ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 29 May 2019
Birlingham Village Hall

Welcome

Present:

Councillors Aston, Griffin and Yates.

In attendance

District Councillor Ron Davies, Carl Brassington (Lengthsman), Steven Byrne, Julia Luff, Pollyanna and Nick Green, Eddie Waldron, Marva Eligon-Edwards 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*).

2) The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself. The Chairman gave an explanation of the meeting saying that it gave residents an opportunity of annual reports of activities and achievements from the County Council, District Council, Wardens and community groups.

3) Apologies:

County Councillor Adrian Hardman (another meeting), Councillor Maxine Cook (hospital), Michael Porter (leave), Bruce Hayward (Footpath Warden), Karl Grimston (Tree Warden) and Julie Pardoe (West Mercia Police).

4) 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.

5) Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Meeting, held on 16 May 2018, were verified by Councillors as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

6) Parish Council Chairman's Report

Councillor Yates presented his report:

"This report is a summary of the many activities that have taken place over the last 12 months. In May 2018, Ian Yates was elected Chairman of the Parish Council and as there was more than one expression of interest in the role of Vice Chairperson, a vote was held and Paula Aston was duly elected. Following the untimely death of Councillor John Hill, a vacancy existed and an application for co-option was issued. An application from Terry Griffin was received and the meeting was happy to accept his application and he was co-opted. The seven members of Birlingham Parish Council were therefore Stuart Allen, Ken Fitch, Marion New, Paula Aston, Steven Byrne, Terry Griffin and Ian Yates along with Parish Clerk June Hiden. The Parish Council also considered its scheme of delegation and appointed members as follows:

- *Footpath warden under the authority of WCC – Bruce Hayward*
- *Lengthsman – Carl Brassington*
- *Tree Warden – Karl Grimston (although due to other commitments, additional support was requested)*

Three members of the Parish Council also agreed to take on specific responsibilities:

- *Planning Group – Ken Fitch with a transition to Steven Byrne*
- *Financial Support Officer – Terry Griffin*
- *GDPR Officer – Stuart Allen*

As always, I would like to begin by thanking everyone who have given their time for the benefit of the parish. A special thank you goes to 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, developing and maintaining the village and Parish Council website and providing advice and guidance. Thanks, are also due to County Councillor Adrian Hardman and District Councillor Ron Davis, who continue to support us in many ways. 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 monitor and maintain the village trees. They are all looking very healthy.

The village Lengthsman, Carl Brassington, has worked hard to keep our gullies, drains and verges up to a very high standard, which significantly reduces the impact of flooding.

Over the last 12 months the Parish Council has been involved in a wide range of other activities.

<u>Planning</u>

The Parish Council was required to comment on 11 planning applications in the last year. This is to provide Wychavon District Council who are responsible for planning decisions with a local perspective based on the villager's feedback in the Village Survey and Village Design Statement. Some applications required additional research and on-site visits due to their potential impact on the wider community. Applications are now distributed online, which allows them to be considered by all members of the Parish Council. Ken Fitch followed by Steven Byrne did a great job of pulling all the comments and ideas together in a timely fashion.

<u>Village Design Statement</u>

Although the VDS is available on the village website, hard backed books were also printed and these were made available in the church and village hall for those who wished to read them.

<u>Traffic and Speed Awareness</u>

My thanks to Paula Aston who has co-ordinated the monitoring of vehicle speeds through community speed awareness in Upper End. A meeting was held with Adnan Ali Community Speed Watch Co-ordinator and Julie Pardoe from Pershore Rural North and South Local Policing Team following our request for information on the vehicle speed data that was recorded. Although the average speed of vehicles was shown to be above the 30mph limit,

the volume of traffic was considered too low for further enforcement measures. However, the situation will continue to be monitored. In addition, Steven Byrne has looked at the provision of white gates to mark each entrance to the village to see if this might encourage lower speeds. Further HGV signs were also discussed to ensure that lorries follow the correct route into the village.

