Birlingham News online

Published on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month

No. 355 Wednesday 28th May 2025

Editorial

This edition contains plenty of reading matter – the reports from the Annual Parish Meeting last Wednesday.

We also have news of forthcoming events and some great photos.

Stuart Brown

We are sorry to announce that Stuart Brown died last Tuesday, 20th May.

Born and bred in Birlingham, Stuart was a wonderful character who will be greatly missed.

Our thoughts are with Beryl and the family.

St James' Church



Churchwarden:
Adrianne Woodward
(Tel. 01386 750936)

St James' would like to extend an invitation to attend an outdoor Eco Service on Sunday 8th June at 10.30am.

It will be held at the Court House woodland garden, Birlingham, by kind permission of Rupert and Maryanne Day and will be led by Revd. Jayne Parker.

There is parking on site and refreshments will be available following the service.

Please contact Adrianne Woodward (01386 750936) if you have any queries.

Cuppa & Chat

Wednesday 4th June

by Sue Hermon



Cuppa & Chat will be held on Wednesday 4th June from 3.00pm to 4.30pm in Birlingham Village Hall. Everyone is most welcome to come along. There will be tea, coffee and a selection of cakes and the cost is still only £3.00 per head!

For more information, or to request transport, please contact me on 01386 750096 or email sue.hermon@me.com.

Bretforton Morris Dancers at the Swan Inn, 16th May

(Photo: Diana Grimston)



St James' Church, Birlingham

OUTDOOR ECO SERVICE



SUNDAY 8 JUNE
10.30AM

COURT HOUSE WOODLAND GARDEN, BIRLINGHAM
BY KIND PERMISSION OF RUPERT AND MARYANNE DAY

THE SERVICE WILL BE LED BY REVD JAYNE PARKER
AND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY REFRESHMENTS

Contact Adrianne Woodward
on 01386 750936 if directions are needed

Annual Parish Meeting

The Birlingham Annual Parish Meeting took place on Wednesday 21st May. The meeting received annual reports from the following:

- The Chairman, Councillor Ian Yates
- County Councillor Adrian Hardman
- The Jubilee Committee (delivered after the meeting)

These reports are reproduced below.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – PARISH MEETING MAY 2025

This report is a summary of some of the many activities that have taken place over the last 12 months.

Members of the Parish Council
The following were members of the Parish Council between May 2024 and May 2025 except where stated:

- Ian Yates – Chair
- Paula Aston – Vice Chair and Financial Support Officer
- Katie Parsons – Head of the Planning Group (until her resignation from the Parish Council in March 2025)
- Steven Byrne – (Head of the Planning Group from March 2025)
- Michael Porter
- David Glover
- Rupert Day – (Joined the Parish Council in July 2024)

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. June Hiden agreed to continue as Clerk for the 19th year in a row! We are very grateful to everyone who volunteers their time in support of the Parish Council and as always, I would like to begin by thanking everyone who have given their time for the benefit of the parish. They have all been involved in the many different projects undertaken by the Parish Council over the last 12 months as detailed later in this report.

I would also like to thank the following; County Councillor Adrian Hardman, for his help with arranging funding for various village projects and District Councillor Paul Middlebrough, who took over the Eckington Ward from Ron Davis. It is much appreciated that they find time to attend our meetings whenever possible. Thanks also to Steve Morris who continues to develop and maintain the village website, including a page for the Parish Council and amongst his many activities heading up the Jubilee Committee and Birlingham News.

Parish Council Vacancy
Councillor Katie Parsons decided to step down in March 2025 so there is currently a vacancy on the Parish Council. If you are interested in joining, please contact June Hiden the parish clerk at birlingham_clerk@yahoo.co.uk

Parish Council Financials
The Parish Council discussed the budget for 2025/26 which sets the precept for the year. It took into account funding for various projects in discussion for the coming year. So a small increase of £210 in the precept was agreed equivalent to approx. £1.40/property.

Each year the parish council makes provisions from their budget to cover possible future costs in areas such as
the costs that the parish council are charged to run an election.
to build a community fund to support village projects some of which are listed below.

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

Full Fibre Broadband (Fibre to the Premise)
The government's stated ambition was to roll out full fibre to the majority of the country. However it was recognised that rural communities could be delayed by several years as they were less commercially attractive. In 2023, the Parish Council decided to secure the installation of a full fibre infrastructure for Birlingham (alongside the existing copper connections) by working with Airband who were already very active in Worcestershire. We were able to work with Worcester County Council to add Birlingham to the infrastructure planned in Pershore, Bredon, Eckington and Defford so giving residents choice - between full fibre or remaining with their existing copper service.

