

2016 - 2020

Birchwood Town Council Strategic Plan



Updated version – February 2018
Includes resident survey and actions

Birchwood Town Council Strategic Plan

1. Introduction:

This plan has been put together by a task force of members of Birchwood Town Council for consultation and development with all our key stakeholders including residents. It is a way of ensuring the continued improvement of the area, principally for its residents, but also for local businesses. This is especially important at a time when local government expenditure is under severe pressure. It provides an analysis of the current situation in Birchwood, and a resulting framework for local action to potentially improve the general quality of life for all who live and work in the town. It is intended that this plan should be updated annually to take account of any changes which may have an impact on the actions needed and to add any new actions resulting from resident consultation and through our work with key partners.

2. Our mission:

To work together effectively as the elected leaders in our community, to achieve the goals and objectives set out in our Strategic Plans through the implementation and regular review of our accompanying action plan and to achieve our vision within two elected terms.

3. Our Vision:

It is our vision as a town council to operate at the highest possible standards. In this way, we will add more value for our residents and make Birchwood a highly desirable place to live, work, socialise and play. We will help create a safe, attractive, prosperous and healthy environment, where the different communities are aligned, integrated and supportive of each other.

Our main way of reaching this goal will be by putting into place standards required for NALC quality gold accreditation. The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. Quality Gold councils provide leadership for their communities, bring people together, have excellent business planning processes, ensuring value for money as well as constantly seeking new innovations and opportunities to improve. Currently there are only 18 councils in the country which are Quality Gold accredited and of these, Knutsford and Holmes Chapel are the only ones in Cheshire. Sandbach has foundation status. The process of achieving the standard will take six years and will be carried out in three phases: Foundation standard, Quality Standard and Quality Gold.

3.1 Our Strategic Objectives

The following is the list of our key strategic objectives which are examined in more detail in the accompanying action plan and which will help us to achieve our vision.

Objective 1: To ensure that the best possible image of Birchwood is projected to residents as well as the wider community throughout Warrington and beyond

Objective 2: Build further on the green environment enjoyed in Birchwood by protecting what we already have, enhancing the environment where possible and by helping ensure that our residents can benefit from it to the full

Objective 3: Ensure that the work of the council is of the highest possible standard and provides the best possible outcomes for residents while providing excellent value for money

Objective 4: To build a greater sense of community and belonging in the residents of Birchwood

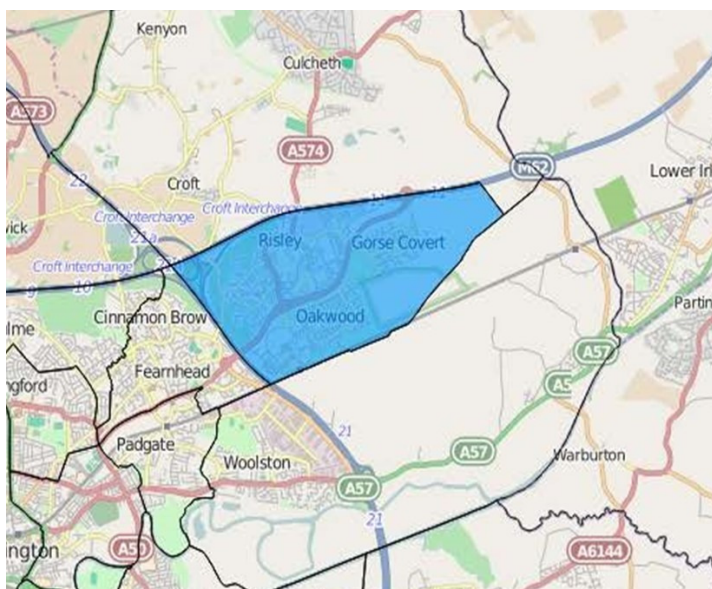
Objective 5: Work more closely with local businesses and other stakeholders to positively impact the lives of those who live and work in Birchwood

Objective 6: Seek sources of additional funding to allow additional development of Birchwood as an area

Objective 7: To Work to Improve community safety

4. Birchwood Town Profile:

This profile has been extracted from data published by Warrington Borough Council and seeks to

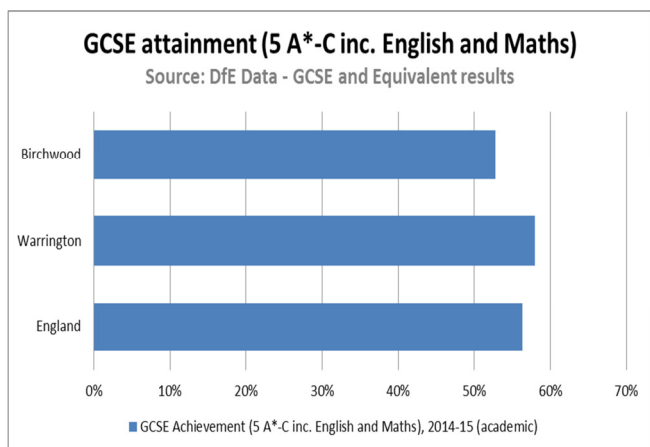


summarise the key demographic data for Birchwood from the 2011 Census and later sources. Birchwood is one of 22 wards within Warrington. In the map below, Birchwood is the area shaded blue.

All data within the profile is provided from the Office for National Statistics unless stated otherwise. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

4.1 Size and population: Birchwood is an area of Warrington which was developed mainly in 1970s and 1980s as a part of Warrington New Town, and measures 810 hectares. At the time of the 2011 Census, it was home to 13.20 persons per hectare.

The latest midyear estimates suggest that there were 10,680 people living in Birchwood in 2013, and Census 2011 indicated that the area contained 4,839 households. In 2011 the average size of a household in Birchwood was 2.20 people per household.



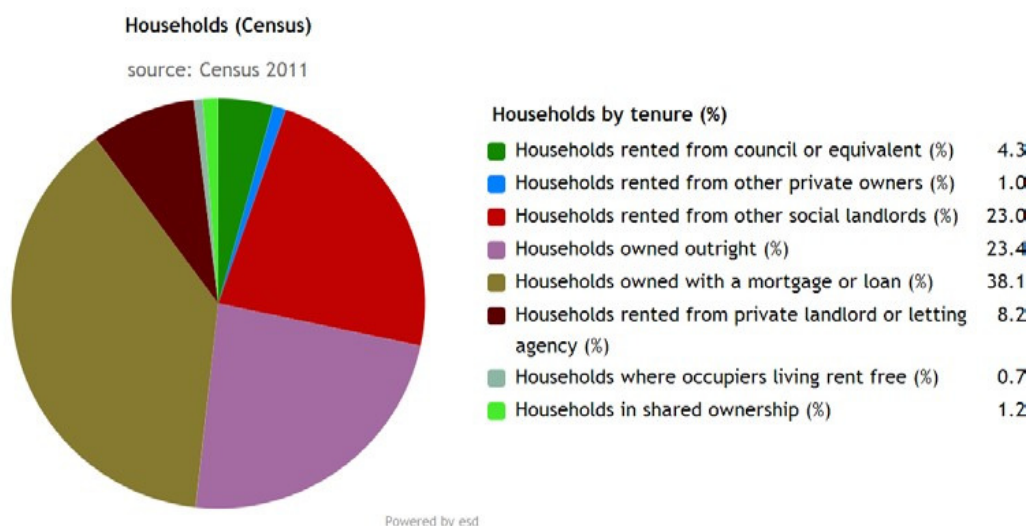
Residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups formed a relatively small 4.3% of Birchwood's population.

According to the 2013 midyear population estimates, 18.2% of residents in Birchwood were aged under 16, 66.8% were aged 16 to 64, and 14.9% of residents in Birchwood were aged 65+. These figures are similar to Warrington as a whole.

There is currently some further development planned in the Oakwood area and possibly in Chatfield. These could lead to an increase in residents of up to 400, and will need to be taken into account for local services.

4.2 Housing:

In Birchwood at the time of the 2011 Census, the main housing tenure type was 'Households owned with a mortgage or loan' (38.1%). Most of the social housing is operated by "Your".



4.3 Education and Skills

In 2015, 52.8% of pupils living in Birchwood achieved at least five GCSE passes at grades A*-C (including English and Maths). This was significantly below the Warrington average of 57.9%, and an England average of 56.3%. The provisional figures for 2016 however, have shown significant improvement to 69% which is significantly above the Warrington and England figures of 63.2% and 58.7% (note: there were changes in the way this is reported, so the absolute figure is not directly

comparable, but the relative scores are relevant) The last OFSTED report categorises the school as “requiring improvement”. Many of the issues relate to governance/leadership and results for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

According to the 2011 Census, 19.6% of Birchwood residents aged 16+ had no qualifications, compared to a Warrington average of 20.70%. In contrast, 27.1% of Birchwood residents aged 16+ had a Level 4 qualification (e.g. a degree or NVQ 4 or 5 qualification), compared with 27.4% for Warrington overall. The national figure for people with Level 4 qualifications or above was 27.4%.

4.4 Economic Activity:

According to the Census, 45.1% of Birchwood residents aged 16+ were employed full-time in 2011, compared with 42.7% for Warrington. A total of 4.4% were unemployed in Birchwood, compared with 4.00% for Warrington. In Birchwood 5.4% were long-term sick or disabled (this compares with 4.1% across Warrington and may reflect some of the localised health issues mentioned later).

