

**MINUTES OF THE 128th ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ELECTORS OF THE PARISH OF BROUGHTON ASTLEY HELD ON
THURSDAY 21 APRIL 2022**

PRESENT: Councillors R Capewell, R Gahan, D Glenis, C Golding, C Grafton-Reed (Chair), M Graves, S Oliver, R Patrick, P Shipman, Mrs M Stell, M Swinfen, J Worrell

ALSO PRESENT: County Councillor N Bannister, District Councillor P Dann and 2 residents of the Parish

Clerk: Parish Manager

Apologies: Councillors G Brown, R Davis, and G Mallaghan and District Councillor W Liquorish

No Apologies: Councillor A Teague-Concannon

MINUTES: The Parish Manager confirmed that the Minutes of the 127th Annual Parish Meeting held on 29 April 2021 of the Electors of Broughton Astley have been recorded in the Minute Book. The Minutes were accepted unanimously and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING: There were no matters arising.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL - ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Report – 2021-22

The last Council year has seen us emerging from the effects of Covid-19. Although the virus is still very much with us, the risk has changed, and we are learning to adapt and live with it. It has changed the way we have been operating but many of those restrictions we have had to deal with have been lifted and we are returning to normal.

The Council has returned to face-to-face meetings which is welcomed as it allows more debate on matters brought before the Council.

Financially the Parish Council has come through the turbulence of the last year quite well due to the previous careful management of funds to build reserves and the constant care and attention the staff give to our finances. Despite the recent increases in energy costs, we have not been immediately impacted as some fixed contracts were put in place. These will run out in due course but the early action by the staff has softened the blow. A lot of measures have been taken already to reduce our electrical usage and we will need to look again at what further measures might be possible recognising all the major changes have already been made.

Once again, we have received a clean audit with no issues raised on any of our transactions or processes. This is the tenth year in a row when this has been achieved which is a credit to the office staff, particularly the Deputy Clerk.

Our precept was increased from £318,556 to £341,035 which, due to the increase of a further 63 dwellings, equates to a 1.6% rise on a Band D property. The largest proportion of that increase comes from nationally agreed pay increases after some years where civil service pay has been restrained. We constantly monitor costs as members of the public can

see in the parish council minutes and we will continue to look hard at where any savings might be made. However, we have a growing population and so we have had an addition to the office staff, Jan Briggs, who has joined as receptionist. This has allowed Anita Percy to focus on seeking out and securing grant funding to help us deliver improvements across all areas. To date she has secured £19,840 for a series of projects including the new wooden gazebo at the cemetery to provide shelter for those who want to quietly contemplate their departed.

The Parish Council are looking to complete a number of improvements in the cemetery including the pathways, a garden of remembrance and some landscaping funded from S106. This funding comes a result of house building which everyone will have seen on the main sites. These funds are allocated to specific areas when the District Council agrees planning with developments over a minimise size, however, we are currently talking to District to see if/how we can re-allocate some of these funds to more appropriate areas for us. We are also looking to improve engagement with HDC planning to have a greater input in the S106 allocations.

We have carried out improvements at the recreation ground with the installation of CCTV and new security fencing. Having suffered repeated vandalism over many years, we hope to deter and where necessary prosecute offenders to reduce these anti-social acts. New decking and work to re-establish the footpath to the wildlife garden on the Western Willows site has also taken place.

The Council started the year with a one councillor down and then had the Vice Chair, Councillor Dan Howe, resigned to pursue his career with the Crown Coroners service which precluded him from being a Councillor. He will be sorely missed. His vacancy was filled by Mary-Ann Fothergill in May but sadly she has since had to resign due to work and family pressures. She did make an immediate impact with her planning knowledge during the revision of the Neighbourhood Plan, and we thank her for her contributions. The outstanding vacancy was filled again by co-option in December by Anthony Teague-Concannon and we welcome him to the council.

