

**MINUTES OF THE MAY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL,**  
**HELD ONLINE, ON TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020**

- Present:** Councillor Reeves in the Chair  
Councillors Atkin, Breslin, D. Ellis, J. Ellis and Nelson  
Clerk – Mrs. F. McDonald  
Deputy Clerk – Mrs C. Caddock  
Business and Finance Officer - Mr. G. Crowe  
Sgt Stuart Gibbard  
1 guest from another Local Council
- Apologies:** Councillors Fitzsimmons, M. Hearldon (dispensation) and T. Hearldon  
Councillor Bowden was unable to attend due to urgent Borough Council business.

Prior to the formal commencement of the meeting, the Chair made a statement, which was unanimously echoed by all Members and Officers of the Council:

*“I would just like to take a moment on behalf of the Town Council to extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of those that we have lost, and to pass on our thoughts and best wishes to those who may be poorly or may have been affected in some other way by this terrible pandemic.*

*I would also like to thank all those who are looking after our community in whatever capacity; NHS staff, carers, many, many keyworkers and volunteers. We are all very thankful for their contribution, selflessness and acts of kindness.”*

The Chair stated that, as today is also International Nurses Day, Nursing leaders have called on the general public to commemorate the day and show their support for all nursing staff by shining a light out of their homes tonight at 8pm.

001/20-21 **ONLINE MEETINGS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the ‘historic’ first online meeting of Birchwood Town Council; a necessary format due to the current Coronavirus pandemic. He said that he hopes that we do not have to have too many meetings online; that the situation will soon improve enough for normal life to be resumed where possible.

The Chair added that a risk assessment has been undertaken regarding the platform (Zoom) which is being used for the meeting. Whilst we know there have been concerns raised in the press about some Zoom meetings being ‘hacked into’, we understand that additional security measures have recently been put in place by Zoom. No sensitive or confidential information will be discussed during the meeting, and the Clerk, as ‘host’ is able to control the meeting:

- Meetings can be password protected.
- Meetings can be secured with encryption.
- Settings can be enabled requiring the host to be present before meetings can start.
- The waiting room feature can be enabled, allowing only the host to admit participants.
- Meetings can be locked.
- The meeting host has a number of controls including the ability to control their microphone and remove participants, should there be a disruption.

002/20-21 **FEBRUARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**Councillor Atkin proposed, Councillor D. Ellis seconded, and it was resolved that: The Minutes of the February Council Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.**

These could not be formally approved until now, due to the cancellation of the March and April meetings because of Coronavirus lockdown – although they had been available in draft, online.

**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, D. Ellis and J. Ellis– Birchwood Youth & Community Centre Committee*

*Councillor Reeves – Birchwood Community High School*

003/20-21 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

(a) **Meeting Guest**

One ‘guest’ asked permission to observe the meeting, as a member of another Local Council, to see how Birchwood Town Council ran its online meeting.

Members were happy for a fellow Local Councillor to observe tonight’s meeting.

(b) **Police Report**

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

**Police Report Birchwood Area - Incidents 13/04/20 – 12/05/20**

*“During the last month under the Covid 19 lockdown both PCSO Bingham and PC Frith have been on active patrol in the Birchwood area, with the majority of this time spent on bicycles patrolling the open spaces and residential estates, engaging and encouraging locals where required on the lockdown rules. PCSO Bingham is reconnecting with the local businesses and schools and providing reassurance in the area.*

*We have received 19 reports about breaches, some at the time of the breaches and other online after the event; we have responded to these reports resulting in 2 fixed penalty reports being issued and advice where necessary.*

*Antisocial behaviour reports have been low with 6 incidents of note 3 of which were of off-road motorbikes in the Gorse Covert area and around Pestfurlong Hill, this was backed up by local residents we engaged with whilst on patrol. We stepped up our presence in this area in order to put a top to the nuisance riders. The other reports related to neighbour disputes.*

*PC Frith has been dealing with a longstanding dispute in the Oakwood area. This had to be resolved at a low level with restorative justice action, bringing all parties involved into the police station to sort the issue.*

*Again, due to the current lockdown situation thefts/ shopliftings have been low, 3 incidents of bike theft from around the Birchwood Mall area have been reported which are currently under investigation. Shoplifting with 7 incidents reported, 3 were of very low value and closed down, 2 incidents where offenders were given banning orders and 2 currently under investigation.*

*Four incidents of criminal damage where we have no lines of enquiry have been closed off, one of which was a historical incident reported for a crime number.*

*Two burglaries have been reported with no further lines of enquiry, one at Birchwood Boulevard and the other in an out-building on Risley Moss where nothing was taken, just entry gained.*

*You are aware of the robbery in Gorse covert One Stop which is still under investigation by CID and we will give you a update when we are able to. We are giving the area and other local stores some hi-vis reassurance patrols in the evenings.*

*Speed enforcement will be again up and running in the near future so any complaints we received will be actioned, although at present we have just received a couple of reports.”*

Councillor Reeves commented that it was useful, to receive more detail in the Police Report, (such as in the report above) rather than just basic statistics.