The installation of the fibre infrastructure was not without its problems and the Parish Council spent a large amount of time dealing with issues raised by residents such as pole locations, ducting runs and intermittent service. However the installation was completed in September 2024 with many residents then signing up for the new service. The fibre infrastructure future proof's internet and voice communications for the village given the government plan to switch off traditional copper telephone cables and terrestrial television in the not too distant future.

Consultation on Potential Community Infrastructure Projects
In early 2024 we reported on a meeting between community groups and the Communities Officer at WDC to discuss possible grant funding for projects in the village. The Village Hall committee was one of the groups to benefit from this and received funding for new hall lighting which was installed at the end of 2024.

The Parish Council has £4000 of funding available within its Community and Projects provisions. In addition we were notified that a Community Infrastructure Levy payment of £1543.91 would be paid by WDC to Birlingham Parish Council as a Neighbourhood Fund. The money can be spent on the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure and is available to help fund any village community group projects.

20IsPlenty

During the Open Session at the May 2024 Parish Council meeting a presentation was made on behalf of residents in Upper End entitled 'Making Upper End safe and with an acceptable quality of life for residents'. The concern raised was the increase in traffic since the pandemic with more home deliveries and an increase in HGV's since the expansion of Redstar's refrigerated packing sheds. Amongst other things, this is causing traffic problems at pinch points, erosion of verges and structural damage at Court Cottages. It proposed a reduction in the speed limit to 20mph.

Comments on the presentation were opened to the floor and a wide-ranging discussion took place. Members of the Parish Council gave details of work they had done in 2017/18 working with the police to survey traffic speeds and encourage enforcement but actions were limited as the volume of traffic was considered too low to justify enforcement resources. It was decided to carry out a survey of residents to understand their views on the 20mph proposals. Residents in Upper End were contacted initially and this was then expanded to include some properties in the centre as well. 50 houses were visited and 72% were in favour of a reduced speed limit. Monitoring of vehicle speed and volume in Upper End was also carried out through a request to Worcester County Council.

A proposal was put forward to Worcester County Council identifying many of the relevant points set out in *The Government Guidance Setting Local Limits (updated March 2024*. However the proposal was rejected by the Head of Traffic Management at WCC as not meeting their policy relating to 20mph limits which only considers it in limited situations as follows:

- Outside schools through advisory limits.
- At accident collision cluster sites.
- In connection with major projects as appropriate.
- For all new residential development through appropriate design

As a result the Parish Council has escalated this to the Cabinet Member responsible for Highways and Transport at WCC asking why WCC is not aligned with the National Guidance on the issue of assessing speed limits and how their decision was taken.

In addition consideration is being given to:

- Improved signage including radar activated speed signs.
- Traffic calming in the form of additional painted lines indicating where the road narrows.

Further meetings with the farm to ensure that the existing guidance to hauliers regarding preferred routes and time restrictions on access to the village is being followed.

VE Day Celebrations

A £19,000 fund was made available to help communities across Wychavon mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe and the Parish Council received £250 to support the street party which was brilliantly organised by Steve Morris and the Jubilee Committee held on 5th May.

Changes to Councils

Whatever happens, on the 31 March 2028 Wychavon council along with Wyre Forest, Worcester City, Redditch, Malvern Hills and Bromsgrove councils, along with Worcestershire County council, will cease to exist. The service provided by all the councils will be run by a new council covering the footprint of the existing Worcestershire or two councils, one covering the north of Worcestershire and the other covering the south of Worcestershire.The new councils are called unitary councils covering all county and district functions from dustbins to coroners, planning to potholes. Many county areas have already gone through the changes such as Wiltshire, Dorset Shropshire etc. and it is said that Parish Councils will be required to take on some local services and activities although how this will be funded is not yet clear.

Planning

Multiple planning applications in Birlingham were discussed during the year and comments sent to the LPA at Wychavon.

In one example, the Parish Council made a number of comments and recommendations on the Broadgrove Nursery, Eckington Road application. The original application was for seven industrial units on the site and this was approved despite opposition from neighbours who were supported by the parish council, and the case being taken to planning committee. Subsequently a second and alternative Planning in Principle (PIP) application was made for 4 residential houses on the site. This application was supported both by neighbours, the parish council and district councillor as preferable to the industrial units. However this application was refused! The applicant appealed the decision and this appeal was again supported by the parish council and we were pleased that the appeal was successful.

The Parish Council continues to monitor changes to legislation and provide input where necessary.

The Chancellor Rachel Reeves' recent announcement that she wants to accelerate housing with a new 10,000 home town planned for the area around Worcestershire Parkway station. The scheme is already in the proposed review of the South Worcestershire Development Plan.

Water leak on the road by the Manor House, Lower End

It is disappointing to report that 12 months on from the last report the water leak, which has been a problem for the last ten years, has still not been fully resolved. This is despite considerable work being carried out to address the problem in 2023 and 2024, and many meetings between the Parish Council, Severn Trent and WCC.

