

MINUTES OF THE POLICY, STRATEGY & ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE, DELENTY DRIVE, BIRCHWOOD
ON THURSDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2017 at 6 PM

Present: Councillor Ellis in the Chair
Councillors Allman, Bowden, Breslin and Evans
Deputy Clerk – Mrs. C. Caddock
Business and Finance Officer - Mr. G. Crowe

Apologies: Councillors Atkin, Fitzsimmons, Nelson and Reeves
The Clerk, Mrs. F. McDonald (attending the Parish Liaison meeting at the Town Hall)

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 Breslin and Ellis– the Youth & Community Centre Committee

Councillors Allman and Evans – Oakwood Community Association

Councillor Allman - Spectrum Striders

Councillors Allman and Evans – Friends of Birchwood Forest Park

Councillors Bowden, Breslin and Ellis – Birchwood Carnival Committee

287/17-18 **PURPOSE OF MEETING**

Councillor Ellis informed Members that the purpose of the meeting is to review the results of the survey undertaken during the 2017 summer months and to decide what the next steps are to progress some of the issues raised by the community (413 responses) where possible.

He added that some of the statistics gathered are informational; other comments can help the Town Council formulate a plan to take forward during the next three to four years.

Those Members present then considered the survey results and put forward some recommendations to be taken to Full Council for further consideration and/or approval.

The survey results presentation can currently be viewed online at:

<http://www.birchwoodtowncouncil.org.uk/images/temporary-posters-whats-on/residentsurveyfinal.pdf>

288/17-18 **QUESTION 1: HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT BIRCHWOOD FOREST PARK? AND QUESTION 2: WHY DID YOU VISIT?**

Councillor Ellis commented that the responses received suggest to him that the Forest Park is used by a lot more people than he expected and for a wide variety of reasons.

Councillor Ellis pointed to the ‘word cloud’ created by SurveyMonkey, which picks out words from the information input – those that appear in larger print were used more often than others.

There were a lot of things that didn’t appear in the word cloud, but had been mentioned by respondents to question 2, such as dog walking, kite flying and use of the fitness equipment – although ‘exercise’ might cover that point.

Recommendation:

- To find ways to encourage the community to take advantage of the facilities already available in Birchwood.

Councillor Ellis stated that there was a majority 'yes' response to all the four options:

(a) if ... the toilets were open more often

The Forest Park Ranger is no longer responsible solely for Birchwood Forest Park, but has responsibilities for other parks as well. The toilets are opened when he is on site. They are also open when The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park's café is open.

Members discussed the problems associated with arranging for the toilets to be open more often. It was agreed that the main concern if they are open when there is no one on site to monitor them is that they might be vandalised. Also, they need to be kept in a clean condition, have soap and toilet roll available, etc.

In addition it would have to be decided what the toilets opening hours would be and who would be responsible for opening/closing them and keeping them clean.

Councillor Allman suggested perhaps a self-cleaning toilet, made of stainless steel, which people pay to use, could be installed outside the Rangers' Centre.

Councillor Ellis stated that it is not surprising that people would like the toilets to be available when they visit the park. He suggested that we write to the Borough Council whilst plans are still being formulated for the refurbishment of the Rangers' Centre with any thoughts/proposals and to ask whether there is any potential way that the toilets could be open regularly during each day. We believe that part of the plan is for new toilets to be situated so that access from within the Rangers' Centre is not required, so they can be accessed as a separate unit.

Councillor Breslin said that the Town Council can present this as a community concern as it was a key outcome of the resident survey. However, whilst the refurbishment plans are still being finalised, he believes the focus in the meantime should be on finding a way of arranging for the toilets to be opened and closed daily.

Councillor Ellis commented that whilst it would be good to have them open, they also need to be monitored for vandalism and cleanliness.

The BAFO agreed that any proposals regarding the toilets need to be taken into account during the new build/refurbishment.

Recommendation:

- To write to the Borough Council about the toilet facilities at the Forest Park and to ask for their suggestions about how arrangements might be put in place for them to be opened regularly and for longer periods of time.

(b) if ... there was more seating and **(c)** if ... there were more picnic benches

Members discussed the potential for more seating and picnic benches in the park and agreed that it would benefit the park to have some additional seating, in particular, around the footpaths.

Councillor Ellis stated some people have commented that it would be more pleasant for them if, when they go for a walk, they could also have the opportunity to sit down to rest, or just stop to sit and have a chat for a while.

