

BINTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Assembly held by Zoom on
Tuesday 4th May 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Flaxman (in the Chair)
Councillors Diane Burton, Richard Cox, Denise Day, Alex Finch, Tom Lloyd and Colin
Taylor

Clerk: Karen Parnell - Three members of the public were present

1) **Apologies for acceptance**
SDC WCC Cllr Mark Cargill

2) **Minutes** of the Parish Assembly held in 2019
The minutes were signed as an accurate record.

3) **Matters arising** from those minutes
None

4) **Chairman's report**

It's been an interesting year. Hopefully things are returning to normal, and the next routine parish council meeting will be in person. The support groups for those self-isolating to my knowledge have worked well and three flyers have been circulated to the residents. The Binton WhatsApp group and the Binton Life Facebook page seem to be running well.

The speed sign is in place and working well. New initiatives across the local parishes are being followed with the PCC. This is co-ordinated by the Bidford Parish Clerk and also involves one of the candidates for the county councillor elections.

We have had a new footpath laid this year by WCC and some repairs to the road surface. The Heart of England Forest charity who acquired 300 acres of land in the village and adjoining parishes are intending to meet villagers to discuss plans for the fields south of Church Bank to be developed as a Community Forest. Further details will be made available as and when.

Nothing else for the Action Plan this year but a Housing Needs Survey will be looked at next year. I will produce a new flyer regarding activity and finance for circulation to residents.

We have to note reluctantly that Councillors Day and Burton have resigned with effect from after today's meetings and the Parish Clerk will inform SDC and set up the process for seeking replacement members. I would wish the minutes to record our thanks for their support and to wish them well. We will need to

identify “volunteers” both for parish council membership and to take on the various roles that Cllr Day has been performing including the management of the Village Hall, although I would ask her to keep some going for a short while so a handover can be arranged.

5) **Village Hall Committee**

Binton Village Hall – Report for April 2020 – March 2021

The revenue of the hall has been severely reduced due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The car park has been a small source of donations for its use, but as you will see from the attached year-end report this year’s income has been severely affected. However thankfully, the previous year’s revenue has seen us through this difficult time.

Hopefully 2021/2022 will see groups returning to the hall. Denise Day

The condition of the village hall deteriorating through damp was noted. A surveyor may be needed. Fundraising and grants will be looked into for repair works.

6) **District and County Councillor’s report**

Annual Report – WCC & SDC This year has been dominated by Covid and lockdowns. The real story of course is what happened behind the scenes; how did local authorities perform during the pandemic. Warwickshire County Council was well prepared for agile working prior to the pandemic meaning that literally overnight all officers were able to work from home. That was quite an achievement considering the number of staff involved and the complexity of the work they do. Hot on their heels, SDC all staff were effectively working from home. During this time, many officers volunteered to help out with food distribution hubs, foodbanks, helping those shielding, self-help groups and much more. Later officers also helped out with the testing and vaccination centres. All council meetings were moved online. PPE was an issue in some parts of the country however Warwickshire did not run out and we were able to help out care homes with emergency supplies. Appreciating that people would be very hard hit financially, a number of government grant schemes were announced. Stratford District Council alone paid out over £40 million to local businesses. Following hot on the heels of summer was another wave of Covid cases. As is often the case, the second wave can be worse than the first and this was certainly the case here. Fortunately, the NHS and all the health services had the opportunity to prepare with the consequence that our hospitals were not overloaded, and many deaths were avoided. It's worth mentioning at this point that Warwickshire County council were singled out for praise as an exemplar Authority for their response to the pandemic. Financially of course all local authorities started to struggle with additional costs but also a significant loss of revenue. Fortunately, Warwickshire County Council and Stratford District Council were both in a financially sound

state and were able to lean on their reserves to fill the shortfall. Stratford District Council was the 4th hardest hit district in the country mainly because of tourism but also because of our motor trade. There is an estimated £7.2m in lost revenue between now and the end of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (2023/24). Recovery from this will take years however there were more pressing considerations. Prior to the pandemic, Warwickshire and in particular Stratford and Warwick Districts had the highest GDP in the West Midlands. Measures have been put in place to recover as quickly and possible with stimulus grants and schemes. One such kick-starter is the green shoots recovery fund enabling new and emerging companies to apply for grants. Many businesses have failed in the last year and we see some of those results on the High Street. Again, recovery plans have been drawn up here although it is worth noting that the high street will look quite different in the future. It is a testament to the sound fiscal management of the authorities that in spite of the pandemic WCC and SDC produced a balanced budget. No services were cut although a service charge had to be implemented on the green bins discretionary service and car parking charges increased in Stratford. The effects of the pandemic were especially felt in our schools. To help families that struggled during the crisis, a food voucher scheme was implemented that ran not only during term time but also in the holidays.

7) **Open forum**

Speeding was discussed and an initiative involving the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner and County Councillor will be enabled by the chairman.

Works at Honey Bee Meadow were considered and the chairman will try to ascertain any future plans for the site.

Pruning of hedgerows by Heart of England Forest was explained: Heart of England Forest routinely trim the top one year and the sides on alternate years in the interest of conservation.

Meeting closed 7.30pm