

**PARISH OF BARFORD
ANNUAL MEETING
MON 17 APR 23**

Present: J V Murphy (Chairman)
Sixteen other electors
In attendance: Cllr T Merrygold (Barford Sherbourne & Wasperton JPC)
Cllr J Matecki (WDC &WCC)

Introduction The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting.

Minutes of the annual meeting held on 4 April 2022 The minutes were approved as a true record. There were no matters arising.

Annual Report of Chairman of Joint Parish Council

I'll try and keep my report short, as we have a very full agenda, just covering off a few local village matters and then a few that are affecting the wider three parishes.

King Georges Field

We have had a busy year at King Georges Field for two main reasons, one good, one bad. On the good side we have re-surfaced the footpath from the corner of KGF past the allotments all the way down to the edge of the area surrounding the current Scout Hut. We chose not to re-surface that section on the basis that it is likely to be damaged during the build of the Youth and Community Centre and will need re-surfacing at the end of that build.

The bad one – is the work needed on the toilet block to repair it after two acts of vandalism, first a fire and then broken windows. Repairs meant that we had to close the toilets for some months. While the insurers paid for the fire damage, we have had to put extra funds into the block ourselves, upgrading the lock on the toilet door and putting protective wire screens over all the windows to protect them from being broken in the future. This money is of course, yours, from your council tax.

The Glebe Hotel

One of the main JPC activities is our work being consulted on Planning Applications. Most of these go through without objections, for some we make comments or suggestions for changes, many of which are accepted.

Some we object to, and the highest profile among these is the Glebe Hotel. As you will know this has gone through a number of iterations and as with many of you, we submitted a lengthy objection to the last version covering a variety of issues. The Applicant is now taking this to appeal, which is happening in mid-May and Cllr Murphy will be representing the JPC at the appeal.

Now onto the wider things affecting the village.

Minerals Plan

The Local Minerals Plan saga continues to rumble on and has reached the stage where despite the objections of the JPC and numerous local residents, the Wasperton site has been included in the approved WCC Minerals Plan.

Following this, the appointed contractor, Smiths Concrete Ltd have submitted a detailed Planning Application to operate the Sand and Gravel Quarry at the site. Unusually this Planning Application is being handled by WCC and not WDC so the consultation process is not as straightforward as normal. The JPC has submitted a lengthy objection to this on a few grounds, which are not worth repeating in detail here.

There have also been over 1,500 other local responses to the consultation. Although the consultation period has officially finished, WCC will still accept some written submissions. The Sand and Gravel Action Group are commissioning several additional detailed reports which they hope will add more weight to their objections, and the JPC has commissioned a report on the predicted problems with generation of dust from the site.

WDC have also adopted a very robust stance on the Applications.

So, while we can't predict the outcome, the fight is not over.

South Warwickshire Local Plan

Last year I talked briefly about the South Warwickshire Local Plan which is being prepared jointly by Warwick and Stratford District councils. This is to replace the current plans when they expire (2029 for Warwick and 2031 for Stratford) and take the councils on to 2050.

They put out an initial 'Call for Sites' so that any landowners or developers could put forward any sites that they may want to be considered for any change of use. All of this has now been collated on an

interactive map covering the whole of South Warwickshire and you can drill into this map and see all the sites put forward within the boundaries of all three of our parishes and the surrounding areas. This has now moved on to the Consultation Stage and the JPC have submitted very detailed responses covering our concerns for the effects on the three parishes. In Summary we are concerned about the continual creep of Warwick southwards, and Wellesbourne in all directions with the potential to create a large South Warwickshire Conurbation. Among our objections and comments, we have cited the complete lack of any infra-structure planning and have suggested a 'red line' at the M40, south of which there should be no further development, together with a similar 'red line' to avoid any development to the west of the A429, heading north from Wellesbourne.

Wellesbourne Innovation Campus

Moreover, and not included in the SWLP, Warwick University have issued an outline Master Plan for the Wellesbourne Campus (the old HRI site) with plans to turn it into an Innovation Hub with opportunities for commercial and industrial development for high-tech industries, all in a sympathetically sustainable design.

Sadly, the Master Plan contains no detail whatsoever, about sizes of units, numbers of jobs generated, amount of traffic generated, and all images have the caveat added that they are representative only and any buildings may not end up looking anything like them.

One of the local concerns about the Quarry site is the amount of heavy traffic that will be generated and the extra traffic from the Wellesbourne Campus is likely to completely dwarf this.

