Birlingham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 21 May 2025

In Birlingham Village Hall

Councillors: Councillors Steven Byrne (SB), Rupert Day (RD), David Glover (DG), Michael Porter (MP) and Ian Yates (IY).

In attendance: District Councillor Paul Middlebrough and Clerk, June Hiden.

1. Election of Chair for 2025 – 2026

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

Welcome – The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

It was agreed to appoint a Vice-Chair. Councillor Paula Aston wished to continue as Vice-Chairwoman. Councillors voted and Councillor Aston was elected.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were tendered by Paula Aston due to overseas visitors calling unexpectedly. Apologies given by County Councillor Adrian Hardman who was in Pembrokeshire with work, the Lengthsman, Carl Brassington and Footpath Warden Bruce Hayward who was away.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 19 March 2025, a draft copy of which has been circulated to all Councillors. The internal auditor corrections were actioned. The minutes were agreed as a true record and duly signed by the Chair.

5. Declarations of Interest See *Appendix 1*

Councillors were reminded of the need to update their register.

Councillor Yates declared an interest in 11a Planning regarding Chance Cottage.

6. To consider the Council's Scheme of Delegation for Officers and Representatives

a) Appointment of Lengthsman;

The Annual Agreement (the Parish Lengthsman Scheme) for the undertaking of minor highway maintenance works between Worcestershire County Council and the Parish Council had been returned to County Hall in May 2025.

Carl Brassington was happy to continue as the Lengthsman on the current contractual basis and a copy of his current business insurance policy is held on record. Carl was re-appointed as Lengthsman.

b) Appointment of Tree Warden; Rupert Day will continue in his role as the Warden.

c) Planning Group – All members are in the Planning Group. They actively take part in the consultation process which has a Head of the Group to lead consultation, collate the Group remarks and finalise a comment before sending to the Proper Officer (Clerk) for submission to the local authority. Councillor Steven Byrne will continue as the Lead. Councillor Byrne asked that comments be made back to him for collation as soon as possible.

d) Appointment of Footpath Warden under the authority of Worcestershire County Council. Bruce Hayward has confirmed that he will continue in his role as Warden. The Parish Councillors thanked Bruce for his work and support in the village and to give thanks to Mark Smith who assists Bruce when needed.

e) Appointment of Financial Support Officer. Councillor Paula Aston is willing to give any advice and support in this role.

The Chairman thanked all volunteers for their assistance to the community.

7. Confirmation of arrangements for Insurance Cover

The Parish Council is required by law to assess, at least annually, the risk of its various activities (litter pick – public liability) and to update its insurance and asset register. The understanding for the Insurers (Zurich) is that: the precept is under £25,000 (Certificate of Exemption confirms this); the wages are under £20,000; All Risk's total is under £10,000 and there are no major events or public services undertaken during the year on behalf of the Parish Council. The Clerk has confirmed with Zurich that the bench and kiosk are covered by the premium and has received a revised quotation. Agreement at Item 12.

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

The Parish Council reviewed and approved its subscription to Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC), which is a member organisation offering support, training, seminars, advice, and guidance to parish councils.

All Councillors are aware of what CALC does and the service it provides which is an important backup and useful membership to the Parish Council.

The subscription was reviewed and accepted.

The charges for the current financial year are to be agreed at agenda item 12c.

9. 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 was proposed and agreed that the meetings will continue to commence at 7pm on the third Wednesday of the month. Birlingham Village Hall is the usual venue and is being booked in advance.

It was agreed that the annual meeting of the Parish Council will take place in May 2025. The date and will be agreed later in the year.

Democratic Opening

Full discussion has taken place in the Annual Parish Meeting.

