

**BIRCHWOOD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**HELD AT PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE,**  
**DELENTY DRIVE, BIRCHWOOD, WA3 6AN**  
**ON TUESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2017, 6PM**

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

*Prior to the start of the meeting, those present observed a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the terrible attack on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017, at Manchester Arena and offered their sincere condolences to the families and friends of all those affected.*

Before the meeting formally began, it was noted that the Chair, Councillor Russ Bowden had sent his apologies as he was unable to attend this evening, due to an Executive Board meeting at Warrington Borough Council. Councillor Chris Fitzsimmons was duly elected to Chair this meeting on his behalf.

**Present: Chair – Councillor Fitzsimmons**  
**Clerk – Fiona McDonald**  
**Deputy Clerk – Clare Caddock**  
**Business & Finance Officer – Gary Crowe**

**10 Residents**

**Apologies: Councillor Bowden and three residents**

046/17-18 **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS 2016**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2016 had previously been presented at the June 2016 Town Council meeting and signed as a correct record.

The Chair's Report for 2015/2016 had been published on the Town Council's website.

047/17-18 **OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The Chair, Councillor Fitzsimmons, opened the meeting at 6.00 pm. Councillor Bowden's apologies were formally noted.

Councillor Fitzsimmons circulated a copy of Councillor Bowden's Chairs Report for all those present to read. This was a report on the local activities of the Town Council during the 2016/2017 municipal year.

048/17-18 **CHAIR'S REPORT 2016/2017 – COUNCILLOR BOWDEN**

As a Birchwood resident myself, I feel privileged to have been the Chair of the Town Council during the last twelve months which has been a period of large scale change, both locally and nationally.

With all the constraints being put on local government, your Town Council has used it as an opportunity to work smarter by encouraging others to share resources and work more in partnership in order to deliver services. One such arrangement involves our work with Warrington Borough Council to implement a more frequent grass cutting regime in Birchwood, which is having a positive impact, improving the look of the area for both residents and visitors.

The Borough Council provided us with mowing machines and the Town Council's Maintenance Team were then trained to use them. The end result is that we can now carry out an intermediate cut, increasing the frequency of grass cutting thus improving the look of the area and the quality of the grassed verges.

I am pleased to say that we have received some excellent feedback regarding this from the local community.

There have also been some further improvements within Birchwood Forest Park, with the Town Council providing the funding necessary to replace the dilapidated informal kickabout area, with a new, lit, multi-use games area (MUGA), which is available for use by the community. The reinstatement of lighting will enable this facility to be used more frequently during the darker, winter months.

We will continue to work with the Borough Council to improve some of the other facilities within the park but, as with anything, it takes time and is dependent on funding.

Another of the Town Council's projects for this year has been to improve Birchwood Brook Footpath. We have been working closely with the Borough Council to provide a much improved footpath surface. At the time of writing a dropped kerb has been constructed to enable heavy plant and machinery to access the site in order to carry out the resurfacing works which should be completed by the end of July.

Another function of the Town Council is to present the views of local residents on planning matters at Borough Council Development Management Committee Meetings (DMC), as and when necessary.

There have been a few planning applications this year which the Town Council opposed after being contacted by concerned Birchwood residents. The New Hall Farm Flexible Generation Facility was one such application which was refused by the Borough Council, after representation on behalf of the community, but the most recent planning application relates to the former Oliver Plunkett site on Admirals Road. Again, after representing the concerns of residents, especially with regards to road safety, I am delighted to say that after attending the DMC, putting the views of residents to the Committee and attending other associated meetings with WBC planners regarding this application, we were successful in securing an agreement for a much needed formal crossing point on Admirals Road in addition to some traffic calming measures.

The Town Council has put together a strategy for the period 2016-2021 which is available on our website. This is a live document which will be reviewed on a regular basis, with an action plan which will be updated regularly.

It is important for us to keep you informed and to let you know how we are progressing matters on your behalf, so the Town Council will be reinstating its magazine which will be produced twice a year and delivered to your door. We also have a website [www.birchwoodtowncouncil.org.uk](http://www.birchwoodtowncouncil.org.uk) and a Facebook page and we will be looking at other ways to further improve communication.

We welcome your feedback on the things we do, and the things which are important to you and your families, so we will be circulating a survey for you to complete either in writing or online. The responses from this will be used to shape the Town Council's strategy moving forward.

We have regular ongoing dialogue with the Police on matters which are of concern to our residents such as speeding, parking, off road motorcycles and anti social behaviour, but we are also in talks with them about the Police Community Support Officer scheme, and their proposals, going forward.

The Town Council is in regular contact with other local organisations; Your Housing Group, local schools, Birchwood Shopping Centre, Birchwood Forum, Birchwood Medical Centre to name a few and works with them to improve the lives of local residents.

I have enjoyed being Chair of the Council during 2016-17 and being given the opportunity to work on some great projects, with some great people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Councillors, Town Council Officers and the Maintenance Team for their continued support and hard work during the last twelve months. I have enjoyed working with you all, and I wish my successor every success during their term of office.

*Councillor Russ Bowden  
Chair of Birchwood Town Council 2016/2017*

## 049/17-18 **COMMUNITY ISSUES**

The Chair invited questions or comments from residents.

### **(a) Tree Cutting on Birchwood Forest Park**

A resident enquired about some recent tree cutting work that had been undertaken at Birchwood Forest Park and whether there are any further plans.

The BAFO said that he had made an enquiry about the recent work done to remove a small number of trees in the park and was informed that it was necessary to enable telecommunication signals to function correctly. This is not only beneficial to residents, but also to local businesses and the economy.

Although we were not informed prior to the work being undertaken, we have been reassured that only absolutely necessary tree work was done, it had all been approved and as the Borough Council owns the land, they could authorise the necessary works.

The BAFO added that there are plans for some further tree thinning works later this year, in the autumn, especially around the new MUGA and skateboard/ BMX tracks; to enable them to be more visible and areas of the park to seem less intimidating for users.

A resident commented that they would be concerned if trees were being cut down purely for commercial interests; they also suggested that perhaps some consultation should have taken place.

The BAFO stated that we only found out by chance about the two or three trees that were affected, but reiterated that as it is Borough Council Land, they do not require permission to remove trees that are on their own land.

Another resident, who is a member of 'The Friends of Birchwood Forest Park', said that they would raise this query at their next meeting.

As there were no further questions or comments from residents, the BAFO explained that comments and queries raised at the Annual Town Meeting will be noted and presented to the Council for further consideration and action where possible.

Councillor Fitzsimmons thanked all residents for attending and declared the meeting closed.

***The meeting concluded at 6.20 pm.***