



ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Tuesday 4th May 2021, 7.30pm Online via Zoom



Parish Council Factfile

Members of the Council 2020/2021

Chairman: Mr L Davison-Williams

Vice Chairman: Mrs B Thomas

Mrs G Gardner

Mr J Selley

Mr J Paxton

Mr A Channon

Mr J Roberts

Mr N Day

Mrs V Jones

Mr K Taylor (*resigned November 2020*)

Mr S Laycock (*Co-opted July 2020*)

Staff

Carolyn Callen, Clerk to the Council

Suzanne Cowie, Assistant Clerk to the Council

Ian Swales (*Left August 2020*), Full-Time Ground/Facilities Maintenance

John Fitzgerald (*Joined June 2020*), Full-Time Ground/Facilities Maintenance

Ian Nicholls, Part-Time Groundsman

Elizabeth Rhodes (*Left August 2020*) Norman Road Playground Keyholder / Office Cleaner

Karen Small (*Joined August 2020*) & Selina McConville (*joined September 2020*)

Norman Road Playground Keyholders

Council Address: 1 Windsor Parade, Barton-le-Clay, Bedford, MK45 4NA

Telephone: (01582) 883990

E-mail:

theparishclerk@bartonleclay-pc.gov.uk

Website:

www.bartonleclay-pc.gov.uk

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1563405067289955>

Blog:

<https://seekingcouncil.wordpress.com>

2020/2021 Precept: £174,895

Report from the Parish Council Vice Chairman

It is with great regret and sorrow that I have to report the sad death of our Chairman and colleague of the Parish Council, Councillor Lyndon Davison-Williams, who died in March this year following a battle with cancer. He was known throughout the village, to be seen in all areas that the Council is responsible for, and I believe that the Council and Village will seriously miss his knowledge and wit.

Lyndon served as a Parish Councillor for over 20 years, and Chairman of the Parish Council for 12 of those years. He will be sorely missed by his wife, children, grandchildren, family and colleagues alike. Whilst suffering from cancer he was the leading light in arranging a Coffee Morning in aid of MacMillan Cancer Support, with help from members of staff from the Parish Council, Councillors, Barton Rovers Football Club and other volunteers, to raise over £3,500 for the Charity.

Parish Council Membership

At present we have 9 serving Councillors. In line with local government legislation, the Parish Council will continue to promote co-option as a valid means to join your Parish Council. We currently have four vacancies to fill, so if you have the time and desire to join the Council, please call into the Parish Office on Windsor Parade or alternatively contact the Clerk at theparishclerk@bartonleclay-pc.gov.uk.

Public Participation and Communications

We welcome members of the public to our monthly meetings. It is important that we encourage public participation in matters that affect you the parishioners of Barton-le-Clay. A strong Parish Council and a more integrated community can only be accomplished if the community have a desire to participate in debate and question the role of your Parish Council. Due to the Pandemic, we have been holding our Meetings remotely via Zoom during the last year. With the expiry of temporary legislation put in place for the Pandemic, remote meetings will finish in May 2021 and face-to-face meetings will recommence with Covid-19 restrictions in place, as appropriate. Please see the published agendas or contact theparishclerk@bartonleclay-pc.gov.uk to find out how to access the meetings.

How the Parish Council have helped the Village during the Pandemic

To support local organisations and residents during the Pandemic, the Parish Council did the following:

- Waived Barton Rovers Football Club Annual Rent for 2020/21;
- Paid the annual lease payment for the Tennis Club for 2020/21, which goes towards the upkeep of the courts and fencing;
- Paid the annual access roadway charge for the Village Hall – to ensure upkeep of the shared roadway with the Doctors;
- Waived the water rates for Unity Hall for 2020/21;
- Our Groundsman delivered medicines on behalf of the Doctors during the first Lockdown period of the Pandemic;
- Provided a Grant to Barton Helping Hands to allow them to support residents struggling to obtain cash to buy groceries during the first Lockdown period of the Pandemic;
- Provided further Grants to other local organisations, as part of the Annual Grant process – several relating to changes required due to the Pandemic restrictions.



