

The Bearwood e-Bulletin



News from Abbey Councillor Bob Piper

April 2021

Emerging out of lockdown....

With the feeling that Spring has arrived, hopefully we are gradually emerging from the prolonged lockdown, and life can begin to return to normality.

However, even during the last year the feeling of community has shone through in Bearwood. The support groups and food bank collections have seen a positive response from people helping those less fortunate.

Amongst those things we've missed though, are the number of concerts, groups, clubs and activities hosted by Julie and her staff at Thimblemill Library. Hopefully, in the coming weeks, they can restart and rebuild. I've been talking to Julie McKirdy to ask her how she's

coped during lockdown, when she expects Thimblemill Library to re-open, and what she is looking forward to.

Also, our coffee bars and pubs will begin to reopen soon, not just places for a coffee or a pint, but to become places where people can meet and enjoy real human contact and conversations.

It isn't over yet. Too many people have lost relatives and friends for us to drop our guard now. The increased awareness of infection and levels of hygiene are likely to remain with us for a long time, and we may have to be prepared for further outbreaks or variants. But for now...let's get ready for the 'new normal'.

Nicky Hinchliff selected as Labour candidate for May 6th

The Labour Party has selected Nicky Hinchliff as their candidate to represent the Abbey Ward in the local council elections on May 6th.

Nicky has lived in Lightwoods Road for over 20 years and she is the Deputy Head of an Early Years Centre in inner City Birmingham.

"I'm delighted to be invited to stand," said Nicky. "My work involves supporting children and families on a variety of issues, such as welfare benefits, housing and domestic abuse.

"I have seen first hand how cuts to public services have impacted on some of the most vulnerable in society, but the cuts have affected all of our communities. Who would have thought that in one of the richest countries in the world, people would be having to depend on food banks to survive. I felt I had to do more, and I can hopefully bring the experience I have gained to the role of being a councillor."



"We are naturally sad that Ann Jaron has chosen to retire, she has been a marvellous voice for Bearwood. I am delighted Nicky is standing and she will be a terrific local councillor and an asset to the council" - Cllr Bob Piper



Life, lockdown and libraries

Some people may think that with buildings like libraries and leisure centres being closed to the public, life would have been much easier for staff. The e-Bulletin spoke to Bearwood's own Julie McKirdy about the valuable work she has been carrying out over the last 13 months whilst Thimblemill Library has been closed to the public.



Julie, how are you and how have you coped with COVID?

The start of pandemic, I thought like most people, we would be probably be in lockdown for 3-4 weeks. Just before lockdown, I'd been very busy with Thimblemill libraries evening events, and had booked a few days annual leave after our last event, that was planned for 19th March, when I was due back we had gone into lockdown. In that time, I developed symptoms of Covid, it left me feeling very tired for a few weeks, but otherwise okay.

I am a very busy person and that helps me to cope. I love my garden and last year we had lovely weather around springtime so that helped and my garden never looked so good. Being busy in the welfare hub helped too, keeping up with family and friends via Zoom/teams with weekly quizzes, music and theatre online, then walks and catch ups in gardens, this is what kept everyone going last year wasn't it

What have you been doing work-wise?

Early in lockdown, I was redeployed into the welfare hub as one of the welfare co-ordinators. We received information about Sandwell's vulnerable residents. Some lists had consisted of nearly 1,000 residents to contact. We would cascade calls down to the team of welfare agents, staff from different departments and our library staff. They would call to ask a series of questions and then if assistance was needed we would call the emergency number to put in place offers of help such as food boxes, prescription services or other help needed. A lot of the time the residents enjoyed the chance to talk and often the agents would be the only person they had actually spoken to that day or week.

Then I came back into libraries to start with their re-opening. I helped with the re-opening of Central library and got Smethwick library ready to open. I was redeployed back into the welfare hub in the November lockdown. I have been busy with

Smethwick library re-opening in early December and getting Thimblemill ready.

Everyone's looking forward to the library re-opening - do you have any news about when that might happen?

*I am looking forward to the re-opening too, like everyone. And as you all know how I feel about Thimblemill library, my local library and the library I've been privileged to call work for 42 years. **I am pleased to tell you that Thimblemill is the next library on list to re-open.** It will be soon, please keep checking the Sandwell libraries website for the updates. It will be a reduced service to start with like the other libraries in Sandwell. The opening days are: Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday 10-4pm and will be appointment only, check this link for **all information needed to visit.** <https://capitadiscovery.co.uk/sandwell/home4>.*

Any changes to the library in the last 12 months?

We've been recently re-decorated, and it's looking very fresh and clean. It will look very different at this stage of re-opening. For now, with your appointment to collect your grab bag of books or requested items, you will use the main doors and collect these from the community room and leave via the fire doors. To use the Pc's, you will follow the markings on the floor to your socially distance pc's and leave through the community room. Like shops and other buildings now there will be hand sanitisers/wipes for you to use. All books will go into quarantine for 72 hours when returned. Keeping everyone safe.

