

BRINDLEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 30 JULY 2024 AT THE WHITE HOUSE, MARQUIS DRIVE, BRINDLEY HEATH

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: P. Adams (Chairman)
R. Turville (Vice Chairman)
Mrs M. A. Turville
A. Pearson
Mrs S. Pearson
M. Sutherland

IN ATTENDANCE: PC Darren Wilkes (to the end of item 3)
PCSO Chad Carrington (to the end of item 3)
Mrs T. Williams (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies and reasons for absence were received, accepted and approved from Councillor D. Cotton under S.85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Apologies were also received from County Councillor P. Hewitt.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

<u>Member</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Councillor Ron Turville	Internal Auditor (Agenda Item: 18b and Minute Number 18b, 2024-25)	Personal Interest
Councillor Mrs Ann Turville	Internal Auditor (Agenda Item: 18b and Minute Number 18b, 2024-25)	Personal Interest

3. POLICE REPORTS

The Chairman invited Local Neighbourhood Policing Team officers PC Darren Wilkes and PCSO Chad Carrington to address the Council.

The Officers gave information on the types of jobs the Rugeley Neighbourhood Policing Team had worked on in the Brindley Heath and Etching hill areas during the month of July (up to 6pm on Tuesday 30 July).

The incidents occurring in Brindley Heath and Etching Hill were categorised as follows:

Concern for Welfare – 7, Other Notifiable – 2, Suspicious Incident – 8, Domestic Incident – 8, Family Domestic Incident – 5, Criminal Damage – 2, Violence against Person – 3, Burglary – 1, Missing Person – 4, Drugs – 2, Malicious communications – 1, Harassment/stalking – 1, Public Order – 2, Sexual Offences – 1, Theft – 3, Road Traffic Collision – 4, Transport Related – 3.

The Officers pointed out that there had been no vehicles stolen which was usually a big problem in Etching Hill, and there had been a good reduction in the number of burglaries. The reduction in these crimes was reported to be the result of work done by the neighbourhood team and a specialised team that had been involved in the background.

Burglaries and vehicle crime remained the forces top priority and officers were working hard to identify offenders and reassure the public.

The Police are continuing to encourage the public to sign up to receive 'Smart Alerts'.

The Police have been involved more directly in the Speed Watch initiative and are looking to recruit new volunteers. They were out on site twice (on 30 July 2024) in Etching Hill where a total of 250 vehicles were recorded in an hour in two different locations and only one vehicle was slightly over the 30mph speed limit.

The Council informed Officers that there had been a noticeable reduction in anti-social activity in the Chase Side parish over the last couple of years which it thought was due to the effectiveness of the local policing team. Councillors said they hoped there wouldn't be any changes to the team.

The Officers reassured the Council that the Rugeley Neighbourhood Policing Team would be staying as it was with no plans to redeploy anyone to other areas. There was currently a Response shift (who respond to 999 calls) and three Neighbourhood shifts (with four PCSOs).

The Neighbourhood Police Officers, due to their role, can be diverted elsewhere but will go back to their allocated area. PC Wilkes was one of just three Neighbourhood Officers serving the whole district which was in contrast to covering Etching Hill and the Heath, three years ago. Neighbourhood Officers spend most of their time responding to 999 calls. The officers highlighted that the Rugeley area was lucky to have its current team of officers who had extensive knowledge of their area. Members of the public were welcome to approach them directly with queries.

The Officers said the Staffordshire Force had a very good Chief Constable who was neighbourhood driven and doing his best with the available resources. He had recently brought the force out of special measures.

PC Wilkes is a rural officer covering Cannock Chase. District Council Environmental Health staff, the Police and DEFRA had been working jointly on an operation that had recently located a wanted person on wildlife and fly tipping offences.

At the end of the Police Reports the Chairman and Councillors thanked the Officers for briefing them on their work before leaving the meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

5. MINUTES OF LAST MEETINGS

Resolved: That the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 28 May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 28 May 2024 were noted.

6. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Chairman asked whether any information was available from Cannock Chase Council on the number of days that a pop-up camp site could operate on Cannock Chase. The Clerk confirmed that information clarifying permitted development rights in Cannock Chase National Landscape had not yet been received. It was noted that the old operating limit of 28 days in a calendar year had come to an end and the new term going forward was 60 days with conditions.