This site is in the Stratford District and the JPC is not routinely consulted on SDC Planning Applications, but we have submitted a response to their Consultation, expressing our concerns and insisting that we are included as one of the Statutory Consultees as the plans progress.

Summary

At the risk of leaving you all with a very gloomy view of the future of our lovely rural area and lifestyle you can at least be safe in the knowledge that we will keep a close eye on all of these and continue to influence them as much as we can.

Finally, I would like to thank all our councillors and parish clerk who have served their electors well throughout the year.

Cllr Tony Merrygold

Warwick District Councillors' Annual Report

Warwick District Council, (WDC), froze the District Council element of Council Tax for the second year running. The opposition, as they did last year, wanted to increase it by the maximum amount allowable, despite the Council generating around £1.5m per year through a joint venture by the local housing company that the Councils owns. £52,000 was allocated to food banks, which is £1,000 per week, as well as other measures to help the most vulnerable in our society.

A new Development Policy Document, (DPD), has been submitted to Government for approval. The DPD will force any new developments in the district to be built to a much higher environmentally friendly building standard, which will reduce carbon emissions and also provide more energy efficient homes. The Inspector has had a public review of the DPD, and we hope it will become part of the Local Plan by the autumn of 2023.

WDC will be moving out of Riverside House in Leamington. The backroom function will be moving to offices in Saltisford, Warwick, with a front office facility being introduced in the Pump Rooms in Leamington Spa. It is planned to have 'floor walkers' in the Pump Rooms to meet residents and help them with their enquiries. There will be private meeting rooms available, and a member of the housing team will also always be on site to deal with any urgent housing needs. The move is planned to take place around June 2023. A purchaser of Riverside House has been found, who will develop the site to include 40% affordable homes and retaining the protected trees.

The District hosted the Commonwealth Games bowls and men's and women's road cycle races. These were a great success bringing a lot our tourism and business into the district, as well as showcasing Warwick and Leamington to the rest of the world. Bowls England are hoping to host more international events at the newly laid international standard greens in Victoria Park, and there has been an upsurge in interest from filming companies wanting to film around the area. This will bring more revenue into the local economy and into the Council.

An Additional Licensing proposal has gone out to consultation to look at making all houses of multi-occupation, (HMOs), licensable. Currently, only homes that have 5 or more occupants from 2 or more households need to be inspected and have a license. The proposal is that all HMOs, defined as 3 or more people from 2 or more households sharing a property, in the district should be licensed. The extra revenue from the licensing fee will self-fund the extra staff required for inspections and

enforcement. The scheme will also penalise those landlords that do not fulfil their duties in managing HMOs in an appropriate manner. It is hoped the scheme will be approved by October 2023.

Two brand new leisure facilities in Kenilworth have started to be constructed. The sports centre at castle Farm and the swimming pool complex at Abbey Fields have been demolished and work started on the new buildings. The new swimming pools at Abbey Fields will have a pool with a moveable floor so that younger children and those with disabilities will be able to use the pool with depths to suit their needs. It will be a first in the district for a pool with such facilities.

Finally, a grant of £250,000 has been secured from WDC for the new proposed Youth and Community centre in Barford. The grant is subject to conditions being met, which have been put in place to ensure that the project is a viable proposition. This grant being made available should help in secured other grants that were dependant on WDC funding and will hopefully now see the project more forward at an accelerated pace.

Cllrs Jan Matecki & Alan Rhead

Warwickshire County Councillor's Annual Report

The year has been dominated by the cost-of-living crisis. As well as providing advice to families, Warwickshire County Council has supported residents with financial support through various grants and schemes. £3.47m of grants was made available through the Household Support Fund, and a further £180,000 was made available to voluntary and community groups to establish projects that helped address the cost-of-living crisis.

The new all through school in Bishop's Tachbrook, Oakley School, was granted planning permission and work started on the school in December 2022. It is on target to open in September 2024, with the first year 7 intake scheduled to start in September 2023 spending their first year in Myton School's new 6th form centre, which is also currently being built and on target to be ready for the pupils to start in September 2023. There was no catchment area set for pupils wanting to start at Oakley school in September 2023. September 2024 will see the arrival of the September 2024 year 7 intake, as well as the year 8 pupils move from Myton 6th form centre. There will also be an intake of reception year children in 2024.

On the theme of education, a Task and Finish group has been set up to look into the inequalities of education throughout the county. The group are investigating why certain schools have children that underperform, while others in predominantly deprived areas perform well. I am part of the group and a report is expected to be issued later in the year.

