

Bredon and Bredon's Norton Parish Council

The minutes of Bredon's Annual Parish Meeting held at Bredon Village Hall on **Monday 28th April 2025** at 7.00 pm.

Present:

Cllrs Mr Nick Bradley (Chairman), Mr Colin Davidson, Mr Matt Darby, Mr Kevin Falvey, Mr Andrew Rhodes, Mr Declan Shiels and Mr Rob Sly. Also, Mr Tim Drew (Clerk), Ms Heather Johnson, Ms Ruth Sly, Ms Wendy James and Diane Davidson.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Mr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Mr Brod Whiting, PC Alex Prentice and PC Ben Trowman.

2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting Held 29th April 2024.

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

3. Parish Council Chairman's Report 2025.

Good evening and welcome everybody, thank you for attending this evening.

The Parish Council continues to have 2 vacancies, I hope that maybe some of you attending this evening, may wish to put yourselves forward for the role as a Parish Councillor, or recommend the role to a friend who they feel may wish to make a contribution to the community.

This year has been a continuation of the theme of the previous 7 years where the Parish Council continues to face Developers as well as the District Council seeking to bring forward major development within the Parish, between Bredon's Hardwick and Mitton in Tewkesbury.

You may recall that an application for 500 homes was submitted in 2018 followed by an application for a primary school, both of which were refused by Wychavon District Council Planning Committee in 2022 going against the Case Officer's recommendation. The subsequent appeal launched by the Developer was dismissed later that year by the Planning Inspectorate following a 2-week hearing.

Unfortunately, revised applications for the 500 homes and the Primary School were submitted 2023 which remain undetermined. In the last month, a further application has been submitted for a further 500 homes, which will extend the housing up to Bredon's Hardwick, including a vehicular access from Hardwick Bank Road.

You may have received a leaflet through your door, or you should soon, which provides information about the application and seeking that you submit comments on the Planning Portal ahead of the close of the Consultation Period on 3 May 2025.

The Parish Council urge you to submit comments, as your views are important, and your submission carries as much weight as that of the Parish Council's submission. I also invite you to ask family, friends, and neighbours to also submit comments regarding the application, as the volume of submissions and the weight of opinion is important, in communicating the opinions of

local people, which can never be underestimated and will influence the decision-making process.

The proposed development set out within the Developer's 3 applications for 1,000 homes, a primary school, etc, reflects the South Worcestershire Development Plan for strategic development in this area. The Parish Council has been lobbying against the strategic allocation since 2018, when it became known that the site was proposed as part of the Local Development Plan Review. This led to the Council recently making representations to the Planning Inspectors appointed by the Planning Inspectorate to conduct the Examination in Public and assess the soundness of the Plan, including attending the Hearing to make representations on this Strategic Allocation.

The Parish Council feel that the submissions made to the Inspectors and the evidence on which our representations were made, clearly demonstrate that this is not a suitable or sustainable location for development. The main grounds of our representations were based around the impact to transport, ecology and landscape. This is not to undermine the other valid reasons why the site is not suitable, including flooding, coalescence, cross boundary matters, etc.

It is the case that the evidence submitted by the Developer and the South Worcestershire Council's clearly demonstrated that this site is a valuable ecological site for protected species, including a number which are on the red list. Furthermore, whilst it is already a problem, it was also clear from their evidence that the increased flow of traffic through the Parish to be generated from this Development, even with proposed mitigation, would become significantly worse on existing road networks and junctions, leading to increased rat running, thereby increasing the volume of traffic passing through the Parish and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Parish Council continues to play an active role in seeking to engage on other major planning matters locally, with myself continuing to act as Chairman of the Parish Liaison Group, representing Parish Councils locally, with this group forming part of the Tewkesbury Garden Town Governance structure. In addition to which I am also a Member of the Garden Town Oversight Board, the Parish Council's involvement in these groups ensure we are kept informed, but also provide us with the platform to represent the local community, expressing their views and ensuring that their voice is heard.

It is expected that soon, there will be further planning applications submitted relating to the Garden Town area, including Newland Homes who are looking to build 500 homes to the rear of Northway on the land between the railway line and Hardwick Bank Road.

With North Ashchurch Consortium expected to submit an application for 2,800 homes to the rear Northway on the land to the East of the railway line extending across towards the B4079, with the application seeking to close the B4079 between Ashton on Carrant and the A46 at Aston Cross. This application will also include a new application for the Ashchurch Bridge Over Rail, which the Parish Council were instrumental in fighting at the Court of Appeal and succeeding in getting the permission Tewkesbury Borough Council had granted itself overturned.

