

**MINUTES OF THE  
BARFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 25**

**Present:** J V Murphy (Chairman)  
Twenty-four other electors  
One non-resident stakeholder

**In attendance:** Cllr P B Phillips (WDC) Cllr J Matecki (WDC & WCC)  
Mrs Mary Baker (Head Teacher)  
Helen Dexter (Clerk)

**Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting.

**Minutes of the annual meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 24**

The minutes were approved as a true record. There were no matters arising.

**Annual Report of Chairman of Joint Parish Council**

2024-2025 has been another busy year!

We started off the year by embarking on our IT modernization project, by installing a new JPC specific computer for the clerk, ready for the impending new clerk/RFO appointment. This is being slowly followed by our move to IT independence and security upgrading, progress on Social Media and specific domain names for emails and a new website – all taking a lot of time and concentration. Additionally, we are hopeful that we may get a new phone mast near to J15 and this may improve the poor mobile signal that we enjoy in our villages - basically, the nearer the mast is the better our signal will be, but we must be aware that the M40 is the priority – not us!

We formed a Succession Planning/Staffing Working Party to recruit a new clerk/RFO and this worked very well, progressing steadily over the early summer to a full

appointment in June. James Johnson retired at the end of July and Helen Dexter took over in August ready for her first solo JPC in September.

We started renovation of the Wellesbourne Road bus shelter early in the year expecting a relatively simple strip and re-tile, however once exposed the scale of the job was clear and a much more radical approach was needed. This caused delays in authorizing funding and getting licences for erection of scaffolding “on the highway”. Costs escalated from £4K to £13K and the project was finally completed in October!

Work on the Barford shelter drew our attention to the Sherbourne shelter, which looked a far more complicated job. As it happened, due to the sound roof and a very practical approach, the work was rather simpler than expected and was completed well under its £3500 budget.

CCTV installed at KGF proved its worth very quickly when a miscreant was easily identified and promptly handed on to the Police for their attentions. Thankfully the CCTV deterrent effect seems to have drastically reduced the vandalism seen on site and whilst a few parents were initially concerned about the CCTV presence, hopefully most are now feeling reassured.

CCTV has also been suggested recently as a response to car and house crime which seems to be on the rise. We have asked the Police to look at the possibilities which may help them and also act as a deterrent. Installation and management costs are likely to be considerable, and where do we stop and start with it?

The end of the year saw us completing the Allotment Path/Public Footpath W96 through to Wasperton Lane and BYCC, along with a tidier link to the latter. The footpath component was funded by JPC s106 contributions from developers and the BYCC section was funded by Barford Community Charity.

Also at BYCC the JPC managed the installation of a defibrillator – suitable for both adults and children – funded by a WCC grant and some money raised by the “Dads’ Football Group”. This will be maintained and funded ongoing by the JPC.

Meanwhile, along with various planning issues, the latest debate concerns the district and county councils – the “Unitary “ debate – Unitary councils will happen as decreed by the current government, but there is a lot to discuss about whether it is a single body for Warwickshire or whether we divide into North and South. Also where else we align with and the possibility of local mayors? – and whether parish councils take on more duties and responsibilities? – lots to consider.

Currently the JPC is under quota for councillors and an extra member is required for both Barford and Wasperton – come and see how our meetings work and consider joining us. It is interesting and involving work

## **Developments in Barford – an update (Cllr J V Murphy)**

Development Updates:

- Sand and Gravel Quarry – currently paused pending applicants’ responses. Further consultation expected.
- Land Around Barford House – Currently no progress due to funding difficulties. Other developers being explored.
- Glebe Hotel site – Permission granted at appeal for partial demolition and erection of 4 town houses. Demolition currently under way.
- W/23/1178 – Bremridge 3 – Permission granted with temporary access onto A429 Barford Bypass - development imminent.
- New South Warwickshire Local Plan – Now past the Preferred Option stage. We held a very successful public meeting with the lead officers presenting. JPC has made strong submissions. The next stage will be the Draft Deposit Plan due in late 2025 for further consultation.

### **Councillor attendance records 2024-2025:**

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>JPC Meetings</b>			<b>Planning Meetings</b>		
	No of Meetings	Present	%	No of Meetings	Present	%
Cllr J T Barrott	10	10	100%	12	10	83%
Cllr J D Billingham	10	10	100%	12	12	100%
Cllr R Clay	10	10	100%	12	12	100%
Cllr H Gadsden	10	6	60%	12	5	42%
Cllr J M Hawkesford	10	8	80%			
Cllr G Jackson	10	8	80%			
Cllr Mrs S Jarratt	10	9	90%	12	10	83%
Cllr Mrs L M Jones	5	2	40%			
Cllr T Merrygold	10	10	100%	12	12	100%
Cllr J V Murphy	10	10	100%	12	12	100%
Cllr Mrs R Newsome	10	8	80%	12	7	58%
Cllr P B Phillips	10	6	60%			
Cllr B Ranner	10	8	80%			
Cllr M J Sheard	10	10	100%	12	7	58%
Cllr Mrs K E Thomson	10	3	30%			
Cllr Mrs L Wallis	7	4	57%	6	4	67%

### **Warwick District Council (Cllr P B Phillips)**

I’m Peter Phillips, one of your Warwick District Councillors, alongside Jan Matecki, who has also been your County Councillor for the last four years. I am also a Parish Councillor on the Joint Parish Council.

