

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at Barnt Green Baptist Church, Bittell Road on Monday 28th May 2025 at 7pm

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

In attendance: 3 members of the public
Parish Councillors: C Hotham, P Perry, S Whitehand, M Roberts and Sally Tucker.
WCC Cllr Adrian Kriss
BDC Cllr Alan Bailes
Eleanor Choudry, Executive Officer, Barnt Green Parish Council

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Apologies

None received.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 22nd April 2024

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

Copies of the Chairmans report were available 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 – Copies of the Cllr Hotham's report were available to those in attendance and provided at Appendix 2. Cllr Hotham highlighted aspects of his report

c) Report from County Councillor for Beacon Division – Copies of Cllr Kriss's report were made available to those in attendance and provided at Appendix 3. Cllr Kriss highlighted aspects of his report.

d) Parish Council Finances

A summary (attached appendix 4) of the parish council's accounts for 2024/25 was made available to those in attendance. Eleanor Choudry, Executive Officer, highlighted areas of her report.

5. Open Forum

A member of the public attended the meeting to report that she had witnessed two separate incidents of shoplifting during a visit to Tesco on Sunday. On one occasion, she was nearly knocked over by an individual running out of the store. Tesco staff confirmed that they believed it was a shoplifter and noted that a similar incident occurred shortly afterward, involving someone fleeing the store with several packs of bacon. Staff also stated that such incidents occur almost daily. The resident expressed feeling distressed and powerless and now feels nervous about returning to the store.

She was advised to report the incidents by calling 101 and to log them with both the police and British Transport Police. The EO will request that a representative from the Safer Neighbourhood Team attend the next parish council meeting on May 19th to provide an update on local shoplifting concerns. Additionally, the EO will ensure that shoplifting is included in the next quarterly review of police priorities for the Barnt Green community.

6. Summary of discussions and close of business.

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 20:09hrs.

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

**BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025
Chairman's Report**

The council had its full complement of 8 councillors at the yearend though James Baldwin resigned during the year and Sally Tucker was coopted.

Social events have been scaled back as support has dwindled over recent years. However, Bittell Road Playing Field was made available to Social Eats who held their second event there last September. It was blighted by wet weather. A date has been set for another event on Saturday 30 August 2025.

Based on numbers attending, the Christmas Light Switch On was the most successful yet, helped by benign weather. Two new lights designed by pupils at St Andrews CofE School were unveiled. The event was extended with music on a stage after 5.00 p.m. Our thanks go to Danny Bromage who arranged many of the new features and support for the event.

The Council again organised a Wassail Walk between Christmas and New Year which attracted about 70 people.

The opportunity was taken to support biodiversity with funding from Worcestershire County Council by planting 8 new fruit trees in Bittell Road Playing Field in the alcove behind the sport club's tennis courts. The 5 fruit trees previously planted in 2023 appear in good health. We are grateful to the volunteers who are tending the pollinator site at the corner of Greenbank.

The children's play equipment at the bottom of Bittell Road Playing Field had become life expired and our efforts to improve the drainage had failed. New equipment has now been installed alongside the previous site where the drainage is better. A substantial portion of the funding came, with the council's thanks, from the Barnt Green Medical Trust.

Work was undertaken on Hewell Road between Station Approach and Greenbank cutting back the trees so that the streetlamps were no longer obscured to make it a safer pavement in the winter months.

I am pleased to report that, following 10 years of lobbying by the parish council, that contractors are on site installing lifts at the railway station. I thank everyone who has supported the cause over this long period.

In higher tiers of government, work is being undertaken on the country's housing needs.

Bromsgrove District Council has to find sites for an additional 9,000 homes, bringing the total to 12,000, for the period 2028 to 2043. Barnt Green will have to accommodate a portion of these homes. The District Council's proposals should be published for consultation in June/July 2025.

The precept (the portion of council tax paid by residents to the parish council) increased by 3.7% for the coming year. In the previous two years, the increase had been lower than inflation, but the nature of cost increases meant that this year's precept, regrettably, had to exceed inflation.

I thank everyone who has worked for and supported the Parish Council in the last 12 months.

Robert Cholmondeley

Annual Report: Barnt Green Parish Council April 2025
District Councillor Charlie Hotham.

Car parking is a major concern to residents. The enforcement of parking regulations fall to Bromsgrove district council. Historically, the enforcement Officers have only been tasked with spending 10% of their time outside the town centre. However, at the insistence of the Independents on the council, this has now been increased to 25%. I hope that we will see an increased presence of enforcement Officers.

Planning enforcement has changed. The role is now under the remit of Worcestershire regulatory services rather than Bromsgrove planning department. This has resulted in a more direct approach to enforcement issues and several that have been rumbling on for many years have been resolved.

