

**Minutes of Barkway Parish Council Meeting
Held in the Reading Room on 14th March 2016 at 7.30pm.**

- 1. In attendance:** Cllrs:
Rev S Falaschi-Ray (Chair)
Mr J Dalton (Vice-Chair)
Dr G Frapporti
Mr R Squire
Dr R Davidson

Also present: Mrs C Toms (Clerk/RFO) & Dist. Cllr. Gerald Morris

Others present: None

2. To receive and accept apologies for absence: Cllr. Swann (unwell) and County Cllr. Tony Hunter - apologies accepted.

3. To receive Councillor's Declaration of Interest: None received

4. Minutes

4.1 To approve the minutes of the last meeting - approved as read.

4.2 To consider any matters arising from the last meeting: The Clerk reported that it was disappointing, that despite two emails sent to Tony Hunter enquiring about potential funding assistance towards the legal fees for acquiring the open space behind Windmill Close, no response had been received from him. It was suggested by Dist. Cllr. Morris that he may be contacted more successfully by text message. **Action: Clerk**

5. Public Session: No one present

6. Council Administration

6.1 To consider quotations received and agree appointment of Internal Auditor - The Clerk reported that she had received 2 quotations for carrying out the Internal Audit - Carol Willis Accountant £250 + VAT and Hardcastle Burton Accountants £425 + VAT. A third company that had been approached did not take on auditing work. It was proposed by Cllr. Falaschi-Ray and seconded by Cllr. Davidson and agreed by all to appoint Mrs Carol Willis as Internal Auditor. The Clerk to write formal letter of appointment to Mrs Willis. **Action: Clerk**

6.2 To review effectiveness of internal controls (including risk assessment) and adopt proposed amendments to Governance documents - A review was carried out of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit. The purpose of this was to ascertain that the systems of financial procedures, practices, documents of governance and other controls were effective. The review provided sufficient assurance to the Council that standards were being met and that the work of the internal audit was effective. It was proposed by Cllr. Falaschi-Ray and seconded by Cllr. Dalton and agreed by all that apart from inserting the details of the newly appointed Internal Auditor, this document was approved. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr. Davidson had examined at length all Barkway Parish Council Corporate Governance documents and reported to the Council that apart from very minor tidying up of some documents, the only documents needing to be revised and re-adopted were the Financial Regulations, Freedom of Information Policy and the Risk Assessment.

Financial Regulations - to amend 1.1

Freedom of Information Policy - to take out all non relevant material.

Risk Assessment - general updating suggested, in particular to do with the risks associated with the village pond and wagon wash areas.

It was proposed by Cllr. Davidson and seconded by Cllr. Falaschi-Ray and agreed by all to approve these amendments and re-adopt these policies. Cllr. Davidson was thanked for his diligent hard work on this matter. The Clerk to ensure that the website was updated with the revised documents. **Action: Clerk**

6.3 To review and approve level of insurance cover (including fidelity guarantee) - The Clerk reported that she had updated the Asset Register with any acquisitions during the past year and had contacted Zurich to add appropriate cover for these items. Following the Internal Audit in 2015 some additional cover had been added for cash being held pending banking. The level of insurance cover was considered to be appropriate, in many cases sums insured were industry standard, including fidelity guarantee cover at £100,000 which was considered more than adequate for Barkway Parish Council. It was proposed by Cllr. Falaschi-Ray and seconded by Cllr. Dalton and agreed by all to approve the level of insurance cover, including fidelity guarantee.

6.4 To discuss and agree action to fill Councillor vacancy - Cllr. Falaschi-Ray reported that sadly Cllr. Jenny Warren had resigned from the Council since the last meeting. She would be sorely missed and thanks were made for all her dedication and hard work whilst on the Council. The vacancy notice had not resulted in a call for an election. The Clerk reported that NHDC had confirmed that the Council were now able to co-opt to fill this vacancy. All Councillors were asked to give some thought to recruiting a new Councillor. It was agreed that the Clerk would display a recruitment poster on the boards, place a notice in the April edition of the Diary and send out an email to residents via the Parish email database to encourage people to step forward and apply to become a Parish Councillor. **Action: Clerk**

7. To receive updates from Portfolio Holders

It was proposed by Cllr. Dalton and seconded by Cllr. Falaschi-Ray and approved by all that in order to not potentially prolong the meeting too much, item 7.1 be deferred until after item 7.7. All approved.

