



# BARLASTON PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING

Held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at 7.30pm.  
In BARLASTON VILLAGE HALL.

**Present: –**

Cllr. E. Philpott (Chair)  
Cllr. T. Dodd  
Cllr. S. Hall  
Cllr. S. Broome  
Cllr. I. Macmillan  
Cllr. P. Linehan

**In attendance:** Mrs. K. Squires (clerk), Mr. J. Blount (consultant), 14 members of the public and 1 member of the press.

**Absent:** Cllr. Gent

**Public Question Time – matters raised:**

Churchyard clearance – several members of the public voiced their hurt at the insensitive and apparently arbitrary clearance of items from the Churchyard. Photographs of a skip containing of items apparently removed from graves were shown. The Vicar had apparently cited Health and Safety reasons for the removal of some but not all items and, despite being asked, the Vicar had failed to produce a Health and Safety risk assessment and had been unsympathetic in her dealings with those who had contacted her about this.

A member of the public complained about the poor quality of grass cutting in the Churchyard and stated that grass-strewn paths were a greater danger than ornaments on the plinths of graves. It was explained that the removal of grass cuttings was costly and added significantly to the cost of grass cutting.

A member of the public thanked the Council for its work in stopping plans by Severn Trent Water to divert lorries through the village.

A member of the public asked about the results of a questionnaire that had been distributed about 18 months before. It was thought that the questionnaire related to the Village Plan that had been succeeded by the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr. Hall believed the results could be found on the Parish Council website. The member of the public hoped to find evidence to support her efforts to create a playground in the village. She also asked how she could become a member of the Playing Field Committee. Cllr. Macmillan invited her to the Neighbourhood Plan meeting on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July.

A resident of Nursery Gardens asked what had been done about the number of concerns that had been raised during previous Public Question Times. It was explained that this was on the agenda for this meeting. It was recommended that the member of the public could raise concerns with the County Council. This had apparently been done about grass cutting and hedge trimming; the response had been that this was the responsibility of the Parish Council. It was explained that this item was also on the agenda and that this would be addressed then.

**404. Election of Chairman.** Cllr. Philpott was nominated. There being no other nominations Cllr. Mrs. Philpott was duly elected as Chairman for the meeting.

**405. Apologies.** Cllrs. Jones, Fisher, and O'Dunne submitted apologies. It was resolved to accept these apologies.

**406. Declarations of Interest.** There were no declarations of interest.

**407. Written applications for dispensations under the Localism Act 2011.** There were no written applications.

**408. Minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016.** Cllr. Broome said that she has informed not asked the Council about the Churchyard clearance. It was resolved that, with this amendment, the Minutes be accepted as a true record.

**409. Matters arising from the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016.**

341. Neighbourhood plan. Mr Blount reported progress on this and that the Steering Group were meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July. It was noted that there may be difficulty with the end of grant report and that £2400 would have to be returned as money had not been spent in line with the original grant application.

360. Asset register. Members contributed further details and, with the addition of the Downs Car Park, the register was accepted as an accurate record. It was resolved that this item be discharged.

362. Accounts. Further enquiries had been received from Grant Thornton and replies sent.

Public Liability Insurance. Copies of all insurance policies had now been received. It was resolved to discharge this item.

Account with the Unity Trust Bank. Cllrs. Philpott, O'Dunne, Fisher and Jones were nominated as signatories.

HMRC issues. HMRC had agreed that incorrectly claimed VAT could be repaid by foregoing further claims until the amount misclaimed had been covered. This amounted to about £5,800. The clerk was still awaiting payroll information.

Contracts of employment and job descriptions. This item was moved to the end of the agenda.

Weekly visual check of play equipment. It was resolved that Cllr. Dodd would carry out this inspection. Clerk to send draft inspection forms and instructions.

Annual inspection of play equipment. This had been done and had identified a number of issues amounting to a spend of between £400 - £500. It was resolved that the Clerk would ask Stafford Borough Council to quote for the work.

Information Commissioner. The clerk reported she had registered with ICO. It was resolved to discharge this item.

Keys for Council property. Mr. Blount was acquiring new keys so that the Clerk and the Chairman would each hold a set. It was noted that Mr. Blount would not present the bills for these and similar items until April 2017.

Financial information on the Council's web site. Mr Blount reported that this was now completed. It was resolved to discharge this item.

Audit programme. The Clerk and Mr. Blount would be meeting with the Internal Auditor on 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

374. Land on Station Road opposite Plume of Feathers. The clerk reported that the license from SCC would cost £100. As planting had already been done the application would be retrospective.

392. War Memorial project (See item 414 below)

**410. Reports from Chairman and Borough Councillor.** No report was made as Cllr. Jones was not in attendance.

**411. Reports from the County Councillor.** No report was made as Cllr. Parry was not in attendance.

**412. Reports from the Planning Committee.** The following decisions had been reached by the planning committee:

App 16/24346/HOU for loft conversion at 60, Longton Road. No comment.