Councillor Ellis added that perhaps this is something that the Friends of Birchwood Forest Park might like to become involved with, as profits from the café they run are to be put towards funding enhancements to the park.

Councillor Allman said that this can be raised at a meeting of the Friends Group.

Councillor Breslin commented that a plaque could be put on any benches stating who has sponsored the benches and/or picnic tables.

The installation of any seating would have to be undertaken in partnership with the Borough Council as they would be on WBC land and WBC might need to cat and genny areas for cables, etc. prior to benches being installed.

Recommendation:

- For Councillor Allman to ask The Friends of Birchwood Park to consider purchasing some additional seating for the park with profits raised by the café.

(d) if ... there were more activities

Councillor Ellis stated that what stood out from the survey was that people would particularly like to see additional activities for children and teenagers.

290/17-18 **QUESTION 4: WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?**

Councillors acknowledged that in past years the Rangers used to arrange quite a lot of activities for children and their families (some of which took place in Risley Moss). However, during recent years, particularly since the Rangers were given additional responsibilities for other parks, the number of activities provided has decreased.

Councillor Ellis said that there are activities that do take place in the Forest Park and suggested making a list and using the newsletter to communicate to people what there is already going on. He added that there is a great potential to use the park to organise lots of different types of activities.

Councillors Evans commented that The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park have indicated that some of their members might be happy to volunteer to arrange various activities.

These would have to be coordinated in partnership with Warrington Borough Council.

Councillor Ellis questioned whether arranging activities could be incorporated into the Friends Group's plans. He also wondered whether the Town Council could get involved with the arranging of activities.

He said that some of the suggestions that came out of the survey included dog training, Nordic walking and Thai Chi.

The BAFO reminded Members that the Town Council does not have any control over the Rangers' work schedules or the activities that they might be able to arrange/provide.

Members noted that the new MUGA at the Forest Park is not being very well used. They wondered whether Livewire would be interested in helping to support the Town Council to raise awareness of the new facility, possibly by arranging some activities at the MUGA.

It was suggested that the Town Council could contact the junior football teams with regard to organising a 5-a-side tournament on the MUGA. The Town Council could sponsor the cups.

Members were unsure whether Livewire would make a charge to arrange activities, or whether they would do it as part of an awareness raising programme.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to contact Livewire regarding the above.
- For the Town Council to consider arranging a 5-a-side 'winter league' competition

291/17-18 **QUESTIONS 5 AND 6: IF THERE WAS A CAFE IN BIRCHWOOD FOREST PARK, DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD USE IT? HOW OFTEN?**

Councillor Ellis stated that since the survey was undertaken, The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park have opened a café in the park at the weekends, selling tea, coffee, cakes, etc., and it seems to be going well.

292/17-18 **QUESTION 7: WHAT ELSE MIGHT ENCOURAGE YOU TO USE THE PARK?**

Councillor Ellis said that, again, as this was an open-ended question, there were many varied responses. Two of the main issues raised were the need for better/additional lighting and issues surrounding dogs not being kept on leads and 'out of control' in the park.

(a) **Lighting**

Members discussed the issue of lighting in some detail – including lighting on footpaths in general throughout Birchwood.

Councillor Bowden said that that now the birds are no longer nesting, the Borough Council is committed to undertaking an audit of the new lighting columns and cutting back trees where branches are obscuring the light.

The BAFO said that the Town Council has been told that no night scouting is being undertaken in the residential areas of Birchwood, other than on the main routes; but not on the side footpaths.

During the October Finance, Audit and Personnel Part 1 meeting, the BAFO had informed Members that we had received emails from Street Lighting with a technical update identifying the need for a survey of the parts of the main circular path around the Forest park that do not currently have the benefit of lighting, prior to providing an estimate of costings for any new lighting work (see Minute 275/17-18).

During that meeting, Members had resolved that the Town Council approves £350 (approximate) funding for the necessary lighting survey as the Borough Council does not have available funding from their Parks and Gardens department.

The BAFO said that he hopes the result of the survey and associated costings will be received before the 28th November; in time for consideration at the Budget and Precept meeting.

