ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 16 May 2018
Birlingham Village Hall

Welcome

Present: Councillors Aston, Allen, Fitch, Hill, New and Yates.

In attendance: Carl Brassington (Lengthsman), Felicity Collier, Angela Fitch, Terry Griffin, Val Gilmore, Ann Maxwell and June Hiden (Clerk).

1) Election of Chairman
Councillor Ian Yates was elected as Chairman (*the Chair of the Parish Council must preside if present*).

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2) Apologies: County Councillor Adrian Hardman, District Councillor Davis (*three meetings at Wychavon on the same date)*, Councillor Steven Byrne, Bruce Hayward (Footpath Warden), Karl Grimston (Tree Warden), Julie Pardoe (West Mercia Police) and Chris Reynard.

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 10 May 2017, were verified by Councillors as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

5) Parish Council Chairman's Report

Councillor Yates presented his report:

"As you know I have only just become chairman of the parish council following the unexpected and untimely death of our former chairman John Hill. John's funeral was very well attended and I know most of you were there. His sudden death came as a great shock to all of us and we pass on our condolences to Daphne and the family.

John was involved in a great many different activities around the village and worked tirelessly for the benefit of the community. Not only was he an active member of the Parish Council but was also a member of the Parochial Church Council raising funds for St James's Church. John took over the chairmanship of the Parish Council from Steve Morris in May 2017. It was John's idea to change the format of the Parish meeting and twelve months ago it was held in the cricket club for the first time where we heard presentations from many of the village groups and organisations. This is a format that we will consider for the future, even though there was no time to arrange it again this year. John, with his accounting background, also helped to bring the parish council's finances onto a more stable footing with improved budgeting and allocation of provisions to cover the cost of work to the plane tree and future parish elections. These funds are now held in a separate savings account. He also set up a Community Fund to provide financial assistance to village organisations. He will be greatly missed.

So, this report is a summary of the many activities that have taken place over the last 12 months. 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 and I have found her knowledge and experience invaluable. I would also like to thank Steve Morris who was, of course, chairman for many years and who continues to be of great support behind the scenes, working from his canal boat developing and maintaining the village website and providing advice and guidance based on his extensive experience.

Steve Morris's resignation in May 2017 resulted in a vacancy and Steven Byrne was co-opted. Steven had already led one of the working groups during the development of the Village Design Statement and we have welcomed his participation and fresh ideas.

My thanks also go to Ken Fitch who has headed up the planning group and has had to deal with some difficult applications such as Comberton Golf Course and Woodfield Farm caravans. Thanks, are due to Stuart Allen, Paula Aston, Marion New and Steven Byrne for their input to this subgroup. Applications are now distributed online, which allows them to be considered by the whole council. Ken has done a great job of pulling all the comments and ideas together in a timely fashion.

Thanks also to Paula Aston who has co-ordinated the monitoring of vehicle speeds through community speed awareness in Upper End and Marion New for her work on the provision of additional litter bins.

I headed up the group that developed the Village Design Statement. The process of creating the VDS has taken almost three years and has involved more than 30 people in the village. It started with the village survey in 2015 and was followed by an extensive consultation process and Open Day. I'd like to thank all of those that were involved in its development including members of the parish council and in particular the small group of volunteers who helped me with the task of managing and running the overall process. They were; Steven Byrne, Mary-Ann Dyer, John Hill, Bryan and Christina Horrocks, Steve Morris and Dan Stratford.

I am delighted to report that the VDS was adopted as a Local Information Source at the meeting of Wychavon Council's Executive Board on 7 February 2018. This now means it has material weight, within certain limits, in helping to determine planning applications. It has been a significant undertaking and I hope that it will not only be a useful planning tool but will also provide an interesting snapshot for future generations of life in the parish between 2015-18.

Thanks, are also due to County Councillor Adrian Hardman and District Councillor Ron Davis, who continue to support us in many ways. For example, we are delighted that the resurfacing of Church Street, Berwick Lane and Grange Road has been completed. It is much appreciated that you find time to attend our meetings whenever 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. They are all looking very healthy.

