

BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL, held Thursday 13th July 2017 in the Front Room, Great Wakering Community Centre, High Street, Great Wakering, Essex.

Present: Councillors Ashdown, Cohen, Edmunds, Gardiner, Knight, Pearmain and Steptoe.

Apologies: Councillors Bond and Clark;
District Councillors Lucas-Gill and Williams.

Attending: I.King (Parish Clerk)
District Councillors Hookway (to item 9b) and Hughes (from item 7a to item 20)
3 members of the public (to item 20).

MINUTES

- 1. The Chair to declare the meeting open.**
 - a. The Chair declared the meeting open at 7:00pm
- 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 15th June 2017.**
 - a. Proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the minutes be agreed. Carried unanimously.
- 5. The meeting will stand adjourned to permit Parishioners of Barling Magna to address the Council.**
 - a. Mr Ottley of 21a Church Road addressed the Council on the matter of dangerous vehicles in Church Road. He had collected a petition. Recently another cat and a moorhen had been killed by speeding cars. He thought that Church Road ought to have a maximum speed limit of 20 mph. Councillor Steptoe outlined the role of the Local Highways Panel and a first application had been made to the panel, although this was a slow process. The local Speedwatch volunteers could not operate in Church Road, owing to the lack of pavements. Councillor Edmunds said that, although he shared Mr Otley's concerns, the actual volume of traffic was low. District Councillor Hookway asked if a similar issue in Pointers Lane in Great Wakering had been resolved: it had not. Mr Otley was thanked by the chair for

raising the matter. The Parish Council was both aware of and concerned by the problems he described and was doing all that it could do to address them.

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 Employment & Skills at Essex County Council.
- b. He had attended the recent Local Government Association conference in Birmingham. In light of recent terrorist and other incidents, he felt that it was important to ensure the parish council has a tried and tested Emergency Plan. A draft had been prepared by a former Clerk and this would now be reviewed. The District Council had just issued guidance on managing incidents in crowded places and it was agreed to consider this at a future Council meeting. Councillor Ashdown reported that if it was not possible to phone the emergency services, people could send a text message to 999. District Councillor Hookway raised the matter of Southend Council's flood response strategy. A Flood Forum meeting was expected soon. In the case of Barling Magna, the potential for flooding was largely fluvial, not marine.
- c. District Councillor Hookway was concerned about vegetation on the footpaths and verges in Barrow Hall Road. There was a concern about public misperceptions of which authority had responsibility for which tasks. District Councillor Steptoe reported on a long campaign to resolve issues around the rural verges in the same road. A member of the public present voiced concerns about litter in the same area, although he congratulated the District Council on its excellent response to fly-tipping.

7. Financial Matters

- a. Payment requests for July 2017: the Clerk tabled a revised schedule of cheque payments. This included provision for subsequent staged payments to the contractors 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. Councillor Cohen raised concerns that the amounts payable to the Green Gateway Trading (GM) Ltd for mowing and bin clearance were higher than expected. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Edmunds that:
 - (i) Green Gateway be asked to provide a breakdown of their invoices into the specified tasks in the tender;
 - (ii) The schedule of payments be approved: carried unanimously.
- b. Bank reconciliation to 30th June 2017, along with a financial report on the first quarter of the year. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the reconciliation be approved: carried unanimously.
- c. The Clerk reported on VAT matters, as follows:
 - (i) VAT claims had been submitted for the period 1 October 2016-31 March 2017 and 1 April – 30 June 2017. We were expecting repayment of around £4,629.81.
 - (ii) The Clerk had received detailed pro bono advice from the VAT specialist firm of DCK Beavers Ltd., affirming again that we should be able to reclaim all building-related VAT in the current year.
- d. Councillor Pearmain asked why the claims were so high and the Clerk reported that the second one included some elements of buildings-related expenditure.
- e. The Clerk reminded the Council that it had incurred legal fees of £2,131.80, which the

internal auditor had thought properly the responsibility of the Barling Magna Parish Hall Committee charity. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Ashdown that the recharge to the charity be waived, as a donation: this was agreed with 7 in favour, 0 against and 0 abstentions.

8. Banking

- a. The Clerk reported that the Council had begun the calendar year with six bank accounts. The two Santander accounts had now been closed with the balances transferring to the Co-op Bank accounts. After much effort, it appeared that the same was true of the HSBC account 42066580. Progress was being made with the HSBC (Hall operations) account, although some statements were still not being received. The two Co-op Bank accounts were working very well.
- b. Owing to other pressures, it was not possible to bring forward changes at this time to the mandates for various accounts, to include signatories and online banking; they would be presented to a future meeting.