Councillor Bowden confirmed that previously Spectrum Striders have indicated that they might be willing to put some funding towards the installation of additional columns, as they use the park on a regular basis.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to write to the Borough Council to inform them that our survey showed the Birchwood community has raised concerns about safety at night, specifically relating to poor lighting levels – much of which seem to be caused by trees obscuring the lights. The Town Council would like to see this issue resolved.

Councillor Ellis said that some of the trees may not belong to the Borough Council; they could be on private, or housing association land.

Councillor Bowden stated that the Borough can identify the trees that are causing the issues on any land and write to the owner, giving them a timeframe in which to arrange to have the work done. If it is not done, the Borough can cut the trees and recharge the owner.

(b) Dog Issues

Councillor Ellis stated that one of the key issues raised was regarding dogs being off leads on the Forest Park, with some respondents to the survey raising concerns about dogs being 'out of control'. Suggestions had been made that a fenced 'off-lead' area for dogs, such as the one at Orford Park should be installed.

Councillor Breslin commented that if a fenced off area was created, it would have to be considered how to keep order within that area and how it would be maintained and cleaned.

Councillor Evans commented that this proposal has been raised previously with the Borough Council, including a suggestion that a suitable area might be to the left of the underpass leading towards Keyes Close on the way out of the Forest Park.

The BAFO stated that this suggestion has not been supported by the Borough Council previously. The space is also quite close to residential properties.

Members discussed whether there should be signs stating that dogs should be kept on their leads at all times.

Councillor Bowden stated that the Borough Council will not have a fenced off dog area on the Forest Park (which is Borough Council land). He added that enforcing people to keep their dogs on a lead at all time is also not going to happen as it is a public space.

Members suggested installing signs, respectfully requesting that people keeping their dogs on leads and under control at all times (formal wording to be confirmed at a future date.).

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to write to the Borough Council to enquire about the possibility of installing signage around the Forest Park requesting that people keep their dogs on a lead and under control at all times.

293/17-18 **QUESTION 8: HAVE YOU VISITED ANY OF THESE GREEN SPACES IN BIRCHWOOD WITHIN THE LAST TWO YEARS?**

This question relates to other green spaces in Birchwood, not the Forest Park.

Councillor Ellis said that the survey results show that Risley Moss is well frequented, with Gorse Covert Mounds and the Brook Footpath also being quite well used. However, The Walled Garden and Locking Stumps Common are not as well-known/used.

Councillor Ellis said it might be the areas are not visited as often is because over the last few years the Borough Council appears to have left both of these facilities with little or no maintenance being undertaken on them, so they now are unappealing spaces for visitors.

A discussion took place about the potential of The Walled Garden. It was agreed that this should be discussed in more details at a future date.

294/17-18 **QUESTION 9: WOULD YOU VISIT ANY OF THE ABOVE GREEN AREAS IN BIRCHWOOD AND OTHERS IF . . . ?**

- (a) if . . . footpaths and destinations were signposted and
- (b) if . . . there was some information on the Council website

Councillor Ellis stated that the strong majority answer to both the above questions in the survey was 'yes'. The Brook Footpath, Risley Moss, the Forest Park and Gorse Covert Mounds already have some signage and/or information boards.

Councillor Ellis added that Angus Lord, from Warrington Borough Council, is currently looking into the possibility of signposting for heritage trails in Warrington.

Members agreed that it would be a good idea to contact the Borough Council and also The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park, with regard to looking at sponsoring/supplying/adding additional signage to point to green spaces in Birchwood (with the necessary landowners' consent).

Members also agreed that information could be put on our website, even if it is only links to external sites where information may already exist.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to write to the Borough Council to enquire whether additional signage for Birchwood could be added during considerations being undertaken regarding heritage trails.
- For the Town Council to contact The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park to enquire whether they might consider funding additional signage within the Forest Park (which would have to be done in consultation with the Borough Council).
- For the Town Council to add information about green spaces in Birchwood to its website.

Councillor Ellis asked if Officers could find out what the traffic numbers to our website are.

295/17-18 **QUESTION 10: WHAT ELSE WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO VISIT?**

Councillor Ellis said that this question elicited a wide variety of responses. Many of them related to issues already touched on, such as better lighting, a café, more activities and better maintenance of areas and footpaths to enable safer access to areas.

296/17-18 **QUESTIONS 11, 12 AND 13: DO YOU LIKE TO SEE ROADSIDE FLOWERS IN BIRCHWOOD? WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE? WHAT TYPE?**

Councillor Ellis reported that the majority of people who responded to the survey do like the roadside flowers and would like to see more in Birchwood.