	Birchwood	Warrington
	2011	2011
	%	%
Employee: Full time per cent	45.10	42.70
Employee: Part time per cent	13.90	14.60
Full time student per cent	2.60	3.00
Long-term sick or disabled per cent	5.40	4.10
Looking after home or family per cent	3.40	3.30
Retired per cent	13.30	14.80
Self-employed per cent	6.60	7.80
Student (including full-time students) per cent	3.80	3.60
Unemployed per cent	4.40	4.00
Other economically inactive per cent	1.60	2.10
Long-term unemployed per cent	1.90	1.50

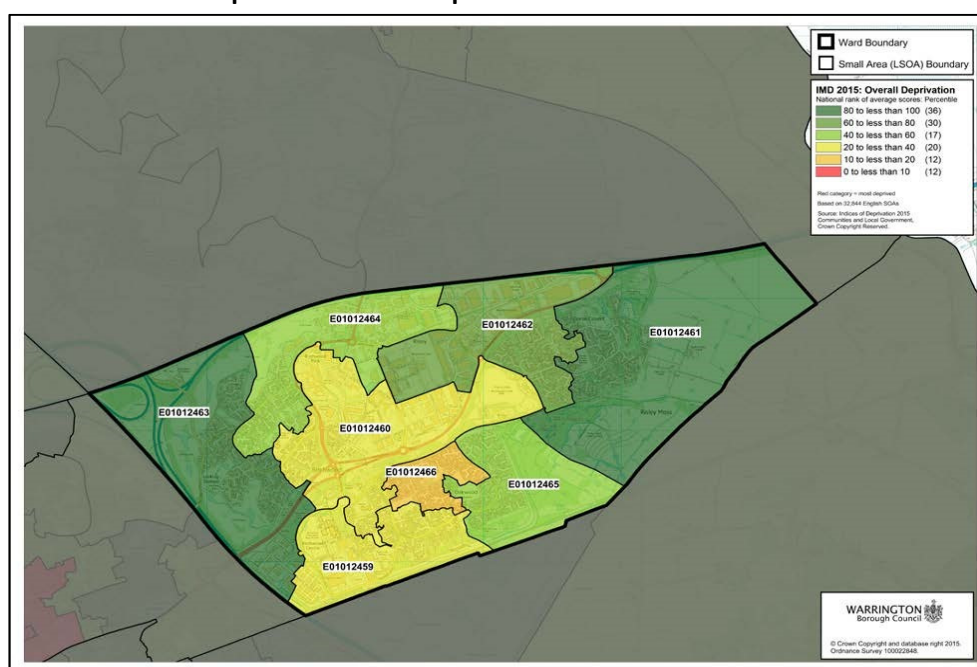
In 2011, the main occupational group amongst employed residents in Birchwood was professional occupations (16.94%, compared with 18.10% for Warrington). Across England the main occupational group was also professional occupations (17.49%).

4.5 Deprivation

Within Birchwood there are varying levels of deprivation (Indices of Deprivation 2015) as presented in the map. The highest levels of deprivation within the ward are experienced within the Oakwood area (coloured orange in the map – this area falls within the top 20% most deprived areas nationally, also known as Quintile 1), whilst the areas of Gorse Covert and Locking Stumps experience very low levels of deprivation (coloured dark green within the map – these areas fall within the top 20% least deprived areas nationally, these areas are also known as Quintile 5).

The map below shows how small areas in Birchwood compare for Multiple Deprivation. On the map the small areas coloured orange are those with the most deprivation and small areas coloured dark green are those with the least deprivation. Birchwood shows a more polarised effect than most parishes.

Indices of Deprivation map



4.6 Out of Work Benefits:

Data from the Department for Work and Pensions show that in August 2015 there were 1,620 residents in Warrington claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) representing 1.1% of the population aged 16 to 64 years.

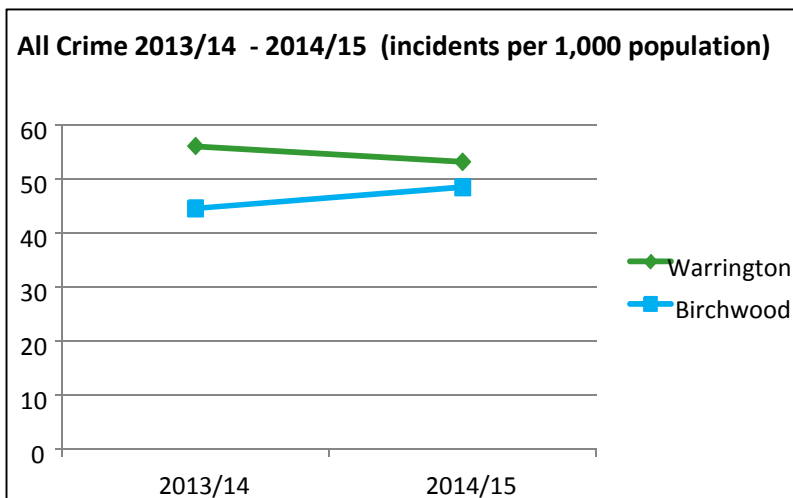
It is estimated that of these, 92 were living in Birchwood Ward, representing 1.3% of the population aged 16 to 64 years. The ward ranked 7 across the 22 wards of Warrington for JSA claims (where 1 is the worst-performing).

In February 2015 there were 10,750 residents in Warrington claiming out of work benefits, representing 8.2% of the population aged 16 to 64 years. It is estimated that of these, 765 were living in Birchwood Ward, representing 10.7% of the population aged 16 to 64 years. The ward ranked 6 across the 22 wards of Warrington for out of work benefits (where 1 is the worst performing).

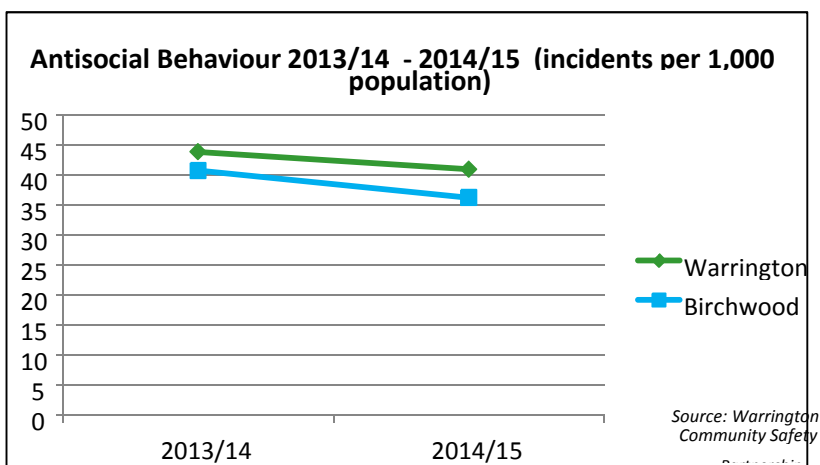
4.7 Crime and Antisocial Behaviour:

The All crime rate in Birchwood (measured as incidents per 1,000 residents) has risen but remains below the Warrington average. In 2014/15 there were 48.4 crimes per 1,000 residents in Birchwood ward,

compared with a rate of 53.1 crimes per 1,000 residents across Warrington.



The number of Antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents per 1,000 residents declined in Birchwood during 2014/15, following the Warrington trend. Last year there were 36.2 incidents per 1,000 residents, compared with an average of 40.9 incidents per 1,000 residents across Warrington which is good. While crime is relatively low, residents feel that the area is not very safe for walking especially at night. This may reflect the significant number of footpaths which are poorly lit and which do not follow main roads. (see health and well-being section)



4.8 Health:

According to Public Health England data, men in Birchwood are expected to live for 77.6 years on average, and women for 81.3 years. This compares with an average of 78.1 years for men and 81.8 years for women across Warrington.

46.0% of residents in Birchwood reported their health as 'very good' and 34.6% reported it as 'good' in the 2011 Census. This compares with figures of 49.8% and 32.7% respectively amongst residents across Warrington overall.

4.9 Childhood Obesity:

Under the National Child Measurement Programme, a child is classed as obese if they fall within the top 5% for Body Mass Index on the 1990 national child growth charts for a child of their sex and age. According to the Programme, 7.6% of Birchwood children measured in Reception year between the academic years 2012/13-2014/15 were obese, compared with 7.9% across Warrington and 9.3% across England. Amongst Year 6 children measured, 13.0% were classed as obese in Birchwood, compared with 16.4% for Warrington and 19.0% for England which compares favourably.

Childhood obesity has decreased in Birchwood over time, which is in line with the Warrington and England trends. Between 2011/12 and 2013/14 in reception year 8.9% of Birchwood children were obese, compared with 8.2% across Warrington and 9.4% across England. In Year 6 over the same period, 15.6% were classed as obese in Birchwood, compared with 17.9% for Warrington and 19.1% for England.

4.10 Health and wellbeing ward profile – (Public Health Team’s publication - January 2016)

The health profile has highlighted a number of indicators where health and wellbeing outcomes in Birchwood ward as a whole are worse than the Warrington average and where there should be future focus. These include;

- Percentage of adults who are obese
- Percentage of adults who feel unsafe out in their neighbourhood after dark
- Percentage of adults who had to borrow to cover necessities
- Percentage of adults receiving income support/social security benefits
- Planned hospital admission rates
- Emergency hospital admission rates

As highlighted within the deprivation section, Birchwood is a ward of variation and this is also reflected in health and wellbeing data. The following list highlights indicators which are significantly worse in the Oakwood/Birchwood Centre area (coloured red and orange on the deprivation map), when compared to the Warrington average

- Percentage adults reporting that they currently smoke
- Percentage adults obese
- Percentage of adults going without food to manage financially
- Percentage of adults who had to borrow to cover necessities
- Percentage of adults receiving income support/social security benefits
- Percentage of adults who feel unsafe out in their neighbourhood after dark
- Percentage of adults having poor neighbourhood connections/perceptions

These are all areas which warrant further examination. Some may be areas to include in resident consultation processes.

5. Local facilities and usage:

5.1 Primary Schools

Locking Stumps

Gorse Covert

Birchwood C of E primary school (Oakwood)

5.2 Secondary and other schools

Birchwood High School

Birchwood College

5.3 Churches

Church of the Transfiguration, Admirals Road, Oakwood (Church of England)



Unfortunately, this church has been closed for some time now, although the town council recently provided a small grant to enable them to hold a function.

