

BARMING PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10th JANUARY 2024 at 7.30pm

AT THE PARISH HALL, TONBRIDGE ROAD

PRESENT: Cllr Gooch in Chair, Cllr Vizzard, Cllr Brotherwood, Cllr Ilsley, Cllr Passmore, Cllr Doe, Cllr Pepper and Clerk Mrs N Attwood.

IN ATTENDANCE: Reverend Wil North

Rev Wil North came along to the meeting to update BPC regarding the situation with the village hall. The church has offered a rescue package for the Village Hall Committee which includes an acting Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary to help with the legal side of things and letting agreements. This will all be reviewed at their AGM in May 2024. Cllr Gooch confirmed that if BPC can be of any assistance in anyway, members are happy to support. Rev Wil went on to remind everyone that the church offers a twice monthly community café unfortunately, this cannot be registered as a 'warm space' as it would have to run weekly and there are not the resources to do so. Everyone felt that there was a need for a community hub for the elderly, lonely and isolated members of the parish; it could also offer after school homework clubs, youth clubs and lunch clubs. BPC are happy to work in partnership with the church to see what could be set up in the future and where.

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Webb

2. NOTIFICATION TO BE RECEIVED FOR INTENT TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH OR RECORD ANY ITEMS.

No intent to record any items.

3. COUNCILLOR DECLARATIONS

Cllr Gooch declared an interest in item 6.3 online payments

4. MINUTES of the Meeting held on 8th November 2023

The minutes were **Agreed** as an accurate record with all members in favour.

5. RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

5.1 Finalise the Draft Budget 2024-2025

The Clerk had received the tax base figures from MBC which included the boundary change figures showing an increase from 825.7 in 2023-24 to 1643.7 for 2024-25. Members carefully discussed the different scenarios and felt that the sensible and fairest decision would be to not proceed with the 4.11% precept increase for 2024-25 as proposed at the November meeting, but to retain the current 2023-24 level for the next year. BPC can then learn what the new area brings and obtain wish lists from the new community to form an action plan for future years. This was proposed by Cllr Vizzard, seconded by Cllr Ilsley with all members in favour. The current band D charge of £44.72 will remain the same and generate a precept of £73,506.00. The paperwork was signed by the Chairman and Clerk to be submitted to MBC.

ACTION: Clerk

5.2 Parish Hall: DHSC Match-Funded Defibrillator

During the Christmas period, Cllr Ilsley successfully manage to secure match-funding for the defibrillator at the parish hall to which BPC thanks him for his efforts. Members ratified the decision to proceed with the order and subsequent expenditure of £900.00 (inc.vat £150.00). This was proposed by Cllr Ilsley, seconded by Cllr Passmore with all members in favour. Cllr Gooch will arrange for the installation and connection to take place and then the Clerk will register the unit on the Circuit (The National Defibrillator Network).

ACTION: Cllr Gooch, Clerk

5.3 Parish Hall & Pavilion: Disabled Facilities

Members decided to consider this item along with item 5.5 as there is the opportunity to gain possible funding for this project through the Rural England Prosperity Fund. Please see item 5.5 for minutes.

5.4 Allotments: Western Boundary Quotations

Cllr Pepper updated members on this project explaining that three companies had been approached to submit quotations for the work using the same schedule. Two quotations had been received but are extremely different amounts. Therefore, members felt that further quotations are required so that they can make a better-informed decision. Cllr Doe will arrange for another company to contact Cllr Pepper and this item will be deferred until further quotes are obtained.

ACTION: Cllr Doe, Cllr Pepper

5.5 Rural England Fund Prosperity Fund

On the 4/1/24 Cllr Gooch circulated the MBC presentation regarding the prosperity fund. Cllr Gooch proposed to proceed with the application for funding for the installation of solar panel at both the parish hall and pavilion; Cllr Pepper proposed for the inclusion of disabled facilities at the parish hall. This was seconded by Cllr Vizzard with all members in favour. Cllr Ilsley will look for recommendations of companies and work with Cllr Pepper to obtain a quotation for the disabled facilities.

ACTION: Cllr Gooch, Cllr Ilsley, Cllr Pepper

5.6 Capital Projects List

Members discussed the items listed on the current projects list and Cllr Gooch proposed to add upgrading the lighting in the pavilion hall and in the parish hall toilets, kitchen and store room (approx.cost £5,000). Cllr Vizzard seconded with all members in favour. An adjacent pathway to run up the parish field will also be added (approx.cost £5,000) and Cllr Doe will ask someone to take a look at the parish field gate to see if the locking process can be made easier. Members also agreed to update the Highways Improvement Plan to include a pathway on the Tonbridge Road by the Barming sign, a footpath on the west side between Rectory Lane and the Walnuts and remedial hedge planting along the Tonbridge Road.

ACTION: Cllr Doe, Cllr Gooch

5.7 KALC Community Awards Scheme

Members noted the information regarding the scheme and will re-visit next year.

5.8 Annual Subscription Renewal: Campaign to Protect Rural England

Cllr Gooch proposed to proceed with the annual subscription at a cost of £36.00. This was seconded by Cllr Ilsley with all members in favour. The Clerk will arrange the payment.

ACTION: Clerk

5.9 Grounds Maintenance Contract

The Clerk had contacted three companies for a long-term contract and a further company had approached her to offer a quotation. Contractor A quoted: Year 1 £2,946.74, Year 2 £3,035.14, Year 3 £3,126.19. Contractor B declined to quote due to them already being fully booked with work. Contractor C did not respond to any emails and Contractor D emailed saying that they would send in a quotation which the Clerk chased on 6/1/24, with no joy. Cllr Gooch proposed to accept the quotation from Contractor A which was seconded by Cllr Doe with all members in favour. The Clerk will contact Landscape Services to inform them of their success.