The Chief Executive of Bromsgrove district council retired earlier this year, and a new appointment (Mr John Leach) started at the beginning of April.

Bromsgrove district council continues to be in a financially sound position with a balanced budget. The structure of local authorities will change over the next few years. The English Devolution White Paper was published in December 2024. This will mean that in future there will be a Parish Council and a Unitary Council, effectively dissolving the District Council and County Council. My mission in the transition period is to make sure that our area gets what is fair. Your grandparents and parents will have paid Council Tax to Bromsgrove for many years. Therefore, I want to get the best deal for residents. An Extraordinary Council meeting on 18th March dedicated to the Unitary topic resolved to pursue both the option of a North Worcestershire Unitary and a Worcestershire Unitary. An independent report on the benefits and drawbacks of each option will be sourced. As with any Government change there are many rumours and scaremongering that can cause worry. Not least that we will be absorbed into Birmingham. I would ask you to contact me if you are concerned about what you may hear.

The other huge topic is the long-awaited Development Strategic Plan Review. The change of Government instigated a new and increased house building target for the district which will have an impact on Barnt Green. I am working to minimise this.

It has been confirmed that instead of 6500 new homes by 2042 for Bromsgrove district, this number has rocketed to 12000. At the start of the planning review every authority was encouraged to submit amendments to the National Policy Planning Framework. We commented as a District Council and also a separate submission from me and the Independent Group. These were taken into consideration by Government and a new NPPF was published late December 2024. I would encourage anyone who is concerned about development plans for our area to read this document which is the start point to understand Government policy.

Recently, Government have issued guidance on how the green belt should be treated for planning purposes. This has significantly reduced the protection afforded by the green belt.

It is expected that draft strategic plans for the district will be made available for public consultation during the summer.

Charlie Hotham
07944808085

Worcestershire County Councillor - Annual Report

This is my last and final report as the County Councillor for Beacon. This is also the end of an era for Barnt Green as, due to the boundary changes, it is no longer within Beacon Division.

Worcestershire County Council have listened to resident's concerns about communication and that Worcestershire County Council has been poor at communicating the wonderful work that it actually does and, as a result there is now a second edition of Your Worcestershire, a magazine to keep all residents updated. I've included a link below.

[JN2425.098 Your Worcestershire Resident Magazine Issue 2](#)

As a WCC councillor I am proud of the governance of the Council and the way that it has been led. The cabinet members have had to make extremely difficult decisions when it comes to budgetary requirements and it has handled them extremely well. Yes, jobs have had to be restructured, and hours changed but that has enabled strategic services to continue. This has been done whilst maintaining one of the lowest council taxes in the country.

Following the government's plans to move forward on merging all 2 tier District and County Councils towards Unitary councils to save costs, proposals will be put forward by the end of this year. A Unitary Council should have approximately 500,000 residents. Currently Worcestershire has just over 600,000. Whilst there are some parties that have voiced their opinions to splitting Worcestershire into two, a North Worcestershire and a South Worcestershire unitary, the figures do not add up. North Worcestershire has only 290,000 residents and this proposal would leave the New Unitary well short of the required numbers. The Labour Government may well allocate part of Birmingham into the North boundary to make up the numbers and take some of the pressure of Birmingham City Council. Currently the state of the roads and some of their social housing stock is in dire need of investment and I would hate to see our taxpayers money going towards the repairing of the failures of this neighbouring Council.

This year our council has invested in mobile signal detectors attached to refuse collection lorries and this has enabled us to report back against OfComs data suggesting good coverage. This will enable OfCom To put the necessary pressure on our connectivity providers to improve their signals significantly. More people are working from home and budding entrepreneurs are starting new businesses and therefore need access to the best broadband and signal to enable them to grow and succeed.

Due to our three-year commitment to excellence for our highways, the condition of our roads and pavements remains one of the very best in the country. Also 99% of our streetlights have now been upgraded to LED ensuring our commitment to sustainability and cost saving. We have also seen the introduction of Bat friendly lighting to ensure safe corridors for these small mammals.

The success of the BOD bus in Bromsgrove has resulted in the expansion to Malvern and connectivity with other bus companies within north Worcestershire. This offers a flexible and affordable bus service suitable to modern day demands.

I am disappointed that, within my term of office, Network Rail has not completed the lifts to enable less able users to reach all the platforms. I hope that this will be completed by the end of the year and I'm pleased that I have already provided a disabled crossing in Fiery Hill Rd in readiness for them. Unfortunately, I have been unsuccessful in achieving crossings in Bittel Road or Groveley Lane, Cofton Hackett despite a reduction in the 85th percentile of speed which was the original reason for refusal. I do hope that this can be taken further by whoever becomes the future Councillor for the new division.

