Birlingham Parish Council

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 21May 2020

By videoconferencing

Councillors:

Councillor Aston, Byrne, Cook, Griffiths, Luff, Porter and Yates.

Present:

District Councillor Davies and June Hiden (Clerk). No Public Attended.

Welcome

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Ian Yates was willing to continue as Chairman. It was agreed unanimously to elect Councillor Yates as Chairman and he duly signed the Declaration of Office.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

Councillor Paula Aston had expressed her interest again as Vice-Chairwoman. Councillors voted and Councillor Aston was elected.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were tendered by the Footpath Warden, Bruce Hayward and Lengthsman, Carl Brassington.

4. Declaration of Interest

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.
d) Written requests for the Council to grant a dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011) are to be with the Clerk at least four clear days prior to a meeting.
e) Dispensation forms have been received from all Councillors for the term of office ended May 2024.

Interests were declared by Councillors Paula Aston and Julia Luff regarding Item 16 as they are representatives on Birlingham Parochial Church Council.

Note: Councillors who have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, or Other Disclosable Interest which falls within the terms of paragraph 12(4) of the code of conduct, must leave the room for the relevant items. Failure to register or declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest may be a criminal offence.

5. Council's scheme of delegation and to appoint members

a) Appointment of Financial Support Officer. Councillor Terry Griffin is happy to continue with his role and is duly appointed.

b) Appointment of Footpath Warden under the authority of Worcestershire County Council. Bruce Hayward has confirmed he is happy to continue in his role as the Footpath Warden and this was agreed. All Councillors said that Bruce does an excellent job.

c) Appointment of a Lengthsman. Carl Brassington agreed to continue as the Lengthsman on a contractual basis. A copy of his current business insurance policy, showing his indemnity, is held on record. The Annual Agreement (the Parish Lengthsman Scheme) for the undertaking of minor highway maintenance works between Worcestershire County Council and the Parish Council has been returned to County Hall (April 2020).

d) Appointment of Tree Warden. Karl Grimston has previously indicated that he will carry on as Tree Warden although he is not very active currently. Clerk to make contact. Would there be anyone willing to assist?

e) Planning Group. The Group is made up of all Councillors and they actively take part in the consultation process. It was agreed that the Group will continue to be headed by Councillor Steven Byrne as the Planning Co-ordinator. He will lead on the communications exchange between Councillors and collate an overall view to finalise a comment to pass to the Clerk for submission to the authority.

6. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover

The Parish Council is required by law to assess, at least annually, the risk of its various activities and to update its insurance and asset register. This was agreed with a public liability of up to £5 million for any one event, with an example being the litter pick.

The understanding for the Insurers (Zurich) is that: the precept is under £25,000, the wages are under £20,000, All Risk's total is under £10,000 (bench, kiosk and strimmer) and there are no major events or public services undertaken during the year on behalf of the Parish Council.

All Councillors are aware of the policy document. This has been reviewed and is accepted.

7. Review of the Council's subscriptions to other bodies

The Parish Council subscribes to Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC), which is a member organisation offering support, training, seminars, advice and guidance to parish councils. The charges for the current financial year have been received and is to be agreed at Item 12.

All Councillors are aware of what CALC does and the service it provides. The subscription was reviewed and accepted.

8. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings and the next annual meeting of the Parish Council

A discussion took place on the Parish Council's annual review of the time and place of ordinary bi-monthly meetings. It is proposed and agreed that the meetings will continue to commence at 7pm on Wednesdays. Birlingham Village Hall is the usual venue and has been booked in advance. The hall is not available due to Covid-19 and this will be monitored.

It was agreed that the annual meeting of the Parish Council will take place in May 2021. The date and time was deferred and will be agreed later in the year. The Chairman will review the meeting arrangements and decide on the possibilities for it.

9. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2020, a copy of which has been circulated to all Councillors, was agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

Democratic Opening

The meeting was adjourned for public question time. There were no questions.

10. Progress Reports

a) Footpath Warden:

i. Footpath 500 (behind Rough Hill Farmhouse) – cleared by the landowner.
ii. Footpath 511 (Withy Walk) – strimmed.
iii. Footpath 518 (Asham Lane) – fallen tree removed, over-hanging branches cut back and kissing gate cleared. Councillor Yates has topped the lane.

Questions asked:-
Footpath 511 – Withy Walk. Can the owners at Whitehall House cut back the hedge?
Footpath 510 – Birlingham House to Whitehall House. Can the farmer be reminded of the Public Right of Way and mark the footpath? It was felt this was not appropriate at this time but should be after the crop has been harvested.

b) Tree Warden: No report.

c) District Councillor:

i. The local authority budgets have all been completed but the pandemic has changed the priorities. Key areas of business have lost revenue:
- £1.06m loss in car parking fees.
- £250,000 in Planning grants.

It is hoped that because of the 'lockdown' imposed the Chancellor will reimburse.
The end of June loss of income is estimated to be £2.5m.
The cash reserves are covered so fairly solvent.
ii. Wychavon District Council are holding virtual meetings for members and the public. One of the unfortunate items that members have discussed is death management during Covid-19; funeral arrangements, rough sleepers and a mobile test centre being topics. The Planning Committee is holding a Zoom meeting. The first audit meeting is open to the public.
iii. How do we kick start the economy? Difficult with social distancing as this puts restraints on tourism and leisure.
iv. 4 Wards have claimed their £10,000 for village hall funding.
v. No money has been claimed from the Councillor's budget of £500 (£125 per parish) for volunteers. The Chairman has contacted the volunteer group to make them aware but there has been no up take. Can PPE be sourced by the Councillor to assist volunteers?
vi. swdp review still on course although there is concern at the moment due to the current situation and risk assessments.

d) County Councillor: none.

e) Clerk - See ***Appendix 1***
Information from the Lengthsman is included.

11. Planning

a) Planning applications pending:-

i. 20/00505/F - Bakers Hill Farm, Defford Road, Pershore WR10 3BZ

Proposed extension to agricultural building

b) Applications granted – none.

c) Enforcement – none.

12. Financial Matters

a) The Accounts for year end 31 March 2020

i. Bank balance is £6,628.84 as at 31 March 2020 and as shown on the spreadsheet and as per the financial year end. The resolution of the Audit usually due at this time of year is unable to be completed due to the pandemic restrictions.

