

**BIRCHWOOD ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**HELD AT PARKERS FARM COMMUNITY CENTRE,**  
**DELENTY DRIVE, BIRCHWOOD**  
**ON TUESDAY 28TH MAY 2019, 6PM**

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

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

**11 Residents**

**Apologies: Mr. R. Bowden, Mr. D. Ellis, Mrs J. Ellis and Mrs. P. Nelson**

032/19-20 **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS 2018**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018 had previously been presented at the June 2018 Town Council meeting and signed as a correct record.

The Chair's Report for 2017/2018 had been published on the Town Council's website.

033/19-20 **OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The Chair, Councillor Atkin, opened the meeting at 6.00 pm.

Councillor Atkin circulated a copy of his Chair's Report and presented the report to all those present. This included an account of some of the local activities of the Town Council during the 2018/2019 municipal year; it will be published on the Town Council's website.

034/19-20 **CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2018/2019 – COUNCILLOR IAN ATKIN**

It has been a pleasure to serve as the Chair of Birchwood Town Council for the last 12 months; a year which has presented both challenges and opportunities.

The Town Council was made aware that the Council Tax Support grant from Warrington Borough Council was to be removed for 2019/20, which would result in a significant reduction in our overall budget so, in order to maintain the levels of service that local residents enjoy we were presented with some financial challenges. The decision made was to increase the precept whilst utilising some money from Council reserves in order to retain the status quo.

During the year, Councillors and officers have spent a lot of time meeting with representatives of Warrington Borough Council and Your Housing Group in order to further improve working relationships. In the climate of austerity, it is even more important that we all work together to make the best use of the resources we have at our disposal.

Of all the Parish Councils in Warrington, Birchwood Town Council is quite unique in its approach in that there is a team of eight Maintenance Operatives who are out Monday to Friday in all weathers looking after the area whether it be litterpicking, grass cutting, cutting shrubbery, gritting, cleaning road signs or scraping back footpath edges. To my knowledge, no other Parish Council in Warrington has the same level of resource.

A new planter has now been installed on Copperfield Close in Locking Stumps which will be closely followed, we hope, by other locations. Before we can install any planters, we have to obtain the landowner's permission and ensure that the location will not have a detrimental impact on sightlines or the maintenance of underground services.

As Chair of the Town Council, one of my first 'duties' was to formally open the Birchwood Carnival. As far as I can recall, it was the first year the event had been supported financially by a number of local businesses. The Committee was extremely thankful as it enabled them to extend the programme of entertainment and activities on offer. Apart from the sun shining and the smiles on people's faces, it was a great day and, for me personally, one of the highlights was the Llama display team!

We are very fortunate that this year's Carnival has, again, been supported with kind donations from several of our local businesses that are keen to give something back to the local community.

Events, such as the Carnival, depend on the support of many volunteers that give up their time to help to make these events run smoothly. There are various local volunteer groups who work together to improve the environment; whilst others provide support and activities for the community, whether it be working with young people or those who are disadvantaged.

All our local volunteers put in a lot of time and effort and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for the valuable contribution that they make and the opportunities that they give to others.

We are a community that comes together in difficult times and there have been several examples in the last 12 months. For example, there was an incident on the motorway network during the extremely hot temperatures last summer which resulted in standing traffic for a considerable length of time. Local residents took water and refreshments to those stranded motorists, some of whom had very young children in their vehicles. I would like to thank you all for your selflessness; it makes me very proud to be a part of this great community.

Birchwood Youth and Community Centre on Delenty Drive is now a thriving facility with many regular user groups. This year the centre has gone through an extensive programme of refurbishment under the management of Cllr David Ellis. A couple of local businesses provided the materials, manpower, chairs and some new lightweight, folding tables so we are very thankful to them.

The centre is now 'home' to the Birchwood Repair Café, Birchwood Seniors, Age Concern and a Signing Choir to name a few.

