

BRINDLEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2023 AT THE WHITE HOUSE, MARQUIS DRIVE, BRINDLEY HEATH

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs T. Williams (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies were also received from County Councillor P. Hewitt.

In the absence of Councillor Adams, the Vice Chairman, Councillor R. Turville took the Chair.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

<u>Member</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
	No interests given	

3. POLICE REPORTS

Local Policing Team representatives were unable to attend the meeting but had forwarded a police report (distributed at the meeting) with information on the work of Rugeley Neighbourhood Policing Team for the period 1 to 27 November 2023.

Incidents occurring in Brindley Heath and surrounding areas (including Etching Hill) included: Concern for Safety – 5, Abandoned Calls – 3, Harassment/Stalking – 3, Suspicious – 4, Road Traffic Collision – 7, Transport related – 7, Missing Person – 4, Domestic – 10, Family Domestic – 2, Burglary – 2, Anti-Social Behaviour – 4, Sexual Offences – 2, Other notifiable – 1, Vehicle Crime – 4, Violence against Person – 1, Wildlife – 3, Firearms Incident – 1

The Police advised that burglaries and vehicle crime was the Forces top priority. They were working hard to identify offenders and reassure the public.

Officers were encouraging members of the public to sign up to the free 'Smart Alert' email service with information about crime in the area, police updates, information about surgeries/meetings and crime prevention advice.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

5. MINUTES OF LAST MEETINGS

Resolved: That the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 26 September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 26 September 2023 were noted.

6. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Clerk advised the Council that AEDdonate had recommended monthly checks of the defibrillator (as a minimum) and that Rugeley & District Community First Responders had asked for the Parish Council's support in carrying out checks of the publicly accessible defibrillator when visiting the White House as they were only able to undertake quarterly testing.

Councillor Cotton agreed to make regular checks of the defibrillator, to add to his regular checks of the defibrillator on Stafford Brook Road, and to monitor the use by date of the consumables.

7. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice Chairman had no reports under this item.

Councillor Turville expressed his very best wishes to Councillor Adams for a speedy recovery, and all Councillors echoed his well wishes.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Items of Post

Warm Hubs, food tables and support – request for information on where they are in the community.

The Parish Council noted an email from the Consultation & Engagement Officer (dated 4 October 2023) requesting information on the locations of warm hubs, food tables and other support available in the parishes through autumn and winter. The details will go in Cannock Chase Council's directory which is being updated.

No services of this kind were thought to be available in the Brindley Heath Parish.

Hednesford Town Councillors advised the Council that Lightworks were organising food tables at Pye Green Community Centre on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve (evening time).

b. Consultations

Cannock Chase Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Parish Council considered an email from the Local Taxation & Benefits Manager (dated 22 November 2023) advising that Cannock Chase Council was proposing minor changes to the calculations of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme with an opportunity for interested parties to contribute to a formal consultation.

A link to the survey had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Parish Council noted that no adjustment to the Council Tax base would result from the scheme changes as no significant change to the levels of award or cost of the scheme would occur.

Councillor Peason advised the Council that the Government had given extra support to Cannock Chase Council to enable a benefit boost (from 80% to 100%) but the extra support finished in April.

The Council concluded that a collective response to Cannock Chase Council was not needed, and Councillors could contribute to the consultation on an individual basis.

9. PARISH WARD ISSUES – CHASE SIDE

The Council anticipated the occurrence of unauthorised tree cutting during the festive season.

10. PARISH WARD ISSUES – BRINDLEY VILLAGE

No issues were raised for discussion.

11. CANNOCK CHASE FOREST

To discuss issues relating to Cannock Chase Forest

a. Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is renamed Cannock Chase National Landscape

The Council noted an email from the AONB Communications Officer (dated 20 November 2023) stating that from Wednesday 22 November 2023 at 00.01 all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales were to become National Landscapes, including Cannock Chase which will become Cannock Chase National Landscape.

The officer suggested the new name would reflect Cannock Chase AONB Partnership’s national importance, the contribution made to protect the nation from the threats of climate change, nature depletion and the well-being crisis, as well as creating greater understanding and awareness about the work done.

Cannock Chase National Landscape will have, alongside all AONBs, a new visual identity in the form of a new logo. The transition to the new identity will be gradual as brand assets, promotional print and materials need changing.

The Parish Council questioned the need to change the name and expressed the view that the new name no longer incorporated or reflected the value and attributes of the landscape in the way that the old name had. The term ‘Landscape’ could mean a number of things and did not define quality. The Council questioned whether Cannock Chase was still recognised as an area of outstanding natural beauty with the same protected status. It expressed concern about new controls or ‘watering down’ and about changes to the boundary.

