



ANNUAL REPORT

2023—2024

Published May 2024



PARISH COUNCIL FACTFILE

Members of the Council 2023/2024

Chair:	Mr J Paxton
Vice Chair:	Mr N Day
	Mrs G Gardner
	Mrs A Fletcher
	Mr S Laycock
	Mrs J Mikkelson
	Mr W Rudd
	Mr J Selley
	Mrs B Thomas
	Mrs A Vale
	Ms A Tebb (<i>co-opted June 2023</i>)
	Mr K Qureshi (<i>co-opted December 2023</i>)

Staff

Carolyn Callen	Clerk to the Council
Suzanne Cowie	Assistant Clerk to the Council
John Fitzgerald	Full-Time Ground/Facilities Maintenance Person
Ian Nicholls	Part-Time Groundsman
Jim Pope	Part-Time Groundsman
Karen Small	Norman Road Playground Keyholder
Selina McConville	Norman Road Playground Keyholder

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Website: www.bartonleclay-pc.gov.uk

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

2023/2024 Precept: £221,381

Report from the Parish Council Chairman

Since being voted in as Chair in May 2023, I have been pleased to see Barton-le-Clay continue to thrive as a community. This report will highlight how the Parish Council and the different committees have worked to make sure that we have a vibrant, welcoming village, making it a wonderful place to live and work. I am particularly excited to see the Coronation Community Garden opening up in the Summer of 2024, which is something I know everyone in the Village will benefit from.

2023/24 has seen the Parish Council work extensively with our two new Ward Councillors in a number of areas. Road safety has been a priority for us, and we have continued to liaise with Central Bedfordshire Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, to make Barton's roads safer.

2024 has seen the final draft of the Neighbourhood Plan completed. This is a vital piece of planning work that will help the Village, highlighting our green spaces and having a greater say in what type of development is required to benefit the Village. My thanks go to everyone from across the Village who contributed their time and knowledge to the working group. The Parish Council were pleased to see the 'Greenwoods' development plans for building between Barton and Silsoe withdrawn but we will be monitoring any future plans for the area.

After a hiatus of 3 years, following Covid and then the passing of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022, the Village Show returned to the Village Hall in July. After some time without a Show, it was pleasing to see such a great turn-out and as ever there was some fantastic produce on display.

As always, the Barton Light's Committee provided a fun and exciting event for the Christmas Switch on. Sadly, the group informed us that it will not be continuing to manage the event in the future, but the Parish Council have taken over the responsibility for the funding, maintenance and installation of lights through the centre of the village over Christmas. Whilst we may not be able to run an event as in previous years, we plan to Switch On the lights at the end of November. My thanks go to everyone who has worked on, and donated time and money, to the Barton Lights Committee over the past 7 years to give Barton-le-Clay a very special Christmas atmosphere!

The Parish Council itself has grown with the co-option of 2 new councillors, giving us 12 serving councillors at the end of April 2024. There are vacancies for any residents who wishes to join the council. Please visit the Parish Office or e-mail the Clerk to find out how you can volunteer your time to helping to make Barton-le-Clay a pleasant and safe place to live and work.

My thanks must go to my fellow volunteer Councillors, who have given me their support during this year. Thanks go especially to previous Chair, Councillor Thomas, without whose experience and guidance I would not have been able to carry out the role. Also, I must recognise the hardworking Parish Council staff in the office and out and about in the Village, they represent and work for the Village so hard and so well!

Councillor Jonathan Paxton
Chairman Barton-le-Clay Parish Council



Planning Committee Report

As a statutory consultee, the Planning Committee, on behalf of the Parish Council, have met regularly throughout the year, to consider all planning applications submitted for the Barton-le-Clay Parish. We have commented where we agree inappropriate or insufficient plans have been provided and object when considered necessary. Reviewing the plans involves looking at previous and proposed plans, visiting the site or property to understand the context of the proposal and then discussing them at the Committee meeting. Over the last year, we have considered 67 applications, commenting on 23, objecting to 23 and raising no comments on 21. We 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. We 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 Parish Council were delighted to receive confirmation in March that the proposed new 'Greenwoods' application, with up to 3750 new homes and facilities between Wrest Park and Barton-le-Clay, had been refused outline planning permission by Central Beds Council. This followed a detailed campaign where we worked with other Parish Councils, local Ward Councillors, local organisations and residents from across the surrounding villages impacted by the potential development, to voice concerns regarding this large, speculative development. We will continue to keep a watching eye on this site, particularly as part of the discussions for a new Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire.

