

## **ALVECHURCH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

### **Incorporating Community Safety Forum (PACT)**

#### **Alvechurch Baptist Church**

**16<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at 7pm**

The Minutes were taken by Tammy Williams, Clerk.

**In attendance:** Cllrs A Humphries (Chairman), J Cypher, A Willetts, A Smith, M Ball, P Freeman, T Wallis, N Wise, PC S Albutt and 19 members of the public signed the Attendance Book

**Apologies:** Councillor R Chima, Tim Reading

#### **The Parish Council Chairman, Cllr Andy Humphries, chaired the meeting.**

The Chairman noted that the Annual Parish meeting is not a normal Parish Council meeting, it is for local people to ask questions about the Parish and for organisations to promote themselves. Agendas were on seats and attendees were advised that this Agenda was flexible. Some questions had already been received and have been included in the Community Safety Forum.

There was a special welcome extended to PC Simon Allbutt Beat Manager for Alvechurch who gave a Report at the start of the meeting (Appendix 1).

**The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2017** were approved and signed formally at the end of the meeting.

#### **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman stated that this was a new venue and it was the first time the Annual Parish meeting had been held here. After the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation was held there it was thought to be a good central location and Alvechurch Parish Council is grateful to the Baptist Church for allowing us to use the church as it is not normally used to hold meetings.

The Chairman welcomed residents, Police representatives, Councillors, District Councillors and Parish staff. This is the Annual Parish Meeting for the electorate and must be held between April and June. The Agenda is flexible as this is not a standard meeting; the Agenda being more of a guide and questions can be asked at any time.

The Chairman gave a review of 2017/18 year touching on the following subjects:

#### **Relating back to 1969**

The Parish had seen a number of changes in 1969 there was no motorway, bypass, no computers or tablets, no Alvechurch Marina and no Gin & Pickles! It was a completely different place and the amount of change since then has happened gradually. We might look forward in another 20-30 years to more change as well.

#### **APC over the last year or two**

The Parish Council has been rebuilding over the last few years with more stability in the office again and stability amongst councillors nonetheless with office changes, the advent of social media and so on, the Parish Council has seen a whole spectrum of changes. The Clerk has only been with us just over a year and has Certificates over her desk evidencing her learning.

#### **Rebuilding District and County**

We now have an excellent relationship with both District and County, who are prepared to meet with us, although this has not always been the case in the past. Over the last few years, we have managed to have a say and influence over Section 106 monies and how they are spent.

### **Last 12 months**

APC would like to mention the success of the Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) and after six demanding years formal submission to Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) has taken place. Built on comments received APC is very proud of what this Steering Group has achieved.

### **Christmas lights**

The Chairman hoped people thought that our efforts had been worth it in particular, the Chairman noted that the last event saw the Community Choir singing carols, shop window displays and involvement of The Lounge and Gin and Pickles in the festivities. The Parish Council will put the event on again.

### **Hopwood Community Centre**

The centre had been refurbished with a great help from Parish Councillor: new flooring, doors, windows and kitchen, which the Chairman noted was installed and very cost effectively.

### **Consultations**

There had been two Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) consultations where many people came and gave their feedback.

### **New play facilities**

Section 106 monies will provide new play facilities at the Wiggin and following public consultations the Parish Council has responded to the ideas of what Parishioners would like. The tendering process ends this week with BDC and APC working together on the decision.

### **Community Safety**

Street lights and footways in particular trip hazards noted and it was stated that some had been fixed including the replacement of concrete street lighting columns.

### **Finance**

In the spirit of transparency we have provided you with some financial information on the back of this Agenda. The Parish Council is always striving to get good value for money such as with our grounds maintenance contract which we successfully tendered to ensure best value for taxpayers.

The Precept supports the budget and was increased by 2% which was less than BDC and WCC and helps the Parish Council continue to invest in the local infrastructure such as our street lighting replacement programme.

It was noted that there is a possibility that the Assistant Clerk may retire this year and a handover period has been accounted for in the figures if she does.

This ended the Finance section, it was noted that the Councillors provide many hours for free and do not get the allowances of District and County councillors.

The Chairman also advised that it is the Clerk's intention to increase information supplied to

### **General Data Protection Regulations**

GDPR is being brought into operation this May and we are also encouraged to be transparent.