The question of 'what type' drew a range of responses, including requests for more wildflowers.

Councillor Bowden said that he does not think there are many more suitable locations to try the wildflower planting in Birchwood.

The BAFO confirmed that a lot of locations are not suitable for wildflowers. They have to have the right type of soil, which has to be of poor quality and the width of the area has to be suitable from the Borough Council's point of view for preparation of the area, sowing and harvesting, etc.

Some areas which have done well in the past have not given as good a display this year and some areas have completely failed due to the ground conditions.

A suggestion was made that it would be nice to have additional planters around the area.

Again, the locations have to be suitable and approved by the Borough Council (or other landlord) and these would involve maintenance time. The costs of purchasing the planters and ongoing costs for the soil and plants would also have to be considered.

Councillor Ellis stated that hanging baskets had featured highly on the survey as something residents would like to see back in the area.

The Deputy Clerk and BAFO informed Members that a couple of years back (in April 2015) having asked whether the new lighting columns, once installed, would be suitable to hold the weight of fully watered hanging baskets, we received a comprehensive reply from the Borough Council with all the new regulations that have to be adhered to for every basket that is put up.

Applications have to be made in writing for each basket – there were numerous (13) points that had to be followed just in the ‘Structural Requirements’ section of the application, including the materials that supporting brackets, clips and attachments had to be made out of.

The BAFO informed Members that previous hanging baskets had to be removed as the Borough had required that all lighting columns with baskets on them had to be stress tested. For the numbers of baskets the Town Council had at that time, the costs, just for the testing, were prohibitive.

In addition, the Town Council would require additional resources in order to water and maintain the baskets and planters. The shopping centre baskets and current number of planters in the area take two full days of watering during the summer months (sometimes three during very dry weather).

The costs of additional baskets would also need to be considered.

Members requested that additional information be requested from the Borough Council to ask again whether baskets be put on the new lighting columns, what the cost implication would be to the Town Council and what the current rules and regulations are for hanging baskets.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to write to the Borough Council to enquire about the installation of hanging baskets on the new lighting columns.

297/17-18 **QUESTION 14: HOW IMPORTANT IS THE CLEANLINESS OF BIRCHWOOD TO YOU ON A SCALE OF 1-10?**

Councillor Ellis said that this question had been included on the survey, specifically to understand whether the community values the work undertaken by the maintenance team, which includes a significant amount of litter picking.

Councillor Ellis stated that the score of 9.6 out of 10 indicates that the cleanliness is of great importance to the community. He thinks this is something that should be communicated to residents and suggested that an article about how much the maintenance team does in the area is included in the newsletter.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to include an article about how much litter is collected by the team in the upcoming newsletter.

298/17-18 **QUESTION 15: WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE STRICTER IMPLEMENTATION OF FINES FOR LITTERING, DOG FOULING AND FLYTIPPING?**

Councillor Ellis said that the survey showed 98% of respondents supported that idea of having a warden to issue fines for littering, dog fouling and flytipping.

A query was raised, whether Town and Parish Councils already have the power to issue fines.

Under the Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, Town and Parish Councils have the power to take enforcement action against those who commit an offence against a Dog Control Order. They also have the power to take enforcement action against those that litter. However, the person issuing fines would have to be trained and consideration would have to be given to the Town Council's resources to be able to do this.

Councillor Bowden confirmed that anyone employed by a Town or Parish to issue fines on Borough Council land would have to be fully trained and approved by the Borough Council. Councillor Bowden added that the Borough Council does not have the resources to send trained wardens into all the local Parishes.

Councillor Ellis reminded Members that in April 2017 (see Minutes 016/17-18 from the April Minutes) it was reported that we had contacted Warrington Borough Council, asking for their opinion regarding a company, with trained staff, who go into Towns and Cities and act as litter and dog fouling wardens with the ability to issue on-the-spot penalties. For every £75 ticket they issue they keep £35 and the Council gets £40.

At the April meeting Councillor Ellis had also suggested that the question of whether the local community would like to see fines being issued for people who litter or don't pick up after their pets could be added to the community consultation.

At tonight's meeting Members discussed the option of contracting an external company to issue fines in Birchwood. There is no cost to the Council and a potential for some income.

