Birlingham Parish Council

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 20 September 2023

In Birlingham Village Hall

Councillors:

Councillors Aston, Byrne, Glover, Parsons, Porter and Yates.

In attendance:

County Councillor Adrian Hardman, District Council Paul Middlebrough and Clerk, June Hiden.

Welcome – The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

1. Declaration of Interests – signed by all Councillors'

Members present have all signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office forms to cover the period till May 2027. Completed declarations of interest forms and electoral expenses forms, for all elected members, have been received by Wychavon District Council before the commencement of the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were tendered by Footpath Warden Bruce Hayward, Lengthsman Carl Brassington and Tree Warden Rupert Day.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023, a copy of which has been circulated to all Councillors, was agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

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.

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.

Interests were declared by Councillor Aston in relation to Planning.

Democratic Opening

The meeting was adjourned for public question time. There was nothing to report.

5. Progress Reports

a) Footpath Warden:

i. Footpath 506 (west of village green) – strimmed and kissing-gate cleared;
ii. Footpath 506 (west of Old Rectory) – crop obstruction; reported to Worcestershire County Council; Permissive path round field edge clear by Revills;
iii. Footpath 511 (Withy Walk) – strimmed and hedge trimmed;
iv. Footpath 517 (by The Pigsty) – stile and finger-post repaired by landowner;
v. Footpath 518 (Asham Lane) – chased Worcestershire County Council to get contractors to clear;
vi. Footpath 522 (between weir and lock) – strimmed/mowed by Avon Navigational Trust volunteers.

Footpath 508 – Defford boardwalk is noted in Clerk's report.

b) Tree Warden:

i. I had a look at the trees around the cricket ground/Upper End against the road. While many do overhang the road it does seem that the limbs are high enough to not impact cars and may be beneficial in slowing lorries. But the minutes would suggest that it needs to be considered more carefully so I would propose that I meet with the Lengthsman and together we come up with some thoughts for the next meeting.

ii. I note the fallen chestnut limb outside the Court House boundary and will take it on myself to remove this before the next meeting.

c) Lengthsman – see ***Appendix 1***

The Lengthsman has addressed the question on What3words.

d) District Councillor. The following report had been received:-

"Since you last met it has been a relatively quiet period at Wychavon though several important decisions have been made.

- *Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2023-2040 which sets out a long-term strategic approach for housing in the county has been endorsed the council. The long-term strategic approach to delivering housing is seen as a crucial part of a thriving, prosperous, sustainable and healthy county. The intended scope of the strategy is, therefore, very broad and identifies how housing can support wider objectives, such as economic growth and environmental sustainability.*
- *New Changing Places Toilets are to be provided at Pershore High Street, Broadway Activity Park and Lido Park, Droitwich Spa. These toilet facilities offer full access to toileting facilities to those with severe disabilities, including electric hoist, changing table and sink, along with all the other fittings associated with disabled toilets. Funding has been secured from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Development.*
- *The South Worcestershire Development Plan Review documents are being finalised to submit to the planning inspectorate during September.*

On the political front things have been more dynamic. Bradley Thomas, the Leader of Wychavon Council for the last six years has been selected as the prospective Conservative candidate for Bromsgrove at coming general election. He has therefore decided step down as leader of the council. He will remain as leader until the council meeting on 18th of October.

At the Evesham South ward byelection Peter Knight, retained the seat for the Green Party.

I thought after being elected in May, I would review the planning applications which have come in since then."

At the meeting Councillor Middlebrough went on to say that the Housing Strategy would be significant for people with disabilities.

Planning was discussed. Broadgrove Nursery application will be going to Committee and there will be a site visit. The Parish Council made it clear about the strength of feeling by residents. The egress was discussed, had Highways visited the site and also the objections of the scheme.

The Planning Department was discussed where the Leader of the Council will be reviewing working from home with staff not even based near Wychavon. Who is the Head of Planning?

There was no further update on Broadband/Airband. There was no timescale and nothing on the installation at Bredon or Eckington.

Crime – has increased around the area with examples horse boxes and caravans being stolen. Things don't appear to be being tackled. The Crime Commissioner was in Bredon but Bredon Parish Council had only invited Eckington and not Birlingham. There have been 46 incidents in the Eckington Ward but many relate to Strensham services. Members asked what the police were doing in a structured way? What reassurance is there if statistics are broken down so that they reflect more locally. More local 'visible' police units. Members believe things may not be being reported particularly minor agricultural incidents and it's difficult to get an incident number. Reporting online is not feasible for some residents.

