

BREWOD AND COVEN PARISH COUNCIL
WITH BISHOPS WOOD AND COVEN HEATH

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD 10 APRIL 2014

The Chairman of the meeting, Dr R. Taylor, declared the meeting open and welcomed those present, including members of the public. The meeting had been called and advertised in accordance with the requirements of the 1972 Local Government Act Schedule 12.

12 Members of the Parish Council, the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk were present.

The Chairman presented a plaque to Mr J. Cook, who had retired from Brewood Dole Charity, in recognition of his many years of service.

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2013 were approved and duly signed by the Chairman, there was an error in the date, which was duly amended.

Chairman's Report – Dr R. Taylor

I report a year of loss and progress.

Sue Groom, who worked for the Council starting as car scheme co-ordinator for nearly 14 years, died suddenly and unexpectedly on 30th October 2013. A good and loyal friend to our Council, the Parish and all who knew her. The church was packed for her funeral. A tremendous loss to her family and friends. She is and will continue to be missed. Long term ideas for a suitable memorial plan are being actively discussed. Another loss to the Parish which we keenly feel is the death last July of Ivor Clay. A Parish Councillor for 39 years and District Councillor, his experience and wisdom are missed. We are grateful for the regular and very useful attendance of our new County Councillor Mark Sutton. We are grateful for the regular and very useful attendance of our District Councillors, including Ivor Clay's successor Wendy Sutton. We are equally grateful to Anne Holmes who sits on the Parish as well as the District Council. For the second time Maggie O'Brien was thrust into a crisis situation. We appointed her acting Clerk and were pleased to formally offer her the job of Clerk in February after advertisements and interviews. She coped, she learnt and she organised. Well done!

Tanya Postles also coped, learnt and was willing (and able) to act up as Assistant Clerk in addition to her job as Voluntary Car Scheme Co-ordinator. We have now appointed her as Assistant Clerk. Well done! A new person to run the car scheme is about to start.

We are so fortunate as a council to have a whole team, inside and outside the office, to have such a loyal, hardworking group of people. Well done to all of them. Ongoing items and problems have been more than halved over the year. Some like the Sandy Lane intrusion, the SHLAA / SAD consultation process, the Planning Core Strategy, police presence and communication, the Bowling Club Lease, traffic and parking management, problems with the sewerage works in Coven Heath rumble on. We acted swiftly and positively on the school transport reorganisation. We supported and assisted in the installation (by the community) of three defibrillators in the Parish (unused I am pleased to say to date).

We were pleased to support the 1st Responder team in their need for a new fully fitted vehicle.

I hope the Parish enjoyed the Civic Sunday in September. It is an opportunity to thank organisations and individuals for their contribution to Parish life. It is also an opportunity for networking. We gave several scrolls and shields during the year for their special work and long service. Significant work has been carried out in the Parish Council rooms: decorating, carpeting and refurbishment of the external wall and sorting out smell from drains. I hope the working environment is improved.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for the commitment, hard work, co-operation and advice. I have enjoyed my year as chairman. Thank you.

Clerk's Report – Mrs M O'Brien

As you are aware this is my first Annual Clerk's Report having been appointed on a permanent basis in February. Who could have foretold what was in store for us all twelve months ago. It was with shock and great sadness that we heard of Sue Groom's untimely death in October and we miss her expertise greatly in the office.

I would like to thank Tanya Postles for her unyielding support and good humour during the past few difficult months. We hope to be back to full capacity very shortly now that we have appointed the new Car Scheme Co-ordinator who is due to start on 28 April.

There continues to be much to learn in supporting the work of the Parish Council as legislation changes and new initiatives are passed down from central government.

The two issues which created the most interest from the public this year have been with regard to planning (Horsebrook Lane and Kiddemore Green Rd) and grant funding for the Brewood and District First Responders when we saw the Council Chamber full to capacity for quite a number meetings.

We are again grateful to the Community Council of Staffordshire, who have offered their assistance in helping local residents consider their priorities for their community as the Site Allocation consultation gets underway.

The Council currently employs seven (soon to be eight) members of staff to cover the ten part-time posts that exist. There are three office staff, including the car scheme co-ordinator, four caretakers for the playing fields and allotments, a janitor, a handyman - gardener and a cleaner.

The Council has one casual vacancy in Coven ward following the resignation of Tom Fellows in January. Tom had been a Parish Councillor for over two years but work and family commitments were such that he was unable to continue to dedicate as much time as he would have liked to the council responsibilities.