The 2019/2020-year end audit will be deferred until the July meeting when it is hoped the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been actioned.

Councillor Griffin will liaise with the Clerk.

b) The Accounts for 2020/2021 (*current financial year*)

i. Bank balance is £9,514.84 as at 30 April 2020.

ii. Receipts –

£3,326.00 – Wychavon District Council (Grant £90 + Precept £3,236)
£250.00 – Worcestershire County Council (County Councillor's Grant – Cuppa & Chat)
£500.00 – Worcestershire County Council (SmartWater grant)

iii. Payments: –

£135.00 – Lengthsman January 2020 (cheque 574)
£165.00 – Lengthsman February 2020 (cheque 575)

b) Payments for consideration –

2019/2020

i. £560.00 - Clerks pay – January, February, March
ii. £140.00 - Clerks PAYE – January, February, March
iii. £104.28 - Clerks expenses – January, February, March
iv. £13.10 - Clerks specific expenses 2019/2020 (£6.50 + £6.60)
v. £60.00 – Lengthsman March 2020

2020/2020

vi. £233.62 – CALC (service charge per elector 213.10 and Nalc affiliation fee £20.52)
vii. £257.60 – Zurich Insurance 1/6/20 – 31/5/21
viii. £225.87 – Archer Safety Signs – aluminium advisory 'no fouling'
ix. PAYE April, May June

Note: Lengthsman summary for 2019/2020 attached.
Not working during April due to WCC Lockdown guidance.

c) Transfer of £50.00 (reference to the recharge invoice for the election administration). It was agreed by all Councillors not to transfer this amount from the Provisions as it was within budget.

d) Savings account £1,000 transfer for the Provisions (£500 Plane tree, £250 Elections and £250 Community Fund) to be actioned at the end of the financial year.

13. Lengthsman

The County Council have requested a risk assessment from the Parishes. This does not have to be onerous just what the Lengthsman do generally. The Clerk has sent a risk assessment to CALC as instructed and this has been accepted. In future it appears that the County Council will require risk assessments and method statements regarding the Lengthsman scheme. CALC have already started looking for a training provider to provide a course on carrying out these tasks.

The Lengthsman qualification for working in the highway has expired and Worcestershire County Council are unable to give any dates yet for future training courses due to the Covid-19 situation.

14. Litter Pick - rescheduled

Councillors agreed that the Litter Pick should be rescheduled to coincide with the rearranged 'Keep Britain Tidy' September campaign. The weekend of 26/27 September is the provisional date. A day is to be confirmed closer to the time.

15. Date of Annual Parish Meeting

The May 2020 Annual Parish meeting is cancelled due to the pandemic restrictions. The Chairman gave his thanks to members and wardens. The Chairman has sent regular reports to Birlingham News (village communication email circulated on the second, fourth and fifth Wednesdays of each month) during the year. He will write an article for the Bystander recognising the work of the volunteers during lockdown.

16. St James' Churchyard maintenance

A communication has been received from the churchwarden on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) regarding the maintenance of St James' churchyard. The PCC are requesting funding for the future upkeep of the churchyard which is over £1,000 per annum. The church has substantial costs already with lighting, heating and insurance. A discussion took place on an existing endowment that the church had and the Parish Council Community Fund. The Parish Council's published guidance for its Community Fund was established to provide funding to village organisations wishing to purchase tangible assets. It is not intended for day-to-day running or maintenance costs and is therefore unsuitable for this type of request.

The Parish Council has sympathy with the request but members felt this was the wrong vehicle for funding.

Several members of the Parish Council also sit on the Parochial Church Council and Friends of St James' Church committee and so as an alternative it was proposed that a joint meeting of these other committees be held. It would be their decision to discuss the PCC's other ways of streaming the need for funding.

Clerk to contact the churchwarden giving an update on the members discussion and decision.

17. Councillors' reports and items for next agenda

Updates on SmartWater, Dog fouling and the Millennium Bench:-

<u>SmartWater</u>

Councillor Paula Aston has been working on the provision of SmartWater for households in Birlingham to deter theft. SmartWater allows items to be invisibly marked with your details so that if stolen they can be traced. It has been shown that if sufficient households in an area sign up to SmartWater it acts as a major deterrent to thieves. The Parish Council has decided to fund the provision of SmartWater so that it is free to all Birlingham residents. Money from the Parish Council's project budget (£301) will be allocated along with additional funding received from the County Councillor's budget. The scheme will now be rolled out and residents are encouraged to register. If 80% of residents register for SmartWater then the parish will also receive signage that can be used as a further deterrent.

Councillor Aston will send a letter out to every property in the village explaining the benefits of having a broader coverage. The deadline is the end of July. A further article can be placed in the Bystander and the Birlingham News. Councillor Aston was thanked for her work.

Dog Fouling

The village continues to suffer from dog fouling. It is thought that the problem is sometimes a result of walkers coming from outside the village to exercise their dogs. The situation during 'lockdown' seemed better because of less walkers. It was suggested that irresponsible dog owners should be challenged. This has happened at Asham not only for dog fouling but also nesting birds. The Parish Council had previously looked at the provision of additional dog bins but found the cost to be prohibitive due to the need to buy approved bins and pay for them to be regularly emptied.

The Parish Council agreed to fund the provision of aluminium signs which remind dog walkers of their responsibilities and Councillor Steven Byrne has sourced these and they have been positioned around the village. There are 4 signs still to erect. Further signage was suggested in Berwick Lane/Nafford. Councillor Steven Byrne will contact the landowner. The situation will now be monitored and reviewed in 6 months.

Millennium Bench – New Homes Bonus. Removal and relocation on the village green

Councillor Maxine Cook identified a carpenter who removed the bench from around the plane tree at the end of February. Further work has been delayed by the lockdown. The next step is to get three quotations for levelling and preparing the ground on the village green to create a suitable place for the Millennium bench to be restored and re-assembled. Councillor Cook is writing an article for the Bystander to justify the New Homes Bonus money and give an update.

Other reports:-

Worcestershire Community Foundation (WCF) Covid-19 response

The Police and Crime Commissioner has made us aware of a Worcestershire-based foundation that may benefit residents in our community during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Councillor Terry Griffin is investigating what level of funding this scheme might offer and what sort of uses it could be put to under their application rules. Reply awaited.

Village Map

Steve Morris was thanked for his work on creating a village map showing properties in Birlingham. This has been made available on the birlingham.org website.