What have we done in 2020/21 financial year?

The reports contained within the body of this report will provide a good overview of what the Parish Council has achieved during the previous financial year. It is not my intention to precis these reports but simply ask you to read further and gather a better understanding of what the Parish Council does.

I would like to thank the Parish Council staff for their invaluable support.

Finally, I would like to place on record my thanks to all fellow Parish Councillors for all the time and effort they devote to their duties. Parish Councillors do not receive any remuneration for their services. I do believe that every Councillor is concerned for the well-being of the parish and has the best interest of the village at heart.

Barbara Thomas
Vice-Chairman of Barton-le-Clay Parish Council

Planning Committee Report

As a statutory consultee, the Planning Committee, on behalf of the Parish Council, have met remotely throughout the year, to consider all planning applications submitted for the Barton-le-Clay Parish. They have commented where they agree inappropriate or insufficient plans have been provided and object when considered necessary. They are particularly concerned regarding any proposed loss of garage or parking space, which will contribute to already difficult parking facilities on many roads throughout the Village. They are also concerned by the loss of bungalows and two-bedroom properties, reducing more affordable or accessible housing for the future needs of residents.

The Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan has continued to be reviewed by the independent Planning Inspectors, following hearings held in 2019 and 2020. This process has been delayed due to the Pandemic restrictions. The Parish Council's main concerns are regarding the level of housing proposed and the impact on the Green Belt and the ANOB which surround the Village. Further information is available from Central Bedfordshire Council website

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/46/local_plan.

As part of the land highlighted in the Local Plan, Taylor Wimpey Developers are proposing to build around 500 new homes and a primary school on the land to the East of Barton-le-Clay, on Higham Gobion Road. They have shared their proposals with residents via a newsletter to each household. The Parish Council have considered the impact this will have on the Village and what additional facilities the Village will need to mitigate the development plans. This will be progressed once any formal planning applications are submitted during 2021.

Burial Grounds Committee

The Burial Grounds committee is responsible for the supply and maintenance of the Burial Ground, War Memorial and it looks after the Closed Churchyard of St Nicholas Church.

During 2020/2021 we have:

- Carried out an in-depth review of our Burial Ground Regulations. Regulations and fees are reviewed annually so please keep an eye out for the latest edition on our website.
- Completed the planting of standard rose bushes for the Garden of Rest
- Carried out Memorial stability testing of headstones in St Nicholas Churchyard and Garden of Rest and re-set 11 headstones
- Removed dead wood from trees in the churchyard
- Commissioned a tree survey of the churchyard and church garden – work arising from the report will be carried out after nesting season ends
- Sadly the public 2020 Remembrance Sunday service had to be cancelled due to Covid. However, a smaller service involving the Parish Council and other organisations went ahead with wreaths being laid
- Installed two soldier ‘tommy’ silhouettes by the war memorial
- The main project which the committee have concentrated on is to look at the burial space we have left for our parishioners and form a strategy for future burials. It is estimated that there are approximately 10-20 years left in the current location if burial rates continue at the current rate and the population does not increase. Expansion of the current site proves challenging due to water levels, so a new site may be necessary and is being explored. The committee will continue to look at this over the coming months and we hope to move the project to the next level so we can continue to offer this vital facility to the village.

Highways & Environment Committee

As a result of the Pandemic restrictions, Barton-le-Clay has seen an increase in visitors accessing the Barton Hills Nature Reserve over the past year. The additional cars caused parking issues in the surrounding roads, with vehicles left on verges and pavements, blocking access, etc. The Parish Council arranged for Central Bedfordshire Council Highways department to visit the area. An informal consultation on their proposed plans to try and resolve some of the issues was held. This resulted in double yellow lines being installed on parts of the roads to prevent congestion. Enforcement of these lines was delayed due to the Lockdown period. Whilst the parking restrictions have eased some of the pressures, it is still evident that the lack of available car parking in the area and the wider Village is an ongoing problem and, without any public land, there is no clear long-term solution.