It was suggested that the Parish Council form a relationship with the Safer Neighbourhood Team. Clerk to invite Dave Wise to a meeting.

The District Councillor can be contacted on paul.middlebrough@wychavon.net

The Chairman thanked the Councillor for his time.

e) County Councillor –

Councillor Hardman gave an overview on politic matters nationally. Worcestershire County Council has suffered financial penalties but are under budget.

County Hall has aerated concrete and part of the building is closed. The Hall is too big.

Pershore area will go ahead with the pyramid schooling structure by 2025. Classes will be consolidated. Birlingham catchment will be reviewed again.

The drama block at Pershore High School has aerated concrete.

Questions were then asked at a local level.

Broadband – problems seem to be with wireless and not the fibre to the cabinet.

Highway issues:

The Roundels were not completed and repainted. This will be done.

Potholes – are being repaired but shrinking so a repeat of the same issues. This was noted and Councillor to address. What has happened in Whitehall Lane with the repairs. The residents' concerns need to be addressed regarding the reasoning behind a piecemeal patching rather than a comprehensive resurfacing.

It is felt that public money is spent insufficiently. The road is sinking in Upper End. Councillor Hardman says that 'patching' will be addressed and that surface dressing will be next year.

Councillor Hardman was thanked for his attendance and assistance.

f) Clerk - See ***Appendix 2***

6. Planning

a) Planning applications pending: -

i. W/23/01802/CU - **The Bungalow**, Upper End, WR10 3AA

Change of use of land to residential garden

Applicant – Mr and Mrs Haydon

ii. W/23/00042/FUL - **Broadgrove** Nursery Farm Shop, Eckington Road WR10 3DA

Commercial redevelopment of nursery site with 7no. units

Applicant - Mr T Mence

Awaiting Committee date

Information regarding procedures at Committee, for example, date, time, venue, details for speakers have been forwarded to members.

Parish Council comment as per July report:

20 March 2023 –

Regarding the current application, we have several fundamental concerns, which we feel would need to be comprehensively addressed and satisfied prior to this application gaining support from the Parish Council or indeed local community. As a Parish Council we have been approached by the majority of people living in proximity to the site, and no doubt they will be making direct representations to the planning authority as well.

Issues/concerns:

The access/egress onto the site and general highways issues:
The proximity to a blind bend, which even if vehicles kept to the speed limit would present a danger, but vehicles tend to speed around that corner and arrive upon the access/egress into the subject site at speed and with little reaction time.
At peak times in the morning, we expect between 8am and 9 am, when staff arrive to work in the proposed project, cars may need to queue on the public highway to await their turn to progress into the site. Possibly having a much wider bell mouth on the site/queuing area may negate the need to queue on the Highway?
At peak times in the evening, we expect between 4.30pm and 5.30pm, it would again put considerable pressure on the site's access/egress point. In the winter this occurs in darkness and unless the Council plan street lighting, it would become even more hazardous to have a lot of vehicle movements to and from the site at those times.

The number of visits to and from the site during trading hours from this number of units, also raises concerns.
The current use for the site, when previously trading, at peak times probably had one staff and two or three customer cars. This proposal has over 30 car parking spaces which is a great intensification.
A short distance away on the other side of the road there is already a small turning on the bend leading to a handful of village properties. The combination of the potential disruption to traffic at Broadgrove and the use of the existing turn, would create an unwelcome level of risk to all road users on that bend. The turn is also a public footpath but there is no pavement on that side of the road so it can only be accessed by crossing the road close to the bend with limited visibility in both directions; even with current traffic volumes this is already a risky undertaking.

The positioning of the refuse bins:

They are in our view, too close to adjoining residential property, therefore representing health issues, but also potential noise issues if the commercial refuse is collected at unsocial hours.

Notification procedure:

From comments we as a Parish Council have received, we do not believe that all parties adjoining the applicant's boundary or indeed in proximity, were written to making them aware of the application.