The Planning Committee continue to highlight any potential breaches of planning conditions, which are reported to the Central Bedfordshire Council Enforcement Officers to investigate. Depending on permitted development rules and the nature of the breach, a decision will then be made.



Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

The Committee is made up of local volunteers and parish councillors, to work to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the Village. This will comprise of a set of planning policies, determined and adopted by local people, to help us to shape the future of Our Village and surrounding area and put us in a much more powerful position legally, to ensure any new developments meet our needs and are not just foisted on us.

Work has been done to draw up suitable policies. A Green Infrastructure Plan has been completed by The Greensands Trust in consultation with local residents. A supplemental Design Code to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan has been produced, incorporating current design features and what is considered good and bad, so that it can provide guidance to meet the future development design needs of the Village.

A six-week consultation is now underway, where residents will have an opportunity to review the Plan and comment before it is finalised. Once any amendments have been made, it will go to formal independent examination, before the final Referendum is held later in the year. Further details on the Neighbourhood Plan and process are available on our website using the following link:

<https://bartonleclay-pc.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>



Leisure Committee Report

The Leisure Committee is responsible for the supply and maintenance of the Arnold Recreation Ground, Norman Road Play Area, and the Allotment site.

In June 2023, the annual RoSPA safety inspection of our play equipment was carried out by an independent surveyor. Three pieces of equipment in the Recreation Ground Play Area needed new parts and the repairs were completed over the following months. More recently the closing mechanism for the play area gate was replaced as it was not fully shutting and new seats and chains were fitted in the Norman Road Play Area.



Also, during June 2023 there was an unexpected issue with the zip wire as one of the main structural legs had lifted out of the ground due to the extreme wet and dry weather. Due to safety concerns, there was no other option than to close the equipment until the repair could be completed, which we understand was disappointing. The leg has been successfully reset and is being regularly checked, along with all play equipment, on a weekly basis.

In December 2022 Jim Pope joined the team to help our full-time Groundsman with the many duties needed to keep the village and green spaces in good condition. Since Jim joined the team, on a part-time basis, several larger scale jobs, in the green spaces and elsewhere, which were previously dealt with by outside contractors have been able to be completed in-house, making significant cost savings.

Winter 2023 has been exceptionally wet and like many areas up and down the UK, the Recreation Ground has suffered extensive flooding. Although a new bench has been purchased for the Play Area, it has not been able to be installed due to the flooding. We plan to set the new bench in the drier area and the old bench will be removed as soon as possible.



Discussions with Central Bedfordshire Councils Drainage and Highways departments are ongoing, and we hope to find an affordable solution to alleviate the flooding.

The Allotment site offers 91 plots of varying sizes. The Allotments remain a popular facility and at the time of writing there are 6 vacant plots ready to let. If you would like to grow your own fruit and vegetables but do not have space at home, you might like to consider taking on a plot. Please contact the Parish Office to arrange a meeting to view the plots on offer or add your name to the waiting list.

Over the past few years there have been several improvements and financial investment to the allotment site, including work to the bank, the creation of new accessible access for tenants, installation of fencing and gated access following issues of theft, resurfacing the central track, and improving the boundary hedgerow. You will have seen that the groundwork for the new Coronation Community Garden, located next to the allotments, has begun and is coming on well. At present our Groundsmen are busy installing fencing between the Garden and allotments to ensure that the site remains secure. The Groundsmen have also been busy cutting back bushes, strimming, grass cutting and repairing all manner of things over the past year.



Part of our maintenance contract for the site is to cut the hedges annually. This took place over the winter and following negotiation with the contractor additional hedgerow, which is not covered by the contract, has been tackled.

