

Bredon and Bredon's Norton Parish Council

The minutes of Bredon's Annual Parish Meeting held at Bredon Village Hall on **Monday 29th April 2024** at 7.00 pm.

Present:

Cllrs Mr Nick Bradley (Chairman), Mr Colin Davidson, Mr Matt Darby, Mr Kevin Falvey, Mr Adrian Hardman (County and District), Mr Andrew Rhodes, Mr Declan Shiels and Mr Rob Sly. Also, Mr Tim Drew (Clerk), Mr Ian Baldry, Ms Ruth Sly, Ms Wendy James, Ms Debra Lincoln, Ms Diane Davidson, Mr Philip Sheehan, Ms Hazel Sheehan, Mr Mike Cluer, Mr John Houghton and Mr Derek Ebbage.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Mr Brod Whiting and PC Molly Keeler.

2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting Held 24th April 2023.

The minutes having been circulated were **agreed** and signed as a true record.

3. Parish Council Chairman's Report 2024.

Following last year's elections, the Council has been operating with only 10 Councillors, with vacancies remaining unfilled to 2 Councillors, hopefully we can welcome onboard 2 new councillors to fill the vacancies in the coming year.

It continues to be the case that unfortunately the Council is beset with dealing with major planning applications, both within the Parish but also on its borders which have the capacity to change the idyllic setting we call our home. These applications include the ongoing planning application relating to the 'Land at Mitton', located in Bredon's Hancock which proposes initially 500 new homes and a Primary School to serve Gloucestershire, or the SWDP which proposes a strategic allocation of 1,000 homes at Bredon's Hardwick.

At the Parish border proposals remain for the Tewkesbury Garden Community, we recently saw one of the major developers hold a consultation in our Village Hall on 9 April 2024, wherein they are proposing to deliver 4,000 homes to the north of the A46, to the north of Northway and the MoD Ashchurch Camp. For those who attended the Consultation, they will be aware of the scale of the proposed developments and will equally be aware of the impact this will have on our Parish, noting the significant issues which are faced locally already with transport and flooding related issues to name but a few, which will only be exasperated by these developments should they proceed, if not carefully controlled and managed.

Bredon Parish Council continues to engage with these issues, campaigning and lobbying to ensure that the concerns of our local community are heard and taken into consideration. I am pleased to say that as a Parish Council not only have we managed to secure a place on Tewkesbury Garden Communities Parish Liaison Board, but I am also currently fulfilling the role of Chairman on this Board. Which has also led to Bredon Parish Council securing a place on the Garden Communities Oversight Board also, with the views of the Parish Council being widely and loudly expressed at the meetings of these Boards.

The views of the Parish Council on such matters are shaped through listening to our community who consistently come out and show their interest, engagement on planning matters when public meetings are conducted on these major planning matters.

Unfortunately, as with recent years, planning matters have continued to pre-occupy the Councils time and attention. This year did bring about a conclusion to the two applications to develop the site referred to "Land at Mitton" for the provision of 500 homes and a primary school. It was at last years annual parish council meeting, I reported that these applications were to go before Wychavon District Councils Planning Committee the following week, having been running for 4 years in the case of the housing application. I am pleased to report that the Planning Committee decided to refuse the application for the 500 homes, which led to the withdrawal of the application for the Primary School.

However, the Developer decided to lodge an appeal against the Decision of the Committee, leading to a Planning Inquiry being convened over a two-week period at Wychavon's Offices during late October and early November 2022. The Parish Council successfully applied to be a Rule 6 Party at the Inquiry. I am pleased to report that the Parish Councils efforts, along with those of consultants we engaged, plus members of the community in support, including our District Councillor Adrian Darby and the role of our District and County Councillor Adrian Hardman who represented Wychavon District Council at the Inquiry, led to Planning Inspector dismissing the Appeal.

It was therefore the Parish Councils expectation that the next battle ground for this application site would be the South Worcestershire Development Plan which is due to be published in Summer 2023 for Examination in Public. Regrettably though I must report that the Developer has submitted a new application for the primary school, which the Parish Council will now need to consider.

On other planning related matters, the Parish Council continued its collaboration with Ashchurch Rural and Northway Parish Councils in appealing the Ashchurch Bridge over Rail application, for a new road bridge crossing over the Birmingham to Bristol main line, in a location between Bredon and Northway. The appeal process took us to the Court of Appeal in the Royal Courts of Justice In December 2022, again I am pleased to report that the Parish Councils were successful in getting the planning application quashed on each of the 3 grounds of appeal submitted.

For the first time in many years, it has regrettably been necessary for the Parish Council in light of the costs of defending the planning applications mentioned, as well as the potential to have to do the same with the latest Mitton application as well as the examination in public of the SWDP which proposed to allocate the enlarged Mitton site for 1,000 homes. The Parish Council as with everyone else has to face the increased inflation costs which exist; however, the Parish Council has ensured that the increase is kept to a minimum and within the current inflation figures.

