

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 25 April 2022 at 7pm

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

In attendance: 1 member of the public
County Councillor: A Kriss
Parish Councillors: J Nilsson, P Perry, O Polton and M Roberts
Eleanor Choudry, Executive Officer, Barnt Green Parish Council

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Parish and District Councillor C Hotham and Cllr Whitehand.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 12th April 2021

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 circulated to those in attendance and provided at Appendix 1. Cllr Cholmondeley highlighted aspects of his report.

b) Report from District Councillor for Barnt Green and Hopwood Ward – Councillor Hotham was not present.

c) Report from County Councillor for Beacon Division

County Councillor Adrian Kriss said that he had been in discussions with the new Liaison Officer to highlight areas requiring improvement in Barnt Green. It was decided that the footpath at the front of Barnt Green Inn requires a dropped kerb and the footpath along Fiery Hill Road requires a raised kerb to prevent drivers mounting the pavement opposite Butterwick Close. Highways need to complete their assessments before approval is given. The pavement opposite the railway station requires a dropped kerb to allow disabled access. Dropped crossings cost £3,600. The crossing will have dimples for blind/disabled access highlighting where it is safe to cross. The Jubilee Safari is to be launched with 7 different businesses having a bar code sticker in their window which children scan and it gives them insight into what the queen has achieved during her reign. Cllr Kriss is awaiting WCC to respond regarding the continuity of the bus service for the 144 bus following negotiations with First Bus.

d) Parish Council Finances

A summary (attached appendix 2) of the parish council's accounts for 2021/22 was presented. Cllr Cholmondeley advised that the parish council finances were in a healthy position with reserves enabling small overspends to be absorbed. £30k is ringfenced for retarmacking of the community car park when required. Parish Councils can retain a maximum of one years precept. The parish council 5-year office lease expired in 2020, rent continued to be paid but the office was unused due to Covid restrictions. As there was no emergency exit or disabled access it was agreed that the parish council would move into the rear larger office which enables both disabled and emergency access. The rent increase is offset by the £1k income received from the Community Car Park electric charge point. Professional fees such as solicitors and decorators were avoided during the office move. Cllr Hotham and Cllr Perry

and their wives helped to move furniture and decorate. The initial problems accessing broadband were rectified.

5. Open Forum

5.1 A resident said she had two questions to ask which had been answered. The parish council office hours had been detailed in the Chairmans Report. Cllr Cholmondeley confirmed that the office is open to the public from 10am until 1pm Monday to Thursday. Quotes are being sought for signage. The resident also explained how difficult it was to travel to the railway station with a suitcase and asked when the lifts would be installed. Cllr Cholmondeley explained that the install should of happened in 2015 to adhere to the Equality Act. The scoping had been signed off by the Department for Transport (DFT) and we are now just awaiting agreement of the funding. Network Rail have organised the contractors and subject to agreement it is hoped that the work will commence in August. C Cllr Kriss advised that Station Approach may be retarmacked at the same time.

5.2 Thank you to everyone involved with the Parish Council.

Cllr Cholmondeley wished to express his thanks to everyone who supports and is involved with the Parish Council whether they are paid or volunteers.

The meeting ended at 19:44hrs.

Signed Chairman..... Date.....

Chairman
Appendix 1 – Chairman’s Report

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL YEAR ENDING MARCH 2022 Chairman’s Report

For most of the year, the council had its full complement of 8 councillors. However, Judith Jagger resigned last month on health grounds. I would like to put on record our thanks for the many years of service she gave to the council and wish her well. The vacancy has been advertised.

Our Executive Officer, Tracy Bodley, left at the end of November 2021 for a full-time role at Bewdley Town Council. I welcome her replacement, Eleanor Choudry, who joined us in late February 2022.

The Parish Council office has been closed during the pandemic during which time the lease came up for renewal. Councillors agreed that a physical presence in the village is important, as is the importance that our office has disabled access. Our landlords were not willing to make alterations for disabled access to the front of 80 Hewell Road but offered the 2 roomed office at the rear of 80 Hewell Road. We agreed to the additional rent and moved office at the end of January 2022. The office is now open to the public between 10.00 and 13.00, Monday to Thursdays.

