

BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL, held Thursday, 14th September 2017 in the Barling Magna Parish Hall, Barling Magna, Essex, commencing at 7.00pm.

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

Apologies: Councillor Ashdown
District Councillors Lucas-Gill and Williams.

Attending: I. King (Parish Clerk)
District Councillors Efde (to item 10 b); Hookway (to item 8 b); Hughes (from item 8 b to item 10 c); Steptoe (also Essex County Council, for the full meeting)

MINUTES

- 1. The Chair to declare the meeting open.**
 - a. The Chair declared the meeting open at 7pm.
- 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, the CIF Fund, the Local Highways Panel and any other concerning Essex County Council or Rochford District Council.
 - b. Councillor Clark declared a non-pecuniary interest in the matter of new seating for the Parish Hall.
- 4. To sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 8th August 2017.**
 - a. Proposed by Councillor Gardiner, seconded by Councillor Knight that the minutes be agreed. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.
- 5. The meeting will stand adjourned to permit Parishioners of Barling Magna to address the Council.**
 - a. Councillor Steptoe addressed the meeting on behalf of local resident Mrs Shirley Glover who was unable to be present. He reported that the August Bank holiday weekend event at the Parry had been successful, with 435 paying adults attending and 96 child wristbands sold. The total takings were in the region of £720. There had been a successful car display. Mrs Glover proposed

to send £600 of the takings to the parish council, to be used to enhance the facilities in the Barling play space adjacent to the old school. In response to a question, Councillor Steptoe said that he believed the balance was going to be donated to a local charity. Parking on the day worked out well, as had the food and toilet facilities at The Castle public house. For next year, Mrs Glover suggested that there might be an arena in the middle of the field, for example for falconry displays, sheepdogs herding ducks or similar. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the parish council's congratulations be sent to the organisers. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.

6. To receive a report from the District and County Councillors for the area on any matters of interest.

- a. District Councillor Hookway informed the council of recent training that he had attended on sustainable draining systems, offered by Essex County Council. The training materials that had been supplied in connection with this were available from him. District Councillor Efte had also attended that training session and informed the parish council that under current regulations developed sites were required to drainage levels at least equivalent to greenfield sites. District Councillor Hookway referred to the County Council's modelling for this, which he believed was impaired because it might not take account for example of tidal impact. Councillor Edmunds believed that modelling was an important tool when comparing developed and greenfield run-offs and this point was endorsed by Councillor Steptoe, who explained that greenfield sites were awarded a baseline level of run-off. Once building development had been completed, a further reading was taken and this had to be equal to or less than the baseline reading. He drew attention to the Toomey development at Cherry Orchard, which required the use of underground water attenuation tanks.
- b. District Councillor Steptoe reported that there would be a Flood Forum on 2 October and that this was a public meeting.
- c. District Councillor Steptoe reported on a meeting of the Rochford Investment Board, which he had chaired. The main current business was concerned with the development of South Street in Rochford.
- d. District Councillor Steptoe reported on the consultation regarding the coastal path development, which it was proposed would run from Gunners Park in Shoebury to Wallasea Island, omitting the restricted areas of Potton Island and Foulness. There would be public consultation meetings as follows:
 - (i) Rochford Parish Rooms in West Street, Rochford between 5 and 8 pm on 28 September 2017;
 - (ii) in Southend Central library between 10am and 1pm on 3 October 2017Councillors were eligible to register to receive updates on the development of the coastal path. It was intended that this section of the path will be completed by the spring of 2020, although recent action to allow tidal ingress at Wallasea Island would mean that the original proposal for the pathway in that area would need to be redrawn.

- e. District Councillor Steptoe reported on the Local Highways Panel which will meet on 21 September 2017. Within its schedule of works are the intended changes near Ye Olde Shoulderstick. There will be chevron signs on the corner of Barling Road and a cinder footway will be installed in the same area, at a cost to the Panel of £33,000.
- f. At a future meeting, District Councillor Steptoe will report on new tendering opportunities for the Green Gateway company operated by Rochford District Council.
- g. County Councillor Steptoe reported on changes to the Rangers service. Management of this service would devolve to the Local Highways Panel.