App 16/24350/HOU for extension and alteration to form new garage, Utility, Open living/Kitchen area and ancillary accomm with Bedroom and en-suite at New Pool, Bedcroft. It was noted that this work would be very close to the neighbouring property but as the Council was not aware of any objection made by the neighbour, the Council did not object to this application, which, while large, would improve a previously empty and neglected property.

App 16/24164/HOU for 2 storey side extension at 5, Broughton Cres. No comment.

App 16/24310/OUT for detached house and garage in garden of Oak Barton, The Green. The Council noted that the driveway was very narrow and did not support creating a driveway through an existing property.

App 16/24282/HOU for demolition of existing attached garage. New single storey front entrance and cloakroom extension. New front double garage. New two storey extension and alteration to elevations Oak Barton, The Green. No comment.

**417. Committee terms of reference.** It was resolved that for the Neighbourhood Steering Group, a quorum would be 3 and that the Council would delegate spending powers of £200 to pay for the stand at the Village Show. Mr. Blount would be in attendance. Other committee terms of reference were deferred to the next meeting.

**418. Review of and decisions on amendments to Council policies:**

- a) Complaints policy
- b) Freedom of Information requests

c) Press/media policy

These policies, which had been mentioned in previous minutes could not be discovered. It was resolved that some draft policies would be produced for consideration at future meetings.

**419. Voluntary Transport Scheme.** It was resolved to consider this under item 414.

**420. Ownership of Downs carpark.** Paperwork referring to the deeds for the car park had been discovered, confirming that the Parish Council does own the car park. The deeds themselves would be recovered and held securely by the Clerk pending a decision on their safe keeping.

It was resolved to consider action to be taken regarding loutish behaviour at the next meeting.

**421. Churchyard clearance.** This issue had caused a great deal of ill feeling within the community. Cllr. Broome explained that the clearance was within the regulations laid down by the Diocese, which were being adhered to strictly by the Vicar. These regulations were given to each person purchasing the use of a plot in the Churchyard by either the Vicar or the Undertaker. Signs requesting that people did not put anything breakable on graves had been erected; ideally, only gravestones should mark graves. Artificial flowers are not allowed except for poppies in November, and wreathes at Christmas and the anniversaries of death or marriage – in all cases these must be removed within one month. It was resolved that the clerk should draft an open letter, which would be posted on the website, to the Chancellor, and copy it to Matthew Parker, the Archdeacon of Stoke, and the Vicar. A meeting with the archdeacon will be arranged when the Vicar returns from sick leave.

**422. Complaints from residents of Nursery Gardens.** 1) The hedge on Old Road/Nursery Gardens entrance is encroaching onto the footway: the residents need to contact the developers to establish ownership of the hedgerow. 2) Grass cutting: thanks were extended to Mr Hemmings, the former Clerk, whose local knowledge proved invaluable in clarifying that Staffordshire County Council (SCC) cut this grass twice annually. 3) The footway between Nursery Gardens and Orchard Place has tree roots coming through and is becoming overgrown with brambles: this needed to be taken up with SCC. The clerk would contact Shane Latham at SCC to try and arrange a site visit. 4) The block paving on Nursery Gardens is breaking up and needed urgent attention: the homeowners should contact the developers as the development is still new. 5) Visibility at the road access point. Residents could ask the postman to park his van on Nursery Gardens instead of the junction. The clerk would contact SCC to see if solutions to the problem of visibility could be found. It was resolved that the clerk should telephone one complainant and acquire his email address so that one point of contact could be established and the decisions reached could be clearly explained.

**423. Proposed electricity pole installation at Old Road Barlaston.** It was resolved that Cllrs. Macmillan, Philpott, and Dodd would meet with Mr Ford. The clerk would liaise with Mr. Ford to suggest a site meeting on a Friday between 3 – 4pm.

**424. Trees on Village Green by Spokane House.** Mr. S. Brunt, has asked the Council if it will cut back 4 trees that it owns. He is prepared to pay for expert tree surgery which will be done with the guidance of the Stafford Borough Council tree officer. It was resolved to give permission but that a schedule of work must be agreed in advance and written confirmation provided by Mr. Brunt that he will pay for the work.

**424. Questions from Councillors.** There were no questions from Councillors.

**425. Reports from representatives:**

Voluntary Transport Scheme. 29 lifts in June.

Best Kept Village. The Clerk reported that an invitation inviting three members of the BKV group to the announcement of results evening on 1<sup>st</sup> August had been received.

Barlaston Community Group. Cllr. Linehan reported that the film night had been successful and that an Open Gardens event was planned for late July.

Barlaston Village Hall Committee. No report was made as Cllr. Jones was not in attendance.

**426. Correspondence and circulars.**

Mr. Hemmings: Minutes of May meeting.

NHS England review taking place regarding maternity services in Stafford.

