

**Minutes of the Barlaston Parish Council Meeting
Held on Tuesday 3rd September 2013.**

Present: – Gareth Jones
Chairman

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

Apologies: Tony Dodd

In attendance: Gill Hill, Lynne Bakker Collier, Ian Parry, Kerry Ashdown (Stafford Newsletter) & Michelle Cuow (The Sentinel)

Open Forum

159. No one in attendance.

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

Wedgwood Memorial College

161. The revised Design Brief for the possible development of the two sites of the College had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Council were generally in favour of the proposals, noting the amendments from the original and the new access for emergency vehicles and a proposed access to the Limes site from Coton Rise. A pedestrian access from Broughton Crescent to the Estoril site was also proposed.

162. Overall the proposals were consistent with the previous document and the Chairman noted that several poplar trees on the northern boundary on the Limes site might need removing as Western Power had to ensure overhead cables were not affected.

163. No commercial interest in the sale of the site was known and there had been no response to date on the proposals from Stoke-on-Trent or Staffordshire County Councils.

Minutes of the meeting held on July 2nd. 2013

164: RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on July 2nd. be approved and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

165. Re. Minute 121 Councillor Hall requested clarification on the identification of the trees involved in the survey; it was agreed these should be those needing a TPO on Parish Council land.

Neighbourhood Planning

166. Raj Baines Neighbourhood Planning Officer for Stafford B.C. gave a presentation on the stages of the process needed to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. She provided a flow chart identifying the necessary stages before approval of the plan by the government office, it was noted that Barlaston was now ready to develop public consultation.

167. She identified the type of support she could provide in the development and writing of the plan that could include data, personal advice and access to a funding stream.

168. Several Councillors stressed that the main aim was to preserve the character of the village and to guard against large development of housing; the issues relating to the possible development on the Memorial College site was also a priority for consideration.

169. It was noted that a village questionnaire in 2011 had identified three main issues planning and the greenbelt, the environment and traffic concerns. Progress had been made to identify the key action points which should then be consulted upon and incorporated into a community engagement plan before a local referendum takes place. The final Neighbourhood Plan was a statutory document and several examples nationally were referred to.

170. A support group meeting for local councils developing Neighbourhood Plans was to be called for early October by Raj who was thanked for her contribution to the meeting.

Village Green Improvements

171. The Chairman referred to the paper "The Management of the Village Green" and the annotated plan for the four areas identified for action.

172. The Chairman welcomed Gill Hill who had been instrumental in providing the expert detail on the proposals which were clear and detailed for each area.

173. Mrs Hill then explained the proposals for each area and the implications on the flora and fauna that could be anticipated.

174. She felt that if the plans were implemented there would be a noticeable improvement in the environment and ecological diversity in a year or so.

175. Comments from the Council were invited and it was agreed that the proposed path in Area A could be reduced in width to 1.5 metres. It was suggested wood anemones could be planted in that area also. Councillor Fisher indicated that Mrs Audrey Fisher would wish to assist in the maintenance of the lime tree by the old library – Area C on the plan.

176. It was agreed to take forward all the recommendations as set out in the paper. Mrs Hill agreed to detail a specification for the work that would go to tender to suitable

contractors. The overall cost of the work could not be estimated yet but if it was excessive local residents could be asked to volunteer with the labour intensive activities.

Report by County Councillor

177. Councillor Parry was welcomed to the meeting and gave a report on several local issues.

178. He would pursue the need for hedge cutting and ground maintenance on the Wedgwood Memorial College site. The Clerk had also pursued this problem reported by pedestrians on Station Road.

179. Councillor Parry indicated that he was unaware of any on-going commercial interest in the site.

180. He outlined the position of the County Council regarding the changes to the local bus services being run by Bakers Buses. He was made aware of the specific problems for local residents commuting to and from work, the difficulty of students reaching local colleges in Stoke and Stafford and parents taking children to and from Barlaston School from Barlaston Park. He requested some firm and reliable data on the demand and usage for both the X1 and X5 services, which Councillor O'Dunne would try to collate and forward to him.

