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BARKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes** of the meeting of the Barkham Parish Council held on 11th June 2024 in Meeting Room A13, Arborfield Green Community Centre at 7.30pm.

**Present**: Mrs Stubbs, Mr Dexter, Mr Wrobel, Mr Barker, Mr Sheth, Mr Edgecombe, Mr Cunningham, and Mrs Tims, Clerk

**24/084 To receive and accept any apologies for absence** Local Government Act 1972 Sch12

Mr Heyliger – On holiday

**24/085 To receive any declarations of interest on items on the agenda** (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1464)

Mr Dexter mentioned that he will be raising a topic under Any Other Planning Business that Council may decide reflects a conflict of interest.

**24/086 Minutes of the Council Meeting** LGA 1972 Sch 12 para 41(1) **–**

**Resolved:** The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 were approved and signed as a true record.

**24/087 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.

One member of the public was in attendance, and raised an item regarding the new proposed community centre and the lack of recycling facilities available. The resident attended the Community Engagements Sessions, and had spoken to the various representatives there, none of whom had considered placing recycling facilities somewhere in the District Centre.

Cllr Betteridge had spoken with the resident and had looked into this, and it was correct that there currently were no plans for recycling facilities. Cllr Betteridge has made a note of this.

Barkham Parish Council has also noted this, and the Clerk will raise it with the working group for the Community Centre.

Cllr Betteridge then gave some information that Central Government was looking to standardise recycling collections across the country, to make it easier for residents and recycling processing centres, but with the election, this has been put on hold, and we will need to wait to see what happens after the election.

**24/088 Planning**:

1. **Planning Applications –** To discuss and agree any comments or objections on planning applications received before 14th May 2024. To include:

**241351 -** 8 Lance Way Arborfield Wokingham RG2 9YY

**Householder application of proposed demolition of existing carport, followed by single storey side and rear extension.**

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Whilst Barkham Parish Council has no objections to the planned extension, it would like to suggest some landscaping is implemented to soften the impact on the street scene of the brick wall that will replace the fence by the highway.

1. **Approved and Refused Applications Report**

None

1. **Any Other Planning Business**

Mr Dexter made the council aware that further to his approved application to replace the windows on his listed cottage, he had now submitted a discharge of functions application for the works. He was aware that the Council had not been notified, and the Clerk believes it is because there is no requirement to consult on a discharge of functions application, as the approval has already been given, this is a formality. Mr Dexter informed the council as a matter of courtesy.

Cllr Betteridge informed the Council that the Arborfield Green Sport Pavilion was going before the planning committee on Wednesday 12th June. There are 3 people speaking on the application, one in favour and two against. The officer has recommended approval of the application.

**24/089 Ward Councillor Report**

Cllr Betteridge attended the meeting and gave a report as follows:

**Report for Barkham Parish Council Meeting 11th June 2024**

The first month since the local elections has flown by. As I write I find myself unexpectedly back on the campaign trail for the General Election, which will be hard-fought in Wokingham.

The election has caused most Wokingham Borough Council committee meetings to be postponed due to the ‘purdah’ rules, though internal business continues, as do planning and licensing. WBC also asked councillors not to attend the Arborfield Green Community Centre public events. Non-committee business is continuing as normal and I understand that the next steps on the local plan should not be significantly, if at all, delayed.

In the last month I have met with both Barkham and Arborfield parish councils and introduced myself to Finchampstead, the latter having around 1,200 parishioners in the ward. I have also met with the WBC team responsible for the Arborfield Strategic Development and with the responsible Director from Crest Nicholson, the principal developer. I will meet shortly with representatives of Pinnacle who are progressively taking over responsibility for maintenance of the newly developed site, and with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation who are responsible for the legacy MOD estate. Through this I hope to be able to respond better to residents with construction, infrastructure and maintenance issues in the Arborfield Green area.

