

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY COUNCIL MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,
HELD ONLINE, ON TUESDAY 26TH JANUARY 2020, 6PM**

- Present:** Councillor Reeves in the Chair
Councillors Atkin, Bowden (part of meeting; he had advised he would be late)
D. Ellis, J. Ellis and Fitzsimmons
- Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald
Deputy Clerk – Mrs C. Caddock
Business and Finance Officer - Mr. G. Crowe (he had advised he would be late)
- PCSO Titans
- Apologies:** Councillors Evans (IT issues) and M. Hearldon (dispensation)

263/20-21 **DECEMBER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

Councillor Atkin proposed, Councillor D. Ellis seconded, and it was resolved that: the Minutes of the December Council Meeting held on 15th December 2020 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

Code of Conduct – Declaration of Interests

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to declare any personal interest or prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when the item is reached.

*Councillors D. Ellis and J. Ellis – Birchwood Youth & Community Centre Committee
Councillor Reeves – Birchwood Community High School
Councillor D. Ellis and Councillor Reeves – Birchwood Forum*

264/20-21 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

(a) **Police Report**

A Police report had been emailed to us by PCSO Stefan Titans prior to the meeting, which had been circulated to Members. The report details are as follows:

The following comprises the Police Report for the month of January 2021 to date. Also included are incidents from the second half of December not covered by the previous report.

-There has been one instance of burglary other than in a dwelling – on 07/01 the local high school was broken into; the means of entry being breaking a window at the front of the building. The culprit was scared off by the alarm before anything of value could be taken and had fled the scene by the time officers arrived. The culprit has been linked to suspicious activity outside of a nearby residence, where he was caught on the homeowner's CCTV. The suspect's image has been released in an appeal for information. Residents have been asked to be vigilant in securing their property.

-There have been 2 instances of burglary in a dwelling, both in close proximity of each other. Action has been taken through the housing association to safeguard the victims.

-There has been 1 instance of theft from a motor vehicle in which the owner of the vehicle left the car unlocked overnight and found their purse and other belongings to be missing, some left on the ground outside the car.

-There have been 3 reported instances of shoplifting from the shopping centre in the post-Christmas period images of suspects have been circulated internally for identification.

-Counterfeit banknotes were detected at the shopping centre in late December 2020. The persons responsible for their use have not been identified. The banknotes have been sent to the National Crime Agency for further investigation.

-No instances of serious assault in the area.

-We have seen an increase in ASB in the period leading up to the national lockdown. A particular focal point for this has been Birchwood Railway Station. Youths appear to congregate there from other areas and cause damage to the footbridge, drink, smoke cannabis and leave copious amounts of litter and broken bottles in their wake. On one occasion this has extended to the shopping centre, where youths caused minor damage to a café. Youths have been identified from Irlam, Woolston, Latchford, Fearnhead, one from as far afield as Liverpool. As a persistent location for ASB, Police are now taking a 'Problem Solving' approach.

Also of note are two incidents of stones being thrown at a house, two incidents of criminal damage to a vehicle and youths starting a fire at a local park.

-PC Frith and PCSO Titans have liaised with the local housing association to tackle ASB and threatening behaviour from an individual in Oakwood towards their neighbours. A civil injunction has been placed against the individual and the matter seems to be resolved for the time being.

-An address in Locking Stumps has been the source of frequent noise and Covid breach complaints since the post-Christmas period, which has escalated to the point of residents writing to the local MP. Officers were called out to the property on five occasions, however on arrival no noise or Covid breaches were identified. PC Frith and PCSO Titans have been in contact with residents and have been providing advice and reassurance as well as speaking to the subject of the complaints. This is being approached as a multi-agency issue and PCSO Titans has attended a meeting with the subject and representatives from social services and housing. Appropriate measures are being taken.

-A Major Incident has been declared in response to recent flooding following severe weather conditions, officers across Warrington have been responding, safeguarding residents, and managing road closures.

