ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2023
At Birlingham Village Hall

Welcome

Present:

Councillors Aston.

In attendance

June Hiden, Clerk.

1) Election of Chair

Councillor Paula Aston was elected as Chairwoman (*the Chair or vice of the Parish Council must preside if present*).

2) Welcome from the Chairwoman

The Chairwoman would usually explain that the meeting gives residents an opportunity for annual reports of activities and achievements from the County Council, District Council, Wardens, and community groups to be heard.

There were no residents present.

3) Apologies:

Apologies were received from the Parish Council Chairman, Ian Yates, County Councillor Adrian Hardman, District Councillor Ron Davies, Lengthsman Carl Brassington, Footpath Warden Bruce Hayward and Tree Warden Rupert Keys.

4) Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Meeting, held on 18 May 2022, were verified by Councillor Aston as a true record and duly signed by the Chairwoman.

6) Parish Council Chairman's Report

Councillor Yates report was presented:

"As always, I would like to begin by thanking everyone who have given their time for the benefit of the parish; all the members of the Parish Council; Vice Chair Paula Aston, Maxine Cook, Julia Luff, Steven Byrne, Terry Griffin and Michael Porter. They have all been involved in the many different projects undertaken by the Parish Council over the last 12 months as detailed later in this report. A special thank you also to June Hiden for the long hours she puts in as Clerk. Her knowledge and experience is invaluable.

Our thanks also go to those involved in the Parish Council's scheme of delegation; Carl Brassington the village Lengthsman, who has worked hard to keep our gullies, drains and verges clear, significantly reducing the impact of flooding. Rupert Keys Tree Warden who has monitored and maintained the village trees. Bruce Hayward Footpath Warden ably assisted by Mark Smith who have spent many hours maintaining the parish footpaths.

I would also like to thank the following; County Councillor Adrian Hardman, for his help with organising the work on the resurfacing of the village roads and for arranging funding for Cuppa

& Chat, speed roundels and telephone box restoration. District Councillor Ron Davis, who despite ill health has continued to keep us informed on Wychavon matters. It is much appreciated that they find time to attend our meetings whenever possible. Thanks also to Steve Morris who continues to develop and maintain the village website, including a page for the Parish Council and amongst his many activities heading up the Jubilee Committee and Birlingham News.

Annual Parish Meeting
Due to an overseas holiday, I will not be present at this year's meeting. Instead, it will be ably chaired by Paula Aston who is the Parish Council's deputy chair.

Parish Council Financials
In November a budget meeting was held to discuss setting the parish precept for 23/24 based on government guidelines. As a consequence of a reduction in amounts planned for projects, the Parish Council were able to reduce the precept from £7235 (in 2022/23) to £6625 (in 2023/24), a saving of £610. This reduced the amount payable for a Band D property from £41.47 to £38.66.

Each year the parish council makes provisions from their budget to cover possible future costs in areas such as

- *To cover costs that the parish council are charged to run an election.*
- *To build a community fund to support village projects.*

My thanks to Councillor Terry Griffin and Clerk June Hiden for their management of the parish finances.

Millennium Bench
The bench was removed from around the plane tree on the village green to prevent damage. Councillor Maxine Cook identified a carpenter to restore it which turned into a labour of love as many parts had to be refabricated. The Parish Council is very grateful to carpenter Ian Morphett for doing the work, much of which was at his own cost. Rupert Keys kindly volunteered to do the groundwork so that the bench could be re-sited around the time capsule and it was finally installed in February 2023.

Telephone Kiosk
The telephone box was in a sad state of repair. It is no longer owned by BT and was adopted by the Parish Council a few years back. The Parish Council agreed to have it restored and Councillor Maxine Cook found a company that specialises in this work. Councillor Adrian Hardman kindly agreed to fund 50% of the cost with the balance coming from Parish Council's project fund and the Jubilee Committee. The restoration work was completed and the box reinstalled on a new concrete base in February 2023 with many complimentary comments from villagers.