Thomas Risley Church, Glover Road, Locking Stumps (United Reformed Church)



The church has a number of activities which it operates directly including Tommy's Tots and a coffee shop, as well as hosting several community groups including Brownies.

Birchwood Community Church (Evangelical)

This is a community-focussed evangelical church which was temporarily based at Birchwood High School. The new Encounter Centre officially opened its doors in October 2016. It is at the former housing office opposite BetFred (Spectrum Arena) just a short distance from its previous location at the former Silver Birch. The organisation also runs the Fusion Youth Group.

5.4 Sports facilities

Livewire, Birchwood. This facility houses one of the few indoor tennis centres in the North West of England as well as having 4 outdoor hard courts. There is a large gym facility as well as other halls for playing other sports. The high school has a number of well-used 3g pitches for football and other sports. There are also several MUGAs in the area.

5.5 Parks and recreation

Birchwood is blessed with an extraordinary variety of green and open spaces from woodland to meadows, ponds, gardens and parks. The following provides a short summary of some of the main attractions.

Risley Moss and visitor centre



Risley Moss is a remnant lowland raised bog that was created following the last Ice Age. It is locally referred to as the 'mossland'. It is part of the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its rare mossland habitat and plants. It is also a Local Nature Reserve.

The site is open for 6 days a week (closed Fridays) and is an important local asset used by residents and visitors from outside the area.

Risley Moss is managed by the Ranger Service of Warrington Borough Council under the guidance of Natural England, with the objective of the restoration of active lowland raised bog.

Oakwood Gate Walled Garden



The walled garden is a part of Birchwood Forest Park, but has not been properly maintained for some years. It was built in the original water reservoirs of the old ordnance factory. It originally housed a large number of very attractive and exotic plants and shrubs and was very much appreciated by those who used it. The cost of restoring it to its former condition would be very high. A local group of volunteers has been carrying out some limited work to remove dead branches and some of the overgrowth.

Birchwood Forest Park

This is the main park for Birchwood and incorporates playing fields, play areas for skateboard, MUGA (under construction), children's play area and outdoor exercise machines. This is arguably one of the best parks in Warrington, although the buildings which house toilets, changing rooms and showers are in a poor state currently. WBC is currently looking at upgrading the facility although there appear to be issues with finding sufficient funding. There is a part-time ranger who works on the site. A friends group has been set up recently.

Gorse Covert Mounds and Pestfurlong Hill



This suburban site is a delightful mosaic of mixed woodland, meadows and ponds, and supports an amazing variety of plants and wildlife. Its network of accessible paths allows you to enjoy woodland and waterside walks, and some stunning views from Pestfurlong Hill. On a clear day, you can see as far as the West

Pennine Moors. There is a group of friends which carries out work at the site and organises occasional special walks.

5.6 Public Houses

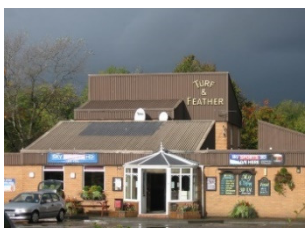
There are five public houses within the Birchwood boundaries



Nelsons Quarterdeck,

Admirals Road,

Birchwood



Turf and Feather

Glover Road

Locking Stumps



The Peacock

Dewhurst Road

Birchwood



The Poacher

Gorse Covert Road,

Gorse Covert



The Noggin (although currently closed for business)

Warrington Road

Risley

5.7 Local community groups (Does not include commercial groups)

Friends of Birchwood Forest Park

Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds

Rimag (Risley Moss Action Group)

Birchwood Carnival Committee

Walking group – Oakwood Community Centre

Birchwood Seniors –Birchwood Youth & Community Centre

Age Concern

Birchwood Library – Adults & young persons reading groups

Birchwood Leisure & Tennis centre – Pilates, Group kick, junior gym, Boot camp, Body condition, Indoor cycling, Zumba, Circuits, Insanity, Stop Smoking

Sure Start

Women's/ Craft Group – Oakwood Hub

Oakwood Community Association /Oakwood community centre

Parkers Farm Village Room (Town Council Offices)

Community room at the Fire Station

Peace/ community garden at Birchwood fire station

Asda Eleveses – Asda café

Read & Relax – Asda community room

The Centre at Birchwood (includes a large canteen and a commercial gym – Alive and Well)

Alcoholics Anonymous – Oakwood Community Centre

Woodlands Children's Centre?

Treats Café – Thomas Risley Church

Toddler Zone- Mums & Tots

Spectrum Striders – more than 200 members both male and female.

Birchwood Juniors Football Club

Scout Huts, Cubs, Brownies, etc. – 12th Warrington East Scouts/Cubs/Beavers. Warrington Road

Parents & Toddlers Group

Fire Cadets at Birchwood fire station - young people meet on Wednesdays from 7 to 9.30pm

Birchwood Youth and Community Centre – Delenty Drive

5.8 Local business organisations and facilities

Birchwood Forum

Birchwood Forum is a UK business forum that was established to enhance and maintain Birchwood as a strong economic community with businesses working in partnership and investing in the future together. It has more than 40 members and holds regular meetings

Birchwood Park – North West Nuclear Forum – this was formed as a separate, but closely aligned group to the forum.

The Centre, Birchwood Park

The Centre at Birchwood Park is a top class facility which is mainly for employees within Birchwood Park, but which is also used by some local residents. The centre is placed within a very attractive environment



with a lake attracting ducks and other water birds. There is also a gym – Alive and Well. The main building houses a restaurant with excellent quality food, a coffee bar and conferencing facilities. Birchwood Park also has the only allotments within the Birchwood Town Council area.

Birchwood Partnership

This group comprises, and represents, key stakeholders and property owners in Birchwood.

In recent times, this group has not met on a regular basis, however, with the “business improvement district” proposals moving forward and austerity affecting many organisations there is a need to work smarter, and together.

There is also an important need to build a wider sense of community across Birchwood, with a view to improving local sustainability, health, educational and employment outcomes.

Therefore, the Town Council will be looking to bring the group back together.

6. Analysis:

The following analysis includes aspects over which the town council has no direct control, but are included for completeness and to ensure that the issues are taken up with key stakeholders.

6.1 Good features of Birchwood as a Town Council area – areas to build on

- Birchwood has a high proportion of green spaces and is generally a very pleasant environment for both residents and local businesses.
- Birchwood is very well served as it is very close to the M62 and M6, and is close to Manchester airport and railway stations on both North/South and East/West routes.
- Birchwood has important and thriving business parks.
- Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone has launched at Birchwood Park with the potential to lever £100m investment.
- Traffic flow through Birchwood has been significantly improved by the new pinch point improvements.
- Residents very much like the bulbs and wild flowers planted by WBC and by BTC.

6.2 Issues which need to be addressed

- There will be a need to consider the potential impact which the building and construction of HS2 may have locally on Birchwood, especially the construction of the planned bridge over the M62.
- There are clear pockets of deprivation in Birchwood which coincide with areas of poor health – diabetes, obesity.
- Continuing litter problems especially alongside certain main roads through Birchwood, especially Birchwood Way and Birchwood Park Avenue (note that there some issues due to the speed of traffic).
- The general upkeep of the green spaces has deteriorated in the last couple of years as Warrington Borough Council has had to reduce costs. This has made the area look untidy and somewhat neglected.
- There is limited communication/engagement with residents.
- There is only limited feeling of community both within and between the different sections of the town – Locking Stumps, Oakwood, Gorse Covert, Delenty Drive and Chatfield.
- The walled garden and the two ponds beyond it are in a poor state.
- The main building in the forest park is in poor condition.
- Green spaces are not always used as much as they could be and are rather invisible from main roads.
- The Youth Club building at Delenty Drive could be better utilised for the benefit of the community.
- There is substantial traffic noise in some areas closest to the M6 and M62.
- Signage could be improved throughout the town.
- Birchwood Way runs through the centre of the town and acts to some extent as a divider of the communities and there is substantial traffic noise generated due to the relatively high speed of traffic both on this road and on the A574. (70 mph and 50 mph respectively).
- Parking at the commercial centre/medical centre/dentist and in other business areas is becoming increasingly difficult.
- There are no allotments in Birchwood for residents.
- Residents find it difficult to identify like-minded individuals with whom they can associate.

6.3 Opportunities

- Create improved level of pride in Birchwood and a commitment to making it better.
- Formation of residents' panels.
- Produce a newsletter to keep residents informed at least annually.
- Use the Birchwood community group as a vehicle for communicating with residents.
- Carry out relevant surveying of residents to establish needs and priorities.
- Provide a range of community volunteering opportunities.
- Work to facilitate a Business Improvement District model for Birchwood as a means of bringing more money into improving Birchwood, by working constructively with Birchwood Forum.
- Make sure that employees of the business area are fully aware of the local facilities so that they get used more often (e.g. outdoor exercise machines) and that they appreciate the community in which they work.
- Encourage the uptake of non-carbon based energy sources within Birchwood.
- Further development of Birchwood Partnership.
- Investigate feasibility of taking on more grass cutting from Warrington Borough Council so that Birchwood is in better control.
- Work in partnership with Birchwood Medical Centre, Livewire and Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group to investigate ways of improving the health of residents.
- Greatly expand the BTC website to make it a window on the town and promote what we have to offer as well as making local job vacancies more visible.
- Completion of the works on the dogbone pinch point on the south approach.
- Grants etc. as a source of funding.
- Traffic calming measures in problem areas.
- Crime reduction.
- Internet access for those without.
- Encourage formation of residents' associations for all the areas of Birchwood.
- Explore the options for a Birchwood park and ride.
- Potential to reduce local traffic at morning peak and 3 pm to 4pm by encouraging school pupils to use public transport or other means rather than being transported in cars.
- Possible opportunity for BTC to take on increased responsibility for local services/facilities.