I asked the WBC planning team to ‘list’ the planning application for Sports and Community Infrastructure in Arborfield Green, as this has been subject to much public interest and I believe it right that residents and the committee have the opportunity to be heard.

I have been contacted by a number of ward residents with specific issues which I have resolved or am dealing with, as well as reporting issues I have found on my travels.

I have been contacted a number of times about the traffic regulation order closing School Road, which crosses both Barkham and Arborfield wards. I am told that the council’s intention is to convert this to a Permanent Traffic Regulation Order. The notification of this has been delayed whilst the General Election is underway, but will be published the week after the election, week commencing 8th July. Residents are both for and against the continued closure and will be able to comment on the notice.

I am also talking with officers about where we go next in relation to the desire to reduce the speed on Langley Common Road which does not have support from the police. It may require a more comprehensive programme to calm the road, rather than just the implementation of a limit.

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I will be at the meeting on Tuesday 11th and will be happy to expand on any of the above or discuss any other issues.

Adrian Betteridge Wokingham Borough Councillor for Barkham and Arborfield ward 07985 088298 [adrian.betteridge@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:adrian.betteridge@wokingham.gov.uk)

Cllr Barley also attended the meeting and gave the following report on behalf of himself and Cllr Evans:

I would like to deliver this report on behalf of myself and George Evans who apologises as he cannot be here tonight. My name is Joseph and along with George we were elected as two of your WBC ward councillors in last month’s local elections.

It has been a busy first month getting to grips with everything, we have only held one main council meeting since the election, many others have been cancelled since the general election was called, nonetheless we both have a couple of items we would like to report on.

The first is the proposed crossing at Biggs Lane, I asked the council for an update on the progress of the proposed crossing at the Annual Council Meeting as in my personal view its proximity to Bohunt in conjunction with the growth of our local area provides a strong case for its development. Unfortunately, the council informed me that the crossing doesn’t currently meet the criteria for delivery and because they have designated the crossing low on the priority list, it could be some time before the funds become available for a crossing to be built. Now from my understanding Barkham Parish Council is keen to see this happen and some funding has been mentioned to Finchampstead PC. I think it is critical that if we all use our collective effort and strength, we can work together to deliver this crossing to ensure safe travels for our residents and especially, our students.

Another point I wanted to bring up was the current closure of School Road, I understand this is a controversial topic with many in the parish and there is no easy way to make everyone happy. From talking to residents during the election we know reopening School Road is strongly opposed by its residents, George had a particularly lengthy chat with one resident during the election – their strength of feeling is understandable. However, the residents of Langley Common Road are also less than satisfied with the speed and congestion that has come to the road as a result of the closure, additionally residents turning right from School onto Langley Common are put at unnecessary risk due to the nature of the turn and the speed of the road. Despite all this I know we can all agree on one thing, the current situation cannot continue in its current form. I do agree with the closure of School Road, to put it simply it’s what their residents want. However, it’s also important we do right to the residents of Langley Common Road too, improve the road condition, reduce the speed limit, traffic calming if necessary. Again, this is something that we want to work with you on.

On another note, George asked a question in main council about the status of the swimming pool that had monies allocated in the Medium Term Financial Plan until recently. He is waiting for a meeting with the Leader of the Council, Stephen Conway to discuss this.

I won’t get too political, but our election campaign was all about listening to residents, at the end of the day we want to make sure we can give residents the best representation possible. We are honoured to have been elected and are really looking forward to working with all of you over the coming years, thank you.

The following questions and comments were raised on the reports:

**Mr Dexter asked:** What are you collectively going to do for residents and the council? Will you work together? Mr Dexter had five main areas that he will consider success on –

1) Stop overdevelopment of the area.

2) Assist BPC to improve the safety of the roads across the parish.

3) Ensure the Solar Farm is executed with minimum disruption both in the short term (ie during construction) and longer term (ie overall impact on the countryside and residents)

4) Assist BPC to continue working with WBC to complete smaller projects around the parish which are small scale by WBC standards so are not prioritised.

