

**Brewood and Coven Parish Council
with Bishop's Wood and Coven Heath**



Annual Report

2017-18

Brewood and Coven Parish Council – Annual Report for the Year 2017-18

Chairman's Report – Parish Councillor Richard Dakin

Welcome to the second Annual Report of the Parish Council since we were awarded Quality Council Status under the revised Local Council Awards Scheme. The following reports are those given at the Annual Parish Meeting which was held on 12th April this year:

Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to thank all fellow Councillors for their support and hard work, also thanks to our Clerk Maggie Birtles, Assistant Clerk Gemma Jones and the Car Scheme Co-ordinator Sofena Phillips. My thanks go to our County Councillor Mark Sutton and District Councillors Joyce Bolton and Brian Cox, all part of a good team. I would also like to acknowledge that two of our Parish Councillors are also District Councillors; Anne Holmes and Wendy Sutton, the parish is grateful to them their hard work for both councils.

I did inherit a couple of ongoing issues, the main one being the West Midland's Interchange proposed development, which in turn I will be passing to next year's Chairman! I have represented the Council at Remembrance Services, several Civic Sundays in local parishes, the Commonwealth Day and presentation of trophies at Brewood Junior Football Club.

Great progress has at last been made with Brewood Bowling Club which is now operational, I wish them every success. Also thanks and congratulations to the Best Kept Village volunteers and organisers for winning the Best Kept Village competition and being awarded the trophy for best large village in South Staffordshire, which is currently in Market Place. Thanks also to the organisers and helpers of the Christmas Lights and to the volunteer staff at the Library. Thanks also to our local MP Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE who gives great support and commitment to the Parish.

I must not forget the work that is carried out by our handyman Martin Smith and also our janitor/caretaker Matt Orgill. Finally I would like to thank Anne Holmes for the assistance and help she has given me during my year as Chairman.

Finance Report - Parish Councillor Jan Carr:

Precept

The Council's anticipated budgeted expenditure for the financial year to 31st March 2018 was £347,337. In support of the 2017/2018 budget, the anticipated income was £8,719 excluding VAT refunded, the Precept Demand and income from Roseclaim. This income was derived from administration, rent and lease agreements, provision of facilities and bank interest.

The Council set a Precept of £139,413 giving a charge of £47.00 on a Band D property in the Parish.

Income

The income received excluding the Precept was £63,341. However this amount included the balance of the grant from Veolia together with the money raised by Coven Playing Field Rejuvenation Committee. VAT recovered was £19,576 the actual income figure was therefore in the region of £8,618.

The Council's changing rooms and football pitch at Coven were hired by 3 teams for the season which straddles two financial years: Tettenhall FC, Coven United and Wednesfield 86.

Expenditure

A full breakdown of expenditure is attached at the end of this report. However, an overview of the expenditure incurred in summary comprises of:

- Staff salaries, including all on-costs, amounted to £87,706. The Parish Council has been committed to providing the Living Wage for employees and over the past three years has increased salaries at the lower end of the pay scale by annual increments to achieve this.
- Parish Councillors do not receive any remuneration for the work they undertake other than £25 general admin allowance paid out once a year in December (£375 in total).
- A further £14,030 was spent on administration, associated overheads such as heating and lighting at the Council offices, subscriptions, Audit fees and training.
- Lease agreements at Coven playing field and Coven Heath allotments amounted to £1,809.
- The Parish Council quarterly newsletter printing totalled £2,517. Other incidental expenses such as BKV entries, the Chairman's Civic Sunday totalled £1,220.
- Maintenance of the Council's playing fields, amenity areas and open spaces, Sandy Lane WC and allotments, including water totalled £18,911.
- The Parish Council provided free activities for children in the Parish during the school holidays at a cost of £525.
- Coven village sign was finally made and erected using BKV money saved over several years. The Parish Council has donated £1,000 towards the sign.
- Grants of £2,880 were awarded to Bishop's Wood village hall, Coven Memorial Hall and the Jubilee Hall in Brewood. £700 was granted to Coven Heath Community Association.
- Brewood Parish Sports Association was granted £3,000 which was spent on ground maintenance and insurance cover.
- The Council once again provided grants to the independent community groups who organise the Christmas Lights in all four villages to a total value of £5,618.
- A donation of £150 was given to the Royal British Legion towards poppy wreaths for Remembrance Sunday.
- The Brewood and District First Responders were awarded £2,000.
- Brewood Music Festival Committee drew £1,000 from its grant of £2,500 during the year.
- Brewood Tennis Club was awarded £1,500.
- Friends of Barnfield Sandbeds had £250 towards the planting of native flowers.
- Brewood Bowling Club was granted £5,000 towards the new green.
- Brewood 2nd Scout Group was given £250 towards the provision of access for disabled people.
- Coven's new play equipment was installed at a cost of £70,283 the majority of which was raised from external grants; Veolia, Tesco and Mid Counties Co-op, together with fund raising by the playing field committee which has now disbanded.
- Bishop's Wood had some replacement swings at a cost of £1,713 at the playing field.
- The Parish Council's noticeboard at Coven was replaced costing £337.
- The 2017/2018 repayment of the loans taken out to build new changes rooms at Coven and to install perimeter fencing at Brewood and Coven playing fields cost the Council £9,336.