The Chair welcomed PCSO Titans to the meeting and thanked him for preparing and circulating the Police Report in advance of the meeting, which Members find to be useful.

The Clerk asked PCSO Titans whether the Police had received any reports of car windscreens being smashed, as there had been a number of reports on a local social media page.

PCSO Titans said that there has been no formal report made to the Police regarding this issue.

The Clerk said that if residents call us with an issue that we believe should be reported to the Police, we always try to encourage them to call 101, to make an official report.

Some people say that they ‘give up’ making a report due to the length of time they have to wait for their call to be answered.

PCSO Titans stated that residents must make reports directly to the Police, either by phoning 101, or there is an online submission form that can be used to make reports, in order to allow the Police to do their part, where they can.

The Clerk asked PCSO Titans to send a link to the online form to the office.

Action PCSO Titans to send a link to the Police online submission form, which the Town Council can then publish on our website and Facebook page.

(i) **Vandalism / ASB at Birchwood Railway Station**

Councillor Atkin asked PCSO Titans about the ongoing issues of ASB at Birchwood Railway Station, mentioned in the Police Report.

PCSO Titans reiterated that youths are coming from other areas, including from as far afield as Liverpool, to gather on the ‘old’ footbridge. He added that he had spoken to some young people, not engaged in ASB, who said that the reasons they gather include the shelter of the bridge, which is secluded, and the proximity to McDonalds.

PCSO Titans stated that the problem has not been as bad since the latest lockdown. It may partly be that McDonalds is only operating as a ‘drive-thru’ facility at the present time.

Councillor Ellis asked if there is any evidence of ‘County Lines’ activity at the railway station.

PCSO Titans said that there was no evidence of County Lines activity – the youths have indicated that they gather ‘for fun’. He added that the Police have managed to obtain some names, but whenever they approach the area, there appears to be a ‘look-out’ who will spot the hi-vis jackets, or see the Police vehicles, and then those involved in ASB will ‘scatter’.

PCSO Titans said that a solution might be to alter the design of the roof of the bridge to let in the elements therefore making it less attractive as a meeting place.

The Chair informed PCSO Titans that this was raised at our last meeting, when Councillor Bowden advised that he will be raising the suggestion of removing the roof with WBC.

PCSO Titans said that a request has been made to the Local Policing Unit for mobile CCTV (which can be asked for as part of a ‘Problem Solving’ initiative). A suitable location has to be found to install the CCTV.

Councillor Atkin commented that WBC has already committed to funding more robust replacements for the glass panels that keep being smashed. He suggested that the WBC Officers dealing with the matter, be made aware that the Police are in favour of the footbridge environment being made much less hospitable. He cautioned that completely removing the roof could create issues with water and ice.

Councillor D. Ellis suggested a lower-cost option of installing a high frequency sound emitter, which affects the hearing of young people; making it uncomfortable for them to remain in the area. Older people apparently do not hear the higher frequency, as hearing levels change with age.

PCSO Titans said that there may be issues with a sound emitter, as it is a public footbridge, it would also affect younger people using the footbridge legitimately.

Councillor D. Ellis commented that it would only be a transient discomfort for those using the bridge legitimately.

Action PCSO Titans to put in writing the Police's 'Problem Solving' suggestion and reasons for making the bridge less hospitable, to be shared with WBC.

(ii) **Large Groups Gathering at the Forest Park**

Councillor Atkin mentioned to PCSO Titans that there still seems to be evidence of people congregating in the pagoda in Birchwood Forest Park. He also said that, particularly in nice weather, there seems to be some groups congregating on the Forest Park.

PCSO Titans said that the Police do monitor the Forest Park, especially on nice days and at the weekend. So far, they have not encountered any groups breaking Covid-rules.

The BAFO joined the meeting. He apologised for his lateness, due to personal matters.

(iii) **Street Lighting**

PCSO Titans asked whether the Town Council had any input on lighting within the Birchwood area. He said that it is noticeable that where lighting is poor, the incidents of ASB are much higher. He said that in some areas, he has to use his torch, as it is too dark to walk safely. He added that he has concerns about the safety of members of the public in these areas, who may not routinely carry a torch.

