



BREWOOD & COVEN PARISH COUNCIL

with Bishops Wood and Coven Heath

PARISH NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008

Council Precept and Budget 2008 - 2009

This year the Council has precepted £139,381 to support a budget of £210,232. On a Band D property this represents £46.26 which is an increase of £5.17 per annum on last year's precept. The average Band D parish rate in South Staffordshire is £47.31.

The Council employs a total of nine part-time staff - four office staff, four caretakers and a handy man/toilet janitor totalling over 75 hours per week. For the year ending 31 March the total salary bill was £46,107 with a further £4,249 paid towards pension contributions and £8,594 in NI payments.

The budgeting process outlines where funds have been set aside for the rest of the year. The Council then still have to consider when and how much of the budgeted funds should be spent on any particular service or project.

This year the budget includes village hall grants amounting to £7,394 and up to £5,725 towards the Christmas Lights. Provision has been made for £10,000 in support of a bowling green in the Parish and a further £10,000 towards the new changing rooms in Coven. Allowance has been made for £3,500 for a new bus shelter, £4,000 towards the future provision of graveyards, £5,000 for traffic calming measures and £16,723 for maintenance of Council property and playground inspections. £13,000 has been budgeted for loan repayments and a higher than normal contingency for this Council of £30,000 was considered prudent in view of the forthcoming changing rooms project.

New Changing Rooms Coven

We are delighted to report that the grant application made to the Football Foundation for funding towards new changing rooms at Coven playing field has proved successful with a substantial grant being awarded by the Football Foundation towards the project - more details will be available in the next newsletter.

Several companies will shortly be invited to tender for the work and once this process has been completed the Council will confirm the remaining funding required.

This Council is extremely grateful for all the hard work and support given by our previous Clerk, Mrs Diane Drury, Andy Weston of the Football Foundation and Mark Jenkinson and Katie White of South Staffordshire Council without whose efforts this application would not have been possible.

Clerk to the Council

The start of the year saw Mrs Diane Drury, Clerk to Brewood and Coven Parish Council for 27 years take a well deserved retirement. Diane saw many changes over the years, working with around 20 different Chairs of Council, too many different Councillors to count and a completely different workload that had started at around 14 hours per week twenty-seven years ago to over 43 hours per week now.

The Council has now appointed Mrs Sue Groom as Clerk to the Council and Mrs Deborah Poole as Assistant Clerk to work alongside our other Assistant Clerk Mrs Valerie Turner. Sue has worked with Diane for several years so we should manage an extremely smooth handover. Our thanks to Diane and all our good wishes to her and her family.

Security - Our Neighbourhood Beat Officer WPC Helen Mitchell has asked that we draw your attention to the importance of garaging your cars whenever possible. To leave them on the drive is unfortunately an irresistible invitation to less scrupulous individuals.

Your Councillors are:

Bishops Wood Ward -

Jan Jeffries and Ian Westwood.

Brewood Ward -

Cllr Andrew Ball, David Evans, Ann Holmes (Vice Chair), George Martin, Dr Richard Taylor (Chair), Mac Webb.

Coven Ward -

Moira Alden-Court, Janet Carr, Cllr Ivor Clay, Lena Holmes, Lorna Jones, Yvonne Millward.

Coven Heath -

Fred Barrett.

District Councillors -

Andrew Ball, Ivor Clay, Brian Cox, Mike Hampson.

County Councillor -

Rex Roberts O.B.E.

For contact information see Parish notice-boards

Council Meetings

Meetings are held at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, 35 Stafford Street, Brewood. The remaining meetings scheduled for 2008 are: May 29, June 12 and 26, July 10 and 31, August 14, September 11 and 25, October 9 and 30, November 13 and 27 and December 11. A Public Participation session is held at all of the above meetings.

Office Contacts -

Tel: 01902 850809

Email: brewoodparish@btconnect.com

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Assistant Clerks:

Valerie Turner, Deborah Poole

Car Scheme: Caroline Cumming
01902 851786

Web Sites -

www.brewoodparish.org.uk

www.brewoodvillage.org.uk

www.covenvillage.org.uk

www.covenheath.org.uk

www.bishopswood.org.uk

IF YOU REQUIRE THIS NEWSLETTER IN LARGE PRINT PLEASE PHONE 01902 850809

Christmas Lights Around the Parish

Although it all happened what seems to be a long time ago this is the first newsletter since the end of the 2007 festive season. Once again a fine display was provided in all of our four villages and the Parish Council is extremely grateful for the hard work so many individuals put in to make sure the Christmas Lights were a success. Their work is only noticed for a few weeks through December and into early January but many of those involved are active throughout the year meeting and planning for the year ahead and, more often, fund raising to support what is becoming an increasingly expensive display, with legislation and more demanding criteria affecting them each year.

