

# MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF BARFORD HELD AT THE MEMORIAL HALL ON MONDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2009 AT 7.30 P.M.

**Present:** J. V. Murphy (Chairman)  
Forty-Nine other electors

**In attendance:** County Councillor Les Caborn  
District Councillor Clare Sawdon  
(District Councillor Alan Rhead was also present and, as an elector,  
is counted in the above total)

There were in addition two visitors from Wasperton Parish

## 1 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008, were received and *approved*, subject to a correction to the third bullet point of minute 17 – replace “filling” with “fitting”.

## 2 Report by the Chairman of the Joint Parish Council

2.1 Councillor Murphy read his Annual Report (see annex to these minutes).

2.2 In answer to a question about affordable housing needs, he replied that the need was identified in the survey undertaken by Warwickshire Rural Housing Association at the request of the JPC and allocations of these houses to qualified persons (i.e. those with a defined local connection) would be made only to those without sufficient means to buy at the market rate.

## 3 Reports by Elected Representatives

3.1.1 County Councillor Les Caborn reported that the County Council's budget increase for 2009/10 was 3.9%. Income had been restricted by a reduction in interest from investments, though, unlike some other Councils, Warwickshire had had no funds invested in failed Icelandic banks. The reduction in interest was partly off-set by lower inflation.

3.1.2 The Council had to ensure that funds were used effectively and efficiently. In this context, the County was working more closely with the District Council to jointly deliver services where appropriate and the organization of the County Fire Service was under review. The Council's staffing levels would be reduced by natural wastage. Central government had assessed the Council as performing well.

3.1.3 The new Justice Centre in Leamington would free-up accommodation in Warwick which would be utilized as a conference center and for functions, thus generating income.

3.1.4 The cost of looking after a more elderly population was increasing and this cost was having to be met by the County.

3.1.5 On more local issues: a new cycleway had been completed to Sherbourne, linking with the existing one to Warwick; a review of speed limits had resulted in a reduction to 50 m.p.h. for the A429 from Longbridge to the Barford junction; £12k had been allocated for road safety work in Barford; Barford would benefit from some of the £80k which had been allocated across the County for backlog road maintenance.

3.1.6 Cllr. Caborn expressed his support for the opposition to the proposed designation of two sites near to Barford as suitable for sand & gravel extraction (see minute 5.9 below).

3.2.1 District Councillor Clare Sawdon paid tribute to the Barford community spirit, which had especially been evident in the work to re-open a general store.

3.2.2 Despite some initial problems the new refuse and re-cycling collection system had now bedded down and the District's re-cycling rate is now one of the best in the country.

3.2.3 She expressed her opinion that not enough Police were evident in rural areas of the District, particularly to combat nuisance crime. She was pressing for an improvement.

3.2.4 Despite the pressure the government was putting on the District through the Regional Spatial Strategy for more houses to be built, she felt that it was essential to maintain green space between the towns of the District.

3.2.5 Increases in Council Tax were being kept to a minimum, despite impositions from central government to deliver more services which were not adequately funded from central grants. She cited free bus passes and swimming for designated categories of people as examples of this.

3.2.6 She added her support for opposition to the County's Minerals Core Strategy consultation document, which named two possible sites close to Barford (see minute 5.9 below).

## **4 Police Matters**

The Police representative had left the meeting by the time this item was reached. However, the meeting expressed concern at inconsiderate parking of cars and asked how the Police should be notified of these. The Chairman advised that a note of the registration number and the place should be sent to the Safer Neighbourhoods Team together with a photograph of the offending vehicle showing how the pavement had been obstructed.

## **5 Other Reports and Up-Dates**

### **5.1 Parish Plan**

5.1.1 Councillor Rob Mulgrue, on behalf of the Joint Parish Council, introduced a paper setting out progress in implementing each of the Actions in the Barford Parish Plan. He referred to previous difficulties in engaging with officers at the County Council on certain Actions, particularly those involving roads and traffic. It was to be expected that implementation would be constrained by wider policy issues and budget restrictions but too often officers did not see the need to respond to residents' wishes as expressed in the Plan. However, there now appeared to be some encouragement from senior officers for a culture change in the organisation so that negotiations took place in a more positive atmosphere.

5.1.2 He drew attention to each of the Actions on the paper where there had been some progress during the past year. Sometimes, particularly on roads and traffic issues, compromises had had to be reached when it became evident that the JPC could not achieve everything requested in a particular Action in the Plan.