Millennium Bench

The carpenter who restored the bench for us has returned to carry out annual maintenance. The bench has been rubbed down and retreated with oil.

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

Ian Yates
Chairman, Birlingham Parish Council

Annual County Council Report.

2024/25

Bredon Hill Division.

Birlingham Parish Council 22/05/25.

I am sorry not to be with you for the annual parish meeting because this is a meeting I tried always to attend.

Following the County Council elections I was delighted and slightly dismayed by the majority; to be elected for the next three years as your county councillor I was lucky to be able to count the Birlingham box and let me tell you it was a real three-way go! But this is democracy in action. As to what happens next at the County Council very difficult to say. There should be three options; a minority reform administration; a rainbow coalition all global parties except reform or a reform coalition with another party. If I knew the outcome, I will be off down there the bookmakers. But in some ways the result reflected the pressures that the County Council has been under, but the Reform Councillors seem to have no idea as to what they need to do.

This has been the most challenging year for the County Council as it continues to face relentless financial pressures due to increasing demand and rising costs in key service areas.

- Children's social care placements
- Home-to-school transport
- Adult social care
- Dealing with inflation

The net budget of the Council is now just shy of £0.5 billion for the coming financial year. These pressures are not unique to Worcestershire but are widespread across county councils and upper-tier authorities nationwide, who are responsible for Social care services. Despite ongoing efforts to manage spending and demand, the council's forecasted financial position remains challenging, with £7.9 million in reserves being used to cover in year costs.

Key Budget Challenges are complex, and mainly due to the demographics, National legislation that did not anticipate the ongoing effects of Covid 19 on mental health, and the increasing numbers of special education needs provision, which also causes a much higher bill in home to school transport to deliver this service. The council's budget is essentially fixed in cash terms, limiting its ability to raise income.

National restrictions on council tax and business rates further constrain funding. It is very difficult for the County Council to engage in Income generation from trading activities. The cost of service delivery continues to outpace income growth, exacerbated by factors such as:

- National Living Wage increases
- Changes to employer National Insurance contributions
- Rising costs faced by suppliers, partners, and contractors

Budget Deficit & Exceptional Financial Support (EFS)

At the final budget stage, the council faced a £48.6 million budget gap. This was reduced by:

£12.5 million in cost efficiency and the use of £15 million in one-off reserves.

This left a remaining gap of £33.6 million. Given the severity of the situation, Worcestershire County Council, in line with many other councils, approached the government for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS)—the request that was granted but this is not a long term solution and as we await Baroness Cassey's report on Social Care, a review of special educational needs and I believe it is important that the funding formula for Local Government finance is looked at as a matter of urgency.

Worcestershire Unitary Discussions & Devolution

A key development in local government reform being driven by the new Government is the discussion around unitarization as part of the national devolution agenda. This is being delivered in a top-down approach from Whitehall.

- Worcestershire applied for inclusion in the accelerated unitary program, but this Shire was not accepted on to the programme at this stage. As a result, County Council elections will proceed as scheduled on 1st May 2025.
- Government policy indicates that all areas will transition to a unitary model before the end of this parliamentary term. This will require:
  - Each area will be required to have a Parish Council
  - Consideration of unitary structures based on local demographics and needs

Potential Unitary Models for Worcestershire

1. A single Worcestershire-wide unitary
2. A North/South Worcestershire split

The government's guideline is that unitary authorities should ideally serve a population of 500,000+. This does not simplify the governance of the County since following the abolishing of all Councils in the County. The Government wants to create a strategic authority with a population of 1.5 million or more, which will include the election of a regional mayor. In conclusion despite financial pressures, the Conservative run County Council remained committed to:

- Promoting health and well-being
- Delivering a good standard of adult social care
- Helping children and families
- Protecting the environment
- Supporting businesses

While significant challenges remain, I will continue to work towards sustainable solutions and strategic partnerships that will ensure Worcestershire remains a thriving and well-supported community, under a Reform administration this will change, since only 1 of these appear to be on their agenda. What they plan to do is a total mystery to me and everyone in Worcestershire, but I find myself reminded of the speech Mussolini made in Milan in 1923, when I see their leader!

Just to dwell for a moment longer local issue. I continue to work with all the agencies to resolve flooding issues, and chase Highways to deliver the standard of roads I believe you deserve. As well as a vast range of other issues from Broadband poles, ambulance waiting times, mobile phone signals; just to name a few problems I have been helping residents with. I am delighted that we are moving to a two-tier school system since it will keep the local schools on a better footing, and I hope we can deliver the school changes on time. I am aware that yesterday the two different teams of contractors racing to beat the rain caused a degree of chaos on the road net work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for all they do for this Community, and I would like to thank you the resident for your support.