The Clerk said that PCSO Bingham is now back in Birchwood.

Sgt Stuart Gibbard took questions from those present and confirmed details within the report. He said that since lockdown, anti-social behaviour, in general, had decreased, as had burglaries and thefts.

Where there are breaches of lockdown, the Police initially try to educate people, but where people resisted accepting the advice and reacting appropriately, they were fined.

Sgt Gibbard said that the latest changes in the message for lockdown conditions, coming into effect in England from Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020, are not as clear-cut as previous guidelines. The Police are awaiting guidance from HQ regarding the implications as to how this will affect their interaction with the public.

Sgt Gibbard said that he had been made aware of reports of door handles being tried at several properties during night-time hours. He said that this type of activity has been going on for over two years and seems to come in ‘waves’. It is difficult to detect why this is happening, as there does not appear to be any crime, such as a burglary, following on from this ‘handle-trying’ – which would usually be expected.

Sgt Gibbard added that there could be a number of reasons why it might happen, which may not be related to a crime, including people getting the wrong address.

If people are concerned, they need to make a report to the Police on 101, rather than just mentioning the event on social media – that way, if there is a pattern, the Police can direct resources to monitor an area.

Councillor D. Ellis asked whether there is any update regarding the expected move of the Police into Birchwood Fire Station, from Delenty Drive.

Sgt Gibbard said that this has been postponed in the short term, as the size of the room at the fire station is not large enough to ensure safe social distancing.

The Clerk informed Sgt Gibbard that some of the Town Council’s waste bins have recently been vandalised – one beyond repair.

Sgt Gibbard said that he would pass the information on to PCSO Bingham and PC Frith, so that they can monitor the areas whilst they are out on their bike patrols.

The Chair thanked Sgt Gibbard for attending and he left the meeting.

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

#### 004/20-21 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP (YHG) - UPDATE**

The Clerk updated Members on various issues that had been raised with / dealt with by YHG since the February meeting including:

The litter bin on the village green near to Ainscough Road and Whitworth Close is full and overflowing. YHG have been informed.

The Town Council operatives do not have a key to open it. They have undertaken a litter pick around the bin area and put a bag over it to discourage use. There is another bin close by which could be used.

The litter bin on Greenfinch Grove near Chatfield Drive also needs emptying. YHG have been informed.

The Clerk said that YHG's landscaping contractors are now out grass cutting. They are around six to seven weeks behind schedule. They are hoping to undertake two rounds of grass cuts per month in the YHG areas, up to September.

The Clerk reported that play surfaces of YHG play areas have now been jet washed.

We understand that YHG staff have been phoning some tenants to undertake welfare checks.

Fix360 have only been able to undertake essential works at the moment, such as gas checks in order to minimise any potential Coronavirus risks to YHG tenants and their own staff.

Letters have been sent to tenants of Whinchat Drive and Whitethroat Walk relating to flytipping.

Twice a week, on a Monday and a Friday until further notice, Fix360 will be monitoring the YHG estates and undertake flytipping removal. We are reporting incidents to WBC that we have been made aware of – for inclusion in their statistics.

Walkabouts, drop-in sessions and neighbourhood inspections have been postponed. They will be rearranged once it is safe to do so.

WBC has undertaken a lot of flytipping removal recently, including some from YHG areas.

#### 005/20-21 **GRASS CUTTING**

The Town Council is taking up Warrington Borough Council's grass cutting responsibilities in some of their residential areas (in the short term) in the spirit of partnership working arrangements. This will enable the Borough to undertake and concentrate on other services, due to the current unusual circumstances where staff resources are having to be deployed differently.

There are some areas where the Town Council cannot grass cut on Borough Council land, and we cannot cut on YHG owned land. These areas will be maintained by the respective landowner.

006/20-21 **DAMAGED WASTE BINS**

This weekend 2 bins were damaged one on the path between Old Warrington Road and Glover Road. The metal insert was damaged beyond repair so the bin has been removed, for now.

The bin near Strawberry and Campion Closes in Locking Stumps was also damaged. However, the maintenance team have managed to re-install the bin.