Our WDC report back is dominated by one issue for the whole of Budbrooke Ward – the South Warwickshire Local Plan, which sets out the housing plans for the next 25 years. The current Green/Labour administration at Warwick District have put forward a total of 26,885 houses in Green Belt around Budbrooke ward, Kenilworth and the north of Leamington. In addition Barford in particular is also facing a potential 25,845 houses between the village and the south of Warwick.

The spillover effect on the village could be massive, with for example, significantly increased traffic using Barford as a rat run, pressure on local schools, hospitals, GP surgeries, the water supply etc. The community shop, might pick up more trade, but it's a huge price to pay.

I won't bore you with detailing all the scores of meetings that Jan and I have attended over the last 12 months in support of the opposition to these proposals, including public meetings, such as the one in Barford School, meetings with the portfolio holder and planning officers, as well as at parish councils and knocking on doors to talk directly to residents, getting information, answering questions and encouraging residents to respond. It has been our key focus this last year. I'm pleased to say there were at least 23,600 responses across South Warwickshire and these are now being processed by officers. I have no doubt that you in Barford played your part.

We can expect further consultations later this year and we will continue to keep you all informed of these as and when they arise.

Also an issue of increasing concern has been the siting of solar farms on agricultural land in the Green Belt, such as the two at Sherbourne. We look at each proposal individually on Planning Committee, on which I sit, and see if there are exceptional circumstances to approve these on Green Belt land. For instance, I note that there are masses of rooftops in and around our District that could provide solar as well, so I will continue to keep an open mind, but for me to support such a proposal it has to be truly exceptional and I have not seen one that meets that criteria yet.

Jan and I continue to respond to the ongoing normal issues that come up across the ward. We realise that to the individual and families concerned it is far more important than just “day-to-day.” It would be inappropriate to go into details in a public forum, but suffice to say that if any resident has an issue that they want help with from the District Council, please get in touch with me or Jan.

Both Jan and I continue to support the work of SAGAG in its fight to stop the Barford quarry. There still appears to be silence from the proposer, but when they have responded to the questions from the County, we will have just three weeks to respond. As your councillors we will support you the residents in this fight with whatever it takes.

I will briefly cover the government’s proposal to create a unitary authority in Warwickshire – that is merge all 5 District/Boroughs plus the County into one new unitary council. In principle, I support this – yes, a turkey voting for Christmas – as there is complete confusion on many doorsteps as to which council does what. As an example there are some county council candidates, from a different party to me, who believe that they are responsible for bins. This is a district matter, not county. And this list of confusion goes on and on.

Simplifying the structure will both make it easier and be more cost effective for the residents of Warwickshire. But the cackhanded way the government has gone about this, means we have no idea how, when, or even if there will be changes, which creates a great deal of uncertainty, especially for the District Council’s employees.

Thank you again for your ongoing support of our work as Councillors and we look forward to working for you over the coming 12 months

### **Warwickshire County Council (Cllr J Matecki)**

I’m delighted to begin with our educational achievements. In September 2024, Oakley School in Bishop’s Tachbrook opened its doors—a state-of-the-art, £60 million all-through school that spans from nursery right through to secondary education. This flagship project, the largest capital programme the County has ever undertaken, welcomed its very first reception, Year 7, and Year 8 students. This bold

new start not only equips our children with outstanding facilities but also marks an enduring commitment to the future of our young people.

Turning to our environmental goals, significant strides have been made. With nearly £864,000 secured from the Local Authority Treescape Fund, we have approved 24 community orchards—half of which are already flourishing. Alongside this, we've reduced our carbon footprint by almost 1,760 tonnes through innovative energy-saving measures in Council buildings, improved streetlighting, and smarter business travel policies. Looking ahead, an investment of £3.3 million will further accelerate the shift to greener transport by funding electric vehicle charging points across both urban and rural areas, providing accessibility to some 700–800 new points and 1,500 charging sockets.