Councillor Sutherland offered to make enquiries on the permitted development rules directly to the Planning Department.

7. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no report.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Items of Post

Staffordshire County Council’s Local Transport Plan

The Parish Council noted an email (dated 25 June and 9 July 2024) from Staffordshire Parish Council’s Association about Staffordshire County Council’s intention to engage with parish councils on writing a new Local Transport Plan. The County Council had agreed to offer a wider and more accessible consultation event on 20 September 2024.

The Parish Council agreed that local transport did not serve Cannock Chase well and that accommodating the needs of rural areas County wide was a complex issue. Councillors considered it a good decision to arrange a meeting that was more widely accessible to the communities.

Resolved: That Councillor Mrs Ann Turville is nominated to attend the Local Transport Plan event on 20 September 2024, as a representative of Brindley Heath Parish Council.

NALC National Network for Smaller Local Councils

The Parish Council noted the National Association of Local Councils’ plan to set up a ‘Smaller Councils Committee’ forming part of the NALC National Network for smaller local councils. The first meeting was to be arranged in the summer and meetings thereafter would roughly take place quarterly by Zoom. To qualify, parish councils must have an annual budgeted precept or turnover of £10,000 or less.

The Committee will provide the smallest parish councils with a national voice in terms of the issues they face and follow the same template as the 6 other NALC national networks. NALC invites councils who meet the criteria to join the network.

The Council noted that it met the criteria to join the ‘Smaller Councils Committee’ but did not nominate a representative to attend the online meetings.

b. Consultations

No consultations had been listed for consideration.

The Clerk informed the Council about an email to parish councils from SPCA (received in the last few days) with an invitation from the Executive Committee to submit their thoughts on the development of an SPCA policy position on rural speed limits. The Committee would like to know whether it should support 20 mph speed limits around schools and whether there were other

situations where 20mph should be considered. The question was also asked about identifying the criteria to propose lower speed limits than the national speed limit which currently applies on most rural roads.

SPCA has recently approved a motion from Croxton Parish Council to put pressure on central government to give rural speed limits a higher priority.

Brindley Heath Parish Council acknowledged that it had taken years to have the speed limits reduced on Stafford Brook Road and Bower Lane and the speed limit on Penkrige Bank Road remained at 60mph with a 40mph advisory.

The Council agreed to respond to the consultation individually rather than collate a collective response.

9. PARISH WARD ISSUES – CHASE SIDE

Felling of trees on protected SAC and SSSI land

The Council noted an email from the Cannock Chase SAC Project Officer offering support with a tree felling matter on protected land. She offered to meet with the landowner to explain landowner responsibility for SAC and SSSI land. The officer very kindly offered her contact details for future reference.

The Council believed the landowner was now aware of the landscape protections and their responsibilities.

The Council emphasised that trees cannot be cut down on protected land and there was an expectation to replace fallen trees. The Parish Council agreed that stronger Enforcement powers needed to be available to Natural England and presiding Councils.

10. PARISH WARD ISSUES – BRINDLEY VILLAGE

Councillors noted that land off the Rugeley Road (on the left side when travelling to Rugeley) has a garden centre appearance with several greenhouses installed on site.

The Council suggested making enquiries to learn more about how the land was being used.

11. CANNOCK CHASE

The Parish Council discussed the meaning of ‘Grey Belt’ land, a term recently reported in the press. The green belt was thought to include both greenfield and brownfield land, and the new government suggests there are parts of it which are low quality and should be prioritised for development. Disused or unkempt premises are what the government is calling ‘Grey Belt’ land.

Councillors agreed that, although new houses were needed, greenfield land should be protected.

The Forest Concerts which took place earlier in the year were discussed, and no noise nuisance was observed.

Councillor Sutherland talked about his wonderful experience listening to Tom Jones in the garden (in a previous year), and Councillor Adams raised the point that he had not enjoyed the sound of non-melodic bands carrying to the top of Kingsley Wood Road.

The Council noted that the Cannock Chase National Landscape Annual Review 2023-24 with a summary of last year’s achievements of Cannock Chase national Landscape Partnership was available to download.

