

MINUTES OF THE 113TH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
OF THE PARISH OF CASTLE BROMWICH
HELD ON TUESDAY 1ST MAY 2007 IN ARDEN HALL.
CASTLE BROMWICH COMMENCING AT 8.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Electors of the Parish

CB01 1848	Cllr Mrs J Smith	CB04 1509	Cllr J Dutton	CB01 1089	Cllr J Gibbins
CB01 178	Cllr Mrs. B Wilkins	CB01 1700	Cllr E Knibb	CB03 39	E F Woodhouse
CB01 690	Mrs J Draycott	CB01 1701	Mrs. T Knibb	CB04 1286	Mrs. J Smith
CB04 1341	Cllr J Riordan	CB05 347	Cllr Mrs. Haywood	CB01 1072	P F Jordan
CB04 1342	Mrs M Riordan	CB03 291	J Siviter	CB01 1191	P Smart
CB03 299	D Feasey	CB02 1884	Cllr Miss J Ward		17 electors

Members of the Public

Cllr D A Kettle
 Mr H Murch

2 Public

Officers:

C. D Tibbles, Clerk to the Council.

1 Officer

Total Attendance 20 people

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them sincerely for attending.

1. The Notice to convene the meeting.

The Clerk read the notice to convene the meeting, copies having been circulated and published on notice boards.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Cllr P Scriven, Mr M Rashid, Mr A Bull, Mrs M Turner and Mr A Turner.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of last year's meeting had been made available prior to the meeting and were taken as read. **IT WAS RESOLVED** that on the **PROPOSITION** of Cllr J Dutton, all in favour, that the Minutes of the 112th Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 2nd May 2006, having been circulated, be signed as a true and correct record of the meeting.

4. Report of attendance.

	Actual Meeting	Possible Meetings	
Cllr Amos (Resigned 25/10/06)	5	10	50%
Cllr Buckley Cllr Cardall (Resigned 20/12/06)	25 9	35 14	71% 64%
Cllr Dutton	35	36	97%
Cllr Gibbins Cllr Mrs Gray (Died 11/09/06)	41 13	44 13	93% 100%
Cllr Mrs. Haywood	21	22	95%
Cllr Hughes	6	22	27%
Cllr Kettle	41	42	98%

	Actual Meeting	Possible Meetings	
Cllr Pearce	10	22	45%
Cllr Riordan	43	45	96%
Cllr Scriven	30	35	86%
Cllr S Ward	21	34	62%
Cllr Mrs Wilkins	40	45	89%
Cllr Miss Ward Cllr Knibb (Co-opted 29/11/06)	12 14	22 17	55% 82%
Cllr Mrs Smith (Co-opted 29/11/06)	8	11	73%

Average for whole Council			71%
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This had been a difficult year for members with several absences during the year due to serious illness, operations and accidents. Many councillors continued to serve on numerous Working Parties that prepared for future planning, which were not reflected in these figures.

**5a The Report of the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee,
- Councillor D Kettle (Vice-Chairman).**

It had been a trying year for the Finance and General Purposes Committee, not least with the tragic death in September of Cllr Mrs Gray, who had been it's Chairman for a number of years. After Mrs Gray's death, Cllr Scriven was elected Chairman and although he was unable to be with us tonight, he had asked Cllr Kettle to present this report.

Throughout the year this committee had consistently voted against planning applications for mobile phone masts, with our recommendation to Solihull for refusal being overturned, as it seemed the District Council had little control over the masts, but we continued to make our point. The police base provided by this Council was still under used and we have had yet another promise from the police that it will be made better use of now that the new shift patterns were in place, we shall see. A considerable amount of time was taken up by this committee trying to solve the problems of Hob Farm but this was hampered by ill-founded rumours. We now have gates to secure this area from dusk till dawn but is sad to note the very expensive gates have suffered damage - it is hard to believe some of this damage was carried out by youngsters.

Cllr Kettle was pleased to report an application had been submitted to the National Lottery for a grant to enable the Parish Council to refurbish the Spencer and Windsor rooms. This would make them a much more attractive venue, and should attract more hirers. Cllr Scriven wished to thank his fellow committee members for their support over the year and to record his thanks to the Clerk and her Assistant for all the support and the background work that enabled this committee to function.

5b Report of the Chairman of Leisure Services Committee - Councillor Riordan.