New Homes Bonus

This scheme was introduced by the government in 2011 and was designed to ensure the economic benefits of housing growth are returned to the communities in which the growth takes place. Birlingham has had very little housing development and so the value of our NHB is relatively small. However, it has been used in the past to fund improvements at Birlingham Village Hall, the Cricket Club and provide a new marquee for the Flower and Produce Show and other village activities. The government has now decided to replace this scheme with a new Community Legacy Grant Scheme and any unused NHB money will be lost if proposals are not submitted. The Parish Council have therefore submitted funding proposals for three schemes for the remaining £1372 of NHB. These proposals are for the repositioning and refurbishment of the Millennium Bench which is damaging the plane tree on the village green, the addition of a missing inscription on the war memorial and printing of a WW2 commemoration booklet. As part of the application process, villager's views were sought through a short survey. It showed that more than 91% of villagers who responded were in favour of each of the proposals.

Policies and Procedures

My thanks to Stuart Allen and Paula Aston for taking on the task of ensuring that the Parish Council was compliant with the new GDPR legislation that came into force. The 'Councillors and Staff Privacy Notice' and 'Data Breach Policy' were developed along with other policies covering Complaints, Requests under the Freedom of Information Act, Dealing with Press and Media and Social Media.

Drainage

My thanks to June Hiden for co-ordinating the work in Upper End, the area around the Church and Church Street to improve drainage to reduce flooding. She was able to ensure that HGV's visiting Woodfield Farm and others effected by road closures were kept informed of progress so this work could be carried out with the minimum of disruption.

Flooding in Berwick Lane

A resident reported a problem of water leaking from the bank at the side of Berwick Lane which was pooling in his driveway. Attempts to resolve the issue with Highways and Severn Trent had not been successful and the Parish Council has agreed to make enquiries. Severn Trent have tested the water and concluded that it is not from the mains. Highways have not responded to our enquiries and so it was agreed that we would try and escalate the problem with Worcester County Council.

Bus Stop

A villager suggested that a bus stop sign should be positioned outside the village hall so that users of the service would know where to meet the bus. My thanks to Ken Fitch who discussed this with WCC and developed plans despite objections from some villagers. However, at the last minute the plan was dropped after we were informed of a reduced bus service in future.

Litter/Dog Bins

It had been noted that dog walkers had nowhere to leave their dog bags and so rather than taking them home were leaving them on the side of the footpath. My thanks to Marion New for

looking at the cost of providing additional litter/dog bins. Unfortunately, due to the cost of buying and emptying the bins we were unable to proceed at this time.

Telephone Box

The telephone box in the centre of the village is in need of some painting and restoration. June Hiden has been looking at ways of funding this work through sponsorship by local businesses.

Birlingham Memories Project

The Jubilee Committee is launching the Birlingham Memories Project. The intention is to capture the memories of our older residents (and people who used to live in the village), either in sound or on video, so that these memories are available for future generations. The Jubilee Committee hope to purchase recording equipment for capturing the memories, and playback and display equipment for use at an exhibition. The PC discussed the project in general terms ahead of a formal application by the Jubilee Committee who are seeking funding through Wychavon's Community Grant supported by the Parish Council's Community Fund.

Litter Pick

The annual litter pick took place on Saturday 23rd March and coincided with the Great British Spring Clean. There was a large turnout this year and my thanks to everyone who participated.

Wychavon Parish Games

The Parish Council has confirmed it would provide financial support for entry fees for any team wishing to participate in the Wychavon Parish Games this year.

Election and Co-option

Parish Council members are required to stand for re-election every four-year term and with elections being held on 2nd May 2019, nominations to the Parish Council were invited. It is common that after having served one or more terms, some members decide either not nominate themselves for re-election or to stand down and Stuart Allen, Ken Fitch, Marion New and Steven Byrne did not nominate themselves. The list of candidates who had applied was published by Wychavon District Council on Thursday 4th April 2019 and it showed that there had been no additional nominations and therefore the election would be uncontested due to an insufficient number of candidates. This was actually good news as it saved the Parish Council the considerable cost of running an election. As a result, those who were nominated, Paula Aston, Terry Griffin and Ian Yates, were returned unopposed. I would personally like to thank Stuart, Ken, Marion and Steven for their hard work and dedication on behalf of the village and its residents over the last few years. The Parish Council will therefore be looking to co-opt new members to fill the four vacancies that now exist and I'm please to say that a number of expressions of interest were received and applications submitted before the closing date.

