

BIRDINGBURY ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING

7.30pm Tuesday 30 April 2024

The Chair, Cllr French, welcomed everyone to the meeting at 7.31pm.

18 residents attended. **Apologies** were received from the Barneys, the Davies, Jenny Hawkes, Wendy Lloyd, Carmel de Nahlik, Simon Kent and Sara Kendell.

Minutes of the 2023 AVM held on 2 May 2023 had been circulated on the Village WhatsApp group and been posted on the noticeboard since June. They were agreed as a true and complete record.

Cllr French gave a brief overview of the main discussions at the Parish Council over the last 12 months.

Change of Councillors – at the beginning of the Council year, we said goodbye and thanks to Rich Cutts, and hello and thanks to Carmel de Nahlik.

Car Parking – remained an issue on & off although parking around the War Memorial has improved. The Parish Council would like to ask all residents to remain considerate when parking their vehicle, especially when parking opposite driveways and near corners.

Speed Survey – Police had undertaken surveys in Main St and Marton Road. Whilst speeding was recorded, it did not meet Police thresholds for enforcement action. The Parish Council will continue to monitor this.

Websites – the previous village website is in the process of being closed now that the Birdingbury-pc.gov.uk site is up and running. This should save the village about £400 a year.

5G Phone Mast - a third application for a phone mast by the Marton Road entrance to the village was submitted and again it was refused. The Parish Council has tried to engage with the applicants about alternative sites but has not had a reply.

Broadband – small progress with the “lot” that includes Birdingbury being won by CityFibre. We’re contacting them to understand what might happen next.

Drains – this has been a regular focus for us due to the storm run-off issues seen in the village this year. We are pressing WCC and Severn Trent for a longer term solution to the Main St and Back Lane drains that appear under-capacity. We have had an inspection of the drain & culvert by the Stockton Road junction and are awaiting a plan from WCC about remedying the road flooding.

Main St curbs – these have been installed thanks to a grant from our District and County Councillor, Dale Kealing. We have put in a request for re-laying some of our tarmac paths as these are showing serious signs of wear.

Recreation Field – we are reviewing the actions necessary to address issues identified in the most recent safety inspection. We have had a small group of volunteers offer services to do a range of tidying and fixing jobs, and have asked specialist quotes for repair or replacement of large items (the skate park ramps, the slide and the multi-pay frame). Once we have a better idea of costs, we will need to consider sources of funding (grants) and also whether some repairs are worth it given usage levels.

Parish Council Finances - last year the Parish Council spent about £200 more than it receives in precept. However, costs have risen, mainly clerk’s expenses and grass-cutting, but most costs have nudged up. We took the decision to raise the precept by £750, the first increase in 5 years.

Looking ahead – we have decided to meet every other month (rather than 10 times a year). This will start from May. We will also be monitoring the work on the Rugby Local Plan to identify any implications for the village, and also consider alternatives to cutting the verges in the village (like encouraging wild flower meadows).

In response, residents raised the following matters:

- With regard to speeding, the corner by the Church seems to be a hot-spot.
- Could the Council consider weedkilling on paths to slow down the break-up of their surfaces?

Birdingbury Club

Tony Flint (Club Chair) gave an update. 2023 was a challenging year, resulting in a loss as predicted; with initial projections for 2024 suggesting an even bigger loss was likely this year. All costs have risen, but staff costs are the biggest pressure. So, with the club manager resigning recently (and thanks were given to Suzie and Hayden for all that they have done), this has given an opportunity to look at a volunteer led model. A good number of villagers came forward with offers of help and, although it's only been a month, early indications are good, with a much-reduced wage bill really helping the finances and we're hopeful of returning to a broadly break-even position by the end of the year.

This now allows other plans such as finishing the refurbishment of the front, and more volunteers have also come forward to help with the future development strategy – both of which have taken a back seat for obvious reasons over the last 12 months. How sustainable it is going forward relies entirely on the continued support of the community, but there is now a real opportunity to make the club into a true community-based organisation.

The Birbury Management Committee (BMC)

Guy French (one of the BMC Trustees) reminded the meeting that at its 2023 AGM, the BMC had changed its constitution so that it now consists of three representatives – one each from the PC, the PCC and the Club. Jennie Barr has joined as Treasurer. During the year, the committee has agreed which expenses will be covered by the BMC and which by the Club. Usage remains free of charge and has increased during the year, largely due to outside catering and Club events.

