

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF WASPERTON
HELD ON MONDAY 22 APR 24 AT 7:30PM**

Present: M J Metcalfe (Chairman)
Cllr J V Murphy (Chairman of the Joint Parish Council)
Cllr J Matecki (Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council)
Olivia Williams (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)
Twenty-five Wasperton Electors

1 Opening

The Chairman welcomed Wasperton residents to their Annual Parish Meeting, and identified the Councillors who were in attendance to give various reports and to take note of resident's comments and views.

He also introduced Olivia Williams from WWT and proposed that potential re-wilding of parts of the village be discussed as a newly inserted item after the Councillor Reports.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 Apr 23 were approved as a true record, there were no matters arising.

3 Report of Chairman of Joint Parish Council [Cllr J V Murphy]

2023-2024 has been a busy year! – It seems busier when I look back over it than it actually seemed at the time. The year started with my return as Chairman and with the appointment of Cllr John Barrott as Vice-Chair. We also added Ben Ranner as a new councillor for Barford and welcomed back Peter Phillips for Wasperton.

We promptly resolved to adopt the "Civility and Respect Pledge" and facilitated this by creating a "Dignity at Work" policy.

We started working on "wilding" – working with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and funded by Severn Trent. We have installed over 500 hedging plants around KGF and the Rectory Paddock, along with two very large swathes of wildflower sowings.

We undertook a review of the BNDP - and concluded that it was still fit for purpose and represented our community's wishes, and importantly should not be changed until the emerging New SW Local Plan was much further advanced. The challenge would be to get significant note taken of BNDP in the NLP... To better prepare us for the NLP we will undertake a Housing Needs Survey in the coming year and the JPC will receive a presentation at its May meeting.

We have now made significant progress with s106 projects and having completed the allotment path upgrade and increased the seating in KGF, we moved on to install the cemetery link pathway and renovate the Barford Village Green wall. Still outstanding are improvements to KGF signage, completion of the allotment path adjacent to BYCC and the external works at BYCC.

The Land Around Barford House has been an ongoing matter for many years now. We have had talks with the latest developers, Opus, who are offering an attractive scheme and have taken it as far as "Pre-Application" status with WDC. Whilst the JPC-LABHWP is largely or notionally supportive of the scheme so far, we must wait and see how WDC will respond to the scheme, which is still contrary to many local policies...

Within the JPC we chose to change the makeup of our Planning Committee to better represent our villages. The mix will now be Barford-6, Sherbourne-2 and Wasperton-2 – with the JPC Chair being "*ex-officio*", but taking one of his/her parish's places, rather than being additional as before.

King George's Field remains popular and busy, despite all the wet weather of late. Sadly, recurrent acts of vandalism, at great cost to the JPC, has led us to install CCTV around the site. It went "live" in December 2023.

Water Safety near the river was raised as a significant concern by Barford St Peters School pupils after a recent visit to the river and they suggested that some signage was needed. These have been commissioned and will be erected soon, warning of the danger and giving location details to assist the emergency services.

In September we reviewed our support for Village Voices, the community magazine that we have delivered to every household in the three parishes. The magazine is much valued as a single channel for information and as such the JPC resolved to continue funding it at £3200 for the current year and inflating by CPI until November 2026 when it will be reviewed again.

Such funding brings us on to Council Tax which is an even hotter than usual topic in this time of Cost of Living Crisis. Most levels of council have caps on how much they can raise but PCs are not restricted and are free to reflect local needs and wishes to maintain services. The JPC increased its

precept demand by 6.7% to £66,963 in line with official inflation figures to protect our spending ability and conserve services and reserves.

And whilst on finances, a LGA of 1894 restricted spending by PCs on church properties and caused much confusion and acrimony, with conflicts with later legislation. New legislation and clarification by the House of Lords has resolved the situation, to some degree, and PCs can now legally fund certain church projects, where there is a clear "benefit to the general public".

NETWORKING – One of the few benefits of the pandemic was the growth in remote working and the increased use of videoconferencing. This is now being exploited by PCs and their advisory bodies. We have had discussion groups for "clerks" and separately "chairs" for some time. These have been very useful and replace some of the in-person divisional and area meetings we used to have but have now lost. Now we are to have "councillor meetings" for all PC members, EXCEPT chairs and clerks! We hope they will be well attended, and very informative.

In a similar vein we must accept that social media is seemingly here to stay, for good or for bad, and matters which should be debated solely in the JPC domain are often discussed there, often by those with little detail knowledge of the situations being discussed. As moderators on such platforms have limited powers and are often slow or reluctant to react, we are considering how we can improve the situation and perhaps have some form of official JPC monitoring, with possibly very limited JPC input (*restricted to factual statements and/or JPC policies – NOT engaging in debate*), perhaps directing folk to a more productive route such as attending JPC meetings or corresponding directly via the more formal channels. The use of a separate FaceBook page as a bulletin board is also under consideration.

