

# Parish of Berkswell Assembly

Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 8 pm. in the Jordan Room, St John Baptist Church, Berkswell

## 1. Attendance and apologies

31 people attended the assembly. Apologies for absence were received from Berkswell residents:- Councillor Edwards, Mr and Mrs Dymond, Mr and Mrs Rees, Mrs Wimpey, Mr Monkman, Mrs Noon, Mr Thomas.

## 2. Minutes from the 2017 Assembly

- 2.1. The minutes were approved. Copies were available at the meeting and had been posted on the parish council web site last year.
- 2.2. The following matters arising were covered.
  - 2.2.1. A well warden has been found to do day to day upkeep on the well
  - 2.2.2. SMBC had decided during the Parish Governance Review to leave the parish boundary unchanged
  - 2.2.3. There had been no further reports of suspected poisoning of buzzards
  - 2.2.4. HS2 Ltd have indicated that they plan to put forward a planning application (outside of the scope of the HS2 Act) to use Hallmeadow Road as a delivery route which would involve a haul route across greenbelt behind Carstins garage from the Station roundabout

## 3. Parish Council Chairman's report

The parish council Chairman's report is attached. The Chairman used the following power point slide to explain the council's overall budget. Fuller figures are available on the council web site

### Parish Finances



2018/19	
Budget	£49k
Spent	£40k
Closing Reserves	£59k
2019/20	
Budget	£43k
Closing Reserves	£44k (forecast)

## 4. Issues discussed at the assembly by residents

### 4.1. HS2

There was a general discussion on the construction phases and implications of HS2. There was no agreed action

## **4.2. Climate change “emergency”**

It was agreed by residents that the parish council should be asked to conduct a review of its activities with a view to ensuring that their impact on global warming was minimised and/or appropriate mitigation actions were taken. Residents thought that the following should be considered

- 4.2.1. Consider setting up a working group, with non-councillor participation and perhaps including young people
- 4.2.2. Develop an action plan if action is possible and publicise it
- 4.2.3. Consider tree planting and the use of the SMBC tree planting policy and Wildlife ways as methods to undertake projects on SMBC land as mitigation
- 4.2.4. Review council policies to see if “climate change” wording needs to be introduced.
- 4.2.5. Avoid “gesture politics” with real action only. that is within the power of the council

There being no other topics for discussion the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

## **Appendix**

### **Chairman’s Report**

I am going to run through some highlights of what has been a busy year.

### **Parish Finances (full details are on the website and I’m not going through the details here)**

For the year 2018/19 we set a budget of £49k. We have underspent that by £8k. As well as the things we have to do like admin, mowing etc. we gave £5k to local groups like the Scouts to support them in their activities with our young people. We also continued to work in partnership with the Berkswell Society in keeping our community attractive to live in and providing Christmas Trees.

We set a “precept” (local tax) below the amount we planned to spend and as a consequence we reduced our reserves to £59k. We have maintained our precept at that lower level for 2019/20 and expect our reserves to fall again.

This is the right thing to do. It is your money and we should only keep it if we think we need it.

It is, however, likely that the precept will increase from 2020 as we reduce our reserves to a reasonable level.

### **Community Governance Review**

As Andrew has detailed earlier the residents of Berkswell Parish (and in particular those living in Balsall Common) overwhelmingly rejected moving the parish boundary to the railway line.

As I told the Solihull Governance Committee:

“Democracy is about people not geography”.

## **Parish Council elections**

For the first time in many years we had a competitive election with a good turnout. Thanks to those who voted for me. We welcome Sheila Cooper who has joined the council and say goodbye to Alison Cambage and thank her for her contribution.

## **Berkswell Parish NDP**

The Berkswell Parish Neighbourhood Development plan is making good progress. It has now passed Examination. There are a few amendments we have to make. Some watering down of our more stringent parking standards and a rejection of our attempt to designate the field owned by the Catholic Church on Meeting House Lane as Local Green Space. It stays Greenbelt for now but the Solihull Draft Local Plan does mark it for development.

The next stage is for a referendum of Berkswell Parish residents. More information on this in due course.

However, please remember the NDP does not support new housing (and should not be confused with the Solihull Local Plan). It sets out policies that will make any developments we do get better, both for our current residents and our new ones.

## **Draft Solihull Local Plan**

This was published earlier this year. It proposes c1700 new homes in Balsall Common mostly in Berkswell Parish and a bypass using Hallmeadow Road. We held a well attended consultation event to inform our response to this plan. We will continue to resist inappropriate development in the Greenbelt.

We have invited the West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street to visit us and explain why he thinks he has "saved green fields in Solihull". He has accepted. More information soon.

## **Volunteers**

I know I'm boring on this subject but it isn't just Norman. Many people work for our community often unasked and unseen. We help where we can. Thank you.

## **Update on issues raised in 2018:**

- a) The Well - We have a volunteer "well warden" who is looking after this for us all.
- b) Governance Review - The final outcome was "No change"
- c) Buzzards - No further reports
- d) HS2 - Ongoing.....

**Richard Drake**