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BARKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes** of the meeting of the Barkham Parish Council held on 10th October 2023 in the Studio Hall, Arborfield Green Community Centre at 7.30pm.

**Present**: Mrs Stubbs (in the Chair), Mr Heyliger, Mr Dexter, Mr Wrobel, Mr Barker, Mr Williams, Cllr Pittock (Ward Councillor) and the Clerk.

**23/113 To receive and accept any apologies for absence** Local Government Act 1972 Sch12

None

**23/114 To receive any declarations of interest on items on the agenda** (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1464)

None

**23/115 Minutes of the Council Meeting** LGA 1972 Sch 12 para 41(1) **–**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12th September 2023 were approved and signed as a true record. The minutes were signed by Mrs Stubbs.

**23/116 Public Participation (allotted time 15 minutes)** Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960 s.1 extended by the LG Act 1972 s.100

Adjournment of the Meeting will be called if any members of the public wish to address the Council on any matters or concerns relating to Barkham.

A member of the BVRA attended for the discussion on the proposal to merge the 2 magazines

1 resident attended to express and interest in joining the council. The resident gave some background about himself to the Council and why he wished to join the Council. Co-option will take place at the next meeting if the resident still wishes to join.

**23/117 Election of Vice Chairman** Local Government Act 1972 S15(6)

Mr Heyliger Proposed Mr Barker to be Vice Chairman. Mr Barker indicated he was happy with the proposal. Mr Dexter Seconded the proposal. Vote: All agreed. Mr Barker was duly elected as Vice Chairman of the Parish Council.

**23/118 Planning**:

1. **Planning Applications –** Council discussed and agreed any comments or objections on planning applications received before 10th October 2023. As follows:

**232244** -73 Bearwood Road, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4SX

**Householder application for the proposed wall mounted installation of an Air Source Heat Pump.**

Barkham Parish Council had no comments on this application.

**232249 -** Beechwood, Highlands Avenue, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4SP

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**Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey side and rear extension, two storey side and rear extension. Following demolition of existing chimney and garage. Changes to fenestration and new porch.**

Barkham Parish Council had no comments on this application.

**232144** - Doles Farm, Doles Lane, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4EA

**Full application for the proposed installation of 14 no. ground based solar PV panels following demolition of 2 no. existing outbuildings.**

Barkham Parish Council objects to this application on the grounds of the technical issue concerns raised by a neighbour.

If the dispute with the neighbour is resolved, Barkham Parish Council will withdraw their objection

**231992 -** Sparks Farm, Barkham Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG41 4TL

**Application for Listed Building Consent for the proposed replacement of 9no. windows and repair of 3no.(total 12) Windows to match existing.**

Barkham Parish Council had no comments on this application.

**230152** -Arborfield Garrison, & Adjoining Land, Arborfield, Reading, RG2 9NW

**Application for approval of Reserved Matters for 135 dwellings, pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 (dated 02/04/2015) – Parcel O2. Re-consultation on revised plans and supporting information. Amendments to site layout, housing mix and unit type plans & elevations. Enlargement of red line boundary to facilitate addition of secondary access adj. to 1a Biggs Lane and pedestrian link to Hazebrouck SANG. Amendments to landscaping, levels and drainage schemes.**

Barkham Parish Council had no comments on this application.

**230791** -31 Barkham Ride, Wokingham, RG40 4EX

**Outline application for the proposed erection of 26 no. dwellings following demolition of the existing dwelling and garage. (All matters reserved except for access.)**

Barkham Parish Council still object to this application. There has not been significant changes to address the points raised in the comments submitted by the Parish Council on 2nd May 2023, and those objections still stand.

1. **Approved and Refused Applications**

**231842 -** 17 Lance Way, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG2 9YY

**Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey rear extension following the demolition of existing conservatory.**

This application has been approved by WBC

**231791** -5 Aggisters Lane, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4DW

**Householder application for the proposed conversion of garage to habitable accommodation, part single storey side extension, part single part two storey rear extension**.