5.1.3 Residents raised a number of issues on aspects of implementing the Plan to which the Chairman responded:

- doubts were expressed on the effectiveness of additional signage in improving road safety or traffic speeds and the view was expressed that the amount of signage generally should be reduced. The Chairman responded there were certain legal requirements which had to be met but some signs were being removed now that Wellesbourne Road and Bridge Street were not classified main roads;
- there was an opinion that road noise appeared to have increased. It might be that the removal of most through traffic by the opening of the bypass had resulted in noise from the motorway becoming more noticeable. The motorway would be resurfaced with quieter tarmac when the surface next required renewal. However, quiet tarmac was not technically suitable for more rural roads;
- a particular street lamp in Wasperton Lane was located too close to a telegraph pole, which prevented the light being effectively spread. The Chairman offered to investigate;
- the sodium street lamps at the mini-roundabout were intrusive, not suitable for a rural village and were no longer required now that most traffic used the bypass. The Chairman responded that one had already been removed and the others were likely to be replaced with less prominent types when they needed renewal.

### **5.2 Community Shop & Post Office**

5.2.1 Kirsty Healey and Ian Findlay, the former and current Chairmen respectively of the Barford Village Shop Community Interest Company, gave a presentation on the new village shop and Post Office.

Additional grants and fundraising had enabled the building to be completed in July and after fitting out and

volunteer staff training it had opened for business in November. Since then the shop had opened every day except Christmas Day; takings were exceeding estimates; feedback from customers was very positive; reactions from the trade were favourable; the café was successful as a meeting place for residents; the new management structure was working well; sufficient volunteers had come forward to serve in the shop.

5.2.2 The Sub-Post Office had moved into the shop from its temporary accommodation in the committee room of the Memorial Hall. Thanks were due to Jane Symonds, the former Sub-Post Mistress, who had kept the office open under difficult circumstances in its temporary accommodation, to the new Sub-Post Master, Rod Scott, and to their volunteer helper, Alex Farr.

5.2.3 A questionnaire had been circulated in the village and she appealed for residents to return it so that customers needs could be identified.

### 5.3 Barford Relief in Need Charity

5.3.1 Terry Offiler, the Joint Clerk to the Charity, reported that the Charity Commission had recently agreed to widen the terms of the Charity so that village organizations could benefit as well as individuals. The new terms simply stated that the objectives were “the relief of poverty, sickness and old age and the advancement of education among persons resident in the Parish of Barford.” The Trustees had proposed this change to the Charity Commission as in recent years there had been insufficient individual applicants to use up the Charity’s annual income and thus a relatively large surplus had accrued. The Charity’s previous terms of reference, which had remained unchanged since it was established in 1907, had made it very difficult to give grants to organizations, even though those organizations contributed to relieving hardship. To ensure that individual applicants, who previously were the sole eligible beneficiaries, were not put at a disadvantage by this widening of the terms, the Trustees had agreed to keep back a reserve each year in case individuals applied towards the end of a year.

5.3.2 He also reported that a system of retirement in rotation for Trustees had been re-established with vacancies widely advertised within the village.

### 5.4 Neighbourhood Watch

Ian Findlay, on behalf of Barford Neighbourhood Watch, reported that there were Co-Ordinators in all streets. In many cases these had proved effective in letting residents know about the recent spate of burglaries in the village and what could be done to deter such incidents. Residents should contact their street co-ordinator if they had suggestions as to how the scheme could be made more effective. One initiative, which had proved a valuable deterrent in other places, was Smartwater, which had been publicized by Barford Neighbourhood Watch.

### 5.5 Village Design Statement

5.5.1 Maggie Hayward, a member of the Parish Plan Committee, introduced the draft Village Design Statement (VDS), copies of which had been distributed at the meeting. The Statement had been drafted by the Committee at the request of the special parish meeting held in July 2005. She gave a slide presentation of the main points. The purpose of the VDS was to state what was valued in the built environment; to give guidance to householders considering alterations to their properties; to give guidance to potential developers as to what might and might not be acceptable; and to attempt to influence Planning Officers and the District Council’s Planning Committee on planning issues in the village. Because of the diversity in styles of properties in the village, the village had been sub-divided into zones and, where appropriate, the guidance made specific for each zone. She then summarized the design guidelines in each section of the document.

