### BARLING MAGNA PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** held Thursday, 11 March 2021, through online conferencing under s78 of The Coronavirus Act 2020.

Present: Councillors Ashdown, Cohen (Chair), Edmunds, Gardiner, Glover, McKillop and Steptoe (Vice Chair)

Attending: County and District Councillor Steptoe, District Councillor Lucas-Gill and M Power (Parish Clerk)

Apologies: Cllr Bright and District Councillors Efde, McPherson and Williams.

**MINUTES**

1. **The Chairman to declare the meeting open.**

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.05 pm.

1. **To receive apologies for absence.**

Apologies were noted, as recorded above.

1. **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.**

Councillor Steptoe declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Barling School by virtue of sitting on the Essex County Council planning committee; in this respect he reserved the right to change his mind when the matter was considered by the County Council. Cllr Steptoe declared a non-pecuniary interest in any issues around flooding by virtue of the fact that a Barling Creek tributary runs through the bottom of his garden. In any planning matter, he reserved the right to change his mind when the matter was considered by the District Council.

1. **To approve the minutes of the Council meeting 11 February 2021**It was proposed by Cllr Steptoe, seconded by Cllr Ashdown that the minutes of the meeting held 11 February 2021 be approved, subject to the following amendments:  
     
   (i) That it be noted that Cllr Edmunds had given his apologies.  
   (ii) The penultimate work in paragraph 21.34 c. should be ‘his’ and not ‘this’.
2. **The meeting will stand adjourned to permit Parishioners of Barling Magna to address the Council**No parishioners attended the meeting on this occasion.
3. **Financial matters**
4. The bank reconciliation to 28 February 2021 had been circulated for approval. This was proposed by Cllr Steptoe, seconded by Cllr Ashdown and approved unanimously.
5. The following table of payments had been circulated to members. It was proposed by Cllr Steptoe, seconded by Cllr Ashdown, and carried unanimously that the schedule be approved. It was noted that a payment of £87.35 to the HMRC in respect of salary deduction arrears was retrospective and had been authorised by the Clerk/RFO and the Chair for payment in between meetings to avoid possible penalties.

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|  | **Payee** | **Description** | **£** |
| Direct Debit | E.on | Street lighting power | 290.03 |
| Direct Debit | E.on | Parish Hall electricity | 45.36 |
| Direct Debit | E.on | Parish Hall gas | 103.96 |
| Direct Debit | Anglian Water | Parish hall water | 32.93 |
| Direct Debit | Anglian Water | Wildlife Reserve water | 52.59 |
| Direct Debit | British Telecom | Combined broadband and mobile | 55.42 |
| BACS | G Gates | Salary | 424.62 |
| BACS | M Power | Salary | 1,019.23 |
| BACS | M Power | Clerk's ECC pension | 329.04 |
| BACS | M Power | Expenses 12.2 to 11.3.21 | 19.20 |
| BACS | HMRC | Salary deduction arrears | 87.35 |
| BACS | HMRC | Quarterly salary deductions | 100.28 |
| BACS | Information Commissioners office | Data protection fee renewal | 40.00 |
| BACS | Brunel Computer Services Ltd | Office 365 premium | 135.36 |
| BACS | EALC | Instagram for Councils course for Clerk | 84.00 |
| BACS | EALC | Understanding the Annual meeting course for Clerk | 84.00 |
| BACS | Blackwater Sign and Print Solutions | Signs for WLR and parish hall | 52.80 |
| Debit card | Zoom | 1 month subscription due 2.1.21 | 14.39 |
|  |  | **Total payments** | **£2,970.56** |

1. The Parish Council had received a further Rochford District Council Local Restrictions Support Grant payment of £2,096 to cover the period from 16 February to 31 March 2021.
2. **Wildlife Reserve Committee – to receive recommendations from the Committee held 8 March 2021 and take any decisions**

The Chair of the Committee, Cllr McKillop, reported that 400 trees were scheduled to be delivered in mid-April to the Reserve from the Woodland Trust. The volunteers would be on site to plant the trees when they arrived.

A request was made for equipment, including two additional spades, pruning secateurs and material for boarding the smaller trailer, at a cost of approximately £118. There had been a further request for a replacement gas regulator and hose for the propane hob in the kitchen, at a cost of approximately £20. These payments were proposed for approval by Cllr Steptoe, seconded by Cllr Gardiner and agreed unanimously.