So, in conclusion, my thanks go to the Clerk, Councillors, Wardens, Lengthsman and others who have given their time in support of parish activities."

7) To receive annual reports from elected representatives

County Councillor

County Councillor Adrian Hardman gave the following Annual Report 2018/2019:

"I will start with a brief note on the County Council. While it is a fashionable idea to worry about the finance at the County; as in the BBC story today overuse of reserves, I would point out they are a year behind the action. In the year just ended we will end up with a small overspend of

less than 1%. The first out turn figure is £2.4M; I expect this to fall to below £2M as we close the books, and next year we will see our budget rise for the first time in 10 years. Whether it will rise fast enough to deal with the pressure and needs in the Social services budget remains to be seen. But even here at the end of the food chain we are starting to see scorching austerity start to fade a little and we return to just austerity.

Even with this, a lot is going on. On a clear day from here you might be able to see that work on the new Worcestershire Parkway Railway Station is continuing apace with external steelworks and glazing substantially completed on the station building. Currently work is concentrated on platform installation and paving the car park and the landscaping and planting around the site. The station is set for an opening at the end of this year.

Worcestershire has been successful in its bid for Government funding to test and explore 5G connectivity. 5G is the next generation of mobile technology. When it becomes available in the UK, 5G is expected to have a profound impact on the way people live their lives. As many as 1.4 billion 5G connections are predicted by 2025, as well as a host of new technologies not yet imagined. The Worcestershire 5G consortium, led by the County Council and Worcestershire LEP launched the first-ever British 5G factory trials at the Worcester Bosch factory earlier this year.

Works are now underway on the final phase (4) of the Worcester Southern Link Road scheme. A security fence has been erected and vegetation is being removed on the southern side of Temeside Way between the Carrington Bridge and Powick Roundabout. The Ketch viewpoint is now temporarily closed.

The latest monitoring visit by Ofsted Inspectors has found that the Council has made progress in improving its services for children and young people who are at risk from sexual exploitation and those who go missing. The Council's more effective approach, said the report, had reduced the numbers of children and young people going missing. WCC's Cabinet approved recommendations for the development of a Wholly Owned Council Company as the alternative delivery model to deliver Children's Social Care. The company name is 'Worcestershire Children First'.

A phased shadow period commenced on 1 April enabling the Company Board to begin working as a team, and with representatives from the Council, to help prepare for Worcestershire Children First to go live on 1 October 2019.

Adult Social Care turned 70 in 2018 and we were happy to celebrate this milestone.

We shared videos, stories and interesting facts about the history of social care and how adult social care is improving vulnerable adults' lives. A 70th birthday card signed by members from across the Council was handed over to the Health Secretary in December. I as, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, and Richard Keble, the Assistant Director of Adult Services travelled down to London to personally hand the card over to Matt Hancock MP at the Department of Health and Social Care offices. The aim of the trip was to highlight that more needs to be done by Central Government to better fund adult social care in Worcestershire and across the country. This led to a debate over the performance of the Acute Hospital in Worcester, and it's far from satisfactory performance.

We have avoided any significant snowfall in the county this winter. We are also seeing much higher than expected temperatures for this time of year. Our gritting teams have been stood down for the year, having gritted from Birlingham to the equator. We continue to think that the climate is changing, and so we invest in mitigation schemes for flooding. This year has seen significant investment in two schemes designed to alleviate flooding and keep key roads open. New Road, Worcester was raised last year and will allow the road to be operated two-way if necessary, keeping a key east-west route across the city open at times of significant flooding of the River Severn. Similarly, works are set to be completed this month at Upton-upon-Severn, where the A4104 which links the town with the strategic A38 is being raised and straightened to ensure business continuity and avoid lengthy diversions when the river is in flood.

