Bournheath Parish Council

Parish Council Meeting Minutes:
Wednesday 25th March 2026, 7.00pm at Bournheath Village Community Centre

Councillors (Cllr) present: Gary Davies, Louise Colley (Vice Chair), Matthew Guest, Phil Hughes, Sophie Moir, and Maria Stepin.

In attendance:
Clerk, Ro Hardeman and six members of the public.

1. **Apologies**
   Cllr Karen May, Simon Nock (District Cllrs) and, and Mark Dunkley (County Cllr).

2. **Declarations of interest** – one.

3. **Dispensations requested** – one with no requests made to participate or vote.

The meeting was adjourned to allow Cllr Davies to leave the meeting whilst the next item (planning) was discussed. Vice Chair Colley chaired the meeting in his absence.

4. **Planning**
   The following item was discussed and agreed by the council for submission to the planning portal:

26/00226/PIP, Permission in principle, Land Of Doctors Hill, Bournheath, B61 9JE, Erection of between 3no. and 5no. bungalows and houses.

The Council objects to this application for the following reasons:
Highway concerns – the Council has been working with Highways and other agencies to reduce speed and improve road safety on Doctors Hill. The issues with Doctors Hill are prevalent due to the narrowness of the road. We have been working for many years to make drivers aware of the nature of the road including the installation of road narrowing signs and white lines at the carriageway edge to show where the road width is reduced. Within the next few days the road narrowing sign, at the point that the developer has marked a service road, is being moved to make the sign more prominent.

Road narrowing, at the site of the proposed development, is a cause for concern. A neighbouring property boundary (fencing) has been damaged twice where cars have left the road, and vehicles often use residents' driveways to move aside to allow other vehicles to pass due to restricted road width. The issue with the road is further exacerbated with a known problem of speeding in the area.

The Council, together with Highways and the local community speed watch team monitor the speed along Doctors Hill. The council has gone to great lengths to fund three VAS signs to monitor the speed of traffic from Dordale Road/The Nailers Arms to the proposed development entrance. It has been found that those travelling from Belbroughton fail to adjust the speed when entering Bournheath from 60mph to 30mph, with cars travelling more than the maximum for Doctors Hill. It has been cited in the decision 25/00372/FUL (The Nailers Arms) that there is a speeding problem with this road and having the entrance to the development located close to a blind bend will only increase the risk of an incident.

With the lack of infrastructure in the village (and no amenities) all services would be accessed by car as there is an extremely limited bus service in the village. Quoting a recent decision made by the Planning Inspectorate in relation to an appeal for a similar proposal, we believe the following points regarding infrastructure hold true for this application:

"The on-demand bus service is not a door-to-door system, nor does it service every bus-stop, so it is likely that car journeys would still be necessary (even to reach a point for residents to get on to a bus), making the use of this land for new housing unsustainable. "

"The bus-stop currently has one or two buses per week, meaning that it is not something that realistically helps with reducing car journeys. not in a suitable location for housing, such that future occupiers would be unduly reliant on the private car to access day-to-day services and facilities contrary to the Council's spatial strategy that guides the location of housing to more sustainable locations."

Therefore, the expectation is that the minimum volume of vehicles accessing this development would be ten, when including other traffic such as council services, postal service, deliveries to properties, there will be a steady flow of traffic throughout the day to and from the site.

In addition, there is no pavement on this stretch of road, therefore pedestrians must use the road. The verges on the road are high, therefore is no safe place for walkers to move to if there is passing traffic, this again increases the risk of an incident. Referring to a recent planning appeal for a proposed development on the Fairfield Road which stated "There is also a lack of infrastructure, such as pavements and streetlighting, such that pedestrians would have to walk in the carriageway, creating increased pedestrian vehicle conflict to the detriment of highway safety. There would also be harm to the character and appearance of the area. These are serious planning objections.".