And LASTLY, we must announce the retirement of our long-standing, and some would say, long-suffering Clerk and RFO.

Colonel James Johnson OBE came to us for what he thought was a short stay in early retirement - and has been with us for twenty years. He has out-stayed all but two JPC members and seen us through thick and thin, having dragged us from the old dusty paper-bound era, fully into the technological age. Everything now is electronic and efficient, and fast. Everything has always been very professional, but nowadays we are subject to far more regulation and scrutiny, all of which absorbs more and more of his and indeed our time. We have already started the replacement recruitment campaign, but he will be a hard act to follow. Watch this space...

Councillor attendance records 2023-2024:

Name											Meetings	Attendance	%
Cllr J T Barrott	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	10	8	80%
Cllr J D Billingham	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	10	9	90%
Cllr R Clay	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	10	9	90%
Cllr H Gadsden	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	10	7	70%
Cllr J M Hawkesford	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	10	8	80%
Cllr G Jackson	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	9	90%
Cllr Mrs S Jarratt	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	10	6	60%
Cllr Mrs L M Jones	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	10	6	60%
Cllr T Merrygold	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	10	8	80%
Cllr J V Murphy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	10	100%
Cllr Mrs R Newsome	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	10	7	70%
Cllr P B Phillips		1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	9	6	67%
Cllr B Ranner		1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	8	89%
Cllr M J Sheard	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	8	80%
Cllr Mrs K E Thomson	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	10	4	40%
Cllr Mrs L Wallis	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	10	6	60%

4 Report from Warwickshire District Council [Cllr P B Phillips *in absentia*]

It is a pleasure for Jan Matecki and me to address you again and I am sorry that I am unable to be at the meeting in person. I should start by thanking my predecessor Councillor Alan Rhead for his 16 years of service as your District Councillor.

So, what do we do as District Councillors? Jan and I sit on various committees in the Warwick District Council. As well as sitting on the Full Council, I am a member of the Planning Committee, I chair the Asset Compliance Committee, and also sit on the Audit and Standards Committee and the Employment Committee. If you didn't know, all these meetings can be viewed on Warwick District Council's YouTube channel.

This report is actually rather a low-key report this year as not a great deal of significance has happened at the District Council. As you may be aware we have a Labour/Green coalition running the Council. I think the year can be summed up by the Leader of the Council stating in full Council, "we were led by the officers."

In Budbrooke Ward, we both continue to work to support residents in a large variety of ways from planning issues too numerous to mention, bin collections, footpath works, playgrounds, path clearance and fly-tipping. And we have obtained additional funds for the Norton Lindsey Community Shop

Specifically in relation to Wasperton, we continue to support the Sand and Gravel Action Committee in whatever way they want us to. The fight on this is far from lost, and we will continue to do what we can. We are awaiting feedback from Smiths to the 2,500 comments/objections after which we have just three weeks to respond again.

A significant challenge has been the two major solar farm developments in the Green Belt which came to Warwick District's Planning Committee in the 2nd half of 2023. The mega schemes would cover the equivalent of 85 football pitches near Honiley and 65 football pitches near Sherbourne, and these were in addition to the previously approved second solar farm at Sherbourne.

As a member of the Planning Committee, I voted against both schemes but both were approved. The danger I fear is that we are going to be salami slicing our way through the green belt. The Honiley scheme was called in after the intervention of their local MP and is the subject of a Planning Inspectorate inquiry, due to report in June 2024. The Sherbourne scheme was not called in as no request was made by our MP, so it is approved to be built.

Which leads on to a very important note. While we are here to help you there is one area where we need significant input from yourselves. That is the South Warwickshire Local Plan, which is slowly winding its way through its multi-year process. The second call for sites has just been completed and while putting a site forward does not mean it will be approved for development the SWLP has the potential to significantly alter the size and characteristics of Barford and Wellesbourne. Please go online and look for SWLP interactive map (at this link).

<https://tinyurl.com/5n8nnbwh>

While Wasperton only has the Paddock in the middle offered as a site – and I think I know the village's view on that - you will see if all the proposed sites were to be developed in Barford and Wellesbourne it would have a significant impact on the A429 and would change the nature of Wasperton into being an island village between two large conurbations. Your views are welcome at any time, but I have secured in Full Council that there will be a full consultation with villages affected. But you need to start pulling together your thoughts on this now.