Councillors D. Ellis and Atkin gave a brief background on the history of the lighting issues that have been experienced, especially since the new lighting has been installed.

The Town Council has been, and remains, very concerned about poor lighting quality in some areas. Councillors undertook a 'survey' of the new lighting and raised concerns about a number of areas, even arranging a meeting with WBC Officers on site to show them some of the worse areas.

Despite ongoing complaints and chasing the issues, the Town Council has never received a proper response from WBC regarding these issues.

Councillor Atkin proposed that the Town Council petitions the Borough Council again regarding the poor lighting.

Councillor D. Ellis said that if we have a specific written request from the Police, stating the effect poor lighting is having, then it might have more of an impact with WBC.

PCSO Titans stated that the lack of good / no visibility in some areas of Birchwood, contributes to the level of criminality in an area. He can identify specific locations where ASB / crime figures can illustrate this.

Action PCSO Titans to draft a letter explaining that there is a very clear link to poor lighting levels and higher levels of crime in some areas of Birchwood.

Councillor D. Ellis reported that he had nearly fallen over some flytipped concrete blocks and large branches on a footpath that leads off Stonecrop Close, due to very poor lighting.

The Clerk said that she will ask our team to look at this area tomorrow.

Councillor D. Ellis said that he understands that the Police are working towards putting measures in place to assist in trying to tackle the issue of abandoned trolleys in the area.

PCSO Titans confirmed that this is the case.

There were no more questions for PCSO Titans. Members thanked him for attending the meeting.

PCSO Titans left the meeting.

As there were no residents present at tonight's meeting, the Chair declared Public Participation closed.

265/20-21 **CLOSURE OF BARCLAYS BANK**

At the December 2020 meeting, a resident attended the meeting to raise their concern regarding the upcoming closure of the last local bank in Birchwood, Barclays Bank at the shopping centre. It is due to close in February 2021.

As requested, the Clerk wrote to Barclays Bank requesting they reconsider the decision to close this branch.

A reply has been received that explains that the business decision to close the branch has already been made.

The consultation had been to understand how Barclay's customers and the community can be supported with the transition. Barclays are closing 63 more local branches around the country in the first three months of 2021.

266/20-21 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP (YHG) – UPDATE**

The Clerk reported that she had circulated a report to Members, following a recent remote meeting on 13th January 2021, with representatives of YHG. She said that if Members have any queries to raise with YHG at her next meeting with them, to let her know.

The Clerk confirmed that she has requested that Locking Stumps, Heathfield and Gorse Covert areas are added to YHG coppicing schedule for the next financial year.

The Clerk said that Fix 360 are moving flytipping that has been exposed by the coppicing works. If there is an urgent safety reason to move an item quickly, our team will collect it.

Councillor Bowden joined the meeting. He apologised for his lateness, due to his attendance at another meeting.

267/20-21 **UPDATE ON MEMBER'S REFERRAL FROM MAY / JUNE 2020**

At the May 2020 meeting, Councillor D. Ellis had submitted a proposal, “. . . to submit to Warrington Borough Council, to combat rat-running along Locking Stumps Lane, Lords Lane and Glover Road and make Locking Stumps a low traffic zone.”

At the October meeting Members agreed that the latest reply, in ongoing correspondence with WBC, was unsatisfactory.

Councillor D. Ellis wrote to WBC again, regarding the issue. At tonight's meeting he reported that he has not yet received a response.

The Clerk reported that we had received a letter from a resident regarding traffic calming measures, which had been circulated to Members, and was noted.

Councillor D. Ellis stated that he will contact WBC again, and try a different approach.

268/20-21 **UPDATE ON PLANNING MATTERS**

- (a) Application No. 2020/37719 North Cheshire House, Kelvin Close, Birchwood, WA3 7PB. Variation of Condition 2 (approved plans) and Condition 4 (car parking spaces) on previously approved application 2017/31859 (manufacturing and storage of aluminium frame windows).