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5) Ensure that Barkham is NOT sacrificed as some may seek to establish political advantage.

**Cllr Betteridge responded**: We still need to sit down together to work this out, but we are still planning on working together.

**Cllr Barley responded**: When it comes to public and residents issues, we all agree that we want to work together to serve the residents to the best that we can.

**Mrs Stubbs asked**: What is happening with the Bohunt School sixth form?

**Cllr Betteridge responded**: The School has decided it it will open the sixth form in September 2025, it is a school decision, and not something the council has any control over.

**Mr Cunningham asked** what could be done about the knock on effect that this is having on other schools?

**Cllr Betteridge responded** that there are places available within the other schools in the borough which can take on the students from Bohunt school.

Mrs Stubbs raised that the admission policy for primary schools wasn’t working for some of the residents.

Cllr Betteridgeasked for details to be sent to him so he could look into them, and he will send relevant information on admissions to the clerk.

**Mr Dexter asked**: What is happening with School Road? We were previously told there would be another consultation, but that appears not to be the case and the decision has been made to close it permanently. . We had also been advised that the way the project had been progressed was going to be reviewed by WBC’s Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Is this going to happen?

Mr Wrobel raised that it didn’t appear that procedures had been followed.

**Cllr Betteridge** responded: From discussions, it appears that all procedures have been followed. There was no planned consultation, but residents are able to comment on the notices that is to be served for the closure to be made permanent.

Cllr Betteridge was given a background on the process from the view of theparsih council and what the council had been told over the years by various people from WBC – Ward Councillors and Officers.

Cllr Betteridge said that there may have been inaccurate information given, and he would find out what the process is and send it to the clerk. The Council could then look to see if the required process had been followed in view of what information the council had been given.More importantly, this should be used to ensure the correct procedures are followed by all in the future.

Mr Dexter raised: I see you have a meeting with Pinnacle, I have some information from a resident that I would like some clarification on, can you assist with this?

Cllr Betteridge confirmed he had a meeting on the 12th, and if Mr Dexter spoke with him regarding the issues, he would try to help. Mr Dexter agreed to share his notes from the discussion with the resident in time for the meeting with Pinnacle.

Mr Dexter then raised that he could see in Cllr Barleys report, that the swimming pool that was promised was being looked into.

Cllr Barley responded that this was currently being looked into by Cllr Evans.

**24/090 – Clerks Report**

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

The Clerk is awaiting costs from WBC on the project to be approved by Council.

**Item ongoing**

**Communications**

An new newsletter is proposed as part of the June Agenda.

**Items closed**

**Enforcement Issues**

The Coombes – No update received

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**Items ongoing**

**School Road / Langley Common Road Junction**

No further update since the last meeting

**Item Ongoing**

**Meeting with WBC Executive Officers**

The Clerk is meeting with officers from WBC on a monthly basis, to progress the communications and other issues. Some items, such as the lack of information for consultations has been actioned by the WBC officers, and we await to see what effect this will have.

**Item ongoing**

**Insight Strategy and Inclusion meeting with WBC**

This meeting was held in June, and was attended by Mrs Stubbs.

**Item ongoing**

**District and Community Centres**

There are several public engagement sessions are currently underway, and the results are to be assessed.

**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.

**Item ongoing**

**Purchase of Litter Bins**

WBC have given permission for the bins to be installed on their furniture. The Clerk is awaiting a response from Tivoli who empties the bins to confirm the increase in our contract to empty the bins.

**Item ongoing**

**Closure of Langley Common Road Underpass**

No further update since the last meeting.

**Item ongoing**

**Closed Items:**

**Change over to BT Phoneline and Broadband**

The Change over to BT has now taken place. A refund has been received from Plusnet for some of the last bill payment that was taken.

