advice to our clients and serve the local community.

SUE JORDAN



Who We Are...

We are part of the national Citizens Advice service and we are available to help everyone without discrimination.

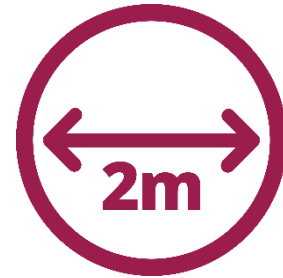
We provide free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems.

We work to fix if possible the underlying causes of these problems.

We are a voice for people on the issues that matter to them.

We value diversity, champion equality and challenge discrimination.

A screenshot of the website's "Contact Us" page. At the top is a dark blue navigation bar with white text for "Home", "About Us", "Contact Us", "Debt Advice", "Benefits Advice", "Volunteer", and "Research & Campaigns". Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: "Home > Contact Us". The main heading "Contact Us" is in a large, bold, dark blue font. A red text box contains the message: "Our face to face services are currently closed, due to Covid-19 but our team is still here to help you and give free, impartial advice." Below this, contact information is listed: "Phone - 0808 278 7890" (Monday - Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm), "Email - [contact us](#)", and "Chat online - [Chat Here](#)". Further down, three helpline numbers are listed: "Universal Credit Help to Claim - 0800 144 8444", "Consumer Helpline - 0808 223 1133", and "Debt Helpline - 0800 240 4420". On the right side of the page, there is a dark blue silhouette of a person talking on a mobile phone.



Covid 19 and our Response

This has been a year full of unprecedented challenges to individuals, organisations, Governments and all aspects of our everyday lives due to the impact of Covid 19, and not least, CABR and how we deliver our advice service.

Before March 2020, we had been a predominantly face to face service, working from our office in Bromsgrove with a small satellite office in Redditch Town Hall. We had a very small team of advisers who could answer calls on adviceline, but the majority of our volunteers interviewed clients at our two drop in services.

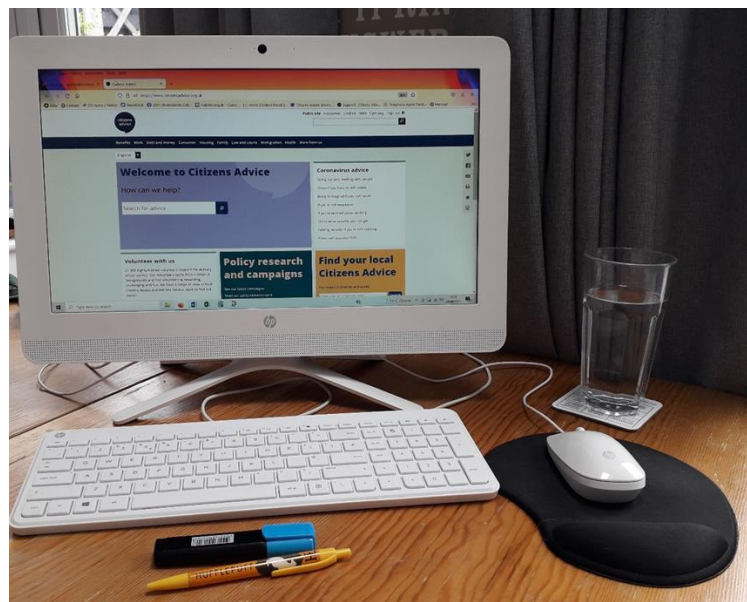
Along with everyone else, when lockdown hit, we closed our offices and started working remotely, little understanding how long this would be for or the challenges it would bring.

We immediately switched to giving advice by telephone and gave what little equipment we had at the time to our small adviceline team and our supervisors. Our staff and volunteers have gone above and beyond to deliver the service this year and made huge sacrifices along the way. Many have converted kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms to continue helping our communities. Everyone has had to set up and learn new technologies from a far which has had its challenges, especially the art of videoconferencing, but we've all worked together to enable us to continue providing help to our clients.

The senior management team quickly implemented a plan to roll out additional laptops, mobile phones and a new VOIP phone system to our staff and volunteers. Whilst our office remained closed we continued to support our current and all the new clients who contacted us.

We felt it was important to keep in contact with our non-active volunteers who were unable to work with us either due to their own circumstances or changes to their roles. Our Admin Manager produced a regular monthly newsletter to keep everyone informed of what was happening at CABR with some interesting stories and challenging quizzes!