6.4 Threats

- Further reductions in local government expenditure.
- Increasing traffic could further degrade the general quality of life.
- Further commercial development of the Birchwood Centre could make parking more difficult.
- Competition from business parks in other areas of Warrington.
- Limitations on infrastructure investment.

7. Resident Consultation Process

A consultation exercise was carried out to ensure that the Town Council's plans would be resident centric. The resident consultation process took place in two phases. The first of these was a presentation of the draft strategy to a group of interested residents – about 25 attended in total. After

the presentation, a short simple survey was carried out which was completed by the majority of those present.

Short Survey Results:

The short survey was carried out at the public presentation with the intention of helping to finalise some of the questions on the main survey. It was designed to identify some of the key issues and the following results were obtained.

Question 1: What are the best 3 things about living in Birchwood?

Green spaces – 15 respondents

Shopping centre – 7

Community spirit – 6

Location – 4

Transport connections – 4

Great place to go walking - 4

Other answers included: Housing, schools, wildlife, Doctor/Dentist, spaces for children, relaxed living, business park, library and potential for wellness culture.

Question 2: Which 3 things would make Birchwood a better place to live?

More activities for children/teenagers - 8 respondents

Maintain green spaces better, and develop them – 6

Better control of litter/dog fouling/fly tipping – 5

Reduce speeding traffic – 3

Better parking – 2

Improved lighting (safety) – 2

Better maintenance of footpaths – 2

Improved bus/rail services – 2

Other issues mentioned included: social hub, affordable childcare, Birchwood in Bloom, café in the park, quality schools, better reputation, toilets open in the park, more PCSOs, more community involvement, and more activities

Question 3: What recreational activities would you like to see?

Kids groups/activities – 7 respondents

Activities suitable for older people – 3

More restaurants/cafes – 3

Drama and art – 3

Theatre/Cinema – 3

Dancing – 2

Cycling – 2

Others included: Volunteering, helping older people, external work (green), music, arts/cultural, local walking, computers/technology, outdoor fitness, family events, skill sharing clubs, running, adult learning to get back into employment.

Question 4: – Would you be interested in volunteering opportunities?

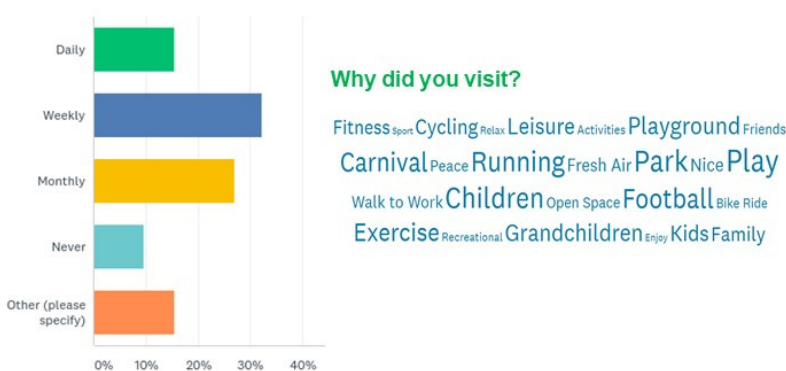
18 responded “yes” – 90%

Residents Full Survey - Results:

The results above were used to inform the design of the full resident survey which was put together by a working party and based on the above results. The survey was circulated on paper to every resident property in Birchwood (Ca. 6000) as an insert in the Town Council newsletter, and was also available electronically on Survey Monkey.

A total of 412 responses were received of which, the majority were completed electronically. The results were as follows:

Q1/2: How Often do you visit Birchwood Forest Park?..And why did you visit?



Birchwood Forest Park is used much more than was anticipated, with the maximum frequency being weekly. The 'word cloud' shown is created by SurveyMonkey, which picks out words from the information input – those that appear in larger print were used more often than others.

Q3/4: Would you be more likely to visit the park if.....

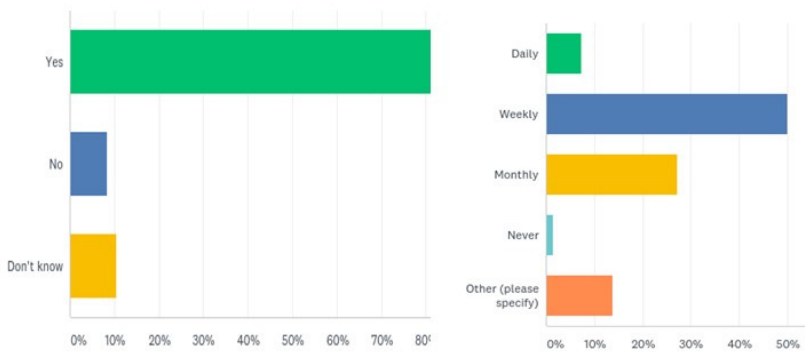


There were a lot of things that didn't appear in the word cloud, but had been mentioned by respondents to question 2, such as dog walking, kite flying and use of the fitness equipment – although 'exercise' would clearly cover this last point. In question 3, the main issues concerning the toilets are that they can only be opened when the Ranger is present, as they need to be kept clean and have soap etc. available. There is also a high risk of vandalism when no-one is present. It would be helpful for visitors to know when toilets would be open, however, this would have to be decided and who would have

responsibility for opening/closing them and keeping them clean.

Proposals to upgrade the ranger building will have an influence on any possible future solution and availability of toilets should be an aspect which is taken into consideration. It is clear that additional seating would be well received by residents. With regard to activities, the most important were those designed for children, but there were also many requests to have the bonfire back.

Q5/6: If there was a cafe in Birchwood Forest Park, do you think you would use it? – How often would you use it?



The idea of a café in Birchwood Forest Park was something which was very well received with most respondents saying that they would visit a café weekly.

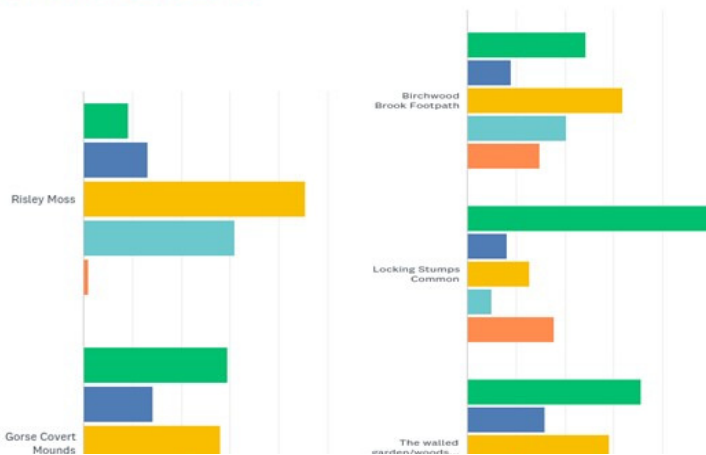
Since the survey was completed, a café has been set up by an enthusiastic friends group and has been very successful. It is expected to help generate some income to make improvements in the park

Q7 – What else might encourage you to use the park?



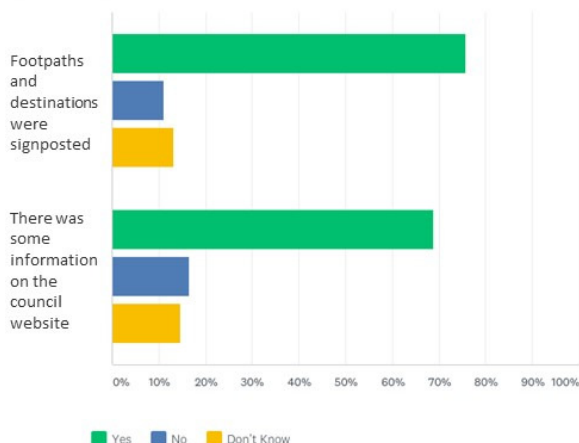
Question 7 sought to identify what might encourage more people to use the park. The word cloud shows the words which came up most often. There are several which stand out – events/activities (which is addressed later), issues related to dogs especially having dogs on a leash, a café (dealt with earlier) and better lighting. This latter item is seen as important from a public safety point of view and the issue of overgrown trees strongly connects into this.

Q8: Have you visited any of these green spaces in Birchwood within the last 2 years?



Question 8 sought to understand if residents were aware of all the green spaces to which they have access. This highlighted the fact that Locking Stumps Common and the Walled Garden are not visited by a large number of residents. This may reflect the very poor state these facilities are in.

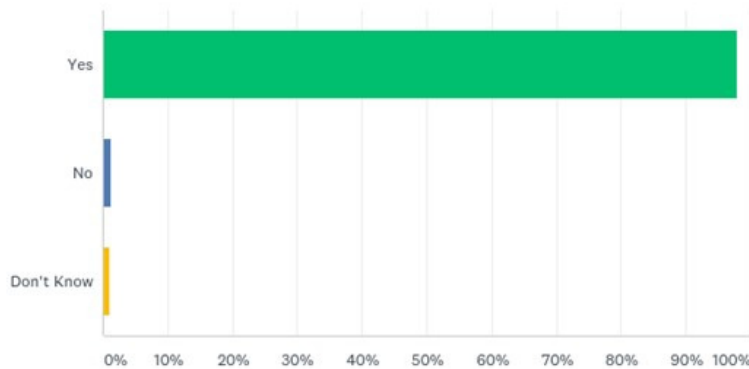
Q9: Would you visit any of the above green areas in Birchwood (and others), if...



Risley Moss, on the other hand is visited by the majority of residents, often on several occasions.

Question 9 was designed to determine if residents were more likely to visit those areas which they didn't know if there were

Q15 Would you support the stricter implementation of fines for littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping?