It was reported that WBC's Planning Enforcement Officers are considering some ongoing complaints regarding this site. Councillors D. Ellis and Bowden are liaising with a resident in relation to the matter.

- (b) Application No. 2020/37866 Land adjacent to units 720 and 730 Birchwood Boulevard, Birchwood, WA3 7PS. Proposed drive-thru coffee shop.

The Clerk has spoken to the planning department regarding this application. At the present time there is no further update or Officer recommendation.

The Clerk stated that some amended plans have been added to the website, very recently, including a revised ecological survey.

269/20-21 **STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

Councillor D. Ellis did not have any specific updates for this meeting.

270/20-21 **FLOODING – ROBERT'S FOLD**

The Clerk stated that the Borough Council is now liaising with Torus Housing directly regarding the issue of flooding on Roberts Fold.

The Clerk noted that the area did not flood last week, during the heavy rains and snow.

271/20-21 **CENSUS 2021**

The Clerk reported that, as agreed, the Census information was published on our website and Facebook page.

272/20-21 **BIRCHWOOD RAILWAY STATION**

(a) **Access from the path from/to Woolston**

The Clerk has been corresponding further with Northern Trains Limited and WBC regarding accessibility issues. Despite sending chaser emails, we are still awaiting an update.

(b) **Vandalism**

This was discussed earlier in the meeting (see Minute 264/20-21 (a) (ii)).

Councillor Bowden confirmed that he is pushing this issue with WBC Officers to try to find a sensible solution to the problem.

273/20-21 **PROPOSED PLAQUE COMMEMORATING ROF RISLEY WORKERS**

At the December 2020 meeting Members considered a proposal from Councillor D. Ellis about putting up a plaque to commemorate those who had worked in a very dangerous environment at the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) Risley during World War 2. This would provide additional historical interest for the area, as well as being a memorial to those who worked at ROF Risley.

Members had resolved that this is something they would like to pursue.

The Clerk has not been able to progress this item yet, but will do as soon as possible.

274/20-21 **HS2 UPDATE PRESENTATION**

To note that Officers and four Councillors had attended an online presentation earlier this evening, with representatives of HS2 Limited, regarding how HS2 will affect Birchwood, if the current plans remain unchanged.

We have requested Birchwood specific information for us to publish / link to on our website and Facebook page.

NEW ITEMS RAISED UNDER THE CLERK'S REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

275/20-21 **WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

(a) Sent/received – various emails / online reports following contact from residents re: flytipping, grit bins, flooding, etc.

The Clerk reported that the office had received a number of reports of flooded roads and footpaths this week, following the heavy rains and snow melt.

(b) To note that correspondence has been sent to WBC regarding ongoing problems with a private laurel hedge on Locking Stumps Lane. We are awaiting an update from WBC.

(c) Received – confirmation that WBC approved revisions to its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) on 14th December 2020. The SCI sets out how the community will be involved in the preparation of the Local Plan and other planning documents and how they will be consulted on planning applications. It can be viewed on the WBC website: www.warrington.gov.uk/statement-community-involvement

(d) Received – Information and documents relating to the next Parish Liaison Meeting, taking place on 11th February 2021. The Clerk informed Members of the items on the agenda, including an update from electoral services. She added that the current position is that elections will go ahead.

Members questioned whether the May elections, effective campaigning, voting, the count, etc. can take place in a Covid-secure way. The decision will be made by the Government.

276/20-21 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP (YHG)**

- (a) Sent/received – various emails / online reports re: flytipping, including that exposed by recent coppicing works, the YHG grit bin on Chaffinch Close, overflowing bin areas, abandoned trolleys, etc.
- (b) Sent/received – emails with Paula Marshall, new Director of Housing and Customer Service at YHG.
- (c) Emails received / sent re: fallen tree branches – as a result of the weight of snow. YHG has dealt with these.
- (d) Received – additional meeting notes from Andrea Spamer (the Clerk has circulated meeting notes to Members).