Coven seem to have a particular talent for fundraising even though they have been without a committee for the last two years. Mr Ryan Price raised £1,000 through a Family Valentines Disco and Mrs Yvonne Millward and volunteers Margret Evans, Leslie Cliff, D. Bayliss, Janet Penn, Morice Bickford, Lorraine Owen and Iris Frost raised over £1,700 through Mrs Millward's Dance, street collections and donations from local businesses. What community spirit! A committee have now come forward to organise the lights for Coven in the future and through the hard work of Yvonne and Ryan the new committee has a healthy bank balance to build on - our thanks to Ryan and the rest of the committee for coming forward.

Last year Rotary took over the Christmas Lights in Brewood, retaining the existing Lights Committee in the process. Although Rotary is well known for its fundraising throughout the year to benefit local organisations and charities it is intended that any funds raised towards or from the Christmas Lights will be ring-fenced purely for the lights. So as not to dilute existing fundraising efforts, which many organisations and charities are reliant on, Rotary is seeking volunteers - organisations or individuals - to raise funds for future Christmas Lights. Please phone Peter Wakeham on 01902 850321 if you believe you can assist with fundraising by organising an event, large or small. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Bishops Wood and Coven Heath though smaller are no less retiring in their Christmas Lights celebrations, both having active committees who organise lights and lighting-up events. The Parish Council have once again precepted for a grant towards the lights in all of the villages to assist the lighting committees in their endeavours but it will only be by judicious fund raising and your support that they will be able to maintain the standards that we all enjoy each year.

Traffic Congestion

In response to numerous concerns raised by locals with regard to the speed of traffic through Brewood, cars mounting the pavement to pass each other and the general risk to pedestrians, the Parish Council called a meeting of the Council to enable several presentations to be made - from Staffordshire County Council, Parish Councillor David Evans and Brewood Civic Society - and to provide an opportunity to hear the views of local residents.

It was extremely encouraging to see and hear the level of interest in the community. By the end of the meeting it was clear that opinions were many and varied as to whether a problem existed, if there was a problem what caused it, whether it should be dealt with or not and if so then how.

To enable the Council to be more responsive and to focus the debate further a Traffic Management Committee has been set-up comprising of Mrs D.M. Holmes (Chair of Committee), Cllr A. Ball, Mr D. Evans, Mr G. Martin and Mr M. Webb. The remit of the committee is to review and investigate the various proposals and points of concern raised to date, report back to Full Council and make recommendations for their approval.

Inter Parish Games 2008

The 2008 Inter Parish Games started back in February and once again Mr Paul Guest of Coven has kindly volunteered to co-ordinate the games for our Parish of Brewood and Coven, with Bishops Wood and Coven Heath.

Regular winners in the past, this Parish also regularly manages to compete in every single event - quite an achievement. Our good wishes to Paul, the team captains and all the contestants in their endeavours.

Coven Luncheon and Sunday Social club - providing Sunday lunch and a chance to meet and chat with others, for those who would otherwise be housebound in Coven on Sundays. This group is run by volunteers with the support of grants from local organisations. If you would like to help or provide support in any way please contact Moira Alden-Court on 01902 703528 for more details.

Photographs Wanted - in October we will be updating the Parish Guide and will be looking for some new photographs from around the whole Parish. With spring and summer ahead of us it would be really interesting if, with your assistance, we could compile a collection of photos from our four villages. Digital photographs can be emailed to brewoodparish@btconnect.com or if you prefer you can drop them off on a disc to the Council Office in Stafford Street. In time any photographs received will also go on to the Parish web site. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Summer Sussed Activities

Arrangements are currently being made for this years Summer Sussed children's activities as organised by South Staffordshire Council. Eight events will be scheduled during July and August to take place in Bishops Wood, Brewood and Coven. All events are free and open to local children between the ages of 5 to 12 years (5 to 8 years for the fitness activity) - places must be booked with South Staffordshire Council before-hand.

The Parish Council is subsidising six of the events to the value of £540 with two further events being funded by a Staffordshire Children's Fund grant to South Staffordshire Council. Details will be made available as soon as possible through the schools, village papers and the parish notice-boards. We are extremely grateful to the three Village Hall Committees who allow the halls to be used for these events free of charge.

