

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 27th April 2016 at the Friends' Meeting House, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green

The Meeting was chaired by Cllr Robert Cholmondeley, Parish Council Chairman and was attended by Cllrs Briggs, Gumbley, Hotham, Jellie and Whitehand together with 5 members of the public.

In attendance: Rachel Banner, Organiser, Barnt Green Open Gardens
Richard Dugdale, Senior Sponsor, Network Rail
Gill Lungley, Executive Officer, Barnt Green Parish Council

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all present.

2. Apologies

No apologies had been received.

3. To hear from invited speakers

Rachel Banner spoke of the community event planned for the weekend of 2nd and 3rd July when there is to be a flower show in the church, the shops will be decorated with red, white and blue bunting, flags and balloons and residents' gardens will be open to the public. She thanked the local National Garden Scheme organiser David Morgan, Rob Fieldson of St Andrews Church, Pete Worth of the Baptist Church, St Andrews First School, the parish council and all who are supporting the event which is hoping to raise funds for three local charities – The Basement Project, Where Next, and Barnt Green Day Care.

The Chairman thanked Rachel for her presentation and efforts to ensure the event is a success.

Richard Dugdale provided an update on the scheme to electrify the line between Barnt Green, Bromsgrove (part of the Birmingham – Cheltenham scheme). All the works must be done in a strict order since each step relies on completion of the preceding step. Since the last Annual Meeting, the four local bridges have been reconstructed with some attention on-going at the Hewell Lane bridge to prevent vehicle incursion onto the line.

Bromsgrove station is soon to be completed following which there will be a 12-day closure of the line ending on 7th November 2016 to allow for replacement of the track layout and signalling improvements. The cross-city line (Redditch – Lichfield) will run as normal except for the weekend of 5th/6th November. The full electric service will be ready for December 2017.

With regard to the pedestrian foot-crossing at Cofton, this was closed since the increased line use indicated the crossing was unsafe. Alternatives such as a variety of old and new footpaths or a footbridge are being investigated and Network Rail has been consulting to establish the best way forward on this.

On the subject of lifts at Barnt Green station to assist with access to each platform and help passengers move from one side of the station to the other, Richard warned of delays due to funding uncertainties, but was confident they would be in place by December 2017.

The Chairman thanked Richard for his presentation.

Cllr Edwin Gumbley spoke of the recent inaugural PACT meeting (Partners and Community Together) which will meet quarterly for the community to raise issues. Edwin spoke on the subject of SmartWater, which is a forensically coded marking liquid used for identifying valuable property.

This is available to buy and if there is an 80% take-up within a community the community can be known as a SmartWater Village, which is an effective deterrent to criminals. The parish council is considering whether to enter into this scheme and is willing to assist with distribution, form-filling and property-marking, but needs to know if it will be used by enough residents to qualify for the SmartWater Village status and therefore make it a viable investment.

4. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting dated 20 May 2015

The minutes were approved a true record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Chairman's report

The Chairman gave a report which is given in full at Appendix 1.

6. Parish Council (un-audited) accounts for the year ending 31 March 2016

The Chairman referred to the accounts at Appendix 2.

7. Reports from County and District Councillors

Coun. Charles Hotham, Barnt Green and Hopwood ward, Bromsgrove DC

The past year has been difficult for Bromsgrove DC with the planning department starting the year in special measures, now removed, and the District Plan only now appearing to be acceptable to the Plan Inspector which means parishes with Neighbourhood Plans can start to move forward.

The recent office move from Burcot Lane to Parkside and the decision to replace the Dolphin Centre without a sports hall has affected the council's finances with concerns of escalating costs. Coun Hotham was asked about the council's use of consultants which was answered by...

Peter McDonald, Worcestershire County Councillor for Beacon Division.

The County Council has been aware of the need for financial savings and is hoping to be self-sufficient by 2017. The funding has been cut by more than 50% over the last 3 years and this has had an obvious effect on services, although funding for social services and children's services has been ring-fenced.

There are concerns about the use of consultants and agency-staff and the possible lack of accountability; council services are being provided by the private sector which would imply a change of emphasis towards profit-making.

The council has been looking at combining authorities, and if this is proposed Peter would ask for a referendum to ensure the decision was taken by residents.

Peter is asking for all asbestos to be removed from schools by 2017 and, in response to a question from the floor, stated he is against fracking.

In response to a question about the council's accounts, Peter stated there are two audit teams – internal and external - and there is a transparent annual audit process.

The Chairman thanked Charles and Peter for their reports.

8. Open session

Residents commented:

(i) Re. CALA Homes development: that the re-siting of the pavement under the Bittell Road railway bridge would be inconvenient for the many walkers and residents walking along Bittell Road and into Kendal End Road, necessitating extra road crossings at Hewell Road and Fiery Hill Road.

(ii) Re. parish council finances: perhaps the office electricity costs could be reviewed.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Chairman
2017

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2016

Chairman's Report

I'll commence with changes in personnel. In August last year, our chairman John Jagger sadly died. As vice chairman, I had taken on the day to day role of chairman during his illness and was formally elected as chairman by my fellow councillors in September. John's wisdom and gentle manner are missed by us all.