In February 2024, a new Working Group was formed to undertake a review of the existing play equipment and establish what improvements you would like to see in our play areas. The Leisure Committee have saved, over several years, a small pot of money for new equipment but we are aware that we will need to secure grant applications to move projects forward. A full consultation with residents is planned for May 2024 and we encourage residents to take a few moments to fill in the survey. The results of the survey will shape what we can do now as well as in the future.

The Committees projects for the coming year include refurbishment of the Recreation Ground park gates, repair fencing in the Norman Road Play Area, continue working to improve the allotment hedgerow and to explore options to tackle the flooding in the Recreation Ground. The Play Equipment Working Group will undertake a full review of our play equipment and surfacing and will explore grant opportunities.

Play Equipment Working Group

The Play Equipment Working Group was formed in February 2024, to undertake a review of the Parish Council owned play equipment in the village. A full consultation with households, and schools, is planned for May 2024 and we would encourage everyone to respond. The feedback we receive will be used in applications for grant funding and will shape the future play offering for the village.



Barton Village Show

On Sunday 23rd July 2023, the re-vamped Village Show was held at the Village Hall. Despite a difficult growing season and the earlier date for the Show, there was a good display of home-grown fruit, vegetables, flowers, floral displays, crafts and cookery entries. The number of entries was less than previous years, but the feedback received from exhibitors and those who visited the event was positive.

We were pleased to include our local Community Groups to join us by having fundraising stalls and hope this has raised their profiles in the village as well bring in additional income to help with the running of the groups. We also invited Community Safety Officers from Central Bedfordshire Council, the Fire Brigade, Barton-le-Clay Street Watch and the Police who were all on hand to offer advice to residents which proved very popular.

Following analysis of the number of entrants and interest within the village, it has sadly been decided that 2023 would be the last show in this format. The Show has been a tradition within the Village for decades, so it is sad to see it go. The Parish Council will consider whether it is able to run a suitable event in the future.

Burial Grounds Committee Report

The Burial Grounds Committee is responsible for the supply and maintenance of the Burial Ground and War Memorial and is also responsible for maintaining the closed churchyard of St Nicholas Church.

Over Spring 2023, the box hedge in the Burial Ground Garden of Rest suffered a caterpillar infestation which affected large areas. Following ongoing treatment, most of the hedge has recovered, and treatment will be ongoing as necessary.

Winter 2023 proved to be very busy with numerous activities taking place. You will have seen the Parish Councils Groundmen busy working to improve the War Memorial area. In October 2023, we were pleased to take delivery of a new handmade bench to commemorate the First and Second World Wars. The bench was installed in time for the Annual Remembrance Sunday Service on 12th November and offers a comfortable place to rest.



Although the Parish Council are custodians of the War Memorial, the land on which the memorial sits is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council. Following lengthy discussion, we are pleased that it has been agreed that we will take on the maintenance of the shrubs and continue to cut the grass regularly going forward. Work to tidy and cut the shrubs back has been completed and we will be progressing plans for the area over the coming year.



On 12th November, despite the wet weather, the Village stood together to remember those who gave their lives to serve in the World Wars and further conflicts. In the run up to the event, Barton Scout leaders 'planted' the handmade red poppies throughout the village. You may have seen the additional purple poppies which were added to remember the animals who served during the war.



We are also fortunate to have been gifted several handmade Tommy statues which were displayed in key areas around the Village. On the day we closed the roads surrounding the memorial for a short period of time to allow the service to be heard and the parade to the Church to take place safely. Although the road closure is complex, it does make an enormous difference to the service but it does rely on volunteers to man the closure points, as well as patience and understanding of motorists using the route. If this is something you would like to help with, we would love to hear from you.

Remembrance Sunday is a key event for the Village, and we would like to thank everyone who helped and gave their time - David Cope for leading the service, Marek Kosala for performing The Last Post and Reveille, Scout Leaders for making and displaying the poppies, the resident for gifting the Tommy statues and, finally, all the volunteers who gave their time to make the road closures possible.

During the winter months the contractor completed the annual hedge cutting of the Burial Ground and Churchyard.