Trading hours:

Considerable concern was expressed about long trading hours given is proximity to residential accommodation. We would expect to see limitation on trading hours to Monday to Friday, c 8.00 am, to 6pm

Design and Ecology:

We are supportive of the recommended ecological measures proposed but at the same time concerned that the overall development amounts to an overlarge injection of buildings and hard landscaping in amongst the existing green fields, trees and hedgerows characteristic of the area. At six metres tall these buildings are akin to two storey houses in height, and this would be to the detriment of the local environment and the tenor of the neighbourhood; even with significant soft planting to obscure the site, the character of this area would be irrevocably altered.
We acknowledge the attempt to soften the visual impact of such large new buildings in a rural area with the use of vertical timber cladding, but question whether this is sufficient to counteract dark grey roofing, and large dark grey roller shutters and steel doors – the overall look is still one of light industry/commercial premises that will be out of keeping with the location and the adjoining residential accommodation.
We understand that the Use Class E development specifies that any industrial processes should not be detrimental to the area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust, or grit. We would however also highlight the fact that Eckington Road is currently an unlit country road and query whether the proposed development, especially during the dark winter months, will be generating an untoward level of light pollution which would disturb local residents or wildlife and change the nature of the locality.

Potential future applications:

We, as the Parish Council would like to draw your attention to the Birlingham Village Design Statement which recommends that residential development should be on a small scale (1-3 houses) and reflective of existing buildings in the parish by incorporating a variety of styles, orientations and materials; whilst commercial in nature, this proposed development equates to seven large identical houses in two straight rows, so is not at all in keeping with the design ethos for the parish.
However, if a future alternative application was submitted for 2/3 residential houses on the entire site (not just the red lined current application area), we as the Parish council would be supportive, as it would be in line with the Birlingham Village Plan, and important aid the current site owner to address the current semi derelict state of the site, which in itself has a detriment affect on the adjoining residential land owners

Amendment .

Date received: 21 June 2023

Description of additional information/amendment: Building heights are reduced - Hedge planting shown along boundary between Northcroft and proposed unit 3. - Planting shown at the ends of parking bays. - Note updated to incorporate new trees in hedgerow along SE boundary. - Additional tree and shrub planting indicated along SW bank adjacent development. - 2.5m acoustic fence added along the boundary of the access road and the rear garden of Northcroft. - Refuse store relocated to the end of parking bays to units 5- 6 to move away from residential garden and retain central location between all units.

Parish Council comment - 26 June 2023

We Object to the planning application W/23/00042/FUL:

Birlingham PC do not feel that the objections and concerns we previously raised on behalf of residents within the Parish have been adequately address by the proposed modifications.

Please refer to the previous identified objections and concerns. Indeed, we also do not feel the modifications address adequately the concerns raised by the statutory consultees.

We continue to be particularly concerned with:

The revised application states that the "building heights are reduced as much as reasonably practical. Any further reduction would not be practical or usable". However. there are no dimensions on the drawing to tell if the height reduction is significant or not, and Wychavon's site no longer shows copies of the previous drawings. So, what are the actual height reductions?
Hedge planting shown along boundary between Northcroft and proposed unit 3. Please consider ensuring the acoustic fence is extended along this boundary.
The proposal indicates a 2.5m acoustic fence added along the boundary of the access road and the rear garden of Northcroft. Please consider imposing a condition that the acoustic fence (blue dashed line) should extend along the full length of the access road.
Please review the refuse store being relocated to the end of parking bays to units 5-6, to move away from residential garden, and retain central location between all units. Is there a better location to keep it entirely away from adjoining residential property.?
The access and egress of the enhanced vehicle movements generated by the proposal. We still consider this dangerous especially so close to a fast dangerous bend.
The massing, design and the scale of development proposed, continues to be out of keeping with, and may be deemed harmful to, the rural character.
If, you ultimately decide to grant the consent, we would ask you to consider a condition restricting the use to a narrow definition. As currently set out in the planning application A general Use Class E permission would allow the site use to change to any of the myriad uses listed within class E, some of which would be significantly more harmful in this location and impact greatly on its neighbours and indeed to village.
We once again ask you to consider limiting the trading hours during the week, and not allowing operations on the weekend, due to the proximity to local residential units, in a predominantly residential location.

iii. W/22/02657/HP - **Hills Cottage**, Upper End WR10 3AA

First floor extension over existing carport. The enclosure of carport bay at ground floor level to create entrance hall and construction of zinc standing seam roof to link house to carport. Addition of PV solar panels.

