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BARKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes** of the meeting of the Barkham Parish Council held on 9th July 2024 in Meeting Room A13, Arborfield Green Community Centre at 7.30pm.

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

**24/097 To receive and accept any apologies for absence** Local Government Act 1972 Sch12

Mr Barker – On holiday

Mr Wrobel – Medical

Cllr Betteridge – WBC meeting

Cllr Barley – WBC meeting

**24/098 To receive any declarations of interest on items on the agenda** (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1464)

None

**24/099 Minutes of the Council Meeting** LGA 1972 Sch 12 para 41(1) **–**

**Resolved:** The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11th June 2024 were approved and signed as a true record.

**24/100 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.

No residents attended the meeting.

**24/101 Planning**:

1. **Planning Applications –** To discuss and agree any comments or objections on planning applications received before 9th July 2024. To include:

**241524** - Hogwood Farm, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG40 4QY

**Application for the approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2179 (as varied by s.73 planning permission 181194, dated 14/11/2018). The Reserved Matters comprise details of 186 dwellings across Parcels P4 and P5, access via Wheat Street and Sheerlands Road, associated internal roads, parking, landscaping, footpaths, cycle ways and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS). Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered**

Barkham Parish Council had no comments on this application but due to the time period left for public consultation, the council will review the application again nearer to the submission deadline to see if there are any further resident’s comments to consider before it makes the council submits a response.

**241608** - 20 Oak Drive, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG2 9GJ

**Householder application for proposed loft conversion to create habitable space, 1 no. pitched roof rear dormer and changes to fenestration.**

Barkham Parish Council questions where the solar panels shown on the existing plans are to be relocated to. The existing plans have a comment by the existing solar panels that states ‘Client responsible for

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repositioning of existing solar panels by third party specialist installer’, however the proposed plans do not show where these solar panels are to be located.

1. **Approved and Refused Applications**

**241043** - 312a Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 4DA

**Householder application for the installation of an electric security gate. (Retrospective)**

This application was approved by WBC

**223764** – Sports and Community Infrastructure, West and East of Princess Marina Dr, Arborfield Garrison, Reading, RG2 9BH

**Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to O/2014/2280 for the refurbishment of the existing rugby, football, cricket pitches and tennis courts, the demolition of the existing Pavilion building and the erection of a new Pavilion building, the provision of two play areas, Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and allotments, with associated internal access roads, parking, landscaping, footpaths and drainage. Access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered.**

This application was approved by WBC

**240665** - 178 Bearwood Road, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4SH

**Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. four bedroom detached dwelling with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing dwelling and garage.**

This application was approved by WBC

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

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

This application was approved by WBC

1. **Any Other Planning Business**

Mr Dexter informed that the pre-work commenced on the Solar Farm this morning. They are currently surveying the soil structure etc under the supervision of an archaeologist. The archaeology assessment will take place once these surveys have been conducted.

**24/102 Ward Councillor Report**

The following report was received from Cllr Betteridge:

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

Firstly, my apologies for not being with you at this month’s meeting due to a clash with another council meeting.

With the conclusion of the general election, council political business resumed on Monday 8th July. Whilst the election has necessarily occupied councillors, the work of the executive and officers continued as previously reported.

Due to the late receipt of some external consultation responses the local plan is now expected to come before the full council in September. A cross-party working group is overseeing the development of the plan and no decisions have been made on individual sites. It is not anticipated that changes from the new Labour government will impact on the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update process.

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The planning application for Sports and Community Infrastructure in Arborfield Green was approved and work will now start on this, in parallel with the District Centre.

Further to two issues discussed at last month’s meeting:

* I updated the parish clerk on 25 June that there is after all to be a consultation on the future closure of School Road as the timescales for the experimental order to be made permanent expired. There are a wide range of views on the issue across the area and between different parish councils. I am expecting the consultation to be published this week.
* I provided an update and links to further information to the parish clerk on school places, for sharing with councillors.

I have continued to respond to and help resolve a range of questions from constituents across the ward.