- Worked with Ramsey Manor Lower School, the Police and Central Bedfordshire Council to put in place enforceable parking restrictions outside the School to improve the safety for children walking into school.
- Village tree survey completed. Following the arboriculturists report, several trees within Lovers Walk woodland were found to be either dead, damaged or diseased, requiring them to be felled for health & safety reasons. Felled tree trunks have been left on site as natural habitats for wildlife. Natural regeneration in the woodland will continue. A tree replanting strategy is now being drawn up.
- Reported defected road surfaces, footpaths, overgrown hedgerows and fences around the village. Central Bedfordshire Council have launched 'FixMyStreet' online site and app, and residents are encouraged to use this format to report any issues.
- The resurfacing works at the Luton Road/Hexton Road junction completed, including a new crossing-island and narrowing of the road entrance to help slow the flow of traffic.
- Traffic management strategy being reviewed and updated.

Leisure Committee

In line with Government directive the play areas were closed during lockdown 1 and the fitness equipment was closed during both lockdowns. During this time safety was reviewed, weekly checks undertaken, closed areas cordoned off and signage offering guidance for users was displayed.

Despite the challenges, the committee have been proactive working on numerous projects. The annual RoSPA safety check of play equipment highlighted very few issues which were dealt with straight away. In August 2020 we installed a new zip wire in Arnold Recreation Ground. The project was funded jointly by the Parish Council and Central Bedfordshire Council's Community Asset Grant Scheme and has so far proved to be very popular.

- Unfortunately, antisocial behaviour and incidents of vandalism continue to occur in our green spaces. Examples have included: damage to the play area gate, broken bench, damaged fencing and many incidents of broken glass and rubbish.
- In the Norman Road Play Area the toddler swing seats were replaced and tree work completed.
- The allotment site offers 91 plots of varying sizes. The allotments have been particularly busy and since the beginning of Covid we have seen a large increase in interest from residents wishing to work a plot and grow their own produce. The Groundsmen completed considerable clearance of historic debris and rubbish from our vacant plots and we have welcomed a number of new tenants.
- The allotment hedgerow bordering Dunstall Road properties has been significantly reduced in height and width making future maintenance more manageable and cost effective.

Sports Field Committee

The Sports Field offers 9 football pitches of various sizes and the Pavilion changing facilities which are currently utilized by 18 Barton Youth teams, Barton Rovers and a local Sunday League team. The 2020/2021 football season has been very stop-start due to Covid. The committee agreed to extend the playing season until the end of May to allow our teams time to catch up on their cancelled matches.

- Safety of our staff and players has been a priority. In the Pavilion, signing in and a one-way system were introduced and it has become normal practice for those using the facilities. Our changing rooms remain closed but we hope to open up for the 2021/22 season.
- Carried out alterations to the access road wooden fence to stop access to motorbikes on the field. The scheme has been successful and adds a safety feature for younger players who may run out into the road.
- We addressed the pitch flooding issue and discovered the main drainage pipe on the A6 border was completely blocked with a root snake which extended over 10 meters in length. The blockage was removed and new drains laid.
- Annual maintenance of the fields took place during the summer non-playing months. Pitches were reseeded and fertilized ready for the new season.
- Unauthorized use of the pitches and dog fouling continues to be an issue. Signage has been displayed. Dogs off lead near sports pitches is a public order offence with fines of up to £1000, as well as a serious health issue caused by any fouling.
- Evaluation of the trees along the access road concluded they should be removed as many were unstable. Replanting of the hedge was organized by Barton Rovers Football Club.
- Repairs during the past year include: replacement of several roof ridge tiles due to wear and tear, necessary repair to the emergency lighting and the lightning conductor. Due to the age of the Pavilion, the heating, hot water system, many taps and showers will need repair or replacement in the coming years.