Finally, you may not be aware that every 10 or 15 years the Electoral Commission reviews the structure of all the UK constituencies for the Westminster Parliament. The latest such changes were approved by Parliament in Autumn 2023. The impact locally is that Budbrooke Ward, which includes the Barford JPC villages which used to be part of the Warwick & Leamington Constituency, will change to Kenilworth & Southam Constituency as of the date of the next general election, i.e. Wasperton residents will vote for the MP for Kenilworth & Southam. Until then all questions should be addressed to the Warwick & Leamington MP, Matt Western.

5 Report from Warwickshire County Council [Cllr Jan Matecki]

The year was still dominated by the cost-of-living crisis. The County Council continued to providing advice to families, and supported residents with financial support through various grants and schemes, which were made available through the Household Support Fund. This scheme was going to close at the end of March 2024, but support has now been extended for a further 6 months.

The new all through school in Bishop's Tachbrook, Oakley School, is still on target to open in September 2024. The year 7 intake that started in September 2023 have spent their first year in Myton School's new 6th form centre and will move to the new school building this September 2024, along with a new year 7 reception class intake.

A 'Task and Finish' group set up to look into the inequalities of education throughout the county, continued to look at what drives these inequalities. It visited schools within Warwickshire and neighbouring counties that had achieved better than expected results, to further understand how the results were achieved. The group, which I am part of, continues to meet and will hopefully put out a report in the very near future.

The trial 'on demand' bus service, IndieGo Plus, which covers villages west of Warwick and replaced the old No.16 bus service, was a finalist for 2 awards at the national Citti Awards, which were held in London. It took first prize in the best 'Public Transport Award' category. It is also attracting interest worldwide, with a national Academy in the United States looking at demand responsive transport contacting me for information on our service. It continues to increase patronage, and this year has exceeded the number of passengers that travelled on the old No 16 service in the last year of its operation. I was pleased to have the service extended to Norton Lindsey which has not had a regular local bus service for many years.

The County Council secured over £7.5m of BSIP Plus (Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus), funding from the DfT. The BSIP Plus will support, protect and enhance bus services and support new initiatives. The funding will help ensure Warwickshire can take forward some of its BSIP priorities and, coupled with the extension of the government's £2 bus fare cap, will help encourage patronage growth across the bus network.

WCC was also successful in securing £3.3m for Warwickshire through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, to provide hundreds more charging points across the county. This will help

to facilitate the switch to low and zero emission vehicles. Potential sites, especially in rural areas and areas with little or no EV infrastructure, were sought from the public and community groups. These sites are now being evaluated.

For 2023/24, WCC's budget for pothole repairs is £1.970m. In addition, WCC will spend approximately £1.75m of capital on small patching works. So far this financial year, 7,890 potholes have been repaired across the county's road network. Warwickshire has a strong reputation for making repairs and are ranked 4th out of 30 peer authorities in the National Highways and Transportation Survey for overall highways maintenance, condition of highway and how quickly we deal with potholes and damaged roads.

WCC Highways have also completed 63 schemes that delivered 21 miles of resurfacing works, a further 64 schemes that delivered 44 miles of surface dressing and 53 schemes that have delivered 10 km of footway reconstruction schemes.

Budgets for all Councils remain a challenge. This year's County budget which includes, 2% for the adult social care levy, has been driven by the rising costs of adult social care which has seen an investment of £28m, children's social care services which has seen an investment of £8m, supporting children and young adults with special educational needs and disabilities, and home to school transport which has just under £9m of investment to ensure the County can continue to deliver high quality transport for over 10,000 children each day.

Locally, the planning application for a quarry at Wasperton has now had all comments summarised and sent to the applicant for review. The applicant now has an opportunity to submit proposals to mitigate any concerns raised. These proposals can be inspected and commented on in a similar way to the original proposal. It is unlikely that the application will be in front of the Regulatory Committee before the summer. I continue to support the local community in fighting against this proposal and will speak against the proposal at the committee hearing.

In Barford it has been agreed that a speed limit of 20mph could be implemented on Bridge Street and Church Street. I am using funding from my delegated budget to progress this scheme, and it should go out to consultation in the very near future. I continue looking at ways to improve road safety in all our villages, and I am talking to WCC officers on how to reduce speeds and heavy goods vehicles coming through Sherbourne village.

6 Warwickshire Wildlife Trust [Olivia Williams]

Olivia Williams explained that her role was to act as an ambassador at large to deliver the message to schools, parish councils, parochial church councils, and any other interested bodies that rewilding was a powerful tool to enhance the aesthetic appeal of living and working environments.

Prior to the meeting, guided by Lucinda Wallis, she had conducted a reconnaissance of the village to establish the potential for rewilding there. The results were encouraging, and she listed them for the meeting. She also stimulated a debate on what should be grown (not trees) and the merits of annual and perennial species, together with advice on clearing the flowers post-blooming.

There was a short discussion comparing and contrasting WWT suggestions with similar operations which are already established in the churchyard.