Moving into 2024, a review of the Burial Ground Fees and Regulations was undertaken in January. We are pleased to have been able to freeze the fees effective 1st April 2024, with no increases applied. A review of the Burial Ground Regulations was also undertaken, and minor updates made. A copy of the up-to-date Fees and Regulations is available to view on our website, paper copies are available from the Parish office. One thing of concern is that we are seeing an increase in the number of graves with stone chippings. Please note that chippings and kerb sets are not permitted in the Burial Ground due to health and safety concerns.

At the beginning of the year, following ongoing issues with the waste cart contractor, the decision was made to end the contract and install new bins. The two new bins were installed in March and provide a means to dispose of flowers for composing, as well as paper and plastics.

The Committees' projects for the coming year include: progressing work to the War Memorial area, a review of the rose beds in the Garden of Rest which have sadly perished, and the D-Day 80th Anniversary Beacon Lighting on 6th June 2024.



Highways & Environment Committee Report

Road Safety in the Village is a major concern for residents. Whilst the Parish Council have no power to introduce safety measures such as speed restrictions, safer crossing points and barriers, we have been liaising with the Highways Improvement Team at Central Bedfordshire Council to try and persuade them to consider various options. In October, we met with the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner to undertake a walkabout around the Village looking at key areas where Road Safety and Crime were concerns. Since this meeting, we have been working with the local Ward Councillors and the local Schools to collate evidence to support improvements on the highways with speeding and parking issues.

In May 2023, we donated four Kiddie Parking Buddies and a Banner to Ramsey Manor Lower School and PTA to try and encourage parents and carers to consider safer parking when dropping their children off at the school in Manor Road.

The 3-yearly Tree Survey of our trees was undertaken by an Arboriculturalist last Summer – over 400 trees! As a result, essential tree works were completed in various locations, including the Burial Ground, Recreation Ground, Sports Field and Lovers Walk woodland. This Autumn, the Parish Council will be looking to replant trees to replace those that had to be felled due to disease.

Following requests from residents, the Committee have reviewed the general waste and dog waste bins around the Village and highlighted areas where further bins could be installed to prevent overflowing bins. We are working with Central Bedfordshire Council to deliver the extra bins required.

The 'Blooming Barton' volunteer group have continued to maintain the flower planters and planting by the Village gates. They have also planted more bulbs around the Village which have been enjoyed by everyone over the Spring. The Parish Council have provided a donation to the group towards the Summer bedding plants for the planters.



The Parish Council has continued to support the local group of litter-picking volunteers, taking part in the Keep Britain Tidy 'Great British Spring Clean' Event in March. Litter picking equipment and safety clothing is provided to the group, who regularly organize litter picking from the roadside verges on Hexton Road, Luton Road and Sharpenhoe Road.

Our Groundsmen have continued to undertake minor tree, hedge works and strimming around the Village on Parish Council land or where not completed by Central Beds Council contractors. They undertake litter picking in the Parks, around the Doctors and Village Hall, on the Sports Field and other areas owned by the Parish Council. They quickly clear any broken glass from footpaths when it is reported to us. Additionally, they regularly inspect and wash our bus shelters.

Repairs have been carried out to road surfaces, footpaths, hedgerows and fences around the Village in the last year by Central Bedfordshire Council. The Parish Council encourages all residents to use the Central Bedfordshire Council 'FixMyStreet' online site and app, to report any issues they see relating to highways or environment problems. Last Autumn, we completed an audit of the Public Rights of Way footpaths through the Village for Central Beds Council, to ensure that they are all included in the maintenance contract for this year.

Priorities for 2024/25 are to continue to push Central Beds Council for highway improvements in the Village, to review our current grass and hedge cutting works contracts, to paint the bus shelters and to get the new dog waste bins installed. We will also be looking at environmental improvements, in line with our Biodiversity Policy.



Sports Field Committee Report

The Sports Field offers 9 football pitches of various sizes and the Pavilion changing facilities which are currently utilised by 22 Barton Youth teams and 3 Sunday League adult teams.

Following the end of the football season in May 2023, the annual maintenance programme began. We work in partnership with Barton Rovers Football Club, which means that we are able to reseed and top up the soil levels on all pitches, as needed. Additionally, the pitches also received an application of fertiliser and weed selective to keep the grass in good condition.