A new on 'on demand' bus service, IndieGo Plus, was introduced to replace the old No.16 bus service. Residents in an area from M40 to the south, A452 to the north, A46 to the east and A4177/Five Ways Road to the west can use an App or telephone to book a bus journey at times they need. Journeys can be booked within the area, or to Kenilworth and Warwick. Residents in Warwick can also book journeys into that area. It has been dubbed by many residents as the 'Uber' bus service and has received a very positive response. It is hoped that the service will be expanded to other rural communities if it continues to be successful.

The annual public health report has been issued. It highlights how the cost of living is starting to affect the health and wellbeing of residents, and that there is a risk of exacerbating further the health inequalities that already exist within the county. The newly formed Integrated Care System has been given recommendations on how to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and involves focus on food, housing and transport. The full report is available online.

The Warwickshire Minerals Plan was adopted, which included the Wasperton site for the extraction of sand and gravel. A planning application has been submitted for the site, but it is not expected to be presented to committee for consideration before autumn 2023. I continue to object to a quarry being at this site, and I am working with the local sand and gravel committee in their fight to have the application refused.

The WCC Council Tax increase for 2023-24 was set at 3.94%, which includes 1% for the Adult Social Care levy. The budget included investments of:

- £24.8m to protect elderly and vulnerable adults
- £8.2m for home to school transport
- £5.4m for children's social care services
- £1.8m to support children and young adults with disability placements
- £1.2m in the Waste Management service to meet increased demand
- £0.8m in Fire & Rescue Service to review current strategies and processes.

More locally, the JPC area of Barford, Wasperton and Sherbourne Parish Councils, has seen some improvements on the roads. White lines have been painted on parts of Barford roads to stop parking, new fencing installed along the A429, and the layby just south of the Wasperton turn has also had

new surfaces laid at the entrances. Funding has also been secured for 20mph limits to be installed in Barford along Bridge Street and Church Street/High Street, but I will push to have this extended to include Wellesbourne Road if at all possible.

Cllr Jan Matecki

Police Matters

Your Safer Neighbourhoods Team (SNT) is a group of local police officers dedicated to serving your community. The team is made up of Police Officers, PCSOs, Special Constables and volunteers based in your area, supported by additional officers from the wider area. The team are accessible and have the skills and experience to identify and address local issues to ensure that communities are safe places to live, work and visit. Key to the success of the Safer Neighbourhood initiative is the involvement of our local partners. Together with Safer Neighbourhood teams, they are committed to addressing local and force-wide concerns that impact upon quality of life. The Safer Neighbourhood teams work with many partners from the wider community, many of them volunteers like our Neighbourhood Watch coordinators, who are willing to give up their time to help make their communities safer. The Warwick Rural West team covers the Bishop's Tachbrook, Budbrooke, Lapworth and LeekWootton electoral wards in Warwick District. These four wards cover the parishes of Baddesley Clinton, Barford, Beausale, Bishop's Tachbrook, Budbrooke, Bushwood, Haseley, Hatton, Honiley, Lapworth, Leek Wootton & Guys Cliffe, Rowington, Sherbourne, Shrewley, Wasperton and Wroxall. If you would like to contact the team then you can call us on 01926 684397 or you can email us on wrw.snt@warwickshire.police.uk. However if you need to report a crime then please call 101 or report this on the police website on www.warwickshire.police.uk. In an emergency, call 999. We are also encouraging the use of our Warwickshire Connected service. This is a free messaging service brought to you by Warwickshire Police where you decide when and how you hear about the issues that matter most to you, whether that be getting regular crime updates, the latest information on ongoing incidents and emergencies or learning more about what your local police are doing. This is also the place where you can get involved in helping to make your local area a safer place, tell us what police should be doing in your area, shape the initiatives that help to keep people and property safe and tell us what matters are causing your communities harm, To sign up, go to <https://www.warwickshireconnected.com/>

Allotments Report JPC

Things have been far more settled in the post-pandemic situation during the past season. The hot weather of 2022 caused record demand for water. An extra water tank has been installed and is well used.

Most welcome footpath improvements were carried out during the year, hopefully reducing the trespass on allotment land.

We welcomed 7 new tenants for the 2023 season and currently the waiting list for Barford is clear.

We have 6 names on the list for the wider Warwick District.