Members agreed to contact the Borough Council again, to ask whether it might consider allowing the external contractors (who are fully trained and have been utilised successfully in other Boroughs) to use Birchwood as a 'pilot area' within Warrington, to see if it has a positive effect on the ongoing issues of littering and dog fouling. We can inform the Borough Council that the survey results indicate that a high percentage of our residents would support this.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to write to the Borough Council to ask about the possibility of the external company being 'contracted' to issue fines for littering and dog fouling in Birchwood.

299/17-18 **QUESTIONS 16, 17 AND 18: HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL IN BIRCHWOOD? WHERE DO YOU FEEL UNSAFE? WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL SAFER?**

Councillor Ellis noted that answers to these questions had been covered during discussion earlier in the meeting.

The survey results show that during both the daytime and night time the majority of respondents feel 'safe', with around 43% feeling very safe during the daytime. After dark the percentage of people feeling 'unsafe' rises to around 35%.

People tend to feel unsafe where there is a lot of overgrowth and where areas are quite dark, also in areas which they perceive as being a 'hangout' for groups of youths to congregate.

Better lighting and maintenance (discussed earlier) were both main issues that people believe would make them feel safer.

The other issue raised was that of more PCSOs/Police presence. This is already currently subject to further consideration by the Town Council as the Police have altered their proposals for the costs and terms and conditions of employing additional PCSOs (see Minute 283/17-18 from the October Part 1 Finance, Audit and Personnel Minutes). The Police propose that Local Councils are to pay £32,280 per additional PCSO for an area; this would equate to a 6% rise in the precept just for one extra PCSO in Birchwood.

At the October meeting Members discussed the matter further and **resolved** that due to the lateness of the proposals from the Police in the budget cycle, the proposed cost and current ongoing uncertainty and unanswered questions, the Town Council could not approve the full funding of an additional PCSO for the 2018/2019 financial year.

At tonight's meeting, Members suggested that an additional community consultation may need to be undertaken, with full details given to residents before a decision can be made regarding the future provision of PCSOs in Birchwood.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to consider undertaking an additional community consultation regarding the future of PCSOs in Birchwood following the receipt of full proposal from the Police.

300/17-18 **QUESTION 19: RE: A NEW PROPERTY MARKING SYSTEM**

The full question asks: "A new property marking system is now available which uses an individually created fluid DNA. This is applied to your possessions and means that any stolen items can be identified as yours. It also leaves a "fingerprint" on the criminal, which could lead to conviction. When widely used, the system is more effective than any other at reducing theft. If the property marking system kit was available for sale for under £15, would you be interested in buying one?"

Councillor Ellis said that just over 50% of respondents had said they would be interested in buying a kit; around 37% were a 'maybe', leaving around 13% saying 'no'.

Councillor Ellis said that he is currently awaiting additional information from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Cheshire regarding the kits. At a recent meeting Councillor Ellis attended, the PCC had indicated that if the Police ordered one kit for every household in Cheshire, the price would be reduced to around £1 per kit – which might make it attractive to more residents.

The Police have indicated that it is important that whole streets are covered, as it makes them much less likely to be targeted by criminals. Areas where the majority of homes use the kit will have street signs put up to indicate the property of the residents is protected by the fluid DNA.

Councillor Ellis said that the PCC will report back at his next meeting with Parish Councils and further consideration about whether the Town Council wishes to purchase some for supply/sale to Birchwood households can be undertaken at a future date.

301/17-18 **QUESTIONS 20 AND 21: WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON SPEEDING VEHICLES IN BIRCHWOOD? WHICH ARE THE WORST PARTS?**

Councillor Ellis stated that the majority of respondents saw this as a moderate problem, approximately 42%, with around 33% thinking it is a major issue. Councillor Ellis added that PCSO Steve Bingham is trained to use the 'speed gun' and does undertake enforcement operations in the area.

Councillor Ellis informed Members that after one speed enforcement operation on Glover Road 51 fines were issued.

The BAFO said that the majority of fines have apparently been issued to local people.

The 'worst parts' identified by residents are those that the Police are already aware of and are monitoring. These include Gorse Covert Road, Admirals Road, Ordnance Avenue, Lords Lane, Locking Stumps Lane and Birchwood Way.

People have also raised concerns about the 20mph limits on side roads not being observed.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to pass on the results of this survey question to the PCSOs.