7. Financial Matters

- a. The clerk tabled a schedule of cheques for authorisation in the amount of £21,974.12p. It was noted that this high level of expenditure reflected further work completed on the parish hall. It was proposed by Councillor Gardiner, seconded by Councillor Steptoe that the schedule be approved. This was agreed unanimously.
- b. A satisfactory bank reconciliation to 4 September 2017 had been circulated with the agenda. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Cohen that the bank reconciliation be noted and the clerk was thanked for preparing it. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.
- c. Recommendations for spending at the Wildlife Reserve: there were no recommendations arising from the meeting of the Wildlife Reserve Committee held on 5 September 2017. Councillor Pearmain requested a report updating the council on the costs of running the Reserve. He believed that Mr Peter Shaw had previously prepared such figures. The clerk indicated that the next meeting would receive half-yearly figures for income and expenditure against budget for all aspects of the council's work. He would also contact Mr Shaw to follow up on Councillor Pearmain's request.

8. Future plans

- a. The clerk had prepared a report which had been circulated with the agenda. This proposed that the council consider agreeing priorities for the many competing options for budget, volunteers' energy and staff time. He suggested that success in external funding applications might be contingent upon convincing potential supporters that the council had a clear idea of where it wanted to go and how it was going to get there. Councillor Steptoe emphasised the importance of the Community Investment Fund (CIF) and upon collaboration with external partners, which might yield matched funding. He encouraged the parish council to submit applications to the CIF Fund throughout the year. Having had experience now of successfully completing a CIF fund application, Councillor Cohen offered to assist with the drafting of future applications and this was noted with thanks. Councillor Pearmain enquired whether the CIF Fund might underwrite the cost of a new kitchen for the parish hall and this would be one option, although it was noted that the trustees of the parish hall charity were thought to be well-disposed towards

assisting with this. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Clark that the council create a sub-committee of no more than three members plus the clerk to consider possible strategic priorities, to report back to the council in due course. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0. It was then agreed that this Futures Sub-committee would comprise Councillor Clark in the chair as well as Councillors Cohen and Pearmain. Alternative sources of grant-aid will be explored, including through RRAVS.

- b. The council received an expanded draft council calendar, which included external and internal deadlines and schedule of planned events. This will be reviewed periodically.
- c. The council considered a report on neighbourhood planning prepared by the clerk, deferred from the meeting on 13 July 2017. The purpose of the report was to ascertain whether members had appreciated the degree of commitment and energy that would be required successfully to complete the neighbourhood plan. Also, the requirement to indicate preferred areas for local development might not be popular with local residents. In response to a question, the clerk reported that he had contacted Great Wakering Parish Council in the spring and had been informed that they had resolved not to undertake a neighbourhood plan. It was agreed that the chair would contact her opposite number at Great Wakering to see whether there might be a change of heart. Again, at the council's request, he had raised the matter with the clerk of Sutton with Shopland Parish Council, which wished to proceed and were proposing inviting a speaker from the Rural Community Council for Essex to offer a briefing to councillors from several local parish councils. Several members expressed concern about the effects of possible development on infrastructure: even if this were not to take place within the parish there would still be consequent effects on provision of healthcare, leisure activities, schools and roads. District Councillor Efde enquired whether there were potential section 106 advantages to publishing a neighbourhood plan and Councillor Steptoe affirmed this. Councillor Pearmain was concerned that a neighbourhood planning process might run into the same difficulties as the former parish plan. If the parish council was minded to test the reaction of local residents to the prospect of a neighbourhood plan then it would need to devise a community engagement strategy as part of this process. It was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Clark that the council should publish a newsletter comprising two sides of A4, to be delivered to every home in the parish, which might include general news and a consultation on a neighbourhood plan. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0. Councillor Edmunds agreed to investigate whether this might be delivered at the same time as the Broomway Beagle (the parish church magazine). Councillor Bond thought that his son might be willing to volunteer to assist with the artwork and design; the clerk would compile the copy and arrange for production.
- d. The parish council discussed Christmas events, to allow adequate time for planning. Councillor Steptoe offered to contact Mrs Dobson to enquire whether she would be willing to arrange the Christmas hampers once again. The clerk confirmed that Mrs Dobson and her fellow volunteers were insured

when they were undertaking such work on behalf of the council. It was further agreed to go ahead once again with a Christmas lights competition and the clerk was asked to include this in the copy to go into the next Great Wakering News as well as our own newsletter. Regarding the Citizen of the year award, posters will be placed on the noticeboards and in the newsletter and once again in the GWCA News. Following a proposal by Councillor Pearmain, it was agreed to decorate the live oak tree in front of the parish hall, which was shortly to be trimmed, with decorative LED lights at Christmas.

