

BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL, held Thursday 15th June 2017 in the Front Room, Great Wakering Community Centre, High Street, Great Wakering, Essex.

Present: Councillors Bond, Cohen and Steptoe.

Apologies: Councillor Ashdown, Clark, Edmunds, Gardiner, Knight and Pearmain; District Councillors Lucas-Gill and Williams.

Attending: I.King (Parish Clerk) and (from item 9) District Councillors Hookway and Hughes.

MINUTES

- 1. The Chair to declare the meeting open.**
 - a. The Chair declared the meeting open at 7:00pm
 - b. The meeting observed a minute's silence to commemorate those who had died or been injured in recent terrorist incidents and in the Grenfell Tower fire.
- 2. To receive apologies for absence.**
 - a. Apologies were recorded, as listed above
- 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 planning matters and any relating to Essex County Council or Rochford District Council.
- 4. To sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 11th May 2017.**
 - a. Proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the minutes be agreed. Carried unanimously.
- 5. The meeting will stand adjourned to permit Parishioners of Barling Magna to address the Council.**
 - a. No parishioners wished to address the Council.
- 6. To receive a report from the District and County Councillors for the area on any matters of interest.**
 - a. County Councillor Steptoe reported that he had been appointed to the Deputy Portfolio for both Environment and Business at Essex County Council.
 - b. District Councillor Steptoe reported on a current initiative to reduce the placement of homeless persons in bed and breakfast accommodation to nil. As seen in the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, homelessness could affect people for many different reasons and the District Council was committed to assisting where possible.

- c. There would be an open discussion between the District Council and senior representatives of the National Health Service on the future provision of Accident and Emergency services at Southend Hospital, to be held on the evening of Thursday 22nd June 2017.

7. Financial Matters

- a. Payment requests for June 2017: the clerk tabled a revised schedule of cheque payments. This included provision for the first two staged payments to the building firm currently working on the Parish Hall. The release of these payments would be conditional upon the clerk being satisfied by reports from the project manager that work was proceeding to plan and the receipt of full invoices. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the schedule be approved: carried unanimously.
- b. To receive a bank reconciliation to 31st March 2017. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the reconciliation be approved: carried unanimously.
- c. To consider the annual accounts for the year ending 31st March 2017. It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the accounts be approved: carried unanimously.
- d. Annual Return and Internal Auditor's report for 2015-16:
 - (i) Section 1. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Bond that the governance statement be approved: carried unanimously.
 - (ii) Section 2. It was proposed by Councillor Bond, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that this section be approved: carried unanimously.
 - (iii) Internal Auditor's report: this was a very satisfactory report with just two advisory recommendations. It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the report and recommendations be noted: carried unanimously.
- e. To approve the updated asset register. Questions were raised about the basis of the valuations, whether these were original purchase prices or estimated replacement values. The basis of the inclusion of the Parish Hall for some years past was not clearly understood. A thorough review of the register was due by September 2017 and these matters would be explored then. Councillor Steptoe asked that the possibility of leased play equipment be explored. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the register be approved for the year: carried unanimously.
- f. To receive a report from the Clerk on VAT matters. The VAT office had overpaid one of the Council's recent claims by £6,000. The clerk had notified HM Revenue & Customs and they had requested the return of the money; a cheque for this had been approved in the current month's cheque schedule.
- g. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that all those who had been responsible for the successful audit for 2016-17 should be congratulated; carried unanimously.

8. Banking

- a. The clerk reported that both of the Santander bank accounts had now been closed, with funds transferred to the Co-operative Bank DirectPlus account. The closure of the main HSBC was expected imminently. The clerk would then attempt to resolve problems with the HSBC 'Hall' account. In discussion, members reported that they had heard positive accounts of Metro Bank, which was now used by several other

Councils.

- b. The clerk was requested to bring the matter of changes to the mandate for the two Co-operative Bank accounts, to include including Councillor Clark as a signatory and online banking, to the July meeting.