The year, since the last Annual Parish Meeting, comprised of 22 scheduled meetings of the Council, excluding special meetings, the Council's committees and working parties. Individual Councillor attendances were as follows:

Moira Alden-Court	20
Andrew Ball	15
Mrs Jan Carr	20
Mr David Evans	15
Mr Richard Dakin	20

Mr George Martin	21
Mr John Pegg	18
Mr Paul Smith	19
Dr Richard Taylor	20
Mrs Linda Tomkins	19

Mr Tom Fellows	10
Mrs Anne Holmes	15
Mrs Jan Jeffries	17

Mr Mac Webb	20
Mr Peter Webster	18

To close this report, I would also like to thank Members for their patience and support over the past twelve months, especially since Sue's death in October and I look forward to the many challenges that lay ahead during the next year.

Finance Report – Mr P Webster

The Council's budgeted expenditure for the financial year to 31st March 2014 was £352,934. Members resolved to set a precept demand of £174,474; giving a charge of £57.94 on a Band D property.

In support of the 2013/2014 budget the income received totalled £10,206, net of VAT refunds and excluding the precept of £174,474, reimbursements and the Roseclaim grant of £7,000.

This income was derived in part from rental charges of £2,765 paid by the Royal British Legion and the Day Nursery in Coven as well as £1,579 from the rental of allotments and grazing land.

The Council's football facilities at Coven were hired by three adult teams for the season Emerald Athletic, Brewood Old Boys and AFC Milestone. Income of £1,933 was received during the financial year. Income has been reduced as matches were cancelled due to the bad weather. Some of these will be played later and payments will be recorded in the next financial year.

Once again the Council received a grant of £7,000 from Roseclaim following the 2013 V Festival, which is given to the Council to distribute to Bishops Wood organisations in recognition of the disturbance experienced by local residents during the Festival which is held in August at Weston Park.

The actual expenditure incurred was £154,893, net of VAT and in summary comprised of:

- Staff salaries, including all on-costs, came to £64,597. Members do not receive any remuneration for the work they undertake as Parish Councillors other than £20 telephone expenses once a year (£300 in total).
- A further £9,523 was spent on administration, associated overheads, subscriptions, Audit fees and training. Lease agreements at Coven playing field and Coven Heath allotments came to £1,809.
- The Parish Council Newsletters expenditure totalled £1,934 which included printing and delivery. Other incidental expenses such as BKV entries, plaques and the Chairman's Civic Sunday totalled £1,778.
- Maintenance of the Council's playing fields, amenity areas and open spaces were £16,968.
- Coven Heath allotments maintenance, including water and the removal of leylandii trees and cutting back the hedge along the A449 totalled £1,434.
- Essential works carried out at the Parish Council offices totalled £10,064. This included the replacement boundary wall which had partially collapsed, external work to rectify a problem with the damp proof course and work to remedy a problem with the underground sewerage pipes.

- The Council also purchased a badge for the Vice Chairman to wear at civic functions when representing the Council in the absence of the Chairman at a cost of £619.
- Grants totalling £7,140 were made to the three village hall committees in the Parish and also £600 to Coven Heath Community Association.
- The Council once again provided grants to the independent community groups who organise the Christmas Lights to a total value of £5,250.
- £3,585 was distributed as miscellaneous grants of which £2,328 was grant funding towards the costs of the Brewwood Parish Sports Association, spent largely on grounds maintenance. A donation of £120 was given to the Royal British Legion towards poppy wreaths for Remembrance Sunday.
- Spending on capital projects was less compared with the previous year with £2,330 being spent on the provision of a new bus shelter at School Lane, Coven.
- Finally, the 2013/2014 repayment of the loans taken out to build new changes rooms at Coven and to install perimeter fencing at Brewwood and Coven playing fields cost the Council £12,570.

Planning Report – Mrs J. Jeffries

The Parish Council is consulted on all planning applications that affect property in our four wards, whether they are residential or commercial. Our role is advisory, in that we state whether or not we have objections, and these comments are then noted by the District Council when it considers the application.

During the year we were consulted on 76 applications; the figure for 2012-1013 was 65. The applications were broken down as follows:

Domestic: - Brewwood 29, Coven 16, Bishop's Wood 5

Commercial: - Brewwood 7, Coven 8, Four Ashes 2

Staffordshire County Council Reserved matters 2

Staffordshire County Council (Roads and Schools) 4

These numbers are increased by adding re-submitted and amended plans. In addition, 3 applications were withdrawn.

After a legal battle, South Staffordshire Council (SSC) was given the go-ahead to start consulting on the Site Allocation Document (SAD), and your Parish Councillors have attended training sessions and workshops on the matter. The next step is that public information sessions will be held involving SSC, the Community Council of Staffordshire and your Parish Council. The date for Brewwood has been provisionally set at 1 May, with that for Coven set for Tuesday 6 May. A further meeting organised by SSC will be held in the district. Details are available from SSC website, and large scale maps are available in the Parish Council offices.