Policies & Resources Committee

Structure

The Policy & Resources Committee membership is comprised of the Council Chairman, Vice-Chairman plus the individual Committee Chairmen. The Committee is primarily responsible for the administration of the Council, budget allocation and asset-management. The Committee additionally oversees all HR aspects through the Pay & Personnel Sub-Committee. The Committee meets approximately eight to ten times per year, dependent upon the level of business to be transacted.

Parish Precept 2021/2022

The Parish Council has resolved a precept for the next financial year of £176,900. This represents a Band D equivalent increase of 1.6% above the previous year's precept. This increase is predominantly due to the inflationary increases from our suppliers and contractors and some provision for future tree works.

Annual Accounts

The Parish Councils' financial year ends on the 31st March each year. Parish Council year-end accounts are checked annually via three levels of audit procedure. Firstly, each Parish Council is required to review the prepared year-end accounts. Secondly, the Parish Council secures the services of an independent Internal Auditor to review and report on finances, policies, procedures and accountability. The final stage requires the council to submit a statement of financial fact to a nationally appointed "External Auditor" - chosen by central government – Mazars LLP.

The Parish Council publishes a set of accounts each year, which can be viewed at both the Parish Office and online Website. The annual accounts will be available to read/download from the Parish Council website by end-June.

Small Grants

Our precept includes provision for small grants to non-profit organisations that directly benefit our community. Applications are invited in September each year, details of which can be obtained from the Parish Clerk. The Parish Council awarded grants totaling £3,033 this year to the following good causes:-

Barton-le-Clay Village Hall 3 replacement hand dryers £259.00	Noah's Ark £100.00 Craft materials & toys
Barton Kids Club £275.00 Replacement trampoline	Barton Helping Hands £200.00 Public Liability Insurance
Keech Hospice Care £374.00 One full-day nursing care for patients & families	Barton-le-Clay Pre-School £400.00 iPad
Unity Hall £300.00 Base for shed	Royal British Legion £100.00 Poppy Wreath for Remembrance service
Ramsey Manor Lower School PTA Outside play equipment £200.00	Gale Court Residents £300.00 Afternoon Tea & entertainment event
Bedfordshire CPRE £100.00 Donation	Barton-le-Clay Street Watch Group Waterproof security jackets £250.00 for volunteers
Arnold Academy £50.00 Annual awards evening prizes	Harlington Upper School £125.00 Annual awards evening prizes

Pay & Personnel sub-committee

At the start of the year, Carolyn Callen, Parish Clerk for 18 months, successfully completed her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification in near record time - an outstanding achievement.

Having deferred his retirement to support the council, long serving Grounds/Facilities Person (Ian Swales), finally “hung up his strimmer” ...but not before welcoming and showing the ropes to his replacement, John Fitzgerald, who joined the Council staff at the end of June. John is certainly proving his worth. Ian has subsequently continued to provide adhoc support which is very much appreciated.

In August, Elizabeth Rhodes, long-serving Playground keyholder for the Norman Road play area, moved away from Barton and was replaced by Karen Small and Selina McConville who now share the duties. We thank Elizabeth for her service and we wish her every happiness in her new home in Norfolk.