Why don't we publish all papers? Some of the papers do contain personal information, so we have to think about Data Protection, thus we need to be careful what we publish including Facebook and our own website. This is going to involve balancing of work versus using available to produce something constructive like improving play equipment at The Wiggin.

### **Infrastructure**

- Station car park
- Speeding
- Street lighting – the community is seeing gradual improvements i.e. replacing sodium lights with LEDs and the replacement of concrete columns to steel alternatives. There have been a few complications such as lamps in residents' gardens or right up against resident's walls and these have proved time consuming.

### **Services**

- Health issues – cross border GP services. Suggested improvements look good on paper but difficult to change things in our Parish
- Funding challenges – unless you can get Section 106 monies it is very difficult to get money for highways.
- It was noted that Section 106 monies were designated to provide the crossing at the school, the cycle shelter at the station and for play equipment at the Wiggin Memorial Playing fields (the Meadows).

### **IT and Social Media**

Social Media has been really challenging for the Parish Council. Great for cascading the message but its hard to tell if someone resides in the Parish. The Council is always looking for advice as to how best they can communicate whether by document, Media or public involvement; it is something that we are working on.

## Planning

- You may have seen in The Village magazine that there has been a study in an attempt to address housing shortfalls in the area. How will it affect the Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan? This study also goes against the Bromsgrove District Plan.
- There was a brief discussion on a planning case in the Bolton area where they are minded to approve a big development from a large developer. How would the political makeup of Bromsgrove influence a decision in our District like the one in Bolton? Is the number of houses that Birmingham expects the Bromsgrove District to build in order to meet the Birmingham housing targets reasonable?

## Parish Council Priorities for the Next Twelve Months:-

- **Neighbourhood Plan** adopted and working in different areas within the village
- **Playground** equipment at the Wiggin Memorial Playing Field.  
Consultation: Zip wire, risky play and gym equipment. This is to go to tender and then be installed after "Picnic in the Park" and before the school holidays.
- **GDPR compliance**
- **Emergency Plan.** Cllrs Cypher and Lambert with support from the Parish Lengthsman has regenerated work on the Emergency Plan which includes a list of facilities to aide first responders in the event of an emergency.

Thanks were offered to the Office Staff starting with Tammy Williams as the most prepared person for meetings and who is ably supported by Wendy Carney with her many years of experience in the role. Thanks were also offered to Rob and Ron for cleaning up and keeping Parish and Community facilities tidy.

Thanks were also offered to the Parish Councillors who do a huge amount of work; Parishioners would be surprised by how much they do.

Most of all, thanks are given to those who roll up their sleeves for the community! The Picnic in the Park (PIP) organising committee who put on an excellent event that takes a large amount of organising. The Lounge, Alvechurch Village Society who organise litter picks twice a year amongst other events. All the Residents' Associations, sports groups, churches....the same people crop up each time and they make Alvechurch a great place to live.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr Smith gave a brief overview of the 6 year that the Plan has taken to compile and revise. It has been a huge task. The Steering Group has been made up of Parish Councillors and residents who have been hands on throughout. This pre submission, which includes consultee comments, has been to BDC to undertake compliance checks with Legal Planning.

After that there will be a further 6-week consultation and then if it goes well the plan will be passed to an Independent External Examiner. The Independent External Examiner will very likely suggest amendments and if addressed, BDC will arrange a referendum which will likely be in the summer/autumn of 2018.

Cllr Smith advised that he suspects that the Parish would need to address some of the housing needs from Birmingham and we need to look at what is important. The Neighbourhood Plan is necessary for the next few years. It is now. Whatever happens with Birmingham, means that BDC will have to show initiative.

Our Neighbourhood Plan will then have to be amended in line with BDC Local Plan. APC is urging Parishioners to vote Yes as it will be our first Legislative document. We've heard Green Belt reviews contain many flaws and show very little understanding of the local area. We have two train stations which aren't fit for purpose so we need to get the Neighbourhood Plan adopted.