Full Fibre Broadband
The Parish Council has been progressing a project under the Government's Gigabit Voucher Scheme that can be used to fund the provision of Full Fibre Broadband to homes as part of a community project. Full Fibre Broadband replaces the copper telephone cable that runs between the telephone cabinet and house with a fibre optic cable. The benefit is higher speeds (up to 1Gb/s) and a more reliable service. After much discussion with Airband they agreed to undertake the project as part of the infrastructure they were installing in local villages. It is hoped the work in Birlingham will start in July 2023. My thanks to Councillors Steven Byrne and Michael Porter.

Dog/litter Bins
The Parish Council included funding for three additional bins in its 2022/23 precept. Wychavon District Council, who empty the bins, approved the proposed locations which are the junction of Broadway with Grange Road, top of Sherpool Lane (junction of Broadway with Shorthill) and

junction of Shorthill with Church Street. These are areas popular with dog walkers. The bins have now been installed and are in regular use.

Roads and flooding
The Parish Council dealt with a large number of road and flooding issues in the village including:

- *Water Leak in Berwick Lane. After several attempts this seems to now be fixed.*
- *Flooding near the Manor House. Work was carried out to address the problem of water running across the road near the Manor House. However, water is starting to run again and Severn Trent Water have been called out as a result to inspect it further. This is ongoing.*

The Parish Council thanked Clerk June Hiden for her assistance in getting this work done.

War Memorial – Frederick Quarrell
You may recall that during some research into the First World War it was discovered that Frederick Quarrell, a villager who died during the war, did not have his name included on the Birlingham war memorial. The Parish Council therefore decided to apply for funding to pay for his name to be added. Planning permission was required as the war memorial is a listed monument. However, the Parish Clerk June Hiden identified a stone mason and the inscription has been added.

Speed Advisories
The Parish Council discussed with Worcestershire County Council the installation of speed advisory roundels. The existing 30/40mph roundels located near the entrance to Birlingham Nurseries were completely worn away and needed remarking. Additional roundels were also painted at Upper End near Court Barns and have since been repainted due to wear and tear. The Parish Council thanked Adrian Hardman who agreed to fund the work.

Planning
The Parish Council commented on several planning applications during the year. This is to provide Wychavon District Council who are responsible for planning decisions with a local perspective based on the residents' feedback in the Village Survey and Village Design Statement. My thanks to Councillor Steven Byrne who as Planning Group coordinator was responsible for collecting comments and summarising them for WDC.

Newcomers Drinks Party
16 new households have moved into the village over the last two years. This is an unusually high number. Some have already become integrated into village life while, for others, Covid lockdowns have made it difficult. So, the Parish Council decided to invite the new arrivals to an informal drinks party in March as a way of welcoming them to the village. My thanks to Councillor Julia Luff for organising and hosting this event.

Communication between Woodfield Farm and Birlingham Village
As a result of resident comment and some opposition to tree felling carried out by Revills at Swan's Neck, Councillor Julia Luff and I met with Michael Porter and John Sansome of Revill/RedStar. It was realised that the lack of communication between Revill/RedStar and the village (and vice versa) can sometimes be responsible for creating a false perception of why something is being done. This leads to a deterioration of goodwill between the village and the farm, which is unhelpful in resolving issues. Therefore, the objective of the meeting was to agree how, through better communication, we could ensure we are kept informed of planned activities that might affect residents, so giving us an opportunity to provide feedback. It was a very constructive meeting and we agreed that the Parish Council will act as the interface between residents and Revill/RedStar on any issues that residents may be concerned about.

Remembrance Day
The Parish Council provided wreaths for both the Eckington and Birlingham remembrance services.

In conclusion, within the constraints of its budget, the Parish Council has been able to carry out a large program of activities on behalf of villagers and the community."

7) To receive annual reports from elected representatives

County Councillor

County Councillor Adrian Hardman had not been unavailable.

District Councillor

District Councillor Ron Davis has sent the following report:

It has been my privilege to have served as your District Councillor for the past 16 years and I am confident that Paul Middleborough will do a fantastic job for you. Paul has a great deal of experience and will able to assist you on most problems that may come your way.

The last 12 months has been very difficult for me personally with my health issues but I am hopeful that things will improve over the coming months.

If I can be of assistance to your Parish in the future, please contact me.

My sincere good wishes to you all."