Applicant - Mr Nicholas Aston

The application has now past its statutory decision date.

b) Applications granted: - none

c) Enforcement: -

- Birlingham Nurseries, Upper End - reference MGX-883972

  23 March 2023 – pending

- Court Cottages, Upper End – reference W/ENF/23/0290

  5 September 2023

  "The Council will investigate the enforcement enquiry according to the scheme of priorities and timescales as set out in our Local Enforcement Plan. There are 3 categories within our scheme of priorities: ***Priority A*** *consists of Severe, irreversible, and usually ongoing works,* ***Priority B*** *consists of ongoing works that may cause significant and progressive harm to the area if not addressed swiftly and* ***Priority C*** *consists of progressive/completed works that cause no significant harm to the surrounding area or properties and are often reversable.*

  The issue raised has been allocated as Priority A."

7. Financial Matters

a) The Accounts for 2022 / 2023

i) Annual Return Certificate of Exemption 2022/2023 (page 3 of the AGAR) has been sent to PKF Littlejohn LLP. This has been acknowledged with an automated response.

ii) Village website – display of the completed Certificate of Exemption, Annual Return (pages 4, 5 and 6), variances, bank reconciliation has been actioned.

b) The Accounts for 2023/2024

i) Bank balances - current is £9,571.81as at 25 August 2023 and Business saving balance is £8,333.67 as at 9 August 2023.

ii) Receipts

i. £245.00 – Worcestershire County Council
ii. £245.00 – Worcestershire County Council

iii) Payments agreed: –

i. £183.41(Materials £130.91 and labour £52.50) (704)
Invoice received from Carl Brassington
ii. £135.00 – Lengthsman March 2023 (700)
iii. £157.50 – Lengthsman April 2023 (701)
iv. £10.00 – Birlingham Village Hall – charge for Annual Parish Meeting (702)
v. £60.00 – Internal Audit Sadie Yeomans (705)
vi. £245.00 – Lengthsman May 2023 (706)
vii. £20.00 – Birlingham Village Hall July meeting (709)
viii.£650.00 - Clerk's Pay – April, May, June
ix. £104.28 – Clerk's Expenses – April, May, June
x. £200.00 – Jubilee Committee Grant (703)

xi. Training for Councillors

c) Future payments for consideration

i. £20.00 – Birlingham Village Hall – March 2023 (outstanding)
ii. £245.00 – Lengthsman June 2023
iii. £236.25 – Lengthsman July 2023
iv. £210.00 – Lengthsman August 2023
v. £20.00 – September 2023 meeting

The Clerk was actioning change of signatories and then would look at online banking.

Financial Officer, Councillor Aston and the Clerk will look at simplifying the spreadsheet where possible.

c) Projects – The Chairman and Vice Chairwoman will look at projects and funds ready for the November meeting. Councillor Aston to look at the precept and arrange a pre-meeting with Councillor Yates.

8. Full Fibre Broadband (Fibre to the Premise – FTTP)

Councillor Yates had no further updates from Airband on the installation of Fibre despite chasing for a response to be kept informed.

9. Councillors' reports and items for next agenda

Dog fouling

Correspondence was received from a resident regarding dog fouling and the Chairman has responded:

"The Parish Council and I share your frustration over dog fouling. As you know we have recently installed three additional bins and these are located around the village and regularly emptied. One of these bins is at the end of Church Street where it joins Short Hill. So, it's not far from your house. We have also installed a number of 'No Dog Fouling' signs around the parish although some have mysteriously gone missing.

The Parish Council have no powers of enforcement and if you (or we) were to escalate the complaint to the district council's dog warden then some proof of the offence would be needed. If this person regularly walks their dogs past your house, then my advice would be for you to have a quiet word with them. It may be that this was a one-off incident which the owner was embarrassed about having gone out without poo bags. On the other hand, if it is a regular occurrence then photographic evidence would be helpful.

Giant Hogweed

A Councillor was approached regarding Giant Hogweed and has responded:

"Giant Hogweed (as opposed to Hogweed) is a controlled waste (similar to Japanese knotweed). Any plant material (dug up or cut down) should be disposed of by composting or burning. It is also a skin irritant. Although there is no statutory obligation for landowners to eliminate giant hogweed, local authorities will often take action to remove infestations in public areas. GH is fairly common and we are aware of other locations in the parish.

It depends exactly where the GH is growing as to what if any action is taken. If it is on a verge, then the parish council can ask the village lengthsman to dig it up and dispose of it. If it is on private land encroaching onto other private land then it is unlikely to be dealt with by the parish, district of county council and in that instance, you should approach the landowner and either ask them to remove it or get permission to remove it yourself.

The RHS have an advisory leaflet.