7.2 Planning

7.2.1 Update on land behind Windmill Close - It was noted that the Council had been informed by the Solicitor acting for the Parish Council, Glynn Railton of Railton Law, that he thought that the Council could agree the form of Lease but there was disagreement with NHDC as to the terms of the Contract. He was concerned that NHDC were not willing to agree a long stop date, which was an important requirement for the Parish Council in order to avoid the possibility of the matter not progressing to a transfer of the land. He advised caution here, as in local government land cases such as this, there were many issues to consider and goals and policies could change, especially in times of financial restriction as being experienced currently. NHDC were also not agreeing the registration of a notice against the title at the Land Registry. It did not want to request approval from the Parish Council for any other land transaction. Glynn Railton advised that it was usual for any such contract of this type to be registered and it only related to the specific area under that title. He considered that the Parish Council should be appraised of any dealings with the land. Cllr. Swann reported in his absence, that he believed that the two items that NHDC were objecting to were not in the original contract/lease but were added in by Glynn Railton as additional protection for the Parish Council. He would check with Herts County Council (HCC) with regard to the position of further delaying the Open Space Application and report back to Council. **Action: GS**

Further to some discussion, Cllr. Dalton proposed and Cllr. Davidson seconded and it was all agreed that the NHDC proposal should be rejected by the Council and that if necessary the Council should go ahead with the Open Space Application. Resolved.

7.2.2 To consider and make comment on planning application: Full Planning Permission Householder : Single storey rear extension. The Pump House, Royston Road, Barkway, Royston, SG8 8BX - Case Ref No: 16/00445/1HH. No objection. Clerk to contact NHDC. **Action: Clerk**

7.3 Highways - update - Cllr. Swann reported in his absence, that at long last a date had been set for the Highways Together Risk Assessment Briefing evening training session. This would be on 28th April at 7.30pm in Hatfield. Cllr. Davidson volunteered to attend. The Clerk to check if Cllr. Swann was also available and to reserve two places. **Action: Clerk/RD/GS**

Cllr. Swann also reported that he believed that speed survey cables had been laid in Royston Road. He had also started the process for road closure for Remembrance Sunday by asking permission of the Police and Highways. He also advised the Council that he had still not heard back from the Community Payback team and that he intended to chase them that week. **Action: GS**

7.4 Pavilion and Community Property

7.4.1 Pavilion and Community Room

7.4.1.1 Report from BRGMC following meeting held on 1st March -

Cllr. Davidson reported that Royston Town Football Club (RTFC) had had many games cancelled recently due to weather but it was common to the area and not specifically Barkway. The senior team continued to be delighted with the facilities. It had been requested by RTFC to have the pitches rolled. A quotation had been received from Bullards for vertical draining of the pitches at £500 + VAT. A revised quotation would be requested for a roll and aerate as independent technical advice had been sought on this matter. RTFC had offered use of their roller if the cost from Bullards was prohibitive. Generally the pitches were considered to be in very good condition and they would play on mud as long as it was flat. They considered that the attitude of Barkway (Tony Terry and Sam Methven) to get games played, to be fantastic. It was reported that RTFC had received funding from Football Association (FA) football development for the Three Lions Programme so would look to visit/leaflet drop schools locally. There would be initial taster sessions in Royston but activities at Barkway and Royston. RTFC would be running another children's football tournament in Barkway on 23/24 July.