District Councillor Paul Middlebrough sent a report to his ward:

"I should like to thank all of you who voted in the election and your ward, Eckington, had the highest turnout of all the wards, with 45.72% compared with the average turnout of 32.53%. The political composition of the Council is: Conservative 29 Liberal Democrat 7 Green 6 Labour 1. At the annual meeting Robert Raphael from Evesham was elected as Chairman and Bradley Thomas was re-elected for a 4-year term as Council Leader. At the meeting I was elected to the role of Chairman of Member Conduct Committee, and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee. The Member Conduct Committee serves to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of Wychavon District Council and members of Parish Councils within the District. I thought you might like to know that Beverley Hardman, wife of your County Councillor Adrian Hardman, joined the Executive Board, overseeing Climate Change, Environmental Policy, and Regulatory Services. My work has already started, and I have attended two of the ward's four parish councils, Eckington and Strensham. I am sure, like me, you were disappointed to see the Birlingham Parish Council was not quorate and now has to go through another election process. I hope it is up and running soon. If you have any queries or issues relating to Wychavon or other public services do not hesitate to contact me. Email paul.middlebrough@btinternet.com or paul.middlebrough@wychavon.net"

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.

Tree Warden

Rupert Day has just commenced in the position of Tree Warden and gave the following report during that period:

"*Apple Tree opposite Broadway Road*

This was hit by a lorry (more likely coming from the church direction) which fell into the road. Dave Salt kindly cleared the road and I cleared the brash from the side as well as taking down a branch which had been damaged by the lorry, so it did not fall into the road. I will clear the remaining brash next week.

Jubilee Wood

I have been talking to Steve Morris and there is a clear up this Saturday.
- *Brambles over-growing and pulling down the more mature cherry*
- *Guards which are over-grown and need clearing*
- *Self-seeded trees which need cutting back*

After the clearing work this weekend I will talk to Steve about what he feels is appropriate for the wood, i.e. keep with the self-seeding or clear more. Does the Parish Council have a view?

Potential Problem Tree

I have only identified one potential problem tree and that is a Lime on the inside corner at the end of Upper End. Multiple splits in the trunk; Ivy and Mistletoe everywhere and seems to be dying out at the top."

The Chairwoman thanked Rupert for his support.

9) Community Groups

Groups 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 has had an extremely busy year, with both the Platinum Jubilee in June last year and the Coronation this May. Two of our existing members, Maxine Cook and Chris Hermon (both founding members), have now retired. However, we have been joined by Pat Chinneck and Tony Hawgood, both of whom have worked extremely hard over the last twelve months.*

The Platinum Jubilee events included a Quiz Night, Street Party, Pudding Fit for a Queen children's competition, Celebratory Church Service (organised by churchwarden Adrianne Woodward on behalf of the PCC), Pram Race and Treasure Hunt. For the Coronation, we had

another Quiz Night, Celebratory Service (again organised by Adrianne Woodward) and Coronation Lunch at the cricket ground (courtesy of Henry Porter), which included a children's Make-a-Crown competition. We also screened the Coronation itself on the Saturday and the Coronation Concert on the Sunday in the Village Hall. The concert coincided with the switching on of the new church floodlights. All these events were well attended.

Birlingham News is delivered to nearly 95% of households, as well as many former residents. We deliver two issues per month on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Thank you to the many people who now contribute on a regular basis and particularly Ian Yates for his extensive Parish Council reports.

Birlingham News online has gained in popularity and we now regularly have 70 or downloads. We have just published the 30th edition. In the last twelve months we have produced a further two issues of the Birlingham Bystander and the Jubilee Committee's 13th edition (Issue 89) has just been delivered.

The village website continues to receive many visitors but more volunteers are still needed to take on specific groups of web pages.

About half the trees planted in the Jubilee Wood in 2021 have survived and are now showing good growth. The existing trees continue to grow and produced a good display of blossom this spring. This Saturday (20th May) we have organised a group of volunteers to tidy round the trees as part of the Big Help Out (postponed from Coronation Monday).

Thanks to past Tree Warden, Rupert Keys, and new warden, Rupert Day, for their continuing advice on the upkeep of the wood.

We hope that the Memories Group will be up and running again soon.

Our equipment includes a water boiler (currently on loan to the church), 25 trestle tables, bunting, 30 camping chairs, 26 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. We also have a one-third share in the village marquee.