10. Progress Reports

a) Footpath Warden:

i. Footpath 504 (path north from Church St.) – stile repaired
ii. Footpath 508 (path to Defford from Gravelly Hill) boardwalk: has been partially repaired. Clerk has update from County; discussions on-going.
iii. Footpath 510 (field from The Avenue to Withy Walk) – request from Clerk to farm to clear path.
iv. Footpath 512 (Path across field north of Gravelly Hill) – request from Clerk to farm to clear path.
v. Footpath 518 (Asham Meadow) – fence down; kissing-gate being by-passed. Parish Council Chairman communicating with landowners.
vi. Footpath 522 (from Nafford Lock up to Nafford Weir) – Footpath Closure notice issued for a 21-day period leading up to Easter. In fact, the path was kept open during work to lock/weir.

b) Tree Warden:

Rupert Day had given a report during the Annual Parish meeting. The Chairman and members thanked Rupert for his time in talking to landowners to resolve situations.

c) Lengthsman:

The Lengthsman's full report was given at the Parish Meeting.

d) District Councillor:

Councillor Paul Middlebrough gave a full report at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Councillor Middlebrough can be contacted at The Forge, Church Lane, Norton WR5 2PS

paul.middlebrough@wychavon.net 01905 821 732.

e) County Councillor:

Councillor Adrian Hardman's full report was given at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Councillor Hardman was thanked for his support and continuing assistance with village matters. He was congratulated on his return to office following the May election.

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

11. Planning

a) Planning applications pending: -

i. W/25/00571/HP - Chance Cottage, Broadway Road WR10 3AF

Single storey extension to replace existing conservatory; outbuilding extension; installation of roof lights; creation of porch and bay window; replacement of flat roof dormers with pitched roofs

Mr & Mrs Mr Hobby and Mrs Barke

Parish Council comment:

"The Parish Council support the replacement of the existing conservatory, even though it appears to be larger than the existing conservatory's existing footprint. The fenestration, roof lights are also supported. We would suggest in the conditions you stipulate, that you cover the type and quality of the materials to be used.
However, the Parish Council feel that the new build "music room" is an over development of the plot, with its end density not in keeping with either the existing property or the village and indeed is we feel in conflict with the Birlingham Village Design Statement July 2017.

A copy of the Village Design Statement was submitted.

b) Applications granted:-

i. W/25/ 25/00647/HP - Brockham, Upper End WR10 3AA

Erection of single storey and two-storey extensions, and garage, with internal and external alterations, to include modified access. Variation of condition 2 W/23/02237/HP

Dr T and Dr L Roe and Ansell

Parish Council comment:

"*Birlingham Parish Council have no objection to the application and leave it to the appointed Planning officer to ensure that the final details approved are in keeping with the design and ethos of the original approval garage extension consent*."

APPROVED – 13 May 2025

TREE WORKS

W/25/00746/CAN - The Old Orchard Church Street Birlingham Pershore WR10 3AQ
Tree works within a conservation area

Approved – 24 April 2025

c) Enforcement: - none.

12. Financial Matters

a) The Accounts for 2024/2025

i) Bank balances as per year end spreadsheet - current is £1,822.84 at end of March 2025 and Business saving balance is £18, 530.34 as at end of March 2025.

ii) Receipts

i. £250.00 – Wychavon District Council VE grant
ii. £157.50 - Worcestershire County Council Lengthsman February 2024

iii) Payments agreed

i. £22.00 – Birlingham Village Hall January 2025 (transaction date 23.1.25)
ii. £22.00 – Birlingham Village Hall March 2025
iii. £22.00 - Birlingham Village Hall May 2025
iv. £47.00 – ICO (£52 discount for DD of £5) Annual Renewal
v. £167.60 – PAYE January, February, March final quarter (plus £5.00 error to add)

vi. £670.00 – Clerk's pay January, February, March
vii. £104.28 - Clerk's expenses January, February, March
viii. £250.00 – Ian Morphett annual charge for maintenance of the Millennium Bench for 2025.
ix. £245.00 – Lengthsman January 2025
x. £157.50 – Lengthsman February 2025
xi. £250.00 – County Councillor's Divisional Grant (Cuppa & Chat)
xii. £250.00 – County Councillor's Divisional Grant (Art Group) (transaction date 24.2.25)
xiii. £250.00 – VE commemoration grant – discussion below. (funding due date 17.3.25)

Note: £5.75 – service charges

The Accounts for 2024/2025 for resolution (as per the audited financial year end), including the provision, as below.

b) The Accounts for 2025/2026

Acceptance of the accounting receipts and payments so far in the current financial year

i) Bank balance – as per the spreadsheet - current is £5,456.69 as at end of April 2025 and Business saving balance is £18,545.57 as at end of April 2025.