302/17-18 **QUESTION 22: AT PRESENT THE TOWN COUNCIL PART FUNDS A PCSO FOR BIRCHWOOD. WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR VIEWS REGARDING THIS RESOURCE.**

This matter was touched on earlier in the meeting (see Minute 299/17-18).

Whilst the Town Council is aware that the majority of residents value the work of the PCSOs, the Police are currently changing their proposals for the way in which PCSOs are funded (going from Local Councils part-funding to fully funding a PCSO). This will have a knock-on effect as to whether or not the Town Council will wish/be able to afford to have additional PCSOs in the Birchwood area.

Members are minded to undertake another community consultation regarding this matter.

303/17-18 **QUESTION 23: WHAT SORT OF EVENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN BIRCHWOOD?**

Councillor Ellis stated that this question elicited quite a wide variety of responses, including more events, the carnival, more activities (especially for children) a music event, a firework display and a farmers market.

Councillor Ellis said that he had had a conversation with Dave Boyer from Warrington Borough Council regarding the possibility of bringing back a fireworks display.

The BAFO said that when the bonfire and fireworks display used to take place, main issues had been fencing, car parking, health and safety and security - the bonfire had to have security guards overnight for several days prior to the date of the event; it was a sculptured bonfire that took a lot of time an effort to create.

The Birchwood Lions used to help to organise and marshal the event. Admission to the bonfire was by ticket and the money raised used to go towards funding Birchwood Carnival.

The bonfire eventually became a victim of its own popularity as the Borough Council felt that too many people came for the event to remain safe in the area where it could be fenced off.

Having a firework display without the bonfire was tried in November 2005 on the Forest Park field. Again, fencing off a large enough area to keep people away from the launch zone of the fireworks was an issue that had to be overcome. Because it was impossible to completely fence off the main field, the event had to be free to the community, with the Town Council funding the cost of the display (£3,500 paid as a grant to Warrington Borough Council).

Members discussed having a firework display in the future. They agreed that they would prefer the event to be self-financing, with the potential for any 'profit' to go towards the following carnival or other community events. This would require a secure, fenced area in order that the event could be ticketed.

Councillor Ellis queried whether Birchwood Community High School would allow the use of the school field.

Councillor Bowden commented that as the high school is now run as an academy, they would have to be approached directly.

Councillor Ellis suggested contacting the Borough Council again and the high school to explore any options that might enable the event to be reinstated in the future.

Recommendation:

- For the Town Council to explore options regarding the potential to hold a firework display.

With regard to the possibility of having a farmers market, this was another popular suggestion taken from the survey. Councillor Ellis said that he had spoken to the Clerk about looking into how the Town Council would go about arranging this.

Recommendation:

- For the Clerk's office to explore options regarding the organisation of a farmers market.

304/17-18 **QUESTIONS 24 AND 25: WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO PAY FOR A TICKET FOR AN EVENT? HOW MUCH?**

Almost 60% of respondents had indicated that they would be prepared to pay for a ticket for an event, with about 28% replying 'maybe'. The most popular price bracket was £5 - £10, with 'up to £5' close behind. Some respondents are prepared to pay up to £20 (around 15%).

305/17-18 **QUESTION 26: RE: WIDER RANGE OF ACTIVITIES**

The full question asks: "*Residents have told us that they would like to see a wider range of activities available and Birchwood Town Council would like to investigate this further. We need to understand what kind of activities would be of most interest to you. Please tell us how interested you would be in the following:*" Fourteen options were then given for people to indicate how interested they might be in each option.

Councillor Ellis stated that the two options with the highest selections of 'very interested' were 'activities for children' and 'activities for teenagers'.

Members discussed the responses in some detail.

Councillor Ellis suggested that the best way to find out what sorts of activities young people and teenagers might want to see, would be to carry out a further consultation aimed specifically at them and/or their parents.

Councillor Breslin commented that the current activities and facilities available in Birchwood tend to be aimed at children and teenagers who like to be outdoors and/or are interested in doing 'sporty' things. Not all children like these sorts of activities, some would just like a space where they can 'hang out' and have a chat. He suggested consulting via all the local educational establishments in order to try to obtain the views of as many children and teenagers as possible.

Councillor Ellis commented that he thinks it is a shame that the youth club no longer takes place at the Youth and Community Centre. He suggested that it would be useful to find out why it closed – was it because nobody was going to it, the location wasn't right, that nobody knew about it, that it wasn't offering the right activities, or other reasons?