**Item Closed**

**BVRA/BPC Survey**

The CIL advisory committee Have met and reviewed the projects suggested. An agenda item for approval by Council is included for the May meeting.

**Item closed**

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Mrs Stubbs asked about the bus shelter, and if anything had progressed. The Clerk explained that at a meeting with Highways, the officer in attendance said that he would look into incorporating it into the owrks on the roundabout at The Bull Public House, as this would mean less disruption for residents as there would only need to be 1 set of works not 2. The Clerk is waiting to hear back, and will chase this up.

Mr Wrobel and Mr Barker asked about the bins, had we received anything from Tivoli. The Clerk confirmed that she had received a quote for the uplift, and that it had been sent to the councillors that morning, but could net be added to the agenda as it was too late. It will be agreed via delegated authority if needed.

The Clerk confirmed she now had all permissions and was just waiting for the BPC logo stickers to arrive, and the installation could be made next week, but she would need assistance in installing the bins. Both Mr Wrobel and Mr Barker offered to help.

Cllr Betteridge gave a short update on the Solar Farm. An archaeological dig is due to commence shortly to ensure there are no archaeological items of interest that are at the site.Mr Dexter also drew Cllr. Betteridge’s attention to a condition of the original planning approval - to form a Resident/Parish Liaison Group to oversee final design and construction. This should now be established.

**24/091 Finance**

* 1. **Accounts**

**Resolved:** Council agreed the accounts and payments for May to June 2024 LGA 1972 s150 (5)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Payments for May to June 2024 for authorised at Council meeting on 11th June 2024 | | | |
| S/O | Staff Wages | £2,000.32 | April 2023 salaries – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | Nest | £198.05 | Pension Contribution Employer & Employee – April 2023 – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | BT | £44.72 | Internet and phone charges – May 2023 – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | Lloyds Bank (Credit Card) | £204.74 | Credit Card bill – April Payments – LGA 1972 s111  £3.00 – monthly fee, £5.88 – Microsoft – MS Office Subscription, £3.00 - Land registry, £18.98 – Domain registration (CWC Website), £18.00 – Timsons (Key cutting), £155.88 – Zoom subscription. |
| CHAPS Transfer | CCLA | £600,000.00 | Transfer to CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, as per agreement at May meeting. LGA 1972 s111 Transfer made on 24/05/2024 |
| BACS | Amazon | £85.12 | Office Stationary – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | Unity Trust | £18.00 | CHAPS fee for transfer LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | Arborfield & Newland PC | £2604.00 | Share of Final Coombes Woodland Purchase Legal Fees LGA 1972 s111 & LGA 1972 s124 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) |

* 1. **Report on Monies received**

£175.73 Interest from Natwest

* 1. **Grants** - Council is asked to consider the following grant applications for a grant payment:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Payee** | **Amount requested** | **For:** | **Legal power that the grant comes under** |
| Royal British Legion | £100.00 | Wreath (to be paid in November) | Local Government Act 1972 s.137 |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Assisting Berkshire Children (ABC) to read | £1,500.00 | We are seeking a grant to help with ongoing training and support, and also the necessary ongoing resources to enable 7 volunteers to continue to support the children that they currently work with in the Barkham Parish area. | Local Government Act 1972 s.137 |
| Arc counselling and information | £1,000.00 | Contribution towards the costs of providing a free and confidential youth counselling service and low-cost adult counselling service to residents.  All residents have access to the service to help with mental and emotional health issues, including anxiety, depression and relationship problems | Local Government Act 1972 s.137 |
| Barkham Village Residents Association (BVRA) | £660.00 | The grant being applied for is to part cover the costs of printing the newsletter and the operation of the website. These are partly funded by annual household subscriptions. | Local Government Act 1972 s142 |
| Keep Mobile | £1,625 | To continue providing the services offered and where possible lower the number of refusals. | Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.26-28  Transport Act 1985 s.106(a) |
| St James’ Church Barkham | £2704.00 | To cover the costs of grass cutting and hedge cutting in the churchyard of St James’ Church Barkham. | Local Government Act 1972, s.142 |