I am pleased to say that some of the costs associated with the Council Tax increase are also targeted to be spent in positive improvements for the benefit of the community, with some of these already being delivered.

These include in reaction to the increase heating costs has seen the introduction of a 'Warm Room' once a month at the Village Hall. Not only does this event provide a warm room, it provides an environment for people to meet and socialise as well as receive a warm meal. In regard to this initiative the Parish Council wishes to express its thanks to those members of the community who assisted in providing donations towards this initiative and to Councillor Adrian Hardman who provided a discretionary grant from his District Council budget. I also wish to thank Councillor Declan Shiels and his volunteers who help organise and run the warm room events.

The Village Hall has this year provided a location for Ukrainian refugees who have used this as a meeting place to socialise with each other and be provided with English classes, the Parish Council is pleased to be able to gift them the use of the room.

This year has seen some minor improvements to the Village Hall, including improvements to the lighting, further work is soon to commence in decorating parts of the exterior of the hall, with other work planned to take place in the coming year.

Speeding has been a long-standing concern of the community, during this year to address this issue the Parish Council purchase five Vehicle Activated Signs which have been placed at locations across the Parish (Bredon's Hardwick, Glebe Field, Park, Cheltenham Road, Kinsham Road). The introduction of these signs appears to have had an effect on the speed of vehicles passing through the Parish. With these signs also providing the Parish Council will valuable data that will assist the Parish Council in analysing and challenging traffic surveys, so it is the Parish Councils intention to procure further vehicle detection hardware to be able to undertake its own traffic modelling.

In addition to addressing the speed of vehicles within the Parish, the community has received a significant improvement for pedestrians in the village with improvements to the footpaths around Queensmead and the inter connector between Bredon and Westmancote. A massive thanks must go to our County Councillor, Adrian Hardman for supporting the Parish Council in lobbying for these improvements.

Last summer the playing fields and the main car park were subject to an incursion by members of the traveller community, who were seemingly intent on making this their base for a number of weeks. Thankfully, due to the efforts of the Police we were able to get the travellers moved on that evening, but we need to remain vigilant. Consequently, the Parish Council has purchased height restriction barriers for the car parks, which will soon be installed with the intention of preventing a repeat of this situation. In addition to the barriers other improvement are being considered for the main car park, to restrict access to the playing field as well as enhancing the car park.

I cannot mention the playing fields without placing on record the Parish Councils thanks to the members of Bredon Community Play and Recreation who continue to maintain the play equipment at the Park as well as arrange activities for children such as Play Rangers. Bredon Community Play and Recreation play an important community role, who have been chaired by Martin Miles for many years. Martin Miles has now decided it is time to stand down from the role and offer someone else the opportunity to take this role forward. I therefore place on record the thanks of the Parish Council to Martin Miles for the many years hard work be put into the role of Chairman of Bredon Community Play and Recreation and we look forward to working with Martin's successor to maintain and enhance the play facilities.

Parish Councillors give their time voluntary to work on the Council, this is a significant commitment for them to make for the benefit of the local community, I therefore wish to place on record my thanks to each and one of them for their time and commitment during this year, I look forward to continuing the good work that has been achieved in the coming term.

The Parish Council is fortunate to be able to draw on the support and good work also of In addition a small but select group of staff members:

- Jo Lomasney - Village Hall Manager
- David Gray – Lengthsman

- Tim Drew - Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

I wish to place on record the thanks of the Parish Council for the work the three have them tirelessly do for the Parish Council and the Community.

The Parish Council is fortunate to be able to rely upon the support and assistance of our District Councillors Adrian Hardman and Adrian Darby. I place on record the Parish Councils thanks for their efforts over the last year.

Councillor Darby after many years acting as District Councillor for the Westmancote ward has decided not to seek re-election, we wish Adrian well for his support and assistance over the many years he as acted as District Councillor for the Bredon Hill Ward.

Councillor Adrian Hardman is standing for re-election of the Bredon Ward, which due to recent boundary changes sees the Parish fall entirely now within this ward. As well as wishing Adrian thanks again for the work he has done this year in his dual role of District and County Councillor, we also wish him well and every success in the forthcoming elections in the hope that he will continue to act as our District Councillor.

Thank you for your time this evening and giving me the honour over the last year of acting as Chairmen of the Council, it continues to be an honour and a privilege

4. County and District Councillor, Mr Adrian Hardman's Report.

In view of tonight's meeting being the annual meeting and last month's Panorama programme, which focused on Councils going bust; my brief report focuses rather a lot on the money.

Worcestershire County Council continues to navigate a challenging financial landscape into the financial year 2024/25. Despite sustained efforts to manage costs, we face significant demand and cost pressures in key service areas: Children's Social Care Placements, Home-to-School Transport, and Adult Social Care. These pressures are compounded by the council's fixed cash budget and limited income generation capabilities due to national restrictions on council tax, business rates, and trading income.