10. Parish Hall

- a. The clerk reported on the current position of the refurbishment of the parish hall.
 - (i) The roof had now been completed and he had received a verbal report from the project manager that the building inspector was satisfied with the quality of the work and will shortly confirm this in writing.
 - (ii) The combined fire and intruder alarm had been installed but not yet activated. There would need to be a briefing session for all relevant parties on the operation of this system, as well as a sequence of people to be called in the event of an alarm.
 - (iii) After a long delay, the clerk understood that it was expected that the gas installation to the building would take place in the week following 26 September 2017. He was canvassing other local parish councils for details of their gas suppliers, with a view to establishing both the quality of service and its costs. Councillor Steptoe reported that the County Council ran a very competitive gas supply service. To avoid any unnecessary delay, it was proposed by Councillor Steptoe, seconded by Councillor Clark that the chair and clerk be given delegated authority to award an initial contract for the supply of gas, details to be reported to a subsequent council meeting. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.
 - (iv) A new five-lever mortice lock had been fitted to the front door of the parish hall. There were three keys: the clerk would hold one, the hall manager another and the clerk suggested that Councillor Edmunds be requested to hold the third key as his home was in the vicinity (for emergencies only).
 - (v) The contractors had removed the offcuts from the new hall flooring from their skip before it was cleared and Councillor Bond said that it would be necessary to acquire a new skip to dispose of the offcuts as well as the remaining detritus on the stage. Councillor Edmunds and the clerk would go through this to sort anything that needed to be retained: the assumption being that most of these items would be discarded.
 - (vi) The clerk reported that the flooring contractors had placed the stacking plastic chairs outside the building to allow them to gain access to the hall floor. These had subsequently been stolen and the clerk was instructed to notify the police, in case these were later dumped and the parish council found itself partially responsible. This meant that replacement seating was a priority. The hall needed lightweight,

stackable, comfortable and attractive seating. Councillor Steptoe reminded the council that Rochford District Council operated a procurement hub and Councillor Clark had previously notified the council of a contact for a local furniture supplier. A report would come to a future meeting, as the likely cost would require there to be a tendering process.

- (vii) The clerk would contact the supplier of our fire extinguishers and ensure that the correct number and type of extinguishers were installed in the building. Having consulted materials from the Health and Safety Executive and Essex Fire and Rescue, the clerk and the hall manager would conduct a fire risk analysis using the template supplied by one of these agencies and would present this to a future meeting of the Council.
 - (viii) The proposed quiz night on Saturday, 18 November was thought to be at some risk because it would not be possible to guarantee that heating and any other necessary safety works would be completed in time to reassure the organisers. For that reason it would revert to the Wakering Memorial Hall on this occasion.
 - (ix) The clerk reported that the main hall had a floor area of approximately 91 m². In terms of capacity, for a dance or other event where there were no chairs or tables, the standard formula was 0.5 m² per person (i.e. 182 persons capacity); in a conference setting around small tables the standard formula was 1 m² to 1.5 m² per person and, pending the fire risk analysis, it was agreed that for events such as the quiz night with guests sat around tables and allowing adequate circulation space and proper access to fire escapes, the hall would operate with a capacity of 100 people.
 - (x) Councillor Bond wondered whether a community garden in the grounds of the hall might be a way to encourage a sense of ownership and participation.
 - (xi) It was proposed by Councillor Bond, seconded by Councillor Gardiner that the chair and the clerk have delegated authority to arrange for the excavation and concreting of the access from the footpath to the front door of the parish hall, to ensure the safety of visitors. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.
- b. The chair adjourned the meeting at 9:08pm for a short break. At the resumption of the meeting at 9:12pm, the chair proposed that the duration of the meeting be extended and this was agreed.
- c. The meeting considered a report on the marketing of the parish hall for a sustainable future which had been prepared by the clerk. The council deferred a decision on whether it wished to attempt to recoup the full costs of operating the parish council cost-centre from lettings or whether it wished to absorb the capital loan repayments to the Public Works Loan Board from its main budget. There was a discussion about whether the hall might be suitable for letting to a childcare provider, in view of the recent government announcement of the expansion of such. It was agreed to seek an exploratory meeting with local

childcare providers who would be responsible for assessing the suitability of the premises to meet the stringent childcare regulations. Councillors remained enthusiastic about the idea of an event to open the hall. A local band was discussed. Councillor Edmunds suggested that it ought to be a condition of letting that any band's electronic equipment should hold a current PAT test certificate. It was proposed by Councillor Clark, seconded by Councillor Bond that the recommendations of the report be agreed, namely:

- (i) Hall hire rates would initially be
 - £13 per hour for general hire (parties, christenings, funerals etc)
 - £10 per hour for peak hire, i.e. during the day Monday to Friday
 - £12 per hour for regular hirers and clubs, including evenings
 - £13 per hour for the committee room
- (ii) the deposit to remain £50 for the time being;
- (iii) the draft booking conditions as set out in annex C of the report were approved;
- (iv) an initial marketing budget of £350, to be used on the items indicated in the list under 3.2 of the report, was agreed.