It is an honour and privilege to represent the Bredon Division, and I look forward to continuing in this role.

C/Cllr Adrian Hardman

Bredon

Spring 2025

Jubilee Committee

Report for Annual Parish Meeting 2025

The Jubilee Committee has had another active year, especially with the recent commemoration of the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The **VE Day** event comprised a Street Party in front of the Village Hall. Over 90 residents, their families and friends came along for the afternoon, which was made possible with more than 30 people helping in various ways. We held a raffle, which raised £338 for two charities working for veterans and children of members of the armed forces.

Birlingham News is now delivered to all but a handful of households, as well as many former residents. We publish two issues per month on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Our subscribers are still alerted by an email when the online edition is ready to download and the number of downloads is regularly over 160.

Our recent survey resulted in 87% saying they are happy with the current format. We are considering how we can take account of the concerns of the other 13%.

Thank you to the many people who now contribute on a regular basis and particularly Ian Yates for his comprehensive Parish Council reports.

In the last twelve months we have produced a further two issues of the **Birlingham Bystander**, with the Spring edition just delivered.

The **village website** continues to receive many visitors but more volunteers are still needed to help keep it up to date.

The **Jubilee Wood** is looking much more impressive this year. Thanks to Tree Warden, Rupert Day, for his continuing advice on the upkeep of the wood.

Our **equipment** includes a water boiler (currently on loan to the church), 24 trestle tables, bunting, 30 camping chairs, 50 plastic chairs road signs and more, all of which are available for village residents and organisations to borrow for private or public functions. We also have a one-third share in the village marquee. The Cricket Club has recently agreed to provide storage for much of this equipment, for which we are very grateful.

Thank you to the scores of people who have been involved in all these activities over the past year.

Steve Morris
Chairman, Birlingham Jubilee Committee
21st May 2025



Nafford Sluice, 7th April
(Photo: June Hiden)

Pershore Operatic and Dramatic Society

LEGALLY BLONDE



The Musical

2nd – 7th June 2025

Director – Paul Turvey, Musical Director – Andrew Hemming, Choreographer – Vicky Shone

Number 8, Pershore – www.number8.org

Book by Heather Hach, Music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe and Neil Benjamin

Based on the novel by Amanda Brown and the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Muscal Theatre International All authorised performance materials are also supplied by MTI www.mtishows.co.uk

Letters to the Editors

We welcome brief letters to the Editors on any subject relating to Birlingham. The Editors reserve the right to shorten letters and we cannot guarantee that all letters will be printed.

Please send letters to:

news@birlingham.org

Planning Applications

The following planning application has been determined by Wychavon District Council:

Brockham, Upper End: 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 (Case No. W/25/00647/HP). **Approved.** Full details and conditions can be viewed on the Wychavon DC website at:

https://plan.wychavon.gov.uk/Planning/Display/W/25/00647/HP

The Parish Council comments are available at:

http://www.birlingham.org/pc_info/pc_comments_25_00647.pdf

Defibrillator Code



The code to unlock the defibrillator at the front of the Village Hall is:

C1234

Personal Ads

Personal adverts should consist of one paragraph of text, maximum 100 words, and will be included in a single issue of Birlingham News. Please note that advertisement text will be published exactly as received. Personal ads should be sent to news@birlingham.org no later than the Monday before publication. Birlingham News is published on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month.



Sunset in Upper End, looking towards Besford, 10th May

(Photo: Jim Smith)

Are Your Locks Behaving Badly ?

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Dates for your diary

May	
Sat 31	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Harvington CC 2nd XI, 12.30pm
June	
Wed 4	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sun 8	Outside Eco Service – details to follow
Sat 14	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Bredon CC 2nd XI, 12.30pm
Thu 19	Birlingham IW – details to follow
Sat 28	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Droitwich Spa CC 4th XI, 12.30pm
July	
Wed 2	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sat 5	Birlingham CC 1st X1 vs Astwood Bank CC 4th XI, 12.30pm
Wed 16	Birlingham Parish Council, 7.00pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Thu 17	Birlingham IW – details to follow

Birlingham News online is available at www.birlingham.org. Details of future editions will be emailed to subscribers of *Birlingham News*. These emails are available to residents of Birlingham, their families and friends. If you know anyone who would like to receive these emails, or have any comments or items for inclusion in either the email or online edition of *Birlingham News*, or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please write to news@birlingham.org.

Birlingham News online is open to any organisation or business within the parish to promote events. Inclusion of an event does not imply that Birlingham Jubilee Committee supports either the event or the views of the organisation promoting it.

The copy date for the next edition is Monday 9th June (for publication on Wednesday 11th June). We regret that we cannot guarantee to include any items submitted after that date.

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