On behalf of the Town Council, I would also like to take the opportunity to formally thank Councillor Pauline Nelson and Carole for the many years they have supported the Youth and Community Centre.

During the year, we have continued to work with Your Housing, a local housing association; conducting regular walkabouts and, more recently, a tidy up day. During the walkabouts we highlight things that matter to our residents; issues that have been reported to the Town Council.

We hold regular meetings with officers of Warrington Borough Council, again, covering issues that are of concern to our residents and it also works with other organisations such as The Woodland Trust and The Land Trust.

The Town Council liaised with The Woodland Trust regarding a leaking retaining wall located near to the Fire Station. After heavy rain and extremely cold weather the 'run off' from the pond extended across the footpath and in some instances the water froze, creating a hazard for pedestrians. Several months ago, work was undertaken by the Woodland Trust to rectify the situation and there is now no longer a leaking wall.

One of the roles of the Town Council is to act as a statutory consultee for planning applications and supporting the views of residents.

During the year, there was an application regarding New Hall Farm. The plan was for an electrical generation facility which, despite the best efforts of a number of Councillors and local residents, who presented objections to the proposals, was eventually granted on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate. Subsequently, a further application was submitted by the developer to extend the hours of operation. An objection was submitted by the Town Council and consequently Councillors, supported by several residents, attended the Development Management Committee Meeting of Warrington Borough Council to object. On this occasion the application was approved by the Planning Committee.

There is a lot of coverage in the media regarding the detrimental effect that some of our behaviours are having on climate and biodiversity. At the Town Council meeting held in April 2019, Members passed a motion to declare a Climate and Environment Emergency, with a target of reducing Birchwood's carbon footprint by 2030.

We are all aware of the detrimental impact our everyday living is having on the environment, so the Town Council has formed a sub-committee to look at ways we can all play our part in making a positive difference that will benefit both future generations and our environment.

Whilst the planters, mentioned earlier in my report, will introduce more colour into our roadsides, the flowers will also attract pollinators and other insects, all of which are really important to our ecosystem.

Local residents have been worried about speeding traffic with several areas being identified as areas of concern. The Council has held discussions with both the Police and Warrington Borough Council to identify ways in which we can make a positive difference.

As a result, there is new signage on Ordnance Avenue which clearly identifies the speed limit whilst warning motorists that speed enforcement is undertaken.

In addition, Warrington Borough Council conducted a speed survey on Warrington Road which identified that the route would benefit from some speed enforcement. I am pleased to report that the Police have now obtained a site code which will enable them to carry out speed enforcement at this location.

Chatfield Drive has also been identified as another area of concern based on inconsiderate parking, vehicles travelling in excess of 20 mph and the 20 mph speed limit not extending past the high school. At the time of writing my report, Warrington Borough Council is looking to address these matters by extending the 20 mph zone and introducing double yellow lines along the entire length of Chatfield Drive.

In my experience, we have a team dedicated to the wellbeing of Birchwood and its residents. The work that is undertaken on behalf of the community is extremely varied and carried out to a high standard.

We will continue to make progress, build positive relationships and make improvements on your behalf wherever, and if, we can.

I am certain that my successor will continue this good work, and I hope that you will continue to lend your support.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, Town Council Officers and the Maintenance Team for all their hard work, dedication and support during the last 12 months. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you all.

*Councillor Ian Atkin*

Chair, Birchwood Town Council 2018/19

035/19-20

### **COMMUNITY ISSUES**

The Chair invited questions or comments from residents.

#### **(a) Zebra Crossing near Greenfinch Grove**

A resident said that they would like to discuss an issue that was previously raised at the 2018 Annual Town Meeting, regarding traffic safety relating to the zebra crossing on Admirals Road, near the junction with Chatfield Drive. He stated that in his work role he has experience relating to these matters.

The resident commented that the location of the zebra crossing is not an optimal design, there is not the usual separation regarding the distance from the side roads. He enquired whether the design was ever challenged.

The Chair presented a bit of background regarding the installation of the zebra crossing as follows.

