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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

Councillors met with the newly appointed officer for the Bromsgrove district's town centres, Cheryl Welsh, responsible for supporting the viability of shops and businesses in Alvechurch, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall as well as those in Barnt Green. Cheryl has identified initiatives that we can work on to make the village more attractive and worth a visit, one of which is the free-to-enter competition that is running over two weeks to 9th December (see p8).

Having heard concerns from a resident of Rose Terrace about the poorly lit footpath along Hewell Road between the doctors' surgery and the village centre, members agreed to install external lighting to the wall outside the parish council office. This is in advance of a full review of footway lighting in the parish which members heard is a mix of parish council provision to the east of the railway line and county council provision to the west.

Members were delighted to hear that the Community Walk held on Saturday 24th September had involved 197 people, taking part in three different distance walks of 3 miles, 5 miles and 8 miles. With live music, hot-food and refreshing drinks available at the end it was an enjoyable afternoon.

Roadside drains and their efficiency have been the subject of scrutiny, with a number appearing blocked and covered by leaf-fall. The parish Lengthsman has been given the task of regularly checking all the drains in the parish to maintain an efficient drainage system.

A tour around the parish parks – Millennium Park on Hewell Road and Parker's Piece (Barnt Green playing field) on Bittell Road – saw members agree to a raft of improvements. The large tree in Millennium Park, which has been identified as a Nuttall Oak, was made tidier with all dead-wood removed and further plans for improving the park's appearance are in progress. For Parker's Piece plans are in hand to buy three picnic tables and a notice board.

Parish Councils usually consider their next year's budget during the last quarter of the year in order to work out the precept which is then collected from residents as part of the Council Tax. This year the government has been consulting on whether to impose a directive that would require a referendum if parish councils decide to increase the precept by more than 2%. In our case an increase of 2% would raise £1,153 which would barely cover the cost of any referendum! However, mandatory referendum or not, the parish council is keen to hear from residents regarding parish council funding and expenditure.

In October parish councillors met with Susan Roberts, the deputy Chief Executive at Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) which has been successful in obtaining funding from the Big Lottery's Awards For All to support and develop rural communities in the Bromsgrove District. BARN is the local network for Voluntary and Community Organisations across Bromsgrove and Redditch, and they also run the local Volunteer Centre. Contact details on page 7.

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

POWER CUT? CALL 105



A new telephone service was introduced in September for reporting power cuts. Now when the lights go out the only number you need to remember is **105**.

This service was introduced by electricity network operators – they are the companies that keep our lights on, manage and maintain the underground cables, overhead wires and sub-stations that bring electricity into our homes and businesses. They are the people to contact in the event of a power outage - no matter who you pay your bill to.

You can also call 105 if you spot damage to electricity power lines and substations that could put lives in danger; if there's a serious immediate risk, you should call the emergency services too. **105** is a free service, available throughout the UK and can be called from most landlines and mobile phones.

The problem with waste is that it has to go somewhere. The county council is worried that unless we do something Worcestershire will disappear under a pile of rubbish! So a call has gone out for volunteers who can talk to the community about composting, food waste, recycling, reuse and waste reduction.

In return for training, volunteers will work at events and in schools, do talks to groups and share knowledge and enthusiasm with people in the neighbourhood. Could you do this? Call 01905 844377 or contact letswasteless@worcestershire.gov.uk



Let's waste less
www.letswasteless.com



Cycle stands

In September the Parish Council learned it had been successful in its bid for funding to install cycle stands in the village centre which are to be sited outside the Happy Valley Chinese take-away.

This project ties in with the Neighbourhood Plan's proposals for more sustainable life-styles and is supported by way of the New Homes Bonus Fund operated by Bromsgrove District Council. We hope to see the stands well used, especially as car parking space is at such a premium along Hewell Road.

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

Meetings of the parish council's planning committee are held as and when necessary – usually when an application has been received that needs to be commented on before the next full council meeting. All agendas are published at least 5 days before the meeting and can be found on the notice board next to the bus shelter, and on our website.

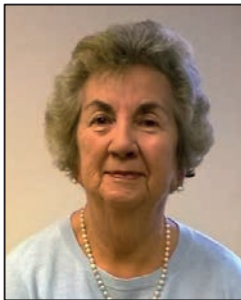
WELCOME #1

When permission was granted for the housing development at the bottom of Fiery Hill Road, now known as 'Foxhills' and Butterwick Close, one of the conditions imposed by the Planning Authority was that only a maximum of thirty homes (out of the 88 that are to be built) could be occupied before the necessary alterations to the local road network are completed. Due to a variety of issues Cala recently sought permission to extend that number to 45 homes, which is likely to be granted.