ii) Receipts

i. £3,653.00 Wychavon District Council (precept £3,563.00 and grant £90.00)
ii. £157.50 – Worcestershire County Council

iii) Payments agreed

i. £132.00 – Birlingham Village Hall – defibrillator pads
ii. £250.00 – Birlingham Jubilee Committee for VE Day Street Party (Item 15)

c. Future payments for consideration

i. £274.08 – Worcestershire CALC (Service charge per elector £208.45 and NALC affiliation fee £23.94 net)
ii. £241.00 – Zurich Insurance revised quotation from original £313.90 renewal price
iii. £22.00 – Birlingham Village Hall May 2025
iv. £4.25 – service charges

For note: Lengthsman – Worcestershire County Council agreement for 2024-2025 approved 2 May 2025 and April invoice for the start of financial year has been submitted successfully on the dashboard.

d. The Accounts for 2024/2025 for resolution (as per the spreadsheet at financial year end), including the provisions.

e. Internal Audit – completed (Annual Internal Audit Report – page 4 - 2024/25 of the Annual Return).

Internal Auditor's findings:

i. July 2024 Page 312 should say A/M/J not J/A/S.
ii. Receipt for BVH payment of invoice 2022472 for £22.00.

Sadie Yeoman's payment agreed above and she has been thanked for her assistance.

f. Certificate of Exemption (page 3) – the date for the external audit from PKF Littlejohn has been given as no later than 30 June 2025.

Copies of the Annual Return (plus variances greater than 15% this financial year and bank reconciliation) sent to all Councillors.

g. Approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Part 2:

Section 1: The Annual Governance Statement (page 5) 2024-2025

h. Approval of the Annual Return:

Section 2: The Accounting Statements (page 6)

All Councillors in agreement with the Annual Return for the external auditor.

Clerk to return the agreed and completed 2024/25 Annual Return Certificate of Exemption Notice.

Clerk has been asked to adjust the interest on the bank reconciliation.

Clerk to display the completed Certificate of Exemption, Annual Return (pages 4, 5 and 6), variances, bank reconciliation and the Notice of the Exercise of Public Rights after this meeting both on the noticeboard and to be published on the village website. **Clerk**

13. Discussion Action from Previous Meeting

20 is Plenty

Councillor Day's contact, Marc Baylis, did not stand for re-election and has retired. Councillor Adrian Hardman is trying to find out who the new Head of Highways' successor is however, this may not be known for some time. There is also a delay until the elected chair for Worcestershire County Council is announced.

Discussion took place on the feasibility of signage. Barry Barnes at Highways has been supportive on addressing signage issues. Councillor Day will contact him again and copy in Councillor Hardman.

Councillor Rupert Day spoke with an engineer in Eckington with reference to the village speed signage. He said that the signage was delivered by Highways and speeding was a key "push" in their Village Design Statement for Eckington.

The current directional signs in the village were actioned through Councillor Hardman's Divisional Funding. This was brought about due to HGV's entering New Barn Road and the Lower End.

James Revill has been contacted and has responded offering to have a meeting on 2 June 2025 to discuss what can be achieved by the farm and Parish Council to solve issues affecting residents.
IY/RD/SB

Community Project Funding (CIL) and Consultation on Community Infrastructure Projects

Katie Parsons will be contacted by the Clerk for the proformas she actioned. Councillor David Glover would like to see the drafts and follow through with the project(s).
DG

Flooding at Lower End near Manor Paddock

Councillor Steven Byrne gave a further update. Severn Trent Water (STW) have visited the site again to carry out a further camera survey from Manor fields, under the road up towards the Manor stables boundary with the Moors. However, they reported on site that the pipe, they themselves had replaced c 3 years ago within the Manor Stable field had "moved" impeding the remote cameras access. The camera could only therefore get within 6-10 meters of the boundary with the Moors where the issue of their collapsed pipe resides. The collapsed sewer has historically been the Water Companies ownership and responsibility. C two years ago they tried to change the responsibility to that of the owners. With Sir Perter Luff's considerable help, it was pointed out that this was illegal without full consultation with the private landowners and full substantive compensations to the c 7 land owners that would be affected. The CEO of the water company apologised, saying it was an "administrative error by the technical team", and changed the sewers back to being the water company's responsibility on all public maps. Last month STW once again started saying in telephone conversations that the sewers are again not in the public domain. Councillor Byrne, with help, will continue to action further the leak and point out the legal position.
SB

14. VE Day 80 Anniversary

The VE Day Anniversary party was a success and thanks were given to Stephen Morris and the Jubilee Committee members for their organising of the event.