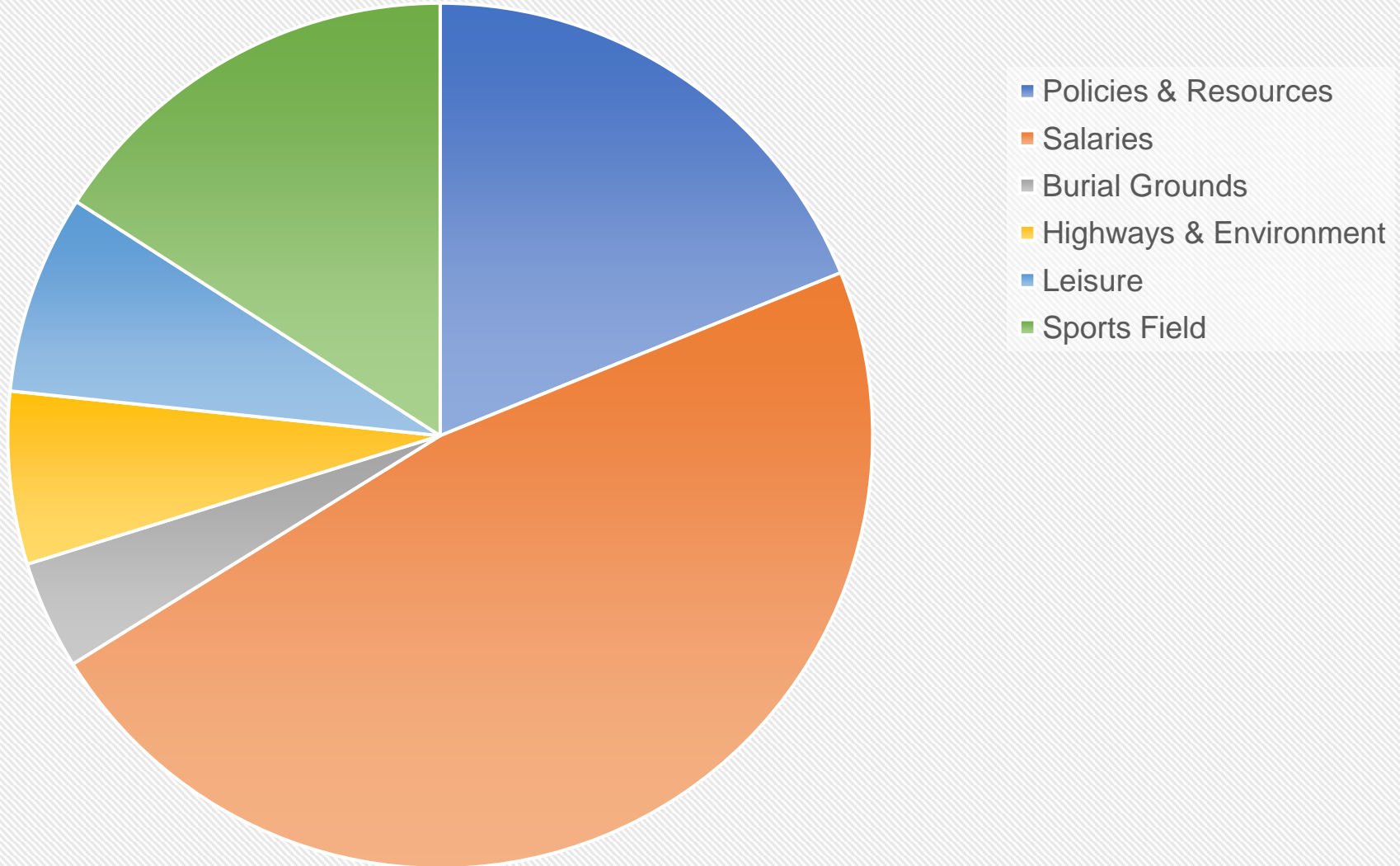
The advent of the Covid 19 Pandemic posed a raft of new requirements for all Council employees, to ensure that all regulations were implemented and adhered to and that staff and public remained safe. All our employees rose magnificently to the many challenges ..and still do. Our most sincere thanks go to every one of them.

Administratively, national pay awards and individual contractual adjustments were implemented appropriately. Office staff were granted a temporary supplement to reflect the increased costs associated with working at home.