5.5.2 In discussion a number of issues were raised:

- part of the former Barford House lands could be suitable for affordable housing either as an “exception site” (i.e. outside normal planning policy and therefore at a reduced cost) or, if Barford were designated as a growth village in the new District Local Plan, as part of a wider scheme that included market homes and public facilities;
- the VDS would need to be reviewed after a period of about 5 to 10 years to ensure that it continued to reflect residents’ views and the prevailing planning environment;

- the status of the VDS in the formal planning process was to seek to influence those putting forward formal planning applications and decision makers. It would not determine whether an application was approved or not but, hopefully, would be taken into account and so influence that decision.

5.5.3 On a vote, the Village Design Statement was *approved nem. con.*

It would now be submitted to the Joint Parish Council for adoption and thereafter to the District and County Councils.

5.5.4 Members of the Committee were thanked by the meeting for the work they had carried out in drafting the Statement.

## 5.6 Pre-School

Stephanie McVeigh, the Chair of Barford Pre-School, reported a busy year, which had begun with financial concerns but the immediate pressure had now eased following an increase in the numbers on the roll. Donations from villagers had proved a lifeline and fund-raising efforts were continuing. However, there might still be a need to seek further grant assistance. Negotiations were underway to move the Pre-School from the Memorial Hall to Barford St. Peter's Primary School site, possibly from 2010.

## 5.7 St. Peter's Primary School

Ann Fawcett, Chair of the Governors, reported on a flourishing and developing school. Pressures on places had meant that not all who had made the school their first preference could be offered a place but there were advanced consultations on increasing the admissions numbers. If agreed, this would help satisfy future demand and aid the budget. There were plans to up-grade the buildings and, if the increased admissions were approved, to undertake additional building work.

## 5.8 Village Pride

The Chairman reported that tidying up work around the village had been undertaken in the summer and autumn and it was intended to resume this work in the spring. He encouraged further volunteers to come forward. Property owners should keep their hedges and trees fronting pavements trimmed.

## 5.9 County Council Minerals Strategy

5.9.1 The Chairman drew attention to the County Council's Minerals Core Strategy document, which was now the subject of formal consultation. It identified two sites close to Barford as strategic sites for the extraction of sand & gravel: Wasperton Farm and Church Farm Sherbourne. Residents who were concerned needed to submit their comments on the document to the County Council by 8<sup>th</sup> May and to sign the petitions in the village shop. A copy of the JPC's response would be placed in the shop.

5.9.2 Charles Cadogan, the tenant farmer of Wasperton Farm, gave the meeting the background to the Court of Appeal decision of 1995 to reject the then proposals for that site. The grounds were principally that it would have entailed the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. There was comparatively little of this high-grade land, which was needed for food production, thus reducing the need for imports. He felt that there was a further danger that, if the site were approved, then after the extraction from Wasperton Farm, the work would be extended to Glebe Farm and into the buffer zone towards the village. He considered that the future national and local need for sand & gravel might be reduced by the use of re-cycled materials and that, even if this did not occur, the best and least disruptive course of action would be to extend the life of existing sites.

5.9.3 There then followed considerable discussion on the two proposed sites near Barford. Amongst the points made were:

- sustainable agriculture to reduce the county's carbon foot-print argued that the best agricultural land should not be used;
- the site at Greys Mallory, identified in the current Minerals Plan, was more suitable as it had good transport links and was not close to any settlement;

- a bund would be necessary for working the Sherbourne site and this would affect the river levels at times of flood and might increase the flood risk. A full hydrological survey was needed to identify the effects of each site;
- the use of the river to transport materials from the Sherbourne site, mentioned in the document as a possibility, was not practicable at present;
- the document on the County Council's web site was not user-friendly and difficult to navigate;
- Barford Residents Association should be revived to fight the proposals.

It was felt that the key issues in opposition to the identification of these sites were: the loss of high-grade agricultural land; reinstatement after extraction would be unsatisfactory; a hydrology report was necessary in the light of new assessment of flood risk and the effects of the building of the bypass.

5.9.4 The meeting *agreed* to establish a Working Party to take forward the meeting's opposition to the strategy document in order to supplement the JPC's objections. The following were appointed to its membership: Wendy Barlow; Sally Hallowell-Carew; Matthew Macfadyen; Chris Murphy; Alycia Smith-Howard. The Working Party would have power to co-opt additional members if it thought it appropriate. It would appoint its own Chairman.

## 6 Other Business

6.1 The legality of some of the village's 30 m.p.h. signs was questionable since they did not conform to the precise requirements. The County Council was investigating this.

6.2 The former shop & post office was expected to be opened as a gallery in the near future by its new owners.

6.3 The cedar tree in the car park of the Glebe Hotel was showing signs of stress and the County's Arbiculturalist had been consulted. Remedial work was possible but expensive. The owner of the hotel had so far not responded to requests that he take such action. It was suggested that grants for the work might be available from BIFFA and the District Council's Rural Initiatives Fund.