Just to end on a local note, I am still working on the idea of upgrading the Eckington Bridge, and I am sure in time this will happen, but no news as yet. Our schools remain in good heart, but Steve Charlton is retiring at the end of term, after a long time as Head of the Middle School. He has been a good head and kept standards up. The main action during the year was the drainage work in the village, which is now finished, and it has been a long haul, from 2007. So many thanks for the support of landowners and June's relentless help. I just hope it works when heavy rains come. Thanks to all for their patience while it was under way.

I would just like to thank the Parish Council and clerk for all their work. It is one of the friendliest around the hill, and has its eyes on the future, as well as delivering day to day for Birlingham.

As all ways, please call or email if you have something to take up with me."

District Councillor

District Councillor Ron Davis, Wychavon District Council, gave a report as follows:-

"This Council's finances are in good shape. We have a near balanced budget for next year if you agree that a £141,000 deficit is not material and over the medium term, we have near balanced budgets too, thanks to increasing property and cash investment income and strong council tax base growth, as set out in our latest money plan. We do not need at this stage to find further savings but this does not mean that we won't continue to search for efficiency savings and new income streams, in line with our Grow Save Charge business plan. What it does mean is that we will continue with our aspiration of avoiding cuts to services and keeping council tax to a minimum.

However, next year 2019/20 is the last year of our 4-year settlement from Government. In 2019/20 we will receive no Revenue Support Grant, better than a negative amount as previously indicated. So, we can thank Government for that. But there will be a Spending Review, a Fair Funding Review and another look at the Business Rates system in the coming year which could have significant consequences for our finances from 2020/21. We will almost certainly lose some or all of our business rates growth we have built up since 2013 and our business rates baseline of £2.6 million per year could change.

Whilst we have made some prudent assumptions going forwards, we do need to battle for a fair deal for Wychavon from 2020/21. It is not by accident that we are in a good financial position. We have worked hard for this and we want to keep things this way. We will be responding to the Government consultations on Fairer Funding and Business Rates making strong representations where necessary.

Of course, it's what we do with the money that counts. And I am delighted that we have 11 new promises starting in 2020/21 covering all of the council's priorities including social mobility, electric vehicle charging points, improvements to our parks, business development, town centres, tourism and community transport.

We know that New Homes Bonus is unlikely to remain in its current form for the long term. But we have a good run and for next year at least we can expect over £4 million from this source. Our protocol has identified £16 million for distribution, £3 million of which will be for our communities through legacy grant funding. At least £12 million is for district investments and you can expect to see some exciting projects coming forward over the next 12 months, adding to recently completed projects at Broadway station and Evesham Leisure Centre.

This Council has invested £23 million in our district over the past 4 years. In addition to the 2 schemes I have already mentioned, significant investments include Blake Avenue, Droitwich; Evesham Waitrose and Fire Station; Worcester 6; Vale Park infrastructure and support for numerous housing schemes. These schemes do make a real difference to those who live and work in our district along with those who chose to visit us. We have also been active buying land and property across the district including Shorthorn Wood.

Turning to council tax, we do know that other preceptors will be forced into making significant increases for 2019/20. Given our current financial position and that we do not want to unnecessarily burden our taxpayers, I am delighted that we are once again able to freeze our element of the council tax in 2019/20.

I recommend the 2019/20 Budget as set out in the papers before you and a Band D council tax, before special levies, of £120.08 to the Council, the same as in the current and previous year."

Councillor Davis gave a profile of Eckington Ward. Details are available on the Wychavon website.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Davis for his support with the New Homes Bonus and his further support for a Legacy Fund (Bonus replacement) if needed.

8) Annual Reports from representatives

The Parish Warden reports were given.

Footpath Warden

Bruce Hayward reported, 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 fingerposts.

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."

Bruce was thanked for his continuing work and the best footpaths locally.

Lengthsman

Carl Brassington reported, as follows:

"*There is nothing major to report for the last year.*

The drainage works in the village have helped but we have had a very dry winter and spring and they have not been tested to capacity.

The outstanding item is the broken drain outside the Old coach House in Broadway which I do not think has been attended to but is only a problem in really heavy inundations.

Other than that, everything seems to be OK."