Outdoor gym

Councillor Michael Porter had recently seen an article from a parish magazine in Wiltshire in which an adult outdoor gym had been created. Councillor Porter wondered if such a facility would be of interest to residents and if a suitable location could be found. Resident feedback would be welcome. Message to be placed with Birlingham News asking for any interest to be messaged to the Clerk.

Fly Tipping

Grass cuttings - there has been fly tipping of grass cuttings on either side of the road north of Moorsfield and Manor Cottage. The Clerk has approached the gardener of Moorsfield and asked that any cuttings be composted on private land and not on the county council highway verge. Some cutting is acceptable and it is understood that this has been done with the good intention of being 'tidy' but grass will not mulch if left in large piles. There is also the biodiversity campaign to consider.

Tree branches and debris – there has been debris deposited in the small coppice below The Cart House.

Declaration of Interest - Councillor Porter wished to declare an interest in a forthcoming planning application at Stable Cottage for a small extension and reconfiguration of his home.

18. Closure and date of next ordinary meeting - with nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 9.05pm and the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.

The next Parish Council Meeting is on Wednesday 15 July 2020 at 7.00pm which is proposed to be held by video conferencing as no public facility is available.

Signed: ..... Councillor Ian Yates, Chairman

Date: ……..……..……

Appendix 1 – Clerk's Report

Lengthsman

Reporting:

Broadway Road

30 March 2020
Reference Number 831299
Update from Worcestershire County Council Highways
"*Thank you for your enquiry. Deficit has been done*"

1 May 2020
Reference 876332 - potholes by Woodfield Farmhouse

Update from Highways: 8 May 2020 - "*Thank you for your enquiry. Contractors have been notified*."

Rectory Lane

1 May 2020
Reference 876333 - blocked gully outside Church gate

1 May 2020
Reference 876330 - potholes outside Glebe House entrance
Update from Highways: 8 May 2020 – "*thank you for your enquiry contractors have been notified.*"

New Barn Road

1 May 2020
Reference 876328 - pothole outside Carron Lodge

Upper End

1 May 2020
Reference number 876334 - Hill's cottage again
Update from Highways: 8 May 2020 – "*thank you for your enquiry contractors have been notified*."

Lengthsman Scheme Birlingham

24 March – from County Highways Liaison Engineer, Parish Lengthsman Scheme Manager

> "*Dear Parish Clerk*
>
> *Following a review of UK Government advice on the Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic, Worcestershire County Council have decided that all works carried out under the Annual Agreement for the Undertaking Of Minor Highways Maintenance Works 2019/20 should be suspended until further notice.*
>
> *I understand that this decision may cause issues in your Parish, but as the Highway Authority we must consider the health, safety and wellbeing of those working on our highways."*

31 March 2020 – Parish Lengthsman Scheme Manager

"Dear Parish or Town Council

Thank you for making this another successful year for Worcestershire's Lengthsman Scheme.

Despite increasing financial pressures, we are pleased to have been able to maintain funding at the same level as the previous year, as such your budget to cover the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 will be £1780.15

I have attached your new agreement for you to complete and return. Please find also attached blank templates for the Lengthsman invoice and worksheets. Please note that we will not be able to settle invoices until a signed agreement has been received.

Invoices and worksheets should be submitted on a monthly basis as stated within the agreement. This is to ensure that site checks can be practically completed for audit purposes."

29 April 2020 – Clerk to Parish Lengthsman Scheme Manager

"Thank you for your email with confirmation of the continuation of the Scheme and my apologies for not replying sooner.

I attach the completed agreement sheets.

The Lengthsman will not commence work in the village until the Risk Assessment has been completed." (as below)

22 April 2020 - Christopher at Worcscalc wrote:

"Parish Lengthsman Scheme

Following the email issued by the County Council here is some addition information and resources which should help which goes through what you need to do generally.

Regarding the current situation regarding Co-Vid 19 we have included the most obvious risks on our template document.

We look forward to receiving your completed Risk Assessments, please send them to christopher@worcscalc.org.uk

THE FUTURE AND RISK ASSESSMENT TRAINING

It appears that the County Council will require in future years risk assessments and method statements to be provided in regards to the Lengthsman scheme. As a result, we have already started looking for a training provider to provide a course on carrying out these tasks. As soon as we have one arranged, we will let you know and arrange for a session to be held".

3 April – Clerk sends a Risk Assessment to CALC

1 May – CALC reply

"Thank you. I can confirm that the Risk Assessment is ok and the Lengthsman can resume duties."

Dog Fouling Advisory Signs

23 March

From Councillor Byrne copied to all Councillors

> *"Further to our last parish meeting, I have now priced up the most cost-effective way to secure the 14 dog fouling signs for the village.*
>
> *The cost from Archers signs for the 14 plates in Aluminium is £12.95 each (including metal straps). Then the timber for the stakes should be c £10. I am happy to then put them together to save cost."*

30 March

Further update from Councillor Byrne to all Councillors:

> "*Will await the consensus from the PC members of where they should go (specific locations please, and offers of whether the individual is happy to have it fixed to their fence post please)*
>
> *The signs need to be fixed to a fence post or such like (not telegraph pole, noted). The one outside my house in the ground has been pulled out several times (3) and thrown in the hedge***.**
>
> *13 signs obtained and members consensus on where they should be located. Suggestions are Whitehall Lane, Lower, general areas where dog walkers go*."

AGENDA item

Financial Assistance for Volunteers

25 March

Communication from District Council Ron Davis asking if Volunteers required reimbursement e.g. printing, fuel but evidence was required for this.

It was suggested that a claim for 0.45p per mile (which should cover wear and tear) for this should be submitted to the Clerk with details of each claimant then this should suffice.

Response – volunteers declined the offer.

7 May

District Councillor message copied to all Councillors

> "Here is the latest on business front – so far we have paid out over 80% of funds received – still a few to go!! I still have my small fund to disperse otherwise it will be returned. There is £125.00 per parish!"

12 May - Chairman reiterates to Parish Councillors the volunteers' response

> "*The £125 he refers to is to cover volunteer expenses. However, none of the volunteers have wanted to make a claim*."

Village Forum

26 March 2020

Chairman to Steve Morris - *"Just to say well done for putting the village forum together. It seems to be quite a success given the number of people who have viewed it so far."*

20 April

Chairman asked Clerk for information on a question asked on the Forum about access to the Wetlands Hide. The questioner wants to know the code. The permissive track to it is narrow.

