

**Minutes of the Barlaston Parish Council Meeting  
Held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2013.**

**Present:** – Gareth Jones  
Chairman

Steve Hall	John Russell
Ian Macmillan	Elaine Philpott
Sarah Broome	Tony Dodd
Sara Fearn	Paul Fisher
Viv O'Dunne	

**Apologies:** Patrick Linehan, Ian Parry.

**In attendance:** Lynne Bakker Collier, Kerry Ashdown (Stafford Newsletter), George Powell, Adrian Cooper, Gill Wyatt & Michelle Reynolds Community Council of Staffordshire, Audrey Fisher, Rebecca Wilshaw, Michala Black, Andrew Black, V.A. Wilkinson, K.M. French, C. French & D. ??

**Open Forum**

58. George Powell, representing the Wedgwood & Barlaston Conservation group, outlined his many concerns relating to the damage to trees on the WWRD estate.

a. He provided photographic evidence of damage to the famous and old Turkey Oak, the saplings that had been planted as well as many smaller trees on the estate. He cited his professional experience indicated to him that many of the young trees were so badly damaged that they would never reach maturity. He questioned why so many of the trees in the Millennium arboretum had died and had not been replaced by WWRD.

b. He requested that the Parish Council try to influence WWRD to protect the Turkey Oak and other trees and that T.P.O's be requested on the estate for the older trees. He had reported the issues to Stoke-on-Trent Council and felt that the work on the estate was poor and that he disagreed with the consultant WWRD had employed to report on the estate trees.

59. He described the recent felling and pruning of trees as a visual shock for the area which had been developed by the descendants of Charles Darwin and that the heritage of the trees and environment should be protected. He also made reference to his disagreement on the erection of the fence by the pool that in his opinion had "detracted from the natural beauty of the area". In conclusion he wanted WWRD to have more involvement with conservation.

60. The Chairman thanked him for his presentation and that the Council would discuss the matter further later in the meeting.

61. Mrs Michala Black a resident of a property at the top of the Village Green spoke about the care and maintenance of the Village Green. She indicated that she represented the

views of many local residents that the "naturalised area" alongside the eastern edge of the Green needed attention.

62. She referred to the minutes of the Parish Council meeting in June 2009 and the issues that were discussed at the time regarding which parts of the Green should be mowed and which parts should be left to nature. She asked for clarification of the minutes of those meetings.

63. At this point the Clerk and the Council Chairman at the time Councillor Philpott explained the particular problems encountered in that year with the new mowing contractor and the wet spring which had led to residents asking for clarification on the grass cutting. Since that meeting several areas around the Green and the tree on the Green had been left to develop without maintenance to support both the fauna and flora. There had been no further complaints to the Council since 2009 on this matter.

64. Mrs Black referred to recent articles in the press and from national organisations that suggested nettles, brambles and ground elder were pernicious weeds that did little to enhance the area and that these species needed to be managed. She stated that the area was now overgrown and as such the wild flowers were being stifled by the other species. She reported that the area was a significant size and was full of discarded litter and waste. She had regularly removed litter from the area.

65. Councillor Fisher replied to Mrs Black outlining that in his time of living in Barlaston close to the Green that he had always argued for the protection of the natural area and the retention of the natural environment and he read from an article that argued against overzealous tidiness of grassy areas.

66. Mrs Fisher another resident said that the area of brambles referred to had not expanded in size in her view and there were wild flowers present.

67. For clarification Councillor Macmillan asked Mrs Black what actions the residents would wish the Council to take. Mrs Black requested management of the area with wild flowers and the treatment of the pernicious species such as the ground elder. She offered to assist with this as did Mr Black.

68. Councillor Philpott outlined that in the past there had been problems with the residents in this area dumping grass cuttings and other garden waste.

69. Councillor Fisher referred to recent damage by contractors, hired by residents, to the grass on the Green in this area.

70. The Chairman drew the discussion to a close indicating that the points raised would be discussed fully later in the meeting.