Pavilion maintenance - Cllr. Davidson reported that in order for the Parish Council to keep the Pavilion open under hygienic conditions the toilet floors in the Community Area needed appropriate covering fitted. They were unfinished at the point of delivery of the building due to lack of funds. Although this would be a major charge against the maintenance budget for 2015/16, it was considered to be essential. The Clerk to obtain three quotations in time for the April meeting. **Action: Clerk.** It was reported that a quotation had been received from Mr Dodkin for £175 to make and fit an external shutter. It was proposed by Cllr. Davidson, seconded by Cllr, Falaschi-Ray and the quotation approved by all. The Clerk to contact Mr Dodkin to ask him to go ahead with this job as soon as possible in order to minimise further damage by water ingress to the building. **Action: Clerk.** It was reported that there had been damage to the veranda railing at one end. This area had been chained off and Cllr. Davidson would try and make this repair as soon as possible. **Action: RD.** It was considered that line painting of the pitches was costing a substantial amount of money. The Clerk to provide Cllr. Davidson with actual costs for 2015/16 and it would then be considered whether it might be worth trialling use of powder paint as a cheaper alternative method. **Action: Clerk/RD**

Fund Raising - it was reported that there would be an Easter egg hunt and football match on Easter weekend. There was a Barkway vs. Barley cricket match planned (free of charge usage at Cokenach Cricket Club) in August. An email would be sent out to the village to invite players. A sponsored bike ride was also being considered. The Council was informed that any funds raised would go towards the purchase of much needed additional tables (to address the main comment of hirers) and an exterior notice board.

7.4.1.2 To consider adjustment of charges for use of the Recreation Area and Community Room for fund raising purposes - Cllr. Davidson asked the Council whether they thought that the current £100 charge to hire the building and recreation area, as it was a public space, was too much for a Barkway village organisation fund raising event. After some discussion it was proposed and agreed that Cllr. Davidson would sort out a revised charging proposal to be considered at the April meeting. **Action: RD**

7.4.2 Recreation Area - to provide update on condition of play equipment - Cllr. Davidson reported that he had successfully managed to repair the swing bridge. The other apparatus were in good condition. The new picnic tables, additional waste bin and new dog bin would be put into final position shortly. The excess gravel on the driveway was due to be raked out that week, which would ease parking problems. It was reported that Martin Bentley was continuing with work to reclaim the land at the Southern edge of the Rec. and had cleared and dug out the ditch along that boundary which would hopefully allow the ground to drain better. A meeting would be scheduled with him to ensure that work continued and that the area could be seeded in time for the Spring growing season. **Action: Clerk/RD**

7.4.3 War Memorial - update on grant application for renovation works - The Clerk reported that she expected a response to the Pre-Application from the War Memorial Trust by the end of March. In the meantime she had contacted the potential contractors, advised them of the situation and asked them to pencil the work into their diaries for the end of Summer.

7.4.4 Reading Room - to discuss future use of the Reading Room - Cllr. Falaschi-Ray reported that she had been in touch with Builder Charles Lee to ascertain a potential cost to convert the Reading Room into a small dwelling. It was thought it would be very expensive, particularly as there would be a significant cost to install drains. She agreed to contact others to get alternative opinions. It was considered that to convert the Reading Room could be a contentious issue and that the opinion on future use of the Reading Room should be sought from residents. Cllr Falaschi-Ray to put forward a piece for entry in the Diary. **Action: SFR**

Reading Room maintenance - The Clerk reported that the Dodkins had fixed the slipped tiles on the roof which were thought to be causing the damp patch of the ceiling. They had also fixed and cleaned out the guttering. Some attention was needed on other areas of the roof due to slipped tiles. Mr Dodkin had been asked to provide a quotation to replace the blown brickwork on the exterior of the Reading Room.

It was reported that the Community Group had used the Reading Room for 3 sessions over the past couple of months and another session was booked before Easter. An Art class were also using the room every other week.