Cllr Riordan introduced himself and wished everyone a good evening. If residents of Castle Bromwich wished to know more about the workings of the Parish Council and it's committees he recommended a visit to the new Parish Council website, which had been launched the previous month. Minutes of Parish Council meetings could be downloaded and details of the facilities available for hire at Arden Hall and information about forthcoming/regular events were available. The Parish Council was interested in resident's views of the website and possible ways it may be enhanced to the benefit of the Castle Bromwich community. Views could be emailed to the Clerk to the Council at the address given on the website. Cllr Riordan reported that in May last year the Committee invited the Village Hall adviser for Warwickshire to tour Arden Hall and give her opinion on the Hall. Her conclusion was that Arden Hall was in need of a lot of renovation work. She recommended that short term measures of decorating and repairs be continued but a long term modernisation plan was needed. To this end, the Parish Council had enlisted the services of an architect and a quantity surveyor to draw up plans and costings for an Arden Hall renovation project. To provide initial finance for this project we had made an application to the Big Lottery Community Building programme and the outcome of this application would be known in August. While on the condition of Arden Hall, Cllr Riordan drew resident's attention to the "Friends of Arden Hall" volunteers group. He urged those who shared this council's passion for Arden Hall to join the group if they had experience or skills and a little spare time which they could make available to help maintain, improve & promote Arden Hall. As the name suggested – it was a friendly group of Castle Bromwich people who wanted to see Arden Hall at it's best and details could be obtained from the Council Offices. To improve the revenue from Arden Hall, councillors were striving to increase the number of events held at the Hall to generate more money for it's upkeep. Last March the Parish Council held a Bridal Fayre, a first for Arden Hall and this event had been a huge success with nearly 400 people coming through the doors so the Parish Council intended to repeat this venture next year. The Leisure Services Committee devoted a lot of time to debating the problems centred around Hob Farm. We held an exhibition and public meeting last September to receive residents ideas, views and opinions as to the solution for the problems of Hob Farm. Following that consultation, the Parish Council agreed to close the gates to Hob Farm overnight. Parish Council wardens open them in the morning and a security firm employed to close them at night. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these measures. The Leisure Services Committee had spent some time putting in place a new contract for the maintenance of the grounds owned by the Parish Council. This contract commenced last month and would run for 4 years. The new contract represents a monetary saving over the previous one. Ten new sweet chestnut trees had been planted on Bradford Gardens and the Village Green, which had been chosen as

being more resilient to the disease prevalent in many of our existing horse chestnuts.

In conclusion, can I thank all my fellow councillors, the Clerk to the Council & all the staff of Castle Bromwich Parish Council for their support & hard work during this past year.

6. The Chairman's Address - Cllr Mrs. B Wilkins

The Chairman wished everyone a good evening and welcomed them to the 113th Annual meeting of the parish of Castle Bromwich. She firstly thanked everyone for finding time to attend this important meeting in the parish council's year and explained the council was bound by law to hold this meeting and report to parishioners on the work that had been undertaken during the year. Following the report by Cllr Kettle, Vice Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the report from Cllr Riordan, the Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee, she did not plan to repeat what had already been said. For the majority of the year, she had been Vice-Chairman, only taking over the Chairmanship a few weeks ago following the unexpected resignation of Cllr John Gibbins and she took the opportunity of thanking him for all the time, effort and hard work he had put in during his time as Chairman to start to bring Arden Hall into the 21st century. As Vice Chairman she had attended and laid a wreath on your behalf at the Remembrance Day service in Solihull and as Chairman had the pleasure of joining the Mayor and Mayoress of Solihull at the annual Easter function at Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens.

For the council it had been a very busy year but in many ways a difficult and disappointing one. We had seen a decline in the number of lettings for the hall along with some of the local organisations having to consider disbanding due to failing membership. Many of you who used the hall on a regular basis will already know the lengthy absence through illness of the Hall Manager, David Watts, and we wish him well for a speedy recovery and return to work. David's absence had understandably put increasing demands on the Clerk and staff of Arden Hall, in particular the Assistant and Deputy Managers have had to provide the necessary cover and we are very grateful to them for being so willing and helpful.

During the year we have seen continuing acts of vandalism to land and property owned by the parish, caused by the mindless minority, many of whom did not reside within the parish, but the ever increasing cost of replacing and repairing these acts had to be borne by the parish. One particular area the Parish Council had tried to address were the problems that some of the residents who lived in close proximity to the entrance to Hob Farm were having to contend with. Some of you would know that it was wrongly reported in the press that this open space was to be closed to the public. However, following a growing concern and with consultation from many of the other residents from the surrounding area, we hope we have gone some way to alleviate these problems by erecting gates that are locked at night. With the arrival of light nights and better weather only time would tell if this had gone some way to providing a solution so it was important to continue to keep councillors informed.