The BMC remains responsible for the Distribution Fund. It funded the village Christmas Tree, new football nets and has agreed a donation to part-fund the new benches and planters for the front of the Club. The fund has received £485 from Ladies Circle on its closure. This leaves a balance of just over £500 and the BMC welcomes applications, especially if supporting new social organisations in the village.

St Leonards (PCC)

Karen Armbrister gave an update. We have two services a month and a weekly short prayer service on Wednesdays at 9.30am. Our services are 1 and 3^a Sundays now, one is a traditional service with hymns and holy communion and one is more informal, suitable for all ages.

We had our annual meeting last night and your PCC here in Birdingbury remains enthusiastic and hard-working, taking good pastoral care of people and serving others where we can by getting involved in village activity. Karen has now become an Acting Church Warden, as Rev Phil works on his centralisation of administrative PCC activity across the Benefice. I'd like to publicly thank the hard-working members of the PCC for their support and commitment.

We are delighted to work so co-operatively with the Club and have been welcomed here on several occasions over the last few months for services both outdoors and indoors.

The next year will be a challenge for us. The boundary wall between the church and the Birdingbury Hall has partially collapsed and will potentially be costly to repair. We are awaiting guidance from the Diocesan Registry regarding responsibility and ownership, before we see how things progress. We also have 4 coping stones which need replacing, on the front elevation, from which we have some water ingress when it rains heavily in a certain direction.

We continue to work hard towards our annual fund-raising target of £2000pa, and thank all those who help and support that. The annual fete will take place on the afternoon of 30 June, in and around the Club.

Things may be hard, the future may be uncertain, but we're here to serve - and we love serving in this community. We hope you feel like we are working hard spreading God's love to you all. If you care about the church here, and want to get involved in any way, then do please speak to one of us.

Birdsong

Lesley Fleming (Editor) explained that Birdsong has continued to be published and distributed free of charge across the parish. We produce an edition every two months: the latest edition was number 121. Birdsong provides a durable source of village news and information to complement the well-established social media channels posting day to day messages across our community.

The Parochial Church Council has decided to concentrate communication through other channels, so Church News and Views is no longer co-published with the magazine. We will, however, continue to include items relating to church activities which may be of general interest to the community.

In addition to the usual updates from the Parish Council, Leamington Hastings Church of England Academy and Birdingbury Club, we have published our usual mix of content over the last year. We are particularly keen to continue to support the Club by promoting and reporting events.

Traditionally Birdsong has been posted on the village website for both reference and access by those further afield. As the website is to close, the best alternative is to use the new Parish Council site.

Funds are currently very healthy, primarily due to last year's substantial donation from the Village Fund. This means we have the wherewithal to continue for another two or three years. I would like to say a huge thank you to all those who have helped finance the magazine.

I would also like to say a big thank you to the wider Birdsong collective. Thanks to those who write articles, send photos and provide information about events and activities. Thanks to the operations team: our diligent proof-reader, and the steadfast distribution squad who, come wind, rain and even heatwaves, get the magazine delivered to everyone on time.

Swap Shop

Continues to attract 12–16 people per week (meeting every Saturday at 10:30am) and serves a social need. Everyone is welcome for a drink and a chat, and swapping books, garden produce, etc. is voluntary.

Community Café

The Community Café has now been operating since January 2023, under the leadership of Jean Foroughi and Karen Armbrister (who gave the report), and supported by both The Club and a wonderful group of volunteer helpers and bakers. We run weekly on a Tuesday from 10.30-12 and serve barista coffees and teas, other hot drinks and squash. We have an enormous range of fresh, home baked goods, of every flavour and style.

Since January 2024, we haven't had a week with less than around 25 attendees, showing us that the Café is now well entrenched in the village weekly social cycle, and it's quite the refuge for a lot of villagers who don't get out so much. We also have some younger villagers attending with little people and babies - particularly during school holidays.

We are always on the lookout for more helpers and volunteer bakers. If you can help, we'd love to hear from you.

All profits go to charities chosen by Karen, Jean and all our volunteers. At the end of 2023 we had donated £2023 since we started. We are also giving some donations to the Club weekly, which are being ring fenced for improvements.

History Group

Richard Davies provided a written update, saying that the Group had decided to close unless 'new blood' joins. A final appeal will be made in Birdsong. The management of the archive, stored in the Church, will be a discussion between Richard, the PC and the PCC.

The meeting closed at 8.16pm.