Our commitment to sustainable transport continues with our expanding electric bus fleet. We now have 27 electric buses operating locally—plus an additional 11 for inter-county routes. The growing success of our IndieGo Plus demand responsive service and the impactful Companion Plus One scheme, which supports those who need a carer to travel safely, further underscores our dedication to ensuring that every journey is efficient and inclusive. In tandem, our proactive 'find and fix' pothole gang has nearly doubled the pace of road repairs this year, demonstrating that preventative care makes a real difference in our everyday lives.

Of course, we also recognize the challenges we face. Home-to-school transport now serves around 12,000 pupils a day—a 20% increase in just three years. As we work to manage rising costs while maintaining high-quality service, rest assured that every child's safe passage remains a priority.

Our children's services have seen remarkable growth as well. By joining forces in the Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme—with partners like Warwickshire Police and the Integrated Care Board—we've established locality-based family help teams and opened four new Ofsted-registered children's homes. These initiatives not only streamline service delivery but also help ensure that vulnerable children remain close to their families and communities.

As we navigate proposals for local government reform and the transition toward a single Unitary Council, we remain focused on addressing financial pressures and upholding sustainable long-term strategies. While discussions continue at the national level, we are committed to shaping a future that reflects local needs and secures a better tomorrow. A joint submission was sent to the government with proposals for a single unitary submitted by the County, and a North and South Warwickshire proposal by the districts and boroughs. It is expected to have feedback from the government on these proposals in May.

On a more local level, the proposed 20mph speed limit along parts of Barford has been delayed due to the design team not preparing drawings for the scheme. These are now being worked on and it is hoped that the formal consultation will be issued in the very near future, with completion later in the year.

I was also pleased to be able to help with a grant for a new defibrillator at the new Barford Youth and Community Centre, which will hopefully save lives in the future.

## **Police Matters**

No representation

## **Barford Residents' Association and Sand & Gravel Action Group**

**(Dr Malcolm Eykyn)**

Now 15 months since WCC sent their Regulation 25 notice to Smiths, the applicant, meaning the planning process has been stalled. However, as a result of further inquiries by our County Councillor, Jan Matecki and MP Sir Jeremy Wright, we understand Smiths are expected to respond this month.

This will trigger the second consultation where the Senior Minerals Planning Officer has now indicated we will have 30 days to respond not 21 as previously stated. Further, the said officer indicated he will “consider” a written request for an extension.

This has given us more time to acquire more information to counter Smiths application, in particular more research into the physics of meteorological transmission and dispersion of toxic particulates in certain conditions. This, in addition to the actual air monitoring we commissioned last year. Both of these pieces of research, we understand, are ground breaking and unique. The latter research has now been successfully peer reviewed and published in the Science Journal of Public Health in December. This journal is based in the USA and has global academic readership.

Although the data collection is now complete for the latest research, we are in the process of getting it peer reviewed and hope to publish it. The former research was submitted in the first consultation and we shall submit this latest research in the second consultation. Both pieces of research reveal concerns about the risks to the health of our communities if the quarry is granted.

We have engaged Wellesbourne and the surrounding village residents in our campaign. Eventually an increasing number of them are showing concerns, not only about the increased traffic but now possible air pollution. As a result, a few of their volunteer residents have agreed to form a Wellesbourne subcommittee so that we can facilitate each other in sharing information and organise those residents wishing to object to mutual benefit.

In the last nine months we have been fortunate to set up a Public Relations Subcommittee of volunteer residents which has taken us to a new and more professional level in dealing with the press and social media platforms. We are very grateful to have their help.

A new round of fundraising was commenced last year to pay for our commissioned experts who completed reports for us in response to Smiths application in the first consultation. They will now need to update their reports for us in response to Smiths response to the regulation 25 notice from the WCC in the second consultation. In addition, we need funding for a KC specialising in minerals planning to scrutinise the Senior Minerals Planning Officer report to the Regulation Committee at Determination.

Thanks to many kind donors we are close to target in this round.

### **JPC Allotments (Cllr Roger Clay)**

All available plots were in use during 2024. However this was a poor year for weather, particularly wet at weekends which made good productivity difficult for many.

The limitation of access by gating has continued to work well.

The JPC decided to join the National Allotment Society and has now been a member for about a year. This has numerous benefits for advice etc. but crucially provides public liability insurance to tenants and the JPC at the reasonable annual cost of £3 per plot. This action followed a full review of all the JPC insurance cover and a consultation with tenants. All respondents were in favour of this action. The extra fee will be added to rents in 2026.

All plots are taken for this year with five keen new tenants joining us and a few of our old stalwarts moving on. There are only two people on the waiting list but they do not wish to be considered for plots until 2026.

Let us hope that this good weather continues for this summer.

**PCC Allotments (Jonathan Partridge – St. Peter's Barford PCC Vice-chair and Treasurer)** There are 31 current allotment licence holders, 14 of whom pay in arrears and 17 who pay in advance having taken on their allotment since the rules were changed some years ago.