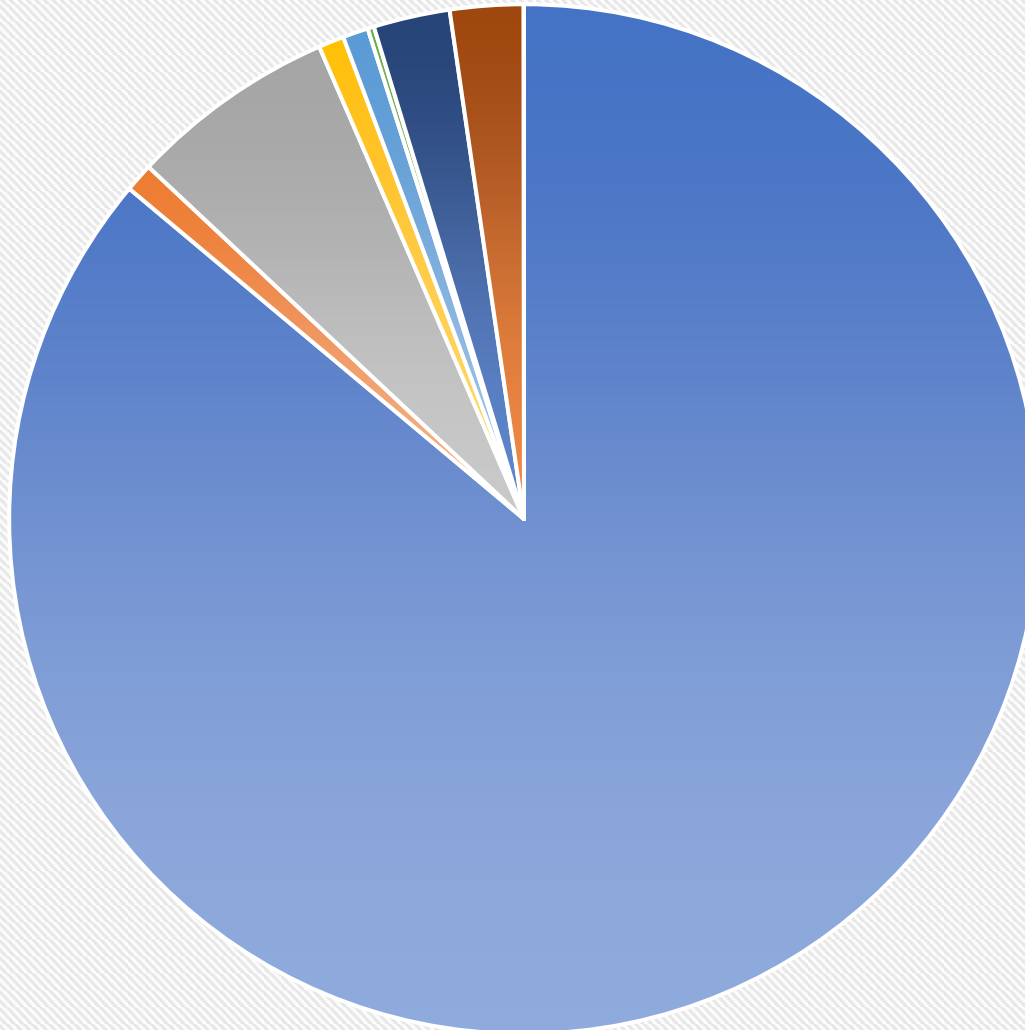
A number of employment-related Policies and Procedures were devised and implemented, consistent with “Good Employer” best practice. Further policy/procedure development will be ongoing.

Our team of staff are absolutely essential to the delivery of all Parish Council responsibilities and I would like to thank each of our staff members for all their efforts.