007/20-21 **CHATFIELD DRIVE DOUBLE YELLOW LINES**

The Clerk stated that she has asked if WBC can repaint stretches of the older sections of double yellow lines on Chatfield Drive that are very faded and broken in places. The deployment of the street sweeper along Chatfield Drive has also been raised with WBC.

008/20-21 **BELISHA BEACON**

In February 2020 it was reported that the Belisha Beacon outside the high school was not working and that WBC were awaiting some specialist parts in order for a repair to be made. This has been raised again with WBC.

WBC has issued an order for the work to be undertaken, as soon as the part has been received.

009/20-21 **DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE**

The Clerk reported that new directional sign for Thomas Risley Church and Locking Stumps Primary has been installed. The cost is being shared between the two organisations.

010/20-21 **ABANDONED TROLRIES**

The Clerk said that Trolleywise is still working and is collecting trolleys that they can see from the roads, and that have been reported to them.

Councillor Atkin said that he has been reporting more trolleys than ever. The implementation of the £1 coin locks has not made any difference. The coins can easily be retrieved by locking them to other trolleys, already abandoned!

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

The Clerk said that there are a lot of items just for noting, as the report covers new items since the February meeting. The March meeting had been postponed at very short notice due to lockdown, and the April meeting had been cancelled.

011/20-21 **WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL (WBC)**

- (a) Sent/received – various emails / online reports following contact from residents re: flytipping, damaged bollard on Admirals Square, blocked drains/flooding in a number of areas, lifted kerbstone causing damage to a resident's drive, etc.

The flytipping complaints include Silver Lane. We asked WBC if they could look through the bin bags for evidence. WBC said that as it is on a section of private land, there is nothing they can do.

- (b) Received – presentation slides/information from the Parish Liaison Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

- (c) Received – letter following a request for additional carriageway gullies on Warrington Road in an area of persistent flooding. There are no plans to undertake any improvements to carriageway drainage in 2020 due to work priorities. Warrington Road will be considered when prioritising work in future years.
- (d) Received – Notification that WBC has arranged for Code of Conduct Training to take place at Appleton Parish Hall, (potentially) on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 6pm. Further information will be circulated closer to the day. WBC has asked to be advised if any Members would like to attend. Cllr J. Ellis would like to attend if it goes ahead at some point in time.
- (e) Sent – email and photographs re: damage to the chicken wire on the board walks in the Walled Garden and other trip hazards. Our team did a temporary fix to make what they could safer.
- (f) Received – various statements from WBC re: COVID-19 in Warrington.
- (g) Received/sent – emails following a request from a local resident for the Forest Park and Risley Moss to be closed as, allegedly, people from outside of the area are using the parks. WBC asked for the resident to contact them directly regarding this matter. We advised the resident accordingly.
- (h) Received – email from Ben Doran. He left WBC, as of 27/03/2020. He sent a list of WBC contacts.
- (i) Received – notification that the Rights of Way Forum meeting, scheduled for 02/04/2020 was cancelled.
- (j) Received – some flytipping statistics from WBC.
- (k) Received – updated advice re: casual vacancies.
- (l) Received/sent – emails re: a request from a resident asking if some warning signage could be installed by the ‘pond’ near the fire station and the pond just off the footpath heading from the fire station towards Gorse Covert. We have contacted The Woodland Trust and WBC.

We are awaiting a reply from the Woodland Trust.

WBC has said that it is not the normal position to have signage around this type of pond, but in light of the enquiry it will be assessed again.

#### 012/20-21 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP (YHG)**

- (a) Sent/received – various emails re: flytipping, overgrown trees and shrubs, squirrels in a YHG property and sinking land (appears to be YHG’s) causing water to drain into a resident’s garden.
- (b) Received/sent – emails re: an unsecured, empty YHG property.
- (c) Received/sent – emails following a request from YHG for a comment from BTC regarding some of their coppicing work, for a YHG publication.

#### 013/20-21 **MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE**

- (a) Received – Various update/information emails from Warrington Voluntary Action.
- (b) Received/sent – emails following a complaint from a resident that details at Gorse Covert bus stops had not been changed to include additional days when the buses were not servicing Gorse Covert Road due to the roadworks; causing one resident to miss hospital appointments.