In the Current Financial Year (2023/24): The council anticipates a significant overspend, around some £20M; albeit mitigated by additional business rates income, further adult social care grants, and the one-off use of reserves.

The Budget for 2024/25: Despite an increase in public health-related grants and business rates pool funding (rising by £27.9 million), we are not keeping pace with the escalating demand pressures. The budget proposals aim to address these ongoing financial strains, projecting into the 2024/25 fiscal year to manage the structural deficit effectively.

In February 2024, the government acknowledged WCC's financial position, awarding an additional £5 million in grants for social care. Additionally, a 2.99% increase in council tax, coupled with a 2% uplift in the adult social care levy, has been approved through Full Council. These measures, alongside targeted investments in children's and adult social care, enable the council to uphold its capital commitments across critical areas such as the economy, environment, highways, and education. The council undertook extensive consultations on its draft budget, engaging with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including scrutiny panels, the school's forum, trade unions, business representatives,

parish and town councils, and staff. This collaborative approach ensures that our financial strategies align with the broader community needs and expectations.

Our Corporate Plan underscores our dedication to championing business, supporting children and families, protecting the environment, and promoting health and well-being. Despite the financial challenges, we remain committed to these pillars, ensuring that Worcestershire County continues to thrive.

Worcestershire County Council is at a challenging point, facing significant financial pressures yet bolstered by strategic planning and external support. As we move into 2024/25 financial year, our focus will remain on delivering essential services, managing resources effectively, and advocating for additional government funding to mitigate these pressures further.

The promotion of Health and Wellbeing remains a key priority of Worcestershire County Council. As part of my cabinet role as the member with overall responsibility for Adult Social Care, and I sit on the Health and Wellbeing Board. Your health and well-being are of paramount importance. Worcestershire County Council are working closely with healthcare providers and community organisations to ensure access to healthcare services and promote healthy lifestyles for all our residents with Prevention being at the heart of all we do.

Wychavon District Council on the other hand continues to be in sound health; this is partly because the services it delivers are not demand driven and it faces a less complex regulatory landscape. But even Wychavon this year; having frozen the council tax for the past six years, is increasing its council tax by £ 5. It is just refreshed its local plan for housing, and this is currently at the stage where it has been submitted to the inspectorate. It is also revised its corporate plan putting greater emphasis on basic efficiency and the health and well-being all communities, while grow trying to grow the economy of Wychavon. New Wychavon Strategy 2024-2028. This has been developed following an extensive and inclusive process involving an analysis of local needs, consultation with residents and engagement with councillors, managers and staff. The Proposed priorities and mini-vision statements are: - Providing opportunities for everyone, raising young people's aspirations and helping people to live healthier lives through improving health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and supporting young people. Helping everyone to access a good place to live, supporting businesses to thrive and creating vibrant and accessible places by delivering affordable homes and preventing homelessness, Revitalising town centres. Growing our local economy, encouraging low carbon travel. In the ENVIRONMENT, boosting our natural environment, cutting carbon emissions and building resilience to climate change by enhancing our natural environment, responding to climate change and encouraging low carbon travel.

2024/25 Budget & Money Plan to 2028/29:

The budget for 2024/25 has been agreed at £12,852,000 which results in a Band D council tax increase of £5 resulting in Band D council tax being £125.08. This is the first rise in Wychavon's council tax for 6 years and reflects the challenges of increases costs and demands for services. To more local issues, we have made some small progress on the issues of flooding in the parish but being the wettest winter for many years; it's been a challenge. The issue that has been raised most frequently with me is not this year the question of the state of the highways but parking in the Church Street around the shop. I apologise for the disruption that the continuing works and flooding at Eckington bridge is having on parishioners who travel to the north as we had to repair both parapets and I think the bridge closed for 63 days in the past 12 months. The biggest cloud on the horizon continues to be the Tewkesbury Garden town. They are currently undertaking a round of

consultation, but it is being led by the developers. It was a joy to see the Kinsham footway repaired and resurfaced.

In closing, I would just like to leave you with this one key statistic: 72 1/2% of the budget at Worcestershire County Council is currently spent on 2 1/2% of the population and these are the most vulnerable in society. It is important that we continue to protect this cohort of our population. These are the most vulnerable, and the County Council are committed to ensuring these members of our community are supported and protected.

Thank you for your time and support.

5. Police Report.

Molly Keeler (PC 21751), Bredon's Safer Neighbourhood Officer from Pershore Rural South and Rural North, was due to attend but was unavoidably absent due to police commitments.

6. Questions from The Floor.

Traffic Calming measures were discussed. Worcestershire Highways were having difficulties finding locations for signage.

Flooding on the B4079 at Hardwick Bank Road near Croft Farm was a constant problem.

The collection of food waste and an Environment Act law (driven by Defra) from February stated that the Local Council must collect. These collections were in place but fell away due to expense.

Fly-tipping is a problem at the turn to the Sailing Club entrance in Bredon's Norton. Wychavon considering CCTV at known locations, with fines for culprits.