Capital Projects - Update

Coven Old Changing Rooms – work to convert the old changing rooms into a sun-shelter and store for use by the Council has now been completed. Following expert advice the original design was reconsidered to address Child Protection and Health and Safety concerns that had been identified and has resulted in a larger, more open seating area which overlooks both the children's play equipment and the rest of the playing field. Not only does this provide much needed shelter from the sun at the playing field but it has also greatly improved the original building and released rented garage space previously used for storage by the Council. We are extremely grateful to Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association for their grant of £2,050 towards the total project cost of £10,000.

Coven New Changing Rooms – see front cover.

Council Offices, Brewood – as previously reported unfortunately the application for a Lottery Grant, to further investigate the feasibility of redeveloping the Council Offices in Brewood, proved unsuccessful but the reasons for considering redevelopment still stand – these in part being to provide access for the disabled, extend storage capacity and to address maintenance issues affecting the current building. Following a presentation by Brewood Ideas Group that considered the requirements of several stake-holders in the village and the possible opportunities for the land such stakeholders owned, the Parish Council is arranging a meeting with these interested parties to investigate the suggestions further.

Community Volunteers - following a suggestion from Mrs Margaret Wootton of Coven, the Parish Council is seeking nominations of anyone you feel has made an outstanding contribution to the community in a voluntary capacity. We receive tremendous support from volunteers in the community who are key to so much that happens in our villages - for the children, the elderly, in support of emergency services amongst many others. Please write in to the Parish Council with any nominations you may have.

Events in South Staffordshire - visit www.sstaffs.gov.uk for the new e-calendar of events and festivals taking place in South Staffordshire. Simply click on the 'What's On' image on the right hand side of the home page. Easy to follow instructions are also displayed to enable you to advertise your own community event on this site.

South Staffordshire Energy Efficiency Advice Service offers free, impartial and independent advice on energy related matters to local householders on phone no. 0800 512 012.

Footpaths

Bishop's Wood - Following the problems encountered last year with weeds growing through the newly laid path to Bishop's Wood playing field and then the subsequent breaking up of the path, Staffordshire County Council now appear to have resolved the problem with the contractors and a more robust path has now been provided. We are monitoring the situation as spring gets into full swing as some weeds have started to grow through in the last few weeks.

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Protection Act 2005

Dog fouling in public places continues to be a problem, particularly at The Bront, alongside Riverside Way and in the field by Grange Farm footpath - in Coven - and the bridleway over the Common in Bishops Wood . Please make sure you clean up any mess after your dog - to not do so is against the law and is particularly dangerous in areas where children are likely to play.

The dumping of garden rubbish has started to be a problem once again. Last year Environmental Health Officers at South Staffordshire Council followed up on this Council's complaint that garden refuse was being dumped on the bridle-way that runs from Old Weston Road to Whiteoaks Drive in Bishops Wood. The problem has arisen already again this year and if necessary the Council will again call in the Environmental Health Officers to resolve the matter .

It seems a shame that many residents are working hard to keep our villages pleasant and enjoyable places to live in, with the Best Kept Village competition giving people a particular focus. If necessary the Council will work with other local enforcement agencies to ensure their efforts are not wasted. Please do what you can to look after our villages.

Bowling Green

The request in the last Parish Newsletter for anyone interested in playing outdoor bowls to notify the Parish Council received an excellent response with around 70 people registering their interest. In the mean time the Council has continued to provide support to the Chair of the Bowls Club, Mr Charles Spencer, and has been in discussions with Brewood Parish Sports Ltd, responsible for running the cricket and football pitch in Engleton Lane, to ascertain whether there was sufficient space to lay a green on the existing site. Unfortunately this does not seem to be possible so an alternative option of locating the green on Engleton Lane playing field is currently under consideration. The Council has funded a survey from a surveyor with many years experience in these matters and the report has been made available to Mr Spencer and the local Crown Green Bowling Association Development Officer, Mr John Morley, whose assistance has been greatly appreciated.

We now understand a committee has been formed who will take the idea forward and who will be seeking active members to assist with running the club and maintaining the green. It will only be possible to progress this project further and seek funding from outside agencies if sufficient support can now be found. If you still haven't contacted the Parish Council and feel you can be of assistance in any capacity please phone the Clerk, Sue Groom on 01902 850809 who will pass your details on.