The relationship with our water supplier is improved but not perfect. Like other Utility Suppliers they are attempting to invoice against estimated consumption which can often be overstated. Our consumption fluctuates wildly with the season and the weather. One wonders why they do not simply read the meter.

Roger Clay

Allotments Report PCC

There are 30 current allotment license holders, 17 of whom pay in arrears and 13 who pay in advance having taken on their allotment since the rules were changed some years ago.

There are no vacant plots at the moment and there is a small wait list.

The annual rental for a standard plot was increased to £50 last year (which will be applied to the 'in arrears' holders this September). At this rate, the church plots still represent very good value alongside the JPC allotments.

Jonathan Partridge

Barford Community Charity

Barford Community Charity continues to welcome applications to fund projects which benefit the villages of Barford Wasperton and Sherbourne

The charity has committed £80k to the BYCC and up to £20k to FABS for the school solar initiative as a combination of grant and matched funding. We are exploring making a contribution to the Sand and

Gravel campaign. Our charitable objects allow us to make grants to protect the environment of our communities and it is hope we can make a contribution to sand and gravel within this.

The Charity has received a donation of £17,500 from the village shop which will be reported by the shop at their AGM. Uncommitted funds currently stand at £36,229.

Funds are available for eligible projects. Applications can be made to the current Chair John Murphy or to any of the Trustees: Alison Gadsden, Liz Harrison-Hall, Alice Helps, Sue Jessett, Barbara Moore, Mary Peirson or Alan Rhead.

Mary Peirson

Barford Heritage Group

The group have had six meetings this year, starting on the 20th of January 2022. Despite having to have zoom meetings in the early part of the year a lot has been decided and acted upon. The group has a very skilled group of researchers and archivists.

Sadly, this year, one of our stalwart members, Ken Hope, died. Ken was a very keen, thorough, researcher and did an enormous amount of work, particularly on Watchbury House. He enjoyed our more dramatic presentations and always dressed the part.

The early part of the year was taken up with discussion and action about the Dovecot at the back of the old Glebe hotel. A group has been set up with JPC members to try and make sure this building does not deteriorate anymore and that perhaps the village can take it over in some form. The barge boards have been rescued and are now stored in the scout hut storage area.

A new Village Trail has been discussed and is underway and archiving continues to be a problem.

Children at school once again, have visited Caroline Hewitt's grave. They put posies of primroses onto the grave of her daughter Harriet who was a major benefactor in the school. The school is very enthusiastic about this and also likes having our information booklets.

We have received the final archaeological reports on the Nursery site and hopefully this will get onto our Heritage website. We have also received a report from the archaeological dig which was done at the Youth and Community Centre. The firm that did this was excellent, very community minded.

Carol Whiteley presented a PowerPoint presentation to the WI in early October and was helped by Hilary Maynard. It went very well indeed and with some extra padding and reminiscences it was put on for the village in late October. This was centred mainly on Bridge Street, we have been asked if we can do this in future covering Church Street or High Street which we are doing this September. Many thanks to Carol for her sterling work.

We are very lucky that Alan McDermott has taken over as temporary Webmaster for our interactive website. Thank you Alan.

Researchers have been working on all sorts of interesting subjects, such as a Barford policeman (Thomas Charles White) and Benjamin Herring All yet to be published. An account of 19th-century Barford written by Henry Maynard has also been delivered. Various homeowners in the village sought the group's help in tracing their properties' history.

Doug Warne has issued a leaflet of notable women- volume two.

Stella Rutherford has been archiving contents of boxes from the storage area. She interviewed Bill Worrall about the forge, his father and grandfather.

She has also taken on compiling items from various sources about how the county and village coped during the Covid pandemic and subsequent months.

We are very grateful to Ann McDermott for dealing with the many website queries as well as her own research.

A major piece of work for 2023 is a presentation of the Barford School history. A running loop of pictures with music and commentary will be presented. A mock up classroom and presentation boards will create atmosphere. Extracts from reminiscences and logbooks will also be on show.

The history of Church Street or High Street is booked for the 13th of October

In 2024 we will be creating a book on the history of the school.

We are also going to be concentrating on present history, for example, the coronation in Barford and how it was celebrated.