Planning Report - Parish Councillor Richard Taylor

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications. We accept that we are not experts on the relevant guidance, but attempt to have a positive and measured view in relation to our local knowledge.

The current year has seen fewer planning applications than in the previous few years. There were 62 applications for residential properties. Of the 14 applications where we had significant concerns, six were refused by South Staffordshire Council. The other eight were approved with

conditions applied. There were 11 applications for commercial properties. There was one application for six extra pitches for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, this is still pending.

We are still awaiting the final SAD document and we hope and expect to have a significant impact into the density and design of properties. We will have views on the type of housing, hoping for a significant proportion of social, part purchase and renting for the known need for this in our Parish.

We are disappointed with the District Council's infrastructure plan, in particular we noted that there were no plans for improvement within the Parish. We also expressed our concerns about the amalgamation of s106 agreement money which is being spent in the district to the exclusion of this parish.

The planning application for the West Midlands Interchange (Gailey Freight Hub), at Four Ashes is due to be submitted. We are supporting, along with all the neighbouring parishes, the opposition to this plan.

A Rural Exemption housing development in Bishop's Wood will be discussed in the near future. We note with concern the proposal by Shropshire County Council for over 10,000 houses on Green Belt land between Tong and Bishop's Wood. We have requested to be a consultee on this proposal.

Playing Field Reports:

Bishop's Wood Playing Field - Parish Councillor Mary Sambrook

Bishop's Wood playing fields has had no major projects this year. The toddler swings in the enclosed area have been replaced and also a new set of goals posts were purchased with Roseclaim money due to the previous ones being damaged. The playing fields continue to have problems with drainage. We also have suffered a number of mole hills during the year. However, the facility continues to be well used. Our grateful thanks go to our caretaker Rachael Dunbar who has looked after the playing field for many years.

Brewood Playing Field and Jubilee Park - Parish Councillor David Evans

The Jubilee Park and the playing field continue to be enjoyed by all ages from the community. The equipment is well used, including the adult outdoor gym, even during the wet winter. The equipment remains clean which has contributed to its use. The handyman's solution to birds perching on the bucket swings thus soiling them has now been adopted for other pieces of equipment, making them more usable. Annual safety checks have been made on all equipment and all is well. It is necessary to change the safety notice regarding the outdoor gym equipment and this is in hand. The full-size goalposts have not yet been replaced and the proposed running track did not materialise. The north-east corner of the field continues to be a problem particularly with water logging and therefore, fails to be mown on a regular basis. Finance was agreed last year for the Council to landscape parts of the park to make it more a park rather than a playing field, and this is still being investigated.

The new bowling green is about to reopen for its first full season having been officially opened by the Rt. Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP. The Bowling Club is going ahead without a clubhouse at the moment because of a shortfall in grants. The Tennis Club continues to flourish with league games on three nights of the week and Sunday mornings. There is tennis training for all ages on other days.

Finally, on behalf of the Council, I would like to express our appreciation for the work and commitment of the Council's caretaker, Mrs Elaine Glead, whose efforts have been so important in keeping the Jubilee Park looking so good and in turn so well used.