9. Parish Hall

- a. The Clerk reported on progress in the repairs. The builders were ahead of schedule. The roofer was now on-site and there had been no serious rain water ingress in the recent showers. The intrusive vegetation had been cleared from the rear of the hall. Unclaimed detritus from 3+ years previously had been cleared off-site. It was agreed to defer consideration of floor coverings to the August Council meeting. Those who had seen the painted interior thought that the choice of apricot white was visually pleasing and enhanced the quality of light in the hall. Those doors which had been gloss painted previously would be prepared and repainted, with skirting and architraves, in gloss white. Doors which were now natural wood would be prepared and restored to the same finish. Regarding exterior paint, in place of unavailable colours, members selected the following from the Dulux Weathershield range: the walls to be in Gardenia; the first choice for plinth to be Brick Red and the second choice to be Muted Gold. In the absence of the Clerk, the project manager would liaise on further such matters with the Chair and Vice-Chair.
- b. Councillor Steptoe declared a non-pecuniary interest in the firm of Eastern Security Ltd in view of item (iv) of the following recommendations.
- c. The Clerk made the following recommendations, some of which arose from quotations supplied that day:
 - (i) To note the positioning of the radiators, including installation in the place of a double kitchen cupboard to the immediate right of the internal kitchen door and the heating of the toilets by means of a radiator situated in the toilet lobby;
 - (ii) That the Clerk be given delegated authority to spend up to £300 to secure the sympathetic cutting back of the memorial Live Oak, once a courtesy note had been written to Mrs Varty in whose husband's memory the tree had been planted;
 - (iii) To note and approve the tabled quotation from the firm of RWS Electricare for electrical works, including the creation of more (preferably double) socket outlets, some of which were to be situated at 1 metre height using electrical supply from the former electric radiators;
 - (iv) To defer consideration of two variant quotations from Eastern Security Ltd regarding the reinstallation of the Fire Alarm, possibly with enhancements, pending enquiries to the Council's insurers about the minimum standards and

- the necessity of a dedicated phone line for the system – the matter to return to the Council at its meeting on 8th August 2017;
- (v) Subject to cost, the Council to consider at a future date the removal of the old kitchen units and the installation of work surface commensurate with the quality of the newly-refurbished building (it being confirmed that the stainless steel hood would be retained and reinstalled);
 - (vi) The installation of an induction loop system to aid people with impaired hearing should be considered once the hall was ready for re-opening;
 - (vii) The project manager to be asked to report on both the potential of the pipework for the radiators to be damaged by movement of chairs in the hall and also upon the future operation of the urinals;
- It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe and seconded by Councillor Edmunds that this list of recommendations be agreed: carried unanimously.
- d. It was proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Ashdown that a working party be established to bring forward proposals for the re-opening of the Parish Hall once the refurbishment was completed. Councillor Bond had already made suggestions for the opening; Councillors Cohen and Ashdown would be pleased to prepare ideas for the Council to consider. Ideas included a formal ‘ribbon-cutting,’ alongside an open day or event with an entertainer. The motion was carried unanimously.
 - e. The Clerk had been asked to make a first report on licences required for the hall. These would include PRS/PPL licences for the playing of any recorded music, the scale of fees depending upon the capacity of the hall. The sale or free distribution of alcohol would require either a premises licence or a Temporary Event Notice. It was noted that private citizens bringing wine or beer to a quiz night would not be affected. The Clerk was thanked for the report and invited to bring a more detail report with recommendations to a future meeting.
 - f. It was reported by the Clerk that there had been visits to the Parish Hall site from a gentleman who claimed to represent the Scouts, seeking to remove the (empty) former Scout cupboard and offering to gain access to the storage sheds to see if there were Scouting items there. It was decided that Councillor Edmunds and the Clerk would be delegated to meet the person concerned and take any steps they thought necessary to resolve the matter.

10. Events and fundraising

- a. Councillor Gardiner reported on preparations for the Fun Dog Show on 15th July 2017. It was expected that Councillor Bond would be fully recovered by the day of the event, although Councillor Gardiner would be the nominated deputy as the Event Manager.
- b. In view of demands upon the time of key volunteers, the Fun Dog Show, the Parish Hall refurbishment and the deadline for submitting an Events Management Plan, it was unanimously agreed not to proceed with the Teddy Bears Picnic this year.

11. Health & Safety

- a. The satisfactory report of the annual independent inspection of the Play Area was received with pleasure. The maintenance contractor would be asked if they could attend to the recommended levelling and re-seeding of the lawn arising from the report.
- b. Regarding health and safety matters in connection with the Wildlife Reserve and Parish Hall, a new First Aid kit and incident book had been installed at the Reserve.