Following the resignation of Cllr Fothergill, a vacancy arose on the Broughton North Ward. Ten electors requested that this be filled by election, however, only one candidate came forward and as such they have been duly elected as Ward Councillor for Broughton North and should have joined the Council by the time you hear this report.

Whilst touching on the subject of the Neighbourhood Plan the Parish Council has engaged a new Neighbourhood Plan Consultant, YourLocale, to complete the review and update of the Neighbourhood Plan. This is document is critical in give a voice to Broughton Astley residents in the planning process at District.

The usage of the Village Hall is recovering reasonably well. For example, the overall revenue for the village hall over a 6-month period (October-March) is only 18.5% down now on the same period pre-pandemic. We have lost a number of long-standing regular hirers, but part of that loss is mitigated by new hirers. Whilst we have a waiting list for the main hall, we need to ensure all the rooms and facilities are utilised as much as possible. I will be working with the Parish Manager to examine how this can be better reported to the Council every month to show the good work that is done in promoting these facilities.

The Leisure Centre returned to full operation as soon as restrictions allowed them to and it is a testament to the operator, Parkwood Leisure, who manage the centre on our behalf that it has bounced back well. They are reporting memberships up and an increase in the number and range of activities on offer. This is important as their management fee pays for the public works loans which the Parish Council took out to fund the project.

The challenge of car parking on the site is being addressed but is complicated. Since the centre was built, the Environment Agency has re-drawn the flood zones and where there had previously been space to extend the car park westwards this is now in Zone 3 where development is not normally allowed. We are looking at all alternatives and are working with Parkwood Leisure to try to put additional capacity in place as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the project manager from Parkwood has been seriously ill which has delayed progress, but we are told he has recovered and will be back at work soon.

The Parish Council is progressing the new combined footpath/cycle way which is one of the planning obligations for the site. That footpath/ cycleway will run from the entrance to the site where the public footpath crosses Cosby Road at the rear of the Bull public house car park up to the Leisure Centre. The obligation is that a "link" is created between the main village and the Leisure Centre / new Aldi estate. Funds have already been set aside for this but with costs increasing there is a risk we will need to dip into reserves to meet LCC requirements so they will adopt it and remove the liability from the Parish Council long term.

We are still pushing for the diversion of the footpath PROW044 which crosses the Leisure Centre land to Thomas Estley Community college. People may not realise that the school field is not public open space, and that the footpath runs around the edge of the field and as such should not be letting their dogs loose on the school field. The diversion will move the footpath PROW044 onto the new cycleway/footpath. All of the necessary documentation has been submitted to Leicestershire County Council (LCC) with respect to the diversion of the footpath. The first stage has been complete with no objections. However due to various pressures including a Covid induced shortage of personnel, LCC are not able to give an estimate of when it will be granted. It should not delay our construction of the new footpath/cycle way.

The Parish Council provided some support to community events organised by Broughton Alive which included the 10th Christmas Fayre and a Family Fun Day which replaced the normal Summer Carnival. These events are well established in the social calendar were very well attended by residents and visitors. We have also provided some funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau to help support their activities helping those who are struggling in many ways. We have also transferred funds to the BAVG for covid support activities and await details of what was done with the funds.

The Parish Council have appointed a new Parish Tree warden after a gap of many years. Joe Johnson has brought real energy to the activity and with support from across the community has arranged the planting of over 600 "whips" around the village. We will support his efforts going forwards where possible.

Sadly, I have to report that BATON, the Broughton Astley Twinning Society has decided to cease their operations. With a reduced and aging membership plus changes in how much people travel even before the recent Covid restrictions, have meant fewer people traveling to

Geveze. In the past we have supported the group with use of the village hall, and I remember very well welcoming their Mayor to Broughton Astley when he last visited. The twinning agreement and the various gifts which are part of our history and will remain in the foyer of the village hall.

Similarly, the Gardeners Association committee are closing their activities. The Annual Village show is however likely to be saved as Broughton Alive have offered to organise the event provided the various cups and equipment are still available. I am awaiting more details.