During the maintenance programme, the entrances to the Sports Field are closed off and although this may be inconvenient for some users, it is vital to allow the new seed time to germinate ready for the new football season.

In recent years, the level of dog fouling and dogs off lead on the pitches has increased significantly, which is a great concern. Although it is not an offence to walk a dog on a marked-out sports pitch, it is an offence for a dog to be off lead and if a dog fouls it must be 'picked up'. To tackle the ongoing issue, we have been working with Central Bedfordshire Safety Officers who are regularly visiting the site to engage with dog owners and remind them of the regulations and potential fines of up to £1,000 for not 'picking up' after your pet. Equally important is to recognize that dog fouling is a danger as it can lead to diseases. If you do use the Sports Field to walk your dog, please ensure it is on a lead (no more than 2 metres long) and that you 'pick up' every time. This will make a huge difference to ensure that the Sports Field remains a pleasant facility for all.



Like many facilities, the level of rainfall since the new football season began in September 2023 has caused issues with flooding which has resulted in some match cancellations and the current football season running slightly behind.



We are fortunate to have 3 dedicated Groundsmen (1 full-time, 2 part-time) who work hard all year round to ensure that the Sports Facility is available and in good condition. During Spring 2024, the Groundsmen were busy replacing sections of the wooden fencing which were in poor condition and although we have a contractor to cut the main field, the strimming and cutting around goal posts is carried out by our Groundsman.

This coming year, the Committee will undertake a review of the Pavilion shutters, access road maintenance and lighting requirements, as well as the annual maintenance of the Sports Field and Pavilion.



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 2024/2025

The Parish Council are very aware of the current cost of living crisis impacting households. However, with price increases being applied by many contractors and suppliers, and the additional costs in taking on the storage and maintenance of the Christmas Lights, the Parish Council will be incurring higher costs in 2024/25. The budgets were reviewed and cost savings made, where possible. As a result, the Parish Council Precept Budget for 2024/25 was agreed at **£233,340**, representing an increase of £5.03 per year on a Band D property (4.4% increase).

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 c.£2900 this year to the following good causes:

Barton-le-Clay Village Hall £200.00 <i>Installation of CCTV</i>	Noah's Ark <i>Childrens books</i> £60.00
Barton Kids Club £100.00 <i>Table-top games</i>	Barton Helping Hands £138.84 <i>Public Liability Insurance</i>
The Barton Players £100.00 <i>Hand-held microphones</i>	Little Rovers Pre-School <i>Improve resources</i> £125.00
Arnold Academy PTA £500.00 <i>Activity Trail</i>	Royal British Legion £100.00 <i>Poppy Wreath for Remembrance service</i>
Harlington Upper School £125.00 Arnold Academy £50.00 <i>Annual awards evening prizes</i>	Barton Beavers & Cubs £250.00 <i>STEM educational games</i>
Barton Rovers Football Club <i>Planting for car park</i> £250.00	Barton-le-Clay Bowling Club £350.00 <i>Footpath repairs</i> £350.00
1st Barton-le-Clay Rangers <i>Flag, pole & banner</i> £250.00	Blooming Barton £300.00 <i>Plants</i>



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.

Pay & Personnel Sub-Committee Report

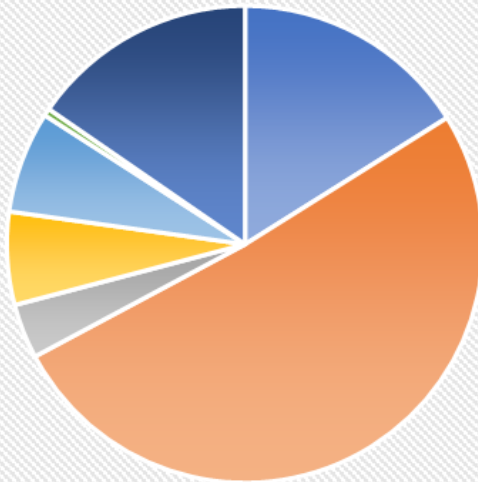
We have, once again, had a very stable team of staff over the past year whose effort and commitment in maintaining and improving the village environment and facilities has been admirable.