181. Councillor Parry indicated that the Council were opposed to the cuts but it was unlikely that taxpayer's money would be used to support local bus services that were under used by residents. The final decisions by the traffic commissioner would determine the future service details in the near future.

182. The Chairman argued that there was a local need and in particular if the times and route of the X1 could not be amended, then the times of the X5 should be altered to provide a better timed service.

183. The consultation for the proposal of a new gas fired power station was noted. Councillor Parry outlined the likely structure of the works and that the plans for the resulting infrastructure had already been agreed in 2007. He reassured the Council that the station would be totally compliant regarding any emissions and would have little visual impact on the area. A series of three public consultation meetings would be organised to include one in Barlaston in due course and if the plans were realised the station would be supplying electricity to the national grid by 2019.

184. Councillor Russell noted the poor state of many local gutters and road surfaces. He felt that the use of weedkiller was necessary to treat overgrown verges and gutters; also he had noted the hedge growth adjacent to the roadside needed treatment. Councillor Parry noted these concerns which would be part of the normal highways programme of gully emptying and treatment to the verges and gutters.

Report by Chairman

185. The Chairman reminded the Council of several planned events: the Village Show on September 7th; the Civic Sunday presentations on September 8th at 10.30 a.m. and a lecture on the 17th. Century Pewter Jugs from the Church to be held on the Church on September 24th.

186. It was hoped that Councillors and residents would contribute to the Health and Well Being Strategy consultation and the future of Stafford Hospital consultation.

187. It was noted that the Boundary Review consultation had now ended and that various proposals to reduce the number of Borough councillors to around 40 or 45 from 59 would now be considered and would be implemented for 2015.

188. The recent detail of the Signposts survey and work of the Good Neighbours scheme were on-going and a meeting of the Good Neighbours group was planned for later in September in the Village Hall.

Report by Borough Councillor

189. Councillor Bakker Collier had nothing additional to report upon but stressed that the work of the two Borough Councillors for the Barlaston and Oulton Ward covered a substantial and varied geographical area both very rural as well as some densely populated areas.

Finance Report

190. The following items were considered and approved.

	NET	VAT	Total Cost
a.) Neil Hemmings- Allowance- July	£48.00		£48.00
b.) Postage stamps	£3.60		£3.60
c.) Heron Postage	£36.00		£36.00
d.) Engraving Golden Jubilee Award	£25.00		£25.00
e.) PJS Landscapes- monthly Cemetery Maintenance-July	£235.00	£47.00	£282.00

f.) Stafford B.C. – lease of land Flaxman Close	£10.00		£10.00
g.) Biffa Waste Services- Cricket Club	£39.93	£7.99	£47.92
h.) Stafford B.C.- Civic amenity Visit	£128.33	£25.67	£154.00
i.) Eurooffice- A4 Paper, Laser Cartridges and staples	£220.06	£43.99	£264.05
j.)British Gas- gas Village Hall	£357.49	£17.87	£375.36
k.)Neil Hemmings- Allowance- August	£48.00		£48.00
l.)PJS Landscapes- monthly Cemetery Maintenance-August	£235.00	£47.00	£282.00
m.) Town & Country Services- grass cutting Flaxman Close-July	£90.00	£18.00	£108.00
n.)Greenfingers- grass cutting- July	£424.00	£84.80	£508.80
o.) Biffa Waste Services- Cricket Club	£157.52	£31.50	£189.02
p.) British Gas- Electricity Village Hall	£177.70	£8.89	£186.59
q.) Patrick Linehan- BKV materials	£7.89		£7.89

r.) Greenfingers- grass cutting August	£424.00	84.80	£508.80
s.) Town & Country Services- grass cutting Flaxman Close-August	£90.00	£18.00	£108.00
t.) Biffa Waste Services- Cricket Club	£29.73	£5.95	£35.68
u.) Biffa Waste Services- Village Hall	£151.32	£30.26	£181.58
v.) SEI. Ventilation installation at the Village Hall *	£9395.50	£1879.10	£11,274.60
w.) Barlaston PCC- chapel insurance contribution	£409.61		£409.61

x.) The contribution from the Parish Council would stand at £4000 the VAT charged would be reclaimed and the Village Hall Committee would pay the difference of £5395.50

y.) The July & August salaries for the Clerk, Transport Co-ordinator and litter pickers have been met.

z.) The national agreements on the slight increase in the hourly rates of pay for the Clerk and litter picker were agreed.