One of the Council's key objectives is to improve road safety for all users in the village including walkers, horse-riders, and vehicles. Developments taking place in and around Bromsgrove means that the roads in Bournheath, particularly Doctors Hill, are being used as a cut-through, especially when the Kidderminster Road is partially/fully closed. We have taken several steps in the last few years to help road users including the installation of VAS signs, speed roundels on the roads, larger traffic/speed signs, white carriageway markings and community speed watch team. A development at this point of Doctors Hill will significantly raise the risk of incident, something we have tried to minimise as best as possible.

Status as Greenbelt – Council believes that this land is greenbelt. The number of properties proposed does not suggest infill, but a small-scale development and the layout of the site also leads to speculation that a secondary development on the neighbouring field will be proposed in due course. There is limited infill permitted within the Village Envelope of Bournheath, but this does not extend to the green belt areas outside the envelope. In addition, five properties would constitute more than 'limited' infill. The council understand that the land has always been used for agriculture purposes, therefore we are unsure as to why the developer is trying to class it as grey belt as there are no exceptional circumstances that would change the lands status from greenbelt. Furthermore, it is highly likely that the proposed five dwellings will impact the wildlife that currently resides on the proposed site.

Character and style of the village – Doctors Hill is known as a dispersed settlement and characterised by the homes being spaced apart with views across the open agricultural land and village. The development does not follow the existing design of the other properties on the road and will change the landscape. The council also refers to PP/P1805/W/25/3374801(PIP appeal to the Planning Inspectorate) which states that for the three main roads in the village, of which Doctors Hill is one, "The prevailing pattern is for built form to front the roads.". The proposed builds will also impede on neighbouring properties which could result in loss of light and privacy. The developer has proposed a tree lined boundary, however this will, in time, block light to neighbouring properties.

The village also has a significant flooding issue which the council has worked to minimise as best as possible. However, with the loss of a greenbelt field, we fear that the increase in hardstanding will result in water flow running-off on to the Fairfield Road and into properties.

The council believes that the proposed development is excessive for the area. Notwithstanding its status as greenbelt, the location is already a known traffic concern and development does not fit the character of the road and village. The council asks that before any decision is made that the recent Planning Inspectorate ruling on PP/P1805/W/25/3374801 is considered as we believe the proposals to be similar.

After the planning item was discussed and finalised the meeting was adjourned to allow Cllr Davies to return and continue as the Chair for the meeting.

5. County Councillor and District Councillor Reports

a. Worcestershire County Council
   Due to the brief period of time between council meetings there was no further updates since the meeting held on 11th March.
   i. County Council update
   ii. Parish resident requests:
      1. Rocky Lane speed limits
      2. VAS installation at Doctors Hill – update provided by Cllr Davies
         The new VAS will use the location of the obsolete VAS sign (a direct replacement) and a second pole will be installed a few feet away to display the road narrowing sign as the current site placement is not as prominent.
      3. Claypit Lane road width
      4. Flooding on Doctors Hill (The Nailers Arm)

b. Bromsgrove District Council, Cllr May, and Cllr Nock
   Due to the brief period of time between council meetings there was no further updates since the meeting held on 11th March.
   i. District Council update
   ii. Parish resident updates:
      1. BDC bins, bench for Orchard and Tuppenny Cake update

6. **Approval of Minutes from 11th March 2026** – approved.

7. **Chair's report**
   The Chair expressed his thanks to the council for attending the meeting at short notice (to allow the public and council to discuss a planning in principle application) and to Cllr Colley for chairing part of the meeting in his absence.

   Since the last meeting the Chair and Cllr May have met with Severn Trent to discuss the reservoir build project. Key points as follows:

   a. Run-off from the site – Forkers (site contractors) have been waiting for the verge/banks to dry out. With the area now dry, the site has had an additional layer of topsoil added, has been seeded and a retention net installed to cover the area. It is hoped that this work will stop any soil erosion/debris in the road.

   b. Site appearance – the reservoir site will be reinstated to the way it previously looked, except for a permanent access way for maintenance, which was not part of the old site design. The remaining area will be restored to a green field.
      Clerk – to ask Forkers if the entrance to the site can be screened in some way.