Each of our staff members has an annual performance review and from this we identify strengths and also training and development needs.

The council is committed to best practice with its employment policies and procedures and this committee ensures that these processes are regularly reviewed. A general HR review has also been instigated this year to assess everyone's workloads and responsibilities and this will continue over the next few months.

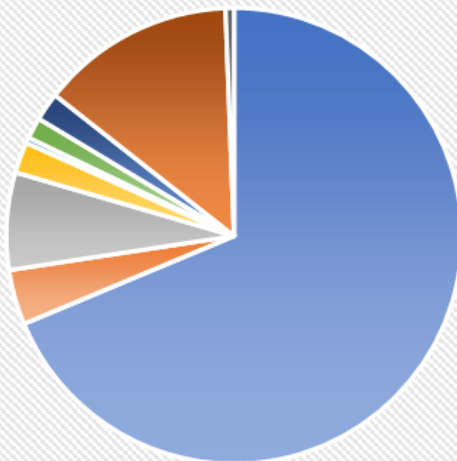
The committee implemented the national pay award for all staff members, announced in Autumn 2023, as well as standard contractual adjustments for individual employees.

EXPENDITURE (Total £232,149)



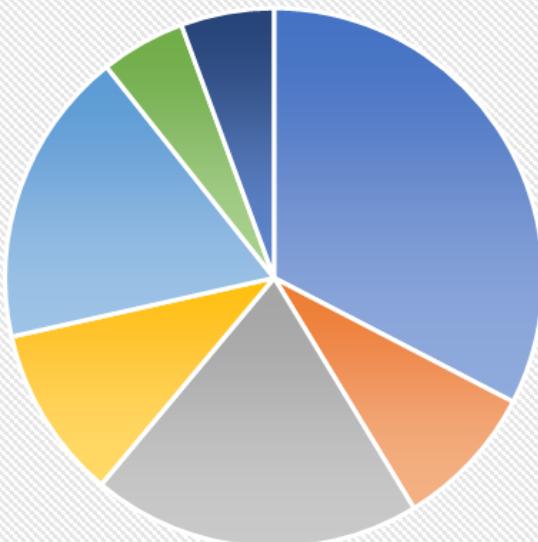
- Policies & Resources
- Salaries
- Burial Grounds
- Highways & Environment
- Leisure
- Planning (minimal)
- Sports Field

INCOME (Total £322,191)



- Precept
- Interest
- Burial Ground
- Sports Pitches
- Allotments
- Rental Income
- Telemast Rental
- Grants & Donations
- Misc/Other (minimal)

RESERVES (Total £358,092)



- General Reserves
- Policies & Resources
- Burial Ground
- Highways & Environment
- Leisure
- Planning
- Sports Field

BARTON-LE-CLAY PARISH COUNCIL

BALANCE SHEET 2023/2024

Balance Sheet as at 31 st March 2024		
31 st March 2023		31 ^s March 2024
	Current Assets	
4,150	Debtors	3,085
4,707	VAT	6,578
3,041	Prepayments	3,294
7,764	Current Bank A/C	14,531
25,578	Savings A/C	44,110
103,563	Public Sector Deposit Fund	159,980
13,663	Tennis Club Account	15,585
84,792	Hampshire Trust	84,792
66,039	Nationwide 45DN Savings A/C	53,363
70	Petty Cash – Office	70
100	Petty Cash - Handyman	100
313,468		385,488
313,468	Total Assets	385,488

	Current Liabilities	
1,238	Creditors	16,689
0	Other Creditors	718
1,388	Accruals	1,712
0	Allotment Deposits	1,300
2,298	Wages	2,525
1,098	Pensions	1,202
3,250	Receipts in Advance	3,250
9,273		27,396
304,195	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	358,092

	Represented by:	
106,072	General Reserves	116,772
198,123	Earmarked Reserves	241,320
304,195		358,092

Local Schools Liaison Report

The Parish Council gave two grants to schools during the 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.

In addition, the Parish Council donated four parking buddies and a banner to Ramsey Manor Lower School to encourage parents to consider their parking during school drop-off and pick-up times.

Arnold Academy PTA have successfully provided an activity trail for the school children to enjoy. The Parish Council contributed a small grant towards the project and were invited to attend the opening of the facility in January.

