

**BREWOD AND COVEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**WITH BISHOPS WOOD AND COVEN HEATH**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**HELD 17<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2008**

*The Chair of the meeting, Mrs L.E. Jones, declared the meeting open and welcomed those present to the meeting. The meeting had been called and advertised in accordance with the requirements of the 1972 Local Government Act Schedule 12.*

*12 Members of the Parish Council and the Clerk present*

*1 Member of the public present.*

*Apologies had been received from Mr D. Evans, M. Alden-Court, Mrs K.A. Holmes*

*The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2007 were approved and duly signed by the Chair.*

**Chair's Report – Mrs L.E. Jones**

*This had been a year that had seen many changes at the Parish Council with elections taking place last May when several Councillors stood down and new ones joined us – some not for the first time. Furthermore we saw our Clerk, Diane Drury, take a well earned retirement having served the Council for 27 years and Sue Groom take over as Clerk, having worked with Diane, and our Assistant Clerk Valerie Turner, since 2003. We were also delighted to welcome Mrs Deborah Poole, to take over the position vacated by Sue, following interviews in March.*

*During all these changes life continued apace at the Council and last May we were pleased to finally celebrate the official opening of Sandy Lane Toilets. Although this proved a long and at times arduous project they had since proved to be a well used facility for the community and visitors to Brewood.*

*Although the Council's application to the Lottery Commission, to fund a feasibility study into the possible provision of new Parish Council Offices, was unsuccessful, discussions continued and had recently taken a new direction with suggestions presented by Brewood Ideas Group to bring together the requirements of a number of stakeholders in the village this in-turn gave us all something to consider.*

*Traffic management in Brewood continued to be a source of much comment with a meeting held in February for the public to voice their concerns. These and other ideas proposed were being investigated by the Council's Traffic Management Committee and the Council awaited their recommendations. The meeting was well attended with approximately 55 members of the public attending.*

*The year saw a successful joint venture which led to fencing being erected along the open stretches of hedgerow that ran along the footpath, bordering the churchyard, above Jacob's Ladder. This area had been a matter of concern for sometime as the land fell away steeply and*

*posed a health and safety risk. A satisfactory solution to the problem proved to be difficult to find as much of the land that required fencing off was deemed to be “no-mans land” since the developers went out of business some years ago. Following a joint venture involving this Council, South Staffordshire Council, Staffordshire County Council and the nearby Doctors, the necessary funding was raised and a sturdy but aesthetically pleasing solution for the fencing was agreed and the Council was pleased to say this had proven to be effective.*

*In a similar vein and as a result of concerns raised by local residents a further collaboration took place between the Parish Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association to provide fencing between Coven playing field and Sunset Close. Councillor Ivor Clay was thanked for his work in bringing this to fruition.*

*Following the expression of interest by around 70 locals a number of options had been pursued for the provision of a bowling green in the parish. Having been advised by Brewood Parish Sports Limited that there was insufficient room by the cricket and football pitches a survey had been undertaken, at the instigation of the Parish Council, to ascertain the feasibility and cost of a green on the Engleton Lane playing field. While this was considered it was necessary for those who expressed an interest to determine whether or not there was sufficient support to run and maintain a bowling green. The Chair thanked Mr John Morley, the local Crown Green Bowls Association Development Officer, for his advice and guidance.*

*Coven Heath was once again the centre of a lot of attention this year with residents anxious about several issues which would be covered by the Planning Report. Coven Heath continued to enjoy the support of a very active Community Association who held five public meetings over the year and published 10 Newsletters in pursuit of the concerns of the villagers. Grass verges had seen some improvement in Coven Heath through the work of the Highways Agency and Amey Mouchel. Further to this, local Member Fred Barrett had continued to pursue South Staffordshire Council for additional cuts on the central reservation. County Highways proved to be very supportive in pursuing the need to restrict the size of vehicles using the Ball Lane Canal Bridge and carrying out pipe maintenance and ditch clearances in response to the flooding last summer in Ball Lane and Horden Park.*