22 April reply from PCSO Pershore Rural North and South, Safer Neighbourhood Team

> *"No, the use of the hide would not be appropriate and the fact that there would not be 2 metres of room for social distancing means this is not appropriate."*

Wychavon Parish Games

21 March

Message from the Secretary of Wychavon Parish Games Association

> *"After considerable discussion, we have reluctantly decided that we need to cancel all the one-day events that were due to be held in June and July - Men's Five-a-Side; Bell Boating; Rounders; Cross Country and Petanque.*
>
> *I am really sorry about this, but we didn't feel we had any choice.*
>
> *Decisions about the later one-day events - Bowls, Angling and Table Tennis - and the knock-out events will be made in June/July, by which time hopefully the situation will be clearer."*

Public Right of Way - obstruction

Clerk informed enquirer / landowner of property owner. Landowner will write to adjacent property owner.

2019-2020 AGAR Littlejohn instructions

24 March

Message from external auditors regarding delay pending clarity over coronavirus implications in light of the government's announcement on 23 March 2020 to introduce stringent lockdown measures in response to the coronavirus pandemic. To be advised.

24 April

2019/20 Limited assurance reporting season

The government recently issued the following changes in legislation in respect of authorities subject to the limited assurance regime:

Statutory Instrument 2020/392 allowing authorities (except parish meetings) to hold virtual meetings. Effective 4 April 2020.

Statutory Instrument 2020/404 removing the requirement for a common period for the exercise of public rights and extending the deadline by which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) together with any certificate or opinion issued by the local auditor must be published from 30 September 2020 to 30 November 2020.

County Councillors Grant - £250

31 March

Message from Sue Hermon to Clerk

> *"On behalf of Cuppa & Chat, I just want to say how very grateful we are for this grant, though somewhat surprised at the timing! Cuppa and Chat do not have a bank account, so please would you hold the £250 on our behalf, against the day when we can resume activities. When that time comes, we will let you know how the group would like to use it.*
>
> *In the meantime, I will email Adrian Hardman to express our appreciation."*

7 May – Clerk to County Councillor

> *"The Parish Council are in receipt of a BACS payment for £500. Many thanks for your assistance."*

11 May - Chairman to County Councillor

> *"Many thanks for the Smart Water payment. It is much appreciated."*

Road Closure – Church Street

26 April - Notice of Order - Road Closure - Birlingham - Wychavon District - 813172

27 April – clarification requested by Clerk with reply from Compliance Officer, Worcestershire County Council, Directorate of Economy and Infrastructure

> *"I have been in contact with our maintenance team and I am of the understanding that this closure will still be taking place over one day within the given period."*

To date nothing has been actioned.

Financial Assistance for Village Halls

8 May 2020 message from District Councillor to Chairman regarding village halls

> *"As part of the financial assistance package it has now been decided to allocate £10k to Village Halls not owned by the Parish Council.*
> *I am sure this applies to all 4 Halls in the Eckington Ward. This should be processed in the usual way - direct to their Bank accounts. Please advise your Trustees accordingly, any problems please let me know.*
> *Enjoy your VE celebrations."*

11 May - Chairman contacted Alan Bradbury, Chairman of Birlingham Village Hall

11 May - Clarification from Ian Dipple, Marketing and Communications Manager, Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils

"Following some queries from members over the weekend we would just like to clarify the information contained in last week's update about payments to village halls.

These payments are not as a result of a new dedicated pot of funding but are part of the existing business grant support payments available to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.

We have now ascertained that village halls are eligible to receive these payments as 'public halls' and we are now working through the list to process payments as quickly as possible.

If your village hall has not already registered, then we will be contacting them this week to ask them to do so.

We need their bank details and for them to confirm that the ratepayer is not the town or parish council as we cannot pay these grants to town or parish councils. Village halls can register using the link on our website.

Feel free to share this information with the relevant village hall organisation in your area and encourage them to register."

12 May message from BVH Chairman

"Thank you so very much for your time on the phone yesterday and your mail below, its always a pleasure to talk to you.

I have been in touch with Rob Davis and David, from Wychavon Council both of which have been extremely helpful,

Thank you so very much for Ron's contact details this was extremely kind of you. I will be making an application for a grant for the BVH in due course later today.

Thank you again your help is very much welcome and very much appreciated. Wishing you and yours a wonderful day and very good week ahead."

Wychavon Arts and Cultural Groups

11 May

Message from Caroline Tredwell, Arts Development Officer

"I am currently reviewing the information we have on arts and cultural groups within the district. We would like to hear from everyone so if you are aware of any groups within your parish please can you ask them to contact Caroline Tredwell caroline.tredwell@wychavon.gov.uk or 01386 565 396 or signpost me to their contact details directly. Thank you in advance."

Clerk has contacted Sadie Yeomans (Pershore Quilters), Angela Fitch (Camera Club), Fiona Abbott (Three Little Pigs) and Karen Crowther (Arts and Crafts). All have responded to WDC.

HGV's in the Village

Clerk contacted Revills regarding HGV's entering the village.

James Revill has replied:

"I did receive all previous emails regarding lorries, these have been passed over to our team here to deal with.

All Hauliers have been contacted (again), the majority are aware.

I believe the issue currently is more difficult as some of the transport companies have agency drivers due to the current situation as some of their regular drivers are not working.

If there are anymore, please let us know and we will make contact with the relevant haulier."

Cotswold Conservation Board aonb

15 April - Cotswolds AONB spring 2020 newsletter circulated to all Councillors.

VE Day

A question was asked of the Chairman about VE Day commemorations

"As the rules haven't yet been relaxed, I think it would be wrong for the PC to be seen to be encouraging a group gathering even though I'm sure everyone would keep their distance. Through the WhatsApp (Volunteers) group people have agreed to bring flowers from their garden to place at the war memorial as a tribute while they are out walking. Also, I believe Chris Woodward has been given permission to ring one church bell at 11:00."

1774 Inclosure Map

Enquiry

10 March 2020

"Dear Ms Hiden,

I am on the understanding from having been at the Worcestershire record office today that you have the original (or 1810 copy) of the 1774 Inclosure map for Birlingham. If so, would it be possible to have a photographic detail of Lower End please?