An electric vehicle (EV) charging point has been installed in the commuter car park on Fiery Hill Road. This was funded by Bromsgrove District Council.

Outdoor gym equipment was installed in the playing field behind the Baptist Church funded by Section 106 monies from the Butterwick Close housing development. The increased usage of the park from the new footpath has exposed the poor drainage where the children’s play equipment is located. We are looking at the options and costs of making improvements.

In Millennium Park, some laurel bushes have been planted in front of the fence, funded by the Government’s post pandemic Welcome Back Fund.

There has been significant progress with getting lifts installed at the station, which is a legal requirement dating back to 2015. Network Rail intends to submit the final business case and scoping documentation to the Department for Transport for approval in May. Contractors have been lined up by Network Rail to start work in August 2022.

Community events resumed during the year with the September walk, the Christmas lights switch on and the wassail walk. These are planned to be repeated in 2022/23. In addition, the council is supporting a blossom walk on Saturday 7 May and is organising a jubilee family party on Sunday 5 June at the playing field. On Saturday 2 July, Brass Beatz, who gave a free concert last year, will perform again in Millennium Park, this time promoting and supporting the work of our local Citizens Advice Bureau.

The precept (the portion of council tax paid by residents to the parish council) increased by 5% for the coming year, having been held below inflation, or with no increase, over the last 5 years.

Looking forward, the spike in inflation is likely to lead to future increases, most notably because of the rise in the commercial prices of gas and electricity.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has worked and supported the parish council over the past year.

Robert Cholmondeley

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Appendix 2
Summary of Draft Financial Accounts for 2020/2021

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL				
Financial Report of 2021/2022: Receipt and Payments				
Annual Parish Financial Report				
RECEIPTS	2020/21	summary totals	2021/22	summary totals
Precept received in current year	64,000.00		65,000.00	
Interest	273.97		191.03	
Lengthsman Refund	1,537.50		1,775.60	
Miscellaneous	10,220.00		1,000.00	
Grants Received	3,000.00		-	
Hires	170.00		395.00	
Total Receipts		79,201.47		68,361.63
PAYMENTS				
ADMINISTRATION :				
Staff Costs	22,057.10		19,032.04	
Chairman's Allowance	-		-	
Office Running costs	7,264.77		9,649.64	
Training and Publications	60.00		30.00	
Meeting Rooms and Refreshments	-		250.00	
Subscriptions	1,853.34		1,518.25	
Insurance	1,157.53		1,247.36	
Auditor Fees	247.40		520.00	
Legal Fees	1,336.67		-	
Election Costs	-		-	
Grants and Donations	500.00		500.00	
General Administration Costs	850.18	35,326.99	1,592.66	34,339.95
COMMUNICATION Newsletters	820.00		270.00	
COMMUNICATION Website	-	820.00	120.00	390.00
MILLENNIUM PARK Mowing	1,202.00		872.00	
MILLENNIUM PARK Maintenance	1,130.18		630.00	
Park Safety Inspections	68.50	2,400.68	68.50	1,570.50
PLAYING FIELD Mowing	2,556.51		2,099.45	
PLAYING FIELD Maintenance	1,214.41		1,346.88	
PLAYING FIELD Safety Inspections	68.50	3,839.42	68.50	3,514.83
ENVIRONMENT Hanging baskets	-		400.00	
ENVIRONMENT Planters	466.67		850.00	
ENVIRONMENT Maintenance	2,094.75		799.05	
ENVIRONMENT Outdoor Parish Caretaker	5,400.00		5,400.00	
ENVIRONMENT Pollinator Site	686.48		110.00	
ENVIRONMENT Commuter Car Park	402.00		-	
ENVIRONMENT Covid-19	1,263.00	10,312.90	-	7,559.05
FOOTPATH LIGHTS Maintenance	195.00		-	
FOOTPATH LIGHTS Electricity	2,911.08		2,916.13	
LIGHTING Christmas lights	7,259.40	10,365.48	7,074.66	9,990.79
HIGHWAYS Lengthsman charges	600.00		2,370.00	
HIGHWAYS Miscellaneous	-	600.00	-	2,370.00
MISCELLANEOUS Events	14.95	14.95	970.20	970.20
N'hood Plan/ capital projects	4,627.02		1,139.01	
FIXED ASSETS		4,627.02		1,139.01
Net Total Payments		68,307.44		61,844.33