10. Closure and date of next ordinary meeting - with nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 9.10pm and the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 7.00pm.

The meeting will be held in Birlingham Village Hall. Clerk to book hall.

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

Date: ……

Appendix 1 – Lengthsman's Report

What3Words - I have not reported anything since July so there has been no opportunity to use What3Words.

Location - the issues are pinpointed on the 'hub map' when reported to Highways and I usually include a photo as well. The pothole at Hill's Cottage was obvious and also included a photograph as shown in your minutes.

A bigger issue is that WCC have updated their HUB interface and the acknowledgements that are now issued when a report is actioned do not contain any detailed information as to location or even the reported issue. This is less than useful when multiple reports are issued as I have to log them on a spreadsheet to monitor them.

New reports will include the What3Words as requested.

Reports to Worcestershire County Council

DRAINAGE

LOWER END
Berwick Lane, gully near Tadpole Cottage – Reference 28464
31 July 2023 - Highways have replied saying they will investigate within 28 working days.

18 August 2023 – update – "*We attended the site on the 18/08/2023 and have raised a four week works order, for the gully to be emptied and jetted out*."

Broadway Road, access cover dislodged - Reference 28470

31 July 2023 – Highways have acknowledged.

18 August 2023 – update – "*We attended the site on the 18/08/2023 and have raised a one week works order for repairs to be made*."

The Avenue, gully opposite Field Cottage (Erics) – Reference 28465

31 July 2023 – Highways have acknowledged.

18 August 2023 update – "*We attended the site on the 18/08/2023 and have raised a four week works order for the gullies to be emptied and jetted out*."

Lengthsman believes the wrong gully has been marked ?

UPPER END

The Ridings – gully full – Reference 28466

Gully full at the ridings

31 July 2023 – Highways have acknowledged.

18 August 2023 update – "*Raised a four week works order for the gullies to be emptied and jetted out*."

POT HOLES

UPPER END

Hill's Cottage – Reference 28469

31 July 2023 – Highways have acknowledged.

18 August 2023 update – "*We attended the site on the 18/08/2023 and have raised a four week works order for repairs to be made*."

Court House
Pothole outside The Court House (again) original reference 21974 17 May 2023

10 August 2023 – Reference 27195
Highways reply – "*Thank you for your enquiry. We attended on the 10/08/2023 and raised a four week works order for repairs to be made*."

Appendix 2 – Clerk's Report

i. Highway Issues

Brought to the attention of the Clerk
LOWER END
Overgrown/Fallen Tree or Shrubbery Report (Reference 27681) - Worcestershire County Council

23 July 2203 – Lower End WR10 3AD Reply "*All reports are prioritised based upon the information provided. We will investigate all reported issues within 28 working days*."

Highways update - 18 August 2023 update – "*We attended the site on the 18/08/2023 and raised this issue with our Green Team for them to make contact with the home-owner*."

ii. Road Closures

Meadow Lane – 14 September completely resurfaced.

Whitehall Lane – 14 September partly re-surfaced.

Resident contact:-

> *"I suspect you are getting grumbles about the re-surfacing of Whitehall Lane from residents?*
>
> *It has to be said that this re-surfacing leaves much to be desired - it is a veritable eyesore and the workmanship is somewhat dubious.*
>
> *Ironically (and fortuitously) the re-surfacing across our entrance to the house is the best of the lot and I am delighted with it!*
>
> *Why they could not have completely re-surfaced the lane I do not know".*

Clerk has acknowledged.

iii. VAS Sign – A4104 Defford

Defford and Besford Parish Council asked if there used to be a VAS sign on the A4101 - *it was periodically moved around and wonder if was shared with other parishes' perhaps Birlingham. Is this something you are aware of – we are thinking about purchasing a solar powered VAS sign but just curious as to where this sign has gone to.*

Clerk has replied to say that there was a sign, but this was not shared with Birlingham.