71. Adrian Cooper outlined his concern regarding the close mowing of the verges on the Wedgwood and Barlaston Park estates. He produced notes regarding the mowing of roadside verges and the loss of natural fauna and flora. He wanted the verges left for wild flowers to grow.

72. The Clerk pointed out that the verges on the Wedgwood estate were managed by WWRD not the Parish Council and that the Parish Council mowed the verges in the Parish in line with the County Council guidelines in the built environment. The County Council occasionally mowed the verges on the outskirts of the village.

73. The meeting would discuss this issue later in the meeting.

74. Gill Wright and Michelle Edwards of the Community Council of Staffordshire gave a short presentation on the possible development of a Good Neighbour Scheme in Barlaston. Gill indicated the research data showed Barlaston as a village with need and she recognised the good work already in place. She circulated an information sheet and requested that the Council consider such a scheme.

75. A starting point would be a drop in session outlining the scheme it was suggested links with the churches was a possibility.

76. It was agreed that a formal response would follow after further discussion by the Council.

77. There were no declarations of interest made before the meeting began

### **Minutes of the meeting held on May 7<sup>th</sup>. 2013**

**78: RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on May 7<sup>th</sup>. be approved and signed by the Chairman.

#### **Matters arising**

79. Re. Minute 5- The Chairman had had a report from Robert Gatensbury on a meeting over the Wedgwood Memorial College site between Stoke on Trent Council and Staffordshire County Council. He indicated that Stoke on Trent Council felt the design plan produced did not maximise the development potential for the site.

80. Re. Minute 9- The work in the Cemetery was complete.

81. Re. Minute 11- The Chairman agreed to pursue this and it was agreed that a new post-box in the Londis store was needed.

82. Re Minute 30- A letter of thanks had been received for the donation.

83. Re Minutes 39 to 42- The Clerk reported that the nominees for the awards had all accepted. No presentation dates or venues had been decided. It was agreed to award Pam Wright a Certificate of Commendation. The Chairman felt local organisations should be reminded of the annual awards to make nominations and a letter could be sent in November.

#### **Report by Chairman**

84. The Chairman had nothing further to report.

### **Report by Borough Councillor**

85. It was reported that there was a proposal to reduce the number of Borough Councillors from 59 to 40.

### **Report by County Councillor**

86. No report.

### **Finance Report**

87. The following items were considered and approved.

	<b>NET</b>	<b>VAT</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
a.) Neil Hemmings- Allowance	£48.00		£48.00
b.) Postage stamps	£6.00		£6.00
c.) PJS Landscapes- monthly Cemetery Maintenance	£235.00	£47.00	£282.00
d.) British Gas- Electricity Village Hall	£60.57	£3.03	£63.60
e.) Nigel Ferguson- web domain and annual maintenance fee	£300.00		£300.00
f.) Greenfingers – Grass cutting	£424.00	£84.80	£508.80
g.) PJS Landscapes- monthly Cemetery Maintenance- Ivy Removal	£95.00	£19.00	£114.00
h.) Howard Kennerley- repairs to bench on Village Green	£70.00		£70.00

i.) Biffa Waste- waste collection- Cricket Club	£29.73	£5.95	£35.68
j.) Biffa Waste- waste collection-Village Hall	£235.61	£47.12	£282.73
k.) Town & Country Services-grass cutting- Flaxman Close	£90.00	£18.00	£108.00
l.) Joe Poultney- Plants etc. BKV	£266.00		£266.00

m. The May salaries for the Clerk, Transport Co-ordinator and litter pickers have been met.

### **Planning Update**

88. There had been a Planning Committee meeting earlier in the evening that had considered three applications.

89. The WWRD application for housing development had been submitted and there was a brief discussion on the information and plans to hand.

90. The application for outline permission for housing development on the Old Road Nurseries site had to date not been approved.

### **Village Plan**

91. Councillor Dodd reported that the posters for the competition about dog fouling were needed from the school and would be sent to the Borough Council to be judged and then the winning one would be printed and copies would be displayed in the village.

