

BARKWAY BULLETIN



A Quarterly Newsletter from the Parish Council of Barkway

Issue No 15.

March 2013

Welcome to the first edition in 2013 of the Barkway Bulletin. In this edition, there are many items including the Parish Precept for the next financial year and an update on the Pavilion Project. We hope that you find the articles informative and if you have any questions please pass them to the Parish Clerk. I would also like to request that you put the date of this year's Annual Parish Meeting, to be held on Wednesday 22nd May, into your diaries.

The Barkway Bulletin has been published for a number of years now and we always welcome feedback on its contents or layout. Please let us know if you have any comments.

Steve Alsop, Chairman, Barkway Parish Council

2013 - 2014 Parish Precept

At the end of 2012 the Parish Council's Finance committee formulated the budget for the next financial year. This involved a detailed analysis of future revenue and expenditure for each portfolio area. The financial controls, which have been introduced over the last few years, have enabled the Council to have full transparency of our current costs to assist this exercise. The Council has achieved a lot during 2012, the details of which will be reviewed at the Annual Parish Meeting in May. However, there are still more areas to tackle, improve and maintain in the future. Moreover, we are also having to fill the gaps that are not now being covered effectively by the County and District Councils.

Following the Finance committee recommendations, it was agreed at the Council meeting in January that there would be no change to the Parish Council precept for the next financial year, beginning in April 2013 and therefore it will remain at the same level as the year 2012/13. This will be shown as a component part of your Council Tax demand from NHDC, which you should be receiving shortly. The final accounts for the year 2012/13 will be published as part of the Annual Report that will be distributed to all households. They will also be included in the presentations at the Annual Parish meeting.

Windmill Close

NHDC is seeking authority to sell a piece of land measuring approximately 1.2 acres situated behind Windmill Close and Royston Road in Barkway. If the NHDC Cabinet approves the sale of the land, it will be put before the Royston and District Committee. If the sale of the land is then approved by them, it will be placed upon the open market, the likelihood being that it will be used for housing development. After a public meeting in January with residents, the Parish Council agreed to support the majority view, which is to seek the status of 'village green' for the land, and this has duly been communicated to NHDC. It is hoped that the land can be registered as a village green through the Open Spaces Society, as the land has been used as a recreational area by local children for over 20 years, setting a precedent for its use. If you have any photographs showing people using this area for recreational purposes, that will help to prove the case. The older the photographs, the better. Please contact Laura Childs or Graham Swann for more information.

Pavilion Project—update

It has been a 'roller coaster ride' for this project. We have had some downs, but there is now some positive news. It was a major disappointment to receive the news in December that we had been unsuccessful in our application for a £50K grant from Sport England. If we had received this money, we would have been very close to our target figure required to build the development, as per our specification. As a Parish Council we know that the structural deterioration of the current pavilion continues and to do nothing is not an option for us. With time being so important to meet the PACIF grant completion date criteria, we met before Christmas with the preferred builder to establish what fixtures and fittings in the specification could initially be left out of the original build. Basically, the Plan B was to build the shell, with all the services in place and which would be functional as a facility from day one, but with a view to add the other items at a later date, as funds became available.

The revised quote, in January, from the builder was still significantly above our current funds. We investigated the possibility of a loan from the Public Works Loan Board, accessed and agreed through the Department of Communities and Local Government.

However, at an extraordinary Parish Council meeting in January it was agreed unanimously that the loan, that we required at that time, was too large a financial commitment to leave to the village.

Since that date, we have had a constructive and positive meeting with NHDC regarding the PACIF grant of £50K, the offer of which terminates at the end of March 2013. We are reviewing several options and we plan to meet again with them very shortly. We remain very positive, even though we have had some major disappointments, that we will still see a new sports pavilion and community room being built on the Rec. As soon as we have further information we will let everyone know.

If anyone has any ideas of raising the extra funds please contact Cllr Steve Alsop. A musical fundraising event is planned for 23rd March in the village hall—more details on the website. Also if you would like to donate to our 'Buy a Brick' campaign to help with the Pavilion Project then please take a look at the details on the Barkway village website. Any contribution will be greatly appreciated and help us provide a new facility for everyone to use in the village.

A copy of the plan and the prospectus are available in the Reading Room.

Red Phone Box Restoration – call for volunteers

Situated in Barkway High Street, the public phone box was decommissioned by BT in 2012 and has since been adopted by the village and the Parish Council. We are looking for volunteers to help with the renovation and redevelopment, starting at the end of March, when the weather will hopefully be improving and the evenings will be lighter. The aim is to restore it to its former glory, tracking the project on the website from start to finish. Anyone wishing to become involved with this interesting project, should get in touch with Councillor Tony Terry at tony.terry@barkway-village.co.uk

Dates for your Diary.....

Parish Council meetings in the Reading Room at 7.30pm. 11th March, 8th April and 13th May. Members of the public welcome.
Neighbourhood Watch meeting in the Reading Room, 6th March at 7.30pm

Parish Matters.....