Another of our challenges was training, as this had previously all been done face to face. Our Training Manager coped amazingly as all the training went online. We even managed to train advisers to use our adviceline telephone system remotely, not an easy thing at all! New advisers that have joined us during this pandemic have been exceptional in their courage and commitment to training remotely, helping us to increase our capacity to support the demand for help due to Covid.



By the end of April, all our services were run remotely, benefit and debt advice, Help to Claim, plus our University and Prison contracts.

We were successful in applying for funding from Worcestershire Covid Response and also for some funding from Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which helped provide much needed laptops and a new telephone system which could be run remotely.

Our funding for the 'Provision of Financial and Problem Solving Advice in Redditch' came to an end in April, but as it was a critical period for our clients, we agreed to continue to deliver services for Redditch Borough Council until the outcome of new the grant application was known in May. We were successful in gaining the grant, but unfortunately, there was a reduction in funding. We have therefore prioritised our resources to deliver specialist help with Debt and Benefit issues only, for our Redditch clients.

To enable us to provide more access to our service, we had a new website designed which has enabled people to email us with their enquiries. This has helped us to become more accessible to our clients.

It has been great to see our team expand over the year, with the majority of our advisers working remotely answering calls or emails, phoning clients to support them with more complex issues and taking part in regular zoom meetings. Our new trainees have now come through all their online training and have become a very valuable part of our team!

Judy Sharpe Service Manager
Dan Milikin Senior Supervisor



The Impact of Our Advice.....



We have helped
3171 clients



We have helped our clients with
12,678 issues



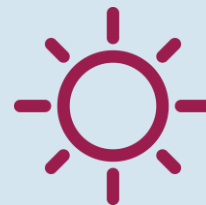
For every £1 of funding
invested we give £11.95 in
value to our clients



Our Specialist Benefits Team achieved
95% success rate in decisions made by
DWP being overturned at Tribunal



£462,050 gained for our clients
following a new claim or
revision to their benefits



We recruited and trained 8 new
remote working volunteer
advisers



We made 396 Food Bank &
Charitable Support referrals



79% of our debt clients had
their issue resolved

Adviceline Overview : April 2020 - March 2021



When we were advised in March 2020 we would be locked down, we had to gather our resources and make a plan to operate a service. This entailed sourcing computers, mobile phones and of course contacting our volunteers to find out who would come on the unknown Journey with us. All of this equipment then needed to be delivered to the staff, together with working from home guidelines. The response from our existing Adviceline team and experienced advisers was fabulous.

We initially started on Adviceline with 5 Volunteers and 1 paid member of staff along with 2 Supervisors, who assisted with the calls and remote working commenced. We now have 10 Adviceline Volunteers and 1 Paid member of staff. We are currently in the process of training more volunteers to assist with Adviceline.

In June, we requested our own direct Adviceline telephone number for clients within Bromsgrove and Redditch – enabling us to answer more of our own local clients. This is now a Freephone number.

Adviceline covers four Districts across the County; Worcester, Wyre Forest, South Worcestershire and Bromsgrove and Redditch

We answer each other's calls across the County and there is also the opportunity for calls to be answered by the National Overflow and National Backup /Single Queue Centres. Calls can also be transferred to the Consumer Helpline and National Debtline.

We have also introduced a Voicemail option for our clients who are unable to wait for their call to be answered.

Some results from our Client Satisfaction Surveys:

Q1 How easy was it to access our service today?

77.8 % Very Satisfied

Q2 Thinking about the person you spoke to, how satisfied are you with the way they handled your query?

90.9 % Very Satisfied

Q3 How satisfied are you with the information and assistance you received

79% Very Satisfied

Q4 Would you recommend our service to others?

95% Very Satisfied

Without the dedication of our Adviceline team it would have been impossible to run a service for our clients and we are grateful for their commitment during a difficult time.

It has been a very difficult year, but, we have managed to keep the team running remotely, have regular Adviceline meetings and daily briefings which has kept the team spirit. We have undergone some significant changes in how we are delivering our service over this last year. All of this was taken very well by all the team and we continue to thrive and work towards improving the number of people we help, without dropping the quality of our advice.

Sally Tucker

Senior Supervisor (Adviceline)



Client contacts CABR either by Adviceline, Website or Letter



Client's issue resolved



Client needs further help.