On a local level I have invested in a TruCam specifically for your local SNT, match funded by John Champion our PCC. This will enable our PCSO's to enforce across the local area without waiting to borrow one from the neighbouring team. These cameras not only record the speeding offence but also whether a phone is being held or even the lack of a seat belt. They can also be used in bad weather and lower lighting conditions.

I am pleased to see at last the dropped crossing at the Longlands. This should have been done in October, but unfortunately extra time was needed for planning due to the lamp column which needed to be moved. I also understand that the date for the raised platform repairs in Hewell Rd is confirmed as 6th-9th of May. There has been no update on whether changes are planned beneath the bridge at Sandhills Green, but the gullies on both this and Hewell Rd bridge are to be jetted on a regular basis.

I am pleased with the white posts approaching the Village along Blackwell Road, but I would like to see the Parish Council putting some additional signage on the posts, welcoming, but warning road users to slow down. They are yours to use.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my term of office at Worcestershire County Council. Whilst sitting on Overview and Scrutiny committees for Adult social care, Health and Well-being and, as vice chair, on the Environment committee has been challenging and interesting, nothing has given me more pleasure than attending the Parish Council meetings. There is nothing, other than the timings, that should stop you attending other PC meetings as a member of the public. I am sure you would find it quite enlightening.

Thank you all for making me feel most welcome at your meetings and I wish you all the best for the future.

Kind regards

Adrian

Adrian Kriss

County Councillor for Beacon

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Appendix 4 – Summary of Draft Financial Accounts for 2024/2025

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL				
Financial Report of 2024/2025: Receipt and Payments				
Annual Parish Financial Report				
RECEIPTS	2023/24	summary totals	2024/25	summary totals
Precept received in current year	109,750.00		37,750.00	
Interest	3,029.80		3,499.92	
Lengthsman Refund	1,960.97		2,391.13	
Miscellaneous	3,369.47		13,695.00	
Hires	3,378.75		2,531.25	
Total Receipts		121,488.99		59,867.30
PAYMENTS				
ADMINISTRATION :				
Staff Costs	24,198.38		25,953.39	
Chairman's Allowance	-		137.30	
Office Running costs	8,812.31		10,216.53	
Training and Publications	30.00		185.00	
Meeting Rooms and Refreshments	40.25		140.50	
Subscriptions	1,794.08		2,349.02	
Insurance	1,372.71		1,082.29	
Auditor Fees	587.40		686.20	
Legal Fees	-		-	
Election Costs	179.20		-	
Grants and Donations	1,250.00		1,000.00	
General Administration Costs	2,365.97	40,630.30	589.13	42,339.36
COMMUNICATION Newsletters	650.00		936.00	
COMMUNICATION Website	180.00	830.00	256.00	1,192.00
MILLENNIUM PARK Mowing	900.00		840.00	
MILLENNIUM PARK Maintenance	2,669.52		1,822.86	
Park Safety Inspections	211.10	3,780.62	94.00	2,756.86
PLAYING FIELD Mowing	2,284.10		2,740.92	
PLAYING FIELD Maintenance	636.82		534.15	
PLAYING FIELD Safety Inspections	211.10	3,132.02	94.00	3,369.07
ENVIRONMENT Hanging baskets	524.65		524.65	
ENVIRONMENT Planters	708.33		1,377.30	
ENVIRONMENT Maintenance	2,687.55		4,382.76	
ENVIRONMENT Outdoor Parish Caretaker	6,873.96		7,910.40	
ENVIRONMENT Pollinator Site	47.00		209.88	
ENVIRONMENT Commuter Car Park	-		-	
ENVIRONMENT Covid-19	-	10,841.49	-	14,404.99
FOOTPATH LIGHTS Maintenance	1,588.75		5,905.00	
FOOTPATH LIGHTS Electricity	2,421.67		2,260.79	
LIGHTING Christmas lights	4,260.00	8,270.42	5,270.00	13,435.79
HIGHWAYS Lengthsman charges	2,232.81		3,084.31	
HIGHWAYS Miscellaneous	948.30	3,181.11	2,389.99	5,474.30
MISCELLANEOUS Events	1,374.58	1,374.58	898.24	898.24
N'hood Plan/ capital projects	14,559.04		17,329.46	
FIXED ASSETS	750.00	15,309.04	343.14	17,672.60
Net Total Payments		87,349.58		101,543.21

