

BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Barling Magna Parish Council held on Thursday 9th February 2017, in The Great Wakering Community Centre, High Street, Great Wakering, Essex, commencing at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Bond, Cohen (Chair), Gardiner, Knight, Pearmain and Steptoe (Vice Chair).

In attendance: I. King (Parish Clerk)

MINUTES

- 1. The Chair to declare the meeting open.**
 - a. The Chair declared the meeting open.
- 2. To receive apologies for absence.**
 - a. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashdown and Edmunds.
- 3. To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and with section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.**
 - a. Councillor Steptoe declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 16.
- 4. To sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 12th January 2017.**
 - a. Proposed Councillor Pearmain, seconded Councillor Gardiner that the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 12th January 2017 be signed as a correct record. Carried.
- 5. The meeting will stand adjourned to permit Parishioners of Barling Magna to address the Council.**
 - a. No parishioners were present to address the meeting.
- 6. To receive a report from the County and District Councillors for the area on any matters of interest to the Parish.**
 - a. No County Councillors were present.
 - b. District Councillor Steptoe reported on the planned Anglian Water rainwater works due to commence in Little Wakering Road on 13 February 2017, subject to the prevailing weather.
 - c. District Councillor Steptoe informed the Council that the Rochford District Council's budget would be set on 14th February. The recommendation was for an increase of 1.96%. Essex County Council planned no rise in their base rate but a 3% rise in the social services budget.
 - d. District Councillor Steptoe had previously drawn Members' attention by email to the welcome £20m boost for the Saxon Business Park, which would benefit the whole district.
- 7. Casual vacancy**
 - a. A casual vacancy had arisen owing to the death of the late Councillor Street. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded Councillor Knight that the clerk be

authorised to notify the vacancy through the noticeboards and on the website.
Carried.

- b. It was noted that, should 10 or more electors request an election, the timing of this would be a matter for Rochford District Council.

8. Chair's Matters

- a. Council received a report from Councillor Cohen about the draft River Crouch Guide. Proposed by Councillor Pearmain, seconded by Councillor Gardiner that a contribution of £50 should be made by the Council, along with Members' request that those designing the leaflet should consider increasing the font size as this was considered to too small for comfortable reading. Carried.
- b. Council received a report on the success of the expression of interest to the Essex County Council Response Grant programme. It was noted that Councillor Cohen was working to complete the full application by the deadline of 24th February.
- c. Members had been asked to consider whether the Council should create a Neighbourhood Plan. It was suggested that such a plan would carry more weight in influencing development and infrastructure than a Parish Plan. It would, however, involve significantly greater work than a Parish Plan. A government White Paper on the topic was expected shortly. Canewdon Parish Council were creating a Neighbourhood Plan and the Council would seek to benefit from their experience. Some grants were available, subject to application. Members noted that the Parish Plan working group remained in existence and their work might inform the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Knight that the Clerk should:
 - (i) contact the clerks of Great Wakering Parish Council and Sutton with Shopland Parish Council to ask if their councils might wish to explore a partnership in creating a Neighbourhood Plan, with the possibility of shared staff time and costs;
 - (ii) consult the Chair of the Parish Plan working group and seek comments on the proposal;
 - (iii) undertake some initial research on the options, drawing on the experience of Canewdon Parish Council;This was agreed.
- d. Council considered a proposal from Councillor Cohen to update the Council's Committee list as necessary following the death of Councillor Street. The committee lists were reviewed. It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that:
 - (i) The seats of the late Councillor Street on both the Finance Committee and the Wildlife Reserve Committee should remain vacant;
 - (ii) The deputising role in representing the Council on the Rochford Association of Local Councils in the absence of Councillor Cohen should be considered on the next Council agenda;
 - (iii) The Clerk should investigate who is to succeed Councillor Street in Great Wakering Neighbourhood Watch;
 - (iv) Councillor Pearmain would represent the Council on seawall matters;
 - (v) Council noted that Councillor Edmunds was already the nominated deputy for Councillor Street on crime prevention and police matters. Carried.
- e. Council considered whether to create a Staffing Committee and a Staffing Sub-Committee, specifically to deal with matters relating to confidential staffing matters, grievances and contracts. The importance of observing natural justice in allowing for impartial appeals was noted. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Gardiner that the chair of the Personnel Committee should have delegated

powers when required to set-up a sub-committee made up of any two members of the Personnel Committee to deal with staff issues and to report back to the Personnel Committee and/or Full Council. If an appeal was lodged by a member of staff, members of the Council that are not members of the Personnel Committee and/or the sub-committee would be called to hear the appeal. This was carried, the chair abstaining.