It is to be noted that there are already 3 live applications submitted with Tewkesbury Borough Council, relating to the Garden Town Area, amounting to 565 homes spread across three sites, MOD site, Pamington Lane and Tinpenny Farm. The application at Pamington Lane is seen as a trojan horse for a development which will ultimately be in excess of 3,000 homes.

Unfortunately, the efforts of the Parish Council at the Planning Appeals and the SWDP Hearings come at a significant financial cost to the Parish Council, in engaging the services of consultants

and a Legal Team to prepare and present the evidence and our case against this proposed site. Thankfully to date this has been money well spent, with the Parish Council being successful thus far, which we hope will continue in securing the omission of the proposed strategic allocation from the SWDP Review, with your continued support.

It is largely in part due to the legal and professional fees of fighting the strategic allocation that the Council was again faced with having to make the difficult but necessary decision to raise the precept for the Parish again this year. Whilst the Parish Council also wished to continue to maintain and improve the facilities and services provided within our community.

Examples of this work include the Warm Room events held at the Village Hall, these twice monthly events, provide an opportunity for parishioners to attend and enjoy the company of others, whilst receiving a free meal or drinks and cake dependant on the event attended. This is an event that has proved to be very successful that's to the work of the many volunteers who help to coordinate and manage these events led by Councillor Declan Shiels, I wish to thank them for their time and commitment in hosting these events.

Unfortunately, the boilers in the Village Hall recently suffered a breakdown, resulting in the Hall being without heating during part of March and April whilst a repair was arranged. I offer my apologies to users of the Hall during this period when the heating was not working. My thanks go to Councillor Falvey for arranging the repair to the boilers.

As part of ongoing maintenance and improvements to the Village Hall, lighting upgrades have this year which again is thanks to Councillor Falvey who has organised these works.

On Thursday, the Village Hall will take on the role of a polling station for the County Council elections, I wish Councillor Adrian Hardman my personal best wishes in the election, as he has served the Parish well over the numerous terms he has served as our County Councillor, but also as our District Councillor and formerly as a Parish Councillor. Adrian has done much for this Parish, but this has also extended to supporting me in my time as Chairman of the Parish Council, so I place on record my personal gratitude and thanks to him for his support and assistance over the years.

During the last year, the Parish Council has co-ordinated and funded the replacement of the fencing and gates to the children's play area at the Playing Fields, I wish to thank Councillor Colin Davidson for the time and effort he put into this project.

Volunteers at Bredon Community Play and Recreation continue to manage the play equipment in the Playing Fields as well as carry out Park clear up's, the Parish Council wish to thank them for the work they do including recently funding the replacement of the bark to the play area.

This year has seen a change in the local policing team, with the Parish previously being served by the Pershore rural policing team, we thank PC Molly Keeler and PCSO Claire Doughty for the work they did as part of the Pershore Rural Policing Team.

A restructuring within West Mercia Police has seen policing locally now being provided by the Evesham Rural Policing Team of PC Alex Prentice, PC Ben Trowman and PCSO Luke Steele. They have really embraced the role locally ensuring a regular local presence including attending Warm room events as well as holding their own drop in events. Unfortunately, due to Alex and Ben's shift pattern, they are not able to attend this evening, but they have sent their apologies and

ask that I communicate that they are due to hold their next drop in event on Sunday 11 May at 10.00am, for those who wish to meet them.

The Parish Council are fortunate to have an able select group of staff members who help undertake the work of the Council and deliver services to the community, they are:

- 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 these three members of staff have undertaken over the last year; I am sure also that residents note and recognise the work they undertake to maintain the Parish and community facilities.

It was with great sadness that the Council report the passing of Mike Johns recently after a period of ill health. Mike was a Parish Councillor up until 2020, Mike was a valued member of the Council and true a gentleman, who will sadly be missed.

Parish Councillors give their time voluntary, the pressures this Council has faced over recent years has meant that this involves significant commitment from them, something which often gets overlooked, but not by me. So, I place on record my thanks to each one of my fellow Councillors for their time, commitment and support during this year and look forward to continuing that work in the future with them.

Thank you for your attending this evening, it has been an honour to act as Chairman of the Council, it continues to be a privilege to serve alongside my fellow Councillors in serving our community.

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

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.

Conclusion

Despite financial pressures, the County Council remains 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, we continue to work towards sustainable solutions and strategic partnerships that will ensure Worcestershire remains a thriving and well-supported community.

Just to dwell for a moment longer local issues. 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 to be able to tell you at long last we are in April going to do more footway works in Bredon.

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.

5. Police Report.

No Report. PC Alex Prentice and PC Ben Trowman Safer Neighbourhood Officers from Evesham Rural North, West Mercia Police were due to attend but was unavoidably absent due to police commitments.

6. Questions from The Floor.

There were no questions from the floor.