1. **Governance matters**
   1. Preparation for audit of 2020-21 accounts. The clerk reported that she had been in contact with the internal auditor in respect of the documentation required for the audit; she had agreed to deliver the documentation to him on 19 April. The Council’s Financial Regulations and Standing Orders would be on the agenda for April’s Council meeting for review and adoption.
   2. Annual review of asset register for 2020-21. Proposed by Cllr Cohen, seconded by Cllr McKillop and agreed unanimously that the Asset Register 2020/21 be approved.
   3. Risk assessment 2020-21. This had been circulated to Members; however, some Councillors had been unable to open the document; the Clerk was asked to resend the document in a different format, for consideration at the April meeting of the Council.
2. **Events and Projects**
   1. **Beautiful Barling Calendar 2021.** Sales of the 2021 calendar currently stood at £386. It had been agreed at the last meeting of Council to reduce the price of the remaining stock to £2; Cllr Bright reported that he had sold £180 worth of calendars at this price. As a result of these sales, the costs of calendar production had been covered. The Council passed its thanks to Cllr Bright. The Council could consider dropping the price of next year’s calendar in order to stimulate sales. The Clerk would be discussing design options with the designer shortly.
   2. **Defibrillator for parish hall.** The clerk confirmed that the defibrillator and cabinet had now been installed at the hall. Publicity photos would be taken for Essex County Council, which had funded the project via Cllr Steptoe’s County Councillor locality fund. Further publicity for local newspaper media and the EALC could be considered and the doctors’ surgery, school and residential care homes in the parish would be advised that the defibrillator was in situ. A letter of thanks would be sent to Tony Young, the electrician who had installed the unit free of charge. The device would be registered with the ambulance service, and the online training link for the use of the defibrillator would be posted on the Council’s website and social media pages. The Hall Manager would be asked to undertake testing of the equipment, which ideally should be done every two weeks.
3. **Planning matters**

**Planning consultation Application No: CC/ROC/20/21 - Barling Magna Community Primary School, Little Wakering Road, Barling Magna.**

Proposal: The demolition of an existing outbuilding. The construction of a single storey building to provide 1no. classroom, specialist area for food prep/science/tech, SEN therapy room, enlarged staff room, group room and ancillary accommodation to allow the school to expand to a 1FE Primary School (210 pupils). The construction of a small kitchen extension. The relocation of existing access gates. The provision of 7no. additional car parking spaces and cycle and scooter provision.

The Parish Council wished to make a representation to the planning authority, as follows: when bringing and collecting children from the school many parents park inconsiderately, across driveways, on verges, on kerbs and on a dangerous bend. School delivery and collection times are likely to be made worse following the completion of the nearby housing developments at Barrow Hall Road. Although a travel plan was in place, in the main, travel to the school involves narrow country roads with no pavements, dangerous blind bends and constant traffic, thus making walking and cycling hazardous and out of the question for most parents. An increase in numbers attending the school would increase the volume of traffic and thereby increase the risk of traffic chaos and accidents. The Parish Council wished to reserve the right to speak at the planning committee to raise its concerns and to be given opportunity for further representation as it arises. Councillors appreciated that the school is popular and places are already in high demand but urged that a balance between the needs of the school, the local residents and safety traffic issues be considered.

1. **Emergency Plan**
2. It was proposed by Cllr Steptoe, seconded by Cllr Ashdown and agreed unanimously that a working group be formed to consider drafting an Emergency Plan for the Council. The group would comprise Cllrs Ashdown, Bright, Cohen, Edmunds, Glover and McKillop. Residents with local knowledge and skills in this area could also be invited to join the group. Cllr Steptoe would be invited in an advisory capacity.
3. **Clerk’s report**

During the last month the Clerk had attended EALC training courses on Annual Meetings, Financial Regulations and Year-end accounts, as well as an Essex Pension Fund workshop on new reporting regulations. She had booked to attend a course on the use of Instagram by Parish Councils in April.

Subject to ongoing review of Government guidelines, it was planned that the parish hall would be available for hire for the children’s kung fu classes; from 17 April, ballroom dancing classes would resume.

**Correspondence**

A complaint had been made by a resident to James Duddridge MP that the Wildlife Reserve was operating in a way that did not comply with Covid restrictions. Advice had been sought from the Environmental Health Team Leader at Rochford District Council, who, following inspection of the site, had confirmed that the current controls both in the car park and the reserve itself were sufficient to comply with current legislation. There was no need to close off any parking bays or introduce additional measures in the car park or to rope off any benches on site. A response had been sent to the resident and to Mr Duddridge.

A letter had been received from the Church of England regarding the future plans for St Mary the Virgin in Little Wakering and inviting the parish council to have some specific conversations around its future use. A remote meeting would be arranged for the week commencing 22 March.

1. **Street Lighting**
   1. There were no reports from Councillors of faulty streetlights.
   2. The Clerk was in conversation with D W Windsor to supply the LED light and anti-glare shield to replace the light by the junction with Carpenters Close. The light would be set to dim to 60% between the hours of 12 pm and 5 am.
2. **To receive a report from County and District Councillors for the area on any matter of interest**
   1. Cllr Lucas-Gill advised that he would be stepping down from his role of District Councillor at the forthcoming elections in May. Cllr Steptoe offered his personal thanks for the work Cllr Lucas-Gill had done in serving the community for many years; the Parish Council echoed this and added that he would be very much missed.
   2. Cllr Steptoe reported that: (a) the coastal path running through the parish by the sea wall would be open between Wallasea and Southend later in the year (b) the Rochford District was the second highest in Essex in the roll out of the Covid19 vaccination programme, with Essex one of the top counties in the country for the roll out. (c) the Council’s Asset Review programme had seen a webinar on the development at the Freight House, Rochford, which was available on the Rochford District Council YouTube channel; there would be a webinar on the development of the Mill Arts & Events Centre and other sites in Rayleigh. (d) a refuse lorry in Hockley had had to shed its load, which had started to smoulder due to the crushing of a lithium battery; nobody had been hurt. (e) gas works scheduled for Sutton Road were likely not to happen within the next three years. Road surfacing work in this area would be carried out over the next month, with the works taking place overnight due to the volume of traffic. (f) There was a possibility that the ECC Cabinet Member locality fund would again be available in the forthcoming municipal year. (g) works at the junction of Kimberley Road and Little Wakering Road were planned for 17 March. (h) Works had been undertaken to repair the impeller blades at the pumping station for Barling Creek stream. The sewer that runs along the Little Wakering Road section had not been relined. In respect of damage that needed to be repaired on the bank of the stream, riparian landowners had received a letter from ECC reminding them of their responsibilities. In periods of sustained rain and with a high spring tide, there is fluvial flooding, and the water level starts to build up on the landward side. There had been discussion by ECC officers on how leaky dams could be used to slow down water coming from the ditch. Streams from all parts of the village flow into the creek. Blocked gullies can be reported on the Essex Highways website.   
        
      In response to a question, Cllr Steptoe advised that the location of a very large pothole in Mucking Hall Road, which had been reported, should be sent to him to follow up; however, as this was not on a major route, it was unlikely to be regarded as a priority.
   3. Cllr McPherson asked that her thanks to the parish council for their continued management of the wildlife reserve, and that they had been able to keep it open throughout the period of lockdown, be minuted; it had been an oasis that had been enjoyed by many and been a real boost to visitors’ mental health; she asked that her thanks also be passed onto the volunteers. She commended the Parish Council for the additions to the community of the flagpole and the defibrillator at the parish hall. She reiterated her concern with the on-going flood issues experienced in the brook from Little Wakering Road to Kimberley Road and the associated pumping station problems, which had been raised by residents as far back as 2014. In January she had taken the issue to the RDC Portfolio Holder for Environment, as, although this does not come under the statutory role of RDC, it could be raised at the flood forum that had been set up by RDC to bring agencies together to hold them to task on resolving flooding issues. The Flood Forum had met that week (a recording of the meeting was available on YouTube via a link on the District Council website), and all relevant agencies, with the exception of Essex County Highways, had attended. The District’s county councillors had been asked to ensure ECH attend future meetings. It was a positive step to see the relevant agencies finally working together to try to solve flooding issues.
3. **At the Chair’s discretion to exchange information and items for future meetings:**

It was agreed that the next Full Council meeting would be held on Thursday 8 April 2021; agenda items for this meeting to include the fence at the rear of the hall and the siting of a baby changing unit for the hall.

1. **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.

1. **Update on progress of private and confidential matters**

* There had been a complaint from a member of the public in respect of the operation of the Wildlife reserve, which would be dealt with as appropriate.
* The issue of overflowing bins at the Reserve could indicate the need for further bins. The possibility of asking local companies to sponsor bins at the Reserve could be considered.
* Discussions with Sanctuary Housing, regarding possible benefits for the Parish arising from their liabilities relating to the Barrow Hall Road development are ongoing.

1. **To declare the meeting closed**

Councillor Cohen declared the meeting closed at 9 pm, thanking Members for their attendance.

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