*Following on from Coven Heath, there was much news about the old and new changing rooms in Coven but this was left for others to report on and the Chair finished her report by congratulating our villages on their achievements in the Best Kept Village Competition. For a third consecutive year Coven had won the Best Kept Large Village Competition and the right to display the Express and Star Trophy, which could be seen on the corner of Brewood Road and Lawn Lane. It had become such a fixture that this year the Committee had arranged for it to be refurbished with funding from the Express and Star and trust it would remain a fixture in the Parish for years to come. Last year also saw Bishops Wood win the Best Kept Small Village Competition in this, it's first year of entering the competition – the Chair congratulated them and their workers too. Although Brewood were unsuccessful last year the Council was pleased to hear that they had taken up the challenge with renewed vigour this year and also understood that, although time did not allow this year, Coven Heath may well enter the competition in the future – they were obviously already committed in the light of the monthly litter picks that were already held on the last Sunday of each month.*

### **Clerk's Report – Mrs S. Groom**

*The previous year had comprised of 22 scheduled meetings of the Council, excluding special meetings of the Full Council and committee meetings. The elections last May saw three*

Councillors stand down – Mr Roger Jones, Mr Peter Sanders and Mr Peter Wakeham. The Council were extremely grateful for all their hard work as Councillors and presented them with plaques in recognition of their service to the Council and the community. As a result three new Councillors joined us - Moira Alden-Court representing Coven was elected unopposed and Mr George Martin and Mr David Evans, both representing Brewwood, were co-opted on to the Council as a result of the vacancies that existed after the election. Mrs J.C. Jeffries and Mr I. Westwood were also co-opted to represent Bishops Wood, both having been Members for Bishops Wood prior to the election.

The attendance figures at the scheduled meetings were as follows:

M. Alden-Court	17 (of 21)	Mrs J.C. Jeffries	16
Cllr A. Ball	17	Mrs L.E. Jones	18
Mr F. Barrett	18	Mr G. Martin	20 (of 21)
Mrs J. Carr	21	Mrs A.Y. Millward	17
Cllr I. Clay	20	Dr R.C.H. Taylor	18
Mr D. Evans	18 (of 21)	Mr M.J. Webb	20
Mrs D.M. Holmes	17	Mr I.F. Westwood	16
Mrs K.A. Holmes	17		

Finally the Clerk acknowledged her own appreciation at having been given the opportunity to be Clerk to Brewwood and Coven Parish Council – with Bishops Wood and Coven Heath of course. The Clerk considered herself privileged to have been able to work with both Diane and Val for the last few years and could think of no better introduction to the role of Clerk to the Council. The Clerk also expressed her personal gratitude to the Councillors who were always most supportive and a pleasure to work with.

#### **Finance Report – Dr R.C.H. Taylor**

The Councils' budget for the financial year to 31 March 2008 had been estimated as £187,692. After making due allowance for income and funds carried forward this had required a precept of £123,058, an increase of £5,127 over the previous year's precept of £117,931. On a band D property the parish rate was £41.09 per annum, which was an increase of £1.52 per annum.

The major items of expenditure were the salaries, including National Insurance and Pension Payments for the Council's nine employees, which amounted to £58,950. Administration and incidental expenses were £13,550 which included insurance, rates and service charges for the Council Offices. The Chair's allowance, Members' and employee expenses, training for Members and staff and phone allowances at £20 each amounted to £4,528. Subscriptions to various organisations were £1,502.

Other major items of expenditure were the grants to the village halls which, including some carry forward from the previous year, totalled £10,398 and the final balance payment on Sandy Lane Toilets at £6,741. Fencing was erected to the rear of the goal posts at Engleton Lane playing field at a cost of £2,950 following concerns raised by local residents and the joint venture with South Staffordshire Housing Association for fencing between Coven playing field and Sunset Close cost the Parish Council £2,316. This Council's contribution towards the cost of the fencing at Jacob's Ladder was £721 of a total project cost of £2,163.

Grants totalling £5,000 were once again made available towards the Christmas Lights in our four villages and Dr Taylor took the opportunity to thank those groups and individuals who raised extra funds and worked so hard to provide such fine displays each year. Expenditure for the three Council playing fields, tennis courts and The Bront amounted to £13,383 excluding the new lengths of fencing erected this year.

Receipts for the year totalled £151,275 which included the precept, allotment rentals and £5,000 awarded by Roseclaim, the organisers of the Weston Park V2007 Music Festival, for distribution to organisations and initiatives in Bishops Wood. All but £200 of this grant had now been awarded to a speed camera initiative headed by the Bishops Wood Neighbourhood Watch, the Friends of St John's First School, St John's Church, St John's Nursery and Out of School Care and Bishops Wood Community Fund. The remaining £200 was withheld for any future requests.