Councillor Evans stated that Councillor Nelson might be able to offer some information regarding this matter.

Recommendation:

- To ask Councillor Nelson if she is aware of any reasons why the youth club at the Youth and Community Centre closed.

Councillor Evans said that part of the reason is likely to be the withdrawal of youth support workers from Birchwood.

Members noted that years ago there used to be several places in Birchwood where young people could go to hang out with their friends, have a soft drink, play games, etc.

Councillor Ellis wondered why Birchwood no longer gets any youth workers, whereas other places, such as Orford Hub seem to have several.

Councillor Breslin commented that Orford Hub is Livewire's 'flagship' in Warrington and as it subsidised by the Borough Council, the Borough is able to put their youth workers in there.

Councillor Breslin also commented that the Town Council might wish to be aware that there are plans for a central youth zone to be created in Warrington, next to where the Warrington University Technical College (UTC) site is. A travel survey is to be undertaken to see how young people who live further away from the town centre could access the youth zone .

With regard to the other twelve options that were suggested, Councillor Ellis wondered whether the Town Council could possibly award seed-funding to set up one or two groups or classes.

The BAFO stated that the Town Council has around £8,000 (in total) per year that continues to be available in grant funding for the benefit of local groups – as long as they meet the terms and conditions for awarding a grant.

Councillor Ellis stated that he had spoken to Nicola Attwood about the possibility of opening a 'repair café' in Oakwood Hub. There is existing storage that can be used and a room is available at least once a week. It would be a place for people to socialise, share skills they might have and pass those skills on to others. It might be how to repair a zip in a jacket, sew on a button, fix a broken toy, mend a chair, or a variety of other items (probably not electrical items) etc.

Repairs could be carried out for a 'donation' or if people had things that could be repaired and they don't want them back, they could be sold at a low cost to residents in order to raise funds.

Councillor Evans said that he would be attending a meeting on 24th November at which he will be able to get more information about this proposal.

Councillor Ellis said that once we have more information, it might be that the Town Council could enable the formation of a Repair Café, possibly giving a grant to purchase some tools or a sewing machine, etc.

Recommendation:

- Councillor Evans to find out more about the proposed Repair Café and to report back to the Town Council.
- For the Town Council to consider any grant applications that might be made by the café, should it formally open.

Councillor Ellis suggested that Members might wish to consider putting together a significant project that will bring measurable outcomes; one that will potentially attract funding streams. He added that some funding streams will allow the funds to pay for staff/manpower costs to run the project.

The project may only be for a few weeks, or maybe a year. If it becomes self-sustaining, it would be an addition to the activities available in Birchwood.

Recommendation:

- To ask Members to think about and propose a future community project.
- To investigate available funding sources for such a project.

306/17-18 **QUESTION 27: WE ARE INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHICH LOCAL AMENITIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE, IT I WERE POSSIBLE**

(a) **Farmers' Market**

This was also mentioned earlier in the meeting (see Minute 303/17-18).

About 73% of respondents had indicated that they would like to see a farmers' market in Birchwood.

Councillor Breslin stated that this is one of the key events that is put on in Culcheth and is very popular.

Councillor Ellis and the Clerk have spoken briefly about looking into how the Town Council would go about arranging a farmers' market. The recommendation was for the Clerk's office to explore options regarding the organisation of a farmers market.

(b) **More Places to Eat Out**

Councillor Ellis stated that this is not within the Town Council's control. He has, however, spoken to Gary Jones at the shopping centre and said that if the possibility came along of a restaurant type place to eat out, residents have indicated that they would like to have more choice of where to eat in Birchwood, rather than just takeaway-type outlets and the Peacock and the other public houses.

(c) **Community Centre**

Just over 40% indicated they were 'very interested', with around 45% indicating a 'possible interest'. This is potentially already being addressed by the Borough Council with proposed improvements to the Tennis and Leisure Centre to create more of local hub.

(d) **Films and Plays**

Again, Councillor Ellis stated that this is not within the Town Council's control. Gary Jones, the manager of Birchwood Shopping Centre has apparently been trying to attract a cinema company to Birchwood, but it is hard to do as there are already several cinema complexes within 'striking distance' and with another one already planned as part of the redevelopment of Warrington Town Centre.

Councillor Ellis said that whilst the Town Council cannot provide these facilities, we could support any future proposals if they came along.