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS SUMMARY 2024/2025						
RECEIPTS	2023/2024	2024/2025	PAYMENTS	2023/2024	2024/2025	Variance %
Precept received in current year	109,750.00	37,750.00	Administration	40,630.30	42,339.36	4.04
Interest	3,029.80	3,499.92	Communication	830.00	1,192.00	30.37
Lengthsman Refund	1,960.97	2,391.13	Millennium Park	3,780.62	2,756.86	-37.14
Miscellaneous	3,369.47	13,695.00	Playing Field	3,132.02	3,369.07	7.04
Grants Received	-	-	Lighting	8,270.42	13,435.79	38.44
Hires (room / playing field)	3,378.75	2,531.25	Environment	10,841.49	14,404.99	24.74
			Highways	3,181.11	5,474.30	41.89
			Events	1,374.58	898.24	-53.03
			Capital projects	15,309.04	17,672.60	13.37
Total Receipts	121,488.99	59,867.30	Total payments	87,349.58	101,543.21	13.98
VAT Refund	6,166.59	9,532.28	VAT PAID	6,853.99	9,039.98	
Annual Receipts	127,655.58	69,399.58	Annual Payments	94,203.57	110,583.19	

Notes to the report of 2024/2025 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 2024/25 upon the Parish Council Taxpayer was £75.47 per Band D Annual Council Tax payment. The first instalment of the precept for 2024/25 of £37,750 was paid by Bromsgrove District Council into the financial year 2023/24 in error which is why the precept figure shows as £109,750 in 23/24 and only £37,750 in 24/25. The actual precept for 2024/25 was £75,500.
3. Other income variances:
 - a) Interest rates increased, and therefore the amount of interest raised via deposit and savings account improved.
 - b) The Lengthsman scheme continues via Worcestershire County Council who will refund up to £2,886 each year. The council is still awaiting final payments against the March invoice and two invoices relate to the previous financial year.
 - 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) Miscellaneous income for 2024/25, consists of £1,000 rent payment from Equan for the electric car charging point in the community car park. £105 audit cost reimbursement from BDC due to the 1st precept instalment being paid incorrectly into financial 23/24 causing an increase in audit costs. A £10,000 grant from Barnt Green Medical Trust towards the cost of the new children's play equipment in Bittell Road playing fields. £200 received from Barnt Green Dental towards the plants in the tiered planter outside their business. A £2,390 grant from West Mercia PCC Road Safety fund for the new vehicle activated sign on Fiery Hill Road.
 - e) Hire income includes fees paid by Total Football for use of the playing field, hire of the meeting room to Conexus Children's Tuition and income received from the hire of the playing field to Social Eats for the street food and music. The decrease is due to a late payment from Total Football and a reduction in hire by Conexus due to needing larger premises.
4. Expenditure variances:
 - a) Administration: Staffing costs have increased in line with the Local Government revised pay rates. Office energy costs have increased due to the landlord requesting the office is maintained at a

minimum temperature of 14 degrees. Grants were paid to support Bromsgrove Citizens Advice and Barnt Green Cricket Club.

- b) Communication: The Parish Council issues two Bulletins during the year, which are delivered free to residents of the parish. The website hosting fee increased to £256 in 24/25 due to a required change to .gov.uk website and email addresses.
 - c) Millennium Park and Playing Field: Work was carried out on the trees in Millennium Park that were overhanging the Friends Meeting House in 23/24. In 24/25 the rope bridge was showing signs of wear and therefore a replacement rope bridge was purchased.
 - d) Environment: The budget was increased to enable improved summer planting and some winter planting. The Outdoor Parish Caretaker expenditure has increased due to an increase in the new contract and ad hoc works.
 - e) Footpath and Christmas lighting: Footpath lighting maintenance costs have increased significantly as the existing lanterns are obsolete and the replacements expensive. The Christmas tree cost had increased, and extra lights were purchased to include Tonys Handyman.
 - 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 2024/25 the parish council was able to host a number of events. These included the Christmas lights switch on, Chairmans Christmas Buffet, the Wassail Walk and the best dressed Christmas window competition.
 - h) Capital projects / Exceptional items: To improve the surface and reduce frequent repair costs new wet pour was installed in Millennium Park in 23/24. Two bespoke children's Christmas lights were purchased as part of a Christmas competition with St Andrews First School in 24/25 and new children's play equipment was installed in Bittell Road playing fields, this was subsidised by a grant from Barnt Green Medical Trust.
 - i) Fixed Assets: Three benches had deteriorated in Bittell Road playing fields so were replaced.
 - 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 1.1.25 to 31.3.25 will be paid into financial year 2025/26.
5. The full version of the parish council's accounts may be inspected during the audit period, between Tuesday 3rd June to Monday 14th July 2025. 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: barntgreenparishcouncil.gov.uk

~End of report~

Eleanor Choudry

Responsible Financial Officer

24/04/2025