This application has been approved by WBC

**231990** - Olde Leathern Bottel, 221 Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 4BY

**Full application for the proposed creation of a site access to serve the existing Public House and the Equestrian centre along with clearance of the former access.**

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This application has been refused by WBC

1. **Any Other Planning Business**

**A329 Reading Road (Wokingham town) cycle and pedestrian improvements Consultation**

Council decided that it did not wish to submit a collective response, as it is felt more individual responses are required. Councillors will respond individually, should they wish to

**Constitution Review Consultation**

Council agreed it would like to submit a response to the consultation, Councillors to draft their comments to submit to the Clerk for collation and submission to WBC.

**WBC Budget Engagement survey**

Council decided not to submit a collective response to the survey, as it is felt more individual responses are required. Councillors will respond individually, should they wish to.

**Footpath Consultation**

There is a consultation to change Footpaths BA10 and FP7 to bridleways. The Parish Council has not been made aware of these consultations by WBC, it has been informed by the Ramblers Association. BPC do not feel it is a good idea to convert these footpaths to bridleways, as they are used by lots of dog walkers and dogs and horses do not mix well, especially on BA10 which is quite narrow. Kissing gates have also been recently installed along these paths, and these would need to be removed if converted to a bridleway, which means the money spent would have been wasted. Furthermore the exits at each end of FP7 leads onto busy roads with poor sight lines making it unsafe for horses to cross the road.

The Council asked why it had been missed off the consultee list and that this was just once such incident in recent times. In addition to re-designating PROWs as bridleways other examples include: i) Improving Barkham Road for walkers and cyclists, ii) Review of roads around Edneys Hill, iii) Proposed closure of the underpass in the vicinity of Biggs Road round-about and iv) The closure of School Road and lack of clarity on the status of the ETRO.

Mr Pittock said he will look into this as Council should be consulted on anything within the parish. The Clerk will contact WBC to Object to the changes.

**3/119 Ward Councillor Report –** Council received a report from Cllr Ian Pittock.

The following report was given by Cllr Pittock at the meeting:

**Bohunt 6th Form** – More funds from both sides have been agreed. It will be a new build on the existing foundations, which should be completed by 2025/2026. The 1st year of 6th form can open in 2024, using existing classrooms. The new build will also cater for extra GCSE pupils.

**Community Centre at Arborfield Green** – The Community Centre will go ahead as planned. Furthe information is required by the proposed operator for the site to be able to build a business case. There is not enough contact at present which is causing frustrations.

**District Centre** – The reserved matters application is going before the Planning Committee tomorrow (11th October). Residents want it delivered.

Mr Stubbs informed Cllr Pittock that she would be attending to speak on the application at the Planning Committee meeting. Mrs Stubbs will be speaking in support of the district centre going ahead, but with a Page

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few considerations. Mr Williams will send Mrs Stubbs some items relating to the residents of Arborfield Greens feelings.

**Management Companies** – The issue of management companies is being discussed, locally and nationally. Not much can be done without a change in law, and it is unlikely to change under the conservative Government. 2 issues that are regularly raised are:

1. Residents are double paying for roads, pavements, lights and sports areas
2. It is marketed at £30 per month, but is more like £300 per month.

**Solar Farm** – Works on the site are due to start soon, and should be ready to connect to the grid by 2026/2027. There were 10 projects chosen across the country, as a priority to begin, one of which was the Barkham Solar Farm.

Planting of trees and vegetation will commence this autumn.

The Send Schools will also be at Rooks Nest Farm.

Construction Traffic has been considered and the size of vehicles used to bring in components will be limited.

Council informed Cllr. Pittock that one of the conditions of the solar farm planning application was that a liaison group, including the parish council and residents, be formed before work began. As work is imminent, Cllr Pittock was asked the expedite this arrangement.

**Local Plan Update** – A decision is due imminently on what sites have been recommended for inclusion in the plan. The draft plan is due to be published in November, but there may be a small delay, if it is thought that Whitehall will make an announcement regarding over-provision of house building. I have not yet decided how I will vote on the plan. Council suggested his vote should represent the views of the parish/ward.

**Bins** – The proposed reduction of bins in the borough has been to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and their recommendation is to reject the proposal, and for it not to proceed further.

**Liaison Group with Crest** – The Task and Finish Group to be formed, who will put a member in the group, along with representatives from Crest, Parish Councils and residents. It needs to be an ongoing group, with proper discussions, not just a talk shop, but will Crest play? There has just not been enough contact with Crest. Council has on numerous occasions tried to engage with Crest – both directly and as part of wider body – and have found this to be of little use. Cllr. Pittock was asked to pass this message to those organising this new initiative.

**Instalcom Appeal** – The appeal has been dismissed.

**St Crispins Sports Centre** – There is a consultation over St Crispins future, and the removal of the sports centre for public use. This means there will be no squash courts in the borough. I have raised that there are 3 courst at Arborfield Green Leisure Centre, that have been repurposed. They should be re-instated. There should also be access to the amenities by all residents outside of school hours, but this does not seem to be happening.

**23/120 Delegated Authority Report September 2023**

The below decisions were made under delegated authority between September 2023 and October.

**Finance**

**Signing of the Deeds for the purchase of The Coombes**

After a query was raised by the solicitors for the executing of the transfer deed, it was noticed that the authority given for signing by Council was not correct, as they state:

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**EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS**

Subject to standing order 23(a), any two councillors may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.

This means that the authority for The Chairman of the Council to sign the Deeds was not enough, and 2 Councillors are to sign the deeds, with The Proper Officer (the Clerk) to be witness to the signing.

Due to this, an agreement under delegated authority was required to change the authorisation for the signing of the deeds to reflect the above information.

Council was asked to agree to the following:

Council agrees to the Chairman of the Council, Mrs Stubbs and Mr Dexter signing the sales contract when the exchange and completion is ready to occur. Councillors will review the documents and agree via email that the council agrees with the contract before the Mrs Stubbs and Mr Dexter can sign the sales/purchase contract. The Clerk, who is the Proper Officer of the Council will witness the signing of the contract.

**This was approved by majority of the full council.**

**Transfer of Money to Solicitors for paying for the purchase of The Coombes**

The Clerk contacted Unity Trust Bank to check if there were any caps on transfer paymnents via BACS. Due to banking restrictions, to pay via BACS, there is a limit to transfers of £150,000.00 per beneficiary per day, this means that the Clerk would need to raise 3 separate transactions on consecutive days. The bank gave an alternative way to make the full payment in 1 transaction and that is via CHAPS, but this incurs a cost.

The Clerk informed the Council of the following:

If the council pays via BACS, the Clerk will need to start sending the payments this week (a total of 3 payments via BACS), so they are cleared in Geldards account ready for the transfer to the seller next week (Geldards need the funds cleared in their accounts by next Wednesday).  This will involve the Clerk raising a payment every day, and 2 authorised signatories, logging on to authorise the payments each day.

If the council pays via CHAPS, it can pay the full amount in one go, but will incur a charge of £28.  For this option all the Clerk needs to do is type the letter (on headed paper) with the details needed, and get it signed by 2 authorised signatories.

Please can you respond with which option you feel is the better option for making the payments:

**Option 1 –** 3 x BACS payments made consecutively over 3 days, raised by the Clerk and authorised by 2 authorised signatories each day.

**Option 2 –** CHAPS payment to be made at a charge of £28.00.  Letter to be written by the Clerk, and signed by 2 authorised signatories, in line with the bank mandate.

**Council agreed on option 2**

**This was approved by majority of the full council.**

**23/121 Clerks Report -** Council received a report from the Clerk

**Change over to BT Phoneline and Broadband**

There have been some issues with the transfer to BT, which resulted in the order being cancelled. The order has been raised again, and the Clerk is awaiting a date for the switch over from Plusnet to BT to occur.

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**Communications**

The Clerk has met with Mr Williams to discuss how the communications from the Council to Residents can be improved. Mr Williams has some links to resources, which can be of benefit to the Council and the Clerk is looking into the options and will report to Council once this has been completed.

**Bus Shelter at Barkham Road / Barkham Ride roundabout**

The Clerk has responded to Barkham Manor Management Committee regarding their stipulations before full permission can be given. The Clerk is awaiting their final decision.

**Enforcement Issues**

Land by Coppid Hill House – This has reappeared on the enforcement register at WBC.

The Coombes – No update received

**Items ongoing**

**School Road / Langley Common Road Junction**

The Road safety group continue to push for the reduction in the limit on this road. The junction of School Road is yet to be squared off with painted lines.

Mr Heyliger informed that the data logger has been up and counting tubes have been across the road for the last couple of weeks. The data collected needs to be reviewed. There was over 5000 vehiclemovements a day, a **25%** increase since the closure of School Road and the average speed remains at around 34/35 mph.

Question to Cllr Pittock - We have still not received any feedback on the School Road ETRO. Is it correct that there will be another consultation – Response – I believe there is to be a consultation on the scheme next year. Cllr Pittock will find out about the report on the ETRO.

**Item Ongoing**

**Instalcom Appeal**

The decision from the Inspectorate has been received, and the enforcement notice has been upheld. Instalcom have 6 months from the date of the decision notice to comply with the enforcement items.

**Item closed**

**Meeting with WBC Executive Officers**

No further update since the last meeting.

Mr Dexter raised that the next meeting with WBC is due in November and this needs to be arranged. It should include a review of what we have achieved, so we can report back to the CEO of Wokingham.

**Item ongoing**

**Insight Strategy and Inclusion meeting with WBC**

No further update at this time.

**Item ongoing**

**District and Community Centres**

The Council await the decision on the planning application, it is due before thw WBC planning committee on Wednesday 11th October.

**Item ongoing**

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**Solar Farm**

WBC have issued a press release regarding the Solar Farm. Following verbal confirmation from Scottish & Southern Electrical Networks (SSEN) and the National Grid that the scheme will be able to connect to the power network earlier than previously advised. A date for the project to begin has not yet been issued and the council await further news.

**Item ongoing**

**California Country Park Improvement Scheme**

No further update since the last meeting.

**Item ongoing**

**BVRA/BPC Survey**

The CIL advisory committee need to meet to discuss the CIL projects suggested by the residents to see if they are feasible to take forward.

**Item ongoing**

**Treatment of the Bracken at The Junipers**

The bracken was sprayed over Summer and the contractors are scheduled to carry out a cut and collect of the bracken around the trees in November. This is to ensure that the spraying is effective as leaving the area uncut will allow the chemical time to get down into the rhizome and take effect.

From November the bracken around the new trees will be cut and collected and then a re-spray will be carried out at the same time next year (July 2024).

**Item ongoing**

**Purchase of Litter Bins**

This project is ongoing.

**Item ongoing**

**Closure of Langley Common Road Underpass**

No further update since the last meeting.

**Item ongoing**

**Closed Items:**

**23/122 Council Communications**

* 1. **Proposal to merge Village Info and BVRA Magazine**

Council considered and agreed to merging the Village Info and BVRA magazine into 1 publication for a trial period of 2 issues, starting with the April issue. A decision will be made prior to the June issue as to whether the merger will continue so that the BVRA can inform its readers of any changes. This needs to be agreed by the BVRA Committee before the merger can proceed.

9.35pm – Vote to Continue – All agreed

As the Council Agreed to the merger of the 2 magazines, Council considered and agreed to the following:

1. The Name of the new magazine (to be agreed with BVRA) should be Barkham Beacon

The following have been deferred to a later meeting during the trial.

1. A joint Editorial Policy is to be drafted for approval
2. Terms of Agreement to be drafted for approval

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1. Advertising costs to be reviewed
   1. **Other Communications**

Council considered other ways to communicate items of relevance to the residents using digital media.

The council uses it’s website as a digital source, however, use of Social Media is increasing, and Council considered and agreed to the use of social media platforms to increase the number of residents that it can communicate to digitally. Council agreed to allow the Clerk to look at ways this can be done effectively. The Clerk will work with Mr Williams to look into this.

**23/123 CCTV Cameras for Fly Tipping –** CIL Spend Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended)

Council considered and agreed in principle for the project to instal cameras at fly-tip hot spots in the parish using CIL monies.

Mr Wrobel is to seek costs from WBC/Vodaphone for surveys of the areas identified, to be put to council for agreement under delegated authority, so that the scale of the scheme can be agreed at a later meeting. The Council will make a decision on the project, once the surveys on the sites have been conducted.

**23/124 Finance**

1. **Accounts** – Proposal to agree accounts and payments for September to October 2023 LGA 1972 s150 (5)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Payments for September to October 2023 authorised at the Council meeting on 10th October 2023 | | | |
| S/O | Staff Wages | £1085.07 | October 2023 salary – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | Nest | £105.44 | Pension Contribution Employer & Employee – October 2023 – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | Plusnet | £32.14 | Internet and phone charges – October 2023 – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | Lloyds Bank (Credit Card) | £9.73 | Credit Card bill – September Payments – LGA 1972 s111  £3.00 – monthly fee  £5.88 – Microsoft – MS Office Subscription  £0.85 – Co-op – Milk |
| BACS | HMRC | £289.70 | Tax and NI for 2nd Quarter LGA 1972 s111 |
| CHAPS | Geldards Solicitors | £354,619.50 | Purchase Payment (£345,000) and Stamp Duty payment (£9619.50) for the purchase of The Coombes – LGA 1972 s124 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) |
| BACS | Amazon | £59.08 | Office Stationary - LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | SLCC Book Shop | £231.30 | Reference books for Office LGA 1972 s111 (Paid in September) (Unable to pay using Credit Card) |
| BACS | St James Church | £747.96 | Payment for Plaque of Remembrance sponsored by the council as agreed in March 2022 (it has taken time for the church to process the ordering of the plaque) LGA 1972 s111 |

1. **Report on Monies received**

20p – E. Tims – Overpayment of July’s Salary refunded.

£30,592.44 – WBC – Precept final payment

£519.86 – Unity Trust Savings Account – Interest for 2nd quarter

£162.81 – Natwest Savings Account – Monthly Interest

1. **Insurance for The Coombes Woodlands** LGA 1972 s111

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Council agreed to joint insurance being taken out with Arborfield PC to cover The Coombes Woodland. Due to the specialism of the type of insurance, the Clerk has only found 1 company that can offer the type of insurance required, so has been unable to obtain more than 1 quote.

The insurance cover will be Landowners Liability Insurance, and will be taken out through Ashburnham Insurance Services Limited at a cost of £370.90 to be split in the ratio of the purchase of The Coombes. Cost to BPC is £269.27 with Arborfield paying £101.63.

1. **Purchase of spare battery for SID/Data logger** LGA 1972 s111

Council approved the purchase of a spare battery for the SID/Data Logger at a cost of £64.99 including VAT and Delivery. The Clerk will order the battery and pay using the credit card.

**23/125 Parish Office Operations**

* 1. **Deputy Clerk Recruitment** LGA1972 S112 ss.1
     + 1. **Salary Scale for Deputy Clerk**

Council agreed to a salary scale between points 13-17 on the Salary Scales for the deputy Clerk position, dependant on experience.

The salary for these points is currently between £24,948 and £26,845 per annum (full time equivalent), and will be pro-rated to the hours that the Deputy will undertake. Part Time hourly wage is between £12.97 and £13.96 for the scales.

The actual salary scale point will be agreed once a suitable candidate has been recruited.

* + - 1. **Advertising the position of Deputy Clerk**

Council agreed to advertising the position of Deputy Clerk in the following manner:

* **Advert on Parish Council Website** – Cost- free. Advert is to be included on social media pages.
* **WBC Website** – Free? Council approved this as a method of advertising if WBC confirms it is possible and it is free to advertise. Should this change, the Clerk will advise the Council.
* **Advert through local press** – Wokingham Today - £200 +VAT for 2 weeks. Advert included in printed paper (available on a Thursday), on the website under the jobs page, and posted on their social media pages.

**23/126 Councillor Forum**

Mr Wrobel raised the question of if CIL can be used for solar panels on the village hall. CIL can be used, but as the village hall has just had their windows and patio replaced using CIL, they should look at other sources of finance. Mrs Stubbs will send the details of a company that provide Solar Panels and grants.

Mr Wrobel also acknowledged the team working to secure The Coombes, and thanked them for all the hard work that had been put in so far.

Mr Heyliger gave a brief update on Speed Watch. There have been three off road sessions held to train the volunteers ion using the equipment. An official road session is planned to take place on the 11th October.

Mrs Stubbs informed that there had recently been two serious accidents, one on Barkham Road and one on Bearwood Road.

**23/127 Exclusion of public and press** Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 S1 (2)

Council agreed that, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, the meeting was closed to the public. The residents in attendance left the meeting and the part 2 discussions began.

**Part 2**

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**23/128 Minutes of previous part 2 meeting**

**23/129 The Coombes**