Planning Update

191. There had been a Planning Committee meeting earlier in the evening that had considered three applications and there were no objections but comments had been submitted.

192. The earlier discussions regarding the proposals on the Meaford site had not raised any concerns.

193. The application for houses on the Old Road Nurseries site was on hold it was noted.

Village Plan

194. It was noted that meetings of the Signposts group were being held fortnightly at Barlaston Park and also in the Children's Centre.

195. Councillor Macmillan was willing to consider the evidence of traffic problems such as speeding on local roads and to undertake a survey of the problems. He felt traffic calming measures on roads into the village such as Meaford Road were needed. It was noted that Highways had never been supportive of previous requests for traffic calming such as those proposed on Longton Road.

196. It was agreed that Councillor Macmillan would take the issue of speeding and traffic calming forward and begin to gather information.

Neighbourhood Plan

197. It was agreed that the formation of a wide consultation exercise should now take place with the possibility of conducting a referendum through an edition of the Heron.

Best Kept Village Competition

198. Councillor Linehan reported on the outcome of the 2013 Competition and Council were disappointed and surprised that the village had not been highly commended. However as the judges report was not available he could only point to possible weaknesses based on the marks criteria that were applied.

199. He cited several issues that may have led to lower marks these included unsightly excavations by Western Power, the lack of an attractive vista outside the local public houses, the tidiness of the Village Hall surrounds and the War Memorial. Councillor Fisher reminded Councillor Linehan of the work that had been undertaken on the memorial and was not sure that planters to brighten the area were necessary. The proliferation of signs may also have been an overstatement that could be reviewed. The hanging baskets on Orchard Place had been a failure as the watering system may have been terminated some years ago,

200. It was agreed that further comment would not be evidence based and we should await the report before further consideration on how to take the village forward if an entry in 2014 was to be made. The Council had spent £1000 on the Competition with plants, planters and signs and had received many favourable comments on the improvements that had been made in 2013.

201. Councillor Philpott suggested the employment of a gardener/handyman on a casual basis to deal with overgrown areas and minor problems as they were perennial problems that were no longer dealt with by the Borough and County Councils. The Clerk suggested this could be accomplished at an annual cost of £2500 depending on the hours worked and rate of pay and he would include this in the planning for the setting of the precept for 2014/15.

Voluntary Transport Scheme

202. There had been 19 lifts during July and 12 in August; there was a shortage of volunteer drivers there had been no new offers of help.

Matters arising from the Open Forum

203. None

Correspondence and Clerk's Report

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

205. The Clerk had requested that the Neighbourhood Highways Teams clear weeds and debris from the footpaths as before around the village; he stressed that they were often unable in the time allowed to manage all the tasks all the more reason he suggested for the employment of a casual worker to deal with noted problems that needed addressing more frequently.

206. The Clerk would write to Bill Cash M.P. to update him over the issues relating to the level crossings and the bus services.

Any other business – Agenda items for meeting to be held on November 5th. 2013.

207. That there should be discussions on the on-going finance of subsidies to local organisations, issues on the railway line and crossings, the improvements to the Village Green.

208. The Clerk outlined complaints he had received regarding advertising and notices in the village; several were for commercial organisations others for local events. He pointed out that all advertising was regarded as unauthorised by the Borough Council and if it was objected to by residents or the Council should be reported to the enforcement team. Advertising on the verge of the Highway was not permitted and could be reported to the Highways Department. He suggested organisations and clubs advertising should be reminded to remove adverts once an event had taken place. He would remove any fly notices if he saw them.

Note by Clerk

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

Village Hall Committee Report

210. Councillor Jones reported that the air conditioning was now working and there had been no complaints regarding noise from hirers recently. The design for the refurbishment of the kitchen was on going.

211. Councillor Macmillan enquired about holding a quiz in the Hall with proceeds to charity. It was noted that a hiring charge had to be made for any event.

212. There was still a need for a new Treasurer on the Hall Committee.

Chairman