6.4 Débris had accumulated near the sewage pumping station. This was referred to the JPC to take up with the land owner.

## 7 Chairmanship, 2009/10

John Murphy was re-elected unopposed to the Chairmanship of the Parish Meeting for 2009/10.

The meeting thanked him for his hard work on behalf of the Parish over previous years.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.12 p.m.

**Annual Report of Chairman of Barford, Sherbourne & Wasperton Joint Parish Council**

2008-2009 has again been a busy year – 9 routine JPC meetings, numerous Planning meetings, 2 Special Meetings, numerous Working Party or subcommittee meetings and the three Parish Meetings.

During the year Cllr George Starkey was taken very ill and decided to resign from active JPC duty. We were pleased that he has now made a good recovery and many were prompted by his experience to undergo CPR training and also to volunteer for First Responder service – and so enhance the health chances of all in our area. He has been ably replaced by Cllr David Morrow who is already contributing well to JPC activities.

**Barford Shop and PO** – The shop and Post Office projects have moved forward at a considerable pace over the year culminating firstly in securing the future for our Post Office and opening the shop in good time for Christmas. It is now a vibrant centre for our communities, a credit to all concerned and a focus for near-universal praise. The challenge now will be to maintain the standards which have been set and to reach out to those members of our community who have not yet realised its true value.

**Barford Bypass** has continued to settle in and is now the subject of less adverse comment. The contractors have been slow to complete some of the snagging list repairs but we are seeing some movement there. Signage has been reviewed both on the bypass and also within the village where there are now anomalies but attention to these is slow coming and complicated by interactions between WCC, WDC and Police on what is required or appropriate.

**A46 Sherbourne Bypass** – This has moved on at a great pace since last year and can be clearly seen to be taking shape. Whilst few people are truly pleased with the final scheme we should all be very relieved at the reduced congestion which we will hopefully eventually experience on J15.

The JPC has repeatedly asked for a review of the speed limit on the A429 as it passes through all three parishes and have suggested a 50mph limit would be appropriate and when the A and B roads Speed Review was conducted last year we were disappointed that once again we were being overlooked, despite the fact that there appears to be a move towards more general speed control, often by signage alone. We have made a forceful comment upon this and the matter was reconsidered and 50mph restriction was eventually agreed from J15 to the River Avon on both the Barford Bypass and the old road. We were hopeful that the review would produce a speed reduction which would benefit all three parishes, but any hope of that must perhaps now rest with a proposal for nationwide 50mph limits on all single carriageway roads - if we want such relief and would be happy with such blanket restrictions.

During the year the cycleway from Longbridge through to Barford was completed and has been much enjoyed by many cyclists old and new. We would now like to see the route extended through to Wasperton and hopefully, eventually, beyond...

**Barford Parish Plan** –. The original BPP Committee continues to monitor and report on the implementation progress, but progress on the more difficult elements of implementation – notably those involving other bodies - remains slow – and we will soon need to consider reviewing the Plan to ensure that it remains fully appropriate for our future.

**Play areas** remain under constant review – checked at least weekly by a Parish Councillor. The skateboard area continues to generate some comment from a small number of nearby residents, but no real suggestions for practical ways to improve the situation. Last year the Environmental

Health Officer was involved again but has failed to come back with any meaningful comments or suggestions, despite his promise to attend and monitor noise levels.

The play equipment provided on Barford Village Green as part of the shop project has been an instant and outstanding success and the older equipment relocated to the Playing Fields provides a wider range of activities there and was very welcome. Much of the work for those projects was carried out on a self-help basis and at minimal costs.

**Dog Fouling** – This remains a constant problem and although much less than in years past is still causing concern. There are strict rules and severe fines for offenders and the Dog wardens promise zero-tolerance. Dog mess bins are available at the Playing Fields and near the Scout Hut so there is little excuse. Persistent offenders are clearly not listening so again we say that names need to be passed on if we are to see an improvement.

**Police Matters** –The safer neighbourhood Initiative has now been with us for more than two years. Despite early changes in personnel we have latterly enjoyed more stable staffing and have actually got to know some of our officers. Safer Neighbourhood Forums have now become Localities Forums and have a wider remit and attendance of officers from WCC, WDC and Police, along with other interested parties. Police “priorities” have been established now for some time but we still are struggling to get the Police to adequately address some of the appropriate issues in our villages. Putting aside larger scale crime and the recent apparent increase in house burglaries our major concerns revolve around antisocial parking – both on pavements or near junctions, and on the Playing Fields track. Despite safety implications and infringements of byelaws the Police remain reluctant to act decisively and effectively and this is very frustrating for us – especially as their occasional efforts do produce good results. We would like to see more consistent and prompt action please.