The alterations to the local roads include re-siting the pavement from the north side of Kendal End Road under the railway bridge to the south side which will entail slight alterations at the junction with Fiery Hill Road, Bittell Road and Hewell Road. We welcome this work as it is expected to improve road safety at these points, however in the short term we fully appreciate there will be some dismay and frustration amongst residents and local businesses whose usual travel routes will be disrupted when the roads close.

The parish council has been advised that the ten-week road closure is likely to start on 9th January 2017. The official diversion is likely to be via A441 (Rednal/Groveley Lane/Hopwood) but no doubt local traffic will find shorter routes, in which case we ask everyone to PLEASE be considerate of your fellow residents living in those roads that do not usually see much traffic!

WELCOME #2



At last! After a year of operating at just 75% capacity, the parish council co-opted two new volunteers at its meeting in October to complete the team.

We warmly welcome these co-optees, one of whom is Judith Jagger, pictured left, returning to civic duties after a gap of five years; the other is Philip Perry, who as a resident of Butterwick Close is especially welcome to provide a newcomer's perspective to council business.

KEEP IN TOUCH

From time to time the Parish Council supports events in the area or is notified of something happening around the district or in Worcestershire that it would like to share with residents.

In the past the Executive Officer maintained a database of names and email addresses for this purpose but with a change of administrator and people moving in and out of the area, this has now been deleted.

If you would like to be added to the notification database, please send an email to exec@barntgreen.org.uk with the words 'Add me in' on the subject line. Full compliance with data protection principles will apply.

COMMUNITY WALK on TUESDAY 27th DECEMBER, 1pm



Join us on the day after Boxing Day for a 5-mile walk on a route to Withybed Green where we join the canal towpath before turning back to Barnt Green via Cobley Hill. We are calling this event the 'Mulled Wine Walk' because we intend to end up at Café Morso for refreshments at about 4.30pm.

There will be lots to enjoy including the views of Arrow Valley, the fresh air, the company and just taking time out to unwind after the hectic Christmas activities.

The walk is being led by Simon Richards, the parish footpaths warden. There is no charge to take part in the walk which will set out from Millennium Park (Hewell Road) at 1pm. All ages are welcome, but young children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

You will need some money if staying for the refreshments at the end, stout walking shoes and wet-weather gear, just in case! But even if it rains, please do come and take this opportunity to walk off the Christmas pudding – just turn up, you will be warmly welcomed!

RAILWAY UPDATE

One of the drawbacks of Barnt Green railway station is that it is difficult to cross from one platform to the other if you have heavy luggage, a baby in a push-chair or any disability or health issue. We have been told that funding is available and a lift will be installed by the end of 2017.

Meanwhile, we have been copied in to a letter from London Midland offering this advice:

"If your assistance needs require it, we can provide alternative transport, such as a taxi, at no extra cost to you, to take you to the most convenient accessible or staffed station, where a member of staff will be on-hand to assist you. We will discuss with you how best to meet your needs and to make as much of the journey by rail as possible and where practicable, we will send a member of staff to an unstaffed station to assist."

Contact London Midland on 0800 092 4260 or via their website:

<https://www.londonmidland.com/travel-information/travel-help/accessibility>

On the subject of the railway station, it seems that the ticket machine is often out of order. Here is an extract of London Midland's response to a complaint - "When the machines are out of order, the problem is logged straight away with the Retail Systems manager for an engineer to attend to as soon as possible... Please be assured that we are constantly monitoring our operations to ensure that they reach the highest possible standards and we log all complaints on our customer database in as much detail as we can. We then use this information to draw up reports which we send to Senior Staff with responsibility in the appropriate area." **In other words they need to know there is a problem** – so if it bothers you please do ensure they know via www.londonmidland.com

CALLING ALL DOG OWNERS

Owning a dog can be great fun! They provide company, they can lift your mood, help to improve your physical wellbeing and encourage a healthy lifestyle. But, there is a downside - they produce poo.

Responsible dog-owners, the majority it must be said, carry a variety of resources to deal with their pet's business; especially manufactured dog-waste bags, poop-scoops, plain old plastic bags or nappy sacks can all be used to clear up after Rover. As a result, our streets and parks are very much cleaner these days and children are less likely to step in anything offensive on the way home from school.

But we should not be complacent. There is still a risk to health, especially to children, from dog waste via the roundworm parasite that can cause an infection called toxocariasis. It is rare but left untreated this could affect a variety of organs in the body, with perhaps the most severe outcome being permanent blindness.