92. The Transport group was still to convene. Councillor Macmillan would pursue the Speedwatch scheme with Steve Bird.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

93. The Chairman had circulated information on community rights in relation to developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

94. It was suggested a list of physical and social assets could be compiled to assist in the process. Examples were cited of facilities that were at risk and by compiling a list of assets and prioritising these it could be a way of gathering support for the assets and facilities if they were under threat. Such an inventory would indicate the level of social value to the

community and provide information for consultation it would also identify the gaps in local provision and need.

95. The Clerk indicated financial support was available for surveys and consultation once this need had been identified; a dedicated Neighbourhood Planning Officer for the Borough had recently been appointed.

96. To move the process forward it was agreed to clarify the objectives, to gather the information and then to widen the consultation to the wider community groups.

### **Best Kept Village Competition**

97. All the planters and hanging baskets were in place. Litter picking was on-going and the next judging visit was awaited.

98. Thanks were expressed to the litter pickers and Tony Shepherd and Joe Poultney for their hard work.

### **Voluntary Transport Scheme**

99. There had been 12 lifts during May

### **Matters arising from the Open Forum**

100. It was agreed that the Chairman would contact WWRD over the matters raised by George Powell and arrange a meeting. The Council revisited the photographs provided by Mr Powell and were concerned over the evidence given.

101. There was a discussion over the area at the top of the Village Green and the issues raised earlier by Mrs Black.

a. The area had developed as a wildlife area over the years but several years ago was damaged by the hedge cutting contractor; there had also been recent damage to the grass on the Green by tree surgeons.

b. It was agreed that wild flowers were preferable to brambles and other weeds.

c. It was suggested a proper conservation area could be developed and managed as such as a natural but managed area.

d. It was agreed that the Council convene a meeting later in the month on the Green to review the area at the top of the Green and the issues raised by Mrs Black. It was felt that the introduction of wild flowers and the establishment of a conservation area were to be encouraged.

102. It was agreed that there was a degree of sympathy for the issues raised by Mr Cooper but the Parish Council had limited control on this matter.

103. It was agreed to take forward the Good Neighbour scheme proposals. It was hoped the initial information could be included in the Heron. Councillor Dodd mentioned the Signpost Centre scheme that dealt with social isolation which he would pursue for Barlaston Park.

104. The Clerk would write to all the parties involved in the Open Forum.

### **Correspondence and Clerk's Report**

105. The Clerk's actions were noted and agreed.

106 It was agreed that a tree be planted near the Green in memory of former Barlaston resident Elsie Challinor, the tree would be purchased and planted by her granddaughter Leonora Flower.

107. It was agreed to site a bench on the parade of shops in Orchard Place. The bench would be taken in at night by local shopkeepers and could be secured during the daytime to the existing noticeboard

108. The Clerk had requested permission from the landowner to site the bench and it was agreed that he pursue the donation of a bench from a local company. He had been given clearance by the Council's insurers for the bench.

109. The Clerk reported that the 350 bus service contract with Wardles was to end in July 2013 but no official news on this was known.

### **Any other business – Agenda items for meeting to be held on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. 2013.**

109. Councillor O'Dunne was still awaiting articles for the Heron before it could be published in July

110. Councillor Russell requested an agenda item on the issue of some houses in the Parkfields area having a Tittensor address not a Barlaston one.

111. It was agreed to place an agenda item on traffic calming and speeding issues.

### **Note by Clerk**

112. The Parish Council meeting closed and members re-convened as the Village Hall Trustees.

### **Village Hall Committee Report**

113. Councillor Hall reported on the recent A.G.M. of the Village Hall Committee.

114. The work for the ventilation was anticipated to be completed soon and funding for the kitchen refurbishment was available but grant support was being sought also. The Clerk would write to support this.

115. The improvements to the ventilation should reduce the problem of noise and complaints related to this.

116. The end of year accounts showed a healthy balance. The usage of the Hall was high.

117. It was noted that the Trustees were aware of the preferred situation of the position of Chairman and Treasurer being separated if volunteers could be found.

## **Chairman**