Councillors discussed the AONB management structure changes over the years and reducing engagement with parish councils which used to be invited to regular parish council liaison meetings. Parish Councils have lost their regular contact and the opportunity to have a say.

The Council concluded that it had strong reservations about the rename which did not summarise quality or value of the landscape and what it represented. The Council did not consider the name identified any special status and should have remained as it was.

b. Cannock Chase National Landscape Partnership Advisors

The Council noted an email from the AONB Team Leader (dated 3 October 2023) sent in response to the AONB Joint Committee’s call for new advisors and the Parish Council’s nomination of Councillor Alan Pearson.

The Team Leader advised the Parish Council that the AONB Joint Committee was looking to increase the diversity and inclusivity of governance of the Cannock Chase AONB and believed parish councils were already represented on the Joint Committee through the Staffordshire Parish Council's Association. They were not therefore seeking representation from individual parish councils or parish councillors but were looking for people who had experience in under-represented groups.

The Parish Council noted this information with disappointment.

c. Fire Breaks on Cannock Chase

An email from Planning Forester at Birches Valley (dated 28 September 2023) with the Forestry England Management Policy for Wildfire Management was circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

The Planning Forester advised the Council that staff are briefed each year at the start of the fire season (Feb/March) and work in partnership with Staffordshire County Council during periods of high risk. They do not create firebreaks in the forest as Cannock Chase is well dissected by roads which create natural breaks in the vegetation. Most fires are also reported quickly due to the presence of the public and their access to mobile phones.

The Parish Council noted the information provided by the Planning Forester.

d. Noise Monitoring at Forest Concerts

The Council noted an email from the Environmental Protection Officer at Cannock Chase Council (dated 5 October 2023) in response to a request from the Parish Council for noise monitoring information (readings) for the afternoons and evenings of the Forest Concerts held in the summertime.

The Environmental Health and Public Protection Service at Cannock Chase Council were tasked by the Forestry Commission to monitor noise levels of the concerts held on Cannock Chase on 8, 9, 10 and 11 June 2023. The purpose of the exercise was to ensure compliance with a noise condition of the premises licence (which specifies an equivalent continuous music sound level of 65db over a 15-minute period) at a fixed monitoring position to the rear of The Pingle, Slitting Mill.

The officer reported that the monitoring results on the first three evenings had demonstrated an excellent level of compliance. The sound levels were found to start and finish within licensed operating times and no formal complaints were made via the complaint hotline whilst the concerts were in progress. The concert on the fourth evening had been cancelled due to inclement weather.

The officer confirmed (in a telephone call) that no monitoring had taken place during the afternoon sound checks – prior to the concerts – and that all sound checks took place during the live concerts.

Councillor Sutherland said that he had noted lower noise levels over the last number of years where previously he would hear the rehearsals. The Council agreed that a crisp sound was different and less annoying than a dull hum drum sound that can be heard from locations a little further away.

Councillor Pearson said that he didn't find the marshals to be well briefed on the road closures and traffic routes around the site during the concerts as he had attempted to pick a member of his family up from one of the events.

The Council noted the information.

12. INVITATION TO MEETINGS/EVENTS

The Council noted the following upcoming (external) meeting invitations:

- Cannock Chase Council Chairman’s Christmas Carol Service on Monday 18 December 2023 at St Peter’s Church, Church Hill, Hednesford.

Details of the Service were noted and Councillor R. Turville and Councillor Mrs M. A. Turville confirmed they would be attending on behalf of Hednesford Town and Brindley Heath Parish.

13. 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 no meeting had taken place.

Etching Hill Village Hall (D. Cotton)

Councillor Cotton advised the Council that a good committee had been formed and the village hall was thriving. Refurbishments had taken place with the installation of Wi-Fi and a Hive thermostat.

Chetwynd Charity (P. Adams)

Councillor Adams was not available to give a report.

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

Councillor Cotton reported that money was available for general maintenance, but the charity was continually having to look for new funding opportunities because Cannock Chase Council now had no involvement with their lease of the recreation ground and didn’t carry out any grass cutting or maintenance.

Councillor Sutherland spoke about funding opportunities that were available to Charities through the County Council.

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman left the room for a comfort break and Councillor Pearson was nominated to take the Chair during his absence.

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

Councillor Cotton advised the Council that the allotments were well managed and there was a waiting list of people who wanted a plot.