      Soil banks will be place around the structure and seeded. A new fence will also be erected to protect the site.

   c. Delivery date - Project is on track to finish February 2027.

   d. Current stage - The initial build has now finished, and the next phase will be to test the structure by filling the tanks.

   e. Community engagement – Clerk is due to meet with Forkers to discuss how Severn Trent and Forkers can support the community.
      Clerk to arrange a meeting with Forkers (Fraser) to discuss next steps.

   Woodland – the Chair also mentioned that more trees had been added to the woodland.

Clerk – to ask the team if any further planting will take place this year.

Annual meetings – the next meeting, in May, will be the Parish's and Council's annual meeting. This will be the Chair's final year before elections in May 2027. Whilst the Chair has enjoyed his time at the helm, he stressed the importance of having a rotation in roles and asked the council to consider a succession plan for the 2027/2028 year.

Finally, the Chair was disappointed to see that residents have continued to abuse the privilege of having free emergency dog waste bags being provided by the parish council. The service will be withdrawn if the thefts continue. A note will be sent to residents that the service is provided at a cost to them, and continued abuse of the scheme will result in the service being terminated.
Clerk – to write to residents about the current supply of dog waste bags.

8. Reports from community associates:

a) Neighbourhood Watch
No issues to report.

b) Bournheath Village Community Centre (BVCC)
Due to the brief period of time between council meetings there was no further updates since the meeting held on 11th March.

c) Footpath Warden report
The sign, which is located on the public footpath next tot The Gate Inn, has been reported to County Council for replacement as the post is beyond repair. Other work undertaken includes installing a new kissing gate near Kidderminster Road.

9. Community Project Reports

a) Flood Prevention
A meeting has been arranged for 9.30am 31st March to look at the Parish Hill culvert, discuss a culvert monitoring system and the drainage on Doctors Hill.

b) Bournheath Village Community Centre (BVCC) lease
Due to the brief period of time between council meetings there was no further updates since the meeting held on 11th March.

c) Village flowerboxes – spring planting
Due to the brief period of time between council meetings there was no further updates since the meeting held on 11th March.

d) Parish Flag for Tuppenny Cake
Due to the brief period of time between council meetings there was no further updates since the meeting held on 11th March.

e) Bournheath Summer Fete (Saturday 13th June)
Cllr Moir continues to prepare for the fete and asked if Cllr Davies would be able to contact the band that performed last year to see if they could play again at this year's event.

10. Clerk's Parish report and Finance review

a) Lengthsman update
The council unanimously approved for the Lengthsman contract to be extended from 8

hours to 9 hours each month.
Clerk – to speak to BDC to arrange for the increase in hours.

Cllr Hughes spoke of the work that has been undertaken on Valley Road as a part of the new pipeline extension. He was disappointed to see that the road had not been reinstated to its original state.
Clerk – PH to send Clerk photos of the issues on Valley Road. The Clerk will speak to Severn Trent.

b) Bank reconciliation
The council is forecasted to achieve a balanced budget at year-end. The March and year-end accounts will be issued at the proper time.

c) Office correspondence:
   i. Elan City – extension of warranty.
   As mentioned at a previous meeting, Cllr Guest has asked if a further option can be added to the Elan City report, with the option that the council self-insures the VAS equipment in the village.
   Clerk – to add a self-insurance option to the Elan City cost benefit analysis.

   ii. Grant request
   The request has been denied on the following grounds:
      a. The Church operates outside the Parish which contravenes current policy
      b. The council has not budgeted to cover the donation in the 2025/26 or 2026/27 budget. The funds are not available currently.
      Clerk – to write to Catshill Baptist Church to inform them of the decision.

d) Assertion 10
   i. Update on current position
   The council should meet the new audit requirements for assertion 10 as the following is in place:
      - Use of a gov.uk email
      - Website and content that meets accessibility guidelines
      - Producing information as recommended on the model publication list, which covers items such as displaying key council information, for example, agenda, minutes, annual financial reports, and policies (including data protection, GDPR and IT).

   ii. Subject to an amendment (section 7 of the policy), the policy was unanimously approved for adoption.

11. Reports from Parish Councillors
No items to report.

The meeting concluded at 8.50pm.

_____ Date _____

Chair, Bournheath Parish Council