During the year, SSC stopped sending hard copy of larger scale plans to these offices, and this has resulted in us looking at alternative methods of displaying plans to the public.

This Council continues to be consulted on Tree Preservation Orders and on tree works within the Brewwood Conservation Areas. We have also agreed to hear what developers have to say regarding proposed submissions, and on several occasions have agreed to allow them to put

forward their proposals in person. This has had the added benefit of large plans being made available at no extra cost.

We are grateful to Maggie O'Brien and to Tanya Postles for their unstinting help in all matters relating to planning.

Playing Fields Reports – Mr R. Dakin

Brewood

The refurbished park continues to be very well used and enjoyed by people of all ages within the community. There was some vandalism reported during the summer months carried out by a minority of people in the community, which was reported to the Police. The area at the north of the field was sown with native wild flower seeds to encourage wild life.

The proposal for a bowling green and club house at the park is still a possibility, the draft lease being with the Bowling Club's solicitor for approval. The Club will soon be seeking grant funding having raised some funds themselves with various events having taken place over the past 12 months. We wish them well in their endeavours.

Finally, on behalf of the Council, I would like to express our appreciation for the work and commitment of the Council's caretaker, Mrs Elaine Gleed and the Council's handyman Mr Martin Smith, whose efforts have been so important in keeping the Jubilee Park looking so good and in turn so well used.

Bishops Wood

There is little to report with regard to the playing field in Bishops Wood except to say that it continues to be well used. The equipment is still in good condition and new bark has been ordered to top up the existing bark which the Council's handyman regularly rakes over to keep levels up. The Council is grateful to the caretaker Rachel Dunbar for keeping the park open, looking after the site and carrying out regular litter picks. The Council would also like to thank Mrs Sarah Hughes for undertaking the Council's play equipment inspections each month. Again, such support from the community is greatly appreciated.

Coven

The play equipment at Coven continues to be popular with the local community and would therefore benefit from an upgrade. Mrs J. Carr has been meeting with the community and has set up a working party to find out what equipment could be installed and where funding might be available from. The tennis court net had been replaced and play bark has been ordered for the zip wire area and the small play park areas. General maintenance is required throughout the year including painting and repairing of the equipment and guttering at the changing rooms, which Council's Handyman Martin Smith has continued to do. A new cradle swing has also been ordered which will be fitted as soon as it arrives. The skate-park, although very basic, also continues to be popular but regular users of the facility have requested more equipment. This is also an area that the working party are looking at. The overall bookings of the football facilities at the site are down again this year due to teams struggling to raise the funds to cover the cost of insurance, league fees, match officials, affiliation costs and the pitch hire and also due to the extreme weather conditions that we endured over the winter. Two teams continue to use the facilities and the Council has agreed to keep the goal posts up until the end of May to enable them to catch up on any league matches that were postponed due to the bad weather

and waterlogged pitch. The Council considered draining the pitch but agreed to wait until conditions returned to normal before making the final decision. The site has suffered some minor vandalism over the summer period. The Council is grateful to Moira Alden-Court who has once again managed the pitch hire bookings with the teams, to the Council's caretaker Matthew Orgill whose hard work and commitment ensures the site continues to be well used and the changing rooms to receive high praise from hirers and Mr R. Dakin for his monthly inspections and reports.

Coven Heath Allotments Report – Mrs L. Tomkins

The allotments continue to thrive and be popular. The majority of plots are well tended and tidy, however there are still one or two plots that have become a bit wild and overgrown. Unfortunately, the plots designated for people who have physical/mental difficulties have not been taken up so, after quite a vigorous advertising campaign it was decided to let the plots to any persons who came forward to request a plot. The Brewood and Coven Parish newsletter has proved to be a good place to advertise vacant plots.

There are a few issues that have developed over the year for example: dangerous trees, the car park surface and replacement plot markers. In addition, the Garden Rules have been amended to confirm shed/greenhouse and poly-tunnel sizes that are permitted.

The track across the allotments has held up well considering the winter weather and the leylandii trees at the north end of the allotments have been removed which creates a larger turning circle and helps to prevent cars running over the nearby allotments

The swap table has been moved to a plot near the gate and has proved useful to allow excess plants, pots and vegetables to be shared.

The boundary hedge has been cut and is almost in full leaf now. Thanks go to Brewood and Coven Parish Council for organising (and paying) for the improvements.

The Annual General Meeting of the Allotments Association is on Tuesday 13th April 2014 at Fordhouses Cricket Club.

Any Other Business

None received.

The Chairman concluded by thanking those present for attending and called the meeting to a close at 7.30 p.m.

Chairman.....