

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL**  
**HELD AT PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE, DELENTY DRIVE, RISLEY ON**  
**TUESDAY 15th MAY 2012**

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

**10 Residents**

**1. Opening of the Meeting**

The Chair, Councillor Bowden opened the meeting at 6.30 pm and reported on the local activities of the Town Council during the 2011/2012 municipal year.

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

**2. Minutes of Proceedings**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2011 had previously been presented at the June 2011 Town Council meeting and signed as a correct record.

Copies of the Chair's Annual Report for 2011/2012 were available for anyone present who wished to see a copy.

This report will be published in the next issue of Birchwood Community News, delivered to all residents and on the Town Council's website.

**3. Chair's Report 2011/2012 – Councillor Bowden**

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

**Chair's Annual Report 2011-2012**

It seems like only yesterday that I was elected Chair of the Town Council. Apparently "time flies by when you are having fun" - and I must say that I have thoroughly enjoyed representing the people of Birchwood at various events throughout the year. More importantly, I have relished the challenge of continuing with the Council's ongoing initiatives whilst also starting on a number of important new projects for Birchwood.

A subject that remains close to the heart of residents is the leisure and recreation facilities available within Birchwood. One of my priorities this year was to look at our children's play areas, particularly those within Birchwood Forest Park, some of which have seen better days. In the past few months, we have been working with Warrington Borough Council and an equipment supplier to look at what might be possible. We will shortly be going out to consultation with our local community to gather their thoughts on our outline plans.

We have been looking to refurbish the existing equipment near to the Rangers Hut, as well as bringing in new equipment to cater for a wider age range. We are also looking at the installation of informal exercise equipment that people of all ages can access freely. Hopefully you will have noticed that the informal kick-about area has been rejuvenated recently and we aim to achieve the same with the skateboard park with the help of some external funding.

One of the key roles for the Town Council is to support residents with their issues and concerns. I am pleased that our regular contact with Warrington Borough Council resulted in the resurfacing of Birchwood Way in the early spring.

Residents across Birchwood remain rightly concerned about road safety and we have campaigned successfully for key areas to be addressed by the Borough Council. After much discussion and investigation, the speed limit on Birchwood Park Avenue has now been reduced to 50mph. The vehicle activated speed sign and speed camera equipment continues to be regularly deployed by the police in tackling problem speeding in Birchwood. We were also successful in campaigning for a pedestrian crossing on Moss Gate, to provide a safe crossing between the Forest Park and Gorse Covert. This was installed in the spring and is now fully operational.

A major success for Birchwood was the application for the “Access for All” grant that will enable much needed improvements to access at the railway station. The bid process was led by Warrington Borough Council with vital support from many local organisations in Birchwood. I would like to thank them all for their support in securing this important investment.

Hopefully you noticed the green grit bins were installed at various locations this year, as part of the Borough Council’s winter resilience initiative after recent severe winter conditions. This scheme was welcomed by the Town Council and has provided the bins and the grit supplies to make sure that the footpaths around our community shops and facilities remain safe.

Sadly, 2011 saw the last staging of the “Birchwood in Bloom” competition. This has been run successfully for many years and helped to generate pride in our surroundings. There have been falling entry numbers in recent years and so it now appears to have run its course. On a more positive note, the Town Council will be continuing with the wildflower displays this summer, as well as installing some new planters and bulb displays in areas such as Locking Stumps where there is no space for wildflower planting.

I am disappointed to report that the ambitious project to regenerate the walled garden has had to be mothballed. There has been a lot of pressure on grant funding streams in the current economic climate and even though a large amount of funding was obtained, we were unable to secure the remaining balance. I know that residents strongly supported this project and I hope that it can be revived in the future. The Town Council decided to reallocate its funding contribution to support the planned improvements in Birchwood Forest Park.

As well as many projects and initiatives, the Town Council is also involved daily with many other activities such as planning, dog fouling, car parking and neighbour disputes, cleansing and litter picking, landscaping and maintenance work to name but a few.

The Town Councillors go on regular walkabouts with local partners to identify any areas requiring attention, such as areas prone to litter and flytipping, graffiti, pot-holes and faulty streetlighting. We then work closely with the responsible organisations to get these issues addressed. As an example, we expect that the streetlighting on the spinal path in Oakwood will soon be reinstated.

In these challenging times, it is important that the Town Council keeps a tight rein on its finance and expenditure, whilst continuing to provide a valued and effective service to the community. I am therefore pleased that this prudence allowed the Town Council to keep the precept at the same level as last year.

In closing, I would like to say that I am proud to be a Member of Birchwood Town Council. We work proactively with our partner organisations, local businesses and other agencies to serve the needs of the community. The Council Officers and the Maintenance Team continue to provide an excellent service here in Birchwood and it has been a pleasure to work more closely with them during my term of office.

I would like to thank them all for their support during the last twelve months and I wish my successor well during their term of office.

**Councillor Russell Bowden**  
**Chair 2011-2012**

4. **Community Issues**

(a) **Parking issues**

Resident, Mr. Fitzsimmons stated that there is an issue relating to parking on Glover Road, near to the junctions with Heather Close and Armstrong Close. Two vehicles in particular have been parking on the grass verge. His concerns relate to sight lines and the potential damage that may be caused to the grass verges. The vehicles are on occasion obstruct the sight lines from the nearby footpath and the bus stop.

Resident Mrs. Nelson added that another area is on Ordnance Avenue, near to the junction of Redshank Lane, causing residents to experience sight line difficulties when they are coming out of Redshank Lane on to Ordnance Avenue.

Some of the residents present thought that at previous Council meetings, the Police had said they would go and put some warning notices on the vehicles.

The Clerk said that when the Police have been out to look at the vehicles, they were not considered to be in contravention of the guidance on parking distance from junctions.

**Action** To raise these matters with the Police at the Annual (May) Council Meeting, with a request for future/continued monitoring.

(b) **Warrington Road access**

Resident, Mr. Evans asked about the access to Warrington Road, near the Scout Centre in Locking Stumps, where concrete blocks have recently been installed to stop unauthorised incursions by travellers. He said that as there are no dropped kerbs in the area, access is currently difficult for those on motorised scooters.

The Chair added that he believes the concrete blocks are a temporary measure which will be removed once a permanent solution has been agreed and progressed.

There were no additional matters raised by those residents present.

***The Meeting concluded at 6.50 pm.***