Appointment made with



Specialist Teams

Benefit Team

Debt Team

Generalist Team

Help to Claim Team

Website

This year we launched a new website with a facility for our clients to email their queries to us in a GDPR compliant way. This has helped us give advice to people who were not able to access us by telephone.



We have a dedicated team of experienced advisers answering our local emails and over this last year they have given advice to 198 clients since August 2020.

We also received some extra funding from National Citizens Advice to answer national emails, which have helped our trainees to develop their skills in researching and advice giving. Since August 2020, we answered 408 national emails.



Our Specialist Team

When clients need more help than can be given in their initial contact with us they are referred to our specialist team for further help which can be from our generalist team or specialised help from our Help to Claim Advisers or our debt or benefit caseworkers.

Out of the 3171 clients we advised over the year, 827 needed specialist telephone appointments for further help.

Benefits Casework

Our dedicated team of benefit caseworkers also transitioned to working remotely, with all its challenges of obtaining client's documents. They continued to assist clients with benefits appeals and dealing with complex benefit issues where people's claims had been wrongly assessed, particularly for Universal Credit.



Over this last year they had 95% success rate in decisions made by DWP being overturned at Tribunal for clients who had come to us for help.

Benefit	Allowed	Revised Decision/Award Review	Adjourned/ Postponed/ Set Aside	Withdrawn	Cancelled	Unsuccessful	Total
PIP	17	10	5		1	1	34
ESA	5	1	1				7
DLA	1		2				3
UC	3		2	1		1	7
Total	26	11	10	1		2	51



Debt Casework

2020 was dominated by the coronavirus pandemic, which caused immediate and hard hitting financial impacts for many people. The pandemic and the restrictions put in place to control it, have had a dramatic impact on household finances. Many people have been made redundant, furloughed, become too ill to work or have taken time off to care for a loved one. Nearly 1 in 3 households lost income because of coronavirus, meaning people are struggling to pay bills and are falling into debt.

In the light of the expected demand for debt advice in the next financial year, we were successful in securing extra funding for our debt work from the Money Advice Service's Increasing Capacity Funding. We have recruited a new full time trainee debt adviser to help us with the anticipated demand.



Help to Claim

The Help to Claim (HTC) service was delivered from both of our Bromsgrove and Redditch offices offering CABR clients appointments to assist to make their initial claim for Universal Credit (UC) and give support to first payment. We also check to ensure clients should be making a UC claim or if they are able to remain on the old legacy benefits.



Our 2 part time HTC specialist advisers were able to transition to the National HTC helpline and offer phone advice to clients seeking help with UC claims from all over the country, whilst working remotely.

Training

As a result of Covid 19 we have adjusted our training plan and methods of recruitment. This year we interviewed several potential advisers as part of the national recruitment campaign. All trainees were interviewed via video link. From these interviews we recruited two remote volunteers and two local volunteers.



Initial core training has been completed by trainees in their own homes. Trainees were given laptops/chromebooks and telephone equipment to assist with this.



Due to the nature of the work carried out on behalf of clients and the advice that is given, our training lasts approximately 4 months before an adviser is able to begin to assist clients. At the beginning of their time as advisers, trainees are mentored, supported and continually monitored until they become competent in their role. Trainees begin assisting clients with emails before moving forward to advising clients on adviceline and with telephone appointments.

From April 2020—March 2021 we recruited four new trainee Advisers including two remote workers. We also recruited two placement law degree students from Birmingham City University.

Jayne Davis

Training Manager

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

We have provided an outreach advice service to staff at Birmingham University since 2008 and quickly transitioned to a telephone and e-mail advice service.

Appointments were arranged through the University via e-mail and weekly advice sessions were held by phone appointment on Wednesday mornings

Staff requested an appointment by self-referral and also by their union representative, Occupational Health, Employment Services and Human Resources. The service was advertised and promoted via the University intranet, staff induction packs, university newsletters and publicity materials.

As many of the staff worked remotely, some even from other countries, there was less demand of advice than in previous years.



HMP Hewell Debt Advice for Prisoners

We help prisoners at HMP Hewell with their debts and finances. Our CABR caseworker is based in the prison 5 days a week.

However, our caseworker had to come out of the prison during lockdown and it took a while for us to work with prison officers to find a way to give advice to prisoners, when not being able to see them face to face, especially as they have no access to support via telephone. However, we established a solution to this problem enabling many prisoners to take control of their debt problems.