- (c) Received/sent – emails with a resident who had enquired about paid part-time work with BTC or voluntary litter picking events.
- (d) Received – Newsletter from the Information Commissioner’s Office – March 2020.
- (e) To note that the consultation re: Liverpool John Lennon Airport Airspace Change Proposal ended on 2th April 2020. Members had not wanted to make any comments.
- (f) Correspondence received from a resident regarding ‘destruction of habitat’ in relation to some shrub cutting work being undertaken by our team on Glover Road. A reply was sent explaining the process for undertaking work during the bird nesting season.
- (g) Received – Information re: a ‘call for evidence’ from The National Infrastructure Commission, for stakeholders to share ideas for transforming the rail landscape of the north alongside the East and West Midlands and help create a lasting legacy from the construction of HS2. This call ends on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020.
- (h) Received – Information from Cheshire & Warrington’s Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) re: Covid-19 Support for Businesses.
- (i) Received – Request from ‘powerforpeople.org.uk’ for BTC’s help with the Local Electricity Bill.

Members discussed the draft resolution that had been circulated. Councillor D. Ellis **proposed**, Councillor Nelson **seconded** and it was **unanimously agreed** that the Town Council supports the resolution.

**Action** Clerk’s office to send a letter to Charlotte Nichols, MP to ask her to support the Bill when it is read in Parliament (the reading was postponed due to the Government’s timetable being affected by the Coronavirus lockdown).

- (j) Received – from Birchwood Forum – Birchwood Newsletter April 2020.

014/20-21 **CHESHIRE POLICE**

- (a) Received – various neighbourhood alerts, including a letter from the Chief Constable, praising the public for its support in helping to tackle the spread of Coronavirus.
- (b) Received – letter from the Chief Constable giving an overview of the role of the Police in Cheshire during the ongoing national emergency concerning the Coronavirus epidemic.
- (c) Received – Police Reports for 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020 – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and for 13<sup>th</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020.
- (d) Received – PCC & Chief Constable Stakeholder Bulletin – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

015/20-21 **CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (ChALC), NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC), SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS (SLCC)**

- (a) Received – ChALC weekly e-bulletins with various attachments, details of training sessions, etc.
- (b) Sent/Received – Emails with Jackie Weaver from ChALC requesting guidance regarding the impact Covid-19 is having on the Council meetings, elections, etc.

- (c) Received - NALC Chief Executive Bulletins, Blogs and Newsletters. These include many updates and Legal Briefings relating to Coronavirus and the impact on Local Councils.
- (d) Received – SLCC – various News bulletins and details of Branch meetings, conferences, etc.

016/20-21 **CORONAVIRUS**

- (a) To note the receipt of numerous letters, emails, briefings, etc. from various sources about Coronavirus and how it might affect Local Councils and some services. Sources have included GOV.UK, NALC, ChALC, SLCC, WBC, SAS Daniels, Terrain, PKF Littlejohn LLP (our external auditor) and many other organisations that we are regularly in contact with and/or purchase items/services from.
- (b) To note that we signed up to the Public Health England website and have shared public health information, regarding Coronavirus, from them on our Facebook page, as they publish new resource materials.

017/20-21 **PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED**

Various LGC magazines & e-mail briefings, The Clerk – March 2020, Clerks & Councils Direct – March 2020

018/20-21 **EFFECTS OF CORONAVIRUS ‘LOCKDOWN’**

(a) **Meetings**

- (i) The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) came in to force on 4th April 2020. The 2020 Regulations enable local Councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May 2021. They also remove the requirement to hold an annual (town) meeting of electors. The 2020 Regulations apply to local Council meetings, committee as well as sub-committee meetings in England.

Documents which cover the specifics of these regulations were copied to Members in their papers.

(ii) **Annual Town Meeting**

Members were asked to consider whether this meeting should be rearranged to take place in June, or whether, using the power given in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, s.4 (1b) (the Regulations) the meeting should be cancelled for this year.

Members discussed the current difficulties surrounding meetings.

Although the Town Council is holding online meetings in a format that is accessible by the general public, the Annual Town Meeting is supposed to be open to all residents; some of whom may not have access to technology. It should legally be held between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June.

Councillor Atkin felt that due to the current circumstances, it would be better to cancel it this year.

Councillor D. Ellis said that it would be a good opportunity to hold it online for people to embrace the new opportunity to attend remotely.

Councillor J. Ellis stated that having an alternative format does not mean that more people will engage.

Councillor Nelson said that she thinks the meeting should be delayed, but that we could try to make online meetings a positive thing by encouraging people to join meetings online, rather than having to attend in person, to see what the Council does.

Councillor Breslin commented that the general public does not seem to have the appetite at the moment to be engaged with Local Councils or local politics.

Councillor D. Ellis asked, if there is no Annual Town Meeting, will there still be a Chair's Report?

The Chair suggested that there could be an interim report issued.

Councillor Nelson agreed and said that it would be published on our website.

Councillor Reeves suggested that the Town Council should make a statement regarding the Annual Town Meeting. He said that, if the situation changes, perhaps we could hold the meeting then,

The Clerk stated that she would double check if, given the current situation, there is still a time constraint for the holding of Annual Town Meetings, as it should normally be held between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June.

