

**MINUTES OF THE BIRCHWOOD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**HELD AT PARKERS FARM, DELENTY DRIVE**  
**ON TUESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2023, 6.00 PM**

**The purpose of the Annual Town Meeting is to comply with the Local Government Act 1972.**

Present: Chair – Councillor David Ellis  
Clerk – Fiona McDonald  
RFO/Deputy Clerk – Clare Caddock  
Administrative Assistant – Hannah Thomas

10 residents

Apologies: Mr. R. Bowden (attending WBC Cabinet Meeting).

036/23-24 **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS 2022**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held at Parker’s Farm, Delenty Drive on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 had previously been presented at the June 2022 Town Council meeting and signed as a correct record.

037/23-24 **OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The Chair, Councillor Ellis, opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

Councillor Ellis presented his Chair’s report for 2022/2023 and thanked everyone for their hard work over the last year.

038/23-24 **CHAIR’S ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023 – COUNCILLOR ELLIS**

It has been an incredible 12 months for the Town Council, and I would like to thank everyone in Birchwood who has contributed to supporting our community whether as part of an organised group or as an individual. Volunteers are very important in bringing activities and services to our community and the Town Council is very grateful for all your efforts. Without you, Birchwood would be very much the poorer.

During my tenure, the community celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II which was the first time in British history that a Monarch had achieved 70 years on the throne. Sadly, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II passed away on 8th September 2022 and the country mourned her passing. Several months later, on Saturday 6th May 2023, the community celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla with a number of local celebratory events.

The annual Birchwood Carnival, which is supported by the Town Council and other local organisations, is to be held on Sunday 11th June, and will be following the theme of the Coronation. Last year’s event attracted possibly the biggest turnout in its history. The weather was glorious, and I think we were all thankful for life returning to some sort of normality.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some key successes during the year.

The play area in Locking Stumps has undergone a facelift; some new equipment has been installed and some of the older equipment has been refurbished. The Town Council worked in partnership with Warrington Borough Council to fund and implement this much needed

improvement to the playground, and it has been nice to see children taking advantage of the new facilities.

We have also been working with the Borough Council on an appropriate memorial to acknowledge the contribution and sacrifice made by those who worked at the Royal Ordnance Factory, Risley during the Second World War.

The factory itself was like a self-sufficient town, with around 1800 buildings, road and railway networks, canteens, workshops, its own police and fire services and a workforce average of 22,000, most of whom were female.

The memorial and a panel with some historical information is to be installed within Birchwood Forest Park in the next month or so. We hope to add some further information boards in the future in other locations which could form the basis of a Birchwood Heritage Trail.

Congratulations should go to Locking Stumps Primary School which was a Nisa #ChairsForChats winner and was subsequently awarded £500 to purchase a bench.

As the land in Birchwood is owned by multiple landowners, the Town Council is working in partnership with the Primary School to find a suitable location for the bench and it will provide the balance of the funding required for installation.

We are in the process of identifying some other suitable locations within Birchwood to site benches.

Speeding traffic has been highlighted as an issue of great concern to the local community. A short survey was carried out to identify the locations which were felt by residents to be of most concern, and we have also worked with our PCSO who carries out radar speed monitoring for advice. As a result, Councillors have resolved to purchase and install a number of Speed Indicator Devices in an effort to raise awareness and tackle this problem. We expect to install the first two devices in the next few months.

The Council has also worked with Your Housing Group and Warrington Borough Council to replace the unsightly concrete bollards which were installed around the perimeter of the Village Green and Powell Avenue with something fit for purpose and more aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

As a result, Your Housing Group installed metal barrier fencing and Warrington Borough Council have put together a scheme for replacement of the concrete bollards located on Powell Avenue.

The Council has been pushing for some refurbishment and general maintenance work to be carried out on the old railway bridge at Birchwood Station. This is a public right of way which was in a state of disrepair and had suffered from significant vandalism. Earlier this year, Warrington Borough Council undertook work to improve the footbridge and the visual appearance of the bridge.

The Town Council has provided funding towards the cost of the annual Service of Remembrance which is organised by Birchwood Lions and it has also awarded funding to a local tots group to purchase some sensory play equipment.

There have been a number of controversial planning applications, the most recent being the application for the redevelopment of the Trident Estate which has generated much local opposition.

The Town Council is supporting residents in their objections and will attend the Development Management Committee Meeting when the date is known.

Day to day, the Town Council Maintenance Team and Officers have been continuing to support the local community, assisting residents with queries and providing services to keep the local area clean and tidy.

The maintenance team remove at least two tipper loads of waste from the streets of Birchwood each week as well as carrying out many other duties such as gritting, removing flytipping, mowing, hedgecutting, maintaining planters, removing graffiti, scraping back footpath edges, reporting abandoned shopping trolleys and visually checking several local play areas each day. This list is not exhaustive as there are many other things that crop up on an ad hoc basis.