Coven Playing Field - Parish Councillor Richard Dakin

The playing field has now been brought into line with the others in the Parish. After a tremendous amount of hard work by the Coven Playing Field Rejuvenation Committee, the official opening was carried out by Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP on 15 July 2017. The playing field always proves a very popular area within the village of Coven during school holidays and weekends, it is well supported by parents and children from outside areas. The surface of the tennis court is in need of some repair but due to the court being misused during the late summer the court net was taken down; this will be put back up next spring in plenty of time for the Wimbledon fortnight! The skateboard park still proves to be very popular with the older children. The football pitch and changing rooms have been hired by two football teams this season. The existing play equipment that was retained when the equipment was rejuvenated has been re-painted and looks very good and in keeping with the new equipment. Once again we would like to say thanks for the work put in by the Committee, which now also includes an outdoor gym for adult use within the playing field which was installed with funds raised by Mid-Counties Co-op.

The Bront Report - Parish Councillor Glen Sibley

There had been very little litter on site and no dog fouling had been seen during the year.

April 2017 - Spring flowers in bloom, plenty of colour and undergrowth beginning to show.

August 2017 - The culvert at the Poplars Farm Way entrance had been cut back and tidied up. Some areas of flowering Himalayan balsam were evident. A bird survey and a bat survey would be carried out during the spring and summer of 2018 to establish which species would benefit from bird and bat houses.

November 2017 - Autumn colour was fading as the leaves were falling due to the windy weather.

December 2017 - The site looked bleak with the onset of winter.

January 2018 - An upstream survey revealed that there were great swathes of untreated Himalayan balsam on the brook either side of the bridge in Lawn Lane and this brook flows directly into the Bront near the Riverside Way entrance which put the Bront at very high risk from the seeds that would be ejected into the stream.

February 2018 - The River Penk was running high and flowing quite fast and there was a high danger of flooding.

A number of large trees had fallen, none of them provided any risk to visitors and were all well clear of the paths. The small gate at the Poplars Farm Way entrance was slowly rotting away and would need to be replaced for safety reasons.

March 2018 - The River Penk was still running high and fast but no flood warnings had been issued. Spring flowers were starting to grow.

April 2018 - The River Penk receded and was flowing slower so the risk of flooding was greatly reduced. There were many spring flowers in bloom around the site adding plenty of colour. Several birds were seen or heard around the site including blackbirds, wood pigeons, wrens, robins, great tits, chiff-chaffs, rooks and magpies. Many of the trees were out in bud so spring seemed to be on its way at last.

Allotments Reports:

Coven Heath - Parish Councillor Linda Tomkins

The 2017/2018 gardening year started well at Coven Heath, if not a little cold and dry, which did not make for a good year for potatoes and parsnips. However, everything else was wonderful. There are 60 plots which includes some plots divided in half. Currently there are three vacancies and there has been a steady turnover throughout the year. There has continued to be a lot of advertising via the Parish Newsletters, website and Facebook page and Coven Heath Community Association has also advertised vacancies in their own newsletters and on its notice board.

The Coven Heath Allotments Association welcomes new plot holders and assists the Parish Council by monitoring cultivation and application of the garden rules. The Association also arranges for visits from a scrap metal dealer to collect any surplus metals that are frequently dug up. The arrangements for burning woody weeds etc are working well and plot holders are respecting local residents by containing their fires in metal drums.

The Parish Council's handyman sprays and trims vacant plots to present them to prospective plot holders as not too daunting to cultivate. We are grateful to our caretaker Alan Lawrence for opening and closing the gate and keeping an eye on things when he can.

The Allotments Working Party has undertaken inspection visits during April, June and September 2017 and in January 2018. As a result of the visits the Garden Rules and procedures have been updated and are working well. During the January inspection the members of the Working Party were very impressed by the cultivation and maintenance of the plots. In particular, it was noted that the bee hives which are situated at the north end of the allotments are a positive asset and benefit to the allotments.

The Allotment Association has had three meetings this year and its Annual General meeting was held on 24 April 2018.

Coven - Parish Councillor Linda Tomkins

An inspection was undertaken in the summer with Parish Councillors and some allotment holders in attendance. Various matters were raised, some of which have been addressed. The Council investigated the possibility of having a water supply but unfortunately this was not cost effective. The allotments are well tended to by the allotment holders, with all plots currently occupied.

Brewood and District Voluntary Car Scheme:

A car scheme has been running in the Parish for many years taking people to appointments that they may not otherwise be able to attend. It is run from the Parish Council offices by Sofena Phillips who is the co-ordinator. We really do appreciate how she has developed the service and managed to recruit more volunteer drivers. The Scheme is very fortunate to have so many willing drivers who give up their time to help. That said, we are always looking to increase the numbers if we can and whatever contribution a driver chooses to make is welcomed. They are reimbursed for their mileage expenses on a monthly basis and there is no impact on car insurance cover or premiums.