12. HONORARY TITLES

Information on the granting of honorary titles was requested as an agenda item by Councillor Ron Turville at the last parish meeting.

The Council noted that Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA72) sets out how councils can give honorary titles and how Principal Councils can go about granting ‘Honorary Alderman’ to past council members.

The Local Government Act 1972 has been amended by several pieces of legislation over the years and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (LDEDC Act) amended Section 249 (which took effect from 12 January 2010) allows parish councils to grant the honour of ‘Honorary Freeman’ or ‘Honorary Freewoman’. Parish Councils were not allowed to grant Honorary Alderman which was restricted.

Section 27 (sub-section 7) of the LDEDC Act amends the LGA72 Section 249 (sub-sections 5-9) to allow parish councils to grant the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman to the place they are the authority where the person is of distinction and the person has in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area.

The Parish Council noted that the power to grant the title of honorary freeman/freewoman was by resolution of the Council and that NALC Legal Topic Note (LTN 12) provided guidance.

Resolved: That the Parish Council establishes the steps and confirms the arrangements for granting ‘Honorary Freeman’ to Councillor Paul Adams for his extensive services to Brindley Heath Parish Council and the community over many decades.

13. INVITATION TO MEETINGS/EVENTS

There were no upcoming (external) meetings to note.

14. APPOINTMENT OF PARISH REPRESENTATIVE TO CANNOCK CHASE NATIOANL LANDSCAPE CONFERENCE

The appointment of a parish representative to Cannock Chase National Landscape Conference had been carried forward from the Annual Meeting.

Resolved: That Councillor Alan Pearson and Councillor Mrs Shirley Pearson be appointed to attend the next Cannock Chase National Landscape Conference taking place in 2025.

15. REPORTS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED

a. To share information on meetings attended:

No reports were given.

b. The parish representatives to outside bodies gave reports on meetings they had attended:

Slitting Mill Village Hall (M. Sutherland)
Councillor Sutherland advised the Council that Slitting Mill Village Hall now had a full Committee who had met three times.

Etching Hill Village Hall (D. Cotton)
Councillor Cotton was not available to give a report.

Councillor Adams said that he understood Etching Hill Village Hall had a Chairman and a full committee and was moving along nicely.

Chetwynd Charity (P. Adams)

Councillor Adams said that it was difficult to say whether the Charity would continue as it was. Students were not applying for bursaries now, despite trustees going into schools to publicise the opportunity and explain the application process. There were just two applicants applying for £100 each last year.

Charity for the Recreation Ground (P. Adams & D. Cotton)

Councillor Adams said that money had been awarded from the Lotteries scheme and an extension had been awarded to allow extra time for the money to be spent (to October 2024). Some grounds maintenance work has to be done at particular times in the year.

Charity for an Allotment for the Labouring Poor (P. Adams & D. Cotton)

Councillor Adams reported that the Charity was now receiving payment for the football pitch (in compliance with the lease), but the District Council didn't want to make use of it, despite there being a shortage of football pitches nationally. He said that a meeting was needed with officers and trustees.

Councillor Sutherland reported that residents had arranged a meeting on the field and were seeking permission to take the posts out.

Longdon Cotton Alms-houses (P. Adams to 2028)

Councillor Adams was not able to go to the last meeting, but all the Alm-houses were occupied.

Cannock Chase Council's Standards Committee (R. Turville)

Councillor Turville confirmed that no meetings of the Standards Committee had taken place.

Cannock Chase AONB Conference (A. Pearson & Mrs S. Pearson)

Councillor Pearson and Councillor Mrs Pearson confirmed that they would be attending the conference in 2025.

16. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

The Chairman invited reports from District and County Councillors.

Councillor Sutherland advised the Parish Council that the PCSOs were doing a good job, and the Speed Watch programme was working well. He said people have a lot more confidence in the Police and PCSOs should have some power of retention if not arrest.

17. WEBSITE

The Parish Clerk advised the Council that enquiries had been made to Staffordshire County Council's Digital Team about their tailored website design and management services for parish councils. However, confirmation had been received that the team had reached capacity and were no longer able to take new customers.

The enquiry was made with a view to updating the design of the website, which would benefit from a refresh, and to move to WordPress which was universally used (for the ease of future users of the website) with a tailored and accessibility compliant format.

