

The Chairman's report is included on the middle pages inside for this issue.

We do hope you have enjoyed the summer – we were particularly impressed with the success of the Barnt Green Open Gardens weekend at the start of July which was supported by the parish council. We would like to record our thanks to Rachel Banner and Maureen Frowley for organising the event, the residents who were happy to open the gardens for us all to marvel at, and to all the helpers in the Church and parish centre for providing the delicious cakes, teas and various refreshments!

Three local charities - the Basement Project, Where Next Association and the Barnt Green Day Centre - benefited from the proceeds of just over £5,000.

The winner (Oasis) and runners-up (Allan Morris, Acorns) in the village shops' best dressed window competition are pictured here with Rachel:



Thanks for allowing their car parks to be used over the weekend must also go to the Vic in Sandhills Lane and Barnt Green Social Club in Blackwell Road. More information about the weekend is included on page 7.

MP and Councillors' contacts:

MP	Sajid Javid – sajid.javid.mp@parliament.uk	
County Councillor	Peter McDonald – pmcdonald2@worcestershire.gov.uk	
District Councillor	Charles Hotham – c.hotham@bromsgrove.gov.uk	
Parish Councillors:	Rosemary Briggs, Robert Cholmondeley, Edwin Gumbley, Charles Hotham, Jenny Jellie, Susan Whitehand, (2 vacancies)	
Chairman:	Robert Cholmondeley	robert.cholmondeley@btinternet.com
Executive Officer:	Gill Lungley	exec@barntgreen.org.uk tel: 0121 447 9893

Parish councillors' contact details can be obtained via www.barntgreen.org.uk or from the Parish Council office at 80 Hewell Road, Barnt Green, B45 8NF
Office open hours are: Mon to Weds 10am – 1pm and Thurs 10am – 4pm

Parish Council blog

The Parish Council doesn't meet in August, but a range of diverse topics has been covered during the two meetings held since the last Bulletin was issued.

June 2016 saw a visit to the council meeting by two residents of Oakdene Drive who are concerned about the increasing amount of on-street car parking in the parish, which they see as predominantly caused by commuters using the train service. They have researched similar situations across the country – such as at York and at Dorridge - and hope the parish council might help to progress a solution with those responsible for road and traffic management.

Since the Parish Council is keen to do what it can to support Barnt Green residents, plans are progressing to take ownership of the new car park that is being built on the corner of the CALA housing development in Fiery Hill Road. The aim of this site is to provide free daily parking space for commuters using Barnt Green railway station, thence freeing up space on the roads. The parish council won't be responsible for managing the car park until after its first year of use, but the agreement has been signed.

The meeting held on 28th July was visited by the new assistant curate for St Andrews and St Michaels, Rev. Sheri Gidney. Council members welcomed Sheri to the meeting and to the civil parish (which is a bit smaller than her ecclesiastical parish) and wish her well in her new post.

We also heard from a Barnt Green resident who voiced concerns about the footpath lighting along Hewell Road; the parish council will be looking into this to see how it can be improved for the darker evenings.

The decision was approved at the July meeting to apply for funding from the district council's New Homes Bonus fund. This fund is made available from the money given to the district council by the government for allowing the building of new houses (for the 6-year period to 2017 Bromsgrove DC expects to receive £1.7m). The parish council has asked for £455 for the installation of bicycle stands in Hewell Road.

The play area in Millennium Park has recently been under attack from the seasonal visiting 'pickatits' who make a bee-line for the safety surfaces under the children's play equipment. Picking away at the safety surfacing appears to be an attractive pastime for youngsters but it means we have to remove the equipment from use and pay for expensive replacement 'wet-pour' which never quite looks the same when completed.

Plans were being made to meet with the district's newly appointed town centres manager. It is hoped that Cheryl Welsh will help to inspire new ideas and initiatives for the village... watch this space!

Draft minutes of Parish Council Meetings are published on the council's website – www.barntgreen.org.uk - click on the 'parish council' tab and then click the words 'agenda and minutes' half-way down the page

Onside seeks volunteers



Onside is a 20-year old charity based in Worcestershire and Herefordshire that aims to improve the lives of over 3000 vulnerable adults every year across the two counties. The charity provides free services via mentoring and advocacy to support adults facing disadvantage through mental and physical ill health, learning disability and old age.

Volunteers are needed in the Bromsgrove & Redditch area to support local people. Advocacy volunteering is a way of supporting and empowering people to ensure that they have their voice heard and their wishes made known to others.

If you can picture yourself in the role of an Onside volunteer, please call Claire Watkins - Volunteer Manager on 01905 27525 or email claire.watkins@onside-advocacy.org.uk to find out more. Thinking about Volunteering – “just do it!”

Volunteers Clean for Barnt Green

On Tuesday 26th July Barnt Green welcomed a group of volunteers 'Youth Transformed' provided via the Baptist Church, who swept through Barnt Green in a whirlwind of buckets, soapy water, cloths and plenty of good humour to clean the street furniture along Hewell Road. Our thanks go to this youth group led by Chris.