A grant of £2,050 was received from Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association towards the Council's initiative to convert the old changing-rooms at Coven to a sun-shelter and storeroom. A substantial grant had also been committed by the Football Foundation towards the development of new changing rooms at Coven, it was hoped the Council would be able to disclose the full details of the grant shortly. Dr Taylor publicly thanked Mrs Diane Drury, previous Clerk to the Council, Mr Mark Jenkinson and Ms Katie White both of South Staffordshire Council for their invaluable assistance in submitting the application and the Football Foundation for their financial contribution.

Finally Dr Taylor thanked the Councils Assistant Clerk Mrs Valerie Turner for providing excellent and accurate accounts for each meeting and the previous Clerk, the new Clerk and new Assistant Clerk.

### **Planning Report's – Mrs D.M. Holmes**

During the year the Council considered 144 planning applications of which 85 were for alterations and extensions to private dwellings. There were 15 applications for new dwellings representing a total of 78 new properties, 38 of which relate to the Engleton Lane development that was now underway. This excluded the development of dwellings on land at Cat and Kittens Lane, which was currently under appeal and an application for 76 caravans for residential occupation which had since been refused. Further to this there were 33 business related applications. Change of use, certificates of lawfulness and miscellaneous applications made up the remainder of the applications considered.

The development of 38 dwellings in Engleton Lane had raised a number of questions with regard to the definition of Affordable Housing, the needs of the Parish and who identified such needs. The Council had met with representatives of South Staffordshire Housing Association and continued to discuss these matters.

At Coven Heath the i54 development and the decision to build a bridge over the M54 to an elevated island in the western corner of Coven Heath caused great concern and three public consultation sessions took place to try to improve matters for residents. The outcome of the Park and Ride Railway Station proposed to the East of Coven Heath was due to be decided by April 30<sup>th</sup>. Further to this the Council had received presentations by Staffordshire County Council and Friends of the Earth with regard to the possibility of a 'waste to energy' incinerator being built at Four Ashes which although outside the Parish it was thought it could have implications for the local area.

## **Playing Fields Report**

The equipment on all three playing fields had been regularly inspected by specialist engineers and apart from minor repairs and maintenance there had been no matters of major concern.

**Bishops Wood Playing Field** Staffordshire County Council took action to resolve the problems of last year when the newly laid path to the playing fields broke up within weeks of the contractor resurfacing the path. A much improved path had now been laid although the Council were monitoring the situation as there were indications that weeds were once again lifting the tarmac – the Council would pursue this with the County Council again if necessary. Further to this the Parish Council had agreed to look at the feasibility of improving the access from the gates to the play area at Bishops Wood. This ground was boggy most of the year, whatever the weather, and improved access would be appreciated by many of the locals who used the playing fields. Unfortunately due to the restricted width of the footpath the Council had found it necessary to decline the generous offer made by Debbie and Trevor Foster of Bishops Wood to donate a basket ball post. The Council would endeavour to find a solution that could be installed accounting for the restrictions.

**Brewood Playing Field** As mentioned earlier fencing was erected behind the goalmouth that backed onto Southgate to reduce the disturbance to local residents. Local Member Mr Mac Webb was working with representatives of the local toddler group to identify the requirement for further play equipment and possible sources of funding. A survey into the feasibility of siting a bowling green on the playing field had been funded by the Council who continued to support the endeavours of those locals who had expressed an interest in such a facility.

**Coven Playing Field** Work had started on converting the old changing rooms to a sun-shelter and store-room. Once completed this would provide covered seating for parents and carers adjacent to the children's play area and would allow the Council to cease hiring two garages which were currently used for storage. As mentioned earlier the Football Foundation had approved a grant towards the development of new changing rooms at Coven playing field. Their design specification was extremely exacting particularly in view of Child Protection and Equality issues that now had to be satisfied to facilitate mixed gender teams and officials. A project manager and an architect had been appointed to oversee the project. When completed this would be a tremendous facility for Coven and would enable football to be further developed in the Parish.

## **Any Other Business**

*No other matters were raised.*

*The Chair concluded by thanking those present for attending and called the meeting to a close at 8.05pm.*

*Chair.....*