Wendy Barlow

Barford Relief in Need Charity

Statistically, on average Barford is one of the richest villages in Warwickshire, so why does it still need a Relief in Need charity? Its very name recalls the old Poor Laws dating back to the 16th century, when Barford was socially and economically nothing like it is today. The answer is that the statistical average includes multi-millionaires at one end but at the other end of the calculation people who in the good times are just about coping but, when something suddenly goes wrong in their lives, find

themselves unable to cope financially, such as: they are on a zero-hours contract and the hours do not come through; they are declared redundant; their relationship breaks down; they develop a chronic disease and they cannot work; or, yes it happens even in Barford, their partner is sent to prison. Often we find it is multiple issues like these that affect people.

Then suddenly the bills mount up and they run out of credit or a vital item of household equipment stops working and they cannot afford to replace it. Eventually they may be threatened with eviction and their children may have to be taken into care. It is in circumstances like these that the Barford Relief in Need charity can help to overcome the immediate crisis through giving temporary financial assistance.

We can help with a one-off grant, but we have realized that frequently our applicants need on-going advice and help, so we have developed an information sheet listing other sources of help and advice. This is given to relevant applicants and copies have been placed in the leaflet racks in the village shop.

Over the last year we have approved grants totaling nearly £10,000 to 11 Barford residents and families in need. Over time the type of applicant has changed. Previously typical applications were from elderly people reliant on the State Pension. Now increasingly the applications are from young families or single parents who are finding it difficult to cope with the increasing cost of living.

Looking to the much longer term, the Trust needs a larger endowment. It has not received a bequest for 50 years but in that time the size of the village has grown significantly and so, in particular, has the amount of social housing, from which many of our applicants come. Our funds are coming under pressure and there may shortly come a time when we will not be able to help good cases to the extent that they need. Although most of our work necessarily has to be carried out in the strictest confidence, it is still vital for the well-being of many in our community. If you are thinking of making a charitable bequest, then bear us in mind.

Finally, we should mention some significant retirements of people who have given their time to the Trust over many years: Gerard Veness was Chair of the Trustees for 18 years and Terry and Barbara Offiler were Joint Clerks to the Trust for 17 years. They made important contributions to the work of the Trust, particularly in moving it to a more systematic and modern way of working. They have been replaced by myself as Chair and Rob Mulgrue as Clerk.

John Barrott

Barford School Trust

Some background history of the Trust: Barford St Peter's School Trust is a Charity established under the Charity Commissioners sealed 22nd July 1997, and combines two former charities, the Dugard and Mills Endowment created in 1667, and the Barford School Trust created in 1836.

The Charity owns land and buildings for the purpose of furthering education for the children of the parish.

Objectives

The Charity has the following objectives in terms of the distribution of its income as outlined in the Scheme dated 22nd July 1997:

To provide equipment and other items, services and facilities for, and thereby advance education at, the School.

To promote the education, including social and physical training, of pupils and former pupils of the School under the age of 25 years who are in need of financial assistance in one or both of the following ways or in such other ways as the Trustees think fit:

by awarding to such pupils and former pupils scholarships, exhibitions, bursaries, maintenance allowances or grants tenable at any school, university, college of education, or other institution of further education approved for the purpose by the Trustees;

by providing financial assistance, outfits, clothing, tools, instruments or books to assist such pupils and former pupils to pursue their education (including the study of music and other arts), to undertake travel in furtherance thereof, or to prepare for or enter a profession, trade occupation or service on leaving school, university, or other educational establishment.

On this last note I would like to say that I have been a trustee for 20 years and the requests for helping individual pupils and ex pupils has increased more than I can ever recall, this surely reflects the current economic situation.

Assisting the school is the Trust's main objective and to this end the school and pupils benefit tremendously by:

Providing significant financial support to enable the school to progress the project to create a new wrap-around care unit with enhanced facilities for pre-school and reception classes.

Supporting the school by making financial contributions in line with the agreed infrastructure expenditure plans to support the school's growth and continued excellent standard of education.

Maintaining and improving the properties owned by the Charity to protect their asset value and maximize their realizable rental income.

Helen Clay

Barford St. Peter's Primary School

During the Summer of 2022 we were very fortunate to have significant building alterations at school which was made possible by the generosity of both the diocese and the Barford School Trust. Internally, our pre-school and reception were separated out enabling them both to have their own space. The reception classroom was reconfigured to ensure it was an appropriate size and includes their own toilets. An internal courtyard was filled in and roofed to create a multi-functional space which is used from 7.30am for breakfast club and throughout the day for interventions, small group work, music lessons, counselling, lunch club, and then again for after school club.

These changes have had a significantly positive impact on the children.