All of the plots are now taken except for one half plot which is rather overgrown.

The annual rental for a standard plot is still £50 (it was increased to this amount two years ago). At this rate, the church plots still represent very good value alongside the JPC allotments.

The PCC is very grateful to Jane Stamp who manages the allotments on a day to day basis and collects the annual rents from the licence holders and also to Roger



Clay who apportions the water charges between the JPC and PCC for their respective allotments.

### **Barford Community Charity (Chair – John Murphy)**

This year the BCC received a further £25,500 from Barford Village Shop

Over the year BCC has funded:

- Barford Youth and Community Centre (main build) £80,000
- Barford St Peter's Church New access ramp in partnership with BRINC
- Sand & Gravel group - £10K for essential reports
- Barford School Solar scheme £16.2K
- Barford Heritage Group – Barford History Book £3594
- BYCC new footpath link – contributed £1000
- Claimed Gift Aid towards the BYCC defibrillator

Current trustees are: John Murphy (Chair), Mary Peirson, Alice Helps (Wasperton), Barbara Moore (Sherbourne), Alan Rhead, Liz Harrison-Hall, Alison Gadsden and Sue Jessett.

### **Barford Relief in Need Charity (Rob Mulgrue - Clerk to the Trustees,)**

The objects of the Charity are defined in its governing document as the relief of poverty, sickness or old age and the advancement of education amongst residents of the parish of Barford or in exceptional circumstances those immediately outside the parish, which is interpreted to mean residents of Sherbourne and Wasperton.

Last year was a busy one for the charity: 14 grants were awarded, 11 of them to individuals or families in need and 3 of them to village organisations for projects which met the charity's objectives. The total number of grants awarded was the highest number since 2017.

The 11 grants for individuals or families covered such items as

- winter fuel costs,
- domestic equipment,
- after-school club fees,
- equipment for disabled children
- assistance with rent increases

- debt relief;
- and car tax.

The village organisations which received grants were:

- Barford School - a substantial donation to its appeal for assistance for disadvantaged pupils;
- the Scout Group for equipment, books and materials;
- the Youth & Community Centre as a contribution towards improved disabled access.

The changes in the type of applications noted in the previous two reports to the Annual Parish Meeting continued and intensified: a reduction in applications from those reliant on the State Pension and an increase in applications from young working families who were finding it difficult to cope with cost of living increases, particularly in utility bills and rent. In 2024 of the 11 awards to individuals or families, 8 were from such families and only one was to a pensioner. It is also interesting that all of those 8 were residents of the new estates.

The total amount of grants awarded (£14,998), for the second year in succession exceeded the charity's annual income (£13,463). The excess was covered by surpluses brought forward from previous years and, whilst in the short term it can be coped with, in the medium term it is not sustainable if the increase in applications continues. We would have to either decline valid applications or reduce their amount to below the amounts applicants need.

The increase in the needs arising from the growth of the village's population and, in particular of the social and "affordable" housing, is beginning to outstrip the charity's income. Whilst one-off donations are welcome, the longer-term solution is for an additional substantial endowment which could be added to our investments and thus produce an increase in our annual income. Such endowments from generous villagers were what set up the charity in the first place but the last one received was in 1972, when the size of the village was much smaller. All of our work with families and individuals necessarily has to be carried out in the strictest confidence and so is not visible, but it is still vital for the well-being of many in our community. If you are thinking of making a charitable bequest for the benefit of the village, then bear us in mind. You can be assured that all of it will benefit residents in need of help – 99% of our annual expenditure is spent as grants.

### **Barford School Trust (Jonathan Partridge – Barford St. Peter's School Trust Chair and Treasurer)**

Barford St Peter's School Trust is a Charity established under the Charity Commissioners Scheme 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. There are 6 trustees all of whom are local people. Normally the Priest-in-Charge is an ex-officio Trustee.

The Charity owns land and buildings for the purpose of furthering education for the children of the parish. The buildings owned by the Trust are the Old School House and the Old School building both of which are rented out to provide an income for the Trust. This income goes solely to support the school and its pupils present and past (up to the age of 25).

Here is a report of the activities for the past year:

- The Trust did not fund any major projects for the School in 2024 because it had paid £120,000 in 2022 towards the costs of the new Early Years and wrap around care unit on the understanding that this would cover capital contributions for a 5-year period.
- However, the Trust continues to support individual current and former pupils and made a number of grants for school trips, clothing and travel costs during the year. In addition, the Trust paid for two tablets to support SEN pupils.
- Bright Horizons (the operators of the Beehive Nursery in the Old School building) continued to be good tenants. The current ten-year lease runs until May 2027 and is a full repairing lease. There were no significant works undertaken during 2024. The new staff room installed in the place of the old toilet block in 2023 continues to be much appreciated by all the staff.
- The Old School House continues to be a reliable source of income. It is therefore the aim of the Trust to ensure it is maintained to a good standard to obtain maximum rental. No significant works were necessary during the year given the major refurbishment carried out in 2023. The new tenants continue to look after the property well and renewed the lease for a further 12-month term from November 2024.