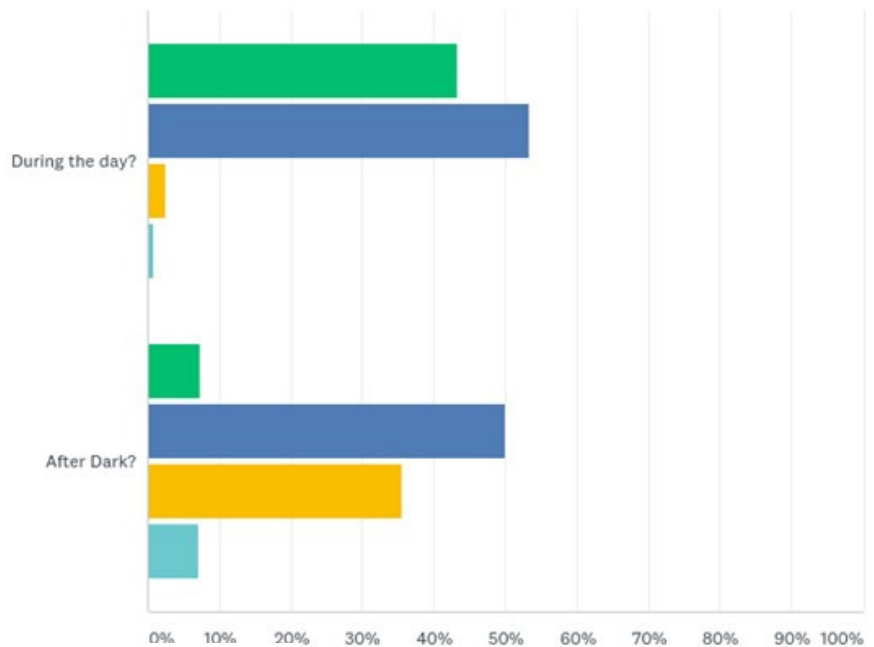
This was further supported by the response to Question 15 which asked residents if they would support stricter implementation of fines for littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping. The response was almost 100% in favour of this and indicates that it may be of interest to look again at the possibility of engaging a warden to pursue this.

Public safety is an important issue.

The survey results (Q16/17/18) show that during both the daytime and night time the majority of respondents feel 'safe', with around 43% feeling very safe during the daytime. After dark the percentage of people feeling 'unsafe' rises to around 35%.

People tend to feel unsafe where there is a lot of overgrowth and where areas are quite dark, also in areas which they perceive as being a 'hangout' for groups of youths to congregate.

Q16: How safe do you feel in Birchwood



Q17: Where do you feel unsafe?

Walled Gardens Reports Walkways Issues Locking Stumps
 Open Spaces Groups Wooded Areas Overgrown Shopping Centre
 Park Dimly Lit Dark Youths Hanging Lighting Live
 Paths Pub Oakwood Gorse Covert Gangs Police Presence Going
 Property Poorly Lit Scooters Estates

afe Unsafe Very unsafe

Better lighting and maintenance (discussed earlier) were both key issues that people believe would make them feel safer. The new LED lights have contributed significantly to the feeling of reduced security.

Q18: What would make you feel safer?

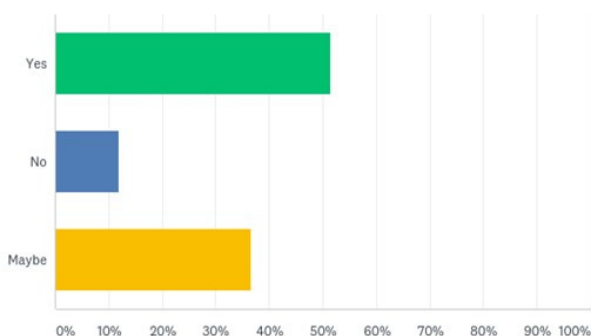
Lit Police Station PCSOs Safe Community Police Clean CCTV
 Lights at Night Paths Teenagers Police Patrols Local Police
 Cut Footpaths Better Lighting Police on the Beat
 Police Presence Regular Street Lighting
 Community Support Officers Bushes Speed Dark Thinning PCSO Roads

The other issue raised was that of greater PCSOs/Police presence. Due to the significant cost implications,

this would probably require additional community consultation to be undertaken, with full details given to residents before a decision could be made.

With regard to theft, information was recently provided about a property marking system involving the use of "smart water". The opportunity was taken to assess the degree of support that this would have if

Q19: A new property marking system is now available which uses an individually created fluid DNA. This is applied to your possessions and means that any stolen items can be identified as yours. It also leaves a "fingerprint" on the criminal, which could lead to conviction. When widely used, the system is more effective than any other at reducing theft. If the property marking system kit was available for sale for under £15, would you be interested in buying one?

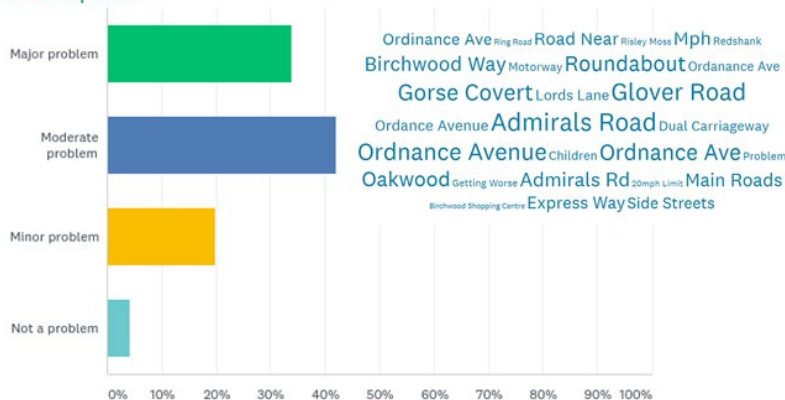


implemented in Birchwood. To achieve maximum effectiveness, it is important that the majority of properties are using the system. At a cost of around £15, more than half of respondents would be interested. Information obtained since the survey was carried out suggests that the cost could be very considerably reduced (to possibly less than £2) if the quantities ordered were much greater. Under such circumstances, it seems very likely that a large majority of residents would be interested in taking up the opportunity and this

could lead to a considerable reduction in crime based on the results obtained in other boroughs in the UK (especially in London) .

Over a period of years, one of the most common complaints from residents has been that of speeding cars through the Birchwood.

Q20/21: What is your view on speeding vehicles in Birchwood? Which are the worst parts?



cars through the Birchwood. Questions 20/21 were asked with a view to understanding how widespread these views are, and to determining the worst affected roads. The majority of residents see it as a moderate problem, with the most affected streets being Birchwood Way, Ordnance Avenue, Glover Road and Admirals Road. Locking Stumps Lane has also been identified as being dangerous due to speeding

combined with the width of the road and the fact that it is a bus route.

Question 23 explores the kind of events which residents would like to see in Birchwood. The word cloud shows some of the key ideas put forwards and includes a Farmers’ Market, music events and concerts, car boots, as well as events such as the existing carnival and a return of the bonfire and fireworks.

Q23: What sort of events would you like to see in Birchwood?



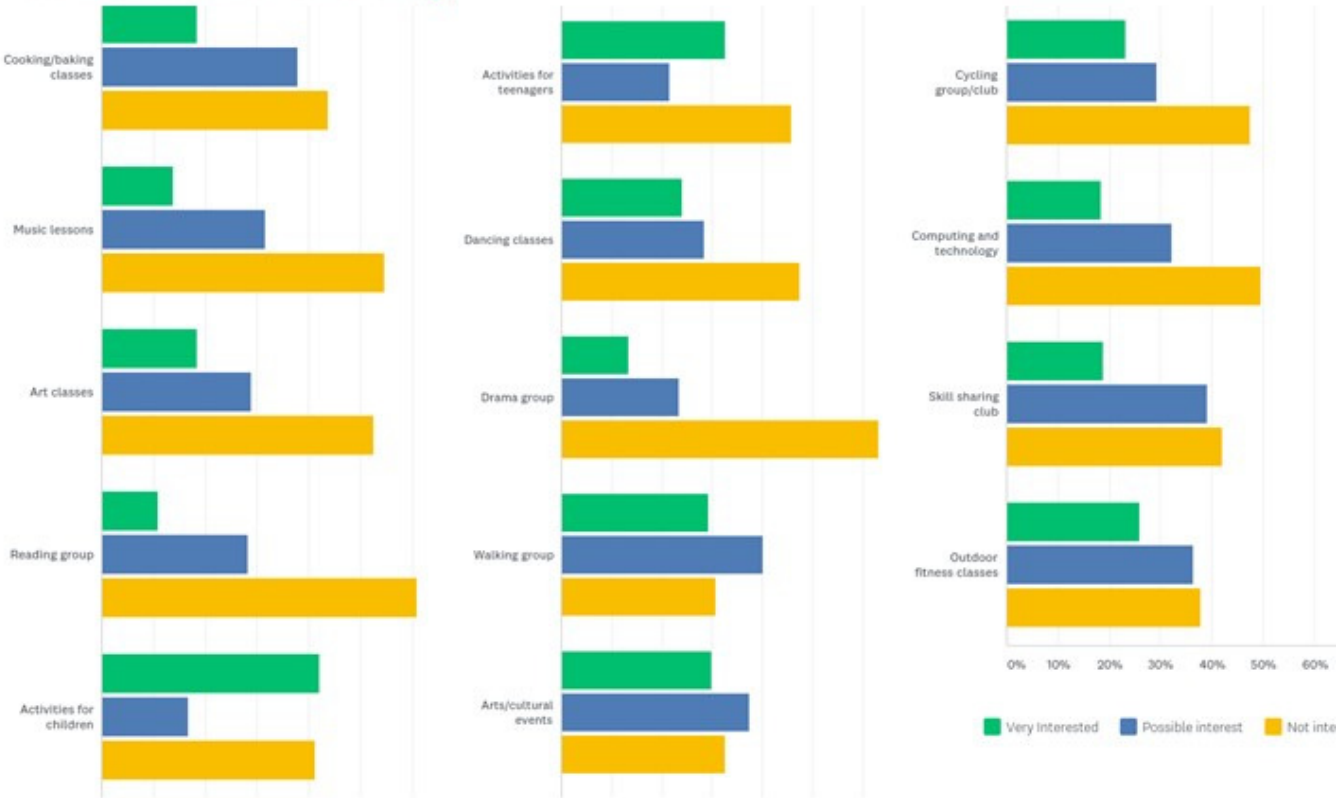
**Q24: Would you be prepared to pay for a ticket for an event?
Q25: How much?**



The bonfire is unlikely to return for health and safety reasons. The key question is whether residents might be prepared to pay for some of the events and how much they might pay. The great majority responded that they would be happy to pay, with most saying they would pay up to £10. This opens up new possibilities for holding events which could be self-financing.