The council also has a new executive officer, Gill Lungley, who many of you will now know. She took on the role in July after Paul MacLachlan left the Barnt Green area and moved to East Anglia.

Since last May's elections, Jenny Jellie has joined the council, but we still only have 6 of the 8 councillor positions filled. Although the powers of parish councils are limited, I hope that by way of this report I can show that there are things which the parish council can do and influence to improve our community. If you have an interest in being involved in shaping the future of Barnt Green, my fellow councillors, Gill and I are more than willing to chat with you about what's involved.

During the year, the Parish Council has organised a number of events.

In September, we had the village walks, ending with food and music in Millennium Park with over 150 people participating.

A further walk was organised in April 2016. A trip on the bus to Stoke Prior was followed by an 8 mile walk back, mainly along the canal.

The Sports Relief Mile in March was supported by the Parish Council. 280 were signed up for the event, again finishing in Millennium Park with food and music.

A new venture for the parish council was staging two entertainment events at St Andrew's Parish Centre. About 70 people enjoyed The Seven Ages of Man in October. Then, 10 days ago we hosted a musical comedy called The Origin of Species.

The Christmas lights are funded by the council. We were involved with the formal switch on with a short service in Millennium Park followed by Father Christmas leading the procession to the school's Christmas Fair. There were a few rough edges in the timings which we should iron out this coming Christmas.

There have been some significant improvements made during the year. Lights have been installed in the bus shelter outside Millennium Park. New metal planters, which are more sturdy, have been purchased and placed outside the shops in Hewell Road. A defibrillator has been installed on the wall in the driveway next to the Post Office. Our biggest expenditure has been laying stone chippings to create a formal path across Parker's Piece (the recreational field behind the Baptist Church). Once it's bedded in, we will consider extending it so there is a circular stone path around the field.

Subject to signing the documentation, the Parish Council has agreed to acquire and take on the responsibility for the 28 space car park at the Foxhills housing development.

It is proposed that no charges will be levied to encourage railway commuters to use it. Cala Homes will provide £30,000, which will be held in trust, for its future maintenance.

Whilst mentioning Cala Homes, I should refer to the cricket nets which were a hot topic at last year's meeting. Although the parish council has not been involved in the negotiations, I can confirm that Cala Homes are paying for the cost of nets to protect the new homes next to Barnt Green Cricket Club's second XI pitch.

The parish council does not have direct authority over planning issues, but it does have the right to comment and has some influence. Perhaps the most contentious issue during the year was the application from Cala Homes to change their plans so that the junction at the bottom of Fiery Hill Road would not be realigned away from the railway bridge. A number of meetings were held and traffic data collected which revealed that leaving the line of the road as it is, with the pavement switching sides under the railway bridge, would result in the safest junction.

Traffic and parking have remained troublesome issues where the ultimate responsibility is Worcestershire County Council. We have engaged at County and District Council level and had contact with the policing authorities to ease some of the problems. There is no obvious panacea for Barnt Green's difficulties, so I ask that we are courteous and considerate on our highways and pavements. Our district councillor, Peter Macdonald, has asked that any issues are referred directly to him.

Although we experienced temporary road closures emanating from the Foxhills housing development and Network Rail's electrification to Bromsgrove, the most concerning incident was the sudden closure in July of the footpath crossing the railway at Cofton Hall on safety grounds. It will remain closed until the end of 2016. The council is lobbying for the footpath route to be maintained with a footbridge across the railway line.

Over the coming months, we have planned to keep on top of the growth of the vegetation more efficiently than we did last year. We are also sorting out the replacement of the missing bollards in Hewell Road. Over the last few months, we have had assistance from a couple of Barnt Green youngsters who have been helping with litter picking as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Work continues on drafting a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Barnt Green. Limited progress has been made during the year because our plan needs to complement that of Bromsgrove District Council. Their plan has still not been approved. We do know, however, that a review of the green belt is highly likely.

Our next event is supporting the Open gardens weekend on 2/3 July which I hope you will also support. The proceeds will go to local charities.

Finally, thank you to everyone, who during the last year, whether performing specific jobs or volunteering, for all your time and effort in maintaining and improving Barnt Green.