SPCA. Weekly briefing notes.

SLCC. News update.

Advice of ACAS training.

Mrs. Black. Email about litter picking.

Mrs Coates. Email about show insurance.

Mrs Coates. Email asking permission to hold the Village Show on The Green – this was given.

SBC Planning. Weekly list.

SBC. 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme

SBC. Invitation to At Home with the Mayor, 21<sup>st</sup> August.

**413. Minutes of the Finance Committee of 28th June 2016.** It was resolved that this was a true record.

It was resolved that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of items 414 and 419 under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 in view of the confidential nature of the matters to be discussed.

Cllr. Broome briefed the Council on the background to the Churchyard clearance.

Cllr. Broome then left the meeting.

It was resolved to suspend Standing Orders at 22.00 hours

**414. Recommendations from the Finance Committee.**

A comparison of spend against budget spreadsheet was distributed and considered.

Members were reminded that the projected year-end figures were based upon the recommendations of the Finance Committee.

Recommendation that amounts paid on behalf of the village hall would be reclaimed in full as they arose. It was noted that the Village Hall Committee were already looking to take waste and energy arrangements under their own control. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation.

Recommendation that Cllr. Jones explore the options for reducing the financial support currently provided to the Parochial Church Council and report. It was recommended that if there was a contribution towards the Chapel of Rest insurance then this be paid in October. At the request of the Chairman Mr. Blount had negotiated with the Secretary of the PCC the proposal (to be taken to both the PC and the PCC) that the Parish Council would not pay the insurance on the Chapel of Rest but would pay half the full cost of the grass cutting. If accepted the effect of this proposal would be a saving of about £450pa on insurance and £337.20pa on mowing calculated as follows.

The cost of mowing is £307.20 per month or £921.60 per quarter. The PCC have been contributing £376.50 per quarter leaving the Council to pay £545.10 per quarter. If the PCC paid half of the true cost their contribution would rise from £376.50 to £460.80. This would save the Council £84.30 a quarter or £337.20pa.

It was resolved to consider this at the next meeting.

Recommendation that the mowing contract be written up with a view to reducing the number of cuts and re-advertising the contract for next year. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation.

Recommendation that Neighbourhood Plan publicity be included in the Autumn edition of The Heron. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation.

Recommendation that the litter picking arrangements be changed at the end of July. An email from a member of the public about this was read out to the Council. The Council explored options from ceasing litter picking from September until the next financial year to reducing the amount of work carried out each month. The agreement with Canal and River Trust was a consideration. It was resolved to give this further consideration at the next meeting.

Recommendation that the voluntary transport coordinator be given a written contract of employment and that the conditions of employment be regularised. It was resolved to consider this at the next meeting.

Recommendation that the War Memorial project be abandoned. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation. The County Council grant would be returned.

Recommendation that the payments to Urban Vision for September and October be moved back to October and December. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation.

Recommendation that the Chairman's Allowance be raised to at least £150 to cover the traditional payment for Remembrance Day. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation.

Recommendation that there should be a provision of £6k set aside for HMRC payments. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation.

Recommendation, should the BKV committee be given a grant, then they would pay for the tubs and planters provided for the BKV bid. It was resolved to adopt this recommendation.

**415. Barlaston CC contribution towards waste bill.** This was deferred to the next meeting.

**416. Financial matters:**

**Bank reconciliation.** It was resolved to accept this as a true record.

**Schedule of payments**

<b>Payee</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Cheque No.</b>
Mrs K. Squires	Secretarial services, inc expenses	882.43	2166
Mrs. K. Squires	Salary and expenses	221.11	2167
Barlaston Community Group	Grant	450.00	2168
Town & Country Services	Mowing Flaxman Close, June	108.00	2169
Greenfingers	Mowing verges	374.40	2170
Greenfingers	Mowing The Green	544.42	2171
Creative Bee	BKV map	12.00	2172
Cllr. Linehan	BKV items	4.85	2173
PJS Landscapes	Churchyard extension July	307.20	SO
Biffa	V. Hall waste	324.54	2174
Biffa,	BCC waste	55.20	2175
Biffa	BCC waste	85.12	2176
British Gas	V. Hall utility bill	185.00	DD
Urban Vision	Neighbourhood Plan support	6480.00	2177
Information Commissioner	Registration fee	35.00	2178
Metrosigns	Keys for notice boards	15.00	2179
Mr. Moorewood	Salary and expenses	406.40	2180
Mrs. R. Kingsbury	Salary and expenses	28.00	2181

All payments were approved with the exception of the payment to Urban Vision which would be discussed at the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting and authorised if it met the conditions on which the grant application was based.

**427. Items for next meeting.**

Financial matters:

Churchyard grass cutting; Chapel of Rest insurance; litter picker; Voluntary Transport Scheme, coordinator's status

Loutish behaviour at Downs carpark.

**Date and time of next meeting**

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 at 7.30 pm.