7.5 Environment

7.5.1 Update on quotations for renovations works to Barkway Pier - Cllr. Frapporti informed the Council that he had received a quotation from Joe Poulton of £2,000 to construct and install a new jetty and £400 to make a foundation for a new bench up Church Lane. He was still in negotiation with Phil Kirk who needed additional detail before he could provide a quotation. It was hoped to have all the necessary information available in time for the April meeting. **Action: GF**

7.5.2 To discuss and agree final proposal to purchase an information sign to be placed at the Wagon Wash - Cllr. Dalton proposed that this sign should be a Corian (colour of slate) backing board with a stainless steel plate with black lettering (font Times New Roman). The plate would be screwed to the wall of the Wagon Wash. He had received quotations from various companies. He recommended a quotation from 'The Sign Maker' of £199.50 incl. VAT. A proof would be provided initially for final approval. It was agreed by all to go ahead with this. **Action: JD/Clerk**

7.5.3 Update following meeting with Heidi Smith from Sworders regarding diversion of Barkway 10 - Cllrs. Falaschi-Ray and Frapporti had met with Cllr. Morris and Mrs Smith from Sworders (land agent for Thomas Keir) to try and sort out a proposal that would suit most users. Currently people used the permissive route and Mr Keir wished to fence off this field to graze animals. He wanted to make the permissive route into a footpath with kissing gates at either end. This would then not be a restricted byway and would therefore prevent usage by horse riders and cyclists, etc. Cllr. Falaschi-Ray had suggested to Mrs Smith that Mr Keir might consider making a restricted byway alongside the hedge, essentially making two paths, one that could be used by horse riders and cyclists. Mrs Smith agreed to consult with her client Mr Keir and report back to the Parish Council.

7.5.4 To note consultation from HCC on Modification Order 2016 (Barkway 5, 27 and Reed 24) - Cllr. Frapporti informed the Council that this was a further step on from the previous consultation on which the Council had been asked to make comment. This was as a result of historic evidence that an old road would be reinstated on the definitive map. In the past these old roads were an important communication link between settlements.

7.6 Media and Communications

7.6.1 Police Report - No report had been provided.

7.6.2 Update on proposed Queen's 90th Birthday celebrations in 2016 - Cllr. Squire informed the Council that there was no further update at this stage. The Community Room and Recreation Ground had been reserved for 12th June.

7.6.3 To consider emailing out of the Agenda and then approved Minutes monthly to those residents who may request this information. Cllr. Dalton proposed this as a method of proactive transparency. It was considered by the Council to be a good idea. It was therefore proposed by Cllr. Dalton, seconded by Cllr. Davidson and agreed by all that an email be sent out to all those on the Parish Council database inviting any interested parishioners to sign up to be provided with a regular email containing a link to the village website and either agenda or minutes. **Action: Clerk**

7.6.4 To consider providing multiple copies of the Welcome Pack to residents whose properties are for sale - Further to a recent request from a vendor in the village for a copy of the Welcome Pack to show prospective purchasers, it was considered by the Council to be a compliment that the Welcome Pack was such a well regarded and useful document. It was with thanks also to Shirley Streeter and Val McGow for their diligent work in updating the document regularly and visiting all newcomers to the village. It was proposed by Cllr. Falaschi-Ray and seconded by Cllr. Dalton and agreed by all that if multiple copies were to be handed out to Vendors for distribution then they should be charged out at cost price. The Clerk to check how much each copy cost and report back to Council. It was also agreed that a mention of this could be put into the next edition of the Bulletin. **Action: Clerk/RS**

7.7 Special Projects - Update on 'Smarten Barkway' project - there was nothing to report. This topic could be revisited in two months time following on from the Highways Together Risk Assessment Briefing in April. **Action: GS/RD**

7.1 Neighbourhood Plan - update - Cllr. Dalton reported that the task of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) acceptable to NHDC, and the inspectorate of the NPs was becoming larger and larger and was now beyond the resources that we had in the village. The problem had been made worse for both the Parish Council and NHDC by a number of changes to guidelines and central policy. In order to achieve the best result it was proposed and resolved that the Council would approach the consultant to whom Buntingford Town Council referred us. The objective would be for the consultant to advise the Council and in principle write up for the Council a NP based on the data which was gathered but in line with what was likely to be approved. Cllr. Dalton would contact the consultant to arrange a meeting between the consultant, Cllr Falaschi-Ray and Cllr. Dalton at a mutually convenient time in the near future.

