

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE, DELENTY DRIVE, RISLEY ON
TUESDAY 25th MAY 2010**

PRESENT: Chair – Councillor Terry Hearldon
Clerk – Fiona McDonald
Business and Finance Officer – Gary Crowe
Deputy Clerk – Clare Caddock

7 Residents

1. Opening of the Meeting

The Chair, Councillor T. Hearldon opened the meeting at 6.30 pm and reported on the local activities of the Town Council during the 2009/2010 municipal year.

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

2. Minutes of Proceedings

The Clerk reminded Members that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on the 26th May 2009 had been presented at the June 2009 Town Council meeting and signed as a correct record.

Copies of the Chair's Annual Report for 2009/2010 were available for anyone present who wished to see a copy.

This report will be published in the Summer 2010 issue of Birchwood Community News, delivered to all residents.

3. Chair's Report 2009/2010

The Chair welcomed residents to the meeting and reported as follows:

Message from the Chair

The past 12 months have been hard, financially speaking, for many people and businesses and the Town Council is no different. We have had to make some tough decisions during the last financial year in order to achieve a 0% increase in our annual precept, whilst still providing our residents with a good, value for money service. We managed to achieve this through good, solid budgeting and business practice. In fact, the Birchwood element of the Council Tax for a 'band D' property went down from £89.99 per annum to £89.75 per annum.

You may have noticed fewer Town Council Maintenance Staff around the area, this was due to the retirement of Mr Malcolm Williams, who had been with us for about 10 years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Malcolm on behalf of the Town Council and the community for all his hard work over the past decade and wish him well for a long, health and happy retirement.

This gave the Town Council time to reflect and we thought it prudent to wait a little while before replacing Malcolm to allow us to evaluate the needs of the Town Council and the community. After much deliberation we believe that a full time person is required to enable us to carry out the many tasks that we do and the vacancy will be advertised in the magazine.

During the summer of 2009 we had a wonderful display of wildflowers which brought with it many accolades from the local community and visitors to the area. We were so pleased with the results that the scheme will continue this year, although we have made a few minor changes. We hope that the weather is kind to us as we need a good mix of sunshine and rain for the seeds to flourish.

Unfortunately, we couldn't find anywhere suitable in Locking Stumps and Risley for a wildflower meadow so a number of wooden planters were installed. They have been planted with spring bulbs and perennials and have given residents and visitors to the area a burst of colour as they drive along Warrington Road in Risley.

The Oakwood Gate Walled Garden Rejuvenation project is gathering pace, and applications for funding are in the process of being put together with a view to approaching a couple of national funding bodies to support the project financially. As a result of the community consultation, the space is to be opened by way of tree thinning which will bring more light into the garden which is vital to the success of any gardening project. The overgrowth will be removed and a sensory themed garden will take its place using herbs, wildflowers, some smaller trees, perfumed, colourful and architectural plants. Any plants currently in the garden that can be retained will be.

In February all of the local Primary Schools, including Fox Wood, were treated to a show presented by a company called 'Mad Science'. This was a science show aimed predominantly at Key Stages 1 and 2 with the aim of enhancing learning in a visual, interactive way. The shows were funded by Birchwood Town Council in partnership with Frontis Homes and were well received by the children.

Continuing with the Partnership theme, I am pleased to report that Birchwood Town Council, Frontis Homes and Warrington Borough Council have been able to secure 'Playbuilder' funding which will enable phase 2 of the play area at Oakwood Local Park to be built. This new phase is to encourage outdoor play for slightly older children up to around 14 years of age.

The Town Council has also made changes to the format of 'Birchwood in Bloom'. This year the competition had to be entered. Gardens were judged during early July and there will be a presentation evening held later in the year when this year's winners will be announced.

Councillors have also been working tirelessly to fight the staffing changes proposed for the Fire Station but unfortunately the Fire Authority decided to change staffing cover at Birchwood Fire Station from a full time station to a 12 hour day shift, with the hours between 7pm and 7am being covered by a retained crew, who would be on call either at home or work locally. At the time of going to press Councillors continue to seek advice as to whether they should take this matter to judicial review because they do not believe the communities of Warrington East were consulted adequately.

The Town Council continues to work with and on behalf of residents on many issues such as parking, potholes, speeding motorists, abandoned shopping trolleys etc. We also continue to work with numerous local organisations such as Frontis Homes, Warrington Borough Council, the Police and local businesses in order to address the concerns of local people and to enable us to work proactively to deliver an excellent service to our residents.

We will also have to make some difficult decisions with regards to one of the other services that we offer, namely the bulky waste collection service. As you may be aware, the Biffa site is due to cease taking waste from October and so the Town Council will have had to look at alternatives. Your Councillors are reluctant to stop this service altogether as they believe it may

have a negative impact on the area and so a number of options are being explored. However, one thing is certain and that is that the format of the current service will have to change.

Looking forward, the Town Council is to look at providing more environmental works within the community which will involve investing in some essential equipment. This will enable us to tackle more overgrowth as we can then dispose of the huge volume of green waste more easily.

You may not have seen a great deal of hedgecutting recently. This is because we are not permitted to carry out any work of this nature during the nesting season. However, once this is over we shall be out and about once again tackling this work.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my year as Chair of Birchwood Town Council and I am proud of the work that we do and the service that the Town Council offers to its residents. It is a service that no other Parish Council in Warrington provides and it is something which sets us apart. We all take a great pride in the community we serve and we strive for excellence.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Staff of Birchwood Town Council and my fellow Members for their support and I would like to wish my successor every success during their year of office.

Cllr Terry Hearldon
Chair, Birchwood Town Council
2009/2010

4. Community Issues

Allotments

Resident, Mr. Fitzsimmons, stated that he would like to see allotments provided in Birchwood by the Borough Council.

All the other residents present said that they agreed with this and they requested that the Borough Council be asked, on their behalf, to consider providing allotments or mini allotments in Birchwood for Birchwood residents.

It was suggested that one possible area of land that might be suitable would be the field at the back of the site where Oliver Plunketts School used to stand on Admirals Road in Oakwood.

The Clerk said that she had received some information from Esstta Hayes, Co-ordinator of the Birchwood Partnership, saying that MEPC had also been considering the possibility of having allotments on some of their land, but that this proposal is still at a very early stage.

Action

Clerk's office to write to the Borough Council asking that they consider, on behalf of those residents present, providing allotments or mini allotments in Birchwood.

The Meeting concluded at 6.50 pm.