I am looking forward to having more time over the coming month to commit to ward activity.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions about anything in this report or on other issues.

Adrian Betteridge

Wokingham Borough Councillor for Barkham and Arborfield ward

07985 088298

adrian.betteridge@wokingham.gov.uk

The following report was received from Cllr Barley on behalf of himself and Cllr Evans:

**Cllr. Joseph Barley and Cllr. George Evans report for Barkham Parish Council**

With the election now over, WBC is back into full operation with committee meetings starting this week. During the election both of us continued hard at work within Barkham & Arborfield and would like to report on our progress over the last month.

Last month Cllr. Barley attended planning committee to speak in objection to the planning application for further proposed housing at 31 Barkham Ride. Despite the proposed development residing in the neighbouring Finchampstead ward, its location being on the border with Barkham & Arborfield would have significant consequences for the infrastructure and residents of Barkham Parish. During the meeting, the committee made the decision to silence me despite all other speakers being permitted discretion to run slightly over time when it came to their turn to speak. The meeting was also plagued with further issues relating to excluding one committee member from voting which would have changed the outcome of the application and factually incorrect comments and behaviour from planning officers during the deliberation of this planning application. As a result of this improper handling of the meeting, the application was approved. This was met with audible anger of the many residents who had come to watch the democratic process first hand but instead had to witness a very poor demonstration of democracy. Cllr. Charles Margetts of Finchampstead Ward has lodged a complaint to WBC on our behalf and we are awaiting a response, I am aware other residents have also lodged complaints with WBC as to how the meeting was ran.

Over the past month we have also been in contact with various local businesses and organisations, making ourselves known to our local community to ensure they know who we are and that they can come to us with their local issues. Most recently today I met with Carolyn of St. Eligius Church to discuss their future plans and wishes to increase their involvement within the community following their purchase of the church from the MoD.

As I’m sure you’re aware today a private consultation took place by a developer looking to once again build more homes in our ward. This was brought to my attention at Arborfield & Newland PC last month and its proximity to Barkham Parish again poses potential threats to the capacity of our local road network, the strategic gap between Arborfield Cross and Barkham Village, and the beauty of our countryside which developers are keen to keep stripping away from us. I made the decision not to attend the private consultation and other councillors have encouraged residents not to either. The reasoning for this is that we do not want to give developers an excuse to claim that they have consulted local residents and ward councillors on any applications as this could strengthen their bid if the application ultimately is one of unsustainable development.

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Once the formal application process begins, we will review the relevant documentation and come to a conclusion on our position. Both of us are committed to opposing unsustainable development in the ward and we’ll be keeping a careful eye on where this application lies on the spectrum of sustainability.

On a final note, the Arborfield Green Community Liaison Group meeting was postponed as a result of purdah, the rescheduled meeting will be taking place on 17th July from 13:00-14:30 at Arborfield Green Community Centre. We are keen to keep up to date with the latest developments in Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park to ensure residents are properly represented.

Once again if there are any further questions the PC may have for us, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Cllr. Joseph Barley: joseph.barley@wokingham.gov.uk

Cllr. George Evans: George.evans@wokingham.gov.uk

The Council accepted the written report received from Cllr Betteridge and the joint report from Cllr Barley and Cllr Evans.

The parish council expressed disappointment that not one of the three elected ward councillors attended the meeting nor is there any indication as to how the ward councillors plan to work together to best represent the residents.

**24/103 – 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**

Mr Dexter queried how long the Clerk had been waiting for a response from WBC for?

The Clerk said a few weeks.

Mr Dexter asked the Clerk to resend the correspondence to the officers and to copy in the 3 Ward Councillors to ask them to assist in this matter.

**Communications**

The Communications Policy is currently being drafted for approval by Council before the first newsletter can be created. A working group including possible outside contributors is to be organised.

**Items closed**

**Enforcement Issues**

The Coombes – No update received

**Items ongoing**

**School Road / Langley Common Road Junction**

No further update since the last meeting

**Item Ongoing**

**Meeting with WBC Executive Officers**

No further update since the last meeting.