**Action** Clerk's office to make enquiries to confirm whether it is legal, in the current situation, to hold the Annual Town Meeting outside of the normal timeframe.

Councillor Breslin said that he believes it should be held if and when the holding of meetings returns to the normal face to face format.

Following further discussion, the Chair **proposed** that the meeting should be postponed, until there is a significant change in circumstances and the Council resolves at that stage to hold the meeting (as long as it is confirmed that the Annual Town Meeting can be held outside of the usual time frame). This was **seconded** by Councillor Atkin and **unanimously resolved** by Members present.

(iii) **Annual Council Meeting**

Members were asked to note that under the Regulations, s.6 (c) the requirement to hold this meeting has been repealed and that s. 4 (2) allows for the Chair and Vice Chair to continue in their roles '*until the next annual meeting of the authority or until such time as that authority may determine.*'

Members were asked to consider when the Town Council wishes to hold the Annual Council meeting.

The Chair stated that he is willing to continue in position, if that is what Members wish.

The Vice Chair confirmed that he is also happy to remain in position.

Councillor Bowden (although not able to attend tonight's meeting) is happy to remain as Leader of the Council, if Members wish.

The Clerk confirmed that the Chair and Vice Chair can hold a two-year term of office. She asked if Members wish the Committee and Sub-Committee membership to remain the same for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Atkin said that he is happy for the current appointments to remain as they are at present. This was agreed by the other Members present.

Councillor Atkin **proposed** that the Annual Council meeting be postponed, at least until there is a significant change in circumstances and then only if the Council resolves at that stage to hold the meeting. This was **seconded** by Councillor Breslin and **unanimously resolved** by Members present.

(b) **Elections**

Received - The Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

These Regulations (“the 2020 Regulations”) came in to force on 7 April 2020. They implement a power that s.61 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 gave the Secretary of State. They ban Local Council by-elections in England until 6 May 2021 as well as referenda for matters such as community governance reviews and neighbourhood plans. The 2020 Regulations predominantly apply to England. In Wales, they are relevant only to police and crime commissioner by-elections.

NALC’s Legal Briefing L03-20 which cover the specifics of these regulations were copied to Members in their papers.

019/20-21 **MEMBERS’ REFERRALS MADE VIA THE CLERK PRIOR TO THE MEETING FOR CONSIDERATION AT THIS COUNCIL MEETING**

Councillor D. Ellis submitted the following proposal to the May meeting of Birchwood Town Council:

**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.**

Councillor D. Ellis had circulated a document to Members relating to his proposal prior to the meeting:

*“The current restrictions in place due to COVID-19 have reinforced the enormous difference to resident comfort, safety and cleaner air that the drastically reduced traffic levels in Locking Stumps have made.*

*Originally, the three villages of Birchwood were designed to be purely residential traffic areas, but in the case of Locking Stumps, this didn’t happen due to the increasing use of Locking Stumps Lane and Lords Lane as a rush hour rat-run into and out of Birchwood, taking traffic to an increasingly problematic level for local residents , not only on these streets, but also for the whole of Locking Stumps due to the inclusion of Glover Road as a part of this cut through. The traffic volumes would appear to be due in the main to commuter traffic travelling to Birchwood Park and the other business areas of Birchwood.*

*Studies carried out on Locking Stumps Lane have shown that around 1000 vehicles use the “shortcut” in each of the morning and afternoon rush hours coming from and to Croft. There is an even greater number of vehicles from the south side. Both directions then pass down Lords Lane and Glover Road, making these roads less safe especially for primary school pupils many of whom have to cross Glover Road as it bisects the village.*

*Traffic lights were installed at Locking Stumps post office some years ago and helped to improve safety, but there have been increasing examples of near misses and one known example of a collision of a car with a Birchwood High School pupil who was lucky to come out of it with nothing more than bruises. On Locking Stumps Lane there have been a number of quite serious accidents at the junction with Lords Lane, one of these careering through a resident's hedge and demolishing his conservatory.*

*As well as this, the high traffic density has led to increasing numbers of bicycles riding on pavements where several pedestrians have been knocked down, including one very elderly woman. These roads are also on a bus route, and Locking Stumps Lane is quite narrow in places with very poor street lighting in places due to these being obstructed by trees. This leads to problems when a wide vehicle meets a bus; one often has to mount the kerb to pass the other.*