Troop Aid

With many of us paying tribute to the work of the armed forces and the current centenary commemorations related to World War I, Barnt Green resident Alfred Eves was featured in the local media talking about his uncle also named Alfred Eves who, as a 15-year old bugler, was killed in the Battle of Jutland 100 years ago. Alfred Jr. regularly calls in to the parish council office to collect 'grab-bag' items that have been donated by residents for forces personnel injured either on training exercise or in combat who have returned to the UK without their personal effects or clothing.

The parish council is happy to receive and pass on any such items to Alfred for Troop Aid.

The External Auditor, Grant Thornton, has completed the annual audit of the parish council's accounts. The auditor's certificate and completed Annual Return can both be viewed on the website (www.barntgreen.org.uk) and are available on application from the parish council office.

**Annual
Audit
££**

Parish council meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month; they start at 7pm and are open to the public to attend.

Our chairman, Robert Cholmondeley took the opportunity to sit down with our vice chairman, Charlie Hotham, to discuss how some of the issues facing Bromsgrove District Council affect Barnt Green. Many of you will know that Charlie Hotham is also the independent district councillor for the Barnt Green and Hopwood ward on Bromsgrove District Council.



Cllrs Charlie Hotham (L), Robert Cholmondeley (R)

Robert – What's the current position with Bromsgrove's district plan?

Charlie – It has been approved by the independent inspector, subject to a number of conditions, and is now available for public consultation. It can be viewed both on line and in the parish council's office.

Robert – What are those conditions and will they affect Barnt Green?

Charlie - They have no direct impact on Barnt Green. However, they need to be put into the context of a demand for increased housing and a review of the green belt which will now consider sites on a sustainability basis.

Robert – What does sustainability mean?

Charlie - This is a highly complex issue. But, in this context it really means a hub, such as Barnt Green, where there are facilities for the local population, such as shops, doctor's surgery, school, railway station etc.

Robert – I understand that a review of the green belt is almost inevitable. This will no doubt affect the land both in and around Barnt Green. Do we know when the review is likely to take place, how long it will take and the likely impact on Barnt Green?

Charlie – Unfortunately there's no scheduled date so we have a period of uncertainty. It could be conducted in a few months' time or it could be a couple of years away and linked to the housing needs of Birmingham as well as Bromsgrove. And, yes, it may mean that one or two parcels of land either in Barnt Green, or in the neighbouring parishes, could be available for housing development.

Robert – No doubt, the prospect of increased housing will be an emotive subject. I suppose that we can closely follow as events unfold and take our opportunities to influence them. But where does this leave the Neighbourhood Development Plan which is being drafted by Barnt Green's parish council? I seem to recall a questionnaire was sent to residents in 2012 before I even became a councillor.

Charlie – Indeed, it's proving to be a complex and long drawn out process. One of the key aspects of any neighbourhood development plan is that it can't be contrary to the plan of the district council. So, in our case, the plans for Bromsgrove have to be clear and approved so that Barnt Green can then formulate a meaningful plan at parish council level for the next 15 years. Hence, we've been held back by the lack of a district plan.

Robert – A Neighbourhood Development Plan is part of Government's localism policy, isn't it, and so if parish councils don't have them they are in a weaker position and residents have less say and influence.

Charlie – Yes, that's broadly correct. As you know a huge amount of work has been going on behind the scenes within the parish council. Ultimately, the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Barnt Green will have to be put to residents for their approval.

Robert – There was comment a few weeks ago that Bromsgrove could become part of the Birmingham Unitary Authority. It all sounded rather ominous, but what was this about and how would it affect Barnt Green?

Charlie – There was a proposal that Bromsgrove should join the Birmingham Unitary Authority. It would have cost Bromsgrove District Council £26,000 per annum with little say and no voting rights. In practical terms I believe it would put Bromsgrove in a dangerous position as the only thing that Bromsgrove district has to offer to Birmingham is land for development. There would also be a big implication for Worcestershire, as the county council would effectively lose control of its north-east. This would have implications for its budget and the viability of Worcestershire county council as we currently know it.

Robert – How would this have affected Barnt Green?

Charlie – Primarily it's about becoming a smaller fish in a much bigger pond. The influence of the parish council would become diminished. I'm sure that residents would not want to see large scale housing development that may swamp the Barnt Green area, but it would become much more difficult to resist.

Robert - Is this the end of the issue? Though, I suppose it could re-surface again?

Charlie – For now, the decision has been taken to continue within Worcestershire. But, Bromsgrove does have looming financial issues, so you can never say the possibility of more influence from Birmingham has disappeared.

Robert – Are there any other issues at Bromsgrove District Council level, good or bad, that will have a bearing on Barnt Green?

Charlie – The latest financial settlement from central government to Bromsgrove District Council has been severely cut. This has led to a significant budget shortfall. Bromsgrove District Council has yet to decide how to cope with much less money.

Robert – There are some important times ahead of us both at a parish council level and district council level. Thank you for your time.

Charlie – Yes there are some important things going on which will have a long term impact on how Barnt Green develops.

The Hunt for Two New Councillors continues... ...could it be you?

