

BRINDLEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020 AT 7.30PM

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and Government Guidelines on public gatherings, the meeting was held virtually on Zoom

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: P. Adams (Chairman)
D. Cotton
A. Pearson

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S. Pearson
County Councillor P. Hewitt (to the end of item 16)
Mrs T. Williams (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

Resolved: That apologies are received and reasons for absence accepted under S.85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, from: Councillors R. Turville, Mrs M. A. Turville and M. Sutherland.

Apologies were received from County Councillor: B. Jones.

2. POLICE REPORTS

No Police officers were in attendance, but a written Police report had been provided by PCSO Liz Dale and circulated before the meeting.

The report detailed that between 7 November and 7 December 2020 there had been 4 admin jobs in the parish relating to lost keys, deer and dog incidents (Kingsley Wood Road, Brindley Heath Road and Tackeroo Campsite), 2 suspicious incidents (Etching Hill Road and Stonehouse Road), 3 Concerns for safety (Stonehouse Road and Brindley Heath Road), 1 wildlife incident, 2 sexual offences (Stile Cop Road), 3 road traffic collisions (Hednesford Road and Penkrigde Bank Road), 2 domestic incidents, 2 COVID-19 breaches (Birches Valley) and 10 transport related incidents (Penkrigde Bank Road, Slitting Mill Road, Birches Valley Forest Centre).

PCSO Dale advised that the transport related incidents were all in connection with the high volume of vehicles visiting the Forest Centre over recent weekends but parking inappropriately on surrounding roads. She said the Police had engaged with the Forestry England and on one occasion had closed access to the centre. The parking problem had been caused by people wishing to avoid parking charges. Forestry England had not expected such an influx of people and the resulting police patrols had responded to the hundreds of vehicles that had already arrived. Many motorists were recorded committing offences, and these are being dealt with accordingly.

PCSO Dale said that the current infrastructure could not cope with the volumes of vehicles that had been present on this weekend and as the majority of roads allow on street parking, this quickly causes a problem.

PCSO Dale advised the Council that she had contacted the Strategic Community infrastructure Manager and was told the County were aware of the Chase's popularity during lockdown but that enforcement officers can only enforce the areas with existing parking restrictions. The County are in the process of reviewing car
Chairman's Initials

parcs and parking areas on Cannock Chase with further information to follow. The County are looking at hot spot areas including sites adjacent to Marquis Drive but as the Chase is an AONB they need to be careful not to urbanise the areas and be sensitive with their solutions. Some of the solutions may include natural barriers such as earth bunds and ditching to further deter parking.

PCSO Dale gave her assurances that local officers would continue to be present in the area and monitor/take action when necessary. They will also be issuing advisory notices in the coming weeks.

Parish Councillors said they had received a number of contacts from residents who had experienced great difficulty getting out of their roads during the previous two weekends and the local policing team and Cannock Chase Partnership had been alerted about the problems.

Parish Councillors concluded that a multi-agency collaboration was needed by the key agencies to identify the causes of on-street parking on Cannock Chase and with that information, effective solutions. The Police, Forestry England, Staffordshire County Council and the Highways Department all need to play their part in actively managing existing parking provision, the introduction of parking restrictions and active parking enforcement.

County Councillor Hewitt advised the Council that social media had been very active on the County's Cannock Chase Car Park Review, but a number of inaccuracies had been published. He said there would be more car parking spaces available on Cannock Chase when the exercise had been completed. The County recognised that during lockdown the numbers of visitors to the Chase had been huge. Councillor Hewitt offered to arrange for a Cabinet Member to attend a future parish meeting to share information on the County's car parking Review.

The Chairman advised the Council that he would like to have further information on a shooting incident within the quarry premises which had occurred in October 2020. It was an earlier incident than the one reported by PCSO Dale in her report. He also suggested that the quarry manager be asked whether permission to use a firearm was granted.

3. PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY

It was once again confirmed that the co-option of a Parish Councillor should be deferred to a future meeting when it would be possible to meet applicants physically. Members were hopeful that this might be arranged in February 2021.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised by members of the public.

5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

To declare interests for this meeting:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Councillor P. Adams	Chetwynd's Charity	Personal
Councillor A. Pearson	District Councillor	Personal

6. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 29 September 2020 were noted.

7. PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Rights of Way - Links had been given (in the Clerk’s Report) to Staffordshire County Council’s Rights of Way map and Public Rights of Way Guide.

Councillor Pearson emphasized that rights of ways will be lost if they are not documented on the definitive map. However, achieving this was a difficult task as the paths would need to be walked.

Grit Bins – Links were given (in the Clerk’s Report) to Staffordshire County Council’s website with the locations of all grit bins in the parish. The bins are fully stocked at the start of the winter season and the majority are replenished as part of a routine program (depending on weather conditions and resources available). The information states that it is not possible to restock the bins on demand.

The damaged grit bin in Kingsley Wood Road has been reported to the County Council (incident report 4219452).

8. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no report/announcements under this item.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Items of Interest/Requiring a Response

The following items of incoming post were considered:

Letter from Cabinet Member for Communities & Culture at Staffordshire County Council – A letter (dated 26 November 2020) from County Councillor Victoria Wilson, cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, thanked parish councils and voluntary organisations who had supported their communities during the coronavirus pandemic and asked that they continue reaching out to parishioners. She talked about the DoingOurBit ethos and outlined some of the support initiatives available through the County which parish councils could explore or engage in.

The Parish Council noted the letter from Councillor Wilson and also commended volunteers across Cannock Chase who had supported vulnerable residents through the coronavirus pandemic.

Councillor Hewitt said that both he and Councillor Wilson would, in due course, be pleased to receive Members feedback on the content of Councillor Wilson’s letter.

Covid-19 Lockdown Grants from Cannock Chase Council – The district council has received funding from the Government to help businesses whose trading has been affected by the current national lockdown. The eligibility criteria were outlined and contact details provided for making an online application.

Councillor Pearson advised members that the uptake of these grants had been high.

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Safety Plan 2020 – 2024 – An email from the Chief Fire Officer advises that Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service’s Safety Plan 2020-2024, setting out the organisation’s priorities for the next four years, has been launched and people are encouraged to view the Plan online.

Staffordshire County Council's 'Happy at Home' Campaign – Details of a new interactive online tool to raise awareness of the low-cost assistive technology equipment that is available to people struggling with everyday tasks around the home, were given.

SPCA Bulletin 19 November 2020: Climate Change Action Fund – Every county councillor has been given £1,000 to fund projects in their area that will reduce carbon impact, improve air quality and adapt to climate change. Eligible organisations include charities, societies, voluntary and community groups, parish councils and schools.

b. Consultations

There were no consultations for consideration collectively, but Members noted a County Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Consultation which was inviting comment.

10. ROAD SAFETY

The Council had discussed (under Police Reports) the car parking problems on roads surrounding Birches Valley Forest Centre in early December when Christmas tree sales were taking place and the German market style huts present. The area had been excessively congested with lines of vehicles double parked to obstruct the flow of traffic. A number of local residents were affected by inconsiderate parking near their homes.

The Chairman referred to the Police Report (shared at the start of the meeting) which also illustrated the problem of racing and speeding through the parish. He pointed out that these incidents are aligned with the ongoing concerns that people have had for a number of years and the Parish Council should continue to apply pressure to the appropriate agencies.

It was noted in the Police Report that the local policing team had not received any information back from the Special Constabulary. PCSO Dale has forwarded a list of roads to the Safer Roads Partnership with a request for them to be added to the mobile speed camera schedule.

The Council expressed concern about lorries tailgating, driving at speed, mounting grass verges and failing to stop at the Wolseley Road junction. It was concluded that a meeting would be arranged between Councillors and the quarry manager when circumstances allow.

11. PARISH WARD ISSUES – CHASE SIDE

a. Quarry Junction

The Parish Council noted that an email had been sent to the Quarry Manager and Land and Estate Manager at Cemex Quarry on 1 December 2020 informing them that the issue of lorries failing to stop at the junction of Wolseley Road and Stafford Brook Road was still happening and near misses had continued to occur.

The Council raised questions about Cemex's obligation to hold community meetings, which haven't been arranged.

12. PARISH WARD ISSUES – BRINDLEY VILLAGE

The 'Brindley Heath' sign on the Rugeley Road was knocked down by a motorist some time ago and Councillor Pearson has retrieved the sign to prevent it from being stolen. One of the supporting metal posts is missing. A request would be made to Cannock Chase Council for a repair to be arranged.