Oliver Bradbury"

4 April 2020

Reply (initially thought contact was spam as found in 'junk')

"Hello Oliver

I am not sure why the Record Office have advised you that the Parish Council hold a map. As Clerk I would not hold any original documents and any recent records (minutes) have been deposited at The Hive for safe keeping. Sorry if this isn't the answer you wanted."

Extracts of interest

Birlingham **News 211 – 20 March**

The Parish Council is putting in place a plan to help those are self-isolating. There is also a new forum on the website for exchanging information and messages.

In this issue:

1. Parish Council Help for those who are Self-Isolating
2. Birlingham Village Forum
3. Shoots at Birlingham Gun Club Cancelled
4. Village Litter Pick

1. Parish Council Help for those who are Self-Isolating

Ian Yates writes:

If you are having to self-isolate and need help, here's how to contact village volunteers

As reported in yesterday's Birlingham News, the Parish Council met last night with the sole purpose of discussing the co-ordination of volunteers who have kindly offered to help vulnerable members of our community that are having to self-isolate. Below is a description of what help can be provided and how the volunteer co-ordination process will work:

- The volunteer process is being set up to support anyone over the age of 70yrs who has reason to self-isolate or any family that is self-isolating because of the possibility of having been infected.
- Volunteers will do their best to help with essential food shopping and the collection of prescriptions. Payment for goods using cash or bank transfer (not cheques or credit cards) should simplify the process.
- Volunteers will use a WhatsApp group (Birlingham Volunteers) to co-ordinate their response to requests for help.
- To request help we ask you to call one of the following central contacts. These contacts may change over time as additional volunteers are added but we will keep you informed:
    - Paula Aston – 07932 637746
    - Nick Baskerville – 01386 751136
    - Marion New – 07867 796044
- If there is no answer, leave a message. Please be sure to clearly state your name, address and telephone number. The central contacts will then arrange via the WhatsApp group for an available volunteer to call you back and provide assistance.
- We ask that anyone requesting help follow all the guidelines to protect volunteers from infection. Shopping will be left on your doorstep and cash should be placed in an envelope. Remember to wash your hands.
- In addition to the above, there is a new on-line forum on the website, which will carry messages of relevance to villagers – full details below.

I'm sure that the above process will evolve over time and we will keep you informed of changes either through Birlingham News or through the on-line forum. We have not forgotten the small number of people who may not use the internet. Volunteers will post this information through their letter box.

Volunteers required

Several people have already offered their time to support the volunteer process above. However, as it is likely that the number of infections will increase and the restrictions will remain in place for several weeks, we need more volunteers to come forward. If you are able to help, please email your contact details to ian.yates@sipeda.com and I will add you to the list. Ideally you will have a mobile phone with an answering service and have access to WhatsApp on your phone. Please also tell me when you are typically available – morning, afternoon, evening, all day etc.

Many thanks and stay safe.

2. Birlingham Village Forum

The Jubilee Committee has added a new noticeboard-style forum to the village website. This forum (which replaces the existing online noticeboard) will be used for giving up-to-the-minute information to the community. Birlingham News will still continue to be used to send out regular round-ups of events in the village.

The forum may look a little scary at first but once you have tried it a couple of times you will find that it is quite easy to use. We will work on making it even simpler over the coming weeks.

Anyone can read messages on the forum. However, if you want to post messages or reply to other people's messages you will need to follow a simple registration process.

The forum can be accessed at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3. (If you are typing the address in a web browser rather than clicking on the link make sure the BB3 at the end is in capitals.)

On the first screen, click on Birlingham Village Forum in the centre of the screen. The topics (messages) are listed. To read any of these, click on the blue subject title.

Detailed instructions on how to read messages, register, log in, add new messages or reply to messages are given in www.birlingham.org/docs/forum_basic.pdf.

If you have any difficulty accessing the forum, need help with using it or have any other queries, please email forum@birlingham.org.

4. Village Litter Pick

The Parish Clerk writes:

At its meeting on Wednesday night the Parish Council decided that the Village Litter Pick, due to have taken place on Saturday 21st March, should be cancelled.

Birlingham **News 212 – 25 March**

We need to know that everyone in the village is receiving this information – please click on the link in the first item to let us know.

During the current exceptional circumstances, we plan to send out a Birlingham News every Wednesday. More frequent updates can be found on the Birlingham Village Forum at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3.

In this issue:

1. Please Confirm Your Email Address
2. Birlingham Volunteers Update
3. Birlingham Village Forum
4. Swan Inn
5. Wychavon District Council Update
6. VE Day Commemorations – Postponed
7. Planning Applications

1. Please Confirm Your Email Address

Birlingham News is now distributed to 90% of Birlingham properties. However, in these difficult times, it is essential that we know that the email addresses we have are still current. Therefore, please help us by confirming your address. Just click on this link, news@birlingham.org, type "Confirm" in the Subject line and send the email.

We will deliver a letter and copy of the Birlingham News to any houses that do not confirm their addresses, in case their email has changed recently. Thank you for helping us to keep this system running smoothly.

Those properties that already receive printed copies of Birlingham News will continue to receive their editions in this way. If you know of anyone (in Birlingham or outside) who would like to receive the email, in printed form if necessary, please let us know at news@birlingham.org.

2. Birlingham Volunteers Update

Ian Yates writes:

We have had a fantastic response to last week's article in Birlingham News with lots of people coming forward to help. There are now 17 volunteers in the Birlingham Volunteer's WhatsApp Group and there are another 8 in reserve for when additional help is required. I'm sure you would like to join me in thanking everyone who has so kindly volunteered. I know that they have been very busy collecting shopping and prescriptions for those residents who are now self-isolating. The additional restrictions announced by the government on Monday will make their activities even more important as we all try and limit the amount of time we spend outside our homes. Remember that the best way to request help from the volunteers is to call one of the central contacts:

- Paula Aston – 07932 637746
- Nick Baskerville – 01386 751136
- Marion New – 07867 796044

and they will co-ordinate activities with the other volunteers through the WhatsApp group.

The Jubilee Committee has now finished setting up the Birlingham Village Forum (on-line notice board) and it can be accessed at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3/index.php where you will also find instructions for using the Forum if you wish to post any messages. Will and Zoe from the Swan have just published details on a delivery service from Pershore Produce and The Meat Company.

Residents who do not use the internet or have chosen not to receive Birlingham News have also had the information on Birlingham Volunteers posted through their letterbox by the Jubilee Committee.