Carl was thanked for attending on his birthday. He was also thanked for his 10 years as Lengthsman.

Tree Warden

Karl Grimston was not able to commit as much time to this role as he wished. He was still on board with volunteering at the moment.

9) Community Groups

Groups, clubs and organisations were invited to send their reports. They are as follows:

Jubilee Committee

Steve Morris, Chairman of the Jubilee Committee, reported:

The Jubilee Committee continues to be involved in a range of activities.

The village website, birlingham.org, receives an average of 400 visitors per month, who view around 750 pages. We are currently trialling a new online noticeboard.

Support for Birlingham News has continued to grow and we have delivered two issues per month over the last year (three issues for those months where there are five Wednesdays). The email is now delivered to 85% of households, as well as a large number of former residents.

During the last twelve months we have produced a further two issues of the Bystander and our fifth edition is currently being delivered.

We are hoping to do some work tidying up the Jubilee Wood soon. Thanks to Karl Grimston for his help as always.

Our stock of equipment now includes a water boiler, 25 trestle tables, bunting, camping chairs, plastic chairs, heaters, glasses, music stands and road signs, all of which are available for village residents and organisations to borrow for private or public functions.

Last summer we joined forces with the PCC for a Celebration Day, at which we screened the Royal Wedding and FA Cup Final at the Cricket Club, with the PCC's fete taking place in between.

In November, as part of the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War, we organised the research and production of a 32-page booklet describing the lives of the 50 men from the war who saw active service. We also worked with the PCC to organise the Remembrance Day Service and mounted an exhibition of photographs and memorabilia in the Village Hall on Armistice Day.

Over the next year, we are planning to produce a similar booklet for the 75th anniversary in 2020 of the end of the Second World War. The booklet will commemorate the 39 men and women from Birlingham who saw active service during the war and will provide a picture of life in Birlingham during the war years. We are grateful to the Parish Council and our District Councillor, Ron Davis, for supporting our New Homes Bonus application for a grant towards printing costs.

The research for Birlingham in the Second World War will form the first phase of our new Birlingham Memories Project. The aim of this exciting project is to capture, either in sound or on video, the memories of Birlingham's older residents and of people who used to live in the village, so that these memories are available for future generations. It is hoped to interview as many people as possible about their lives in Birlingham and to mount a series of exhibitions to display the results. About a dozen people have already indicated their willingness to get involved in running this project. We are particularly pleased to report that we have been awarded a grant of £800 towards equipment costs by the Wychavon District Council Community Grants Scheme. Again, we are grateful to Ron Davis for his support.

We will be looking for more volunteers for different aspects of our activities over the coming months and we are looking forward to another active year.

West Mercia Police

A report was received from Pershore Rural North and South Local Policing Team, as follows:

"***Annual Police Report 2018-19***

The last 12 months has continued to be busy throughout our ever-increasing local policing area.

This report is based using the recorded crime figures between 14/05/2018 and 14/05/2019. Overall, the police recorded 8 recordable crimes (incidents where a specific offence has occurred) this was in comparison to 10 recordable crimes the previous year.

The breakdown of offences is as follows:

	2017/18	*2018/19*
Burglary Residential (Includes garages and sheds)	*1*	*4*
Burglary Business	*6*	*1*
Theft of Vehicle	*1*	*1*
Theft from vehicle	*2*	*1*
Theft other	*0*	*0*
Criminal Damage	*0*	*0*
Deception/Fraud	*0*	*0*
Motor Vehicle Interference	*0*	*1*
Other Offences (Includes mostly concerns for welfare or domestic related incidents and assaults)	*0*	*0*

Overall, the parish has seen a decrease in crime although, this year has unfortunately seen a slight increase in residential burglaries in Birlingham.
We have continued with increased patrols in the area and have issued security advice to residents but the main contributing factor in all of the burglaries throughout the year is that the properties are left without lights during the hours of darkness. 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.

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."

10) Open Session

There were no further issues to discuss in the open session.

Closure – with nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 7.55pm. **The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting, and its format, in May 2022 will be posted when arranged.**

Signed: . . . . . Ian Yates, Chairman

Date: . . . . . .