13. CANNOCK CHASE FOREST

- a. AONB Newsletter – The Council noted an email from the AONB Development Officer (dated 13 October 2020) inviting stakeholders to subscribe to a Cannock Chase AONB e-newsletter.

Councillor Pearson advised the Council that the Chair of the Cannock Chase AONB has been nominated to take charge of the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership.

- b. Tree Planting for Community Groups – The Council noted an email from the AONB Land Management Officer (dated 6 November 2020) with grant aid opportunities from the Tree Council to plant trees.

14. INVITATION TO MEETINGS/EVENTS

Information on Staffordshire Parish Council’s Association training program had been circulated.

15. REPORTS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Cotton reported that he had attended a meeting of Etching Hill Village Hall. A small number of activities are taking place there in line with Covid-19 safety rules, and there are some new openings in the new year. He said the hall wasn’t currently open for normal bookings.

16. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

County Councillor Hewitt again offered to arrange for a County representative to attend a future meeting of the parish council to provide information on future parking proposals on Cannock Chase.

Councillor Pearson gave information about the Covid-19 vaccination programme which is planned to take place in Rugeley. The priority order for administering vaccinations (nationally) would be care homes, hospital staff, and the over 80’s. It was acknowledged and recognised that health workers involved Covid-19 response had worked tirelessly and were exhausted.

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman thanked Councillor Hewitt for his attendance and support, before departing the meeting.

17. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- a) Financial Position of the Council

A breakdown of income and expenditure for the financial year to date was given in the Clerks Report (dated 8 December 2020). The budget statement shows the current financial position of the Council with reserves totalling £17,898.63.

Resolved: To note the financial position of the Council.

- b) Community Infrastructure Levy – Notice Board Project

The Council suggested that the better location for the notice board would be near to the Tackeroo car park at the entrance to Bracken Close, rather than at the entrance to Fives car park off Brindley Heath Road.

- c) Parish Council Precept for the year 2021-22

A proposed budget for the financial year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 had been distributed to Members before the meeting.

Consideration was given to future projects, the value the parish council wished to spend and how it would need to fund the spending (whether from precept, reserves or other sources of income such as grant aid).

The Council noted that Cannock Chase Council had undertaken a calculation of Brindley Heath Parish Council's Tax Base for 2021-22 and would be recommending that it is set at 248.50.

It was noted that if the precept remained at £4,400 for the new year, a Tax Base of 248.50 would generate an annual charge of £17.71 for Band D householders, representing a 0.7% increase in parish tax.

The Council agreed that after a very difficult and challenging year, it would be preferable to reduce the precept for 2021-22, for the benefit of householders. The Council's financial position was healthy and reserves would be able to accommodate this.

Resolved:

- To set the precept at £4,000 for the financial year 2021-22 (subject to the District Council's approval of the recommended figures) generating a householder charge of £16.10 for a Band D property, representing a parish tax decrease of 8.5%.
- To approve the draft budgetary figures for the year 2021-22, accommodating any differences between income and expenditure from reserves.

d) To consider a request for a charity donation

Chetwynd's Charity

A letter (dated 21 November 2020) from the Clerk to the Trustees, asks for a donation towards the work of Chetwynd's Charity, which operates locally in the Rugeley area and offers financial assistance to young people in further education.

Resolved: To award £50 to the work of Chetwynd's Charity.

e) To confirm/authorise cheques for payment

100177	Trudy Williams	£43.17	Reimbursement of monthly subscription for virtual meetings October, November & December 2020 (£11.99 + vat x 3)
100178	Trudy Williams	£661.05 Gross (£220.35 x 3) Inc. updates to pay scales from April 2020	Gross Salary July, August & September 2020 (2nd quarter year 20-21 – new pay scales)

Backdate
(April, May
June): £17.55
(19.5 x 3 x
£0.30)

100179 Chetwynd's Charity £50.00 Charity Donation

Resolved: To authorise payment of the cheques listed.

18. ANY OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

No additional information was shared.

19. SCHEDULE OF NEW MEETING DATES AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Tuesday 9 February 2021. The meeting will be held via Zoom if a physical meeting is not possible.

The following meeting dates were also determined:

- Tuesday 6 April 2021
- Tuesday 25 May 2021 (Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Meeting).

The Chairman thanked all present for their attendance, wished them a happy Christmas and closed the meeting.

Signed.....

Chairman, Mr. P. Adams

Date.....