Research and Campaigns

We continued our research and campaigns work over this last year, focusing in on issues with Universal Credit, particularly retaining the £20 uplift. We also joined in with national campaigns such as Big Saving Energy Week and Scams awareness fortnight. Much of this work utilised social media as can be seen in the report below.

Social Media

Due to the pandemic and everyone working remotely social media has become an important tool for CABR to promote the work we do as an organisation. We can get our messages out to people that may not need to use our services. This raises awareness of the great work we do on behalf of our clients to the wider community.

Through social media we publicised current campaigns that Citizens Advice were a part of and we actively work in partnership with other organisations.

This year, as part of our Research and Campaigns work we highlighted the growth in different types of scams during #Scamsawareness fortnight.

We are supported in this by the national Citizens Advice social media team who send each local office weekly tweets that can be scheduled for the week ahead. This helps to keep our posts flowing and means we are a regular contributor to Twitter. These tweets are always topical, usually raising awareness of the national campaigns like Scamsawareness, Big Energy week and #AdviceatHome; often with a link to particular story which enables people to follow up and read further if they so wish.





There is a quarterly run #campaign which enables local Citizens Advice offices to tweet about everyday life using the #AdviceatHome. This is a more light-hearted approach and promotes what goes on behind the scenes. It has worked particularly well during lockdown and enables the public to have an insight into the world of volunteering for CA.



@BromsgroveCAB



BromsReddCAB & Citizens Advice Bromsgrove & Redditch page

Suzanne Mogg
Admin Manager

Financial Highlights 2020 - 2021

There was a surplus £20,069 compared with a surplus of £13,333 in 2019/20. Due to the Pandemic and the need to close the offices the staff and volunteers mainly worked from home and because of this we had a saving in Office costs. There was additional funding of £12,035 from Citizens Advice for Advice Line and remote working. We also received donations from the Worcestershire Community Forum and Councillor Mallet donated part of his Divisional fund allocation. Our parish councils have also been generous in their grants with some for the first time and others substantially increased.

Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council have maintained their funding levels there has not been any increase for inflation. The MAS contracts continue to provide a surplus to cover some of this.

At 31st March 2021 the total funds held were £483,149 of which £323,079 were restricted. The Reserves Policy is to hold sufficient reserves to meet unforeseen events; these comprise £90,000 for general purposes, and £14,000 as a Building Fund, which we plan to be increase by £1,000 each year and £9,400 as a provision for redundancies, if they should occur in the future We have an old listed building that will require considerable expenditure in the future. We intend to raise additional funding for this.

Finally, our thanks go to our core funders, Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils and Worcestershire County Council, and to those Parish Councils who have supported us. A summary of the income sources is given below and a full copy is available on request.

£121,354	Bromsgrove District Council
£54,167	Redditch Borough Council
£71,383	Money Advice Service – Through Citizens Advice
£35,597	Help to Claim Universal Credit – Through Citizens Advice
£37,747	Worcestershire County Council, through the Worcestershire Advice Network Contract.
£32,000	Warwickshire & West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company

£13,740	Birmingham University Employee Support
£11,343	Citizens Advice for DRO's, remote working and Advice Line, etc.
£4,966	Donations
£3,825	Parish Councils
£69	Bank Interest
£386,191	Total Income

List of Parish Councils

Alvechurch Parish Council	100
Barnt Green	500
Belbroughton Parish Council	300
Bournheath Parish Council	75
Catshill and North Marlbrook PC	800
Cofton Hackett Parish Council	500
Finstall Parish Council	150
Hunington Parish Council	100
Lickey and Blackwell PC	500
Romsley Parish Council	200
Tutnall and Cobley Parish Council	100
Wythall Parish Council	500

**With grateful thanks to our amazing
volunteer team – we could not have
achieved all this without you!**

Amanda I

Barry P

Beth P

Brian C

Christine H

Christine S

Dawn H

Debbie G

Debbie T

Dennis W

Gareth R

Gordon C

Jo-Anne T

Judith A

Kelly A

Kelvyn C

Kim R

Liz S

Maria F

Mark F

Mark S

Mary G

Mary J

Maureen G

Megan D

Michael A

Mike C

Peter S

Prisha B

Rachel W

Rita D

Robert R

Sheree W

Shirley W

Sue J

Susan B

Suzanne G

Tracy H

Terry M