- f. The Chair invited Council to consider the inclusion of a sub-committee to the Wildlife Reserve Committee, specifically for the purpose of addressing the requirements of the Green Flag award. Members noted that there were already informal working arrangements among volunteers and those Councillors who were active in the Wildlife Reserve. The specific aim of any sub-committee would be to ensure that any external representation of the Council, for example in applying for the Green Flag award, should be undertaken by those expressly authorised to do so by the Council and should reflect the Council's policies. Councillor Knight offered to continue to take responsibility for the annual application to Green Flag and the Chair withdrew the proposal.

9. Financial Matters

- a. Proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the schedule of cheque payments for February 2017 be approved and that the Great Wakering Community Centre be booked for future Council meetings. Carried.
- b. The Clerk reported that, owing to the missing bank statement for November 2016, it was not possible to offer a financial report. A letter chasing the previously requested duplicate statement was available for signature at this meeting.
- c. It was noted that the former Locum Clerk, Mr J Watson, would be finalising the current year's finances and preparing the annual return.

10. Risk Assessment for 2016/17.

- a. Proposed by Councillor Gardiner, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the 2016/17 Risk Assessment prepared by the former Locum Clerk be approved, subject to the appending of the following riders:
 - (i) The Council notes and attaches to the Risk Assessment its existing Lone Worker Policy, which will inform the management of any relevant risks;
 - (ii) The Council has a secure facility at the Wildlife Reserve for the storage of flammable liquids;
 - (iii) The Risk Assessment for 2017/18 should be brought forward for consideration earlier in the Council's calendar and there should be a six-monthly review of the same. Future assessments should take account of fire equipment and gas cylinders at the Wildlife Reserve.

Carried.

11. Wildlife Reserve Committee

- a. Council noted the circulated report of the Chair of the Wildlife Reserve Committee, following its meeting on 1st February 2017.
- b. A revised draft invitation to tender for two fencing matters at the Wildlife Reserve was considered, following item 15c. of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held 12th January 2017. Subject to minor additions seeking clarity on both VAT and Risk and Management Systems, the Clerk was authorised to go out to tender.
- c. Proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the Clerk should seek appropriately qualified advice on the benefits and drawbacks of charitable status for the Wildlife reserve and report to Council when this was available. Carried.

- d. Council had been asked to consider the terms of the constitution required by Green Flag Ltd for the Wildlife Reserve but it was reaffirmed that the Council's Standing Orders were the only governing document available.
- e. Council had been asked by the Wildlife Reserve Committee to consider the requirement of Green Flag Ltd in respect of committed financial support from the Parish Council. It was reaffirmed that the Council's budget was the only appropriate financial document available.
- f. Concerning the recommendation from the Wildlife Reserve Committee regarding any national or local bodies who could be approached with a view to helping support the Wildlife Reserve financially in future years, the Chair said that suggestions for any source of possible financial support would be welcomed from Councillors or volunteers. Application to any external source should only be undertaken with Council approval and through the Clerk.
- g. In the matter of the recommendation from the Wildlife Reserve Committee regarding fixing Wildlife Reserve signs to the Parish Council bus shelters, Councillor Steptoe reported on soundings taken from the District Council planners. As long as signs were smaller than 1 metre x 1.5 metres (the threshold for planning permission) and subject to a courtesy conversation with planning officers by the Clerk, there should be no objection to the affixing of 'brown' signs to the Council's bus shelters.

12. Survey of streetlamps

- a. Councillor Steptoe invited Council to note that some of the stencilled identification marks on streetlamps were now illegible and that the growth of ivy was both obscuring some lights and offering the potential for personal injury. It was not clear which body was responsible for the clearance of the ivy: the lighting contractor, the land owner where the plant was rooted or the Parish Council. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Gardiner that the Clerk should contact the lighting engineer to seek their guidance, as this problem must occur in other places, and to request their estimate for undertaking a condition survey of all streetlamps in the parish, replacing the stencilled identification mark where necessary. Carried.
- b. Councillor Steptoe requested that the engineers repair the streetlamp by 121 Little Waking Road.