iv. Footpath 506

Chairman to Manager at Redstar

31 August 2023

> *"I had a phone call last week from Shirley Penn who is Public Rights of Way Enforcement Officer at Worcester County Council. She was ringing about path 506 which is the one that runs behind the Old Rectory and then across the asparagus field to Eckington Road. Someone in the village had reported that the official path across the asparagus field was impassable and the permissive path around the field was also unusable. You'll recall that this was also an issue last year and someone from WCC called Fiona Argyle came out to look at it. It was Fiona who received the report and she had escalated it to Shirley who was asking me if I had any comment before she served you with notice regarding the official path.*
>
> *I asked Shirley to wait until I'd had a chance to speak with Bruce Hayward (our footpath warden) and yourself. Bruce is of the view that if the permissive path was cleared then villagers would be happy. This would avoid you having to cut through the asparagus crop. You'll appreciate that as far as WCC are concerned a permissive path doesn't replace the need to keep official paths open, but if an alternative is acceptable then they don't want to get heavy handed.*
>
> *So could you, asap, have the permissive path around the field topped to make it passable again and let me know when this has been done. Also ensure that in future any ploughing leaves sufficient headland for the permissive path. I've said I would get back to Shirley early next week with an update".*

The Farm Manager responded very quickly with a reply:

> *"Thank you for your email and intervention. We topped the permissive path yesterday and will keep it clear. The field is planned to stay in asparagus for the next 10 years so hopefully ploughing won't be an issue."*

12 September 2023

From Shirly Penn, Public Rights of Way Enforcement Officer, Worcestershire County Council

> *"After some thought, I am contacting you regarding your email below. I am concerned the farmer may think that the County Council has agreed to an unofficial diversion around his crop. This is not the case. Although the clearance of the permissive path has reduced the priority of the report, they are still committing an offence. I have not and cannot condone that. I cannot guarantee that I will not have to pursue the clearance of the definitive line in the future if we get further reports. However, their actions have prevented me from pursuing the clearance at this time. I felt I should make that clear.*
>
> *If you have any queries or wish to discuss this further, please contact me".*

v. Shed adjacent to Footpath 506

August – communication from Footpath Warden regarding the shed which had been broken into.

Clerk contacted the owner who replied saying they appreciated the message and would attend and secure the shed again.

vi. Survey 2023 – Town and Parish Council's West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

4 August 2023 - John Campion

> As the voice of the public in policing, I want to ensure communities are able to shape policing priorities and raise the issues that matter to them.
>
> For the sixth consecutive year, I have launched my Town and Parish Council survey, so you can have your say on police visibility, accessibility, and crime and disorder in your area.
>
> The opinions and feedback provided last year helped to show where improvements needed to be made and I acted on those by providing extra investment which has seen officer numbers reach record levels in West Mercia.
>
> Working in the heart of the communities you serve; I am inviting every town and parish council across West Mercia to complete this year's survey and would encourage you to complete it.
>
> Once again, I will compare this year's results to those I received in previous years and will be using the results to inform my discussions with the Chief Constable on local policing.
>
> The results of the survey will be available to view on my website: www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk. response for your town and parish council.

Completed by Vice-chairwoman.

vii. Tipping of Grass Cuttings – Moorsfield

3 September 2023 – Clerk to owner of Moorsfield

Clerk met with relative of owner of Moorsfield and asked that the issue of fly tipping of grass cuttings around trees on the verge opposite the Moorsfield be addressed. A letter has been sent to the owner.

viii. Parish Notices

July 2023 from Public Rights of Way – notice displayed on village board for members of the community and visitors to see the QR code links on the Council's website.

Extracts of interest

Birlingham **News 309 – 26 July 2023**

Eckington Bridge is now closed for four weeks for repairs – details below.

In this issue:

1. Birlingham News Online
2. Cuppa & Chat, Wednesday 2nd August
3. Eckington Bridge Closure, Tuesday 25th July – Friday 25th August
4. Church News
5. Shrubs and Trees Overhanging the Public Highway
6. Parish Council Report

3. Eckington Bridge Closure, Tuesday 25th July – Friday 25th August

Eckington Bridge is now closed to vehicles until Friday 25th August. This is to allow the rebuilding of the part of the bridge that was destroyed in the fatal accident on 26th August last year.

Currently the bridge can be crossed by pedestrians and bicycles only.

Full details, including the notice of closure and diversion maps, are included in a previous edition of Birlingham News Online.

5. Shrubs and Trees Overhanging the Public Highway

The Parish Council has been asked to remind everyone about pruning shrubs and trees, particularly those that overhang the public highway. The owner or occupier of a property has a legal responsibility to ensure that the public highway adjacent to a property is not obstructed by vegetation from their property. Local Authorities also have a legal duty to ensure that public highways are unobstructed, so usually inspect roads regularly and often receive complaints from members of the general public.

The public highway is defined by law as consisting of any verge, footway, carriageway, bridleway, or footpath that is maintained at public expense and over which the public has a right of way.