The village Lengthsman, Carl Brassington, has worked hard to keep our gullies, drains and footways up to a very high standard, which significantly reduces the impact of flooding. Carl also maintains the village green for us and has put up the No Parking signs to ensure the improved bus service has access.

The PACT meetings have now stopped in favour of online communication but I'd like to thank Chris Reynard for continuing to monitor their activities as well as co-ordinating poppy wreaths and Remembrance Day services.

Last year we contributed part of our New Homes Bonus to two village organisations; the Cricket Club to allow them to upgrade their toilets and the Flower and Produce Show to allow them to purchase a new marquee.

Also, in the last year we have had the plane tree on the village green professionally inspected to ensure it is safe and healthy. The bench at the base of the tree has been secured and the drainage cover levelled.

The annual litter pick on March 24th was well supported again this year and my thanks to June Hiden for arranging this activity and thanking participants via the Bystander.

We have entered the Wychavon Parish Games in previous years but were not able to put together teams for 2017. However, as 2018 is the 40th anniversary we hope that we can encourage groups to participate later this year.

Looking ahead, there are several initiatives that we will be working on; Stuart Allen has agreed to put in place the processes and procedures necessary for the parish council to be compliant with the new General Data Process Regulations that come into force on the 25th May. Marion New continues to look at the provision of additional litter bins which will hopefully be funded through the New Homes Bonus. Steve Morris is making arrangements to separate the parish council website from the village website to allow us to manage its contents independently. The telephone kiosk which has been used to very good effect by the Flower and Produce Show now requires some refurbishment and several ideas are under consideration.

So, in conclusion, my thanks go to the clerk, councillors, wardens, lengthsman and others who have given their time in support of parish activities."

6) To receive annual reports from elected representatives

County Councillor

County Councillor Adrian Hardman gave the following report:

"Dear Resident

Some years seems to pass quicker than others and this has certainly been one of those. Following the County Council elections on the 4th of May I was returned as your member for the next 4 years, and thanks to those who voted for me. I am now Deputy Leader of the County Council, and member with responsibility for Adult Social care, which has been a considerable challenge.

It has been a year of three main themes at County Hall, coping with the financial pressure of the 8th year of budget reductions, the demand pressures in Adult Social Care and the future of Children's Social Care.

This year has been the most challenging year for budget reductions, with the budget reducing by some £32m, and this is starting to have clear effects on the frontline services in the need to reform them. But to quote the Chancellor "There is light at the end of the tunnel" and our budget is starting to rise by some £5m next year mainly due to the Social Care precept section on your Council tax bill. I have in the past talked about the pressure on Adult Social Care for some years now and will only quote on fact that dementia is forecast to rise by some 40% by 2025. I await Government reform with interest.

Following an OFSTED inspection in may the Children's Social Care was found to be inadequate, and this led to the Minster appointing a commissioner to oversee the service and this is leading to a change in system since he is determined we set up an arm's length company to run these services, but the numbers of Children in care has continued to rise, as has the budget over spend.

On a more local front your concerns have been focused on 3 main issues; the question of speeding in the village, potholes and drainage. We still don't have a magic bullet to speeding in the village alas. Please keep reporting potholes. I am able to confirm the Council will be doing some drainage works in the village this year. I hope that you thought the two snow falls were dealt with effectively, but we will not be returning to the use of snow fencing! The schools around the hill remain in good health and close to being full, and it is great to see the numbers at Defford

and Eckington rising again. I urge you to use the bus service, since it is under threat from Frist again I understand.

I would like to thank the Parish Council and my fellow District Councillor for all their work over the year."

Questions have been raised regarding the bus stop location. Should this be marked with signage so that people are aware of the pickup/drop off points? Most regular users stand by the village hall or sit on the Millennium bench. The County Councillor repeated that the public transport must be used, or it will be lost.