We are very blessed to have experienced and dedicated teachers and support staff who continue to work exceptionally hard to make up for lost time over the past 2 years. We have rigorous and effective interventions in place for maths, writing, reading and phonics for children who need them.

We have this year implemented a new phonics scheme which is working well. We have also been focusing on the way we teach maths and reviewing current research and implementing this in practice. This is beginning to improve maths teaching throughout school and we are now focussing on ensuring we provide adequate challenge for the more able.

We have continued to develop our outdoor learning and thanks to our wonderful FABs committee we have a fabulous "kitchen garden" with a raised bed for each class where they grow vegetables. We also have our 6 chickens who are cared for by each class on a rota. All are laying well and children cook with the eggs on a regular basis.

We continue to enjoy a full calendar of services at St Peter's church including our Reception welcome service, Harvest, Advent, Christingle, Christmas, Easter, and our Leavers' service.

Over the past year we have held many fantastic community events, including the Jubilee celebration, the summer fair, Macmillan coffee morning and the bonfire night, all of which were well attended and it is always wonderful to have so many members of the Barford Community join us for these. We also hosted 'Apple Fest' to help with the Youth and Community centre fund raising efforts.

We are currently liaising with the community to organize the forthcoming Coronation celebration.

Finally, we have been exploring the possibility of converting to an academy over the past 12 months.

We are currently engaged in the process of due diligence with the Arden Forest multi academy trust and the school governors will make a final decision in May.

School remains extremely popular and we are currently oversubscribed for our reception cohort for September.

Mary Baker

Barford St Peter's Church PCC

Following two years of disruption caused by the pandemic, in the last year church services finally returned to normal and all the major festivals were supported in the traditional fashion.

Thanks are due to Revd Andy Larkin, our assistant minister Revd John Horton and our three readers, Ann Fawcett, Chris Farr and Malcolm Dawson for all their hard work in supporting this.

Since May last year, a monthly Family Service has been introduced which has increased the close links between the church and the school and brought many new people into the church.

The church is very fortunate still to have the services of Chris Farr as organist and choir master and the ten members of the choir who support services throughout the year and special occasions like the Queen's Jubilee last year and the King's Coronation this year.

Each year, the church produces an Annual Report which is sent to the members of the Electoral Roll ahead of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting which this year is on 3rd May. This provides a much more comprehensive overview of the church's activities and finances. A copy will also be placed in the church.

There are currently 73 people on the church electoral roll. In the last year we have lost three (sadly through deaths) and gained one member.

The escalating costs of energy, insurance and other items have put the church finances under pressure and, for the second year running, expenditure exceeded income despite some very successful events and the generosity of the wider community on Gift Day.

This is a worrying trend and emphasizes the need to try and attract newcomers to the regular congregation and find more ways to raise funds from the community and grant bodies. The financial position has limited the amount of work on the fabric of the church that has been possible, but one of the gas heaters was replaced last year and later this month work will commence in the churchyard extension on a project to provide a hardstanding area for hearses to pull off the road and a hard-surfaced footpath through to King George's Field (the latter element kindly being funded by the JPC).

The church was also able to donate over £4,300 to a range of charities from monies raised through collections or events and from church funds.

A small group of dedicated people help in many ways to keep the church going – our wardens, cleaners, flower arrangers, welcomers, bell ringers, churchyard team – and we are very grateful to them all.

Jonathan Partridge

Barford Youth & Community Centre

Since this time last year, there have been major developments in our project to build a new Youth & Community Centre to replace the existing Hut.

Last Spring, a full re-costing exercise told us that, as feared, there had been a significant increase in the cost to completion for the new Y&CC as designed and specified. This meant a 're-think' was needed and we held further consultations with the local community to explain the situation, provide some options on how we might progress and hear views and suggestions.

From this and our continuing contact with WDC, it was clear that we should find a way to both reduce the cost and have a clear aim to begin construction in 2023.

Further work to investigate options brought us to settle on a new approach of having a steel frame building with essentially the same footprint and layout as the earlier design.

With this costed, we were able to gain the recommitment of grants from the JPC, Barford Community Charity and Barford Relief In Need Charity. Importantly, through our work with WDC officers and with the active support of councillors Rhead and Matecki, we were able to secure a grant commitment of £250,000 from WDC.

Very importantly, taking this approach brought us the pledge of a £100,000 gift and a further £100,000 zero-interest loan from a local resident – for which we are immensely grateful.

As well as continuing to submit applications to other grant bodies (some of which have already been successful) we began new, local fundraising initiatives and these too are bringing in further donations and pledges.