EXPENDITURE (Total £218,862)

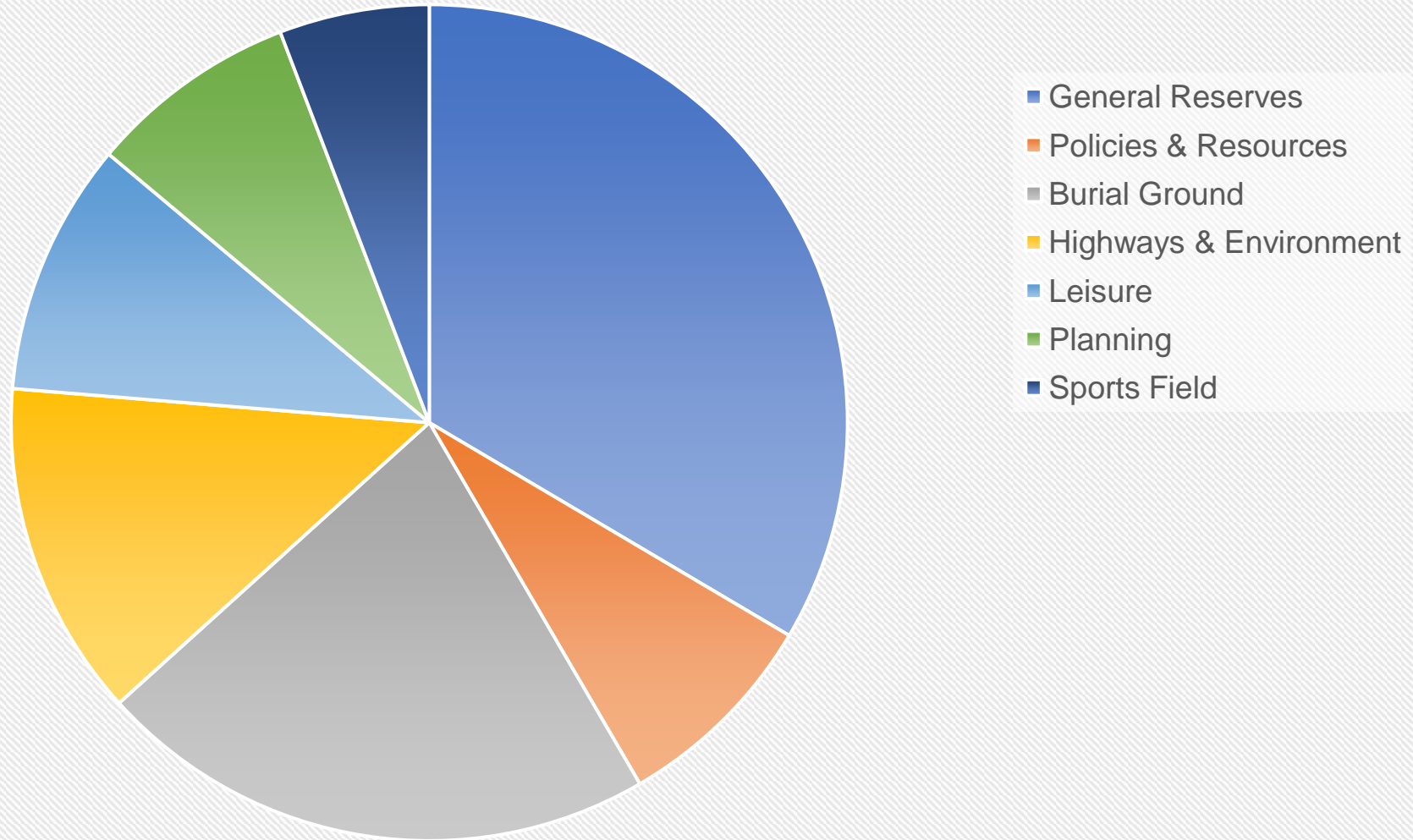


INCOME (Total £203,156)



- Precept
- Interest
- Burial Ground
- Sports Pitches
- Allotments
- Rental Income
- Telemast Rental
- Grants
- Donations/Gifts

RESERVES (Total £237,468)



Reports from Parish Council representatives on Local Organisations

Barton-le-Clay Education Trust

The Trust exists to promote the education of persons between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who, or whose parents, are resident in one of the following parishes: Barton-le-Clay, Higham Gobion or Pulloxhill. Grants are made annually to Students who have completed statutory education, are in training for a profession or calling, at universities, colleges of education and other institutions of further education. Provision is also made to give financial aid to schools and voluntary organisations which serve young persons within the area of benefit. Student applications are called for in October and are considered at the Trust's Annual General Meeting at the beginning of December. Other grants are considered at the ordinary meeting in March.