District Councillor

District Councillor Ron Davis gave a brief report as follows:-

"In general terms it was a quiet year for Birlingham Parish with no major planning upsets. New Homes bonus featured very well with £3620.00 being paid over with a further £1372.00 to be drawn down. The year was sadly marred by the loss of your Chairman John Hill who will be greatly missed by the Parish and everyone who knew him. I trust you have a good meeting and I wish all Councillors a successful new year."

7) Annual Reports from representatives

The Parish Warden reports were given, as follows:

Footpath Warden

The Chairman and members wished to thank Bruce Hayward for his volunteering work and to Mark Smith for his continuing help. The footpaths were in a really good condition. The Warden was quite happy to continue with his duties and thanked the landowners for their assistance.

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.

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.

At each Parish Council meeting a report is made of work undertaken during the previous two months.

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 had reported that he was happy to continue for the next financial year and was thanked by the Chairman for his work.

Carl's report for 2017/2018 was read by him, as follows:

"The Lengthsman budget has been fully expended for the year.

Flooding

I have received no notification of any action following the drain survey carried out by Highways last year. Flooding has been minimal with the area outside Barncroft not causing any great problems this year despite the winter rainfall being quite heavy. The outstanding hot spots are outside The Old Dairy where the carriageway floods as the gully grid is set too high so the rainwater pools rather than running away. Between Parson's Pleck and the Old Dairy flooding is caused due to the gullies become blocked up with silt from the fields and vehicles crushing the verge into the grid. There is still an issue with the carriageway down from the Old Coach House where it is believed that there is a broken or blocked drain. We do not appear to be getting gullies emptied on a scheduled basis and I have asked the Clerk to bring this up with WCC Highways.

Verges
Verge erosion is still a problem with large farm machinery, articulated wagons and now the bus having to pass one another and driving off the metalled surface.

Road surfaces
Various potholes have appeared and been filled by the Council contractors but these are very soon burst out when the frost or rain gets in them.

Fly tipping and litter
Litter is still a problem particularly along Short Hill and on Broadway. There is also a regular imbiber who leaves beer cans and wine bottles at various location."

Carl thanked those present. The Chairman thanked him for his report and the work he continues to do.

The Clerk gave an update on the village drainage scheme to upgrade the Upper End, around the church and into Church Street. This was due to commence later in the year.

Tree Warden

Karl Grimston was not able to commit as much time to this role as he wished at the moment. He gave the following report:

"Jubilee Way – There are now a significant number of established trees with coverage in most areas. Maintenance is required to remove the offshoots and suckers from some of the older trees at the far end.

Withy Walk Barns – Limited success with new plantings. Several have taken but other sites which have been planted twice will not support trees.

Church Street – There is now a row of established mixed trees. A few gaps need to be filled in the autumn.

Broadway Road – Maintenance required to remove side growths and suckers on several trees."

8) Community Groups

In 2018 the Chairman along with members agreed the need to engage more with the Community and in particular with the many organisations, clubs etc which exist in the village. Groups were invited to send their reports. As follows.

Jubilee Committee

"The Jubilee Committee continues to be active on several fronts. However, we have been greatly saddened by the loss of John Hill, a founder member and leading light of the committee.

The village website, birlingham.org, continues to get an average of 700 visitors per month, who view around 1,200 pages. Who they all are is a mystery to us!

The Parish Council section of the website has now been separated out and a new online noticeboard will be launched next week for a trial period of six months.

Support for Birlingham News has continued to grow and we have delivered two issues per month over the last year. We are about to raise that number to three issues for those months where there are three Wednesdays, due to the increased number of articles we are asked to include. The email is now delivered to nearly 80% of households, as well as a large number of former residents.

During the last twelve months we have produced two issues of the Bystander and our third, 56-page edition is about to be delivered.

Next winter, we are planning to do some work tidying up the Jubilee Wood. The trees planted in 2012 and 2015 are now growing well and should soon begin to look more impressive. Thanks to Karl Grimston for his help as always.