**Item ongoing**

**Insight Strategy and Inclusion meeting with WBC**

An update has been received from WBC and sent to councillors for information.

**Item ongoing**

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**District and Community Centres**

The public engagement sessions were held in June, and the results are currently being assessed.

**Item ongoing**

**Solar Farm**

No further update since the last meeting

**Item ongoing**

**California Country Park Improvement Scheme**

WBC are currently undertaking ecological survey works and consultations with Natural England on the proposals, in relation to a protected plant species present in the area.  Alongside this they will also be undertaking a community engagement exercise with a press release and resident survey on the council’s Engage platform. The intended publication date is the 9th July 2024, which is after the election as this type of publicity cannot be carried out during purdah.

BPC will receive an invoice for its share of the project contribution to be agreed to be paid at the July meeting.

**Item ongoing**

**Purchase of Litter Bins**

The bins have been purchased and installed in the identified areas and Tivoli have commenced the contract to empty them.

**Item closed**

Mrs Stubbs informed that she had received positive feedback from residents about the bins.

**Closure of Langley Common Road Underpass**

No further update since the last meeting.

**Item ongoing**

**24/104 – Delegated Authority Report**

The below decisions were made under delegated authority between June and July 2024.

**Finance**

The following comments were agreed via email, as the payment was required before the meeting could be held.

**Cost for Increase in number of Bins to be emptied** LGA 1972 s111

The quote for the increase in the number of bins to be emptied was received and needed agreement before the next meeting could be held so that the bins could be installed as soon as possible, and emptying could commence.

The Costs to extend from 1 Bin to 4 Bins, the uplift has been revised and will be £75.44 a month for April and May (single bin only), **£108.86 for June with the 3 extra bins (part month) and £168.20 July to next April (per Month) after that, should you accept this.**

**The costs of the increased bin collections were agreed by majority of the Council.**

**24/105 Finance**

* 1. **Accounts**

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

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| Payments for June to July 2024 authorised at Council meeting on 9th July 2024 |
| S/O | Staff Wages | £2,000.32 | July 2023 salaries – LGA 1972 s111  |

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| DD | Nest | £198.05 | Pension Contribution Employer & Employee – July 2023 – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | BT  | £44.72 | Internet and phone charges – June 2023 – LGA 1972 s111  |
| DD | Lloyds Bank (Credit Card) | £125.96 | Credit Card bill – June Payments – LGA 1972 s111£3.00 – monthly fee, £5.88 – Microsoft – MS Office Subscription, £108.00 – Map printing (CWC), £4.50 – WBC Parking charge, £1.59 – Aldi – Bin Bags, £2.99 – Screwfix – Cabinet key. |
| BACS | Amazon | £5.69 | Office Stationery – LGA 1972 s111 |
| DD | Unity Trust  | £18.00 | Account fee 1st quarter LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | HMRC | £622.87 | Tax & Ni for 1st quarter LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | Netwise | £528.00 | Website hosting fee LGA 1972 s142 |
| BACS | Tivoli | £311.69 | Bin Emptying Charges for April, May & June LGA 1972 s111 |
| BACS | WBC | £25,000 | CIL Expenditure – Share of Cost for California Country Park Improvement project (as agreed on 13th December 2022, when funding bid was made by WBC) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) |

1. **Mistake on accounts for June**

**Resolved:** Council noted the incorrect amount listed for the CHAPS fee at the June Meeting, the fee was listed as £18 when the correct figure should have been £28.

1. **Report on Monies received**

£158.92 – NatWest - Interest

1. **CIL Expenditure** Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) **– The Junipers Play Equipment**

Council considered the quotes sent by WBC for the replacement of the play equipment and enhancement of the play area as requested by WBC, and selected a contractor to carry out the works. The Quotes received were from Vita Play costing **£21,180.00,** Infinity Playgrounds costing **£28,104.00** and Harlequinn Playgrounds costing **£24,954.84**.

With the Vita Play quote, whilst it was the cheapest option, council did not like the tyre as the swing base, whereas the other 2 providers had baskets as the swing base, which the council felt was more appropriate.

