

BARNT GREEN PARISH COUNCIL SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2006

Chairman's Introduction

In May 2007 there will be elections for the Parish Council.

The qualifications needed to put yourself forward are:

You must be at least 21 years old on the date of the election and fulfil at least one of the following:

1. Your name is on the current electoral register.
(The executive officer can verify this for you.)
2. You have lived in the parish or within 3miles/4.8kms of the parish boundary
(as the crow flies) for at least 12 months.
3. Your main place of business is based in the parish.
4. You own property within the parish.

It is your opportunity to serve your community. If you do not like what is being done on behalf of the residents it is your chance to do something about it. Barnt Green deserves the best councillors it can get, and an election improves democracy so please do consider putting yourself forward. There is space for people to serve for whatever time period they feel they can give. A four year stint will bring in fresh ideas and enable the council to use whatever enthusiasm and skills each successive councillor brings. It will be hard work, there will be demands on your time, it can be uncomfortable at times especially if there are contentious issues affecting the village, and currently you will not get paid, but expenses can be met.

Have you got what it takes to serve your community and to try and improve village life, or are you content to sit on the sidelines?

Elaine Buckett, chairman Barnt Green Parish Council

The Parish Plan

Thanks to those residents who commented on the draft of the Parish Plan. Many of the suggestions and comments have been incorporated into the Plan, and the final draft is now nearing completion. It should be presented to the Parish Council for adoption at its next meeting on July 24th and will be published on the Parish Council website.

The Victoria

The Victoria has now been completely refurbished and is an asset to the village. Many thanks to Mitchells & Butlers for their investment. The brewery has confirmed that patients of both the Barnt Green Surgery and the dentists, shoppers and traders may continue to use the bottom part of the car park free of charge, but ask that the top part of the car park is kept free for pub users.

PACT Meeting – May 17th

The first PACT Meeting – arranged by West Mercia Police - for the Hillside area was held on May 17th. Complaints were made that cars - possibly belonging to commuters - were blocking entrances to driveways in Sandhills Road. Some residents feel uncomfortable about raising the issue with the owners. If this is a problem, please note the registration number, time and date and advise either the Police or the Parish Council who will approach the car owners.

Another issue was bonfires which can be a problem for your neighbours. Please be considerate especially now the evenings are lighter and warmer and people are more likely to have their windows open. Again if you have a persistent problem and feel unable to talk to your neighbour, please contact the Environmental Health Department at Bromsgrove District Council who may be able to help you. Their contact number is 01527 881435. At the time of writing the date for the next PACT meeting for this area had not been fixed, so please watch the local press and noticeboards for details. This is due to be hosted by Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council.

Village Improvements

The bollards and planters now in place from Victoria Mews to Sandhills Road complete the Village Appraisal Proposals which were originally proposed and consulted upon in 1997! The Parish Council initiated these works in response to residents' demands that something be done to

stop the dangerous practice of driving, manoeuvring and parking on the pavement, a practise that has escalated over the years. It would have been easier not to have done anything but that was not an option. The steps taken have been a direct result of the actions of inconsiderate and dangerous drivers. The scheme is a compromise - the Parish Council was in favour of a lay-by to act as a delivery area within specified hours and to enable cars to park outside those hours. However we were informed by the HPU/WCC that this could not be done; this 'compromise' was the only way we could get any protection for the pedestrian. The planters are placed in such a way as to not block any right of access over the pavement that shops may have. The compromise is intended to offer some degree of safety to pedestrians and at the same time to respond to the traders' demands that if delivery vehicles were impeded, trade and the village would suffer. It is hoped that the scheme will lessen the disruption to the flow of traffic along Hewell road during delivery times. We are disappointed that the planters were not sited in such a way as to accommodate the slope of the pavement, but to rectify this would have cost the Parish Council £3,023.64 from the residents' council tax – a sum which we did not feel could be justified. It would be foolish to judge the results that the changes have made at this time. The success or failure of the scheme will be assessed in the spring –we will ask if pedestrians feel confident using that stretch of pavement and do they feel safe? Have the incidents of assaults, near misses and car-pedestrian collisions lessened? Likewise the aesthetics of the planters will also be assessed in the spring.

Traffic calming measures in Hewell Road

Parts of Hewell Road are limited to 20 mph; this is because of the proximity of the school, the sheltered housing complex and the park. All the traffic calming measures are specific to lowering the speed of traffic to 20 mph; the heights of the various speed tables and cushions have been checked, and we are informed that they are correct. We are aware that some residents are concerned that their presence generates increased noise from the traffic. If you observe any such problems, please note the time and date and if possible what type of vehicle is involved. We are informed by the HPU that the emergency services have sanctioned these types of traffic calming. If heavy lorries and skip lorries are causing problems we will ask the County Council to find out why they are using Hewell Road and not the agreed freight routes.