15. Highways and Public Rights of Way

Notice at Swans Neck

The post at Swans Neck has been cut and a notice attached to it saying it is a permissive right of way. This is incorrect and should be removed. The area at Swans Neck has been used by parishioners for decades, particularly for fishing. Letter to be sent to Michael Porter Farming.
Clerk

Visibility Mirror and post at Whitehall Lane

The mirror and post were erected by previous owners of the School House and the sign has been removed. The post is laying in the verge. If residents wish to reinstate it there are no objections from the Parish Council. However, there is no current project funding allocated to this.

No Mow May

Several residents contacted the Clerk regarding the visibility splays at the junctions to the village due to the length of the verges. Worcestershire County Council have a policy for not cutting the grass, 'No Mow May' however this has become a hazard when exiting the village. The Lengthsman has been asked to strim to assist.

Kissing Gate/Asham Meadow

Councillor Ian Yates will ask about the missing fencing at the kissing gate into Asham Meadow.
IY

16. Councillors' reports and items for next agenda

Boardwalk from Gravelly Hill towards Defford. Communication has been received from a Defford resident regarding the condition of the boardwalk. Clerk to get a further update from the Public Rights of Way Operations Manager.
Clerk

17. Closure and date of next ordinary meeting

With nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 8.55pm and the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 16 July 2025 at 7.00pm.

The meeting will be held in Birlingham Village Hall. Clerk has booked hall.

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

Date: .....

Appendix 1 – Declaration of Interest

Councillors who have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, or Other Disclosable Interest which falls within the terms of paragraph 12(4) (b) of the code of conduct, must leave the room for the relevant items.

Appendix 2 – Clerk's Report

i. Highways / Public Rights of Way

Nafford – Footpath BL-522

Works continues at Nafford Lock (company Wrubble) on behalf of Lower Avon Navigation Trust. The footpath has been open but fencing remains in place around the lock for safety. Notice of Closure was issued for a 3-day closure originally.

There have been repairs to the brickwork surrounding the lock and replacement of 'tow' paths.

Inspections to the weir and footbridge are still ongoing as site surveys are still taking place.

Public and Permissive Paths

The farm was made aware of some dog walkers that are not staying on the public or permissive paths and crossing fields. The farm asked that the following be published in the Birlingham News:

'There are a network of public and permissive paths throughout Birlingham for all to enjoy. Please keep dogs under close control and remain on the paths at all times.'

Footpath 510 Jubilee Wood to Withy Walk

Further to the Clerk being made aware from villagers of the obstruction to the width and access across footpath 510 the farm has addressed the issue.



Footpath 509 Hall Barns

The footpath sign has been reported by a villager. The post and sign are down on the path leading off Church Street behind the shed/barns to Whitehall Lane. The Footpath Warden has been made aware.



Footpath 504 adjacent to Leyfield, Church Street

The footpath style that was reported as broken has been fixed by the Footpath Warden.

Footpath 512 Gravelly Hill Cottages towards Bow Brook – footpath not defined

April - the farm was approached regarding the designated footpath 512 which is not defined.

The farm responded saying 'the field in question is not farmed by G W Revill & Son so I am unable to assist you with this sorry.'

Footpath Warden is aware.

Footpath 514 Gravelly Hill towards the Swans Neck bridleway/Manor House

11 April 2025 Clerk to farm manager

The pictures were taken a few days ago so assuming this is still the same location for the equipment. I have been asked by walkers if the bird scarer could be moved as it is aimed across the footpath and obviously very noisy when it goes off. To anyone that isn't aware of what it is, it's also slightly hidden.

19 April - Reply from farm manager

I went today to move the gas gun as requested only to find it has been vandalised with a wire cut. I didn't have chance to move it yesterday and given that it has been there for over 3 weeks I thought another 3 days wouldn't make any difference.