Council preferred the Harlequinn Playgrounds quote as it was the cheaper of the 2 remaining options, had a longer guarantee and more varied equipment for the children to play on.

**Resolved:** Council selected the quote from Harlequin Playgrounds. The Clerk will notify WBC of the decision, WBC will then undertake the project and invoice BPC for the costs.

1. **Change of Current Account level through Unity Trust**

**Resolved:** Council noted that due to the income received in the previous 12 months, the Unity Trust Current account level has been reviewed by Unity Trust and the level has been increased to level T2. This means that the Council will continue to pay the £6 per month account fee, but will also be charged 15p per transaction made. Based on last year’s number of transactions this may equate to an extra £20-£30 per year costs. The change comes into effect in September 2024.

1. **Parish Accounting Information**
	* + 1. **Income and Expenditure Report**

**Resolved:** Council received an income and expenditure report for April – June 2024

* + - 1. **Bank Reconciliations**

**Resolved:** Council is informed that the bank statements and account reconciliations have been checked and agreed. The Reconciliations were checked by Mrs Stubbs.

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**24/106 Parish Office Operations**

1. **Coombes Woodlands**
	1. **Coombes Woodland Management Agreement with Arborfield PC**

**Resolved:** Council approved the Coombes Woodland Management Agreement with Arborfield PC which sets out the agreement for the Council’s working together to manage the Woodlands. The legal document was signed by Mrs Stubbs and Mr Dexter and was witnessed and signed by The Clerk

* 1. **Coombes Woodland Committee TOR’s**

**Resolved:** Council approved and adopted the updated Coombes Woodland Committee’s TOR’s which have been updated to reflect some items contained within the Management Agreement

1. **Approval of Completion of Probationary Period -** To review and approve the successful completion of the probationary period for the Deputy Clerk.

**Resolved:** Council approved the successful completion of the probationary period for the Deputy Clerk and confirmed their status as a permanent employee of Barkham Parish Council.

1. **Policies**

**Safeguarding Policy**

**Resolved:** Council reviewed and adopted a safeguarding policy for the Council, which will inform the Coombes Woodland Volunteer Group Policy and Procedures.

1. **Wildflower Planting –** WBC have said that to be able to assist in Wildflower planting for next year, BPC need to identify where they would like the planting to be undertaken, so that the Countryside Services can best advise which department will be needed to assist with the project – If planting is to be done on highway verges, then Highways will need to be involved, if in fields or recreation areas, it will be a different department.

**Resolved:** Council developed a small working group, consisting of Mr Wrobel and The Clerk to identify where the planting can be undertaken to progress the project with the relevant team. The locations will then be put to council for approval. This will be done via email as WBC need to know the areas of consideration before the next council meeting in September.

**24/107 Councillor Forum**

Mrs Stubbs raised on behalf of Mr Wrobel, that he would like hedgerow planting to be added to the next CIL Working group agenda for consideration as a project.

Mr Edgecombe asked if the Parish Council had any powers to restrict parking along Bearwood Road as there is an issue with 2 vans parking on the bend by the school. The Parish Council does not have any powers, it is also outside of the parish boundary. Mr Edgecombe can report the issue to WBC as they have the authority to look into this.

Mr Heyliger raised that a follow up meeting with WBC to look at the issues raised by the parish needs to be arranged. Before the meeting takes place, the Highways working group need to get together to review and discuss the issues.

Mr Sheth asked if there are any plans for a medical centre in the parish, as he is regularly asked this by residents.

Mrs Stubbs responded that there was a medical centre planned as part of the Arborfield Green development but the CCG said no to it, so it seems to have dropped of the plans. The new MP, as part of his election campaign, has promoted that he wishes to resolve the issue with the NHS in the area, and Mrs Stubbs is planning on writing to the MP to raise this. She will add this query in to her letter.

**24/108 Exclusion of public and press** Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 S1 (2)

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**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 9.18 pm.

**Part 2**

**24/109 Minutes of previous part 2 meeting**

**24/110 The Coombes**