*There are several considerations to be made in this situation:*

- 1. Health of residents and the impact of standing traffic on both Lords Lane and Locking Stumps Lane due to diesel/petrol emissions*
- 2. Safety of pedestrians and cyclists, especially children, and also the elderly who are at greater risk of breaking a hip with consequent long recuperation and in many cases risk of fatality.*
- 3. Both Birchwood and Warrington's climate emergency declarations which aim to reduce traffic and encourage residents to walk or cycle.*

*There is plenty of evidence which suggests that traffic restriction could have a significant impact on total volume of vehicles with overall reductions of over 10% being typical. Over the past three years, there have been very significant improvements made to traffic flows at both College Place and at the "dogbone" roundabout at the junction of Birchwood Park Avenue and Birchwood Way. When rat-runs are dealt with, there are often fears that traffic on local major roads will become much more congested, but the decrease in overall traffic combined with the road flow improvements already implemented would be expected to more than counteract this.*

*It is unfortunate that the improvements made have not led to a reduction in rat-running. People use these routes due to congestion, but once the habit has been created, it is often difficult to change the habit without appropriate action being taken.*

*As well as the above, local residents tell me that the availability of the bus route on Locking Stumps Lane is not especially interesting to them as they could easily catch the bus on Glover Road.*

*The recent Warrington Central 6 study has also shown that what residents want there is a better environment with fewer cars using their streets, and this will be the case in many areas of the town, Locking Stumps being no exception.*

*Low-traffic neighbourhoods can be life-changing for the residents who live in them. Since neighbourhood improvements were put into place in Walthamstow Village in 2015, people are walking and cycling more, children play out, air pollution has improved and importantly, life expectancy has also increased. This increase in walking/cycling is exactly what we have seen locally throughout Birchwood, but especially in Locking Stumps, during the current pandemic.*

*Work carried out which brought together experiences from 70 case studies of road space reallocation from general traffic, across 11 countries, with opinions from 200 transport professionals has shown that traffic does not behave like water moving through pipes, finding an easier path as another narrows. Instead it is a force of human choice, driven by people making all sorts of different decisions when driving conditions change.*

*In one study, for example, people changed their mode of travel, chose alternative destinations, or the frequency of their journey, consolidated trips, took up car sharing or did not make the journey at all. In half of the case studies, over 11% of the vehicles which were previously using the road or the area where road space for traffic was reduced, could not be found in the surrounding area afterwards. This is significant in reducing the impact of vehicular emissions on climate change. (Sally Cairns, Carmen Hass-Klau, and Phil Goodwin, 1998)*

*What is really encouraging, is that one of the most significant behaviour changes following implementation of low-traffic neighbourhoods has been a shift to more walking and cycling. Just one year after the implementation of schemes in Outer London, including Waltham Forest, residents were walking 32 minutes and cycling on average 9 minutes more per week. One of the authors of The University of Westminster's study said, "new infrastructure often takes some time to have an effect on active travel, but in this case positive results were seen after only one year."*

*This demonstrates that if councils improve the conditions for walking and cycling (and make driving just a little more inconvenient), people take the 'bait' very quickly. And as time goes on, as active travel becomes embedded in lifestyles, more will follow leading to long-term change over an entire area.*

*The best way of achieving a low traffic neighbourhood in the location in question will probably require a mix of actions, but will almost certainly include a mix of traffic flow restrictions such as chicanes and speed bumps.*

*It should probably clearly designate the entry points to Locking Stumps with signage (**Low Traffic Residential Zone**) and possibly have raised bumps at the entry points (Lords Lane, and both ends of Glover Road.) It is also worth considering designating the whole zone as 20 mph. Glover Road was designed to be a local feeder road to each estate, and there is no real reason why traffic should not be restricted to 20 mph. It would make cycling much safer. It may also be worth looking at designating a proper cycle lane. Another option that could be included would be a change of traffic to one way on Lords Lane. These are merely suggestions, and it is left to WBC to consider the objectives and decide on the best way of achieving them."*

Councillor D. Ellis presented his document to Members.

Councillor Atkin said that the proposals are a good idea and that he is supportive of moving traffic onto the major routes, which are designed for the higher volumes of vehicles. However, there is a need to be realistic about the level of funding that would be required for any transport improvements. He added that these proposals may be something that need to be included in the Borough Council's next transport plan.

Councillor Reeves stated that he also supports the proposals, but that any local changes would also have to consider residents' thoughts, especially regarding any re-routing of traffic (such as making Lords Lane a one-way system).

Councillor D. Ellis said that his preference would be for chicanes to be installed, which would make it more 'inconvenient' for cars to use the route. He added that, ultimately, it is Warrington Borough Council's decision, as their Traffic Department has the expertise and experience, regarding what measures would work best in the area.