There had been years of requests from residents for another crossing on Admirals Road, however, the Borough Council, using their data, could not afford to fund a crossing at this location. They had to work within their resources and prioritise all the other areas in Warrington that had made requests for crossings, mainly taking actual injury statistics into account.

When the planning application for the new housing development, now named 'Greenfinch Grove' was submitted, the Town Council saw it as an opportunity to ask for a Section 106 to be made as a condition of planning approval; with a view to this funding the long requested pedestrian crossing.

A Section 106 is a legal agreement between the applicant requesting planning permission and the local planning authority. This is used to mitigate the impact of a new development on the local community and infrastructure.

The Town Council had expressed a preference for a traffic signal controlled crossing, but as the cost of these are around £70,000 or more, the developers would not agree to this. Instead it was agreed that a zebra crossing with Belisha beacons would be installed.

The Chair said that the location chosen, although in an ideal world it would not be located as close to side road junctions, was at the point of a well-worn 'desire line' used by both schoolchildren and other residents. It met minimum requirements in place at that time.

Resident, T. Hearldon, stated that another busy crossing place, further down the road towards the junction of Dewhurst Road with Admirals Road, had been considered; however, this was deemed to be too close to a curve in the road with regard to safety. Drivers might not see people on the crossing in time to stop as they negotiated the bend.

The resident who raised the issue said that they accept that design compromises sometimes have to happen and that the sub-optimal siting of the crossing is better than having no crossing at all.

The Chair reminded residents present that the speed cushions had been put in in an attempt to reduce the speed of traffic approaching the zebra crossing. Although they might not be entirely successful in this objective, they at least serve as a visual reminder that drivers should be slowing down.

As reported last year, the Town Council was informed that a raised speed bump, across the whole road, could not be installed, as the route is used by emergency vehicles, and it could slow their journey time. It is also a busy bus route and a full speed bump would make the journey more uncomfortable not only for ambulance patients, but also for bus passengers.

In June 2018, the Town Council asked the PCSOs if site codes could be sought to enable them to undertake some speed enforcement operations in several locations including Warrington Road (Risley Village) and on Admirals Road. A code was recently obtained for Warrington Road, however, we do not yet know if one has been obtained for Admirals Road (near the zebra crossing, close to the Chatfield Drive junction in particular).

Mr. Barry Allman enquired about speeding enforcement on Glover Road, Ordnance Avenue and Chatfield Drive, in addition to Admirals Road.

The Police have site codes for Glover Road, and Ordnance Avenue and do undertake speed enforcement operations on these roads. Officers will enquire again regarding Admirals Road and Chatfield Drive.

**Recommendation:**

- To contact the PCSO to enquire about the site codes and whether speed enforcement operations could be conducted near the zebra crossing on Admirals Road, near the junction with Chatfield Drive, on other stretches of Admirals Road and on Chatfield Drive.

**(b) Traffic Issues Chatfield Drive**

As a continuation of the discussion about the safety of the position of the zebra crossing (above) a resident suggested that perhaps Chatfield Drive should become 'access only' for residents and/or have additional traffic measures put in place.

The Chair said that this is unlikely to happen. It is a main bus route and a main route through to traffic for accessing the shopping centre, high school, library, tennis and leisure centre, the medical centre, etc.

Following the receipt of many complaints from local residents regarding speeding and unsafe / inconsiderate parking on Chatfield Drive/Brock Road, the Town Council requested and pushed for the extension of the 20mph speed limit to continue on past the high school to the junction with Benson Road and for double yellow lines to be extended on both sides of the road for the full length of Chatfield Drive.

The legal processes are almost completed for these requests and as there have been no objections following the traffic notices, both the above proposals will be actioned by Warrington Borough Council in the near future.

Resident, T. Hearldon commented that a lot of vehicles speed along Chatfield Drive, often at school drop off/ pick up times and for some reason around approximately 7pm.