From all of this, we believe we are now less than £20,000 from being able to place the contract for construction to start, with a price firm until the end of June.

There is still work to do to clear some of the conditions linked to the WDC and JPC funding commitments, such as getting the Coventry Diocesan Trustees to agree a 30-year lease (which is outside our control), but we are working through those and making progress.

WE ARE NEARLY THERE!

We are continuing to seek additional funds to give us cover against contingencies, enhance the new building, and support its future.

While all this has been happening, we have continued with the running of the Hut, with use by regular groups and ad hoc bookings, with local fundraising activities and with seeking to keep the local community updated by various means.

We've also expanded our trustees, including by adding a new, ex-officio post for a representative of the JPC.

Although BYCC is not involved in the running of the Barford Scout Group, they are our most frequent "user group" and a vital part of what we enable for the local community.

After nearly 15 years as Group Scout Leader, Martin Russell is moving on to a position within the wider scouting district. Andrew Cameron, the cub leader, is also moving onto a district role after his 6 years with the group. Both positions are being filled and the group will have 10 adult leaders after Easter. Martin & Andrew will still be involved with Barford Scout Group, but it won't be them in charge anymore. There are now 91 young people active in Scouting in Barford, with the three sections at capacity.

I'll be saying more about the last year at our AGM on 19th June – which we're planning to hold in the Church on the assumption that the Hut won't be available!

Finally, and as always – great thanks from BYCC to the local community for your continuing support, which never fails to impress me.

Thank you.

Ian Paterson

Barford Village Shop

The shop has continued to provide a comprehensive service to the three villages, and the more 'normal' trading hours were reinstated as the restrictions in society have eased. We are still aware of the ongoing challenges due to Covid, and for the time being the 'sneeze screens' will be retained on the counter.

Can I again express the Boards thanks to all volunteers that have supported the shop over the past 12 months, those that were 'temporary', those that were able to maintain their presence during the pandemic, and those that have returned. Thank you all.

The shop does, however struggle at times to fill volunteer slots, and the management of the rota does continue to take up a large amount of Corenna's time.

The new till system has settled down and this provides Corenna and Mary in particular, and to the directors via their reporting, with a greater level of detail and control over stock and sales. At this point I would like to thank Mary Peirson for her continued dedication to the 'back office' via her role as Treasurer (and more).

The Café area continues to provide its service as a meeting place and refreshments as required.

Shop turnover has increased over the 12 months to Q1 2023 in comparison to 2022 and is approximately 10% up on the previous year. Of course, the inflationary effect of retail prices will have had something to do with that. However, the average number of weekly transactions has also increased over the same period last year but is not as high as pre-pandemic levels. Average sales are approximately £29,000 per month.

The shop contributed a significant five figure sum to Barford Community Charity this last year, Mary Peirson has reported upon this separately.

As we all are experiencing at home, shop energy costs are a concern to the directors, particularly because of the need to run refrigeration 24/7. The electricity supply contract is due for renewal in April 2024, accordingly we have implemented a swap out of the old fluorescent shop floor lighting, for LED bulbs, which has halved the shop floor lighting electrical consumption. We are also investigating further measures.

We are also endeavouring to talk to WDC planners about the use of Photovoltaic panels to feed the shop electrical supply. At present feedback is slow from WDC.

Costs will be incurred this year in refreshing the main shop signage and external/internal redecorations.

There has been a change in Directors in the period, Gordon Williamson and John Murphy left us, and Colette Long and Jon Holliday have joined the Board

I will conclude by again thanking Corenna for all her dedication and hard work for these last 12 months, she has continued to marshal the troops with efficiency and good humour and helped to keep the shop the valuable asset that it is. Thank you, Corenna.

Mike Sheard

Post Office

The last year has been notable for problems that we have had to cope with which were not of our making.

We have been beset by Royal Mail strikes. If the Postman is not going to collect at the end of the day, then we cannot open as we have nowhere secure to store the mail. An agreement with the Union has now been reached so these closures should cease.

Royal Mail has also had a problem with sending parcels abroad apparently caused by a "cyber-attack". This has now been overcome but it requires the custom declaration information to be entered manually into the system from the Custom form. This takes a lot more time and lengthens the waiting queue.

We have had a new recruit (David Coleman) join us this year and is now fully trained - well as fully trained as any of us. The Post Office seems to revel in adding new procedures and changing existing procedures, so it is a constant battle to keep up to date.

