

Berkswell Society

Notes of Committee Meeting 11th July 2018 at the Bear Inn

Present			Apologies
John Thomas (in Chair)	Bill Bailey	Kay Howles	Ken Shaw
Andrew Burrow (minutes)	Jane Edwards (JED)	Jim Ellis (JE)	Graham Lock
Wendy Gault		Alan Hanbury	
Item No	Action		By whom
26/2018	Minutes of the meeting of 4 th April and AGM on 24 th May 2018 minutes were approved		
27/2018	Matters Arising		
	Web site The link to the history group site is done		
	AVIVA bonds There is no buy back and hence no risk to the Society's investment		
	Open Gardens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £4348 raised for the NGS for their charities £1792 raised for charities of the garden owners' choice through selling teas etc. The Committee agreed to support the Treasurer in a "potential dispute" with the NGS as to whether garden owners could raise money for charities of their choice in addition to all the entrance fees going to NGS. It was agreed in principle that if the NGS persisted in their position that the Berkswell open gardens scheme would be run independently with no money going to NGS and all funds raised to locally determined charities as is the case in Meriden. 		
	The Well It was noted that the well was running clear. Better than in years. Thanks to all involved and to the new "Well Warden" – Denis Stokes		
28/2018	Treasurer's report		
	The treasurers report (attached) was noted. It was also noted that in addition to the funds shown in the current and deposit account that the BSMOG account had £287.44 in funds from a recent dividend payment in addition to the two main Society accounts. With an expected payment of a grant from the PC this gave total funds available are expected to be £1935.52		
	It was agreed that the Treasurer could close the Society deposit account and have all funds available in the current account for ease of administration. The BSMOG account would remain separate.		KS
29/2018	It was agreed to write to the PC to confirm the Society's support for the regulation 14 draft of the NDP.		JT
30/2018	Parish Boundary Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee agreed that no change was appropriate at this stage for many reasons particularly the volume of challenges facing the community and that a reorganisation was likely to cause more problem rather than facing the challenges. In addition, the Society's good works would be severely impacted within Balsall Common. It was agreed that the acting chairman would submit a paper to SMBC explaining the Society's concerns. A draft was discussed. The words (but not pictures) are shown in the attachment It was agreed that the draft would be amended to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would be lost as a heading It is difficult to see what the hard benefits of change would be "now" that would offset the current disadvantages Berkswell PC works well It is usual to have boundaries on the ground that cut across physical features (e.g. Solihull/Birmingham or the London Boroughs) but which reflect an emotional tie 		JT/ASB

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	<p>rather than a physical tie.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The timing is poor ○ Neither HS2 nor new houses built and houses only an initial draft of the Solihull Plan out for a non-statutory consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The document would be finalised by email correspondence ● It was further agreed that Balsall Common resident and Committee member Jim Ellis would represent the Society at the Governance Committee to give a verbal presentation ● It was agreed that the Society would leaflet drop the community with its views. High quality reflecting the proposed paper to SMBC Governance Committee 	
31/2018	<p>Update on Balsall Common Planting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All is planted. Watering a huge problem but with help from residents we are coping. ● The planter on Sunnyside roundabout has been reconfigured and repaired to provide standard flowers ● One planter on Sunnyside lane is neglected because of medical problem experienced by the volunteer. We wish her a speedy recovery. 	
32/2018	<p>Berkswell Village planters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Reading Room planter had been temporarily repaired ● Other might need repair. Bill Bailey to fix including talking to Anne Marshall about the solution the Reading Room planter. Bill Bailey authorised to purchase materials ● It was agreed to put the spare planter from Lavender Hall Lane by the Well where watering was easy 	BB
33/2018	It was noted that work to convert the old museum back to a house would start shortly.	
34/2018	Alan Neild was authorised to spend £25 on a planter at any plant "store" if he chose not to use Craddocks. Money reclaimable via the Treasurer against receipts.	JT/BB/K S
	Date of next meeting would be 9th October 2018. John Thomas organise date and venue	JT

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Treasurer's Report

Mandates are now in place with Barclays Bank enabling the Treasurer to access the Berkswell Society Current and Deposit Accounts.