9. Parish Hall

- a. The clerk reported that work had begun on site and that progress seemed quite swift so far. The chair had been present for the start of the work on Monday 12th June and she, the vice-chair and the clerk had visited the site together on Wednesday, 14th June. Laurel, elder and other trees and shrubs on the boundary would be cut back to allow great light and access. The memorial Live Oak at the front of the property was in danger of fouling overhead wires and the pavement. The clerk would gather quotes for sympathetic pruning. A self-set tree on the boundary with the neighbouring bungalow in Little Wakering Road would be removed.
- b. Two test pits from a previous exploration of the capacity of the foundations to support a second storey had now been back-filled.
- c. The two sets of doors to the property were in a very poor state and would be replaced; the door furniture could be re-used.
- d. The stud partition at the rear of the stage, which created two rather dark storage areas behind, had previously been damaged and might need to be removed, creating greater depth to the stage. Any detritus remaining in that area would be cleared.
- e. The meeting recorded that the fencing across the site would need to be reviewed and probably replaced soon. Councillor Cohen questioned the value of the partition of fencing with the wrought-iron gate on the front aspect. It was felt that this discourage parking on a portion of the lawn that could not withstand regular car parking.
- f. Internal decoration options would be presented to the Council at its July meeting. Councillor Bond had generously offered to supply floor coverings for the kitchen, toilet areas and possibly for the main hall, where the sanded wood floorboards no longer had a coating of varnish. The need to consider potential hirers' needs and their safety was important. District Councillor Hookway offered to advise on wooden floor sealants.
- g. The clerk would ask Gillian Gates to explore options for restoring a payphone and Wi-Fi at the Parish Hall.
- h. The clerk was exploring options for new regular lettings with Gillian Gates.

10. Events and fundraising

- a. Councillor Bond reported on progress on the Fun Dog Show, which was proceeding well. Although the insurers were content with a petrol generator, there would now be a diesel generator on site. He reported on two new attractions to the event. The clerk reported that our insurers were content for any qualified volunteer to conduct PAT tests if approved procedures were followed.
- b. An Event Management Plan and the Risk Analysis had been submitted to Rochford District Council.
- c. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Bond that Councillor Edmunds be authorised to spend up to £150 to purchase new leads for the PA system. This was agreed unanimously. He would also be asked to cost the replacement of the wireless element.
- d. It was agreed to consider a "Barling in Bloom" event for 2018 and to promote the Christmas lights award well in advance.

- e. At the July full Council meeting, a decision would need to be made on the Teddy Bears Picnic for 2018 in light of matters discussed at the Wildlife Reserve Committee meeting on 6th June 2017.
- f. Councillor Bond reported on helpful discussions he had had with Rochford District Council's Environmental Health Team regarding food hygiene and the preparation of food for charitable/community (i.e. non-profitmaking) events. Those taking part in this regard at the Dog Show would be invited to a brief refresher course on food hygiene. The clerk would inform our insurers regarding catering plans and report any issues they raised.

11. Wildlife Reserve

- a. It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Bond that expenditure on the list of equipment and fuel recommended at the meeting of the Wildlife Reserve Committee on 6th June 2017 be agreed; carried unanimously.
- b. Peter Shaw had kindly agreed to repair the car park fencing this month.

12. Neighbourhood Plan

- a. To begin to make progress:
 - (i) As a courtesy, Councillor Steptoe would consult the chair of the (now moribund) Parish Plan Committee ahead of a proposal to the July Council meeting to disband the committee;
 - (ii) The clerk would approach Mrs C Steptoe, honorary treasurer of the Committee, to ask how about residual funds held;
 - (iii) Councillor Cohen would explore the option of a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, to include non-councillors;
 - (iv) The Chair would notify Rochford District Council of the intention to devise a Neighbourhood Plan.

It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that this be agreed; carried unanimously.

13. Special motions

- a. In accordance with Standing Order 7(a) of the Standing Orders adopted on 6th August 2015, the following Special Motion be put to the Meeting of the Parish Council to be held on the 15th day of June 2017, namely that Barling Magna Parish Council Standing Orders adopted on the 6th day of August 2015 Paragraphs 9(g) and 9(h) shall be amended by the inclusion of the word "Special" so as to read as follows:
 - (i) Paragraph 9 (g): Special Motions received shall be recorded in a book for that purpose and numbered in the order that they are received.
 - (ii) Paragraph 9(h): Special Motions rejected shall be recorded in a book for that purpose with an explanation by the Proper Officer for their rejection.

It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that this be agreed; carried unanimously.

- b. In accordance with Standing Order 7(a) of the Standing Orders adopted on 6th August 2015, the following Special Motion be put to the Meeting of the Parish Council to be held on the 15th day of June 2017, namely:
 - (i) the decision under Minute 9(xiv) of the Minutes of the Barling Magna Parish Council Meeting held on the 13th April 2017 that "...this event (namely the Fun Dog Show) would be run by the Parish Council in aid of the repairs to the Parish Hall" be amended to read as follows:

- (iii) Paragraph 9 (xiv) ...this event would be run by the Parish Council in aid of the repairs to the Parish Hall but with the proviso that any profits arising from the proposed raffle be donated to an animal rescue charity to be determined by a majority vote of the Parish Council”

It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Bond that this be agreed: For 2; against 0; abstained 1 (Councillor Steptoe). Carried.