### **Barford School (Mary Baker – Head Teacher)**

It has been another very successful 12 months for Barford St. Peter's C.E. (V.A.) Primary School and the school continues to go from strength to strength. In October 2024 we had our Ofsted inspection during which personal development, Early Years provision and behaviour of pupils was deemed to be outstanding:

Our results in July 2024 were exceptional and placed us as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most successful school in all of Warwickshire. In addition, we were in the top 150 school nationally for greater depth standard in reading, writing and maths.

We are heavily oversubscribed for September with 21 children currently on the waiting list.

We continue to have an exceptional team of talented staff who are relentless in their dedication to the pupils. Our nurturing and caring environment shines through and is commented on when anyone visits the school. Our staff wellbeing continues to be excellent with 100% of staff reporting that they feel well supported.

Thanks to the incredible dedication of Mrs Fawcett, we continue to have strong links with St. Peter's church and the school services throughout the year are well attended. These include Christmas and Easter services.

Enrichment continues to be a key feature of our curriculum, with children experiencing a range of educational visits as well as visitors to the school to enhance their learning.

We are very grateful to the Barford School Trust for their continued support with enrichment for pupils. They have generously enabled our year 6 class to visit Winchcombe station for a World War II Evacuees day which was an exceptional educational experience for them. They have also generously supported vulnerable families with residential costs.

We are also immensely grateful to the Barford Relief in Need charity for their generous donation to enable nurture provision to take place for our most vulnerable children, which would not have been possible without their support.

Moving forward, our two key challenges are the Special Educational Needs system and in particular a severe shortage of specialist school places, and managing school finances with limited resources and escalating costs.

We are proud of our happy and successful school and look forward to continued success over the coming years.

### **St Peter's Church Report (Tim Sowards, Church Warden)**

The church was able to sustain its normal service pattern throughout 2023 and support all the major festivals in the traditional fashion.

Sadly, our Priest-in Charge, Revd Andy Larkin, was off sick for over six months of the year but returned to lead our ministry in the final quarter. In November he announced that he had tendered his resignation and he left his post during February at the end of his 3-month notice period. A leaving event was held on 7th February at which the church officers and some PCC members from across the benefice were able to offer their thanks for everything that Revd Andy had done and to wish him and his family well for the future.

We are extremely grateful to our assistant minister Revd John Horton and our three readers, Ann Fawcett, Chris Farr and Malcolm Dawson who have all worked very hard throughout this period (and continue to do so) to maintain normal church life as much as possible.

The church is very fortunate still to have the services of Chris Farr as organist. Sadly, during the year it was decided that it was no longer viable to maintain a regular church choir every Sunday due to declining numbers. However, it is still planned to try and assemble a choir for special occasions and festivals and this was done for Christmas and Easter.

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 8th 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 71 people on the church electoral roll, two down on last year.

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

This highlights the continuing 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 the major project in the churchyard extension 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 funded by the JPC) was carried out in May. It is hoped to be able to carry out some much-needed repairs to the gate piers for the main churchyard entrance in the near future.

The church was also able to donate £3,450 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.

The priority for the PCC going forward is to work with the rest of the benefice and diocesan teams to try and find a new Priest-in-charge, but with several other neighbouring benefices also in vacancy, this may take a considerable time.

The most significant area of focus has been the recruitment of a new priest-in-charge. We have been working closely with the Diocese of Coventry and, in November, held a consultation event to hear from the wider village community about the future of the church. Following this, a small writing group—elected by representatives from the three churches—produced a parish profile, which serves as

both a job description and an introduction to our benefice. The profile is currently under review by the PCCs and the diocese, and we hope to advertise the role in the coming weeks. While there is no fixed timeline for an appointment, early interest has been received, and we are hopeful a new priest-in-charge may be in post within the next six months.

Throughout this period of vacancy, we are especially grateful to Revd John Horton, our Associate Minister, who has stepped forward with great dedication to take on the responsibilities of a priest-in-charge—despite being officially retired. His leadership and pastoral care during the interregnum have been invaluable.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Chris Farr, who stepped down after an incredible 18 years of service as organist. His musical contribution to worship and community life has been deeply appreciated. A special benefice service was held to mark his retirement and thank him for his commitment over many years.