I close by saying we have navigated our way through what is the worst pandemic in living memory, and whilst it has had a terrible impact on many people and not in just the obvious ways, there have been good things to emerge and hopefully we can retain some of those.

Clive Grafton-Reed

Chairman – Broughton Astley Parish Council.

Public Forum

There were two members of the public who wished to speak.

Good evening my name is Mark Barber, and I am one of the founding members of the Broughton Astley Volunteer Group and would like to thank you for allowing me to address you all here tonight.

In October last year the BAVG completed their first year as a registered charity and as part of the trustee's legal requirement will be submitting our first year's accounts to the Charity Commission.

We are very fortunate to have a qualified accountant as one of our volunteers who is preparing our accounts as we speak ready for submission.

In the next 12 months it is anticipated that the BAVG will be spending approximately £1,200 on hiring the Broughton Bus, £360 on Lutterworth Community Transport and £600 to St Mary's Church and £5,600 to the Village Hall for room hire totalling around £7,700 kept within and for the benefit of the community.

The last two years has been difficult for all of us, and it is fair to say very few will not have been affected in some way. As the pandemic subsides the role of the BAVG has changed as we are now doing far less shopping and prescription collections, although that role is still needed by some residents.

People's mental health and wellbeing has been pushed to the forefront for many agencies as well as the BAVG. All age groups from the young and to the old have been impacted due to the last two years. The formation of social groups in the village has been one method of alleviating some of the mental health problems and loneliness.

With the help of the Rural Community Council and their Coffee Connect van we started a coffee morning initially outside in the car park at the rear of the village hall when indoor gatherings were not permitted. This then progressed into the main hall when restrictions were lifted and has since had to relocate to St Mary's Church to allow the indoor curling group back since all restrictions were finally lifted. The coffee morning has become a regular meeting spot for many people within the village and surrounding areas. There is a large group of knitters who attend to have a knit and a natter, while others just attend to catch up with their friends. The coffee morning is also attended by the Social Prescribers from Orchard Medical Centre who are on hand to offer professional support and advice to anyone who needs it.

The coffee morning regularly attracts over 50 people and on one occasion we had to resort to sitting the people in the pews due to a particularly large number of visitors. The coffee mornings have become so successful, the search for a new venue to hold another one was started. As there was no availability at either the church or village hall in the mornings, an afternoon slot between two regular bookings at the village hall was selected so we are now to hold a coffee afternoon which will start a week today.

Other activities we have been involved in is the rescue of the Indoor Curling and Boccia clubs from HDC as no one was prepared to take over the running of them. Rather than see it fold, the BAVG stepped forward and took over the running of them. Again, due to popularity, we are now hoping to start a new curling session on a Wednesday evening in the village hall.

The village is benefitting from over 30 volunteer litter pickers who regularly go out and reduce the amount of litter in the village. There have also been two craft groups formed with another being organised to accommodate those who can only attend in the evening.

The BAVG have also been running a team of gardeners, a conservation team and, in partnership with Sows and Grows, a newly created community allotment. Hopefully you will have witnessed the work of some of the above groups in and around the village, as they tend the planters at the entrance to the village, the beds in the village centre and around the village hall as well as the Memorial Gardens. A couple of notable pieces of work they have undertaken is the clearance of an area in St Mary's churchyard and in the Wildlife Garden at the allotments. A tidy up of the banks of the brook was also carried out in time for the Remembrance Day Parade in November last year at which we were proud to be able to provide the marshals for. Hopefully, this year we will also be able to supply marshals again in addition to providing the first aid cover following the training of 12 of our volunteers.

Personally, I am extremely proud of the success of the Intouch magazine which now has a waiting list of groups, businesses and individuals wishing to sponsor an edition which has secured the future of the magazine. For many who either do not have access to or shun social media sites this is the sure method of delivering information to the residents of the village.