Councillor D. Ellis noted that if any implementation of traffic calming measures could be put in place soon, it would be easier to undertake, due to the current lower levels of traffic.

Following further discussions Councillor Reeves asked Members if it was the Town Council's wish for Councillor D. Ellis' proposal to be sent on to Warrington Borough Council for their consideration, along with the document that he had prepared:

This was **unanimously resolved** by those Members present.

**Action** Clerk's office to contact the Borough Council regarding the above proposal, including the document prepared by Councillor D. Ellis.

020/20-21 **CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR COMMENT AND OBSERVATION AND OTHER RELATED PLANNING ISSUES**

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

In light of the ongoing situation regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) and the current guidance from the government, the Development Management Committee scheduled for 25 March 2020 was cancelled.

The DMC scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020 has one item of specific relevance to Birchwood on the main agenda for consideration – Application 2019/36068 24 Patterson Close, WA3 6QR – proposed two storey side extension and single storey rear extension, with a Planning Officer Recommendation for approval.

(b) **Enforcement Cases**

Lists of enforcement cases recently opened/closed have been received; including ENF/20/07850 – an ongoing issue re: an address in Oakwood which had already been given enforcement guidance, but the guidance, relating to unauthorised vehicle repairs at the property, has allegedly been breached. We have also received additional complaints regarding the same address, which have been forwarded to WBC. We have sent/received several emails between the office, complainants and the Planning Officer dealing with the case.

(c) **Planning Decisions**

(i) Application No. 2019/36175 Dewhurst Road, WA3 7QS – proposed telecommunications upgrade. Proposed phase 7 monopole C/W wraparound cabinet at base and associated works. **Approved with conditions** – which included consideration of the request sent by BTC, '*. . . to ensure that works undertaken within the highway are carried out at an appropriate time to ensure minimum disruption to the highway network.*'

(ii) Application No. 2020/36456 Abbey Court, Ainscough Road, WA3 7PW. Class T Prior Approval – proposed change of use from nursing home for elderly people (Class C2/C2A) to a residential school for children with learning disabilities. **Prior approval**

- (iii) Application No. 2019/35300 687 Warrington Road, WA3 6AY. Proposed change of use from Public House A4 to offices B1 including external alterations. **Approved with conditions**
- (iv) Application No. 2020/36377 Eastern edge of Birchwood Park, plots 107, 300, 501-502, 611-612, 701-702 and Quadrant, WA3 6AE. Proposed discharge of condition 12 (noise and vibration) from original application 2015/26044. **Partially discharged**
- (v) Application No. 2020/36374 18 Cadshaw Close, Birchwood, WA3 7LR. Section 192 Certificate – Proposed single storey rear extension. **Not to issue a Certificate of Lawful Use or Development** (as the size of the application exceeded permitted development rights).
- (vi) Application No. 2020/36414 130, Birchwood Boulevard, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7QH. Proposed minor alterations including new entrance door, the removal of the entrance canopy, modifying a window at ground floor to create a door to the outside for access to that amenity, the provision of a smoking shelter, provision of additional cycle storage with e-bike charging points, provision of electric charging points at existing parking bays, installation of an external gate within the building perimeter fence on the south east to allow a new path and landscape improvements to the open area between the building and Birchwood Boulevard, additional lighting to the proposed muster points in the car park and modification of the landscape to accommodate parking modifications. **Approved with conditions**
- (vii) Application No. 2020/36476 McDonald's Restaurant, Birchwood Shopping Centre, WA3 7PQ. Proposed advertisement consent for 3 x digital free-standing signs and 1 x digital booth screen (internally illuminated). **Approved with conditions**

(d) **Planning Applications**

*All plans can be viewed via:*

[http://www.warrington.gov.uk/home/transport\\_planning\\_and\\_environment/Planning/Se-arch\\_planning\\_applications/](http://www.warrington.gov.uk/home/transport_planning_and_environment/Planning/Se-arch_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. 2020/36647 3 Delenty Drive, Birchwood, WA3 6AN. Proposed discharge of Condition 9 (method statement) Condition 10 (surface water drainage) Condition 11 (foul and surface water) Condition 12 (boundary treatments) Condition 13 (tree protection scheme) and Condition 14 (landscaping plan) on previously approved application 2019/34700 (residential development).
- (ii) Application No. 2020/36606 3 Falstone Close, Birchwood, WA3 6SU. Proposed installation of step lift and associated building works.
- (iii) Application No. 2020/36369 65 Ringwood Close, Birchwood, WA3 6TQ. Section 192 Certificate – proposed single storey rear extension max 3.2m deep, eaves less than 3m high, ridge less than 4m high and garage conversion.
- (iv) Application No. 2020/36662 Land North of Cavendish Avenue, Birchwood Park. Proposed formation of temporary car park