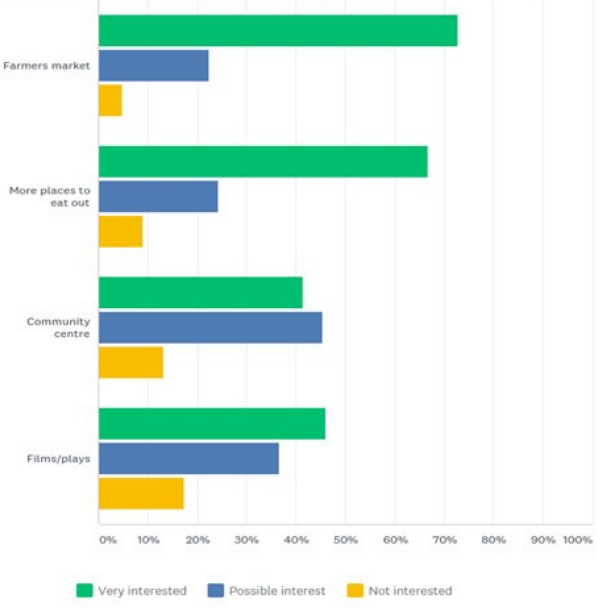
Question 26 aimed to identify new activities in general that residents would like to see take place in Birchwood.

Q26: Residents have told us that they would like to see a wider range of activities available and Birchwood Town Council would like to investigate this further. We need to understand what kind of activities would be of most interest to you. Please tell us how interested you would be in the following:



There were significant numbers of people interested in all the activities which were proposed, but those which had the highest interest were those aimed at children and teenagers, followed by arts/cultural events, outdoor fitness and walking groups.

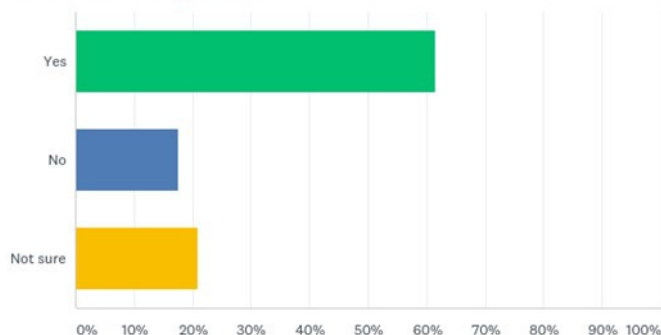
Q27: We are interested in knowing which local amenities you would like to see, if it were possible.



Question 27 asked about the potential interest in specific amenities. This showed farmers markets to be the most popular followed by more places to eat out and films/plays. A community centre showed possible interest – presumably dependent on what is on in it. This may be the subject of a

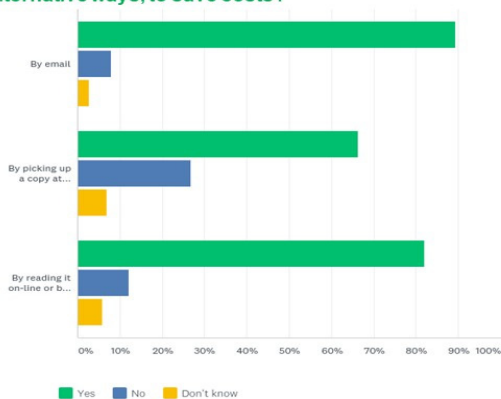
future survey.

Q29: Birchwood Town Council has started to publish the newsletter again which we believe is important. The total cost to produce and deliver this publication to every household in Birchwood is around £4000, which is paid for out of the Town Council precept. Do you think this newsletter is important?



Question 29 explores the value that a newsletter is perceived to have (taking into account its cost). The majority of residents felt that it is worth-while and it is therefore felt that the Town Council should continue to produce one. In view of the production cost and more importantly the cost to deliver it, the Town Council has considered other ways of communicating with residents to reduce cost.

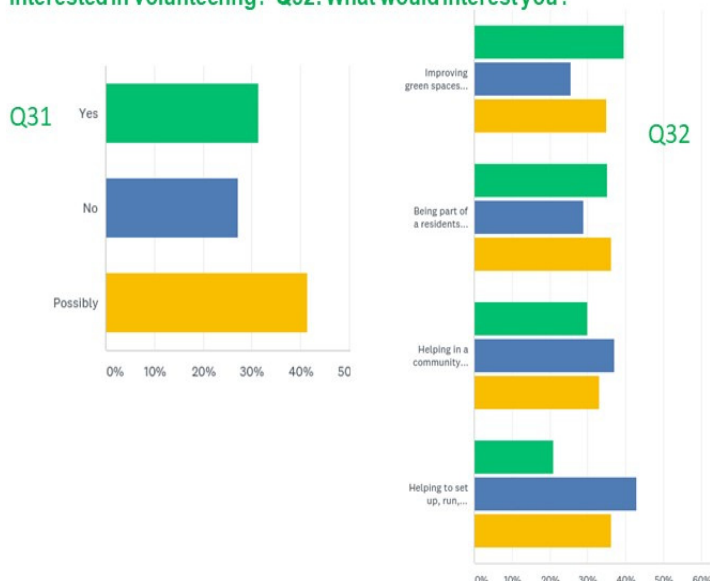
Q30: Would you be happy to receive your copy in any of the following alternative ways, to save costs?



This has included the possibility of delivering by email, reading a copy on the Town Council website, and picking up a copy at a local shop. These options were explored and all three had a high level of acceptance. The reality is that all three avenues could be used which would cover the huge majority of residents at greatly reduced cost.

Especially at a time of reduced services from the local authority, volunteering can play a key role in

Q31: There is a strong community spirit in Birchwood, and many residents have expressed an interest in volunteering. Are you interested in volunteering? Q32: What would interest you?

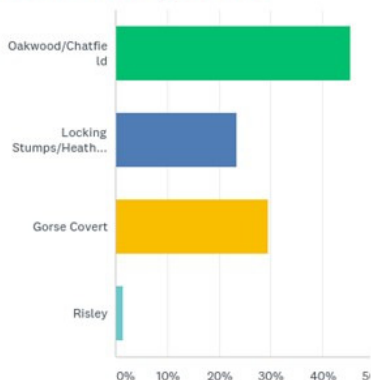


helping to improve the community and can have many beneficial effects for those involved.

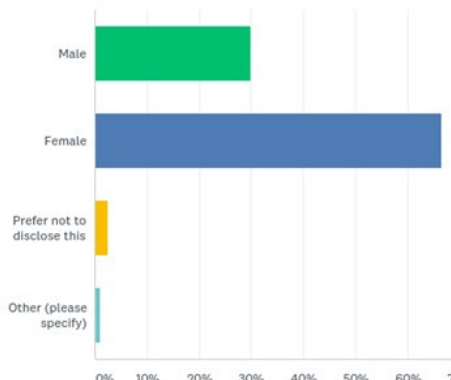
Interest in volunteering was explored, as well as any potential areas of interest. The response was extremely positive with only a quarter of respondents saying that they wouldn't be interested, and significant numbers showing an interest in all the options. This offers an excellent opportunity to build a greater sense of community and improve the area.

All remaining questions were aimed at understanding more about those who responded to the survey and to assess whether there was a good spread of responses from across the community.

Q34: In which area of Birchwood do you live?

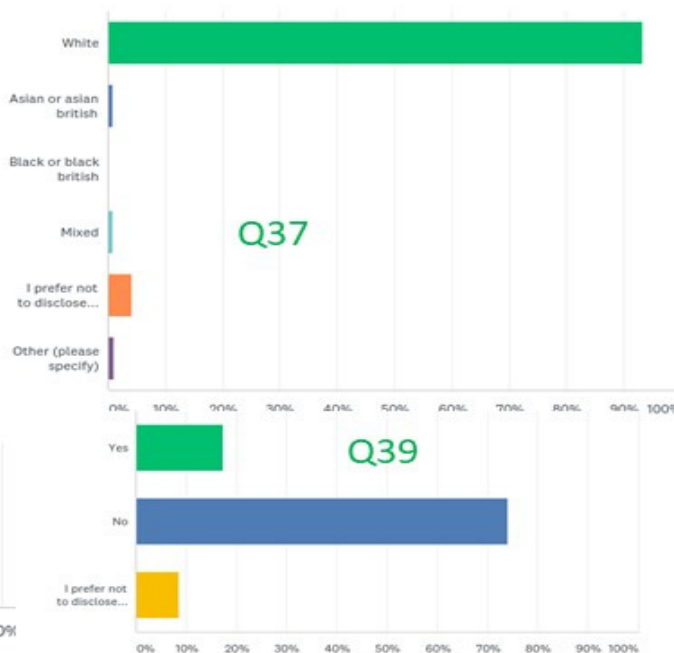
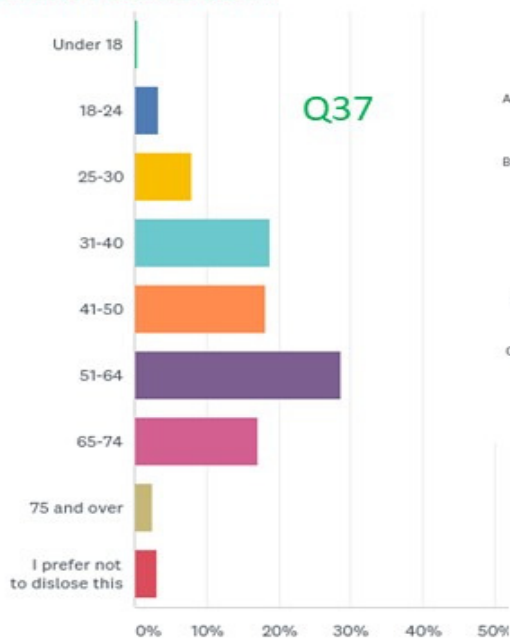


Q35: What Gender are you?