For those who do have the technology the BAVG website which a few days short of its 1st anniversary is now being viewed on a regular basis and is yet another method of putting information out into the public domain.

Looking to the future, youth provision within the village which is sadly lacking and as such we have contacted Thomas Estley College to see if they are prepared to make available the college facilities to hold some sort of Youth Club and have also arranged a meeting with HDC's youth liaison officer to progress the idea. The formation of an old-fashioned Youth Club has the full backing of the police as a safe meeting place for our young people to gather is infinitely better than street gatherings. We do not profess to be experts or claim to be able to eliminate all the problems that is associated with young people, but maybe make a dent.

This September the Broughton Astley Gardeners Association will be sadly closing its doors for the final time. The committee has agreed to hand the BAGA Hut over to the BAVG which will become a focal point for the gardeners, the conservationists as well as the community allotmenters. We also have plans to create other groups who will also be able to make use the facilities, one such group being based on an existing format of Men in Sheds. The BAVG would like to thank the BAGA committee for making this most generous offer and would ask Colin Golding to pass on our thanks to the rest of the committee members.

BAVG's involvement is not just with the residents of the village but also includes many partner agencies such as

Social Services,

The Food Bank,

HDC Youth Liaison,

Waste Management at HDC,

The Environment Agency,

The Community Buses both in Broughton Astley and Lutterworth,

The RCC,

Leicestershire and Northamptonshire County Council's and

Voluntary Action Leicester to name but just a very few.

Finally, as time is pressing, I would like to finish by mentioning a few colleagues who have put their heart and soul into this charity: Jenny Row, Jan Briggs, Nicola Clegg, and Mandi Lynch and all the hundreds of volunteers past and present who have made this possible. If you do not know enough about us and the work of our volunteers, please read the magazine, visit our website, or take a walk round the village.

The BAVG would like to put on record our thanks to the Parish Council for its continued support and look to forward to working in ever closer partnership in the future.

The second report was provided by a representative from Broughton Alive.

We were still in covid restrictions in the first part of 2021 which affected our usual calendar of events. After some discussion it was decided to not do the normal carnival and Party in the Park but hold 1 event and call it a Family Fun Day. The idea been to put something on to give Broughton a fun day and bring the community together following a difficult last 18 months. #Broughtoncomesalive #BroughtonAlive. The weather did try to spoil this, and we had to postpone by a week which reduced some of the things we had planned but all in all it was a great success.

Next came the Christmas Fair. This was able to go ahead as normal with a fun fair, a selection of stalls and the now famous Ringrose Winter BBQ. Tree was purchased and lights put up. Some good sponsorship was secured that BA need to cover costs to keep putting on events. Weather played a part again with high winds and some stalls were moved into the Conservative club. The combined choirs of the churches provided some excellent carol singing on the night. A good crowd turned out everyone seemed to have a good time. The highlight been the appearance of Marshall from Paw Patrol to switch the lights on.

Santa Fun Run took place the following Sunday morning. A great spectacle with nearly 300 Santa's taking part. We provided teas and bacon cobs for the hungry runners at the end and need to thank the Conservative Club for their continued support. The winner was Kili (The dog).

The Santa float is a Scouts event but heavily supported by BA. We help source the truck, provide a driver and several Santa's throughout the week. We are happy to help as it brings so much joy to the village.

We also held two successful tea dances in the village hall. This gives the older residents a chance to get out and enjoy some music and dancing. We will be holding more of these next year as we are building up steady numbers for this.

One of Broughton Alive's commitments is to help local groups with funding and provide good for the community. During Covid we started a voucher scheme to help families in need. Vouchers were in small denominations and could be exchanged for food at local shops, such as Reidy's fruit & veg, Londis, Akshar express, Mace and Ringrose. Vouchers were issued monthly to Lutterworth foodbank, who issued to their clients in Broughton Astley. If funds allow, we hope to continue this scheme.

The Chair closed this meeting at 8.22pm and resumed the Parish Council meeting at 8.23pm