CLlr Robert Cholmondeley
Chairman, Barnt Green Parish Council
27th April 2016

Report of 2015/16 Barnt Green Parish Council payments and receipts

Presented to Annual Parish Meeting dated 27 April 2016

		2014/15		2015/16	
Receipts	Precept received	28,107.88		57,200.00	
	Interest	972.25		484.38	
	Lengthsman Refund	1,453.65		1,382.00	
	VAT Refund	5,133.88		5,260.41	
	Miscellaneous	257.50		3,530.05	
	Total Receipts		35,925.16		67,856.84
Administration	Staff Costs	15,665.15		16,150.28	
	Chairman's Allowance	382.20		343.00	
	Office Running costs	5,471.05		7,098.89	
	Training/Publications	210.00		168.46	
	Meetings/Refreshments	0.00		27.00	
	Subscriptions	817.27		847.86	
	Insurance	947.82		1,026.92	
	Auditor Fees	435.00		415.00	
	Legal Fees	842.50		200.00	
	Loan repayments	583.28		0.00	
	Election costs	0.00		89.70	
	Donations	250.00		0.00	
	Administration Costs	218.77		771.61	
	VAT	5,725.38	31,548.42	4,915.95	32,054.67
Communication	Newsletters	980.00		980.00	
	Website	696.00	1,676.00	736.00	1,716.00
Millennium Park	Park Mowing	810.00		756.00	
	Park Maintenance	4,851.44		1,049.88	
	Park Safety Inspections	215.00	5,876.44	140.00	1,945.88
Parker's Piece	Field Mowing	2,734.32		1,822.88	
	Field Maintenance	1,955.85		1,338.96	
	Field Safety Inspections	215.00	4,905.17	140.00	3,301.84
Environment	Hanging baskets	389.58		416.25	
	Planters	287.50		786.67	
	Environment maintenance	1,813.75	2,490.83	784.61	1,987.53
Street lighting	Street light maintenance	5,750.60		3,196.95	
	Street light electricity	2,482.16		2,256.42	
	Christmas lights	5,825.86	14,058.62	5,640.74	11,094.11
Highways	Lengthsman charges	1,025.60		2,000	
	Highways	0.00	1,025.60	210.00	2,210.00
Miscellaneous	Events	349.40		904.15	
	Section 137	0.00		0.00	
	Exceptional Items	0.00		0.00	
	Fixed Assets	0.00	349.40	5,607.40	6,511.55
	Total Payments		61,930.48		60,821.58
	Cashflow	Deficit	-26,005.32		7,035.26

Report of 2015/16 Barnt Green Parish Council payments and receipts

Presented to Annual Parish Meeting dated 27 April 2016

Notes to the report of 2015/16 payments and receipts

1. These draft accounts are presented on a payments and receipts basis, and have yet to be audited. For more information relating to the audit see paragraph 7 below.					
2. The precept 2014/15 should be £56,215.76; Bromsgrove District Council paid the first instalment (£28,107.88) in the preceding financial year (2013/14). When adjusted to take account of this the 2014/15 surplus is £2,102.56.					
3. Other income variances: - Misc income		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bromsgrove DC passed on the Council Tax Support Grant (CTSG) during 2015/16, amounting to £1,379. • CTSG funding of £350 relating to 2014/15 was received to pay for the new light in the bus shelter. • A donation of £577 towards a seat in memory of a parish resident. • Hire of the playing field £340 for youth football training. • Ticket and refreshment sales of £512 for October Shindig event. 			
4. Expenditure variances		Office running costs		Administration costs	
		2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16
Printer ink & stationery		0.00	143.35	183.77	31.12
Telephone & broadband		348.93	336.08	0.00	0.00
Electricity		363.94	621.36	0.00	0.00
Rent		4,602.74	5,592.09	0.00	0.00
Sundries		155.44	406.01	35.00	169.40
Office hardware items		0.00	0.00	0.00	267.09
Recruitment		0.00	0.00	0.00	304.00
	Totals	5,471.05	7,098.89	218.77	771.61
Park Maintenance	Repairs to Millennium Park safety surfaces in 14/15 of £3,763 and in 15/16 of £600. Maintenance costs include bin emptying.				
Field Mowing	In 14/15 grass was cut 12 times compared to 8 times 2015/16.				
Planters	There were 2 planting visits during 2015/16.				
Environment Mce	14/15 costs included planting of wild flowers and fence painting.				
Highways	£210 spent during 15/16 on 30mph wheelie bin stickers				
Events	The Parish Council supported a community walk in September, Shindig entertainment in October and the 2016 Sport Relief Mile.				
Fixed Assets	New planters for Hewell Road during 2015/16, £4,490; a cabinet £530 and its installation £175 for the defibrillator that was provided free of charge, child-sized defib pads £62.40, bus shelter light £350.				
5. Bank reconciliation			31/03/2015	31/03/2016	
	Unity Bank current account		3,491.10	3,483.66	
	Unity Bank deposit account		7,292.02	13,937.61	
	Lloyds TSB current account		28,685.90	0.00	
	Cambridge Building Society		25,013.70	54,145.20	
	Alto (debit/pre-pay) card		348.49	300.00	
			64,831.21		
	(Add) Receipts in the year to 31 March 2016		67,856.84		
	(Subtract) Payments in the year to 31 March 2016		-60,821.58		
	Cashbook balance at 31 March 2016		71,866.47	71,866.47	
6. Reserves	At the Parish Council meeting in January 2015 the Parish Council retained a reserve of £2,500.00 for Neighbourhood Development Plan costs which has yet to be spent. At present the unallocated reserves stand at £69,366.47.				
7. Audit 2015/16	The 30-day audit period during which members of the public can inspect all books, receipts, invoices, payments and bills will be 3 rd June 2016 to 14 th July 2016. Please contact the Executive Officer if wishing to view the accounts.				