Speed through and past our villages remains a major issue and we have recently been conducting Speed Checks. These are only permitted in the 30mph areas and are “informal”, although exact speeds and registration numbers are recorded and passed to the police who retain the right to follow up our findings. Surprisingly, given that we have to put out large signs, operate in 2s or 3s and wear fluorescent jackets there were still significant numbers of motorists flouting the limit – especially on Wellesbourne Road. The gun has currently gone on to other parishes but will be back in operation in the near future – please don’t let us catch you.

**Sherbourne and Wasperton village halls** have again been supported by JPC grants - £1368 to each of Sherbourne and Wasperton – members have again recognised more active management and fund raising taking place in the smaller villages, to make their halls more viable, and Barford waived its claim to JPC funding in the light of good occupancy and reserves

The JPC also gave grant support towards maintenance of each of the three churchyards.

**Affordable Housing** – In the autumn we carried out a Housing Needs Survey over the three villages – questionnaires were delivered to every household asking opinions on housing supply and particularly trying to identify any outstanding need for affordable housing. Results showed a clear need for 9 homes in Barford, 2 in Sherbourne and none in Wasperton. Housing Associations cannot practically build sites of only two houses so it has been suggested that the Sherbourne two should be incorporated with Barford and that we should look into providing up to 11 homes in Barford if a suitable “exception site” can be identified. An exception site is a site adjacent to current development but which would not ordinarily be developed, and so provides a cheaper site cost allowing the houses to be built “affordably”. The Rural Housing Enabler, Mr Phil Ward, is currently looking at and for possible sites.

**Allotments** –Most are now in good productive use and the few that were in poor shape have been either jollied up or reallocated. Some have also been subdivided and a few more plots cleared so that our waiting list has now been satisfied. Cllr Clay has taken on the role of Allotments Officer

and as such has brought in new order and efficiency, which was much needed. The water supply to all parts of the allotments has been in place for two years and it is hoped that once the pattern of use has been established over a longer period we can incorporate the water charges into a fixed single rental charge.

One aspect of the allotments which is causing concern is the frequent and non-essential use of vehicles to attend them. It only serves to suggest to the younger element that vehicle access is acceptable and they struggle to understand why their form of social motoring to the Playing Fields should be any less acceptable. Byelaws were put in place to promote safety where young children are at risk and minimising motor access is part of this. Please only take cars to the allotments when absolutely essential or the JPC may need to seek reinstatement of the gate which used to be on that track and that will inconvenience everyone because of an inconsiderate few.

**Bus shelters** – throughout our parishes have been renovated and new raised platforms have been installed at the two southern Barford stops, funded by s.106 money from the Oldhams development.

During the year the **Telephone Kiosks** in our area came under threat – the Sherbourne one was summarily demolished in a road accident and not replaced. The other two were threatened with removal. Campaigns were launched to save them, albeit in a non-functional form, although the initial and ongoing costs and liabilities were considerable. Barford Heritage Group managed to fund saving the Barford one, and that will soon be restored. The Wasperton one could not be saved and was to be removed.

**Minerals Core Strategy – Revised Spatial Options** – Over the last few years WCC has been developing its Mineral Core Strategy to fit in with the new planning regime. It has all gone very logically so far but now they have started to look at specific areas for mineral extraction. Under the old 1995 plan there were “Preferred Sites” and “Areas of Search” and we were not particularly impacted by these and the challenges of Wasperton Farm and Castle Park had seemingly gone away. Under the old scheme many suitable sites, despite clear identification, had failed to come forward - presumably due to owner reluctance or possibly where their scale was uneconomic. The new plan seeks to identify “strategic sites” which are supported by their landowners and hence if adopted are more likely to go forward as full planning applications in due course. The JPC has formed a Working Party to mount an initial response and we have given a firm rejection on a multitude of grounds. In order to ensure that these sites do not blight our villages we will need to mount a strong and vociferous opposition to these proposals to ensure that they do not achieve “Strategic Site” status. If they do get adopted then we will again have a major battle on our hands once they proceed to planning approval stage.

All councillors have attended many meetings and served their electors well, working as a strong team with James Johnson our Clerk/RFO. Many thanks to all for their input.

JVM  
06/04/2009