The Etching Hill Charity was working in conjunction with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. The numbers of volunteers had increased with the help of social medial and the hill was gradually taking shape in line with the action plan. Everyone involved were communicating well and there had been no complaints or negative feedback from residents.

Some fly tipping had occurred, but it was not as prevalent as it once was. A new sign, a litter bin and security posts had been installed. There was still a lot to do but it was all positive work.

Longdon Cotton Alms-houses (P. Adams to 2024)

Councillor Adams was not available to give his report.

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

No meetings of the Standards Committee had taken place.

Cannock Chase AONB Conference (A. Pearson & Mrs M. A. Turville)

Councillor Pearson and Councillor Mrs Turville confirmed that no meeting had taken place.

14. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

The Chairman invited reports and County Councillor Sutherland addressed the Council.

Councillor Sutherland advised the Council that the school on the old power station site in Rugeley had been given the go ahead. The school board and the County had the funding secured and the projected timescale for opening the school was September 2025.

Councillors questioned when the deal was going to be signed off for the houses on the Lichfield side of the site.

Councillor Pearson had no report from the District Council but advised the Council that the Town Council's Christmas event was taking place during this coming weekend.

Councillor Sutherland said that the Christmas Lights Switch-On in Rugeley had been phenomenal. Councillors said that Rugeley seemed to be thriving and the outdoor market was doing very well and increasing footfall in the town.

Free parking was suggested as a big benefit to towns during the festive period.

15. 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 November 2023). The budget statement showed the current financial position of the Council with reserves totalling £17,690.89.

Resolved: To note the financial position of the Council.

The Chairman, Councillor Turville, returned to the meeting and took back the chair.

b) To consider a request for a grant from Chetwynd's Charity

Chetwynd's Charity

The Parish Council considered a letter dated (31 October 2023) from the Clerk to the Trustees, asking for a charity donation towards the work of Chetwynd's Charity. The Charity operates locally in the Rugeley and Brindley Heath area, offering financial assistance to young people who are in further education.

A copy of the Charity's accounts had not been provided.

Resolved: To decline the award of a grant to Chetwynd's Charity as the number of applications from students had reduced and the Charity's financial position was currently healthy.

c) Noticeboard Update

The Council considered several designs of notice boards which were viewed at the meeting.

There was collective agreement on a three bay notice board to maximise the display space and provide flexibility to publicise Council and community information.

The Clerk advised the Council that a range of different specifications were available to determine the cost. The prices did not include installation, which may be available separately through the supplier.

Resolved: That the Council specify a green, 3 bay, single sided, A1 decorative A-Multi aluminium noticeboard from Greenbarnes. Reference: AF30MD/TA1.

d) Budget for the year 2024-25

A standstill budget for the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 had been distributed prior to the meeting.

The Council considered potential projects for the year, the sums the parish council would need to spend and how it would fund the spending (whether from precept, reserves or other sources of income such as grant aid). The Council considered the continuing high inflation levels and changes of staff.

Resolved: To approve the draft budget for the 2024-25 financial year, which would require the shortfall between income and expenditure to come from reserves.

e) Parish Council Precept for the year 2024-25

The Council noted that Cannock Chase Council had undertaken a calculation of Brindley Heath Parish Council's Tax Base for 2024-25 and was recommending that it be set at 252.98.

It was noted that if the precept stayed at the same value in 2024-25 as in the current year, £4,272, a Tax Base of 252.98 would generate an annual charge of £16.89 for Band D householders. This value represented a 0.1% decrease in parish tax.

The Council agreed that it needed to balance escalating costs against a desire to minimise Council Tax increases for residents.

Resolved: To set the precept at £4,272 for the financial year 2024-25 (subject to the District Council's approval of the recommended figures) generating a householder charge of £16.89 for a Band D property and representing a parish tax decrease of 0.1%.

a) To authorise cheques for payment

Resolved: To approve following cheque payments:

100228	The White House	£30.00	Donation for use of room for parish meeting on 28 November 2023
100228	The White House	£40.00	Defibrillator electricity reimbursement for 2024
100229	Trudy Williams	£190.55	Squarespace Web Design Tool (1Yr) Reimbursement

Resolved: To authorise payment of the cheques listed.

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

No items

17. SCHEDULE OF MEETING DATES AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Council considered a schedule of meeting dates to May 2024.

Resolved: That Council and Planning Committee meetings would be held on the following dates:

30 January 2024

26 March 2024

28 May 2024 (Annual Meeting)

The next meeting of the Council will be held at The White House, Marquis Drive, Brindley Heath on Tuesday 30 January 2024.

Signed.....

Chairman for the meeting, Mr R. Turville

Date.....