We thank you for taking the time to read this Annual Report and hope you found it interesting. You are welcome to attend Parish Council meeting which are held on the second and last Thursday of each month with the exception of August and December when there is no second meeting.

Annual Accounts

Balance Sheet					
Current assets as at 31 March 2017:			current assets at 31 March 18:		
Pre payment	£	1,443.26	£	1,465.80	
Sundry debtors	£	1,487.66	£	1,243.60	
Cash in hand	£	211,876.50	£	150,393.76	
	£	214,807.42	£	153,103.16	
less:					
Current liabilities as at 31 March 2017			Current liabilities at 31 March 18:		
Receipts in advance	£	1,205.69	£	825.00	
Creditors	£	210.00	£	2,403.58	
New assets	£	-	£	-	
Fund balances	£	213,391.73	£	149,874.58	
Income 2016-17					
£	6,033.43	General Admin	£	2,166.63	
£	2,106.79	Rent/lease agreements	£	1,918.96	
£	3,095.73	Provision of facilities	£	3,361.39	
£	41,670.77	Grants inc Roseclaim	£	22,106.66	
£	-	Reimbursements	£	10,602.75	
£	403.88	Bank interest	£	410.80	
£	139,880.00	Precept	£	139,413.00	
£	10,654.20	VAT refunded	£	24,193.68	
£	203,844.80		£	204,173.87	
Expenditure 2016-17					
£	81,346.48	Staffing	£	87,706.29	
£	9,414.32	Admin/overheads	£	10,772.74	
£	3,760.05	Incidental expenses	£	3,759.20	
£	922.00	CLlr and employee training	£	964.00	
£	1,809.00	Leasing agreements	£	1,809.00	
£	1,106.00	Subscriptions	£	1,047.00	
£	398.70	debit card transactions	£	153.14	
£	6,612.31	Coven playing field	£	8,911.53	
£	3,314.93	Brewood playing field	£	2,507.22	
£	1,647.25	Sandy Lane WCs	£	1,355.64	
£	11,901.16	Other maintenance	£	6,083.79	
£	20,718.90	Projects	£	2,175.00	
£	14,678.00	Village hall grants	£	9,307.50	
£	5,859.95	Christmas lights grants	£	5,617.82	
£	20,617.19	Misc grants	£	19,686.37	
£	25,637.50	Capital items	£	73,895.19	
£	11,644.26	Loan repayments	£	9,335.73	
£	530.00	s137 payments	£	50.00	
£	13,930.90	VAT	£	20,519.45	
£	235,848.90		£	265,656.61	
Income to 31 Mar 17		£	203,844.80	£	204,173.87
Expenditure to 31 Mar 17		£	235,848.90	£	265,656.61
Expenditure over income		£	32,004.10	-£	61,482.74
Retained reserves at 1 Apr 17		£	213,391.73	£	150,393.76
Investments					
Cash/bank	£	211,876.50	£	150,393.76	
Debtors	£	44.40	£	300.00	
VAT	£	4,617.83	£	943.60	
Prepayments	£	1,443.26	£	1,465.80	
	£	217,981.99	£	153,103.16	
Less:					
Creditors	£	210.00	£	2,403.58	
Receipts in advance	£	1,205.69	£	825.00	
	£	1,415.69	£	3,228.58	
	£	216,566.30	£	149,874.58	

Your Councillors' Contact Telephone Numbers for the Forthcoming Year:

Bishop's Wood:

Jan Jeffries 01902 851831

Mary Sambrook 01785 841398

Brewood:

David Evans 01902 851326

Anne Holmes 01902 850611 (Chairman)

Kevin Kearney 01902 261446

Wendy Sutton 01902 851682

Richard Taylor 01902 850594

Mac Webb MBE 01902 850671

Coven:

Moira Alden-Court 01902 703528

Janis Bradshaw 01902 791435

Janet Carr 01902 791443

Richard Dakin 01902 850938 (Vice Chairman)

Antonio Pupino 07857 061128

Glen Sibley 01902 790059

Coven Heath:

Linda Tomkins 01902 786008

District Councillors:

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Brian Cox 01785 840482

Anne Holmes 01902 850611

Wendy Sutton 01902 851682

County Councillor:

Mark Sutton 01902 851682

You may also contact your Member of Parliament:

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