Three meetings are normally held every year, in March, November and December, but due to the Pandemic, no meetings were held in March and November 2020. As no meeting was held in March, only one grant was made to the Pulloxhill Brownies.

At the meeting held on 8th December, 2020, accounts and income from investments were checked and all available money was used to increase Student Grants for 2020. The Trust had 28 grant applications from students. 21 were from students studying away from home and 6 from students based at home. The Trustees unanimously awarded £380 to students studying away from home and £280 for those living at home.

At the meeting on 15th March, 2021 an overview of all incomes occurred. Advice was received, that interest rates would potentially be a lot lower from the "Fund". Bearing this in mind the Trust agreed that no provision could be made for financial aid to schools and voluntary organisations within the area of benefit, but to try to ring fence all money for students in the coming year.

Reports from Parish Council representatives on Local Organisations

Local Schools Liaison Report

The Parish Council made two grants through the S137 scheme to schools during this year, both were to help recognise and celebrate the success of local students at watershed moments in their education. £50 was awarded to Arnold Academy in Barton-le-Clay for their Year 8 annual leavers' award while £125 was awarded to Harlington Upper School to fund prizes for their Annual Awards ceremony. As a result of the Pandemic, no formal ceremonies were held to present the awards for the Council to attend as sponsor.

In addition, the Chairman of the Council and the Clerk visited the independent Orchard School & Nursery in February 2020 to discuss how they could join with the Parish Council as part of the Village community. Due to the Pandemic, there has been limited opportunities for joint events to be held but this will be considered as restrictions relax and allow.

Reports from Parish Council representatives on Local Organisations

Village Hall Report

In terms of “normal operation” the period since March 2020 has been far from normal! Since March 2020, like so many venues and other businesses, the Hall has for the most part been closed due to Covid regulations. Very soon however, as progress along the “Roadmap out of lockdown” continues, the Hall will once again be open for business and welcoming customers ... old and new.

During the enforced closure the key focus of the Executive team became survival. Running costs were squeezed to the bare minimum. Grant funding was pursued wherever available to replace lost income. Reserves were very depleted as a result of the significant roof repairs undertaken, and this posed a significant challenge. Fortunately, it was possible to secure a substantial grant from Central Beds Council which replenished the coffers.

The efforts paid off. Despite some scary moments, the Hall finances have proved to be up to the challenge.

In addition to survival in the short term and planning for re-opening, the opportunity has been taken to think longer term. Barton faces significant expansion as a result of the Central Beds Local Plan. 500 additional homes on land to the east of the village, (off the Higham Gobion Road), now seem almost inevitable. This would likely result in up to 1500 (20+%) more village residents. What part can/should the Village Hall play in providing amenities of all sorts for the significantly expanded village population? (eg Cultural, Sport, Community, Leisure)

The existing Village Hall is capacity constrained and its fabric needs much updating. In order to increase the range/capacity of available amenities in the village either the existing Hall will need significant expansion/modernisation or perhaps a new Hall on a new site would better serve the community. The Village Hall and Parish Council have therefore engaged directly with the developers and with Central Beds Council to firmly register the need for substantial funding to be made available in order to properly meet the needs of the expanded village.

The Village expansion will only take a few years to happen and therefore there will need to be an ongoing focus to determine what needs providing and how best ...along with securing the funds

Open Forum