13. Funding for new play equipment

- a. Councillor Steptoe suggested that the Parish Council should enter into talks with Rochford District Council to explore ways of funding, in partnership with RDC, new play equipment in both the play spaces in Little Waking and Barling. This was proposed by Councillor Pearmain, seconded by Councillor Knight and carried.

14. Clerk's report

- a. Council noted an oral report from its new Clerk who had been in post since 1st February. The Clerk reported on data security and archiving, keys, notifying external agencies of the change of address. Owing to the poor state of the Village Hall and the potential for damage to the Council's archives, the Clerk would move them to Councillor Steptoe's garage.
- b. The Clerk drew Council's attention to three courses run by EALC which might be of benefit to him. The initial outlay would not exceed £200, although some of this would be subject to a rebate, and it was proposed by Councillor Cohen and Seconded by Councillor Steptoe that this expenditure be approved. Carried.

- c. It was noted that Rochford District Council also ran a variety of courses of potential interest.

15. Extension to the meeting

- a. It being 9:30pm, it was proposed by Councillor Cohen and seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the time available for the meeting be extended to no later than 10pm.
Carried.

16. Website

- a. There were no specific amendments to the website to propose, although the process of updating the site with current documents was ongoing.
- b. Council considered a Special Motion dated 1st February 2017 regarding the decisions made under Minute 10 of the Council Meeting held on 10th November 2016 in respect of new email addresses. It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Pearmain that:
 - (i) The Council should discontinue the Parish Council email addresses, so saving £327 annually;
 - (ii) The Clerk should email each Councillor to enquire which personal email address they wish to have appear next to their name on the website – an existing one or a new one they might wish to create for that purpose;
 - (iii) The Chair and Clerk would liaise with Brunel regarding changing the email addresses on the websiteCarried.

17. Planning

- a. Two planning applications had been notified:
 - (i) 16/01248/LDC – application regarding re-cladding of barn adjacent to Walkers Farm. No comments.
 - (ii) 17/00036/LDC – application regarding Cu Nim. No comments.

18. Correspondence

- a. The Clerk reported on letters received from Essex & Suffolk Water regarding opportunities for wider choice of water provider. No action was required.
- b. A declaration of Compliance is due to the Pensions Regulator no later than 28 February 2017. The Clerk was requested to consult with John Watson about action taken on this previously and report to the Chair and Vice-Chair for any urgent action.
- c. The Clerk was asked to check that letters of thanks had been sent to the volunteers organising the Christmas Hampers.

19. At the Chairman's discretion to exchange information on matters of interest to the Parish.

- a. The Chair reminded all members of the importance of upholding the reputation of the Parish Council in any interactions on social media.
- b. The Chair had circulated previously her analysis of the recent Rochford District networking event.

20. To agree the date of the next Council Meeting

- a. The next Council meeting will be held on Thursday 9th March 2017.

21. Exclusion of the Press and the Public

- a. Pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it was resolved that, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and the public be excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

22. Tenders

- a. A draft revised invitation to tender for separate repairs to each of the 4 Bus Shelters had been circulated and this was considered. Previously noted changes to conditions regarding VAT and Risk and Management Systems would apply to this tender, as well as the following:
 - (i) The inclusion of supply and application of one coat of wood preservative treatment;
 - (ii) Tenders should report on the soundness of the base to each shelter and advise on what steps are proposed to ensure the base is sound and level.It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the Clerk be authorised to go out to tender subject to these conditions. Carried.

23. Staff Matters

- a. Under the Special Motion dated 1st February 2017 regarding the decision made under Minute 20a. of the Council Meeting held on 8th December 2016 in respect of the Hall Manager, the Clerk was requested to investigate the options available and report back to Council.
- b. Councillor Steptoe advised the Council that, in the Chair's absence, he had instructed the then Locum Clerk and Hall Manager not to enter the Village Hall owing to the rainwater ingress and consequent risk of collapsing ceilings. The Clerk was asked to communicate this to the insurers, as the regular internal inspection has been undertaken at their request.
- c. Council noted that all outstanding PAYE/NI employee issues had been received in full.

24. The meeting closed at 10pm.