For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.

- d. The clerk reported that he had been informed by the insurance company that, from the time when the hall was declared out of use until August 2017, the hall had enjoyed insurance cover for demolition costs only. Upon this discovery he had reported to the chair and vice-chair and had instructed the company to institute full insurance cover once again. This had immediately resulted in a rebate to the council of £671.47p including insurance premium tax and this had now been received by bank transfer. The sum insured was £270,422.56 which the clerk suggested might be very low given the steep costs of clearing and rebuilding a damaged hall. It was agreed that the clerk would invite an insurance valuation of the hall from Wheeldon and Deacon and on the strength of this would seek a new insurance quotation to cover the full costs of restoring the hall in the event of fire, flood or other damage.
- e. The clerk had circulated two comparative quotes for the installation of broadband in community buildings. It was expected that the non-recurring setup costs of £350 would be met through a CIF grant, with ongoing monthly costs comprising £29 inclusive of support costs. Proposed by Councillor Cohen, seconded by Councillor Clark that the quotation from County Broadband Ltd be accepted. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.

11. Local signs and related items

- a. The Council received an email request by Mr Chris Williams for a new road sign at the junction of Church Road and Little Wakering Road (NB not related to the repair of the presently damaged road sign), advising of the presence of vulnerable wildlife. Councillor Steptoe suggested that this was an appropriate matter to refer to the Local Highways Panel, although Mr Williams should be advised that the low-budget and lengthy schedule of existing approved work might mean that it will take a couple of years to process. Councillor Steptoe indicated that he would be willing to support the proposal as a county

councillor and was sure that there would be members of the District Council that would also endorse the application. It was agreed that the clerk would complete the application form and submit this and write to Mr Williams to explain what would be happening.

- b. Councillor Steptoe drew the attention of the council to a damaged road sign on the corner of Barrow Hall Road and Little Waking Road and wondered whether this was something that fell into the Barling Magna parish or Great Waking. The clerk was asked to try and ascertain this.
- c. Councillor Steptoe had noticed that there was a derelict sign by Ye Olde Shoulderstick that needed to be moved round further towards Mucking Hall Road.
- d. Councillor Pearmain proposed that the Village Sign be illuminated using solar panels. Councillor Bond agreed to consult Steve Roberts, a local electrician, about the various options, including solar power for this.
- e. Councillor Steptoe had noticed the framework for the old village sign was on the stage of the parish hall and asked that options for redeploying this should be on the agenda for a future council meeting.

12. Public Space Protection Orders

- a. The council had been invited by Rochford District Council to consider the intention to introduce Public Space Protection Orders in November 2017. The deadline for submissions was Friday, 15th September 2017. The clerk was requested to communicate the following concerns about the draft document:
 - Page 2, point 2: "You must keep your dog on a lead at all times in a specified area, for example, adjacent to roads." The Parish Council believe this is rather all-embracing and would ask if it might be clarified.
 - Page 3, point 3, bullet point 3: "when in use for playing sports." Does this mean when players are actually on the pitch or when specific areas have been prepared for sports use?
 - Page 2. point 6: "...or drug that is not alcohol or tobacco..." The Parish Council believes that this is too ambiguous. Grammatically it does not necessarily follow the previous reference to psychoactive drugs and it is all-embracing. Common-sense suggests that prescription medication, for example, would not fall into this category but the wording needs to be clarified so that the meaning is clear.
 - Page 5, point 6: Is a bicycle a mechanically propelled vehicle within the meaning of this clause? Should it be under every circumstance?
 - Page 7, point 11: "A person who habitually has dog in his possession...." is missing an indefinite article. Although a minor grammatical point, the Parish Council feels that the authority and clarity of documents such as this rests in part on their construction and grammar. There may be other such points that careful proof-reading will identify.
- b. The chair requested that the subject of bins should be on a future council agenda.