Perhaps the most significant event during this year had been the very sad, sudden unexpected death of Councillor Mrs. Pauline Gray, known personally to her for 27 years. Her experience, common sense, good humour and commitment to the community of Castle Bromwich was very greatly missed. She was in many ways 'the best of us' and we miss her greatly. The Parish Council would also be losing some of the longest serving members this year and their experience would be greatly missed. For the contributions that each of them had made to the community and the council she took the opportunity to publicly recognise Councillors Dan Kettle, Jerry Dutton, Alan Buckley, Phil Scriven and Simon Cardell who would not be taking seats in the new Council. She felt sure everyone would like to join her in wishing each of them well for the future and offered thanks to each of them for their contribution and service over the years.

So we start a new year with new councillors who, she was sure, would bring fresh ideas and expertise to help with the problems to be tackled in the parish. A bid for lottery funding had been made as a beginning towards the refurbishment of Arden Hall itself. If this was successful it would provide much needed cash to refurbish the Spencer Hall and the Windsor Room and this would only be the beginning as the council was committed to look for funding from as many resources that were open to us. Now I come to the bit that may sound as though you are listening to a speech from an Oscar winner but I do have to most sincerely thank Cllr Riordan and Cllr Scriven as Chairman of the committees, their Vice Chairmen and committee members for their support and hard work on behalf of the parish during the last year. She also expressed thanks and appreciation to the clerk Cathy Tibbles, her assistant Carol and to all the staff of Arden Hall and the Park without whose teamwork and effort Castle Bromwich would not be an attractive place to live. During the year several events had been held in aid of the Chairman's Charity Fund and the money raised would be given to support the local schools and community groups in the area. These would be presented at the AGM taking place on 16th May. A Bridal Fayre had been held at Arden Hall

in March, an event organised by members of the council and the Chairman thanked Cllr Mrs. Haywood and her husband, Alf, for their hard work in making that a successful day, an event which we hoped to repeat again next year.

In conclusion, the Chairman appealed to as many of you out there that had a little time to spare to become a 'Friend of Arden Hall' and help the Council to improve it - details were available from the clerk and managers. Councillors were all volunteers and did need help to continue trying to keep Castle Bromwich a pleasant place to live - so please come to the monthly Parish Council meetings. Ask questions, put forward suggestions and your point of view - this is your community. Thanks were expressed once again for everyone being at the meeting, for their attendance and for listening to what the Parish Council tried to do on behalf of parishioners.

7. Questions from Parishioners

Mrs. Janet Smith, West Avenue, raised her concerns about vandalism at a local church that had been reported to the police but who had been too busy to attend. The young people concerned had remained in the vicinity for quite a while and should have been caught. When damage was inflicted on trees and cars in Castle Bromwich she felt there were no consequences for the offenders and they just got away with it. The Chairman was sad that the police were not in attendance at this meeting, felt that many people in Castle Bromwich would be likely to agree with Mrs. Smith and asked the Clerk to pass on these concerns to the police. Mr. Woodhouse, Blandford Avenue, had approached youths he had seen kicking balls near church windows but was unsure how much action was taken by those responsible for the church. Mrs. Smith thought those involved with the church found it most frustrating and often felt helpless without the support of the police. Mr. Siviter, Blandford Road, recalled that the similar problems were raised the year before at the last meeting and was critical of the policing in Castle Bromwich. As before, he urged residents to call the police, repeatedly if necessary, to get the response needed and hoped that things would improve before somebody was seriously hurt. The Chairman supported this call for reporting problems to the police and suggested they be invited to a future Parish Council meeting. Cllr Kettle added that residents must obtain a log number to ensure that their concerns were actually recorded. Mr. Woodhouse acknowledged the police may be reluctant to keep hearing complaints but Mr. Siviter thanked the Parish Council for everything they tried to achieve in encouraging the police in providing an acceptable presence in Castle Bromwich. Mr. Woodhouse referred to the new dog fouling signs erected in Blandford Avenue which had appeared to move the problem to Clevedon Avenue where there were no signs and asked if the Borough Council could resolve this and increase the cleaning/sweeping of this area. Mrs. Draycott referred to the absence of the Hall Manager and asked if there would be a time that Arden Hall had a Manager again as it affected the regular hirers? She mentioned falling standards in cleaning and maintenance in Arden Hall (which she had written about) and also the neglect of dog bins in the park. The Chairman replied that Mr. Watts was ill and it was not possible to say when the situation would improve, although the Parish Council wished him well. She apologised that standards in Arden Hall may have fallen and Cllr Riordan assured Mrs. Draycott that her letter would be discussed at the Leisure Services Committee the following evening. The Clerk was asked to speak to the Park Wardens about the overflowing dog bins.

8. Promotion of Community Groups in Castle Bromwich.

In the absence of any questions on this topic, Cllr Mrs. Wilkins asked people to think about how to support local community groups in the future. She thanked everyone for attending the meeting and declared the meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.