There was a good mix from the three main areas of Birchwood, with slightly more coming from Oakwood than from the other two main villages. More respondents were women than men, which is often the case in surveys.

Q37: What is your age group? Q38: Ethnic origin? Q39: Do you have a disability/long term illness, physical or mental health condition?



There was a good representation from across all age ranges, although the peak of the distribution was for 51-64 year olds. The great majority of respondents were white, but this reflects the ethnic distribution in Birchwood. There is a significant proportion of residents who have a long-term condition/disability and it is important that this is taken into account when considering any actions planned.

8. Action plan

Objective 1: To ensure that the best possible image of Birchwood is projected to residents as well as the wider community throughout Warrington and beyond:

Actions	Responsible	Target Completion date	Resources required	Status
1.1 Work with local publications to ensure that all local good news stories are well publicised	Designated member for liaison with publications/Town Clerk	Ongoing	Requires input of stories	
1.2 Work to find a way to develop a new local website that effectively informs about Birchwood, facilities, things to do, local transport, volunteering opportunities, jobs etc. (explore possibility of doing this in partnership with Birchwood Forum & partner organisations etc.). The site could be a development of the current birchwood.org.uk	Link member with Birchwood Forum	Ongoing	This would require manpower to maintain the site, but could possibly be funded via the BID (Business Improvement District)	
1.3 Send out regular updates to residents about progress on our plans so that they can see what is happening and feel that they are a part of what is being achieved	Town Clerk/members	Periodic updates	Production time and cost of newsletter	
1.4 Maintain and improve standards of cleanliness a) Include an article in the newsletter about the amount of litter collected and the cost b) Investigate the possibility of litter/dog fouling warden	Town Clerk/members	April 2018 Sept 2018	No additional cost Not clear	

1.5 Use social media where appropriate to communicate with Birchwood and the wider community	Town Clerk/members	On-going	No Cost, just time	
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Objective 2: Ensure that the work of the council is of the highest possible standard and provides the best possible outcomes for residents while providing excellent value for money

Actions	Responsible	Target Completion Date	Resources required	Status
2.1 Initially put into effect all the necessary processes and documentation to allow BTC to achieve NALC Foundation status (with the eventual aim of achieving parish/town council quality gold status (NALC) as a way of ensuring best practice and giving residents the highest level of confidence in what we do as a Town Council. All documents etc. to be on council website	Chair together with councillors and all officers	October 2018	Work required to conform with requirements. £50 registration with NALC and £80 for registration Possible time issue for Clerk CPD points	
2.2 Establish processes and operating methods consistent with achieving NALC Quality status. All appropriate documents to be on council website	Chair together with councillors and officers	Dec 2019	Work required to conform with requirements. £100 for assessment	
2.3 Establish processes and operating methods which allow BTC to achieve NALC Quality Gold status. All appropriate documents to be on council website	Chair together with councillors and officers	To be determined	Work required to conform with requirements. £200 for assessment	
2.4 Carry out surveys of residents/high school pupils etc.	Strategy	Ongoing, but first	May be worthwhile	Resident survey

on relevant issues to the implementation of this plan and keep them informed of the results	Committee	consultation of residents to be completed by June 2017 Survey of learners by Feb 2019	subscribing to the second tier of memberships of Survey Monkey - £300 per year	completed on time
2.5 Use the results of surveys to further investigate the facilities and services that residents would like	Strategy committee	On-going	Will not be clear until completed	This has been completed and incorporated into this plan
2.6 Engage with residents as widely as possible by attending meetings of groups/clubs etc. to explain what we are proposing as a council, and gain their feedback through surveys	Members/Officers	Prior to consultations. First round of meetings to be completed by April 2017	None	Completed
2.7 Set up a Birchwood focus group to work with on future consultations. Will require identification of a suitable group	Strategy committee	On-going 1 to 2 meetings per year Identify a group of people by April 2017	None GDPR reg's	First meeting completed. On-going group needs to be resolved
2.8 Encourage the formation of residents' associations in Locking Stumps, Gorse Covert	Members/officers	Target to have in place by November 2018	None	Completion date put back
2.9 Encourage tenants of Your Housing to form a tenants' association	Members/Officers	Target to have in place by Dec 2017	None	Completed

Objective 3: Build further on the green environment enjoyed in Birchwood by protecting what we already have, enhancing the environment where possible and help to ensure that our residents can benefit from it to the full.

Actions	Responsible	Target Completion Date	Resources required	Status
3.1 Approach WBC to see if signage could be used to make our green spaces more obvious or more visible (Forest Park is not obvious to those driving through) and possibly as part of a heritage trail. Consider other alternatives including Birchwood Forum and Friends of Birchwood Forest Park	Town Clerk, member with liaison responsibility with Birchwood Forum	March 2019	If included a part of a BID, there would be no cost, otherwise WBC	Scoping phase of BID completed
3.2 Find ways to help reduce rubbish and improve landscaping/grass cutting on main routes M62 to Moss Gate – work with Birchwood Forum to include as part of a BID	Member with liaison responsibility with Birchwood Forum	March 2019	If included as a part of a BID, there would be no cost	Scoping phase of BID completed
3.3 Publicise public footpaths better so they are used more often. Produce map of pathways. Look at possible expansion of signage. Possible use of Active Cheshire app. to let people get to know the area.	Member with liaison responsibility with Birchwood Forum, Town Clerk, Chair	March 2019	Could be part of a BID proposal	Scoping phase of BID completed
3.4 Continue to plant bulbs and wild flowers and consider how this might be extended	Town Clerk/members	Annually	Annual cost	
3.5 Survey residents on what	BTC strategy group	March 2017	£300 per	Completed

facilities/activities they would like to see in our green spaces that would make them more likely to use them			year if we want to use Survey Monkey	
3.6 Ensure that information about what is on across Birchwood is displayed prominently both physically and electronically including on Town Council website	Town Clerk	Ongoing	Possible issue of time required	
3.7 Work with WBC and other organisations to find ways to widen the scope of the displays in Risley Moss.	Member with responsibility for liaison with Risley Moss	Ongoing	None	
3.8 Work further to identify locations with traffic speed issues and work with WBC to establish appropriate measures	Town Clerk/ Members/ Police	Ongoing	None anticipated	Locations completed through survey Regular deployment of speed camera by Police
3.9 Work with WBC to enable BTC to take on some responsibility for grass-cutting so quality can be improved	Town Clerk/BTC Members and Birchwood Members of WBC	March 2017	Equipment provided by WBC on loan, but there is a maintenance and running costs	Action implemented successfully
3.10 Consider how BTC could encourage the reduction of environmental impact in Birchwood – e.g. the use of PV panels for electricity generation on public buildings such as primary schools. Consider Transition	BTC Chair/members/officers	March 2019	None	

Town possibility				
3.11 Write to WBC about the toilet facilities at Birchwood Forest Park to ask for solutions to having them open more frequently and regularly	Town Clerk	May 2018	None	Completed
3.12 Approach the Friends of Birchwood Forest Park to see if they might consider the purchase of additional seating in the park from profits raised by the group and also see if they might be prepared to help with running events If positive, approach WBC to agree how this could be implemented	Clr Allman Town Clerk	April 2018 June 2018	Funding from the Friends Group	
3.13 Contact Active Cheshire (and possibly LiveWire) to explore how we can ensure best possible use of local MUGAs, especially in the Forest Park, and explore possible help with arranging 5-a-side competition	Town Clerk/ Chair	May 2018	Not known at this stage	
3.14 Understand what activities the Ranger in Birchwood Forest Park could be involved with	Town Clerk/Members	June 2018	No cost	
3.15 Investigate what other parks have done in Warrington with regard to dog control to identify best practice and then have appropriate signage installed	Town Clerk/Members	Dec 2018	No cost to BTC, but requires input from WBC	

Objective 4: To build a greater sense of community and belonging in the residents of Birchwood

Actions	Responsible	Target Completion date	Resources required	Status
4.1 Find out what kind of activities people would like to get involved in, so that we could look to help provide these and better use the facilities that are available. (e.g. The youth club/community centre.) Look at the possibility of BTC helping with funding of these activities	BTC Strategy Group	April 2017	Survey tool cost - £300 Some funding for room hire.	Completed
4.2 Make a list of volunteering opportunities in Birchwood Identify potential volunteers through a resident survey	Town Clerk/Members/etc.	April 2017 On-going	None None Time (GDPR)	Completed Many people have shown interest locally
4.3 Investigate ways to recognise volunteers in some way – perhaps an annual event – volunteer of the year award etc.	BTC Members Recognition to be given by Chair of BTC	Dec 2018	Cost of award, plus cost of event	
4.4 Continue to provide small grants for community groups from an annual fund of £10,000 (subject to annual reappraisal)	BTC	On-going	Annual fund of £10,000	
4.5 Examine the feasibility of running an annual residents' celebration event (note that this could be same event for recognising volunteers)	BTC Members/Town Clerk	Dec 2018	Cost and type of event to be determined	
4.6 Ensure that all existing local activities are well publicised	Officers/BTC Members	Ongoing and regular	None	

4.7 Examine the possibility of bringing back a free Christmas pantomime for local children	Chair, Members and officers	Nov 2018	Cost of venue plus performers	
4.8 Ensure that younger people are involved in survey work to identify activities they would like to see and evaluate volunteering opportunities they might be interested in. This, with a view to helping them become good citizens	Chair, Members and officers	On-going, but first engagement by May 2018 at the latest	Survey cost. Could be done partly through Birchwood High School.	
4.9 Identify community events which residents would like to see	BTC Strategy group	April 2017	Survey cost	Completed
4.10 Explore the feasibility of holding a firework display again	Town Clerk	May 2019	Cost is the main issue, along with suitable venue and health and safety	
4.11 Explore the possibility of having a farmers' market in a location in Birchwood	Town Clerk	April 2019	Not known at this stage	
4.12 Look into the possibility of running a repair café in the Youth and Community Centre as a means of reducing waste, building community spirit and helping combat loneliness	Chair/Members	July 2018	Roughly £1000 to get started	

Objective 5: Work closely with local businesses and other stakeholders to positively impact the lives of those who live and work in Birchwood.