Wisbridge Farm Solar Farm

The revised plans for the Solar Farm are scheduled to go to North Herts Planning Control Committee on March 21st. Following the open meeting held in the Village Hall in November, where the original proposed Solar Farm plans were discussed, the Parish Council put forward the majority view of the village to NHDC. This view was to oppose the planning application. The developers consequently revised and resubmitted the planning application, with additional planting of hedgerows and trees to improve the screening. The Parish Council had the opportunity to comment on these plans and gave the view that as insufficient changes had been made, their opinion was unchanged, in that we continue to oppose the plan for the original reasons. A member of the Parish Council will be in attendance at the meeting on March 21st to again put across our point of view.

Footpath No 3 (Church to Royston Road)

The Rights of Way Service at Hertfordshire County Council have enforced the reinstatement of the footpath as shown on the Definitive Map and Statement. The Definitive Map for rights of way in Barkway, along with other parishes was drawn up in the 1950s by the County Council. At that time it was stated that the footpath went across the field. However, it is understood, from talking to many people in the village that the grassed track, running adjacent to the field boundary, has always been used for access as far as they can remember. However this track appears never to have been recorded as a right of way. The landowner has been instructed, therefore, to make a gap in the fence and the farmer to highlight the path across the field to allow pedestrians to walk the definitive route of the footpath.

It is considered that most people in the village would like to continue to use the grassed track instead of the definitive footpath as the means of access. The route is also used as a vehicle exit from the field parking at the Street Market. The Parish Council is discussing the situation with the landowners and County Hall to see if the issue can be resolved. We will keep the village informed of progress on this matter.

New Website for Barkway & Newsells

The village website is currently under reconstruction, due for completion we hope by the end of March/early April. It will have a more modern look and feel, with fewer pages to maintain, and for those with a technical persuasion, a more 'streamlined user interface', making editing it a simpler affair.

We are also looking to add to the stock of images, so a plea to all those budding photographers to Email us copies of your favourite Barkway and Newsells scenes for inclusion. We can't promise to use them all, but hope that we can refresh the pictures, possibly on a seasonal basis.

If you have any News or Events you would like included, please either submit them through the website itself, on the 'Contact Us' page, or Email fiona.tomkins@barkway-village.co.uk. Plus, if you have any ideas for the new website, we would love to hear from you.

Reading Room Book Exchange

The Reading Room, at number 12 High Street, is not only the home of the Parish Council, and venue for small meetings, but also our very own village library! Over the last few months it has been transformed by a number of volunteers into a warm and welcoming room, filled with books to suit all reading tastes from fiction through to fact. Now that Spring is here we are looking to re-launch this facility and will be contacting past volunteers and encouraging new ones to help run this. We would also welcome suggestions for your preferred opening times. Please contact the Parish Clerk, Catharine Toms.

Dog Fouling in the village

Dog fouling continues to be a problem in parts of the village, particularly on the Recreation Area, where children play and sport takes place. There are plenty of dog waste bins around the village, with a new one about to be sited at Windmill Close at the request of the residents. Dog fouling is an offence and individuals can be fined for failing to pick up after dogs. The Parish Council also has a policy of following up reports of individuals who fail to do so.

Village Emergency Plan – call for snow volunteers!

We are currently revising the Village Emergency Plan, which seeks to outline the course of action to be taken, should a major incident occur. We are increasingly faced with the serious problems caused by heavy snowfall and prolonged periods of extreme temperatures leading to icy conditions on our roads and pavements. The Emergency Plan will therefore focus on this very real issue. One key element will be 'Snow Patrol' which is to be set in motion when the roads in and out of the village become blocked due to snow. We have this year purchased essential basic equipment to kit out three small teams of people to rescue stranded motorists in such conditions and bring them to shelter in Barkway. If you would like to find out more, or think that you could help as a 'Snow Patrol' volunteer, then please contact Cllr Fiona Tomkins.

We also receive an allocation of salt each year from NHDC which we can use to treat roads and pavements. Unfortunately the Parish Council doesn't have a budget to pay someone to do this and relies on volunteers. We are lucky to have some residents with suitable vehicles who this year did a really excellent job of spreading salt on the High Street, so many thanks to them. For next year we are expecting to get a new salt bin located outside the school entrance, plus hoping for a couple more (or if not bins, then salt locations) placed along the route from Windmill Close to school. If anybody feels they can volunteer to help keep a stretch of pavement clear, please contact Councillor Jim Dalton at jim.dalton@barkway-village.co.uk

Your Parish Councillors with their responsibilities and contact details

Steve Alsop: (Chairman) Environment

Jim Dalton: (Vice Chairman) Highways

Tony Terry: Property & Leisure

Fiona Tomkins: Community Liaison and Communication

Andrew Murphy: Corporate Governance & Grants

Jenny Warren: Planning

Special Projects portfolio - vacant

Catharine Toms: Parish Clerk

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Thanks go to Gordon Baker, for his involvement over the past few years with the village website and Barkway Bulletin. Gordon was instrumental in creating both, and continued with his role of Webmaster/Editor well beyond his time as a Councillor. His contribution is much appreciated.

Simon Taylor resigned from the Parish Council on 11th February 2013 after nearly two years service. Simon worked on the Pavilion Project since its inception, dedicating a substantial amount of time and effort to the project. The Parish Council, on behalf of the village, would like to thank Simon for his service as a Parish Councillor.

If you have any comments on the content of this edition of Barkway Bulletin, please contact the editor, Fiona Tomkins at fiona.tomkins@barkway-village.co.uk - we are always interested in hearing your views.

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