Playing Fields

Brewood and Coven In addition to the sun-shelter, the new changing rooms and the discussions in-hand with regard to the feasibility of a bowling green it is also the Council's intention to replace the boundary fencing and gates at Brewood and Coven during the year. A new style of fencing is currently proposed which is stronger and does not lend itself to being climbed. A similar style of fencing has already been erected in shorter lengths at the two playing fields. Sources of funding are currently being explored to further develop the toddlers play equipment in Engleton Lane. Mr Mac Webb has been liaising with representatives of the local Toddler Group who have been advising on suitable equipment and the SSCVA in Stafford Street who have provided guidance with regard to possible sources of funding.

Bishops Wood The Council is grateful for the generous offer of Debbie and Trevor Foster in Bishop's Wood to donate a basketball post for the playing field. Unfortunately the path is inappropriate for the vehicle access that would be required to erect the post. Nice offer all the same. Thank you.

The ongoing problem of drainage between the gates and across to the play area at Bishops Wood continues. Advice is being sought for the provision of a suitable path that would cope with the ground conditions present as previous efforts to drain the area have proved unsuccessful.

A Note From Diane Drury At the end of January this year a luncheon party was held at the Bishops Wood Village Hall to mark the occasion of my retirement as Clerk to the Council. It was a sad but truly memorable occasion which I truly appreciated and leaves me with warm memories of the time I spent working amongst you all.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Councillors and Staff for organising such a splendid occasion, particularly those who worked so hard to prepare the Hall and to provide and serve the excellent buffet which was enjoyed by all those present.

I should also like to thank everyone who contributed to the very generous gifts presented to me, namely a digital camera, a watch, and a substantial amount of gardening vouchers which will provide me with endless hours of pleasure. The Village Hall Management Committee were also most generous in allowing the free use of the Hall. It has been a privilege to serve you all and I wish the Council and its new Clerk, Sue Groom, a happy and rewarding future. Diane Drury

Brewood Singers - in order to help them continue their fund-raising for good causes and local charities Brewood Singers have received a grant of £1,500 from Cllr Rex Roberts O.B.E. under the Local Members Initiative scheme. David Brookes, Musical Director, said: 'The new keyboard will enable the Singers to perform at more venues where a piano is not always available, and let us share our music with a wider audience.' For more information visit www.brewoodsingers.co.uk.

Brewood Music Festival - July 11-13 sees the Brewood Music Festival return with a variety of events to meet all musical tastes. The festival will start with a carousel of events at different locations around the village, followed on the Saturday by an open-air stage at St Dominic's School and a free open-air concert in the Market Place on the Sunday afternoon. This year the Parish Council has made a grant of £1,000 in support of the Festival. Visit www.brewoodmusicfestival.co.uk.

Best Kept Village 2008

After the resounding success of Brewood, Coven and most recently Bishops Wood in this competition the Council is delighted to hear that once again all three villages have entered the 2008 competition. The three Best Kept Village Groups have already leapt into action organising litter picks, children's BKV posters and planting out amongst many other activities. Irrespective of what ever plans the Groups may have they can only make a difference with your support and your involvement. So on behalf of all three villages please offer your services, even if it you only have a little time to spare, it will be greatly appreciated.

Governor Vacancy

Unfortunately due to personal commitments of the existing Governor a Local Authority Governor Vacancy will exist at St John's CE First School in Bishops Wood from the end of May. The Parish Council is authorised to nominate Local Authority Governors for schools in its Parish - if you would like further information please phone the Clerk, Sue Groom, on 01902 850809.

Grass Cutting - A449 at Coven Heath

Fred Barrett, Member for Coven Heath, has been working hard to improve the grass cutting schedule at Coven Heath - Amey Mouchel and the Highways Agency have improved matters and Mr Barrett continues his discussions with South Staffordshire to do more cuts of the central reservation.

South Staffordshire Walking Festival

Sunday 2 June meeting at the car park at the foot of the Wrekin at 10:00am, steady climbs and Sunday 22 June meeting at St Dominic's School Car Park at 10.00am, easy level walking. Both 5.5 miles, lasting 2 to 2.5 hours.



Roseclaim Grants to Bishops Wood

Following the V2007 Music Festival at Weston Park, Roseclaim made a grant of £5,000 to the Parish Council for distribution amongst clubs and organisations of Bishops Wood. Having invited interested parties to apply the following has been distributed: St John's Out of School Club £600; Church of St John the Evangelist £750; Bishops Wood Neighbourhood Watch £1,500; Friend's of St John's First School £1,000; BKV / Christmas Lights £200; Bishops Wood Village Hall £250; Bishops Wood Playing Field £500. Further details are available in the May issue of the Bugle. Our thanks to Roseclaim for their generous donation.