When any of the items in the box were used they should be replaced. There was some doubt as to the currency and adequacy of the certification of the 2 fire extinguishers; the Clerk was instructed to ensure that there were functioning and certified extinguishers installed before the Find Dog Show on Saturday. Councillor Steptoe expressed concern that there was no systematic plan to appraise the health and safety condition of all the Council's equipment, not least at the Wildlife Reserve. The Council was not aware of all the equipment it owned and it was possible that some might be out of date. The Clerk was working on the updating of the Asset Register, with photographs, and this could be expanded to include more items and be used as a checklist for periodic inspections and training. The Clerk was also completing a working-calendar of critical deadlines for the Council, which would be presented to members for their information. As he was still newly in post, he requested members who knew of key dates in the Council's year – not least to do with health and safety issues – to draw these to his attention.

12. Community Assets

- a. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the trustees of the Barling Magna Parish Hall Committee charity be invited to consider assuming legal responsibility for the Barling Magna Wildlife Reserve and the Council's play area in Little Wakering Road. As a first step, they would be requested, when they consulted the firm of Tolhurst Fisher, to take advice on the steps required to make this change and share this advice with the Council. Carried unanimously.
- b. The Clerk reported that he hoped for a meeting with the Parks and Open Spaces Officer of Rochford District Council before too long, to discuss the Parry play area.

13. Neighbourhood Plan

- a. A detailed report, with discussion questions, had been circulated with the agenda. In view of the importance of the topic and the lateness of the hour, the Chair proposed that this item be deferred to the September Full Council meeting to give it full consideration then. This was agreed.

14. Data protection

- a. Members received a report from the Clerk. Each member would now consider her/his position with regard to individual licences. If a member wished to take out a licence, the fee might be reclaimed from the Council. Guidance on new regulations was to be published shortly.

15. Clerk's Report.

- a. A report from the Clerk on progress with work in-hand had been circulated with the agenda, for which he was thanked.
- b. To avoid the Clerk bringing lots of printed copies of supplementary papers to meeting, which were often surplus, the Chair suggested that members consider letting the Clerk know if they wish to have printed papers ready for their collection at the start of meetings.
- c. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe and seconded by Councillor Pearmain that the Clerk be authorised to spend up to £25 on a digital recording device to enable meetings to be recorded officially by the Council. This would aid with minute-taking. This was agreed unanimously.

16. Planning Matters.

- a. There were no planning applications since the last meeting to draw to members' attention.

17. Correspondence.

- a. To consider any correspondence received since the last meeting:
 - (i) The deadline for the Winter Salt Bag offer was 23rd July. There were satisfactory levels of salt in two of the Council's public bins; the level of the third was unknown. There had been no reply yet to an enquiry about the scale of salt stock held jointly with Sutton with Shopland Parish Council at Mucking Hall Farm. The Clerk was instructed to register for the winter salt offer, which would comprise 42 x 25kg bags to be delivered to the Parish Hall. It would necessary to replace the laminated letters held in each of our 3 bins with the current Clerk's contact details.
 - (ii) The Clerk reminded members of their previous consideration of a request for the 'translocation' of a population of common lizards from a development site in Shoeburyness to the Wildlife Reserve. It was agreed that we would seek a significant donation towards the running costs of the Reserve; guidance from the ecologists on the impact of the lizards sharing the reserve with adders (protected species) and other local fauna; finally, any development and management plan would need to be drafted at the expense of the developers.

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

- a. At this point the Chair exercised her discretion to allow the meeting to exceed 2½ hours, pursuant to standing orders.
- b. The Chair reported that she had investigated the eligibility of the Council for the Transparency Fund but our precept was too large to qualify.
- c. The Chair had previously circulated the outcome of the latest EALC meeting by email to all members.
- d. Councillor Steptoe raised the matter of the ride-on mower. He felt that settled arrangements for his inspection of the broken parts with the engineers at the workshop of Ernest Doe had been changed without consultation. He asked that the parts be delivered to him at his garage.

19. Date of next meeting

- a. The next Full Council meeting would be held at 7pm on Tuesday 8th August 2017, to be followed by a meeting of the Council's Personnel Committee. The venue will be notified with the agenda but it might be possible to meet back in the Council Room at Barling Magna Parish Hall. This would afford members the opportunity to inspect the recent works, to satisfy themselves of the quality of the work and to identify any snags.
- b. Councillor Edmunds offered a precautionary apology for the August meeting.

20. 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.

21. Employment matter

- a. The Clerk reported on a matter relating to employment and insurance cover.

22. Monitoring Officer

- a. Under section 14(a) of the standing orders, the Clerk was required to report that the Deputy Monitoring Officer had advised him that she had received a complaint relating to one or more councillors under the Code of Conduct.
- b. The Clerk recommended that it would not be helpful for the matter to be discussed by the Council while the Monitoring Officer conducted her enquiries.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 10:25pm.

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