The Gold service offered by Staffordshire County Council cost £150 and a move before the middle of October would have avoided an overlap of website subscriptions.

Councillor Sutherland offered to make direct enquiries with officers in the Digital Team to seek clarification on whether website services will be available again in the future. If the services on offer are not resuming, the Parish Council would stay with its current website provider for another year.

Resolved: That the Parish Council appoint Staffordshire County Council for its website hosting services at a cost of £150 in the event that the County is willing to accept the Parish Council's order following Councillor Sutherland's enquiry.

18. FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Financial Position of the Council

A breakdown of income and expenditure for the financial year to date was given in the Clerks Report (dated 22 July 2024). The budget statement showed the current financial position of the Council with reserves totalling £17,150.28.

The bank account balance on 2 July 2024 (taken from the bank statement) was £17,819.68 with unpresented cheques totalling £669.40 (£245 for SPCA annual subscription and the balance to the Parish Clerk as salary).

Resolved: That the financial position of the Council is noted.

b) To consider the appointment of an internal auditor of the year 2024-25

The Parish Clerk advised the Council that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations for local Councils (encompassing the Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide), a suitably qualified independent person must be appointed to undertake an internal audit of Brindley Heath Parish Council's accounts annually. The Council is governed by Part 2 requiring an annual internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its accounts, risk management, control and governance processes.

The Internal Auditor for the period two years (2022-24) had recently moved out of the local council sector and was not available to continue in the role.

The Council considered background information and costings supplied in emails from two internal auditors which had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The Council noted that Sandie Morris knows Councillor Ron and Councillor Mrs Ann Turville through their son but neither they nor the Council considered that this association would cause conflict of independence.

Resolved: That Sandie Morris is asked to take on the Internal Auditor role for Brindley Heath Parish Council's accounts in accordance with the guidelines of the Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide for 2024-25.

Resolved: That the Council accepts the terms of the Sandie Morris's Internal Auditors engagement letter.

c) To consider and update standing orders and financial regulations during 2024-25

The Parish Council reviewed the standing orders (based on the NALC Model Standing Orders) which had been circulated electronically by email.

Resolved: That the Model Standing Orders (updated April 2022) be accepted with the tailored line items.

The Parish Council reviewed the financial regulations (based on the NALC Model Financial Regulations updated in April 2024) which had been circulated electronically by email.

Resolved: That the Model Financial Regulations be accepted with tailored line items.

d) Noticeboard Update

The Clerk informed the Council that the notice board previously selected by the Parish Council had been ordered following receipt of a signed copy of the license agreement from Cannock Chase Council approving the siting of a notice board on land off Brindley Heath Road.

The Principal Landscape & Countryside Officer at Cannock Chase Council had previously confirmed (in an email dated 7 May 2024) that the notice board’s design was acceptable, and the Principal Surveyor had said that arrangements could be made to agree the exact position of the notice board and the method of material and installation for securing it to the ground.

The header design had been provided by Councillor Cotton which had previously been circulated to Councillors.

Resolved: That the Council approves the purchase and costs of a Greenbarnes 2 bay single sided A1 A-Multi Decorative aluminium notice board with additional features at a cost of £3,210.96 (including components, vat and delivery but excluding installation).

Resolved: That the costs of installation are obtained from a grounds maintenance contractor.

e) To authorise cheques for payment

Resolved: To approve following cheque payments:

100240	One Another Ministries	£30.00	Donation for use of room for parish meeting on 30 July 2024.
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Resolved: To authorise payment of the cheques listed.

19. ANY OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

The Clerk advised the Council that an email had been received from Cannock Chase Council asking to know the Parish Council’s intentions with regard to the spending of its Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund.

The Council confirmed that after the costs of the purchase of the notice board and its installation had been taken out, the remainder of the fund should be used to purchase bleed kits for siting in various locations in the parish. It was agreed that bleed kits be listed for consideration as a future agenda item.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council will be held at The White House, Marquis Drive, Brindley Heath on Tuesday 24 September 2024. (The meeting date was later changed to Tuesday 8 October 2024).

Signed.....

Date.....

Chairman’s Initials