When Local Authorities become aware of such obstructions, they will usually advise the property owner or occupier of the problem. They may sometimes raise the issue with an owner/occupier even if the vegetation only overhangs the pavement/roadway by a small amount. If the owner/occupier does not take corrective action within a reasonable time, the Local Authority can issue a formal notice for the work to be undertaken and, if that is ignored, they can do the work and charge the owner/occupier.

So please check your boundaries and if any shrubs or trees are starting to obstruct roads, verges, or public footpaths, cut them back!

6. Parish Council Report

The report of the Birlingham Parish Council meeting on Wednesday 19th July will be included in the next edition of Birlingham News, which is scheduled for Wednesday 9th August.

Birlingham **News 310 – 8 August 2023**

We are publishing this edition a little earlier than usual to give notice of a surgery by the Safer Neighbourhood Team in Eckington at 11.00am tomorrow (Wednesday).

In this issue:

1. Birlingham News Online
2. Safer Neighbourhood Team Surgery, Wednesday 9th August
3. Birlingham Art Exhibition, Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th August
4. Birlingham Flower & Produce Show, Saturday 2nd September
5. Toast the Harvest, Friday 22nd September
6. Road Closures
7. Replanting at Swan's Neck
8. Parish Council Report
9. Bystander Archives on the Village Website

2. Safer Neighbourhood Team Surgery, Wednesday 9th August

Molly Keeler, Safer Neighbourhood Team writes:

Your local Safer Neighbourhood Team will be at Eckington Recreation Ground at 11.00am on Wednesday 9th August.

Please take this opportunity to raise any concerns you may have and to find out what we are doing to tackle the issues that matter to you.

Everyone is welcome and it would be great to see you there.

The team has also provided tips on improving home security, which are included in Birlingham News Online

6. Road Closures

We have been notified of two further road closures during August. Full details, including closure notices and diversion maps, are included in Birlingham News Online

Bourne Road, Defford

Bourne Road in Defford will be closed for six days from Monday 21st until Saturday 26th August. The closure is from Revills Farm Shop to Lower Strensham. This is to allow for the laying of electricity cables.

Revills Farm Shop will remain open throughout this period and access from Birlingham is as normal.

Meadow Lane, Lower End

Meadow Lane (which runs alongside the Clock House) will be closed at some time between Monday 28th August and Friday 8th September. The works are for carriageway patching and should be completed in one day.

Access to Lower End and Broadway Road is via Grange Road.

Eckington Bridge

Eckington Bridge will remain closed until Friday 25th August. However, pedestrian and cycle access is still possible.

7. Replanting at Swan's Neck

John Sansome, Revills Farm Manager writes:

Over the next few weeks, we will be beginning work to prepare for the replanting of Swan's Neck. This will involve treating the regrowth of poplar to prevent it shading out the new trees and becoming a problem again in future years.

The planned species for replanting in the autumn/winter include oak, downy birch, small-leaved lime, bird cherry and common alder.

8. Parish Council Report

Ian Yates writes:

Birlingham Parish Council held its meeting at 7.00pm on Wednesday 19th July in the Village Hall.

Elections and new members

Following the elections in May, Paula Aston and Ian Yates were re-elected uncontested. However, the Parish Council was inquorate, so a second election was held, resulting in Katie Parsons being elected and Steven Byrne re-elected, again uncontested. This allowed us to co-opt back Michael Porter along with new member David Glover, giving us six members in total. There is therefore still one vacancy so if you are interested in joining the Parish Council please contact our clerk, June Hiden (birlingham_clerk@yahoo.co.uk) or myself (ian.yates@sipeda.com) for more information. We meet six times a year so it's not an onerous commitment and is an opportunity to assist with issues that are important to residents.

At the meeting Ian Yates was re-elected as Chair, Paula Aston as Vice-Chair and Financial Support Officer, and Steven Byrne as Head of the Planning Group. Under the council's scheme of delegation, Carl Brassington was re-appointed as Lengthsman, Bruce Hayward as Footpath Warden and Rupert Day as Tree Warden. Last but not least, June Hiden agreed to continue as Clerk for the 18th year in a row! We are very grateful to everyone who volunteers their time in support of the Parish Council.