At 5 July 2018 the balance on the Current Account was £374.13 and on the Deposit Account £773.95. A total of £1,148. A further £500 will be received shortly by way of a grant from the Berkswell Parish Council towards the cost of plants and planters around the Parish. This will give a grand total of £1,648.08.

The Deposit Account pays interest of only .20% gross. The Committee is asked to decide whether for ease of administration the money in the Deposit Account should be transferred to the Current Account and the Deposit Account closed.

To avoid the nuisance and time taken in raising and counter-signing cheques, the Treasurer is paying all suppliers' invoices by electronic bank transfer. Members are asked to make sure that suppliers email their invoices direct to the Treasurer for payment (kenshaw170@hotmail.com).

There is a third Barclays account which holds monies from the Mine Opposition Group. At 5 April 2018 this stood at £10,487 (£11,169 at 31 December 2017). The Treasurer is currently in the process of completing a Barclays Mandate transferring authority to access the account from the previous Treasurer.

At the 4 April 2018 meeting (Matters Arising - item 18/2018), the Treasurer was asked to check that the Society's preference shares were not impacted by the then proposal by Aviva to buy back the shares at face value. After receiving advice from Walker Crips Stockbrokers, the Treasurer emailed Committee Members on 12 April 2018 confirming that Aviva had issued a statement saying that they no longer planned to buy back the preference shares.

Note: see in minutes for funds in BSMOG account which the details of which were not available when this report was written.

Berkswell NGS Open Gardens, Sunday 26 June

Another very successful day for Berkswell. Bearing in mind the competition from various major sporting events 551 tickets were sold, which enabled £4,348 to be donated to NGS and its charities. In addition, a further £1,792 was donated direct by garden owners to other charities (eg Alzheimer's Research) from the sale of plants and refreshments. This gave a total raised in excess of £6,000. This means Berkswell has raised in excess of £19,000 for charity over the three openings. That is something to be proud of.

Thank you to the Berkswell Society for its support in meeting the cost of printing the brochure. This, very importantly, meant that all monies raised were donated to charity.

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Thank you also to Malcolm and Jane for helping by selling tickets from the Reading Room and to various people, including Andrew, Jim and Malcolm, in erecting road signs.

The next opening will be on the last Sunday in June 2020.

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Berkswell and Balsall Parishes - Governance Review

Submission by the Berkswell Society (1st draft before amendment by the committee)

1. Background

We understand that the Governance Committee of SMBC is seeking views on a proposal to move the current Balsall Parish boundary to the line of the proposed HS2 rail line. The purpose of this submission is to make Governance Committee members aware of the impact of such a change on the community activities of the Berkswell Society within Balsall Common.

2. Objectives of the Berkswell Society

The Berkswell Society was formed in 1973 and is the residents' association for the civil parish of Berkswell. We have a good working relationship with the Balsall Common Village Resident's Association where our activities overlap. However, in the main the purposes and activities of the Society are different to those of the BCVRA and we do not "compete".

The main focus of the Society is in undertaking practical work to improve the parish both physically and as a community. Political activities (with a small "p") generally play a minor role albeit the Society considers itself a "critical friend" of the parish council and the Society was a major player in opposition to a proposed colliery in the 1980's and recently worked hard for mitigation from impacts of HS2.

The Society has 245 email addresses for members with a significant proportion of those being covering two members (partners) giving an effective membership of over 300. We estimate that about 80 of those undertake physical work for the community through the Society.

3. Our key activities are

- a. Undertaking of gardening and horticultural activities in the public space to improve the physical nature of the parish
- b. The provision of volunteers to help with community activities e.g. the Berkswell fete, litter picking, the Neighbourhood Development Plan
- c. Raising money for charity most notably raising £19,165 over 3 years through the open gardens scheme and £2389 for Help for Heroes.