The Parish Council have met with the Headteachers from Ramsey Manor Lower School and Arnold Academy several times during the year to help build a relationship with them and work together on common goals. In particular, we are working with the Ward Councillors and the Schools to try and improve road safety on Manor Road and Hexton Road, to address some of the concerns raised by residents, pupils and parents.

Barton Tennis Club Report

Barton Tennis Club continues to thrive and provide a valuable asset to our community. Annual membership runs from 1st April to 31st March, and is available by contacting the Club on Tel: 01582 881597 or by emailing: bartonleclaytennisclub@btinternet.com

The Club is always looking to attract new members. They offer both adult and junior coaching sessions throughout the season. Court usage is controlled by key access and an online booking system.

For more details, please look on their website: <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/BartonTennisClub>

The annual court lease fee, payable to the Parish Council, is currently £1,750. This fund is used towards future resurfacing costs.



Village Hall report

The Village Hall, a Registered Charity, depends solely on hiring out the facilities and various fundraising events. The current committee, with the help of a full-time site agent and caretaker, maintain the hall and improve facilities for the benefit of hirers and residents who use the hall.

At the AGM in June, Tom Chinnery, the existing Chairman stood down from the Committee and John Roberts was duly elected.

During this reporting period April 2023 to March 2024, it has been a challenging year financially and the Village Hall posted an operating loss of £7,647 as at 31st December 2023. The annual loss is attributable to the cost of a new boiler, £11,260, the cost of new tables & chairs £8,000 and the resurfacing of the main hall floor costing £6,700. Although, a Community Asset Grant of 50% towards the cost of the tables and chairs, and the resurfacing of the floor was obtained from Central Beds Council.

In order to maintain and improve the facilities at the Hall, there has been a programme of decoration including the Chiltern Room and the Committee Room, new lighting in the main hall, repairs to the roof and replacement of the fire doors in the main hall.

In May, Central Beds Council changed hands following the Council elections and as a consequence the promised Section 106 monies for the expansion and improvement of the Village Hall may not now materialise. Therefore, no more money will be spent on drawing up plans until further clarification is received.

Since April 2023, the online hall booking system has been up and running, and has proved to be a good enhancement as it provides transparency and flexibility to hirers and the opportunity to book different rooms or areas of the hall. During this time, there has been a good level of regular bookings and new hirers which has continued into 2024, providing a good stream of income.

There have been a couple of issues regarding the Village Hall car park.

Firstly, there has been a high level of anti-social behaviour in the car park late at night, break-ins and damage at the doctor's surgery. This issue has been discussed by the Parish Council, the Ward Councillors, local residents affected and the Police. Discussions are still ongoing but in the meantime, the village hall has installed CCTV. A possible solution is a gate across the access road, however, this presents a number of difficult practical problems to overcome.



The second issue is the unauthorised parking by parents collecting their children from Arnold Academy in the afternoons. The Village Hall has written to the school raising the issue.

The Management Committee remain positive and enthusiastic to improve the finances and to maintain of the high standards of the hall for the benefit of the local community.



Barton-Le-Clay Educational Trust Annual Report 2023

Registered Charity No. 307470

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 of this age group who, having completed statutory education, are in training for a profession or calling at universities, colleges of education or other institutions of further education. Provision is also made to give financial aid to schools and to voluntary organisations which serve young persons within the area of benefit.

Notices of the awards available are published in the parish magazine for Barton-Le-Clay and Hexton and in the newsletter for Pulloxhill. Student applications are called for in October and are considered at the Trust's Annual General Meeting at the beginning of December. Grants for schools and youth organisations are considered in an ordinary meeting in March.

In the 2022 – 2023 Trust Financial Year, thirty students were awarded grants. Four grants were awarded to schools this year and two grants to youth organisations.

Trustees: David Cope; Lesley Gordon; Andrew Johnson; Peter Parrish (Chairman); Barbara Thomas

Main Address:

Mrs J. Daye, Clerk to the Trust

E-mail:- joanna.daye@btinternet.com





BARTON-LE-CLAY PARISH COUNCIL

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