Barnt Green Parish Council was established by statute in 1993; before then part of the current parish (the area to the east of the railway line) was a ward of Alvechurch Parish Council. When it was established as a parish council in its own right, including the wider area of Fiery Hill Road and Cherry Hill Road, it was considered appropriate to have eight members, all of whom are electable via the ballot box.

The period of office for each member is four years during which time they will make decisions on caring for the council's assets, such as Millennium Park, the playing field, play equipment, footpath lighting, bus shelter and roadside seating; will comment on planning applications, feed in to a vision for the long-term development of the area, and help to maintain the local environment; and will continue to represent, improve and support the well-being of all its residents.

At this grass-roots level of local government the parish council operates in an apolitical framework, where party-politics have no sway over decisions made by members. However, the council is currently operating at just 75% capacity, having only six members. Five were elected in 2015 during the most recent round of local government elections whilst one was co-opted last September.

Council meetings are held once a month in Barnt Green, starting at 7pm and training is provided for all new members. The co-option process is not arduous but applicants do need to be able to confirm that they are local electors and whether they live in the parish, or within 3 miles of it, or that their usual place of work for the last 12 months has been in the parish.

More information and an application form is available on the website: www.barntgreen.org.uk (search 'co-option') and from the parish council office at 80 Hewell Road, B45 8NF; tel: 0121 447 9893. Gill, our Clerk/Executive Officer, has a wealth of experience on how local councils work and will be happy to discuss any queries.

RAILWAY UPDATE

The two railway-related issues that have been taking up our time in parish council meetings recently have been:

- 1) Lifts at Barnt Green station. We have now been told that Network Rail have secured funding to install lifts to help rail passengers cross from one side of the station to the other and access the platforms in between.
- 2) Re-opening of the footpath crossing over the railway between Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett. It is likely that Network Rail, having closed the footpath over fears for people's safety, will install a new footbridge.

Both schemes are set to be completed by the end of 2017.
See back page for more rail-related news.

Annual Community Walk 24th September

With the help of the Parish Footpath Warden, Simon Richards, the parish council will again be supporting the annual community walk which provides a choice of three routes that vary in length from 8 miles to 3 miles.

Everyone is welcome on these walks which take in the countryside through and around the parish, starting and finishing in Millennium Park in the centre of the village.

The event starts at 1.30pm on Saturday 24th September – and will culminate with refreshments, pig-roast and music. It's a great way to meet your neighbours, keep fit and have fun! Look out for the posters and notices in the village and check the website for further details.

DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

An inspection copy of the Bromsgrove District Plan and its Proposed Main Modifications can be viewed at the parish council offices by anyone during office open hours:

Monday to Thursday 10am – 1pm and Thursday 2pm – 4pm.

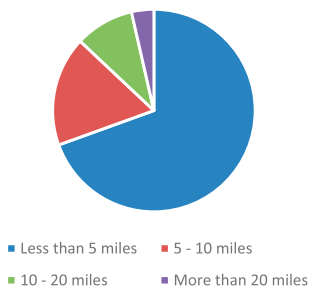
The Plan informs the planning process in the district and gives everyone an indication of what development will be allowed and where to expect it over the next 15 years or so.

The Consultation period runs until 21st September and response forms are also available from the parish council office.

BARNT GREEN OPEN GARDENS

Estimates on the number of visitors to Barnt Green gardens over the weekend of 2nd and 3rd July vary between 300 and 350. Whatever the numbers we do know that all had a good time and enjoyed the sights on offer. Mike Dickenson, whose garden in Hewell Road was greatly admired by all, has produced these statistics based on distance travelled.

Open Gardens Visitors



NETWORK RAIL IMPROVEMENT WORKS

Network Rail have written to Barnt Green residents who live near to the railway line with details of work they will be carrying out as part of their Railway Upgrade Plan. A copy of this letter is on our website but in essence Network Rail outline the dates when their work might cause some disturbance due to the type of equipment and machinery they use.

The work will take place at night, starting no earlier than 22:30hrs and is scheduled mostly for the weekends although some nights during the weeks at the end of August into early September will also be affected.

It's worth noting that there will be a complete closure of the railway line between Barnt Green and Bromsgrove stations for the period between Wednesday 26th October and Sunday 6th November 2016 inclusive for major track and signalling changes. This will not affect the line between Redditch, Barnt Green and Birmingham; the cross-city service will operate as normal except for Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th November.

The improvements scheme along the Bromsgrove Corridor includes the electrification of the line between Barnt Green and Bromsgrove. This will provide an eventual benefit of an extra three additional train services per hour between Bromsgrove and Birmingham.

Contact details for Network Rail are available online: www.networkrail.co.uk and their 24-hour National Helpline is 03457 11 41 41

Train service details are via London Midland – www.londonmidland.com and also via the National Rail website: www.nationalrail.co.uk

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

In advance of the annual Christmas Lights switch-on in early December the parish council is keen to pursue the suggestion that we hold a children's Design-Your-Own competition. The company that provides our festive lighting will create an illuminated motif from a child's drawing that will be included in the annual display.

The scheme is likely to be co-ordinated through St Andrews First School but will be open to all children resident in the parish up to and including eight years of age. If you have children or grand-children, please encourage them to enter!

Barnt Green Parish Council

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