Those with a humorous disposition have described the Society as the "gardening arm of the parish council". There is some truth in this although it underplays the role of the society

4. Examples of the Society's activities specifically west of the HS2 line (Balsall Common)

The Society is highly active both to the east and west of the HS2. Activities in the Balsall Common area in the last 3 years include the following pictures of which are shown in the appendix. These pictures say it all but the words below put some numbers and detail to it.

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- a. The Society has installed and maintains 10 flower planters in its own right partially funded by grant payments from Berkswell Parish Council, the Bugle and Berkswell Charities
- b. The Society has installed and maintains a further 4 flower planters in central Balsall Common in partnership with the BCVRA which are funded by the Bugle
- c. A further 5 planters are maintained at Berkswell Railway station as part of the adoption of that station by Berkswell PC. The Council owns and funds the planters but they are maintained by Society volunteers.
- d. The watering of all of these planters is naturally a major challenge in a hot summer
- e. As part of the restoration of the Jubilee Centre into a highly effective village hall within Balsall Common, the Society in conjunction with the BCVRA undertook to clear the jungle by the entrance to the Centre, turfed the cleared area and periodically cuts the grass to this date.
- f. The Society provided the volunteers to plant 9 fruit trees as part of Berkswell PCs “fruit for free” initiative on the Riddings Hill Estate. It also provides the ongoing pruning and other maintenance including watering the newer trees during hot weather until they are established. We thank SMBC for permission to plant the trees.
- g. The Society plants bulbs across Balsall Common and maintains the beds on the large roundabout by the Station. These activities are funded by the PC with occasional bulb provision by SMBC
- h. The Society installed a red telephone box which operates as a community library on Old Waste Lane. The box is situated on the major dog walking route in the area and on the Millennium Way. The library is frequently used by walkers and local alike. We are very grateful for the huge support from SMBC for this project.
- i. Society volunteers helped repaint the Kelsey lane bus stop to support its refurbishment by the parish council
- j. Society members erected and decorated the Christmas trees funded by the parish council within Balsall Common. Six in the Christmas just past.
- k. The Society petitioned for mitigation of the impact of HS2. Working with the Parish Council and SMBC the Society secured formal Assurances on improved noise mitigation, improvements on viaduct design principles, the protection of trees on the greenway from clear cutting and footpaths on new bridges at Waste Lane and Lavender Hall Lanes. This involved working closely with the SMBC HS2 Working Party and petitioning the House of Commons and House of Lords.
- l. The Society maintains an informative web site not only on the Society’s activities but also things to do and see in Berkswell Parish. The site receives over 30 new visitors a month. The website highlights the features of the parish including such things as the 3 historic pubs (2 in Balsall Common), the Berkswell windmill, packhorse bridge, Lavender Hall Fisheries (a beauty spot with a great cafe), a ridge and furrow field that can be seen by the public, historic buildings such as the Berkswell Stores (all of these in “Balsall Common”!) as well as the delights of historic Berkswell village. www.Berkswellsociety.org.uk

5. Impact of a move of the Balsall Parish boundary to the route of HS2

It is very hard to see that the Berkswell Society could continue to operate within Balsall Common if the parish boundary were to be moved. Its volunteers within Balsall Common form part of a wider parish group motivated to deliver benefits to those in Balsall Common and the wider parish. Volunteers work across the line of HS2 and are motivated partly by their local area but also by the wider vision of Berkswell Parish as a “place” with a community.

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Whilst some members of the Berkswell Society are also members of the BCVRA it is hard to see that organisation picking up the activities currently undertaken by the Berkswell Society given the difference in mission of the two organisations.

It is very possible that residents will not know what they will lose from the physical environment of Balsall Common by the loss of the contribution by the Berkswell Society after a parish boundary change. We ask that the Governance Committee takes into account these potential impacts on the life of Balsall Common during its deliberations.

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