There have been several practical improvements to the church building and grounds. The gate posts at the Church Street entrance have been renovated, and a new ramp has been installed to improve accessibility for those with limited mobility. We are very grateful to Barford Community Charity and Barford Relief in Need for funding the ramp project. Looking ahead, we are preparing for stonework repairs at the south-west corner of the building—likely to be a significant and costly project, but one essential to preserving the church's structure and future use.

As a seasonal note, the flag usually flown at the church was taken down over winter due to storm damage risk, but will return in time for Easter Sunday.

We're also pleased to report strong community support over the past year. Gift Week raised a generous total of £3,968, and many local residents supported a range of fundraising and social events, including the Back to School evening, Christmas Café, Christmas Cabaret, and Harvest Supper, along with the Lent Lunch, Warwickshire Singers concert in July, and the iSingPop school concert in June. We are very grateful for the goodwill shown towards the church and its activities.

The renewal of the electoral roll is currently underway, with applications still being accepted at the time of this report. Paper copies of the form are available in church, and electronic copies can be provided on request—please speak to a churchwarden or PCC member if you'd like assistance. We anticipate a final number of approximately 75 names, to be confirmed shortly.

Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) will take place on 7th May. This meeting is open to all, and we warmly invite members of the wider community to attend. We hope to welcome some new PCC members, and possibly a new churchwarden.

A copy of the Parish Profile is available in both the village shop and the church, for anyone interested in reading more about who we are and what we're seeking in our next priest-in-charge. If you have any questions about the profile or the recruitment process, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Charitable Giving

During the year, the PCC made grants totalling £1,440, with £240 donated to the Salvation Army and £1,200 to CORD, which has been chosen by the PCC as its primary charity for future support.

A further £2,182 was raised through collections at specific services and events, and donated to a range of charities including Save the Children, Christian Aid, the Royal British Legion, and Combat Stress.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support for the life of the church.

### **Village Voices (Helen Clay – Editor)**

Just in case there is anyone present tonight who is new to the village I would like to briefly explain how Village Voices came into existence. For many years the Church had produced a parish magazine called Plurality. It required a subscription payment to receive it and was therefore only delivered to around half the residences in our 3 villages. That was how it was when Sue, Carole and myself took it over (as novices) 10 years ago. The famous phrase I used at the time was 'how difficult can it be, cutting and pasting?' Well now we know!

Our community has changed greatly in recent years and, with lots of new residents moving in to new houses, the JPC were anxious to ensure that they had a means of communicating to everyone in the 3 parishes. This is how, in 2018, the old Plurality magazine evolved into Village Voices, a community publication that is now delivered free of charge to every household in Barford, Sherbourne and Wasperton. Nearly 7 years on now and we continue to produce 900 printed copies each month.

The magazine is also available in digital form on our Village Voices website.

We know that many organisations such as the JPC, Sand and Gravel action group and the new Barford Community Centre rely on the magazine to ensure that all households are kept up to date with news and progress. Other groups of course, use it to promote plays, concerts, open gardens, fund raising events etc. There are too many to mention but we hope that over the course of each year we provide something for everyone.

Nothing stays the same forever and now sadly one of our editors, Sue Partridge, has decided to stand down at the end of this year. We will be looking for someone new to join our team and we shall be using our own magazine to look for that special person who is passionate about our village community and able to give a few hours every three months to edit the magazine. We cannot thank Sue enough for all the work she has done over all these years including liaising with all our advertisers whose payments make a major contribution to the production costs of the magazine. Thanks also to Jonathan Partridge who has been looking after the financial side of the magazine and is a very exacting proof reader, it's rather like giving your homework in to the eagle-eyed Jonathan who always manages to spot something we've missed!

The other members of the team who must be thanked are the many wonderful people who deliver all the magazines come rain or shine; we should also mention Ed Kirkby, a former Barford resident, who despite having moved away, is still kind enough to run the Village Voices website for us. It certainly is a great team!

So in conclusion, watch out for our advert for a new editor; we look forward to hearing from someone who can join us and bring enthusiasm to Village Voices.

### **Barford Youth & Community Centre / Scouts & Guides (Ian Paterson – Chairman)**

Looking back at my notes for previous years, I see that I habitually start with “Since this time last year, there have been major developments in our project to build a new Youth & Community Centre.....”

This year I’m very pleased to begin with – the new Centre is open!

The Grand Opening on 21st September was a wonderful occasion, with Lord Lieutenant Tim Cross cutting the ribbon and then the Promises Auction in the evening.

Since then, nearly all the regular users of the old Scout Hut have been using the new building, as well as several new regular users. These include activities for the younger people in our community (there’s a weekly Arty Splats group and the Scout Group now have a Squirrels section) and across the age range to the weekly Cafe that is enjoyed by 30-40 elderly people, plus the Art Group, BarZero Repair Cafe, an adult Cello class, and Pilates and fitness classes – and more.