Thank you to the many dozens of people who have been involved in all these various activities over the past 12 months."

<u>West Mercia Police</u>

A report was received from PCSO Julie Pardoe, Pershore Rural North and South, Safer Neighbourhood Team, saying that she was retiring.

Contact with the Pershore Rural North and South Team is now through a quarterly newsletter from the Evesham & Pershore Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

The team is tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, speeding and policing local events. Some of their recent highlights are:

Local Policing Charter Pledge working to meet the needs of the Communities highlighting the Policing promise to the community that "there will be a visible policing presence by using local engagement, social media and new digital channels, there will be further opportunities for dialogue so the public can raise concerns, provide feedback, be involved and help shape policing in their area. These channels will be used to update communities on the activities to keep them safe, and provide information and crime prevention advice".

Staff Changes - 3 additions to the team. Evesham SNT welcomed PC Justine Lane who is an experienced officer, and she will be joining the Evesham Town South/Rural West team. Pershore SNT have 2 new starters. PC Amy Hunt was working on a response team in Worcester. PCSO Rebekah Ashley also joined the team.

November saw the launch of Op Sceptre intensification week, joining in with other Police Forces and partners across the country for a week of action and awareness to tackle knife crime. The Anti-Violence bee tour is a key part of the education and early intervention efforts surrounding knife/violent crime. Alongside educational and awareness efforts, while levels of knife crime in towns and cities covered by West Mercia Police are relatively low in comparison to other areas. Operation Sceptre runs nationally twice a year and supports the work that West Mercia Police does all year round to keep people safe from knife and violent crime. Concerns about knife crime can be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

The Anti-violence Bee was created by the British Ironwork Centre in Oswestry, Shropshire, the same company that made the Knife Angel, which attracted thousands of visitors to its tour of cities across the country. Two years in the making, the Anti-violence Bee was originally commissioned by Greater Manchester Police and it is made up of thousands of weapons taken from the streets of the city. The worker bee is an important symbol to the people of Manchester and was chosen to show the strength of community.

We regularly liaise with our parishes to establish the current issues and top 3 priorities you would like the Police to concentrate on. Our contact contracts will be reviewed so we can look at our future policing plan which will be based around the priorities. Speeding is always a concern, and with the assistance of our Road Policing team working together with SNT, we have ensured we are conducting speed enforcement in the high-risk areas. Tool and bike marking drop-in sessions. K. In our previous newsletters we have highlighted the benefits of the "Smart water" marking, and the deterrent to criminals. School engagement. Having a close link with our Schools is a vital part of the SNT role and responsibilities. We will visit our local Schools across Evesham and Pershore to provide educational talks to the Children, this breaks down any barriers, and dispels any Myths, and provides an excellent opportunity for the Children to ask any questions, see our vehicles, and equipment and to speak with an officer or PCSO.

Road Safety Campaign have been conducting several operations in partnership with Wychavon District Council to detect, provide advice and educate the issues to our road users.

How to contact your SNT - Your local policing teams are also actively involved with the below social media accounts, please follow them for updates on our work, and local events/news. @EveshamCops Twitter @EveshamSNT Facebook @PershoreCops Twitter
Email the teams: Pershore Town pershoretown.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk and Pershore Rural pershorerural.snt@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

Neighbourhood Matters - We have seen more residents sign up to the service, thank you. As always, we strongly encourage our communities to sign up to neighbourhood matters to enable a close contact with your local policing teams. Take a look at the website for further details.
- https://neighbourhoodmatters.co.uk/

For the latest crime prevention advice visit:www.westmercia.police.uk/cp/crimeprevention/
For crimes in progress call 999.
For non-emergencies report online:www.westmercia.police.uk/report
If you aren't comfortable contacting us directly, you can pass on information anonymously to the independent charity, Crime stoppers, by calling 0800 555 111 or by visiting their website: www.crimestoppers-uk.org

10) Open Session

The Chairwoman said it was hoped that there would be the ability to implement an event for the village later in the year. There were no further issues to discuss in the open session.

Closure – with nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 7.15pm. **The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting will be in May 2024.**

Signed: . . . . . Paula Aston, Chairwoman

Date: . . . . . .