Cllr. Dalton informed the Chair and the Council that he wished to resign from the Council with effect from the close of the meeting. The Councillors expressed their sadness that Cllr. Dalton had taken this decision and he was thanked greatly for everything he had done whilst being a Councillor and also Chairman.

It was resolved that efforts with the NP would continue as so much hard work had been done to get it to stage it was at. Cllr. Davidson volunteered his assistance with this project and would make every attempt to attend the planned meeting with the consultant.

Action: JD/SFR/RD

District Cllr. Morris asked if he could be excused from the meeting and departed at 9.15pm. He was thanked for attending.

8. Finance - to receive finance reports from the Clerk

The Clerk asked that in view of two Councillors having resigned, both of whom being bank signatories and members of the Finance Committee, that two other Councillors needed to be appointed to take on these responsibilities.

Cllrs. Davidson and Squire volunteered to take on these roles.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr. Falaschi-Ray and seconded by Cllr. Frapporti and approved by all that Cllrs. Davidson and Squire would join the Finance Committee and become bank signatories. The Clerk to organise the change of bank mandate. **Action: Clerk**

A date for the next meeting of the Finance Committee was set for Monday 4th April at 7.30pm in the Reading Room. **Action: Clerk/SFR/RD/RS**

8.1 To provide update on current financial position

Parish Council Account:

The Parish Council bank balance at 14.03.2016 was £45,960.76

Receipts since the last meeting:

£50.00 - Barkway Vets FC - Hire of Pitch

£96.00 - Wicksteed Leisure - Refund of Credit Note for returned play equipment parts

£5.78 - Barclays Bank - Interest

£22.00 - K Price - Hire of Community Room

£1,474.82 - HMRC - Reclaim of VAT (Aug 2015 - Jan 2016)

8.2 To authorise payments:

Approval of payments since last meeting:

DD £5.00 - EDF - Direct Debit Electricity Pavilion

DD £10.00 - Affinity Water - Direct Debit Water Pavilion

Approval of payments to be made at meeting:

CHQ 102275 £930.52 - Martin Bentley - Maintenance works on the Rec.

CHQ 102276 £55.00 - M Thornton - Cleaning of Bus Stops & Window Cleaning Pavilion and Reading Room

CHQ 102277 £51.88 - Thames Water - Waste Water Charge Pavilion
CHQ 102278 £1,441.50 - Zurich Municipal - Annual Insurance
CHQ 102279 £71.39 - Jewson Ltd - Materials for Pitch Maintenance
CHQ 102280 £151.04 - Stationery Cupboard - Printing Bulletin & N. Plan + Stationery & Ink
CHQ 102281 £149.00 - Society Local Council Clerks - Annual Subscription
CHQ 102282 £100.00 - Communicorp - Annual Subscription
CHQ 102283 £33.76 - Michelle Garner - Cleaning of Pavilion Feb
CHQ 102284 £861.04 - Catharine Toms – Clerk’s Monthly Salary + Office Allowance
CHQ 102285 £240.50 - Sam Methven - Groundsman January
CHQ 102286 £48.00 - Claire Methven - Litter Picking January
CHQ 102287 £35.24 - Catharine Toms - Clerk's Expenses*

* £19.70 - Post Office - Stamps
£8.75 - eBay - Sweeping Brush - Pavilion
£6.79 - eBay - Dustpan and Brush - Pavilion

Parish Council - BRGMC Account:

Bank Balance at 14.03.16 was £111.00
Receipts since the last meeting: None
Payments since the last meeting: None

Reading Room Account:

Bank Balance at 14.03.16 was £536.58
Receipts since the last meeting:
£10.00 - Donation in return for business listing on Website
£19.83 - COIF - Interest received
£0.01 - Barclays Bank - Interest received
Payments since the last meeting:
£63.00 D/D NHDC - Rates
£26.00 D/D EDF - Electricity

8.3 To consider grant application from Barkway Social Club - this item to be deferred until the April meeting pending further information to be supplied.

9. Correspondence - Letter received from Vince Styles regarding Highway defect between No. 58 and 58a High Street. Cllr. Swann had since reported the defect to Highways.

10. Date of next meeting: Monday 11th April 2016

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.30pm