Last year, we purchased two new, fully electric Maxus EDeliver3 vans. While these were somewhat more expensive than diesel equivalents, they have shown significant benefits in terms of very much reduced fuel costs, and they lend themselves very well to the type of work which they are used for. As a result, they have enabled us to make a big difference to our carbon dioxide emissions as a council and set us well on our way towards our net zero target for 2030.

Councillors have facilitated meetings with Your Housing Group and Warrington Borough Council to tackle areas of concern such as street lighting and have met with the Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss local Policing issues. They have also met with Livewire, the Police and Birchwood Shopping Centre to discuss how to deal with parking issues created on event days.

It has been a busy twelve months and I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Chair of the Town Council. It is my privilege to represent the residents of Birchwood, but I could not do it alone.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Town Council team and my fellow Councillors for their hard work and support. It is very much a team effort for which I am very appreciative, and I would like to wish my successor every success.

*Cllr David Ellis,  
Chair, Birchwood Town Council 2022-23*

039/23-24

## **COMMUNITY ISSUES**

The Chair invited questions or comments from residents, regarding issues that they would like the Town Council to consider/represent the community on over the next municipal year.

### **(a) Cutting of Grass Verges**

Mr Reeves raised concerns regarding the over-cutting of grass around Birchwood. He said that it should be 'No Mow May', and a lot of the areas the council appears to cutting are areas which should potentially be left to re-wild. He stated that when he raised this with WBC they told him that the land was under the ownership of The Woodland Trust.

The Clerk communicated the ownership of various grassed areas in Birchwood.

The Chair stated that there is some inconsistency in the mowing and agrees that areas which residents would like to be maintained regularly are not being, and areas which should be left to re-wild are often mowed.

**(b) Maintenance of ivy on Chaffinch Close**

Mrs Sheridan reported that ivy has been removed in Chaffinch Close by Your Housing Group's contractors and has been left in the street rather than being removed. Mrs Sheridan and other residents have had to brush the ivy up themselves, but it is still a problem. She asked who is responsible for tidying up.

The Chair informed Mrs Sheridan that YHG has the responsibility to resolve the issue.

**(c) Parking Issues in Oakwood**

Mr Dempsey queried if additional parking spaces could be made available in Chatfield. He stated that there are lots of grass verges that could be used for parking. He explained that in streets such as Mallard Lane, the street parking is so bad that it could be hard for emergency vehicles to get through. He also commented that vehicles park on the verges in Leatham Close sometimes damaging them.

The Chair stated that the development of additional parking spaces would be down to YHG and would need planning permission. There would also be a significant cost involved.

Another resident commented that YHG made additional parking spaces in Talbot Close several years ago and it was very successful and another resident said he had asked about additional spaces in Teal Grove and said that he believes there is a query regarding land and ownership of the parking spaces.

Mr Dempsey mentioned that he has seen notices placed on vehicles that are double parked or parked in a way that makes it hard for an emergency vehicle to get through and wondered if this is something that could be done.

The Chair suggested that the Town Council could ask the local PCSO for advice regarding this matter.

The Chair also mentioned that the car rental scheme, 'Co-Wheels', is slowly being introduced in Warrington.

**(d) Electric Vehicle Charge Points**

Mr Dempsey suggested that it might be a good idea to install some more electric vehicle charging points in Oakwood.

The Chair stated that this is something WBC hopes will be accomplished in time but the cost of doing so is high.

(e) **Working with WBC**

Mr Atkin asked if more could be done to improve the partnership working relationship with WBC. He stated that this matter was brought up last year and does not seem to have improved since then. He mentioned that residents feel they are not getting value for money regarding payment of the WBC portion of their Council Tax.

The Chair stated that this was something BTC have been actively trying to work on and commented that WBC had undertaken more environmental work in Birchwood recently including cutting hedgerows. He also suggested we write to David Boyer and invite him to a future meeting of the Town Council to discuss these issues.

(f) **Parking Around Schools**

The Chair commented that parking around all three primary schools in Birchwood is continuing to be dangerous at school opening and closing times. He reported that he has written to the PCSO regarding the matter and hopes the PCSO will be able to visit the schools to resolve this problem.

Mr Reeves stated that a 'Walking Bus', where children met in the Forest Park and walked to school together, was once used to help make it easier and for children to walk to school.

Mr Evans commented that there are a number of designated 'safe routes to school' in Birchwood.

Another resident suggested that the schools could consider implementing an incentive scheme that would encourage both children and parents to walk or cycle to school.

The Chair said he will raise these points, initially, with the Headteacher at Locking Stumps Primary School.

As there were no other comments or queries from residents, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

***The meeting concluded at 6.35 pm.***