A full set of minutes will be published shortly but a couple of items of interest follow:

- **Full Fibre Broadband (Fibre to the Premise – FTTP)** The Parish Council has received an update from Airband. They have recently completed installations in Pershore, Wick and the Combertons and are currently working in Eckington. They have advised us that they will be starting the installation of the fibre infrastructure in Birlingham in September. The revised design means that full fibre connections will be available to all properties in the parish (should you want it) except for those at Nafford Lock. These will be connected separately at a later date from Eckington. Despite the pole notices that went up last year, our understanding now is that there will be very few if any new poles required in the village. The intention is for the fibre cables to be installed alongside the existing copper telephone cables. You may recall that last year the Parish Council submitted to Airband a list of 69 residents who had expressed interest in their service. They have now started to contact some on this list with the following email:

Dear Defford & Birlingham Resident,

Thank you for registering your interest for our FTTP Broadband.

As part of Airband's promise to transform connectivity for people and communities who deserve better, we plan to build and deliver speeds of up to 900Mbps in the area around Defford & Birlingham.

Over the coming months you will see lots of activity from our teams in the area from Planning & Design, Civils & Engineering. We really are proud of what we deliver, and we hope you will see the benefits of the infrastructure we are building. Airband would like to encourage as much interest as possible, please pass our details on to friends, family & neighbours whom you may think would also benefit from our FTTP build.

Please call 01905 676121 select option 1 and option 1 for residential or 2 for business to speak with our sales team or alternatively please go to the website www.airband.co.uk and enter your postal code in the availability checker box and submit.

They are also offering some promotional pricing for those that sign up in the next month:

150Mbps Download and 50Mbps Upload – FOC Installation – Free router – £25.00 (usually £30.00) per month for 18 months
300Mbps Download and 75Mbps Upload – FOC Installation – Free router – £30.00 (usually £35.00) per month for 18 months

If you are currently in contract with another broadband provider, Airband will pay £250 towards any cancellation fees when you switch!

Please note: The Parish Council believes that full fibre (FTTP) broadband will be an essential technology for online access in the future and has therefore encouraged Airband to install their full fibre infrastructure in Birlingham. However, it cannot make any recommendations regarding Airband's service. It is up to residents to decide whether to switch to full fibre or stay with their existing copper-based service.

- **New District Councillor – Paul Middlebrough** The Parish Council was pleased to welcome Wychavon District Councillor Paul Middlebrough to the meeting. He has taken over the Eckington Ward from Ron Davis, who retired at the election.

Paul is one of John Campion's Assistant Police and Crime Commissioners for West Mercia. His role is to represent John Campion in communities across West Mercia, specifically Worcestershire and Herefordshire. In addition, he has also taken on the role as Vice Chair of the Planning Committee at Wychavon DC. Planning and crime are both important issues for Birlingham residents, so we look forward to working closely with Paul in future.

King's Coronation Celebration This was an excellent village event and very well attended. The Parish Council thanked all the very many volunteers who gave up their time to make it such a success and in particular Steve Morris, without whose leadership and determination the event would have never happened.

Birlingham **News 311 – 23 August 2023**

Here is your final round-up of news for the month, including details of Art Live at the Village Hall this weekend and the Flower & Produce Show the following Saturday.

The online edition of this email is available at www.birlingham.org/village/bno.

In this issue:

1. Birlingham News Online
2. Birlingham Art Live, Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th August
3. Birlingham Flower & Produce Show, Saturday 2nd September
4. Cuppa & Chat, Wednesday 6th September
5. Bystander Copy Date, Thursday 7th September
6. Tower Light Consultation, closing date Friday 8th September
7. Church News – September
8. Falling Masonry

6. Tower Light Consultation, closing date Friday 8th September

Peter Luff writes:

The new tower light at St James' Church has been operating for four months at different times and on different days of the week on a trial basis. If you have views on when the light should be on in the future, please respond to the consultation survey before Friday 8th September.

Birlingham **News 312 – 13 September 2023**

Next week is a busy one, with the Parish Council meeting, Toast the Harvest and the Harvest Festival.

In this issue:

1. Birlingham News Online
2. Swan Inn Holiday Closure, Sunday 10th-Tuesday 26th September
3. Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 20th September
4. Birlingham IW, Thursday 21st September
5. Toast the Harvest, Friday 22nd September
6. Harvest Festival, Sunday 24th September
7. Birlingham Flower & Produce Show
8. Bystander Archives on the Village Website

3. Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 20th September

The next meeting of Birlingham Parish Council takes place on Wednesday 20th September at 7.00pm in Birlingham Village Hall. During the meeting there is an opportunity to express your views on local issues, so please go along.