One-off events have included several children’s birthday parties, an anniversary party, bingo and quiz nights and a school reunion. Our new venue for the whole community is being just that!

Not surprisingly, there have been a few snags identified, perhaps most significantly the acoustics in the main Hall. We’ve already done some things to help improve this and more are planned.

We also now have two outdoor benches, whips planted to close the gap in the hedge, a new broadband connection, the defibrillator and most recently the new gates. Plus the work done by the JPC on the allotment path allowed us to improve the access to the front of the building.

The PV panels and storage battery system is showing its worth as the weather improves and daylight increases, and we’ll soon be selling excess energy to the grid.

But in early February we had a major problem with the drain becoming blocked and the cost to have that cleared was a very large hit to our funds. Some defects were identified in the drain and have been rectified, but a key factor was people flushing inappropriate materials down the loos.



We are continuing to seek additional funds for further enhancements to the building

- for example, we'd like to have a projector and screen that could be used for events
- and we also need to generate funds to pay off the loan that got us to our construction funding total.

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.

Susan Heap, the Group Lead Volunteer, has told me that with the opening of the new Centre the Scout Group has been able to start a Squirrel Drey. This has allowed young people aged 4-6 to begin their Scouting journey with the Group. The Group currently has 95 members, but still has waiting list of 50 young people eager to join.

Activities this year have included the Group Summer Camp, a Group trip to Cosford to gain Air Activities Badges, and a Scouts Winter Camp. Yet again 1st Barford was well represented in the WAGS gang show performances at Leamington Spa Centre, showing off their acting and singing talents to their Scouting friends, leaders and families.

I very much want to thank my fellow Trustees for their hard work, commitment and guidance over the last year. Since the last APM, Ed Butlin has stepped down from being a Trustee, after many years of very generous support. This is perhaps an opportunity to mention that we would greatly welcome new people becoming BYCC Trustees. The average age of the current trustees is over 70 and we've had rather an exhausting time over the years of the Y&CC Project. New, younger Trustees are needed to let some of the current seven of us move off into our dotage, with new people guiding the charity and Y&CC operation for the future.

I know BYCC is far from being the only Barford group seeking new members. At the moment, it seems it's the same familiar faces carrying the load in different roles – despite there being many more people living the village now.

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

The new Centre is now there to be used and enjoyed by everyone – please let me know what bookings you want to make! Thank you.

### **Barford Village Shop (Jill Jeffery, Chair, Barford Village Shop read by Ann Williams)**

The village shop has had a successful year, with both sales and the number of transactions increased. It continues to see a wide range of customers drawn from the village and also from those visiting it, whether for work or for pleasure. The shop is owned by villagers who each own a share in it, and over the years over 600 individuals have owned a share.

The shop is successful for a number of reasons: it sells a wide range of goods and produce, much of it locally sourced, and where possible we include personal requests. The fact it works so well is down to two elements: the manager Coreenna Jennings, who is excellent at all the many aspects of her job, and the huge number of volunteers who staff it on a day-to-day basis.

There are over 60 active volunteers with most doing one weekly shift. All deserve our thanks but in addition there are many who regularly do extra shifts. The shop is always on the lookout for new volunteers, both to replace existing people who step down but also simply to increase the pool of people who are available able to cover a shift in case of illness or other absence. Please consider volunteering – come in and have a chat about it.

Surplus cash generated by the shop is donated to Barford Community Charity, which distributes funds to local bodies. The amount donated by the shop in the year just ended was £21,500, and over the years over £200,000 has been donated by the shop. This money has provided significant funding for the King George's Field, the Youth and Community Centre and the village school, amongst many other projects.

In the last year improvements have been made to the shop's CCTV, improving security both inside and outside the shop for customers and volunteers. The financial accounts for last year are being finalised and will be presented at the shop Annual General Meeting, which is to be held on Tuesday 17th June in the Memorial Hall. Further details about trading will be given and about repairs and maintenance expenditure incurred.

At the shop AGM last year Martin Lusby stood down as a director having completed his 6 years. He is thanked for his contribution over the years, especially during the Covid period.

Thanks should also go again to Coreenna, as well as all those who give their time and energy to support the running of the shop, and our customers.

**Barford Post Office (Rod Scott)** Most of you will be aware that we have been struggling all year to have trained volunteers available 5 days a week resulting in those who are available doing 2 or even 3 shifts a week.

The Post Office deals with much more than Post – The variations in Postal services with requirements on size, weight, dangerous goods, Customs forms, and Banking are bad enough and there are still Postal Orders. Training is on the job – but relies on the customers to bring in different new challenges – we are rarely disappointed. We now have 2 more volunteers being trained so while the staff shortage may be over soon -other problems are available.