As a parish council we are particularly keen to ensure dog owners 'pick up' after their pets when out for a walk and as well as providing a fenced-off dog-free play area at Millennium Park, we also display a variety of notices at Parker's Piece on this topic. Additionally, any of the bins on both sites will take bagged up waste.

If you are aware of a problem site which needs attention, please let us know.

COLD WEATHER PLAN FOR ENGLAND

The County Council advise us that Public Health England has published a cold weather plan which includes specific advice for communities and individuals. This plan can be accessed online via www.gov.uk then search 'cold weather plan'.

At the risk of teaching granny to suck eggs, here are their top tips:

1. Get your flu jab if you are over 65, disabled, a carer, live in a care home.
2. Ask your GP, nurse or carer about staying well.
3. Keep warm. Use a thermometer to check your dayroom and bedroom are at least 18°C (contact the parish council for a thermometer strip).
4. Look after yourself and check on neighbours to make sure they are safe, well and warm.
5. Wear lots of layers and good grip shoes or boots if you go outside.
6. Have hot food and drinks.
7. Keep moving about at home.
8. Get help with money. There are benefits and other help you can get to keep your house warm.
9. Have gas heating and gas cooker checked to make sure they are safe.
10. Get more advice from NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk
11. If you are worried about your health or that of someone you know ask your GP or carer or call the NHS on 111.

CHRISTMAS WASTE COLLECTIONS

Bromsgrove District Council advise that since Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year there will be no change to any collection day throughout the festive season. They ask for all bins to be ready for collection by 7am and if the weather prevents collection then please leave your bin out and they will collect as soon as they can.

Regular updates are available via the website (www.bromsgrove.gov.uk), Facebook and Twitter and their contact phone number for all environmental services is 01527 881188.

Barnt Green Social Club

One of the joys of the Open Gardens event held earlier in the year was the opportunity to visit new places. For many the Social Club might have been one of those, so we asked Ian Rawlings from the club's committee to provide a few words:

A place to meet up with friends and family, or to indulge yourselves in one of our themed evenings, we've got something for everyone. From live music to summer BBQ's and treasure hunts around local lanes.

Regular monthly Quizzes, along with a regular walking group which departs from the Club. We have four full size Snooker tables and the Club's lounge area is also available for private hire for up to 75 people.

Our delightful gardens provide a pleasant and relaxed area with seating and tables. A regular monthly newsletter advises members of up and coming events and start times.

They are at 1 Blackwell Road and www.barntgreensocialclub.co.uk

LOCAL ENTERPRISE

Keen to encourage local enterprise the parish council was happy to provide space for Martin and Sarah Belshah's home-made drink 'Zobi' for those returning from the Community Walk in September. The drink is made from the fruity 'calyces' of the hibiscus flower, which blooms for just a day.

Sarah writes: Drinking hibiscus is a new concept to most of us, although it is popular in other parts of the world. Many people drink it as a means of lowering blood pressure, or simply for the taste, which is surprisingly fruity! There is more information online: www.zobi-hibiscus.co.uk and on their Facebook page @zobihibiscus

BARN provides free help and advice for the voluntary and community sector in rural Bromsgrove

If you would like to find out more then please telephone 01527 60282 or email office@barn.org.uk. Website www.ruralbromsgrove.org.uk

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The judges were faced with a challenge when choosing the winners of the Christmas lights competition, but finally agreed on the five designs that will be part of the annual illuminations for the next few years thanks to sponsorship from Cala Homes and the team at Blachere Lighting. Here is a sneak preview of the designs...



The winning designers, all pupils at St Andrews Church of England First School, will receive a certificate in recognition of their creativity and the lights will be on display following the official switch-on on Friday 2nd December. The event will start at 4.30pm in Millennium Park with the school choir leading the carol singing before processing along Hewell Road to the school Christmas Fair that starts at 5.30pm.

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

Take a peek in the village shops between 25th November and 9th December to find Santa and his tree decorations. You will be able to pick up a competition entry form from Barnt Green Post Office, The Tea Shop or Oasis Flowers and Balloons to record where you found each one. Then, after you've filled in the form, return it to one of the locations to be in with a chance of winning a special prize.

There will also be a best-dressed Christmas themed window competition for the shops to show off their window-dressing skills during the festive season.

These two initiatives are being promoted by the newly appointed Bromsgrove Centres Manager, working for the District Council with the support of Barnt Green Parish Council.

Good luck everyone – with best wishes for a happy Christmas and New Year.



Barnt Green Parish Council

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