- (v) Application No. 2020/36718 Area of vacant land located to adjacent , Daten Avenue, WA3 6YN. Proposed Discharge of Condition 10(Land Contamination) on application 2015/26044(Demolition of some existing buildings and erection of new buildings for a combination of offices (B1); light and general industrial (B1/B2); warehousing development (B8) and ancillary retail/ financial & professional services/ non-residential institutions/ assembly and leisure (A1/A2/D1/D2) floor space.)
- (vi) Application No. 2020/36812 Unit 10 Benson Road, Birchwood Shopping Centre, WA3 7PQ. Proposed change of use from A1 (retail) to D1 (orthodontic service).
- (vii) Application No. 2020/36579 Site of Former Foxwood School, Chatfield Drive, Birchwood, WA3 6QW. Proposed construction of 69 dwellings for private rent and private affordable rent (32, two storey houses and 37 apartments in two blocks), car parking, landscaping and associated works.

As this is time sensitive, following an email conversation with Councillors, an agreed, detailed response has been sent from the Town Council querying several aspects of the application, specifically regarding a number of details which appear to differ significantly from information we received during a presentation given to the Town Council by a representative of the developer.

Councillors and Officers have also been contacted by a local resident raising concerns about amended plans and how it might now lead to overshadowing of their property; WBC has been asked to consider the resident's concerns during their deliberations.

As an 'aside' to this, Councillor D. Ellis commented that several years ago, it was suggested that this development would help to benefit Birchwood as it was linked to proposals for the redevelopment of part of the Tennis and Leisure Centre to create a Neighbourhood Hub. Councillor D. Ellis asked if this proposal is still active, as we have not heard anything about it for a very long time.

- (viii) Application No. 2020/36696 Cedarwood, 2 Kelvin Close, Birchwood, WA3 7PB. Proposed first floor extension to existing offices.
- (ix) Application No. 2020/36856 69 Strawberry Close, Birchwood, WA3 7NT. Proposed single storey extension to side.

*Councillor Reeves has declared an interest regarding this application as the applicant is a former work colleague and friend.*

- (x) Application No. 2020/36647 3 Delenty Drive, Birchwood, WA3 6AN. Proposed discharge of Condition 9 (method statement) Condition 10 (surface water drainage) Condition 11 (foul and surface water) Condition 12 (boundary treatments) Condition 13 (tree protection scheme) and Condition 14 (landscaping plan) on previously approved application 2019/34700 (residential development).
- (xii) Application No. 2020/36606 3 Falstone Close, Birchwood, WA3 6SU. Proposed installation of step lift and associated building works.
- (xiii) Application No. 2020/36369 65 Ringwood Close, Birchwood, WA3 6TQ. Section 192 Certificate – proposed single storey rear extension max 3.2m deep, eaves less than 3m high, ridge less than 4m high and garage conversion.

- (xiv) Application No. 2020/36915 6 Eccleston Close, Birchwood, WA3 7NL. Proposed first floor extension to front, and garage conversion.
- (xv) Application No.2020/36968 Car Parking areas adjacent to buildings 1 and 2 Kelvin Close, Birchwood, WA3 7PB. Outline planning (major) including access, appearance, layout and scale with landscaping reserved – proposed erection of a multi-storey car park, amendments to surface level parking and associated works.

The Clerk said that this had come in as a late paper. She asked Members if they wished information regarding this application to be put on our Facebook page. We do not know how far the distance for the required notification to residents' addresses will reach to; but we do know that for previous applications in the general area, some residents of Warrington Road, Risley, and Cross Lane South have wanted to make comments.

Members agreed that the application should be published on our Facebook page.

**Action** Clerk's office to publish the application on our Facebook page.

(e) **Update - Planning Appeal**

Appeal Ref: APP/M0655/W/20/3245628 Heathfield House, Delenty Drive, Birchwood, WA3 6AP.

*Application to vary Condition 2 to replace plan 77/12/BP with 77/12/BP1 to amend approved car park to 14 spaces; Condition 3 to increase the number of children to 56 children. There shall be no more than 56 children at the Nursery at any one time. Following Planning Appeal APP/M065/A/13/2209344 and Planning Refusal 2013/22163.*

The Clerk stated that she checked the planning inspectorate website earlier today. There is no update regarding the outcome of the appeal.

021/20-21 **STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

Councillor D. Ellis stated that there are currently no further updates re: the 2016 – 2020 Birchwood Town Council Strategy and Action Plan.

**This part of the meeting concluded at 7.15 pm.**