14. Clerk's Report.

- a. A report on current work had been circulated by the clerk. Members thanked him for this. It was clear that a great deal of work was in-hand and the overriding importance of the audit and repairs to the Parish Hall meant that some other aspects had had to take a lower priority.
- b. Councillor Steptoe raised the matter of Data Protection. The clerk reported that new laws would come into force in January 2018 and a briefing was expected from EALC this autumn. Meanwhile, were councillors covered in a personal capacity for Council data stored on their personal computers? The clerk would contact EALC for advice.
- c. The clerk requested news items for the Great Wakering Community Newsletter: deadline 1 July 2017. It was reaffirmed that all Council material intended for external publication should be submitted via the clerk, who should check that it complied with the Council's policies. The Teddy Bears Picnic would not be promoted in this issue as it was uncertain if it would go ahead.
- d. The clerk reported on the renewal of the Council's main insurance policy with Aviva. The renewal was recommended as our broker, Came & Co, had scanned the market and found what they believed was a competitive quote of £2,383.87. This was distinct from the separate Parish Hall insurance. The clerk had had to chase the broker for renewal options and, as the insurance expired on 1 June, he had secured temporary cover until 20th June pending Council's decision and the despatch of a cheque by 16th June for the premium. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that this payment be approved; carried unanimously.
- e. Councillor Steptoe enquired about progress on ivy growth on lamp posts and electricity posts. He was concerned about the post outside Vine Cottage in Barling Road (the cottage nearer to Shopland Road). The clerk was invited to write to the occupier to explain the Council's concerns and to enquire if the ivy originated on their land.
- f. Councillor Bond reported a faulty street lamp in Church Road, near 6a and Barling Weir Lodge; the clerk would notify this to the contractor.
- g. The clerk reported on a letter received from W&H(Romac) Ltd, our street lighting contractor, advising of increased replacement component costs for sodium lighting from £19 to £28 each. It was reaffirmed that, when lamp units are replaced, LED units are used in place of sodium. It was agreed that on the next occasion that the street lighting contractor goes out to tender, the re-marking of lamp posts should be included in the tender specification.
- h. The clerk would obtain a current electoral roll for the parish from Electoral Services at Rochford.

15. Planning Matters.

- a. To consider any Planning Applications received and to agree any action, including:
 - 17/00443/FUL regarding 1 Kingsmead Cottages. No comments.

- 17/00458/FUL regarding an extension to 406 Little Wakering Road. No comments.

In view of his declaration of interests made at 3. above, Councillor Steptoe withdrew at this point while the following application was discussed.

- 17/00531/FUL regarding proposed construction of a house at Church Road. Members felt that the planned building appeared oversized for the narrow plot. The size of the building appeared incongruous to its neighbours. There was also a concern that there seemed inadequate provision for parking.

Councillor Steptoe returned to the meeting at this point.

- 17/00542/FUL – no comments.

16. Correspondence received.

- An invitation had been received to a garden party hosted by the Chairman of Rochford District Council.
- Seafarers UK, a merchant seamen's charity, had requested the Council to fly the Red Ensign in September. This spurred a discussion about the possibility of purchasing a flagpole for the Union Flag or the flag of St George. The clerk would investigate costs.
- A new sign for the Parish Hall was thought to be desirable. The clerk would investigate costs and options.
- Essex County Council has invited the Council to participate in the Winter Salt Bags initiative for this year. A decision was required by 22nd July. It was agreed that councillors would check the salt levels in the three static bins in the parish. The clerk would contact his colleague at Sutton Parish Council to discuss the shared arrangement that exists. He would also try to ascertain if there was any stock remaining at Mr Tabor's farm in Mucking Hall Road.

17. At the Chairman's discretion to exchange information and items for the next meeting.

- The chair reported on a recent meeting she had attended of the EALC, which concerned:
 - Risk assessments
 - Foundation Council awards
 - Councillors' guides to neighbourhood planning
 - Transparency Fund (she would explore if we might apply)
 - Emergency planning – we would revisit work done previously in this regard by John Watson.
 - Defibrillators.
- District Councillor Hughes asked about the road-closure emails, which had stopped. Councillor Steptoe replied that a new system has been created which would start shortly.
- There had been concern about the online system for reporting highways issues. Councillor Steptoe was willing to pursue any such matter but could only do so if he had the reference number.
- District Councillor Hookway enquired about damage to footpaths arising from recent work by contractors on gas pipe work. It was noted that this was outside the parish.

18. Date of next meeting – Thursday 13th July 2017

19. Exclusion of the Press and the Public

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.

20. Legal matter

a. The clerk presented an update regarding a disputed invoice. Although the Council was still of the view that the work was below an acceptable standard, it took the view that possible litigation and the non-financial costs to the Council meant that, on balance, the matter should be closed by paying the invoice for £250. It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Steptoe and agreed unanimously.

21. The chair closed the meeting at 9:30pm.

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