3. Birlingham Village Forum

The Birlingham Village Forum is now up and running and beginning to be well used. The Parish Council will be posting up-to-the-minute updates on the volunteer scheme and the Swan Inn is providing regular updates on what they can do to help.

We would urge everyone to use the forum to keep in touch during the current situation and to register so that they can add messages and post replies.

The forum can be accessed at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3. (If you are typing the address in a web browser rather than clicking on the link make sure the BB3 at the end is in capitals.)

On the first screen, click on 'Birlingham Village Forum' in the centre of the screen. The topics (messages) are listed. To read any of these, click on the blue subject title.

Detailed instructions on how to read messages, register, log in, add new messages or reply to messages are given in www.birlingham.org/docs/forum_basic.pdf.

If you have any difficulty accessing the forum, need help with using it or have any other queries, please email forum@birlingham.org.

5. Wychavon District Council Update

Wychavon District Council published the following information on COVID-19 in their Parish News on Tuesday 24th March:

- We had been anticipating and planning for the stringent measures that Government announced last night but we hadn't expected them to come in to force so soon. Nonetheless we are well placed to play our part in assisting the Government's response.
- Some of our services are now closed but we are currently maintaining our waste and recycling collections and will attempt to continue to do so for the duration of the outbreak.
- We have now had guidance overnight about the support for business. This has taken a while to prepare by government. Our teams will be working on this today as we need to apply back to government for the monies. We expect this to be distributed in early April.
- We are expecting guidance from the Government very soon about how we will deliver essential supplies to people at extreme risk from Coronavirus.
- Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) will oversee the distribution of medicines and basic food parcels to people who do not have help from friends, family or others.
- If you have anyone you are concerned about we would advise you to fill in the form on the County Council's Here 2 Help page, www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help.

The full text of this newsletter is on the Birlingham Village Forum at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=25. More information on all of the above is available at www.wychavon.gov.uk/coronavirus.

6. VE Day Commemorations – Postponed

Steve Morris writes:

It will come as no surprise, following the closure of the Village Hall and the current lockdown, that the VE Day Commemorations, including the Birlingham Memories Project exhibition in the church, have been postponed. The events will be rescheduled for later in the year when life has returned to normal.

The Memories Project will continue its research, albeit at a distance!

7. Planning Applications

The following planning applications have been determined by Wychavon District Council:

- Hills Cottage, Upper End: Demolition of existing single storey rear extension. Partial demolition of single storey side extension and replacement. Internal modifications (Case No. 20/00145). **Approved**. Full details and conditions can be viewed on the Wychavon DC website.
- October House, Broadway Road: Redevelopment of garage and sheds including removal of existing stables and garage extension (Case No. 20/00108). **Approved**. Full details and conditions can be viewed on the Wychavon DC website

Birlingham **News 213 – 29 March**

Thank you all for your amazing response to our request to confirm your email addresses, which is helping us to ensure that everyone is kept up to date with the current situation. Only a handful are now outstanding and will need to be hand delivered.

In this issue:

1. Stay Home, Keep Safe
2. Prescriptions
3. Food Deliveries
4. Waste and Recycling Collections

1. Stay Home, Keep Safe

With the number of coronavirus infections still doubling every three or four days, it is more important than ever that we all follow the Government's regulations:

- Only go out for essential food shopping and keep your trips to the shop to a minimum, preferably just once a week.
- You can go out once a day on foot (or bike) for exercise but stay well clear of anyone you meet.
- Keep a distance of at least two metres from anyone with whom you have to have contact.

In short, stay home unless it is essential for you to go out. The more closely we follow the advice, the sooner things will return to normal.

Keep in contact with friends and relatives using WhatsApp, text messages, Facebook etc. – even perhaps using old-fashioned telephone calls!

All the latest information on the current crisis can be found on the Village Forum at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3.

3. Food Deliveries

There are now a couple of schemes for food deliveries in the village. Main details are given below but full details (and updates to the scheme) can be found on the Forum at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3.

The Swan Inn

The Swan Inn is offering to collect and deliver food from Pershore Produce, the Meat Company (Tony Hall) and Eckington Stores. Deliveries will be collected on Wednesday mornings and delivered to your doorstep, so orders must be made before Tuesday lunch time.

Phone any of these businesses (details below) and specify 'Will, The Swan Inn, Birlingham' as the reference, along with your name and address.

Pershore Produce (01386 552645)

Pershore Produce stock items such as Hovis Bread, fresh milk, 3kg bags of pasta, sugar, rice, eggs, tinned products, frozen and fresh fruit and vegetables.

Payment must be made directly over the phone.

The Meat Company (01386 750510 & 07711 279978)

Tony has frozen stock of rare breed meat, pork, beef and lamb. Payment method to be negotiated with Tony.

Eckington Stores (01386 750266)

Contact Eckington Stores if you want magazines, newspapers etc. (once a week). Payment must be made directly over the phone.

Veg Boxes from Revills

Nick and Charlotte Baskerville are taking orders for veg boxes from Revills Farm Shop. Orders must be received by Monday evenings for delivery to your house on Wednesdays. Boxes will be left on the doorstep. The offer is open to anyone in the village, not just those isolating.

A typical £20 box would include about 16 types of fruit and vegetable. The full list of items can be found on the Forum.

To make payment easier the Baskervilles have offered to be a central point of contact for orders. They can be contacted on 01386 751136 or by email on thebaskervilles@baskerville.in.

4. Waste and Recycling Collections

A message from Wychavon District Council:

Our waste and recycling collections continue to operate as normal thanks to the dedication of staff at FCC.

To support this, we have stopped taking bulky waste collections until further notice.

We are offering businesses the opportunity to suspend their commercial and recycling collections to support them.

We are asking people not to carry out house, garage or shed clearances unless they can store the waste for a period of time. The Household Recycling Centres are currently closed as it is classed as non-essential travel and we cannot accept side waste, as it would overwhelm our standard service.

The full list of affected services is available at www.wychavon.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Birlingham **News 214 – 1 April**

Here is our weekly round-up of information relating to the current lockdown.