13. Asset Register

- a. A commitment had been given to the internal auditor that the asset register would be checked and that a photographic record of every significant item would be added by 30 September 2017. The major works to the parish hall had created some disruption to this process but the clerk was pleased to report that all the photographs had been taken. They now simply needed to be paired with the correct items in the list. One item of concern was that the value of the assets were not depreciated (in common with other parish councils) and that in order to have a fair view of what it would cost to replace a broken or stolen asset some work would need to be done on the true replacement costs. This would be time-consuming.

14. Clerk's Report.

- a. The Council noted the circulated report from the clerk on progress with work in hand.
- b. The clerk would be away in the week commencing 23rd of September 2017. He would pass across his keys and the cheque book to the chair during his absence.
- c. It was highly probable that the winter salt might be delivered during that week. The suppliers had been told to telephone first and the clerk would forward any calls received. He expressed gratitude to Councillor Edmunds and volunteers who had helped clear the storage containers at the rear of the parish hall, which might be now used for storage of salt. Councillor Knight enquired whether the salt will be stored as previously at Mucking Hall Farm? The clerk reminded the council that the owner of the farm had requested that the parish council remove the remaining stock of viable salt and the spoilt salt that was already there; this work will be scheduled at some point in the future.

15. Planning Matters.

- a. Council considered planning application 17/00734/FUL: a proposal to site a metal shipping container for the storage of maintenance equipment on land adjacent to the reservoir north of Barrow Hall Farm, on Barrow Hall Road in Little Wakering. The Parish Council expressed concern about this proposal. Upon examination of the sketch map, siting the container as indicated would obstruct Footpath No 22 which runs from Barrow Hall Road to Barling Road. The clerk was instructed to write to the planning authority and request that any decision should ensure continuing unrestricted access for local residents along the length of Footpath 22.

16. Correspondence.

- a. The clerk tabled several pieces of correspondence for members to consider at their leisure.
- b. He formally reported receipt of a letter by email from Mr Barry Ashdown relating to fencing at the wildlife reserve. The matter had originally been on the agenda of the Wildlife Reserve Committee on 5 September 2017. That committee had taken the decision to refer it to full council. He had consulted

the Essex Association of Local Councils and their recommendation was that the council should prepare a complaints procedure so that, when letters like this were received, they would be considered through a separate process. The clerk was invited to draft a procedure based on the EALC template. The second recommendation from the Association was that the council should be advised to minute receipt of the letter and simply note its contents. This was agreed unanimously.

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

- a. The chair reminded members of the council of standing order 21 under which it was the council's policy that all communications with external bodies should go through the clerk.
- b. Councillor Steptoe had received some complaints about footpaths and felt that the parish council ought to display a map of the parish including footpaths on display in the parish hall, for reference. He asked that the matter of footpaths should be on a future council agenda.

18. Date of next meeting

- a. The next full Council meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 12th October 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. Personnel Committee matters

- a. Councillor Steptoe proposed and Councillor Gardiner seconded that the recommendations from the Personnel Committee held on 8 August 2017 be agreed. For 8, against 0, abstentions 0.
- b. Councillor Edmunds was concerned that he had not received notification of either Personnel Committee meetings in 2017, even though he was a member of that committee. The clerk was invited to investigate the matter and report back.

21. Decisions on outstanding contractual matters

- a. Council noted a decision reached by the chair and clerk under delegated authority to commission a combined Intruder and Fire Alarm system at the Parish Hall, which fell within the amount permitted.
- b. The clerk reported that he was still gathering quotes for work on the memorial Live Oak at the Parish Hall.
- c. The clerk tabled the latest in quotes received for the repair of the bus shelter at Mucking Hall Road. This suggested that the concrete base is fractured and needed to be replaced but would largely reposition the existing timber structure with minor repairs where appropriate. As a starter for discussion, he

tabled an offer received from a bus shelter manufacturer which was offering transparent shelters with structural uprights coated in epoxy resin and which would require very little maintenance over the years. Although this did not have the same rural appeal as the wooden shelter erected by Great Waking Parish Council near the top of Rebels Lane, Councillor Gardiner suggested that this cost in the region of £8,000. The supply and installation of a more modern structure might be achieved for around £2,000 plus VAT and the costs of making good the concrete plinth. It was agreed that the matter would be brought forward at the next meeting. To offer a further option, Councillor Steptoe invited the clerk to consider the bus shelter outside The Hawk public house in Battlesbridge.

The chair declared the meeting closed at 10:21 PM.

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