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS SUMMARY 2021/2022						
RECEIPTS	2020/2021	2021/2022	PAYMENTS	2020/2021	2021/2022	Variance %
Precept received in current year	64,000.00	65,000.00	Administration	35,326.99	34,339.95	-2.87
Interest	273.97	191.03	Communication	820.00	390.00	-110.26
Lengthsman Refund	1,537.50	1,775.60	Millennium Park	2,400.68	1,570.50	-52.86
Miscellaneous	10,220.00	1,000.00	Playing Field	3,839.42	3,514.83	-9.23
Grants Received	3,000.00	-	Lighting	10,365.48	9,990.79	-3.75
Hires (room / playing field)	170.00	395.00	Environment	10,312.90	7,559.05	-36.43
			Highways	600.00	2,370.00	74.68
			Events	14.95	970.20	98.46
			Capital projects	4,627.02	1,139.01	-306.23
Total Receipts	79,201.47	68,361.63	Total payments	68,307.44	61,844.33	-10.45
VAT Refund	5,955.33	2,929.28	VAT PAID	4,829.19	4,441.15	
Annual Receipts	85,156.80	71,290.91	Annual Payments	73,136.63	66,285.48	

Notes to the report of 2021/2022 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 2021/22 upon the Parish Council Taxpayer was £63.10 per Band D Annual Council Tax payment.
3. Other income variances:
 - a) Interest rates have decreased, and the amount of interest raised via deposit and savings account has declined.
 - b) The Lengthsman scheme continues via Worcestershire County Council who will refund up to £1888 each year. The council is still awaiting final payments against the March invoice.
 - c) VAT refund fluctuates from year to year with the Parish Council claiming VAT on non-business activities. The amount reclaimed depends on what purchases (predominantly Capital Expenditure) are made during the year. It would be fair to state that the parish council should not depend on VAT reclaimed each year to support the future budget and class it as income to reduce the precept.
 - d) In 2020/21 Miscellaneous Income included a £10k Covid 19 Business Relief Grant from BDC. The income for 2021/22, consists of rent from Engie for the electric car charging point in the community car park.
 - e) A grant for £3k was received in 20/21 from BDC for the pollinator site. No grants were received in 21/22.
 - f) Hire income includes fees paid by Total Football for use of the playing field and also occasional hire of the office to Barnt Green Social Club. .

4. Expenditure variances:

- a) Administration: Whilst there is a reduction in staffing costs due to the previous Executive Officer leaving in November and not being replaced until February, the reduction has mostly been offset due to increased office running costs.
- b) Communication: The Parish Council issues two Bulletins during the year, which are delivered free to residents of the parish. Three editions were charged for in the 20/21 accounts – Spring 2020, Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021 and only one edition in 21/22. A website hosting fee of £120 is charged in 21/22.
- c) Millennium Park and Playing Field: Costs were increased in 2020/21 due to the the installation of a new boundary fence.
- d) Environment: The Outdoor Parish Caretaker expenditure remains static. Increased costs in 2020/21 were due to Covid-19 expenditure and the pollinator site and community car park signage.
- e) Footpath and Christmas lighting: The Christmas Lighting contract was renewed in 2020/21 for a further 3-year hire period, separated into two contracts for lighting hire and installation/removal.
- 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.
- g) Events: During 2021/22 the parish council was able to host events again and these included the Christmas lights switch on, the Wassail Walk and the best dressed Christmas window competition.
- h) Capital projects / Exceptional items: A new storage shed has been installed in the playing field for use by Total Football and the parish caretaker. A new picnic bench was purchased.
- i) Fixed Assets: The new shed has been added to the fixed assets along with a meeting table that was kindly donated by Barnt Green Doctors Surgery for the new office meeting area..
- j) VAT: There are special arrangements for parish councils to reclaim the VAT on all purchases that are described as for non-business purposes. A VAT claim from 1.10.21 to 31.3.22 will be paid into financial year 2022/23.

5. The full version of the parish council's accounts may be inspected during the audit period, as yet the date for this is unknown. To view the accounts 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~
Eleanor Choudry
Responsible Financial Officer
20/04/2021

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