The mood of the meeting was very receptive, so much so that the Chairman proposed the subject be further explored in the village and that Lucinda Wallis should assemble a group of like-minded individuals to act as the focus for this innovation. This was agreed.

7 Neighbourhood Watch [Michael Brook]

There were no incidents to report.

Neighbourhood Watch in its present form is moribund. It was conceived at a time when almost the only information interconnection between houses was by landline and was designed to allow information to fan out through nodes eventually to reach most of the target audience. This was necessary because landline allows only one-to-one conversations.

The advent of iPhones, iPads, and personal computers which enable connection with multiple recipients renders landline communication unsuitable for this purpose.

It was agreed therefore that "Neighbourhood Watch" would not be an agenda item for future meetings although a 'Police Matters' item will need to be retained to enable any future incidents to be discussed.

8 Parochial Church Council [Michael Porter]

Here we are after Andy Larkins's retirement in interregnum, although it doesn't seem like an interregnum with John Horton having taken responsibility during his retirement. What a wonderful job he is doing. Also, such excellent support from our officers, all ladies.

I must add my thanks to Wendy, Lynda, Ali, Anne, and Alice for keeping the show on the road.

Worship has been maintained on a weekly basis, and our numbers are steady.

The Churchyard wildlife area is ticking along with the support of our twelve volunteers sharing the grass mowing. We are very fortunate to have such sound support from so many folk both inside and outside the Church building. We must wait and see what this next year brings. Finally a word of thanks to you for all that you do.

9 Village Hall Committee [Phil Derbyshire]

Although it might appear no improvements have been made since the meeting here this time last year, in fact a great achievement has been the completely new roof installation.

The first time the hall has been totally waterproof in years.

The 100 club provides a small income, but more members are needed.

The coffee stop has been resurrected and takes place on the first Saturday of the month.

The art continues to meet every week.

Cedar house gardens were opened, and village ladies provided homemade cakes and tea for visitors, all proceeds going to village hall funds.

The committee ladies continue to plan interesting fundraising fixtures.

Sunday lunches are always a sellout.

June will have a pub and BBQ night.

Cedar house gardens will open in August with village ladies again providing teas.

Wasperton sale will take place in September.

A pub date is earmarked for December.

A new notice board in memory of Sylvia Fenwick is on order.

The possibility of installing Wi-fi is being investigated.

10 Sand and Gravel Extraction [the Chairman and Jonathan Wallis]

The Chairman reported that although there had been no major developments on the quarry application, a significant amount of work was being progressed on several fronts, some of which was described on the Barford Residents Association (BRA) website.

WCC had reacted to the very large number of comments and reactions received during the consultation period by sending a 'Regulation 25' letter to Smiths. This requested more information to clarify specific areas of the application.

The Chairman noted that he saw very little correspondence between the concerns expressed at previous Wasperton meetings and the emphasis placed on particular issues in the Regulation 25 letter. There was essentially no explicit reference to impacts on Wasperton village, and 'Wasperton' was even excluded from the title of the JPC. In particular, one of the main concerns – that traffic lights at the site entrance could exacerbate existing acute problems at the Wasperton A429 junction – was not addressed.

The view was expressed that this indicated a failure to effectively raise Wasperton's concerns despite including them in personal and Council objector submissions, and that continuing efforts should be made to rectify this.

In parallel with the Regulation 25 developments work was progressing on reports being prepared on behalf of objectors. The JPC had commissioned a report on the Applicant's dust assessment, pointing out among other things that particulate dust emission standards had recently become more stringent. The Sand And Gravel Action Group (SAGAG) had commissioned reports on air quality and transport, which were due to be made available on the BRA website.

11 Wasperton Paddock

Following dismissal of the appeal against refusal of the previous application, no further submissions had been received.

Residents were reminded that the paddock had been proposed as a potential development site for inclusion in the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP), although this does not necessarily mean that it will be formally adopted as such. A second call for sites was due to be announced in the near future.

12 Other Matters Raised by Electors

At several points during the meeting, speakers warned that potential developments in the vicinity of Wasperton could have significant impacts on the village. These included early proposals for development sites in Barford and Wellesbourne (e.g. those submitted to the SWLP) and a 'masterplan' for a Wellesbourne Innovation Campus on the A429. If implemented, these were likely to increase the traffic on the A429, adding to any such problems resulting from the quarry development.

Residents were advised to take note of any such developments, and to be prepared to comment/object as appropriate.

13 James Johnson

In view of James Johnson's impending retirement as JPC Clerk, the Chairman and Wasperton residents thanked him enthusiastically for his help and guidance in running the Wasperton APM over so many years.

14 Appointment of Chairman for 2024-25

Michael Metcalfe was elected unopposed, but he made clear his intention not to stand for re-election a year hence.

15 Closure

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:00pm.