Parking on Fiery Hill Road

Apologies to Bromsgrove District Council, who we reported in the last newsletter as being in discussion with the police regarding new parking arrangements for Fiery Hill Road. These discussions are between the police and Worcestershire County Council. We understand the new scheme has now been signed off and should be implemented shortly, hopefully easing the problems with commuter parking on this road.

Sheila Parker

Councillor Sheila Parker retired from the Parish Council at the end of May. Councillor Parker was the first Chairman of Barnt Green Parish Council on its inauguration in 1993. Previous to that she had served the interests of Barnt Green on the Parish Council of Alvechurch. It was due to her efforts that we now have the playing fields off Bittell Road – known as Parker's Piece. We are very grateful to Sheila for all she has done for the village. We are glad that she is to maintain an interest in what we do and that she will still be an active force around the village. Typically Sheila has offered to continue to provide help to the Council and the community.

Parish Centre Vandalism

Late on the evening of Saturday 1st July a disturbance occurred at a 16th birthday party being held at the Parish Centre. The police are trying to ascertain exactly what happened, but what is clear is that a large number of the youngsters were under the influence of alcohol and it appears that no adult supervision was present. The Parish Centre suffered a large amount of criminal damage, although a team of volunteers ensured the centre was quickly back in use. The church wardens are sorry for any noise or nuisance caused and the police are requesting that anyone who may have witnessed this incident should contact PC Willetts at Rubery police station, on 0845 444 888.

Overhanging Branch in Playing Field

There is an overhanging tree branch on the Bittell Road playing field which constitutes a danger to field users. Despite robust efforts to establish ownership of the land on which the tree is located, nobody has come forward. Due to health and safety considerations, the Parish Council has no alternative than to instruct a tree surgeon to remove the dangerous branch and to seek reimbursement from the owner of the land, once this is established.

Barnt Green Surgery – an apology

In the Key Findings from the Parish Plan survey included in the Spring newsletter, we stated: “The GP premises were seen as the least physically accessible”. We are happy to point out that these comments were made before the surgery access was updated and improved and that access is now very easy. Apologies to the Barnt Green Surgery.

Hopwood Rendering Plant

Despite many protestations, the appeal against the decision to allow the erection of a 17 metre chimney at the Hopwood rendering plant was defeated. The plant will now be issued with a licence by Bromsgrove District Council. It is vital that the plant conforms to the terms of its operating licence regarding emissions. If any residents detect odours in the air around the village, they are asked to give details of date, time and location to District Councillor Brian Fuller.

Keep Barnt Green Tidy

There have been reports of fly tipping in the village. If you see anyone fly tipping, please note date, time and vehicle registration number and pass this information on to the Parish Council who will follow it up. Residents are reminded that it is their responsibility to cut back any hedges and plants that are overgrowing the footways

The BT Telephone Exchange

The Parish Council has been advised by Telereal, who work with BT's property team, that the exchange in Station Approach does not form part of their “programme for vacations”. Telereal comments that BT's ability to vacate may change with time as technology advances and it will keep the property under review, but says it regrets that in the short to medium term there is no possibility of BT vacating this exchange.

Ragwort

Ragwort is a native species to the British Isles, and is a weed specified under the Weeds Act 1959. Ragwort contains alkaloid toxins that, if eaten by horses or any grazing animal, can have debilitating or fatal consequences. The highest concentration of toxin is found in the pollen, then in order, the leaves, stems and roots. The effect of the toxin is cumulative and irrevocable, and as it builds up in the body results in liver failure. The build up is undetectable until it finally reaches the critical level at which symptoms occur. Ragwort – The Law All land-owners have a responsibility to control the spread of ragwort. Ragwort weed – if you spot it anywhere in the village, contact the Parish Council who will arrange for its removal.

Japanese Knotweed

There have also been instances of Japanese knotweed being found in the village. It is commonly found today along railway lines, riverbanks, roads and footpaths, in graveyards, on derelict sites or anywhere that it has been dumped, dropped or deposited. What does it look like? Japanese Knotweed forms dense clumps up to three metres in height. It has large, oval green leaves and a stem that is hollow and similar to bamboo. Usually in early spring (although it can be later in the year) the plant produces fleshy red tinged shoots. These can reach a height of 1.5 metres by May and three metres by June.