### **Report from District Cllr C Hotham**

There are a lot of financial problems at BDC and austerity measures from central government, which are hitting finances hard and District Cllr Hotham listed several problems:

- The old council building, Burcot House, is still empty;
- The contractor responsible for running the outdoor market in Bromsgrove couldn't make it work so BDC is taking the running of it back on;

- BDC had to raise the Council Tax as they need to be commercially viable. From next year there will be no money from the Government.
- The rendering plant, Mayfield Farm, is operating all year round and attempts to resolve issues reported by local residents have so far been snookered by legislation.
- The issue of stabling and mobile home sited on the land at the corner of Aqueduct Lane and Birmingham Road is the subject of an Enforcement order.
- Hopwood Service Station has been granted permission for up to 42 extra Heavy Goods Vehicle parking spaces which might take vehicles off the A441 but no parking restrictions will be placed on the A441 and parking at Hopwood Services costs £30 per night.

#### **Report from District Councillor K Van der Plank**

- Cllr Van der Plank reported that she is also frustrated at the budget situation at Bromsgrove District Council.
- Cllr Van der Plank has been in the role less than a year with no previous council experience however, Cllr Van der Plank stated that she was surprised by the level of scrutiny and poor financial planning.
- Locally APC, BDC and County Councillors work together.
- District Cllr Van der Plank is still lobbying for a resolution on the issues at Alvechurch Station Car Park.
- District Cllr Van der Plank would echo all that the APC Chairman has said about the work and the value that our community organisations do and provide us.
- There is a Consultation regarding the constituency boundaries

#### **County Councillor Charlie Hotham**

- Finances: money is tight at the County Council: council tax has been raised and adult social care is at tipping point.
- Bed blocking is a major problem at A&E
- A decision is pending regarding the possibility of a crossing on the A441 at Hopwood
- £1.5m has been received from Government for re-surfacing pot holes. If we think it is bad here it is worse elsewhere!
- Gritting lorries covered 150,000 miles last year!
- There are 105,000 gullies in Worcestershire County and there are only three gully cleaning lorries. Gully problems should be reported to your County Councillor or via the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) website
- Ofsted had given WCC a bad 'Looking After Children' report for its Childrens' Services department. WCC is working really hard to rectify this.
- There is a new Chief Executive at WCC

#### **Reports from Voluntary Groups**

##### Rowney Green Association:

Andrew May, Chairman reported:

- Rowney Green has enjoyed newly installed fibre optics to increase broadband speeds in the village and this has been a big success.
- The Village Hall has a newly installed defibrillator
- Recently, there was a big coffee morning with an exhibition of historical artefacts
- Peck Wood put on its annual cream tea and walks through the bluebells.

##### Alvechurch Village Society (AVS)

Grace Hampson, AVS Chairman, gave an update on the group:

- This is a very active group with a keen interest in the conservation of the village.
- They are pleased to support the Neighbourhood Plan having 3 main concerns:
  - i. Speeding - which affects most of the parish.
  - ii. Preservation and improvement of the village centre – they are pleased with the current improvements to the village centre
  - iii. Affordable housing – they are “pro” affordable housing for the local young people
- Adrian Smith (Footpath Warden) and the Footpath Group do a fantastic job!
- AVS has organised events which have included social events and two litter picks– these make a huge difference particularly on the approach roads.
- AVS has proved to be a very popular page on Facebook with about 2,500 members and this has proved to be a good information site for the villagers.

- It was mentioned that the daffodils around the village were planted 10 years ago.
- AVS will be celebrating its 50-year anniversary and the Society is looking for ideas for its celebrations.
- AVS planted a copper beech tree in the grounds of Sandhills nursery.
- Lastly the Village Society said a big thank you to Jim Parker who sadly passed away having dedicated nearly 50 years of service to AVS.

#### St Laurence Church

Alison Smith gave a brief outline of the building and fabrics of the Church:

- There had been a lot of work to conserve the Church which is falling to our generation to fix.
- There has been ongoing fundraising activities to repair the stained glass windows.
- Heritage funds have also been secured to pay for other work to the building.
- There are a couple of unstable memorials in the churchyard and the Church has had to consult with relatives about these.
- The Church is always looking for volunteers to help conserve the churchyard or its heritage.

#### Peck Wood

A report from Peck Wood was provided by Dorothy Snaddon and read out by the Clerk:

“Peck Wood continues to be a popular destination for many of Birmingham inner city schools, members of the scout and guide movement, boys’ brigades and some churches. Most are regulars and look forward to returning. The most popular times of May and June are always full.

