

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 11 May 2016
Birlingham Village Hall

Welcome

Present: Councillors Allen, Conder, Hill, Morris, New and Yates.

In attendance: District Councillor Davis, Lengthsman Carl Brassington, Clerk and three residents (Ann, Dan and Stuart).

1) Apologies: Councillor Fitch, Footpath Warden Bruce Hayward, and Tree Warden Karl Grimston.

2) Election of Chairman
Councillor Steve Morris was elected as Chairman.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3) Declaration of Interest for Councillors

a) Register of Interests: Councillors are reminded of the need to update their register of interests.

b) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.

c) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda and their nature.

4) Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting

The Minutes of the Parish meeting, held on 20 May 2015, were verified by Councillors as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

5) Chairman's Report

Councillor Morris read out his report as follows:

"Following the excitement of last year's parish election, this has been quite a busy year for the Parish Council, with the Village Survey taking up much of our time.

As always, I would like to begin by thanking June Hiden for the long hours she puts in as Clerk. The Parish Council could not function effectively without her hard work.

We were sorry to lose John Comins last summer, following his move to Tewkesbury. John had been a councillor for over ten years and was particularly active in planning matters, in which his knowledge and experience were invaluable.

His place was taken by Steve Conder but unfortunately (for us) he is now having to leave for work reasons. However, I hope he will continue to be involved in village matters, particularly the Village Design Statement.

Financially we are slowly returning to a more stable position, under the expert guidance of our Finance Support Officer, John Hill, and we are building reserves to cover the cost of work to the plane tree and future parish elections. We have also set up a Community Fund to provide financial assistance to village organisations. Although we restricted the increase in our precept to 2% again this year, we will probably need a greater increase next year to cover rising costs.

Ken Fitch has led the Planning Subgroup since John Comins left the Council and has had to deal with some difficult and controversial applications. Thanks, are due to Ian Yates, Steve Conder, Stuart Allen and Marion New for their input to the subgroup. Now that applications are distributed online, we have decided that they should be considered by the whole council, with a Planning Co-ordinator to pull all the comments and ideas together.

Thanks, are also due to County Councillor Adrian Hardman and District Councillor Ron Davis, who continue to support us in many ways. Councillor Davis is always helpful and always attends the meetings when possible.

Bruce Hayward has continued to work hard on maintaining our footpaths, assisted by Mark Smith. The many hours they put in throughout the year is much appreciated. The footpaths are better than any parishes around.

Our Tree Warden, Karl Grimston, continues to maintain the village trees and has also planted replacement trees in the Jubilee Wood. The trees are healthy.

The village Lengthsman, Carl Brassington, has worked hard this year to keep our gullies, drains and footways up to a very high standard, which significantly reduced the impact of flooding earlier in the year. Carl also maintains the village green for us.

Chris Reynard has represented us at PACT meetings but these meetings have now stopped in favour of online communication.

Last summer we conducted a Village Survey, which produced many interesting results. The results were explained to the village at a public meeting, during which Ian Yates gave an excellent presentation. The presentation is now available on the village website.

The most important conclusion from the survey was that the village would like to develop a Village Design Statement rather than a Neighbourhood Plan. As a result, the initial meeting for the VDS takes place next week and this meeting will be led by Ian Yates.

Last year we contributed part of our New Homes Bonus to the Jubilee Committee for the purchase of 25 much-needed trestle tables, which will benefit many village organisations.

The telephone kiosk continues to be used to very good effect by the Flower and Produce Show.

The annual litter pick was well supported and this year was held on two days, so that Swan's Neck and Nafford could also be tidied up. This year we were allowed to keep one set of litter-picking equipment: a special edition to mark the Queen's 90th birthday.

We entered the Wychavon Parish Games for a second year and improved our position in the final league table. Thanks to Denise McGowan for taking overall control of this activity.

The coming year promises to be an interesting one, particularly with the aim of finalising the Village Design Statement within the next 12 months, and I am sure the Parish Council will continue to take an interest in other issues raised during the Village Survey".

Further comments were added. The Chairman said how wonderful the work was that the Lengthsman did and it had helped in flood prevention.

The Chairman said thank you to all the Councillors. Thank you to all the Wardens.

The Vice-chairman also said thank you to Councillor Morris for his work on the Village Design Statement and to Councillor Yates for his presentation of the Statement to the village.

6) To receive annual reports from elected representatives

District Councillor Ron Davis gave a report, as follows:

- Wychavon District Council is 'ticking along'.
- The Annual Meeting is to be held next week.
- Councillor Davis is losing the Chairmanship of the Audit and will instead become Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Planning.

7) To receive annual reports from representatives

Footpath Warden's Report

The Chairman and members wished their thanks to be passed to Bruce Hayward for his volunteering work and to Mark Smith for his continuing help. The Warden was quite happy to continue as Warden.

The Warden gave his report, as follows:

"Birlingham has 2 volunteers who, together with local landowners and others, look after the Parish footpaths on behalf of the County Council. The County Council meet any small expenses incurred, and will often supply 'furniture' (e.g. gates, stiles etc.) that needs to be replaced.

A good example of this is the new gate on Footpath No. 500 (which runs behind the nursery). The County Council supplied the gate and it was installed by the landowner – the People's Trust for Endangered Species.



The main work in the past year for the volunteers has, as usual, been the controlling/clearing of undergrowth and repairs to stiles and finger-posts.