Actions:	Responsible	Completion date	Resources required	Status
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<p>5.1. Work in co-operation with Birchwood Forum to look at the possible establishment of a Business improvement District in Birchwood (BID)</p>	<p>Member with responsibility for liaison with Birchwood Forum</p>	<p>June 2018</p>	<p>Possible £750 from BTC to carry out a scoping exercise and another possible £3K to put together the initial proposal both of which would be refundable if it went ahead</p>	<p>Stage one of a BID completed</p>
<p>5.2. Work with local businesses to see how they might be more involved in the neighbourhood in terms of exercising their corporate responsibility. This could include possibility of volunteering Make sure that local businesses are aware of all local facilities available</p>	<p>Member with responsibility for liaison with Birchwood Forum</p>	<p>Ongoing, but presentation during Q3 2018</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Deadline put back due to lack of opportunity to present</p>
<p>5.3. Work with the appropriate authorities to ensure that phase 2 of the works on the “dogbone” roundabout is completed, so that traffic flow can be optimised especially at peak times</p>	<p>BTC and WBC Councillors</p>	<p>April 2018</p>	<p>None – funding would have to come from outside BTC</p>	<p>Work has now started</p>

5.4 Work with Birchwood Forum to identify new signage to make areas easier to find and facilitate traffic flow	Member with responsibility for liaising with Birchwood Forum	Dec 2018	None – funding would have to come from outside BTC	Will be included in Business Improvement District proposal
5.5 Work with the Birchwood Medical Centre and Warrington CCG to see if there are ways in which specific projects might be funded which would have a positive impact on local health inequalities eg. prediabetes, fitness, smoking cessation, etc	Designated Member	Ongoing	None	
5.7 Work with Birchwood Medical Centre and WBC to look at running an extended presence of the public health team at the practice or in local community facilities	Designated Member	October 2018	None	
5.8 Work closely with local centres of education and local businesses to identify ways of ensuring that as many local people are employed locally as possible.	Member liaising with Birchwood Forum	Ongoing	None	
5.9 Continue to work closely with Your Housing Group to identify issues through local walkabouts and monitoring comments through the Birchwood Facebook page, and try to work to resolve them	Members/officers	Ongoing Periodic walkabouts	None	

Consider potential survey of residents				
5.10 Carry out walkabouts in non-YHG areas to identify issues	Representative Ward Member, where possible	Periodic walkabouts	None	
5.10 Work through Birchwood Forum/ Birchwood High School/ Birchwood College to bring local businesses to our centres of learning to help inspire our young people	Member responsible for liaison with Birchwood Forum	Ongoing but started by October 2018	None	Investigation showed that this is already happening Completed
5.11 Monitor the issues of local parking and identify potential solutions to the problems identified to WBC and seek funding	Members/officers	Ongoing	None	
5.12 Ensure that there is still the facility for the public to access the internet if there are changes in Library services provision	Officers/Members/WBC	To be addressed once the library moves	None	There is no expected change envisaged

Objective 6: Seek sources of additional funding to allow development of Birchwood as an area

Actions:	Responsible	Target Completion date	Resources required	Status
6.1 Investigate potential funding for 50 th anniversary of the sale of	Members/Officers/Birchwood Forum	Dec 2018	Resource to put together a	

<p>the land for the development of Birchwood for residential/business use with a “big” project that would make a significant contribution to Birchwood and help to project the town positively</p> <p>Need to identify a game-changing project</p>			bid for funding – could include Birchwood Forum	
6.2 Continue to identify possible sources of funding to help to further develop amenities.	Officers/Members	Ongoing	Resource to put together bids	

Objective 7: To Work to Improve community safety

Actions	Responsible	Target Completion Date	Resources required	Status
<p>7.1 Work with partners to identify potential security improvements</p> <p>(Note: There is a current idea of a texting service about suspicious vehicles/individuals)</p>	Members	Dec 2018	None	
<p>7.2 Ensure that all the new street lighting is fit for purpose by checking;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of tree canopies • Light strength/dark areas • Any lights which are not functioning <p>Feedback results of the survey to WBC about poor lighting especially on footpaths. This may help improve public safety and</p>	<p>Members to check a zone within their own constituency</p> <p>Town Clerk/Chair</p>	<p>April 2017</p> <p>May 2018</p> <p>Ongoing?</p>	<p>None</p> <p>None from BTC</p>	<p>This phase was completed</p> <p>completed</p>

confidence in going out at night Enquire with Spectrum Striders about possible funding assistance towards additional lighting in Birchwood Forest Park	Cllr Allman	July 2018		
7.3 Consider traffic issues through Birchwood, especially regarding traffic speeds which are affecting both noise levels and safety, and liaise with our PCSOs to ensure regular speed monitoring is carried out	Members/officers/ Police/WBC	Ongoing, but reviewed annually by end of financial year	Data on speeds, accidents etc.	
7.4 Ensure that Birchwood has the most cost-effective measures in place to minimise the level of crime in the town Examine possibilities of smart water marking of property	Members/Officers/ Cheshire Police	Dec 2018	Information on effectiveness of potential measures	In progress
7.5 Support potential ways of achieving improved bus services within Birchwood which could have a positive impact on traffic flow and parking issues (e.g. school runs)	Member with responsibility for liaison with Birchwood Forum	July 2019	Cost of service (BID?)	
7.6 Consider ways in which it might be possible to provide free/low cost public transport around Birchwood. (Note that this and 7.5 might be included as part of the BID)	Member with responsibility for liaison with Birchwood Forum	July 2019	Cost of service (BID?)	
7.7 Investigate the possibility of installing radar speed signs	Members/Officers	Dec 2018	Cost of signs is about £3-5K, but may attract partial funding	
7.8 Consider undertaking a community consultation regarding the future of PCSO numbers and	Town Clerk/Members	Sept 2018		

funding				
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Note that there are several initiatives in previous sections which are expected to have a positive impact on crime, vandalism and safety.

- Action completion is not due for more than 3 months or is complete
- Action is due within the next month and not completed
- Item is overdue or cannot be completed

What we currently do for residents:

Our current range of operational activities relevant to this strategy, vision and statement of objectives are set out in the following summary of work and project related activities:

We employ, and train our staff to nationally recognised, certified standards, to provide and undertake environmental type activities to meet several of our objectives, e.g.

1. Some community maintenance work, including hedgecutting and minor tree cutting; improving sightlines etc.
2. Litter pick the footpath network, primarily residential, and local amenity areas in Birchwood and empty litter bins.
3. Clean and check local play and recreation areas (funded all or in part by the Town Council).
4. During the grass cutting season, mow areas of WBC land in residential areas (in addition to WBC cutting schedule).
5. Maintenance of the floral displays in Birchwood (including some planting).
6. Reporting and removal of graffiti, where possible.
7. Blowing leaves of paths in the autumn, and scraping back footpath edges.
8. Some gritting of footpaths and higher risk areas in the winter.
9. Provide and maintain some benches in the local area.
10. Other ad hoc maintenance requirements in the Birchwood area.

The Town Council also own and provides a central Council office to provide administration, liaison and help deliver services to meet the Council's service requirements and resident issues.

Additionally, the Town Council provides:

- A. Communication with residents using the following:
- Website
 - Facebook
 - Local noticeboards
 - Public participation session – Town Council Meetings
 - Newsletters
 - A presence at the local Carnival
- B. Provide/facilitate access/liason meetings for Police issues to be raised formally by residents/ on behalf of residents.
- C. Active liaison with Warrington Borough Council on various service issues, including infrastructure problems, traffic related matters and other environmental/local matters.
- D. Community development / asset maintenance initiatives.
The current community development programme, whereby the Town Council is providing capital funding to fully, or partially, install facilities for residents has recently concentrated on recreational play and fitness equipment in Birchwood Forest Park and contributed towards improvements on the Birchwood Brook footpath.

It has provided funds towards the local Conflict Remembrance Memorial in Birchwood and assists with its ongoing maintenance and memorial services.

The Town Council will continue to campaign to protect local open spaces and encourage/support any moves to achieve Village Green status.

An extensive five phase programme, in partnership with Warrington Borough Council, is now part way through with the intention of introducing further enhancements within Birchwood Forest Park:

- a. Enhancement of the skateboard and BMX/Pump track within the Forest Park.
- c. Improvements to the public facilities at the Ranger Centre.
- d. Potential improvements to footpath lighting in the park.

Other possible community development schemes include The Walled Garden and local ponds which are currently under consideration.

The Town Council is considering whether some asset transfers from the Borough Council to the Town Council could be beneficial and feasible to the development of services and facilities for the local community.

It will continue to seek local sites where some allotments might be established.

In recent years, the Council has provided funds to install several local play and multi-use games areas where no funding was available elsewhere.

Additionally, the Town Council has, in the past, provided funding support towards local bus shelters, some street lighting improvements, footpath installation and supported other general schemes e.g. Encounter Statue, the Remembrance Memorial at the Shopping Centre and Birchwood Youth and Community Centre.