Mr Dexter reminded Council that during previous discussions regarding the BVRA newsletter, BVRA had advised that, in response to the Residents survey, it would be moving away from printed copy in favour of an electronic version. This stance had obviously changed which has resulted in this request to continue supporting printing and distribution. BPC remains sensitive to such a request. The BVRA newsletter does not include editorial content relevant to Arborfield Green (AG) - most of which lies with the Parish of Barkham - and is not distributed to the new dwellings in AG. As a result, the target audience for the newsletter is progressively reaching a smaller percentage of the Parish. With the continued build-out, AG is becoming increasingly a larger part of the Parish. Moreover, with changes in payment arrangements for the newsletter the traditional coverage is also reducing.

Mr Dexter suggested that it would not be appropriate to suddenly stop supporting the BVRA newsletter but the question of catering for AG readership must be addressed before the matter is considered again next year. This will form part of the discussions on a later agenda item.

A question was raised with what was happening with the additional land requested by the Church. Mr Dexter informed that it was being looked at as part of the Solar Farm Project (SFP) by WBC, but there were concerns with the water table levels. WBC undertook to assess if the height of the water table as part of the SFP construction pre-work. WBC should be reminded of this commitment. If the church cannot use it for internments, it would not want the extra land. The council could consider the purchase as a CIL project for different uses, but this will need to be decided at a later date.

**Resolved:** Council agreed to pay grants in the above amounts to the listed charities that have applied.

* 1. **Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2024-2025**

**Resolved:** Council appointed Claire Connell for the internal Audit for 2024-2025.

**Resolved:** Council agreed to the increase of fees for the audit from £200 to £225.00.

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* 1. **CIL Request form WBC for Play Park items upgrade**

**Resolved:** Council decided it would like to fund the upgrade and replacement of the other items in the park, which are the same age as the cantilever swing that has failed. An estimated cost for the extra replacement equipment is circa £30,000 (including the cantilever swing and bark pit replacement). The Council would like the equipment replaced with wooden equipment like what is there but with steel at the bottom of the legs to go into the ground.

WBC will undertake the procurement process for the works, obtain quotes and send them to BPC for approval of contractor.

* 1. **Additional user license for Microsoft 365 subscription**

**Resolved:** Council agreed to upgrading the Microsoft 365 subscription to allow the deputy clerk access to the subscription. The monthly cost will be £9.80+VAT for the 2 licenses, and will be made via the credit card.

**24/092 Parish Office Operations**

1. **Parish Newsletter** 
   1. **Resolved:** Council agreed to replacing the Parish Magazine with a quarterly newsletter that will be created by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.
   2. Before Council can agree on the way the newsletter will be published and distributed, a working group needs to be arranged so that the interested parties from Barkham and Arborfield Green can be involved in the creation of the parish newsletter. Once this has occurred and the first edition is ready to be created, the council will consider how to publish and distribute the newsletter and the associated costs.
2. **Wildflowers in Barkham**

**Resolved:** Council agreed to looking into and possible funding the planting of Wildflowers in Barkham to grow and bloom in spring 2025. The Clerk will look into how this can be done and costs involved.

**24/093 Councillor Forum**

Mr Wrobel informed that the application for a Children’s Home at 23 Almond Close was being withdrawn by the applicant.

Mr Wrobel gave an update on the fly tipping camera trial along Commonfield lane, and was pleased to report that since the installation of the cameras there had not been an incident of Fly Tipping.

**24/094 Exclusion of public and press** Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 S1 (2)

**Resolved:** Council agreed that, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, the meeting was closed to the public.

The meeting was closed to the public at 9.45pm and the resident left the meeting.

**Part 2**

**24/095 Minutes of previous part 2 meeting**

**24/096 The Coombes**