This plant can grow as much as 2 cms per day and will grow in any type of soil, no matter how poor. Towards the end of August clusters of cream flowers develop and then produce seeds that are sterile. The plant dies back between September and November. The speed with which it has

spread to all parts of the UK has been spectacular when you consider that it does not leave seeds behind but grows from pieces of the plant or root system that are cut and transported by people or by water. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 / Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 it is an offence 'to plant or otherwise encourage' the growth of Japanese Knotweed. This could include cutting the plant or roots and disturbing surrounding soil if not correctly managed. Again, if you spot this plant in the village, please advise the Parish Council who will arrange for its controlled removal.

Verges on Bittell Road

The grass verges on Bittell Road have been severely damaged this year by construction traffic and by cars parking up to take mobile phone calls or consult maps. The Parish Council is looking into the possibility of installing trees along the worst affected parts of Bittell Road in an effort to preserve the verges. Bittell Road residents will be consulted prior to any action being taken. Heavy vehicles have also caused damage to verges in Fiery Hill Road at its junction with Twatling Road, and at the junction of Bittell Road and Bittell Farm Road. The proposed solution here is to install "grasscrete" – a cement grid through which grass can grow. These measures are being pursued with the HPU. If anyone has any comments on the problem and the proposed solutions, please contact the executive officer.

Play Equipment

The new equipment has now been installed in both the park and the playing field and is being put to good use. Some residents in Margesson Drive are concerned about the level of noise coming from the basketball goal in the Bittell Road playing field. The Parish Council is looking into the matter and will take any action that is considered necessary.

Parking on Station Approach

Residents are reminded that parking on Station Approach is restricted to two hours. This is a facility for shoppers and is funded by the District and Parish Councils to help local traders. Parking is now being monitored by NCP who will take action against any transgressors.

Adopt A Station Scheme

The Adopt-a-Station Scheme is a Central Trains initiative that has been established to provide an opportunity for community groups and individuals to assist Central Trains in the upkeep of train stations. The scheme is designed to give local residents and community groups the opportunity to take part in beautifying their local stations and surrounding areas. By being involved in graffiti removal, gardening, landscaping and enhancing the station, it is hoped that the volunteer groups will have the opportunity to meet and work with people from within their community and Central Trains, and to develop an attractive station environment that is more welcoming to rail users. If any local group is interested in "adopting" Barnt Green station, further details are available from Central Trains - [HYPERLINK "mailto:adopt.station@centraltrains.co.uk"](mailto:adopt.station@centraltrains.co.uk) adopt.station@centraltrains.co.uk or 0121 654 1257. The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACORP), have produced an excellent handbook "Station Adoption – A guide for the local community", which may be downloaded from their website [HYPERLINK "http://www.acorp.uk.com"](http://www.acorp.uk.com) www.acorp.uk.com or purchased in printed form for a small cost (01484 847790).

Dates for your diary....

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Monday July 24th | Parish Council Meeting |
| Monday September 25th | Parish Council Meeting |
| Saturday October 14th | Village Clean-Up. |

If you would like to participate, or have any suggestions as to how the village can be made cleaner, please contact the executive officer.

The latest information on village activities can be found on the Parish website. If you have any activities that you would like to bring to the attention of local residents, please contact the executive officer.

How to Contact the Parish Council

If you would like to contact the Parish Council about anything at all, please either contact one of your Parish Councillors or the Parish Executive Officer.

Your Parish Councillors are:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Elaine Buckett (Chairman) | 0121 445 1254 | chair@barntgreen.org.uk |
| Judith Jagger (Vice-Chairman) | 0121 445 2437 | |
| Diane Carr | 0121 445 1220 | |
| Peter Cliff | 0121 445 6383 | |
| Tom Gray | 0121 445 4424 | |
| Susan Whitehand | 0121 445 3530 | |
| Executive Officer: Roger Westbury | 0121 447 7455 | clerk@barntgreen.org.uk |

Parish Council Meetings

These are usually held on the last Monday in each month at the Parish Centre in Sandhills Road at 7.00pm. You are welcome to attend and observe, and an opportunity is given at each meeting for members of the public to speak. Details are on the website, and notices are regularly displayed on the notice board with the dates of the next meeting.

Useful Telephone Numbers:

District Councillors:

County Councillor Mrs Ann Doyle 0121 445 4184

Peter McDonald 0121 453 9267

Brian Fuller 0121 445 4950 :

Anti-Social Behaviour Officer: 01527 881423

Police: 08457 444888.

Local police contact PC 2138 Jayne Willetts Rubery Police station.

Hall Bookings: Parish Centre Edna Whitehouse 445 4696

Baptist Church Hall Beverley Bennett 445 1551

Friends Meeting House Peter Wastenev 447 7355

If a copy in larger print or in Braille or an audio version is required, please contact the Executive Officer