What are you looking forward to most about re-opening?

I could give you a list as long as Thimblemill Road of all the things I missed about Thimblemill library, but the most important thing isI've missed our lovely community, so much, just to see people enjoying the library again, to hear chatter and laughter, I will take that!

Warley Woods - Hibernation is over

Tens of thousands of people have enjoyed the wonder of Warley Woods over the last 12 months, as at various stages of lockdown people have been able to exercise or meet in small groups in the open air.

As lockdown eases some of the Community Trusts other activities will also restart.

Bird spotting walk - May 16th

Join a bird-spotting walk around Warley Woods where you can try and spot some of the key species they have here on site! Get your binoculars ready (if you have them) some of the species such as Great Spotted Woodpecker tend to be seen mainly high up in trees so if you do have access to a pair it is recommended you bring them along!

16th May - [Book your places here!](#)

If you are interested in the bird-life of Warley Woods you may be interested in our self-guided [bird-spotters map](#) you can use this along with our [Bird I.D. guide](#) to help you get a headstart in tracking down some of the birds of Warley Woods.



Share the Dawn Chorus experience - 2nd May, at 7am

Join Wild Warley for an early morning stroll through Warley Woods listening to the birds triumphantly heralding the dawn.

Have a dawn stroll around Warley Woods where you can will listen to the birdsong. A real stress reliever this auditory experience will help you not only to relax but also get more in tune with nature, hopefully, you will pick up how to identify birds by their song!

Book a space [HERE](#) and join Doug and Liz on this Dawn Chorus walk. Spaces are limited, but they will be recording the event so if you cannot attend in person rest assured you will be able to experience the event from the comfort of your own home and at a time that suits you!



VACCINE CLINICS



NHS

FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

EVERY TUESDAY FROM 6th-30th APRIL

TIPTON SPORTS ACADEMY

Appointments from 8am-7pm

To book an appointment, call **0121 796 1504**
or just walk in



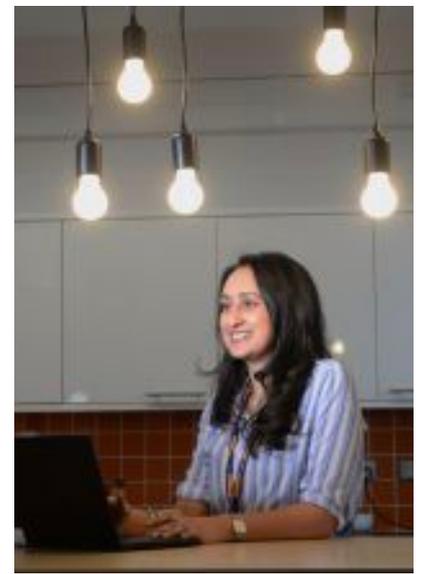
New Chair announced for refugee support group

Bearwood Action for Refugees are excited to announce that we have appointed Simran Sohal as our new chairperson. Simran got in touch via social media and following some conversations with the team she was voted into post at their team meeting this month.

We have asked Simran to write a few words to introduce herself.

"Hi everyone! I'm really excited and humbled to be part of Bearwood Action For Refugees. I plan to work on a strategy to align how BAFR can continue to work effectively and efficiently with local community groups and organisations to galvanise awareness and support. To those of you who I've already been introduced to, a big thank you for the warm welcome and here's to a new chapter at BAFR."

Welcome to the team Simran!



Work continues to help rough sleepers in Sandwell

Sandwell Council is continuing to do everything it can to support people sleeping rough in the borough.

Sandwell Council's Housing Solutions Service has been working hard throughout the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the latest associated restrictions it has brought with it.

During the last 12 months the service has helped more than 70 rough sleepers into emergency accommodation with a number of these securing a home to call their own.

Throughout the colder winter months, we have provided emergency housing to around 40 people, many of whom were found sleeping rough. Through our Housing First pilot we have housed 43 rough sleepers in secure homes since August 2019 and are supporting more than 20 more to find a home and to help them with their finances and health.

Each year, every council carries out a formal rough sleeper count on a single autumn night in October or November, and saw a reduction in the number of rough sleepers down some 60% from its 2019 figure. The council's housing team carried out the count again in January 2021 and found no one sleeping rough.

Councillor Keith Allcock, cabinet member for homes, said; "We will continue to work with anyone we find or who is reported as sleeping rough to give them the best chance of staying off the streets and into somewhere safe."



"We're continuing to improve the ways we work and how we can support everyone who is already homeless and those who are at risk of becoming homeless and our aim is to ensure that no one has to sleep rough. We're making sure that all known rough sleepers have accommodation available to them and have responded to any new reports with offers of accommodation."

"If we are told about anyone sleeping rough, we will go and see them the same day and offer help, including somewhere safe to stay."

If you see a rough sleeper or are worried about someone who may be sleeping rough, you can contact us at:

www.sandwell.gov.uk/roughsleeper or call us on **0121 368 1166 (option 2) or if it's after **5pm** or at the weekend call **0121 569 6883**.**