



Barnt Green Parish Council

www.barntgreen.org.uk



ANNUAL REPORT 1st April 2008 – 31st March 2009

Chairman's Overview

The Parish Council has had a very busy and eventful year. The Council has dealt with a variety of matters ranging from the improvements to Millennium Park to installing new Christmas lights around the village. Many of these activities are highlighted further on in the report. The Councillors were very upset to hear of the death of Councillor Rick Main. Rick joined the council through his work on the Parish Plan and we all appreciated working with him and his full and enthusiastic contributions. Councillor Martin Peyton was disqualified for non attendance during the year. Fortunately we are now pleased to welcome Rachel Banner and Christine Jenkins as Parish Councillors bringing us back to full strength.

We have performed our statutory duties throughout the year and achieved many of our goals thanks to the efforts of our team leaders.

Judith Jagger, Chairman of the Parish Council

May 2009

PERFORMING ITS STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

Street Lighting

The Parish Council is a street lighting authority and is responsible for maintaining most of the street lights in the Parish. Many of the lighting columns inherited by the Parish Council are concrete which is prone to crumbling, and these are steadily being replaced because of Health and Safety considerations. The Parish Council hopes to complete this task in the coming year. The new galvanised steel columns will be painted green.

Christmas Lighting

The Council worked closely with the local traders to install a new Christmas lighting scheme in the village and thanks to their generous donations, the village took on a really festive look this year. Altogether 95 per cent of the businesses contributed a total of £3150 to the scheme. This will be further enhanced this year. The Council has also installed two permanent Christmas trees at the entrance to Millennium Park on Hewell Road and at the junction of Orchard Croft and Hewell Road. While it will be two or three years before these trees can take the weight of the Christmas lights, they will eventually do away with the need to install temporary trees every year.

Millennium Park, Hewell Road and "Parker's Piece" Playing Field, Bittell Road

These open spaces are greatly valued by the majority of people in the village and are managed by the Parish Council. During the year the Council completely refurbished Millennium Park by resurfacing the pathways, installing lighting and benches, erecting new pillars at the side entrance in Sandhills Road and by replacing the swings in the playground. The Council, following consultation with the Barnt Green Youth Council, also took delivery of adventure trail equipment for Parker's Piece. This equipment will be installed in the coming year and the Council is actively seeking grants in order to augment this facility. Both areas are inspected annually by RoSPA and the Parish Council places great emphasis on its duty to ensure that they are safe and comply with the requirements of RoSPA and the Disability Discrimination Act.

Open Spaces

The Parish Council currently maintains with the assistance of volunteers, the embankment on Hewell Lane adjoining the Longlands, the area around the substation in Orchard Croft and some of the verges and the embankment on Hewell Road. During the year the Council planted more bulbs on Fiery Hill Road, Bittell Road and at other locations in the village and these have created an attractive Spring backdrop on the village's roads.

PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Development Control

The Parish Council, as a statutory consultee, comments on each application for planning permission relating to properties in the Parish. The District Council's moratorium on granting planning permission for new houses introduced in August 2003 looks set to remain for the foreseeable future.

Conservation Areas

A Conservation Area currently exists in the Fiery Hill Road / Cherry Hill Road / Twatling Road area. Further consultation with the Conservation Officer concerning the possibility of designating a second Conservation Area in the Sandhills Lane / Sandhills Road / Hewell Road triangle is in abeyance until the officer's return from maternity leave.

Barnt Green Station

The reduction in car parking charges at Barnt Green station has led to an increase in usage of this facility, but unfortunately many commuters still choose to park on Fiery Hill Road and at other locations in the village. The Council has been in discussion with both Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council to identify ways of addressing this problem with the objective of encouraging more commuters to use the station car park rather than park on the surrounding streets.

Barnt Green has joined London Midland's Adopt a Station Scheme. Under this scheme a working party from Network Rail has cleared all the areas surrounding the station and cut back some of the vegetation. London Midland will be installing litter bins and has promised to provide some planters to be placed on the two main platforms. The Council has some volunteers to maintain these planters but could do with more.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER AUTHORITIES

Highways

Worcestershire County Council Highways is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the roads and footways within the Parish. The village's needs were presented to WCC last year and we have now started to see the results of our lobbying with many pavements and Fiery Hill Road, Hewell Lane, Margesson Drive and various service roads being resurfaced. In addition new 'Welcome to Barnt Green' signs have been placed on all the roads leading into the Parish, and new directional signs have been placed at the triangle on Fiery Hill Road, at the Bittell Road/.Bittell Lane junction and at the junction of Sandhills Green/ Sandhills Lane/Sandhills Road. It is however a continuing battle to ensure that Barnt Green's roads and footways are properly maintained and that we receive our fair allocation of county resources. The Parish Council's next priority is the resurfacing of Hewell Road/Blackwell Road and the improvement of parking facilities in the village, both of which require urgent attention. It will therefore continue, in conjunction with our County Councillor, to seek to persuade the Highways Department to address these matters at the earliest opportunity.

The Lengthsman scheme continues to tackle the minor works along the roadsides throughout the village and has been welcomed by many residents.

The community has highlighted the speed of traffic on Bittell Road as a particular issue and the Parish Council will continue to press hard for speed reduction measures to be introduced there, particularly in view of the proposed Longbridge re-development.

Refuse Collection

Bromsgrove District Council is responsible for the collection of refuse and green waste. The Parish Council along with many other rural Councils, expressed its concern about the withdrawal of the green waste collection service during the winter months and the introduction this year of a £30 charge for this facility. However despite strong opposition from the rural councils, this was to no avail and Bromsgrove District Council went ahead with its plans.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

Communications

The Parish Council now produces four newsletters per year which are guaranteed to be delivered to each household in the parish by a group of volunteers. If anyone would like a large print, braille or audio copy please inform us directly or via a friend. The Parish Council also has a website (www.barntgreen.org.uk) which is now an integral part of its communication network.

Parish Council Office

The Parish Council decided not to proceed with the assignment of the lease on the former Lloyds TSB premises on Hewell Road in view of the poor state of the building, but continues to search for possible premises for a Parish Office.

Volunteers

The Parish Council is again very grateful to the many volunteers who are always so willing to deliver information to your doors to get important information to you, sometimes at very short notice. Thank you to the volunteers who pick up litter and those who join working parties to tackle various needs around the parish.

Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council usually meets at 7.00pm on the last Monday in the month in the Lounge at the Parish Centre, Sandhills Road. Dates and details are displayed on the Parish Council notice board. Members of the public are welcome to attend and there is a slot on the agenda when members of the public can suggest items for the Parish Council to consider. Please come along!

Members Allowances

New legislation permits parish councillors to claim an allowance in addition to travelling expenses to ensure they are not out of pocket in representing the community. However, for this year the Council decided that a Basic Allowance should not be paid. The Council is required to publish details of amounts paid to councillors for the parish basic allowance and for the parish travelling and subsistence allowance. In the year ending 31st March 2009, no travelling allowances were paid to councillors.

FINANCE RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 1.4.08 – 31.3.09

	Current Year	Previous Year
	2008/09	2007/08
Receipts	£	£
Precept*	56,000.00	28,000.00
Interest received	2,986.01	4,224.31
Rent	57.50	57.50
VAT refund	3,858.24	2,164.86
Reimbursement of Lengthsman's fees	2,698.50	2,095.46
Festival income	0.00	1,610.00
Donations to Xmas lighting	3,150.00	0.00
Reclaimed cost of repair to footway light	0.00	1,428.37
Misc grants, refunds	3,744.50	0.00
Total receipts	<u>72,494.75</u>	<u>39,580.50</u>

*£28000 from 2007/08 precept was paid early by BDC and therefore appeared in 2006/07 figures.

Payments

Administration

Staff costs inc NIC	15,158.45	12,023.95
Training & publications	147.11	275.00
General administration costs	817.89	1,063.55
Allowance for use of computer & phone	50.00	149.32
Hire of meeting rooms, refreshments and volunteers' "thank you event"	480.01	635.04
Subscriptions	1,388.60	508.48
Auditors' fees	500.00	640.00
Insurance premiums	1,715.05	1,692.42
Legal fees	687.83	66.00
VAT(refundable)	7,915.69	2,123.55
Loan repayments	471.66	471.74
	29,332.29	19,649.05

Communications

Newsletters	753.50	45.00
Website - maintenance	500.00	585.00
QPIF expenditure	30.00	2,135.03
	1,283.50	2,765.03

Park ("Millennium Park") - Maintenance

	1,882.00	2,520.73
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Playing Field, Bittell Road ("Parker's Piece") Maintenance

	2,454.07	2,223.85
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<i>Environment</i>		4,759.69	5,392.55
<i>Street Lighting</i>		5,610.63	11,602.70
<i>Highways & Lengthsman</i>		7,272.24	4,801.39
<i>Parish Plan</i>		0.00	249.01
<i>Festival expenditure</i>		51.00	3,054.30
	Total	52645.42	52258.61
<i>Paid from reserves</i>			
Refurbishment of Millennium Park		26435.00	0
Adventure trail equipment		3913.00	0
Christmas lights		13196.22	0
	Sub total	43544.22	0
	Total	96,189.64	52,258.61

Assets

Unity Bank Current Account at 31.3.09	£23229.38
Unity Bank Deposit Account at 31.3.08	£17902.39
HSBC Deposit Bond	£24500.00
HSBC Community Account	£ 654.42
Lloyds TSB Bond	£25000.00
Lloyds TSB Interest	£ 123.29
VAT due	£ 4231.21

Total

£95640.69

Reserves

£95640.69

In view of the problems regarding safety of bank deposits over the past year, the Parish Council took the decision to spread its reserves between three banks and invested in bonds in HSBC and Lloyds TSB. The Council continues to use Unity Trust Bank as its main bank.

The increase in staff costs is accounted for by the executive officer gaining a Certificate in Local Council Administration, which triggered a pay rise and by the payment of back pay as he had received no increase in salary since 2006.

Major expenditure on the refurbishment of Millennium Park, acquisition of the adventure trail equipment and the new Christmas lighting scheme was funded from the Council's reserves. During the year the Council resolved to maintain reserves equivalent to at least one year's precept.

A summary of the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2009 is set out above and these will be audited in accordance with the Local Government Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, first by an independent auditor and then by an external auditor appointed by the Audit Commission. A full copy of the accounts is available from the Executive Officer.

HOW TO CONTACT THE PARISH COUNCIL

Please feel free to contact any of your parish councillors or the Executive Officer. Alternatively you may wish to use the "Contact the Council" facility at www.barntgreen.org.uk

Judith Jagger (Chairman)	0121 445 2437	chair@barntgreen.org.uk
David Gilburn (Vice Chairman)	0121 445 1456	
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Susan Whitehand	0121 445 3530	
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Executive Officer:

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