All the footpaths in Worcestershire are shown on the Public Rights of Way web map which is maintained by the County Council Countryside Service; visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/countryside and click on Public Rights of Way and then Interactive Map. (There is a link from the village website).

If anyone has any concerns or suggestions regarding the footpaths in the Parish, please contact me at Tadpole Cottage on 751382 or via the Parish Clerk".

Lengthsman's Report

The Lengthsman, Carl Brassington has reported that he was happy to continue for this financial year. Carl had sent a report, as follows:

"The overall expenditure on the Lengthsman was within budget again. Work carried out included clearing of road gullies and cutting of grips to ditches, strimming of visibility splays at road junctions, clearing of fallen tree branches and attending to flooding issues. Generally flooding has not been as big an issue this year even considering that it was the wettest winter on record for many years. There are particular issues at various areas which require Highways action to alleviate. These include:

Historic flooding outside Court House Cottages in heavy downpours. This is made worse by surface water running off the fields. It appears that the amount of water is the issue as the flood usually clears within 24 hours indicating that the drain is open. Broken highway drain outside Field Cottage (Eric's) in The Avenue. The water backs up and forces the manhole outside The Old Coach House to lift. This has been reported to Highways.



Flooding at the junction of New Barn lane and Eckington Road caused by the highway drain not being able to cope with the inundation and water forcing its way through the open grid in the adjacent field.



There is also historical flooding at lower Broadway usually caused by the height of the river which means that the water has nowhere to drain to. There are two blocked road gullies outside the Church entrance which have been reported to Highways”.

Tree Warden's Report

Karl Grimston was on holiday and has given his apologies but submitted a short report, as follows:

“I am of course willing to continue in the role of Tree Warden unless anyone else feels strongly that they want to take it on.

I don't have anything new to report since last time. I think the focus for the coming year will be on keeping the trees already planted in good shape. There is some work to do on Jubilee Way which I will get on with once I'm back. There are also trees that need replacing by the barns at the end of Withy Way and I have those already.

I've noted emails regarding possible funding for upkeep of trees and I'll consider if we can make use of that. I'm not aware of any areas where we could plant more young trees.

I would like to raise again the planting of trees in memory of somebody. We could easily do this in Jubilee Way and it would also be a good way of introducing more mature trees to the area”.

PACT Representative's Report

Chris Reynard was keeping the Parish Council updated throughout the year where necessary. Most reporting was now available on-line.

8) Community Groups

Jubilee Committee

A report was read out, as follows:

"The Jubilee Committee has had a busy year, maintaining the village website, distributing village emails, purchasing trestle tables and organising events to mark the Queen's 90th birthday.

The Committee is in the process of applying for charity status, ensuring that income from the website and future events will be efficiently used for the good of the village.

The website is now ready to take commercial advertisements and the committee is currently promoting the benefits of this form of advertising.

We are also in the process of setting up a completely new section of the website for the Parish Council, which can be maintained independently by the Council in the future.

Over the last twelve months the number of 'first-time' visitors to the website has remained high at around 3900 and of course there have been many repeat visits. Since the website started in 2012 over 43,000 pages have been viewed during 16,600 visits.

The website has prompted interest from around the world, with several interesting contacts during the last year from descendents of the Ager, Bennett, Butler and Lunn families. These contacts have come not only from Britain but also from New Zealand the USA. We were also able to assist in the return to the church of two 19th century books belonging to the Rev Rashleigh Duke.

Meanwhile, a further 28 editions of Birlingham News have been distributed over the last year, including the 100th edition. Following suggestions made in the Village Survey, the email is now distributed on a regular basis, on the second and last Wednesdays of the month. The email is currently sent to 163 people, 22 of whom live outside the parish, and is now distributed to over 75% of properties in Birlingham.

We would like to thank the many people who now regularly contribute to Birlingham News and help us to keep up to date with village activities. Thank you to all who contribute as this makes a huge difference to making the job a lot easier.

The Chairman thanked the Parish Council for allowing the Jubilee Committee to use the New Homes Bonus.

The Committee is also responsible for the maintenance of the Jubilee Wood. A large number of additional trees were planted last year and these are thriving, while the original trees are beginning to become established. Thanks, are due to Karl Grimston for his assistance with the trees over the last year.

The Committee has purchased a set of 25 trestle tables for use by village organisations, with half the funding coming from the New Homes Bonus. The tables were used for the first time at the Flower & Produce Show last September. Birlingham Cricket Club are currently providing secure storage for the tables.

Last month the Jubilee Committee joined with the PCC to organise a special service to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday. Our thanks go to all those who helped make this such a successful event, which was attended by over 70 people.

A further day of celebrations is being planned for Sunday 12th June and we are currently looking for volunteers to help organise the day. This would be a village event held on the cricket grounds"

It was further added that the website was receiving a high hit rate and would soon be using advertisements.

9) Democratic Opening (Open Questions)

There was concern regarding the condition of Church Street and the 'installation' of electricity. When is the resurfacing planned? Clerk and/or Chairman to contact County Councillor Hardman again reminding him that this is a 'C' road.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

Closure – with nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 7.30pm. **The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting in May will be posted when arranged.** It would be a separate meeting date to the Parish Council meeting, in order to make it more of a social event and to encourage participation from village organisations.

Signed: John Hill, Chairman

Date: