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BARKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes** of the meeting of the Barkham Parish Council held on 12th December 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 Edgecombe, Cllr Pittock (Ward Councillor) and the Clerk.

**23/153 To receive and accept any apologies for absence** Local Government Act 1972 Sch12

Mr Sheth – On holiday

**23/154 To receive any declarations of interest on items on the agenda** (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1464)

Mr Heyliger – Application 232787 – Neighbour. Mr Heyliger was not granted a dispensation and will not be able to take part in the discussions or decisions relating to the application. Mr Heyliger will leave the room when the application is discussed.

Mr Dexter – Application 232805 – Applicant. Dispensation for a statement to be given. Mr Dexter is able to make a statement to Council but will not be able to take part in discussions or decisions relating to this application.

**23/155 Minutes of the Council Meeting** LGA 1972 Sch 12 para 41(1) **–**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14th November 2023 were approved and signed as a true record. The minutes were signed by Mrs Stubbs.

**23/156 Co-option of New Councillor** Local Government Act 1972 S16 **–** Council to consider co-opting Mr George Edgecombe onto the Council.

Mr Edgecombe was unanimously co-opted onto council. All relevant forms were completed and signed by Mr Edgecombe and the Clerk.

**23/157 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.

1 resident attended to make a statement on the planning application 232787.

The resident gave some background on the application, and raised concerns and objections for the council to consider as part of its response.

2 residents attended to make a statement on planning application 231708

The resident gave some background on the application, and raised concerns and objections for the council to consider as part of its response. The resident also made the council aware that there were few objections, when the previous plans for the application were submitted in August, and it was in a different location to what is now being proposed.

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**23/158 Planning**:

1. **Planning Applications –** Council discussed and agreed any comments or objections on planning applications received before 12th December 2023. As follows:

8.04pm Mr Heyliger left the meeting whilst the following application was discussed

**232787 -** Ridgelands House, Barkham Road, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4TG

**(Retrospective) Householder application for the proposed erection of a Timber Treehouse Structure with A-Frame Timber Zip Line in the Rear Garden.**

Barkham Parish Council (BPC) does not support this application.

The proposed Timber Treehouse is a sizeable structure – both footprint and height – in close proximity to the neighbouring boundary.  BCP does not believe it complies with CP3(a) of the Core Plan 2010 that it is:

*Of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of the adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers or and their quality of life.*

In addition to any debate regarding scale and appearance, it is evident that the height of the structure provides a vantage point and sight lines into the neighbouring garden and rooms.  The appointed Planning Officer may be minded to make a site visit to assess the impact on the neighbours.

This application is complicated by the addition of the Zip Line and reports by neighbours of the noise made by the line in use and the noise of the excited users.  Policy CC06 of the MDD (Managing Development Delivery) 2014 makes it clear that noise is a material planning consideration.

BPC feels it is important to distinguish between children playing in a garden and the noise generated by the zip line itself, the exuberant cries of those riding the line and gathering of larger numbers which the ride may cause.

BPC would also like to comment on some of the responses in favour of the application.

The residence of Brook House is some 480m from the Treehouse/Zip Line complex and although the land may abut Ridgeways House, it is unlikely this respondent will be inconvenienced to the same extent as those who live closer by.  Similarly, although the writer from the White House may have view of the Treehouse, this property will not be overlooked and will be buffered from any noise.

BPC believes that these responses should carry less weight that those from those neighbours immediately affected.

As this application is detrimental to the amenities of the of the adjoining land users, BPC requests that this application is refused.

8.15pm Mr Heyliger rejoined the meeting

Motion by Mr Dexter to move application 231708 to the next point to be discussed. Vote – all agreed

**231708 -** 331 Barkham Road Barkham Wokingham RG41 4DJ

**Householder application for the installation of childrens play equipment (retrospective).**

Barkham Parish Council (BPC) does not support this application.

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The proposed Children’s’ Play Equipment is a sizeable structure – both footprint and height – in close proximity to the neighbouring boundary.  BCP does not believe it complies with CP3(a) of the Core Plan 2010 that it is:

*Of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of the adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers or and their quality of life.*

In addition to any debate regarding scale and appearance and noise, it is evident that the structure provides a vantage point that allows the neighbouring property to be viewed. The Planning Officer may be minded to make a site visit to assess the impact on the neighbours.

It is noted that before the structure was moved to its current position there was less opposition and BPC is surprised that the applicant has chosen to court contention by making this change.  Although some comments have been passed – such as colour – which suggest there may be compromise solutions outside the planning process, this will not affect the question of noise and sight lines into the neighbouring property.

Although the Applicant stresses that the Equipment will only be used seasonally, he does not seem to appreciate that this will be the very time when neighbours want to be outside enjoying the peace of their gardens.

As this application is detrimental to the amenities of the of the adjoining land users, BPC requests that this application is refused.

**232805 -** 1 Church Cottages, Church Lane, Barkham, Wokingham, RG40 4PL

**Application for Listed Building consent for proposed replacement and repairs to fenestration.**

Barkham Parish Council have no comments on this application

**222306** – Land Adjacent to Blagrove Lane, Wokingham

**Outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, for the proposed erection of up to 350 dwellings (Use Class C3) and care home (Use Class C2), with new accesses onto Barkham Road and Blagrove Lane, landscaping and onsite SANG, following demolition of outbuildings and agricultural buildings. REVISED PLANS**

There have been no material changes to the points raised in the previous response to this application. Barkham Parish Council is still opposed to it. The previous comments submitted will be tweaked, sent to council for approval and re-submitted.

**232927** -Land At Nine Mile Ride Extension, Reading, RG2 9GB

**Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2280 (dated 02/04/2015). The Reserved Matters (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) comprise details of a foodstore, including the creation of the store building, public realm area, service vehicle access and service yard, customer car park with access from district centre spine road, landscaping, drainage and associated infrastructure.**

Barkham Parish Council supports this application.

1. **Approved and Refused Applications**

**232164** - 22 The Woodlands, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4UY

**Householder application for the proposed two storey side extension.**

This application has been approved by WBC

**232641 -** 11 Martingale Grove, Arborfield Green, Wokingham, RG2 9HD

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**Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey rear extension.**

This application has been approved by WBC

**232488 -** 1 The Shires, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4SZ

**Householder application for the proposed erection of single storey rear extension, plus formation of new side door, following demolition of existing rear conservatory.**

This application has been approved by WBC

**231349 - Longmoor Lodge, Park Lane, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4PT**

**Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey side and rear extension to existing garage, including changes to fenestration and the insertion of a first floor to create habitable accommodation, plus the erection of an outbuilding.**

This application has been approved by WBC

8.35pm – the residents in attendance left the meeting

1. **Any Other Planning Business**

**A329 Reading Road Active Travel Scheme - phase 2 Consultation** – Council is asked to consider if they would like to submit a response to the consultation, and what any comments may be.

Council decided not to submit a collective response. Individual Councillors may respond if they wish to.

**Sandy Lane Woodlands** – Council has been made aware that the woodlands at Sandy lane has been land lotted and is being sold off in small plots.

Council considered whether there is anything that can be done to protect the areas of the parish from this and whether it would like to look into this issue any further. Council agreed that for the site at Sandy Lane, there isnot much more that can be done, until we hear from WBC on the Article 4 directive. The council will review in January.

As to other sites and what can be done to protect them from land lotting, it was agree that a letter would be written to John Redwood and Michael Grove on this issue. Mr Wrobel will draft a letter and send to the full council for approval. Once approval has been given, the Clerk will send out on headed paper.

It was also agree that the Council would support a small council in Oxford, who had bought the issue of land lotting to the council’s attention and wished to make it national news, in anyway it could, but was not in the position to be able to take it on themselves.

**23/159 The Coombes Woodlands**

1. Council received an update on the Coombes Woodland purchase

The Coombes Woodland purchase completed on Thursday 16th November 2023, and ownership transferred to Barkham Parish Council and Arborfield and Newlands Parish Council on that date.

1. Council is asked to note the draft minutes from The Coombes Woodland Committee

Resolved – Council noted the draft minutes of the first meeting of The Coombes Woodland Committee

1. Council received an update from the Coombes Woodland Committee on their first meeting and any actions being undertaken

The Coombes Woodland Committee (CWC) held its first meeting on the 16th November 2023.

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At the meeting the following actions were taken or agreed.

**Actions taken at the meeting:**

* Cllr Barker, BPC was elected Chairman of the Committee
* Mr Steel a resident from Barkham was co-opted onto the Committee
* Insurance for the woodlands has been taken out, and cover commenced on 16th November
* The urgent tree to be sorted as a matter of priority. It was agreed to keep as much as the tree as possible, and brace the tree as required. WBC were informed via the 5 day notice form.
* The works identified in the tree survey report to be undertaken as separate projects, to be completed within the timescales of the report.

The Timescales within the report are as follows: Priority 1 – to be rectified within 3 months; Priority 2 – to be completed within 6 months; Priority 3 – to be completed withing a year.

* The items for the Priority 1 are to be managed first, with all works being completed by 16th February 2024

After the completion of each stage, identified in the report the next priority period will be undertaken.

* Budgets have been looked at, to be sent to the councils for consideration.

**Actions agreed to be undertaken at the meeting:**

* A five year plan needs to be considered by the committee, for the maintenance of the coombes and how the rhododendrons will be managed
* A resident from Arborfield Parish needs to be sought to join the committee
* The informal paths need to be considered and risk assessments needs to be undertaken
* A volunteer group from across both parishes to work on The Coombes needs to be looked into and set up.
* Quotes are to be sought for each stage of the works identified in the tree survey.
* The Committee resolved to create a management plan for the woodlands.

**Other items arising after the meeting considered by the committee:**

Unfortunately, when the tree surgeons attended the urgent tree to reduce and brace it, the tree was too damaged and decayed to be able to carry out the work as planned. Due to this the decision needed to be made to fell the tree.  WBC have been informed and have agreed to the felling of the tree. The tree surgeon has been instructed to fell the tree.

There is a requirement to replace any tree that is felled under a TPO, and this needs to be looked into by the committee.

The head of the Forest School department at The Coombes School is interested in joining the CWC and will be co-opted at the next meeting of the committee.

**23/160 Ward Councillor Report –** Council received a report from Cllr Ian Pittock.

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

BARKHAM PARISH COUNCIL REPORT – 12 December 2023

1. An inspection has been carried out of the Arborfield Green Leisure Centre facilities following concerns from some residents that advertising did not match reality. The climbing wall still exists and has been returned to use by Bohunt, but is not available to the public due to a lack of instructors, it is to be hoped this can be rectified with time. The 3 squash courts have been modified to such an extent that they no longer

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exist. There is of course no swimming pool (yet), therefore the advertised swimming lessons are completely wrong.

Discussions on a medical centre were had. There is still money in the agreement for this, but the CGC is against it.

1. A letter has been received from SSEN concerning the Barkham Solar Farm project. It is confirmed that this can now be connected to the national grid in August 2026. WBC has until 22 December to confirm their acceptance (they will).

**Question:** What is the timeline for installation?

**Answer:** It will most likely be in 2025.

1. The polling station review consultation period has ended. It is likely that those in the Barkham part of Arborfield Green will continue to vote at the Village Hall for a couple of years with a change to the AG Community Centre thereafter, I suspect with the opening of the new centre. Likewise for those living in some parts of the old garrison off the Reading Road, with them probably switching to Arborfield Hall in a couple of years. There are issues with mixed boundaries across parishes, parish wards and borough wards. It is expected that a parish boundary review will occur in 2026 across the entire borough.
2. Sainsburys has submitted their planning application. It is currently undergoing verification before release to the public.
3. WBC has agreed that the Solar Farm project (and other related Rooks Nest Farm works) will need a residents liaison group to cover such as traffic issues. I have pressed for this to be set up, although no construction work will take place on site for some months.

Mr Dexter raised that this needs to be set up before construction commences.

1. I have pressed for a date for the review of the ETRO covering School Road, along with a reminder that BPC must be involved.
2. It has been agreed that going forward there will be a more formal liaison team covering WBC officials, local WBC councillors and Crest. I would like this to also include BPC. There is also a desire for better input from residents of Aborfield Green given that this will contain substantial numbers of residents; it is felt BPC cannot cover this at present due to a lack of representation on the council. As yet, there is no residents group other than the self-appointed Arborfield Green Facebook Group, although this does perform a valuable comms role. It has been suggested that a formal residents association be formed which can then speak with some authority.

There has been a post on the Arborfield Green Community Facebook page, asking if a residents association should be set up. There is lots of support for this.

Mr Heyliger enquired about Mortimer Lodge Farm. We understand the farmer leasing the land has been given notice by WBC so that the Borough can use the Lodge to house NHS staff and use the Land for 'Public access'? Mr Pittock was not aware of this, but he agreed to make further enquires with the Borough.

Ian Pittock, WBC Councillor for Barkham, 11th December 2023

**23/161 Delegated Authority Report December 2023**

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

**Planning**

**232490** -Land off Langley Common Road, Arborfield, Wokingham

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**Outline planning application for a proposed residential development of up to 50 dwellings together with open space and associated works. Means of Access to be considered (with Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be reserved).**

Barkham Parish Council (BPC) wishes to oppose this application for the following considerations:

1. This site lies outside the existing settlement area and is the only green space between the settlements of Arborfield Cross and Langley Common Road. It will increase the urbanisation of the area and detract from the nearby countryside. (Policies CP1, CP11, CC02, TB21 & IRS1).
2. The proposed development will encroach into the greenspace around individual residential sites which is contrary to the spatial goals of the 2010 Core Plan set out in Section 2.68 (viii). (Policies CP3, CC03, TB21, IRS1 & IRS2).
3. This is entirely a greenfield development site and an area of mature countryside that will concentrate human and traffic activity closer to the existing hedgerows and other habitats. This will have a significant and negative impact on wildlife such as badgers, foxes, deer, owls and red kites. (Policies CP7 & IRS3)
4. The traffic on Langley Common Road, already congested at peak times, is increasing with an average of some 5000 vehicles per day recorded. New developments that feed onto Langley Common Road will add to this volume.
5. The access road will egress onto Langley Common Road between 2 roundabouts on a route that as discussed above is already seeing a significant increase in in traffic, and will add to the congestion that already exists. (Policy CP1, CP4)
6. The location of the access road is close to a known flood risk area which has already led to the closure of the underpass underneath Langley Common Road. Flooding is frequently observed with moderate rainfall and the proposed development will further aggravate this issue.
7. Furthermore, the closure of the underpass will be offset by the construction of a toucan crossing in the vicinity of the proposed access point which will further increase congestion.
8. The frequency and routing of the bus service from this area to Wokingham and Reading are not conducive for commuting and the school run purposes. The car will continue to be the preferred means of travel adding yet more traffic on this already busy road.
9. This location is not sustainable. The Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD states that for locations to be sustainable, ‘walkable neighbourhoods should be created that have a range of facilities within 10 mins walking distance (800m) to encourage travel by foot or by bicycle’. The proposals of this application do not meet this criterium.
10. Local services such as schools, medical and dental care are already stretched with people having to travel across the Borough to secure access. This development will add to these shortages.

In addition to the above specific planning considerations, BPC would like to make one further observation.

This application pre-empts the Local Plan Update (LPU) – it is not included in the 2010 Core Plan nor in either of the two recent versions of the LPU.

This resulting piecemeal approach to planning driven by the developers without reference to a professionally produced overall plan will create a number of discrete residential centres rather than a focal point that can be designed to be truly sustainable thereby encouraging walking and cycling and reducing additional traffic as much as possible.

The cumulative effect of several such planning applications being adopted will exacerbate the concerns expressed above regarding this specific application. Hence, applications such as this should not be considered in advance of the LPU.

Barkham Parish Council requests that this application is refused.

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**This response was agreed by majority of the Council**

**23/162 Clerks Report -** Council received a report from the Clerk

**Change over to BT Phoneline and Broadband**

The change of supplier to BT is still in progress.

**Items ongoing**

**Communications**

The Clerk is looking into ways to further communications with residents

**Items ongoing**

**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.

**Items ongoing**

**Enforcement Issues**

The Coombes – No update received

**Items ongoing**

Land by Coppid Hill House – WBC have confirmed that the enforcement notice and court order have now been complied with.

**Item closed**

**School Road / Langley Common Road Junction**

This has been agreed, but the work has not yet been completed.

**Item Ongoing**

**Meeting with WBC Executive Officers**

A meeting was held on Tuesday 28th December – there is an agenda Item to discuss this meeting.

**Item ongoing**

**Insight Strategy and Inclusion meeting with WBC**

No further update at this time.

**Item ongoing**

**District and Community Centres**

WBC are setting up a working group group for the final design of the Community Centre, which will include Councils, Crest, and other stakeholders. WBC also want to make sure that they join up with the different pieces of work – Community Centre, Pavilion and the allotments and play area, and are looking to extend the working group to cover this.

**Item ongoing**

**Solar Farm**

No further update since the last meeting

**Item ongoing**

**California Country Park Improvement Scheme**

No further update since the last meeting.

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**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**

No further update since last meeting.

**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:**

**BVRA Magazine Merger**

BVRA have decided that they would not take the offer of a 2 issue trial of the merger, and have decided to keep their own publication and distribute it online only. BPC will retain and look at their own communications to residents.

**Item closed**

**Enforcement issues**

Land rear of 263 Barkham Road, Wokingham - RFS/2023/088783 – This item has been looked into, and has planning permission for storage of vehicles, so this item has been closed.

**Item closed**

**23/163 Finance**

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

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| --- |
| Payments for November to December 2023 for authorisation at Council meeting on 12th December 2023 |
| S/O | Staff Wages | £ 1135.19 | December 2023 salary – LGA 1972 s111  |
| DD | Nest | £112.46 | Pension Contribution Employer & Employee – December 2023 – LGA 1972 s111  |
| DD | Plusnet | £32.14 | Internet and phone charges – December 2023 LGA 1972 s111  |
| DD | Lloyds Bank (Credit Card) | £387.98 | Credit Card bill – November Payments – LGA 1972 s111£3.00 – monthly fee£5.88 – Microsoft – MS Office Subscription£7.35 – Postage of Contracts for Coombes Purchase (cost to be shared with Arborfield PC)£370.90 – Insurance for The Coombes (cost to be shared with Arborfield PC)£0.85 – Co-op – Milk for office |
| BACS | Arborfield PC | £105.00 | 50% share of costs for the Remembrance Day Order of Service LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | SLCC | £183.00 | SLCC membership subscription. LGA 1972 s.143 |

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| BACS | Tivoli | £574.27 | Bin emptying – April – November LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | Staff Expenses | £44.46 | Mileage expenses from July to the December meeting LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | Arborfield PC | £1,655.96 | Work to urgent tree in The Coombes LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | Tivoli | £71.78 | Bin emptying December LGA 1972 s111 |

1. **Report on Monies received**

None

1. **CIL Expenditure Requests** CIL Spend Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended)
2. **Council is asked to consider the bid funding request from WBC to fund the resurfacing of Aggisters Lane.**

Council decided not to fund this project, as it is a no through lane, which has not been adopted by WBC and would not be of benefit to many of the residents of Barkham. CIL should be used to benefit as many residents as possible, and this project does not meet that criteria for the Council.

1. **Council is asked to consider the report and proposals to install fly tipping cameras in The Coombes, Church Lane and Commonfield Lane.**

Council agreed that further information was needed about what role WBC would undertake in this project. It was also agreed that the project seemed very expensive, and time should be taken to look into any savings that can be made, and if it can come under Vodaphone’s community scheme. All decisions have been deferred until the January meeting, when it is hoped that the information required will be available.

**23/164** **Draft Budget** LGA 1972s.41(4) **-** Council is asked to review the draft budget and suggest any changes ready for final agreement in January. The Clerks salary is to be reviewed as part of the budget setting process.

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

*To agree that, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable that the public and press are temporarily excluded and are asked to withdraw for the duration of the discussions of Staff Salaries.* The meeting will be closed to the public during the discussion regarding the salaries only.

There were no public members left in attendance, so the meeting did not need to be closed.

9.43pm - The Clerk left the meeting for the discussions of salaries

9.55pm – The Clerk returned to the meeting.

Council agreed that the Clerk should have a Salary increase to the next band, and agreed that the Clerk would raise to point 27 on the scale, following the purchase of the coombes, and the extra responsibility this put on the role. The Clerks Salary will also be reviewed again after the recruitment of a deputy Clerk has completed. The increase in the Clerks salary to point 27 is effective from 1st January 2024.

The staff salary for the next financial year was amended to reflect the decision for the increase in the budget, and the figures were updated.

The Council unanimously agreed the budget and the precept pending no material changes of costs are received before January. It will only be reviewed in January, should any material changes be identified before the January meeting.

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Pending no changes are needed to the budget figures, the precept for 2024-2025 has been set at £26.45 per Band D Household, which is an increase of 1.02%. The appropriate forms will be completed and sent to WBC by 1st February 2022.

**23/165 WBC partnership working meetings**

* 1. **Arborfield Green Community Centre –** Council received an update on the working group for the Arborfield Green Community Centre.

WBC are drafting the Terms of Reference for the Working Party ready for the first meeting. The Clerk has had a couple of residents interested in joining the working party, and has contacted them to request permission to pass their details to WBC to be included on the working party.

There are concerns that the scope of the working party being increased to encompass the whole of the district centre will mean a loss in focus for the community centre, but the council are willing to review this after the first meeting. The first meeting is yet to be scheduled.

* 1. **Partnership working with WBC –** Council received an update on the recent meeting with WBC to discuss ongoing issues within the parish. These include:
* The crossing at Farley Hill School.
* The crossing point on Biggs Lane at Hazebrouke Meadows
* Langley Common Road Speed Limit and School Road Junction.
* Reporting back to WBC executive on how the meetings have been going

The above update was deferred to January’s meeting due to the time and needing to discuss other items before the meeting closed.

**23/166 Parish Office Operations**

**Carrying over Holiday for the Clerk**

Resolved Council agreed to the clerk carrying over the additional 4 days of hours of annual leave, totalling 9 days of working hours to be carried forward into the next leave year.

**23/167 Councillor Forum**

None

**23/168 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. No residents were in attendance and so Part 2 discussions began.

Part 1 of the meeting closed at 10.22pm

**Part 2**

**23/169 Minutes of previous part 2 meeting**

**23/170 The Coombes**