My thanks go to the Barford Post team who have kept the Post Office open (whenever possible) during the last year and to Corenna who has coped with an everchanging rota in her usual, very efficient way -and always a smile.

Rod Scott

Bar Zero

Repair Café

We have run the repair café in the Scout Hut on the first Sunday of most months this year, saving a wide variety of objects from landfill including table lamps, Christmas lights, a honey extractor, curtains and bicycles. We have sharpened garden secateurs and shears. At the end of April, the café will be moving to the Church while the Scout Hut is being redeveloped. We are grateful for the support of the PCC.

Thermal imaging camera

With a WCC Greenshoots grant we have been able to purchase a thermal imaging camera for free loan to residents. The camera shows temperature differences and allows residents to detect cold spots in their houses which they can then rectify enabling them to reduce energy usage. c30 homes have been surveyed in the period and all have reported finding useful information. We will start again next winter.

Veg Trug

We purchased a veg trug which now stands outside the Memorial Hall, planted with herbs and seasonal veg/salads.

Hedge alongside community Orchard

Despite the drought last summer and the cold snaps this winter, the hedge is surviving well. Michael Mann has recently inspected it.

Recycling

We have expanded our recycling primarily of pill blister packs so we now collect items at repair Café as well as having containers outside houses.

Partnership with JPC

Given the importance of addressing climate change we have been hoping to work more closely with the JPC. As the official village body with direct links to WDC and WCC both of whom have major climate change initiatives, we feel that the JPC is ideally placed to take a lead within our community. However, this is very much a work in progress.

Despite initiating discussions in September, we haven't found an area suitable for wildflowers that we can all agree on, and our plans are shelved for this year.

We also hope that, in the future, the JPC will take up the WCC verge management policy whereby councils can apply to have reduced cutting on verges to allow flowers to grow and set seed. We alerted our contact point to this initiative in early January.

There are other initiatives such as the local infrastructure for car charging that we would like to explore with the JPC in the future.

Exhibitions and Presentations

The purpose of these has been to share what we have done to encourage other groups to take action. Also, by attending these events we often gain ideas ourselves.

We had a stand at Warwick District Councils Ecofest in the Pump Room Gardens, a display at AppleFest in the School and did a presentation to Warwick District Council's Cop 27 event in Leamington Town Hall. Recently we presented to Shrewley Parish Annual meeting.

We held an exhibition in the Village Hall as part of the National Green Week.

Media

We have maintained a regular presence in Village voices and on Facebook giving tips on how people can reduce their carbon footprints.

Mary Peirson

Village Voices Magazine

This is now the 5th year of publishing Village Voices community magazine which follows on from Plurality, the old parish magazine.

VV is produced for the whole community under the umbrella organization of St Peter's Church. We continue to produce 11 editions each year (with a month off in January) and 900 free copies are distributed each month throughout our three villages. As well as going to each household, copies are made available in the village shop, the church and the school. We also have a website which is updated each month with the latest edition and where you can access all past editions from an archive page.

The magazine finances have been a challenge over the past 2 years with printing costs rising dramatically. We tried to stay ahead of the curve and so increased our advertising prices at the beginning of 2022 and again this year. Despite the challenging economic conditions most of our regular advertisers have stayed with us and we are grateful for their continued support. We have 49

advertisers in total, many of whom either live in or run businesses from the villages. We allow up to 15 pages of adverts (out of 48) and our advertising space is currently full meaning that any new enquiries will go on to a waiting list. We impose this limit on advertising space to ensure that there are plenty of pages left to report on our community groups' activities plus other items of local interest.

It is of course our local community groups who contribute most of the material for VV and we are grateful to them for endeavoring to get their copy to us in good time each month. The copy comes in many varied forms and lengths, but we hope that we are successful in presenting it in a cohesive and interesting way. Apart from all the usual regular articles and reports from village organizations, we are always happy to receive suggestions and 'one off' items from individuals (poems, sponsored events, local walks, individual achievements etc.). We also love to receive photos from local residents and those images that are of good quality have often been used for our front cover designs.

Apart from the three editors there is also a wider VV team working in the background. Thanks go to – Sarah Ransome for her hard work liaising with advertisers, Ed Kirkby for hosting our Village Voices website, Jonathan Partridge for managing the finances (and doing the proofreading!) and last but not least our trusty group of magazine deliverers.

Sue Partridge

Appointment of Chairman for 2023-24

John Murphy was appointed.