Obviously, this is totally unacceptable behaviour. Needless to say, it has now been taken away to be repaired and won't be going back to that place.

Clerk response

This is totally unacceptable behaviour. I will note this in the report I give to the Parish Council. We are all here to work alongside each other but it seems that isn't always the case.

NOTE from Clerk: I have spoken to the complainant saying that it has been removed. The farm manager does not want his reply published but members have been advised.

Verges on the A4104 Defford Road / Upper End junction

Several residents have complained about the grass/verges on both junctions out of Birlingham that are obstructing the view of approaching traffic.

County Councillor Adrian Hardman has been contacted.

Meanwhile the Lengthsman has strimmed the visibility splays to assist.

Circulations to Councillors

Chairman of Wychavon District Council for 2025-2026

Notification from WDC - 15 May 2024

At last night's Annual Council Councillor Mark Goodge was elected Chairman of Wychavon District Council. Councillor Goodge's Consort will be his wife, Mrs Emma Goodge.

Councillor Gregory Wilkins was elected Vice Chairman and his Consort will be his mother, Ms Kelly Riding.

Please continue to send any invitations or correspondence for the Chairman or Vice Chairman to me. Councillor Goodge is particularly interested in championing the many voluntary organisations we have in the district and would welcome the opportunity visits them, so please do let me know if you have any causes or occasions in mind.

Applications invited for £245,000 Wychavon Rural Fund

Notification from WDC - 16 May 2025

Businesses and community groups are invited to apply for up to £25,000 in funding to help support projects throughout the rural areas of Wychavon.

The Wychavon Rural Fund offers applicants financial support to overcome growth obstacles and to purchase physical equipment or machinery.

Shawn Riley, Head of Economic Development at Wychavon, said: "We are pleased that funding has been made available through the Rural England Prosperity Fund, with a total of £245,000 allocated for Wychavon to help support our rural communities and strengthen the local economy. We look forward to receiving the applications and learning about ideas and projects from local businesses and community groups."

Currently, two rounds are available to apply for a share in the fund. Expressions of interest for Round One of the funding are invited to be submitted by midday on Monday, 9 June 2025, with the complete applications needing to be submitted to the council by midday on Monday, 14 July 2025. Funding decisions will be made by mid-August 2025. The Round Two deadline for expressions of interest is midday on Monday, 7 July 2025, with the full application needing to be submitted by midday on Monday, 18 August 2025. Funding decisions for Round Two will be made by the end of September 2025.

All projects from both rounds must be completed by Saturday, 31 January 2026.

Two projects that previously benefited from the fund are the All-Things Wild Park, Evesham, and the Worcester Norton Community Interest Company (CIC). All Things Wild received just over £18,000 in funding for a Changing Places facility for visitors with additional needs, and to lay out accessible footpaths around the attraction. The CIC applied for over £24,000 from the fund to support purchasing kitchen appliances, pay for the bar and coffee shop fit-out, and security for The Sergeants Mess Community Hub in Norton.

For more details on the application process, visit https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/business/funding-and-support/wychavon-rural-fund

For more information and to clarify whether a project qualifies for funding, please email: ruralfund@wychavon.gov.uk

Extracts of interest

Road Closures

The Eckington main road was closed w/c 12 May.
Defford main road will be closed w/c 19 May.
Both notices and maps have been published in the News during April.

Birlingham News 354 - 14 May 2025

Publishes -

Annual Parish Meeting & Annual Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 21st May

Defford Road Closure, Monday 19th May – Friday 23rd May

VE Day Street Party & VE Day Raffle

County Council Election Results

A Message from Councillor Adrian Hardman

"*I would like to reassure the electors of Birlingham that I will be taking their concerns and issues seriously over the next three years, no matter who runs the County Council now it is in no overall control. District Councillor Paul Middlebrough and I are always on duty and trying to help sort out your problems. I am sorry not to have spoken to every elector but the Bredon Division is 46 square miles, and the boundary changes only enlarged it. Thanks to the Birlingham residents who voted, even if it wasn't for me. I will have to try harder, but I thank you all for your support and kindness.*