Barford Post Office was set up as a Community Post Office with reduced opening hours when it was rescued from the old shop and moved to the Memorial Hall (17

years ago?) Shortly after that Post Office Limited decided not to renew the Community Business Model and when existing Sub postmasters resigned the office would either become a full time office – open for the same hours as the shop or be changed to an outreach office – managed by another nearby office or by a mobile van visiting for a couple of hours a week. Neither of these would suit our Shop.

I have been discussing with Post Office Limited the subject of my retirement as Sub-postmaster for the last 16 years – at the present rate of progress I will come to a conclusion before we reach a solution. The Shop board has also been in discussion with Post Office Limited – but I don't think they have got much further. We may need to get some more influential bodies such as Plunkett, or Politicians to keep the Post Office going for the next 16 years. This could be Barford's next Battle.

My thanks go to the Post Office staff for their hard work over the year, to Corenna for keeping the rota under control and to the Customers who keep bringing in challenges for us.

### **Barford Heritage Group (Wendy Barlow)**

7 meetings were held during this year and many more due to the school book entitled 'Educating Barford'. A special thanks to Doug Warne and Hilary Maynard as our officers for the year. We have two new members who have joined our group. Both have great enthusiasm and take on work willingly. We welcome them. The book 'Educating Barford' took up a lot of time this year. The editorial group worked incredibly hard and our thanks go to them. Everyone in the group had some input which was much appreciated. But particularly thanks should go to Doug Warne, Carol Whiteley and Ann McDermott for their work. Thanks also goes to Alex Farr for proofreading and Mrs Baker, the head of the school, for her input and enthusiasm. Doug managed to get a grant for printing the book from Barford community charity. Thanks to them for this funding. The book launch in October 2024 went exceedingly well as ever, and the book has been very much appreciated by the village and the school. It is 132 pages long and contains 70 pictures. A feat indeed!

A group of long-term resident ladies from the village decided to hold a reunion the week after this book launch. This really fitted well with everything and we are grateful for their input. The reunion went brilliantly with over 50 people joining in, many of whom had attended the school, and the group sold a lot more books at this event! Half of the money that was made from the reunion went to the school. This is going towards a Saint Peter's school timeline donated by Heritage group that will be fixed to the wall in the main corridor.

As a result of these events we also sold quite a number of other books that we have produced such as 'Becoming Barford'.

The telephone box this year has created a few headaches. Earlier on in the year it had to be boarded up because there was damage and some deterioration. Gerard Veness kindly took over this work for us and we were able to get in a quote of £495 to rectify the situation. The repair work was done by Nigel Gregory who is now our "go to" expert on the telephone box.

In March Anne McDermott and Wendy Barlow met up with Sharon Foreman the county archivist had to come to talk to JPC members and the group about archiving. She was very interesting and offered to come back and have a look through our documentation and artefacts and advise. We are hoping to do this in the New Year of 2025 when we will get all our artefacts et cetera out from storage at the BYCC and have a look how we can best keep them.

In April the group visited Stoneleigh Abbey. This was a very enjoyable event and our thanks go to Anne McDermott for organising it. It was felt that it would be lovely to do more of these events for all our members.

Our new member Sally Halliwell Carew has been working extremely hard to find homes for the remainder of the millennium Plaques. She has done sterling work on this and has found homes for nearly all of them. We now have a full list of these old houses.

The Rectory which is now emptied of all church belongings as it has been rented out, has thrown up some incredibly interesting scrapbooks from 1962 to 1990. Paul Williams, our church warden, offered them to us and we gratefully received them. Alan has said he will have a go at scanning them. Doug Warne has done great work on listing the contents of each one. A major piece of work for next year.

Carol Whiteley has been storing a box of the old church magazines called the 'Parish lamp'. In each of these there's very little pertaining to Barford so it was decided to throw away the generic inner sheets and keep the covers which have interesting information about the village. Thanks to Doug Warne for sorting this.

After a member of the public wondered why we had no blue Plaques on houses in the village Stella Rutherford took on the unrewarding and complicated task of finding out more about how to do this. Unfortunately, this also had repercussions for house owners and we've had to drop going forward with it. Thank you, though, Stella for all the information which we will keep for the future.

Thank you to all members of the group not just the committee who continue to do such brilliant work- digging out information, reminiscence work and general research. It's very difficult to put into words how many hours go into this sort of work and it's very much appreciated. The same applies to Alan McDermott for all his technical expertise and web site management.

In 2025 work will continue with archiving and we have also started new work on farming in and around the village. We have reminiscences, information and illustrations- so look out for our exhibition in October. 'Barford a farming community.'

**Bar Zero**

No representation

**Any other matters**

No matters were raised.

**Appointments**

John Murphy was appointed chairman of the parish meeting for 2025-26.

**Closure**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10pm