277/20-21 **MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE**

- (a) Received – various LGC e-briefings and publications.
- (b) Received – Various update/information emails from Warrington Voluntary Action.
- (c) Received/sent – phone calls and emails from Birchwood High School re: contact for Birchwood Forum, in relation to contacting local businesses with a plea for IT tech to enable more learners to be able to work remotely from home. Cllr D. Ellis (in his role as Vice Chair of Birchwood Forum) has been in contact with the high school regarding this matter.

Councillor D. Ellis stated that an email has been sent to all Forum members regarding this request.

- (d) Received – From Highways England – Notification that the M62 junctions 10 to 12 motorway upgrade work is now complete. Also, information received about the A533 Expressway bridge replacement between junctions 11 and 12 of the M56.
- (e) Received – email from a resident, thanking the maintenance team for the work they do, in all weathers, to keep the area looking tidy.

The Clerk reported that the Town Council maintenance team collects approximately one ton of litter (including waste from the litter bins and some flytipped items on WBC land) each week. This figure is taken from the weighbridge measurement, as the vans must weigh on and off at the WBC site.

In addition, the team moves items from YHG land, which goes in the YHG container.

Councillor D. Ellis asked what proportion of litter comes from the bins and what from litter picking the streets.

The Clerk said that the team empties 40+ litter bins (and picks up waste dumped on the ground around them) at least twice a week. Some bins are emptied three times per week.

The Clerk added that she will ask the team to make a note of how many bags of litter they collect in addition to the litter bin waste. The volume can fluctuate considerably from week to week.

- (f) Received – several emails from a resident – updates on the correspondence they are having with WBC, regarding ongoing issues, of significant overgrowth along the Smithills Close footpath – including some privately owned landscaping. The resident is not satisfied with the actions taken to deal with this matter.
- (g) To note that the Clerk has been in contact with Trolleywise regarding statistics about abandoned trolleys within the Birchwood area.
- (h) To note that the Woodland Trust has been asked to look at a fallen tree near The Cage on Chatfield Drive.
- (i) Received – Coronavirus vaccinations update from Warrington and Halton CCG. This was published on our Facebook page.

278/20-21 **CHESHIRE POLICE**

- (a) Received - Various Neighbourhood Alerts.
- (b) Received – Letter to Chairs of local Councils re: an online consultation taking place to find out what residents’ priorities are for policing and community safety. The survey closed on 24th January 2021.
- (c) Sent – emails updating the local Police about some ongoing issues of anti-social behaviour.
- (d) Received – from PC Frith – request for the Clerk to answer a few questions regarding Partnership Working with the Police, as part of a post-graduate university course that he is studying. He has to prepare a presentation to be made to senior Police Officers, which may help to shape the formulation of future policing policy.

Action The Clerk and BAFO will provide feedback to PC Frith.

279/20-21 **CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (CHALC), NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC), SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS (SLCC)**

- (a) Received – NALC Chief Executive’s Bulletins, and various updates.
- (b) Received – ChALC weekly e-bulletins with various attachments, details of training sessions, etc.
- (c) Received – from SLCC – news updates, training information, etc.
- (d) Received – from ChALC – brief survey, asking where local Councils would put ‘speeding’ on their list of priorities. Officers think it would be within the top 3 of BTC’s priorities.

Members agreed that it would be one of the Town Council’s top three priorities.

Action Clerk’s office to respond to the survey, as decided above.

280/20-21 **PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED**

Various LGC magazines and e-mail briefings, The Clerk magazine January 2021, and Clerks & Councils Direct, January 2021.

281/20-21 **MEMBERS’ REFERRALS**

There were No Members’ referrals received prior to the publication of the Clerk’s Report.

282/20-21 **CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR COMMENT AND OBSERVATION AND OTHER RELATED PLANNING ISSUES**

(a) **Warrington Borough Council - Development Management Committee (DMC)**

The DMC that took place on 21st December 2020 and the DMC that took place on 20th January 2021; had no items of specific relevance to Birchwood on the main agenda for consideration.