(**Question 28** requested more details from respondents regarding the above, which have been recorded for information, but are not listed here.)

307/17-18 **QUESTION 29: RE: NEWSLETTER**

The full question asks: “*Birchwood Town Council has started to publish the newsletter again which we believe is important. The total cost to produce and deliver this publication to every household in Birchwood is around £4000, which is paid for out of the Town Council precept. Do you think this newsletter is important?*”

Around 62% of respondents believe the newsletter is important, approximately 21% were not sure and 17% said ‘no’.

Councillor Ellis said that another printed copy is planned to be published and delivered in the next few weeks, hopefully in early December. After that he proposes that the magazine is made available online, with a very small print run to enable some copies for people who do not have access to, or use the internet, to be able to pick a hard copy up from local shops, the library, etc.

Councillor Allman said that he thinks it is worth the cost to have the magazine to be hand delivered to every household in Birchwood.

The BAFO reminded Members that there are around 5,000 properties in Birchwood and it takes the team almost a week to deliver them to all the properties.

A discussion took place about the possibility of Councillors delivering the magazine; although it was acknowledged that not all Members would be able to, or wish to, undertake this task.

Recommendation:

- To ask Members at the next Town Council meeting about the future publication of the newsletter and the delivery method.

308/17-18 **QUESTION 30: WOULD YOU BE HAPPY TO RECEIVE YOUR COPY (OF THE NEWSLETTER) IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS, TO SAVE COSTS**

This question relates to question 29 above; respondents could choose as many options as they wished:

- ~ 89% would be happy to receive the newsletter via email.
- ~ 65% would be happy to pick a printed copy up from a local shop, etc.
- ~ 83% would be happy to read it online.

309/17-18 **QUESTION 31: THERE IS A STRONG COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN BIRCHWOOD AND MANY RESIDENTS HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN VOLUNTEERING. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?**

- ~ 32% of respondents answered ‘yes’
- ~ 42% of respondents answered ‘possibly’
- ~ 26% of respondents answered ‘no’

310/17-18 **QUESTION 32: RE: VOLUNTEERING – WHAT WOULD INTEREST YOU?**

Councillor Ellis reported that of the four options offered as suggestions, ‘improving green spaces’ had the majority and highest ‘yes’ selection. He suggested that the people who answered ‘yes’ to this could potentially be put in contact with The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park; although there are also other local groups who work in Birchwood to help to improve the environment who might also be pleased for additional volunteer assistance.

Councillor Ellis said that he thinks the Town Council should get in touch with all those people who left their contact details in order for them to be further updated with regard to volunteering opportunities. It would be useful to know who is interested in what type of volunteering, in order to be able to progress such opportunities.

Councillor Ellis said that he would be happy to contact the potential volunteers in order to thank them for their interest, to obtain some more specific information from them as to how they would best like to be involved and to potentially invite them to a meeting in order to progress any ideas further.

It was suggested that perhaps one umbrella Birchwood Resident Association could be formed, comprising of Members of three separate other resident associations – for Oakwood, Locking Stumps and Gorse Covert.

Recommendation:

- For Councillor Ellis to contact potential volunteers and for a meeting of those who are still interested in volunteering to be arranged.

311/17-18 **QUESTIONS 33 TO 38**

Questions 33 to 38 related to the demographics of the respondents to the survey.

312/17-18 **CONCLUSION**

The BAFO commented that the items considered above will create a significant amount of additional work, for an already busy office; therefore there is a need for the Council to decide how they wish to work through the recommendations, once they have been approved and become actions. The BAFO suggested that Members find some items that can be done quickly and relatively easily, in order to start progressing through the ‘wish list’.

Councillor Breslin agreed that there is a need to prioritise key things.

Councillor Ellis confirmed that priorities will have to be agreed from the issues addressed in the survey that become actions for further investigation and/or implementation.

Councillor Ellis stated that all the feedback gathered from the survey, which the Town Council is able to develop into actions, will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan and subsequently be integrated into the Town Council’s action plan going forward. Some of the items will be progressed relatively quickly; others will be worked into forward planning, which will cover the next three to four years.

Councillor Ellis said that he would like to thank all the residents who took the time to respond to the survey. All their comments have been read and taken into consideration.

All those Members present **resolved** that the above recommendations be taken to the next Town Council meeting for consideration and approval.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.