In this issue:

1. Birlingham Volunteers
2. Prescriptions Update
3. Deliveries in Birlingham
4. St James' Church
5. Public Information
6. Spring Edition of the Bystander
7. Dog Fouling

1. Birlingham Volunteers

Ian Yates writes:

As mentioned in last week's Birlingham News, we have had a fantastic response to the request for volunteers to help vulnerable members of our village and those self-isolating during this difficult time. These volunteers are doing a great job under difficult circumstances, helping with a whole range of activities from collecting shopping, delivering prescriptions, cooking meals, arranging vegetable and meat deliveries, co-ordinating volunteering activities, publishing information and keeping residents informed. The process is still ramping up so not all volunteers are available or busy yet but as the peak of the virus approaches it is good to know that we have sufficient help. It's wonderful to see the community spirit in our village and their willingness to help should be applauded. Here is the list of those who have kindly agreed to volunteer (in alphabetical order):

Paula Aston, Marg Barke, Nick and Charlotte Baskerville, Steven and Linda Byrne, Sarah Brown, Steve and Fran Cant, Maxine Cook, Terry Griffin, Will and Zoe Haines, Bruce and Sue Hayward, Sue Hermon, June Hiden, Matt and Kat Jones, Rupert and Ruth Keys, Julia Luff, Caryl Mills, Steve Morris, Marion New, Michael and Lizzie Porter, Dave and Joy Salt, Dan and Kris Shelley, Richard and Philly White, Ian Yates

The best way to request help from the volunteers is to call one of the central contacts:

- Paula Aston – 07932 637746
- Nick Baskerville – 01386 751136
- Marion New – 07867 796044

They will co-ordinate activities with the other volunteers through a WhatsApp group.

5. Public Information

Information relating to coronavirus has been received from a number of organisations:

- **Wychavon District Council**: Waste and recycling collections continue as normal but they have stopped taking bulky waste collections and the Household Recycling Centres are closed.
- **Worcestershire County Council**: The Here2Help website provides a central location for those members of the community who are unable to seek help from family, friends and neighbours.
- **NHS**: NHS call for volunteer army.
- **Western Power Distribution**: WPD has suspended non-essential operations and will be carrying out only essential works, such as restoring power following a power cut.
- **West Mercia Police**: Beware fraud and scams during COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Wychavon DC Business Support**: Availability of grants and other support.

7. Dog Fouling

The Parish Clerk writes:

There is a continuing problem with dog mess in Birlingham, particularly outside certain properties. Not only does this create an unhealthy and unclean environment, it is also an offence and dog owners can be fined up to £1,000 if they do not clean up after their dogs.

We would like to keep our roads and public rights of way clean and pleasant to walk on, so if you see anyone's dog making a mess, please remind their owners to clean it up. There are waste bins in the village that can be used, and these are emptied regularly.

The Parish Council will shortly be erecting advisory signs in the village. Dog fouling is a problem, but sometimes changing the behaviour of just a few thoughtless dog owners can make a big difference. There is no such thing as the Dog Poo Fairy!

It is recommended by the RSPCA and the Dogs Trust that dogs are kept on leads. This is particularly important at the moment during the coronavirus pandemic.

Dog services (including the dog warden), pest control, pollution control, trading standards and other services in the county are operated by a single body, Worcestershire Regulatory Services. For more information, go to http://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk.

Birlingham **News 215 – 8 April**

Latest information on the coronavirus crisis can be found on the Village Forum at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3.

In this issue:

1. Coronavirus Volunteers
2. Curlews on Asham Meadow
3. Dog Nuisance in Asham Meadow
4. Spring Edition of the Bystander
5. Bystander Archives on the Village Website

1. Coronavirus Volunteers

The volunteers organised by the Parish Council are busy helping with essential food shopping and the collection of prescriptions. If you need help in any way, please contact:

- Paula Aston – 07932 637746
- Nick Baskerville – 01386 751136
- Marion New – 07867 796044

These contacts will then arrange for an available volunteer to call you back and provide assistance.

3. Dog Nuisance in Asham Meadow

Rosemarie Baseley writes:

We have just read the latest Birlingham News letter and are pretty disgusted to note that despite many earlier appeals with regard to dog fouling the issue actually increases or rather deteriorates. This is in the village area we note.

However, we thought we would also draw to your attention that the problem is equally as bad where we live on the edge of the village by Asham Meadow. We have seen very many dog walkers on many occasions arrive, park their vehicles in the lay-by opposite and let their pets off the lead into this meadow, ignoring the distinctive sign regarding the fact that the site is of great importance to birds which nest on the ground, such as the curlew, for one. This bird, in particular, arrived there unusually early, many weeks ago as we could hear its distinctive call. The signs were still ignored.

In some cases, there are several dogs and we have also noticed that dog walking companies now arrive to use this area to let the dogs free to run and deposit their excrement wherever. We have also noticed many dog walkers actually picking up their pet's excrement and throwing it in the hedgerow instead of depositing it appropriately in either Eckington or Birlingham dog bins.

As ever, the problem is not the animal, but the thoughtless, inconsiderate owners who do not have to clear up dog excrement from their own gardens.

Birlingham **News 216 – 15 April**

Here is the latest round-up of the messages we have received – details of the Parish Council's coronavirus volunteers and other up-to-date information can be found on the Village Forum at http://www.birlingham.org/forum/phpBB3.

In this issue:

1. Easter Message from the Vicar
2. Covid-19 Emergency Fund for Local Sports Clubs
3. Fly Tipping
4. Birlingham News Team

2. Covid-19 Emergency Fund for Local Sports Clubs

The Parish Clerk writes:

Sport England is making up to £195 million of funding available to help the sport and physical activity sector through the ongoing coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis.

The package includes a £20 million Community Emergency Fund, which is now open for local sports clubs and voluntary/community sector organisations (that deliver or enable sport and/or physical activity) to bid into. Grants of between £300 and £10,000 are available.

The fund has been developed to help organisations meet their obligations, in particular fixed costs that are no longer supported with revenue as a result of coronavirus, such as rent, utility costs, insurance, core staff costs and facility or equipment hire.

To find out more go to https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds/community-emergency-fund.

3. Fly Tipping

Julie Pardoe, West Mercia Police writes:

Whilst on our patrols around our area we are becoming aware of a slight increase in fly tipping. This is a natural and sad consequence of the landfill sites being closed down.

Can we request that any fly tipping needs to be reported to Wychavon District Council via this link: https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/street-care-and-cleaning/fly-tipping.

If people witness fly tipping taking place and are able to get any photographic evidence or vehicle registrations this assists with a potential prosecution.