(b) **Enforcement Cases**

Lists of enforcement cases recently opened/closed have been received.

(c) **Planning Decisions**

- (i) Application No. 2020/37810 Temporary Car Park north of Cavendish Avenue, Birchwood Park, WA3 6YN. Proposed discharge of Condition 3 (Landscaping scheme), Condition 7 (Characterisation, Remediation and Verification), Condition 9 (Surface water) and Condition 10 (Surface water drainage scheme) on previously approved application 2020/36662 (Temporary Car Park). **Condition part discharged / part not discharged.**
- (ii) Application No. 2020/37964 62 Strawberry Close, Birchwood, WA3 7NT. Retention of use of land as a private garden. **Approved with conditions.**
- (iii) Application No. 2020/38150 682 Warrington Road, WA3 6AU. 42 Day Householder Prior Approval – Proposed rear extension to extend beyond the rear wall by 6m, maximum height 4m & height at eaves 3m. **Prior Approval not required.**
- (iv) Application No. 2020/38155 79 Mansfield Close, Birchwood, WA3 6RN. Proposed single storey side and rear extension. **Approved with conditions.**

(d) **Planning Applications**

All plans can be viewed via:

<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/see-or-comment-planning-applications>

Certain applications are not Planning Applications; therefore there is no statutory opportunity to allow 21 days for comments, e.g: Non material amendment applications, Lawful development certificates (S192) and 28 day prior approval/determination applications. These types of applications are received for information only.

- (i) Application No. 2020/38359 5 Cadshaw Close, Birchwood, WA3 7LR. Proposed two storey and single storey rear extension, including render to all external elevations.
- (ii) Application No. 2020/38429 Parking areas adjacent to 1 and 2 Kelvin Close, Birchwood, WA3 7PB. Non material amendment – proposed minor alterations to the landscaping layout to suit revised surface level parking arrangement on previously approved application 2020/37962 (proposed erection of a multi-storey car park).
- (iii) Application No. 2020/38426 Parking areas adjacent to 1 and 2 Kelvin Close, Birchwood, WA3 7PB. Non material amendment – proposed minor alterations to elevations to accommodate increased floor heights, reduction of ramp length, and amendments to layout of surface level parking on previously approved application 2020/37962 (proposed erection of a multi-storey car park).

- (iv) Application No. 2020/38370 36 Inglewood Close, Birchwood, WA3 6UJ. Section 192 Lawful Development Certificate – proposed rear and side single storey extensions.
- (v) Application No. 2021/38455 41 Daniel Close, Birchwood, WA3 6QL. Prior Approval – proposed single storey rear extension to extend beyond the rear wall by 4.04m, maximum height 3.15m, height at the eaves 2.25m.
- (vi) Application No. 2020/38393 56 Rockingham Close, Birchwood, WA3 6UY. Proposed first floor side extension, conversion of integral garage and addition of link detached garage.
- (vii) Application No. 2021/38487 1 Whitworth Close, Birchwood, WA3 6PY. Proposed single storey side extension, projecting 3m off rear elevation and construction of front porch.
- (viii) Application No. 2021/38505 17 Kelsall Close, Birchwood, WA3 6LZ. Proposed single storey front extension.
- (ix) Application No. 2020/38369 1-4 Raglan Court, Risley Industrial Estate, WA3 6SZ. Proposed change of use from Use Class E to Class E and / or Class B and / or Class B8.
- (x) Application No. 2021/38523 Unit B, Concentric Business Park, Birchwood Park, WA3 6WX. Proposed redecoration of external aluminium framework windows, cills, doors, external escape staircase, steel frameworks, gutters, soffits and fascias.
- (xi) Application No. 2021/38559 130 Birchwood Boulevard, WA3 7QH. Proposed x2 illuminated exterior wall signs for new office building.

Members did not have any comments to make, or objections to, the above applications at the current time.

This part of the meeting concluded at 7.00pm.