



BERKSWICH PARISH COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN/WINTER 2020

Your Parish Council

Sue Francis, Chairman
Main Road, Milford. T: 665 490

Malcolm Millichap, Vice Chair
Village Gardens. T: 664 036

Margaret Crossman
Holly Drive. T: 664 793

Graham Kilford
Main Road, Milford. T: 665 334

Ann Millichap
Village Gardens. T: 664 036

Michael Pascoe
Main Road, Milford. T: 660 221

Ben Rowell
Congreve Close. T: 07885 697 148

Katharine Shubinsky
Cedar Way. T: 662 459

Alan Taylor
Village Gardens. T: 664 473

Temporary Clerk to the Council
Liz Harrington-Jones
The Crescent. T: 663 198
berkswichclerk@gmail.com

Stafford Borough Council
Cllr. Andrew Cooper
T: 01889 881 895

Staffordshire County Council
Cllr. John Francis. T: 665 490

Berkswich Parish Council
www.berkswich-pc.gov.uk



COVID 19

The Government has advised anyone with Covid symptoms, including a persistent cough, high temperature or breathlessness, to self-isolate and remain at home. Father Graham Adamson and the Warden, on behalf of their congregation, understand this can leave some people feeling isolated and are offering help and counselling to anyone affected. Contact isolation@berkswich.org.uk or text 07979 963 707.

Most of us have been in lockdown since March. For some this can create problems, such as when collecting groceries or a prescription or simply having someone to talk to. Help is available from Neighbours Helping Neighbours, a local group in Stafford, which offers help and support to those who are self isolating. Contact them at 0784 6996146.

HOLLYBUSH PLAY AREA

The Parish play area at Hollybush Fields has been out of action for some time due to official guidance on prevention of the spread of Covid-19. In the knowledge that play in the open air is good for children, the area was recently reopened. However, we ask users and parents to heed the notices and abide by government

advice on hygiene and social distancing. Please also be aware that the roundabout is currently out of commission and in need of maintenance work. The remaining equipment has been checked by an inspector from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RosPA) and been declared safe for use.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

There are two areas of woodland managed by the Parish Council. These are Walton Coppice, behind Bluebell Hollow, and Hollybush Coppice. In 2016 we commissioned a report from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust which advised on action necessary to improve the wildlife habitat in each coppice. Some of the recommendations are currently being implemented, but some work will be delayed due to the national emergency and the extra cost involved. Nevertheless, we see this as an important part of improving the Parish environment and safeguarding our assets.

Readers may know that the Parish Council has agreed with Berkswich Primary School for the children to use Hollybush Coppice as a part of their Forest Project. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has determined the suitability of the Coppice for environmental education and the Council has

provided start-up funds. The project is progressing well.

Mindful of the need to preserve our natural environment, the Council is considering planting wildflowers, trees and making other improvements to the grass verges in the Parish. Members of the Parish can help by sensible car parking and providing suitable habitat for wildlife in their gardens.

GRASS-CUTTING CONTRACT

At this time of the year we review the general Parish maintenance contract, which includes grass cutting. This involves assessing the number of cuts per year and the depth of each cut. In a drive to reduce costs we will be checking the exact nature of the annual maintenance and the need for so many cuts. If you have any comments on this issue please let us know through the Clerk's Office.

FOOTPATHS

There are several footpaths in the Parish. Some are maintained by the County Council and some by the Parish Council. The question arises whether the Parish should seek to take on the additional responsibility of maintaining more of the public footpaths. This will require agreement with the County Council, and if approved will involve greater expenditure. Unfortunately this will certainly increase the level of the annual precept. However, we understand that tidy footpaths make it easier for people to enjoy the Parish and the beautiful countryside we are lucky to have at our doorstep. Once again, we ask if such a move would receive support.

ANNUAL PRECEPT

Your Council Tax contains a contribution towards Parish costs, which is known as a precept. This is the total amount raised through council tax from all dwellings in the Parish area. The charge per property is calculated by dividing the amount forecast by the Parish Council for its needs in the coming year, by the number of properties in the Parish that fall into band D.

WEeping CROSS MEMORIAL

The War Memorial at Weeping Cross is owned and maintained by Berkswich Parish Council. Last November it was noted that those wishing to lay wreaths had difficulty accessing the monument due to slippery surfaces. A general cleanup was indicated and has been scheduled. This must be carried out by a specialist and will incur further cost.



Tidy footpaths make it easier for people to enjoy the Parish. Photo: Jack.

The precept has remained unchanged for the past five years. However, a general increase in costs means that this year it will need to be increased.



CHRISTMAS 2020

This year has been very difficult for many people in our community. Tremendous thanks are due to all of the front-line workers who have helped keep us safe, kept food on the shelves, and kept trains and buses running; from nurses, doctors, carers and service providers, to drivers, retailers and community volunteers. Berkswich Parish Council offers its profound thanks.

Despite ongoing uncertainty and anxieties, the Parish Council wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas and for better times and a Happy New Year in 2021.