We have added a water boiler to our eclectic stock of trestle tables, bunting, chairs, heaters, glasses, music stands and road signs – all of which are available for the village to borrow for private or public functions.

We hope to involve a number of villagers in running different aspects of our activities over the coming months – new volunteers are always welcome!

Next weekend we will be joining forces with the PCC for a Celebration Day. The Jubilee Committee will be screening the Royal Wedding and FA Cup Final, with the PCC's fete taking place in between.

We are therefore looking forward to another active year."

The Jubilee Committee are reviewing the GDPR.

West Mercia Police

Julie Pardoe at West Mercia Police, reported:

"The last 12 months has continued to be busy throughout our ever increasing local policing area which extends from Whittington, Upton Snodsbury and Dormston in the north to Bredon and Beckford in the south. With targeted patrols, attendance at village surgeries and numerous parish events, messaging via Twitter and the Community Messaging Service (CMS) the team have continued to be actively involved in the community. The whole team remain committed to tackling all levels of crime throughout the area including rural crime and poaching and providing security advice and support to victims and vulnerable residents.

This report is based using the recorded crime figures between 15/05/2017 and 15/05/2018 the comparison is relating to the corresponding dates in 2016/17.

Overall the police recorded 41 incidents that were reported by members of the public this is compared to 32 incidents reported the previous year.

Of the 41 incidents the Parish had 11 recordable crimes (incidents where a specific offence has occurred) this was in comparison to 9 recordable crimes the previous year.

The breakdown of offences is as follows:

	2017/18	*2016/17*
Burglary Residential (includes garages and sheds)	*7*	*3*
Burglary Business	*1*	*0*
Theft of Vehicle	*1*	*0*
Theft from vehicle	*2*	*1*
Theft other	*0*	*2*
Other Offences	*0*	*3*

(Includes mostly concerns for welfare or domestic related incidents and assaults)

Whilst this year has seen an increase in residential burglaries in Birlingham they have all been to outbuildings and sheds which occurred over a short period of time. The majority from last year were also from outbuildings and garages.

We have continued with patrols in the area and have issued security advice to residents regarding security marking of property.

The main contributing factor of all house burglaries throughout the year is that the properties are left without lights during the hours of darkness (evenings). The campaign 'Leave a Light on' is applicable throughout the year and we would strongly advise residents to use a lamp/s on a timer switch to give the impression that someone is present inside the property and review their security in general.

Overall the figures still show that Birlingham and the surrounding area is a safe place to both live and work, however we all have a responsibility to ensure we maintain this.

On behalf of the team and myself I should like to offer my thanks to the Parish Council for all its help over the last 12 months. I would also like to say thank you to the Parish as a whole for its continued support of the local policing team and for the numerous calls we have received relating to suspicious activity, all we ask is that you continue to do this."

Pershore Rural North and South Local Policing Team
Non-emergency phone number: 101

9) Open Session

Following a short break there was an open forum where many subjects were discussed.

Ann Maxwell spoke on behalf of St James' and as acting church warden. The church has been devastated at the loss of John Hill. He had been the treasurer and was leading a 'dream project' to improve facilities including water and drainage supplies. The PCC are hoping to carry the dream on in small stages but not without volunteers. Someone was needed to oversee building works. A new treasurer was required. The church needs help so that it doesn't close.

Question – Is there any progression on the speed awareness?

Had White Gates been reviewed? There was evidence that this had no impact.

Can the speed be reduced to 20mph? The village is a 30mph as it has no footways.

What about making the village one-way?

Speed was questioned in the Village Design Statement as the Parish Council is aware that this has been requested as something to address. Ideas to be put forward.

Question – Why are residents putting in hedges at difficult junctions?

Question – Pollination Conference. Will Chris Reynard attend the next one on behalf of the village?

Closure – with nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 8.15pm. **The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting, and its format, in May 2019 will be posted when arranged.**

Signed: . . . . . Ian Yates, Chairman

Date: . . . . . .