The Chair commented that there will possibly be an opportunity to look at potential traffic calming measures on Chatfield Drive when the old Fox Wood School site is developed.

Resident, Mr. Fitzsimmons, confirmed that the site is earmarked for housing development.

The resident who raised the issue stated that a new housing development will only make existing problems worse.

The Chair said that there will be a potential opportunity, once a planning application is submitted for the development of the Fox Wood site, for the Town Council to ask for planning conditions in relation to traffic calming measures, to offset the effects of additional traffic that will be created by a housing development.

#### **Recommendations:**

- At the point in which a planning application is submitted regarding the development of the Fox Wood site, assumed at present to be for a housing development, to look at the potential for requesting traffic calming measures to be installed along Chatfield Drive.

#### **(c) Proposed Motorway Service Area (MSA)**

A resident commented on a concern raised by some Councillors at the April meeting regarding the interpretation of data collected from a consultation undertaken by the developer for the proposed MSA and wondered whether the results of the consultation would affect any planning decisions.

At the April 2019 meeting (as noted in Minute 10/19-20):

“Councillor J. Ellis said that she had some concerns about the questionnaire that residents had been asked to fill out. The first question was leading, *“Do you support the proposal for a new high quality MSA for Warrington, to create additional jobs and enhance business growth?”* Councillor J. Ellis suggested that most people would probably answer ‘yes’ to this question, taken out of context, with no consideration of location, etc. The only other question that required a response (other than personal details) was *“Do you have any other comments?”*”

Councillor J. Ellis questioned how proper data could be gleaned from posing such an open question; how all the variety of responses that could be received would be turned into specific, objective, rational data that was not being interpreted by a team, skilled in PR that would prefer a specific outcome from the replies?”

The Chair reassured the resident that no actual planning application has been submitted yet. He acknowledged that some Councillors were concerned whether the questions had been leading but stated that it had not been a formal statutory consultation – more a ‘testing of the water’. He added that ultimately any decision would be made on formal planning grounds and that public support is not specifically a planning consideration.

Several residents present said that the consultation events had not been very well publicised and they have since been made aware that all local residents within certain areas were supposed to receive information leaflets; however, many did not.

Mr. Reeves said that once we became aware of this, the Town Council had pressed for the additional, third consultation event that took place at the Penta Hotel and ‘advertised’ this to the best of our ability on Facebook, our notice boards and website.

A resident commented that at one of the events they attended, they had been told that the developer had done some traffic analysis. They believe that traffic coming into Birchwood will not be the same traffic that would use the MSA.

The resident added that they had also been informed that there would be no parking for employees of the MSA. There would be an improved pathway – cycling/walking route. They said that this route would apparently be created along the treeline – somewhere that they would not like to walk along at night or in the dark.

The Chair said that he was informed, again at one of the consultation events, that the primary purpose of the MSA is to serve passing motorway traffic. This would probably negate any request for part of the MSA to be used for park and ride facilities, something that the Town Council had thought about, to reduce some of the volume of vehicles coming directly into Birchwood. He was told that it is not the job of the MSA to interact with the local community - its job is to serve traffic using the motorway.

A resident commented that they are completely fed up with all the roadworks and developments in the area.

The Chair said that the last phase should be the work being undertaken to complete the dualling of Birchwood Way to Junction 11 of the M62.

Mr. Fitzsimmons said that the current developments in Birchwood should be completed within the next 12 months.

A resident asked how all the traffic involved in the construction of the MSA, if it gets approval, would reach the site. They were concerned that Birchwood might have to suffer with huge lorries and plant vehicles using the local roads to access the site

The Chair said that he presumed that most of it would access the site from the motorway – although this cannot be guaranteed at this stage.

The Chair said that once a planning application is submitted, then the Town Council, as a statutory consultee, would be able to assess the plans and proposals in detail and assess how best to consult with residents and respond at that stage.

As there were no further questions or points to be made from residents, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and drew the meeting to a close.

***The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm.***