The Last year has seen us continuing to try update the facilities and we are currently spending on improving fire alarm system.

We guesstimate the flowering of bluebells every year and open to the public (subject to our bookings). This year has given us more problems in this due to weather conditions and we may be proved wrong! However, everyone is welcome to a cream tea on the bank holiday Monday – 7<sup>th</sup> May this year, 2-6pm. Unfortunately, dogs are not allowed in the woods. Last year proved very popular raising money for the wood and the Methodist Church.

A volunteer group look after the woodland, working at least for the first weekend in every month using their skills to manage this ancient woodland.

The volunteer committee are aging and would welcome anyone to help, especially someone with the skills to apply for grants. The feedback from the children is reward in itself as for many of the children it is the first time they have been able to enjoy the countryside in a safe environment!”

#### Open Forum

Items raised:

- **Keeping grass verges tidy: many of the grass verges are churned up by parked vehicles. What can be done about it?**  
All parking issues can be addressed to BDC who can refer it to the principal authority.
- **Seepage Issues in School Lane**  
School Lane is icy in winter and it was noted that discussions are going on to see if it's drainage from the fields or household drainage issues. The Parish Lengthsman advised that many years ago, he investigated it and Severn Trent did as well. It was not a leaking drain but was found to be ground water. Councillor Charlie Hotham noted that he had looked at it and thought that it had to be coming off the field down the ditch onto the road. The gully was checked and found to be clear.
- **Station Road**  
Comments were made about the proposed double yellow lines at the Station Road/Latimer Road junction. The original request for a solution to the parked cars at this junction causing visibility issues for motorists at the junction was reported to the Parish Council. It was noted that the County Highways team would leaflet drop a number of houses from the end of Latimer Road to Dellow Grove and along Station Road to provide further updates for nearby residents on the proposed actions.

- **Barntchurch**

Residents asked for clarity on the report suggesting 10,000 houses could be built between Barnt Green and Alvechurch; that this had raised huge concerns in the community and it was questioned what stage we are at. It was noted that:

a) This was a study for Birmingham overspill which was one and a half months old. There is no justification that APC can see for that number of houses. The Green Belt Review will need to take place first and will need to assess Birmingham District Housing needs. This study goes against the Neighbourhood and District Plans. This was a desktop review undertaken in London. Developers have not been out to see the area and they've actually placed the station where the Red Lion Public House! We need to assess our own housing needs and then look at what we can do to help Birmingham but we cannot support a development of this size. It was questioned who had commissioned the search and it was commissioned by Greater Birmingham and Solihull. We are still trying to establish who in BDC was involved. Cllr Humphries advised that he had consulted Google maps and noted that this is an area between stations – Barnt Green and Alvechurch. It is a question of being alert to what might happen but not to give too much airtime.

Cllr Smith responded with it being hearsay: a study made a while ago when Birmingham housing was going to Frankley. It is all pie in the sky and residents should not take too much notice. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) say there are enough brownfield sites to take one million houses. If this development was actually built it would be bigger than Bromsgrove!

District Cllr Hotham said that Phillip Hammond needs to give enough money to find brownfield sites.

It was queried whether anyone was talking to our local MP, Sajid Javid about it?

- **Change of Constituency Area**

It was queried if the proposed change of constituency goes ahead if our council tax will still be paid to BDC?

The answer was yes, constituency parish areas are not relevant in respect of council tax.

- **Parking permits Station Road.**

County Cllr Hotham advised that WCC has strict guidelines about installing parking permit areas. This can however be looked at. If there are lots of driveways then it would be unlikely. Cllr Humphries said that the issue is the station car park. APC is trying to press the new operator to secure funding but usually future funding only appears if you take on new houses. District Cllr Van der Plank is also trying to press for the station car park to be improved. Double yellow lines at the access to the Station will also enable easier access for emergency vehicles to get down to the station, car park and Station House beyond.

Cllr Humphries advised that the usual response whenever we lobby for station car park improvements is that you have a car park! District Cllr Van der Plank suggested that if the car park was resurfaced parking would be chargeable.

Cllr Humphries thanked everyone for coming and asked if everyone liked the venue, those in attendance replied yes.

County Cllr Hotham thanked Cllr Humphries as PC Chairman.

The meeting ended 9.09 pm

Chairman's Signature.....

Date.....