ACTION: Clerk

6. FINANCE

6.1 Budget Monitoring

The Clerk circulated the budget monitoring and bank reconciliation prior to the meeting.

6.2 Income received

The following payments received since the last meeting were noted:

Unity Trust Account

Parish Hall Hiring £736.25

Pavilion Income £667.25

Barming News Adverts £110.00

Natwest Account

Interest £34.58

Parish Hall Hiring Income £25.50

Outstanding Invoices

Invoice: None

6.3 Cheques for signature & Online Payments

Confirmation of payments made

The following payments were agreed

Natwest Direct Debits

MBC NNDR Rates Pavilion £278.00

Unity Trust Direct Debits

BT Parish Hall WIFI £34.30
O2 Mobile Phone Contract £44.80
Castle Water Allotments £62.78
EDF Parish Hall £88.42
EDF Pavilion £58.18
Castle Water Parish Hall £28.85
Hugo Fox Website £23.99
Business Stream Water Pavilion £132.94
Unity Trust Service Charge £18.00

Employer costs

£1,870.67
HMRC Payment £2,059.45

Online payments authorised

Clear It Away – Field Bin £120.00
F Gooch – Expenses £65.42
KALC – Training £565.20
CSG Global – Consumables £62.38
Paul David Beard (Arbour Tree Services) – Eastern Allotment Boundary £840.00
London Hearts – Defibrillator £900.00
Clear It Away – Field Bin £60.00
N Attwood – Expenses £45.08
Sustrans – Donation £110.00
Deposit Refund £100.00
Deposit Refund £100.00
CGS Global – Consumables £8.24
Dusters – Cleaning Nov £255.00
Dusters – Cleaning Dec £204.00
David J Hadlum – Barming News Print £350.00
Mr P Gooch – Handyman £385.73
Mrs F Gooch – Expenses £92.88
N Attwood – Expenses £35.33

7 PLANNING

7.1 Any planning matters

None

8 MATTERS OF REPORT

8.1 County Councillor's Report

Cllr Webb was not present.

Cllr Passmore (also KCC Cllr for Maidstone Central) provided the following report to the Chairman and Clerk prior to the meeting:

The principle focus for Kent County Council is the completion of the 2023-24 financial year on budget and the setting and agreeing a balanced budget for 2024-25. With KCC increasing its proportion of Council Tax by 5% and getting a 6.5% settlement from Central Government and rates of inflation during part of the year being well in excess of 10% it is inevitable that there will be further cuts to the services that local residents value most. An increasingly large % of the income will have to be spent on the statutory responsibilities of Adult Social Care, Children and Young Persons, Home to School transport for Special needs and the looking after of over 1,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This means that all other services will be cut to the 'bone' and there is no significant light at the end of any tunnel, especially with the current government placing much greater importance on tax cuts in this election year than the rather less spectacular funding of local government services. This means that the services provided by BPC are even more significant to our local residents and it is important that we communicate and demonstrate the benefit of the parish precept we collect from our residents.

8.2 Borough Councillor's Report

Cllr Gooch was sad to report the passing of Mr Paul Oldham who was former Mayor of Maidstone 1993-94. He was a man of exceptional knowledge and a great local historian. There will be a minute silence held at the next MBC meeting.

Cllr Gooch informed members of further sad news of the passing of Cllr Marion Ring who was the councillor for Shepway North and former Mayor of Maidstone. Her blunt directness and her deep caring nature towards her residents was unsurpassable. She was a genuine kind lady and a quality councillor.

8.3 Chairman's Report

Cllr Gooch informed members that the handyman has offered to complete a one-off job of tidying up the front garden at the parish hall. He can clear the area and lay gravel down at a cost of £250.00. This item will be added to the February agenda for discussion.

ACTION: Clerk

Cllr Gooch asked the Clerk to also add 'Tree work' to the next agenda as there are some jobs that need to be completed around the parish. The ash tree in the play area is causing some concern as it may have die back. As it is in the play area and members had concerns regarding the safety of the tree, Cllr Doe was instructed to proceed with the necessary work as soon as possible.

ACTION: Cllr Doe, Clerk

Cllr Gooch reported that both her and Cllr Brotherwood had recently attended the Communications training session. Cllr Brotherwood will be attending the second session and then BPC can look at starting a communications working group. All members were keen to see Cllr Brotherwood as the lead for communications.

8.4 Individual Councillors Report

Cllr Passmore feels that the paper version of the Barming News is essential and BPC need to make sure that future budgets are in place for it, including the residents in the boundary extension as this will enable regular communication.

Cllr Passmore went on to say that it would be a good idea to arrange further litter picks around the parish, although he had received a concern about the safety of litter pickers. Members agreed that litter pickers do so at their own risk and their own responsibility. The correct equipment is provided (high viz and litter picker grabbers); volunteers are requested to wear the correct foot wear etc and if they have any concerns, do not volunteer. Cllr Pepper is happy to continue to be the lead co-ordinator for the litter picking.

9.5 Clerk's Reports

The Clerk reported to members that although a plot holder had recently informed her that they will be giving up their plot, a new gentleman had contacted her and Cllr Brotherwood is happy to show him the available plot when convenient.

ACTION: Cllr Brotherwood, Clerk

10 CORRESPONDENCE

None

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 14th February 2024 at 7.30pm** in the Parish Hall, Tonbridge Road for the regular Full Council Meeting.

The meeting was closed at 21.45pm.