Birlingham **News 217 – 22 April**

We're into lambing season and there have been several reports of lost or attacked lambs. Please be on the lookout for any suspicious activity.

On a positive note, Birlingham Nurseries is now open.

In this issue:

1. Lambs Stolen
2. Public Footpaths Near to Farmland or By Farms
3. Birlingham Nurseries
4. Coronavirus Volunteers

2. Public Footpaths Near to Farmland or By Farms

A message from West Mercia Police:

There have been a number of lamb attacks over the last couple of weeks by dogs being off the lead. Please can you keep your dogs on the lead/under control, whilst walking through fields that have a public right of way and contain livestock.

4. Coronavirus Volunteers

A reminder that if you are self-isolating and need help with essential food shopping or the collection of prescriptions, you can contact the following volunteers (organised by the Parish Council):

- Paula Aston – 07932 637746
- Nick Baskerville – 01386 751136
- Marion New – 07867 796044

These contacts will then arrange for an available volunteer to call you back and provide assistance.

Birlingham **News 218 – 29 April**

Here is the latest round-up of local information. Now that things have become more settled, we are reverting to our usual routine of publishing Birlingham News on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month (and fifth Wednesdays when applicable).

In this issue:

1. Road Closure at Church Street, Tuesday 12th May
2. Garden Waste and Bonfires
3. Fly Tipping
4. Latest News from Wychavon District Council
5. Birlingham Village Forum

1. Road Closure at Church Street, Tuesday 12th May

Church Street will be closed for one day during the week from Tuesday 12th May to Tuesday 19th May. This is to allow for surface dressing. The notice of closure can be viewed at www.birlingham.org/docs/road_closure_2020.pdf.

2. Garden Waste and Bonfires

Information from Wychavon District Council:

Please do not use bonfires as a way of disposing of garden waste. Not only is it anti-social, as smoke could get into somebody's home, it could also cause breathing issues or prevent someone using their garden for exercise. You could also be committing an offence and bonfires can easily get out of hand, resulting in pressure on the fire service.

Please be considerate to your neighbours and consider alternative ways to dispose of your garden waste:

- Leave your grass cuttings on the lawn; they will help keep moisture in during warm weather.
- Compost your garden waste. You can buy a bin at www.getcomposting.com.
- Sign up for our paid-for garden waste service.
- Store your waste until the Household Recycling Centres are open again. HRCs have been closed to help limit the spread of the coronavirus as it is non-essential travel.

Do not use bonfires to dispose of non-garden waste (furniture, general household rubbish etc.)

3. Fly Tipping

Fly tipping of waste is a growing problem. Fly tipping is defined as the 'illegal deposit of any waste onto land that does not have a licence to accept it'. Various types of waste are fly tipped, including general household waste, white goods (fridges, freezers and washing machines), construction rubbish (demolition and home improvement rubbish) and garden waste.

Instances of fly tipping of garden waste are on the increase, with more reports being received both on highway verges and on private land. We need to make you aware that although garden waste is biodegradable, it is still classed as waste, and it is still an offence to illegally deposit it under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 33. Please dispose of garden waste in one of the ways suggested in the previous article.

4. Latest News from Wychavon District Council

Please be considerate of your neighbours at this time when more people than usual are at home. For example, try to keep noise that may upset your neighbours, such as barking dogs, to reasonable levels.

As well as the messages on bonfires, garden waste and other issues above, the latest news from Wychavon District Council contains information on support for victims of domestic abuse, seeking help if you are in medical need, recycling, financial support and much more.

5. Birlingham Village Forum

The Village Forum contains the latest news on the coronavirus volunteers and much more. Latest posts include such diverse topics as details of help for businesses, access to the wetlands bird hide and offers of free dried yeast for home baking and assorted balls of wool.

Birlingham **News 219 – 13 May**

While still staying at home (and alert), you have several opportunities to be involved in village life, whether it is contributing to the Bystander, joining the Village Hall mowing rota or helping the Trustees of the Almshouses.

In this issue:

1. June Butler
2. Road Closure at Church Street
3. Parish Council Meeting, Thursday 21st May
4. Spring Edition of the Bystander
5. Village Hall Mowing Rota
6. Bell Ringing at St James' Church
7. Birlingham Cricket Club
8. Clerk to the Trustees of the Almshouses
9. Applications Invited for an Independent Lay Member of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel
10. Bystander Archives on the Village Website

2. Road Closure at Church Street

Church Street will be closed for one day during the next seven days. This is to allow for surface dressing.

The notice of closure can be viewed at www.birlingham.org/docs/road_closure_2020.pdf.

3. Parish Council Meeting, Thursday 21st May

The next meeting of Birlingham Parish Council takes place on Thursday 21st May at 7.00pm, not Wednesday 20th as previously scheduled. Due to the current restrictions, this will be a virtual meeting, held using videoconferencing. Parishioners are invited to attend (but should contact the Clerk at birlingham_clerk@yahoo.co.uk in advance for an invitation).

Items for discussion during the Democratic Opening should be submitted to the Clerk in advance of the meeting. Note that any member of the public can ask for an issue to be debated, even if they are unable to attend the videoconference.

6. Bell Ringing at St James' Church

The Church authorities have given permission for a single bell to be rung at churches for special occasions.

Therefore, during the coming weeks, a bell will be rung at St James' Church at 8.00pm on Thursday evenings as part of the weekly Clap for Carers. Don't panic – it's not the signal for an invasion!

Hopefully it won't be too long before normal ringing can be resumed.

9. Applications Invited for an Independent Lay Member of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Applications for an Independent Lay Member of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel are invited from members of the public. Closing date: 5.00pm on Monday 18th May.

The Panel covers the geographical areas of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, and Worcestershire with support for the Panel provided by Worcestershire County Council.

The Panel is part of the governance arrangements for policing in the West Mercia area and its role is to maintain a regular check and balance on the performance of the directly-elected West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner.

Information on Police and Crime Commissioners can be found at http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20078/community_safety/861/police_and_crime_commissioners along with additional information on the recruitment process and an information pack.

Should you wish to apply, please download and complete the application form at http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/12481/independent_lay_co-opted_member_-_application_form and return to Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager by 5.00pm on Monday 18th May either by email, sjones19@worcestershire.gov.uk or by post to Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager, Legal and Governance, Worcestershire County Council County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NP.

In addition to the Worcestershire County Council website, details of this position can also be found on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.