

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICIES & RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
OF BARTON-LE-CLAY PARISH COUNCIL HELD ONLINE  
ON MONDAY 29<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2020 COMMENCING AT 7.35PM**

Present: Councillors Mrs B Thomas (Vice-chair), Mrs G Gardner, Mr J Selley and Mr J Paxton

In attendance: Mrs C Callen (Clerk) and 2 members of the public

Minutes: Mrs C Callen

**20/085 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – Councillors Mr L Davison-Williams and Mr A Channon

**20/086 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were none.

**20/087 MATTERS ARISING**

The Clerk advised that following investigation with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), the Parish Council would be unable to claim Small Business Rate relief for the Sports Pavilion as it pays Business Rates on two properties and so does not qualify. The Business Rates Relief Grant is also unavailable due to the Parish Council being a Precept Authority. CBC have agreed to spread the annual rates charge over the remaining 9 months of the year.

Following on from 19/664, Councillor Thomas requested information on what activities are permitted under Mr Arnold's bequest for Arnold Recreation Ground. Further discussion regarding a possible social area for the Barton youth will be held at the next Committee Meeting with the benefit of this information.

At the last meeting it was requested that the Committee review their investment strategy. This item has been deferred to the Autumn, once there is hopefully more stability in the economy and ahead of the re-investment of Parish Funds due in early 2021.

Cllr Davison-Williams and the Clerk met with the Chairman of the Village Hall Committee on 19th June. A copy of the meeting notes were acknowledged.

In March, a resident had approached the Parish Council to request a review of the need to rent office premises in the Village and to consider a possible shared space with the Library. This item has been deferred until the current restrictions are lifted and the ongoing needs of the Village are established. **ACTION – Clerk to update the resident accordingly.**

Councillor Thomas requested that item 20/090 be discussed at this point in the meeting.

**20/090 TO CONSIDER THE PLANNED CLOSURE OF THE VILLAGE POST OFFICE AND AGREE ANY FURTHER ACTION**

The current Post Office in the Village has been closed during lockdown but re-opened 29th June. However, the owners have advised they will be closing permanently from 14<sup>th</sup> October due to ill health. The business has been up for sale for 2 years. Several residents have asked the Parish Council to see if there is any way to protect the Post Office service in the Village. The Clerk has spoken to the agents and obtained details of the sale - including the freehold property and business (shop and 1-bed flat). The Royal Mail sorting office currently rents the shed space at the side of the property but several local landowners have been approached to re-locate the sorting office.

The current proprietor advised the committee that anyone taking on the Post Office service would need to complete the Postmaster qualification – it takes 6/7 months to train up. He would be willing to provide further information if required. He also advised that he would consider selling the leasehold. Councillor Thomas thanked the resident for his input at the meeting and his contribution to the village in providing this service over the past few years.

Members did not feel there was any benefit in making the current premises a Community Asset, which would restrict the current owner progressing any sale and would not protect the Post Office service. Councillor Paxton clarified that the opportunity was being advertised on websites.

2 members of the public left 7.55pm

**20/088 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE POLICIES & RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 2<sup>nd</sup> MARCH 2020**

Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** the approval of the minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, **SECONDED** by Councillor Selley **with 3 in favour and 1 abstention.**

- 20/089 TO CONSIDER REQUEST FOR A BARTON ROCKS MEMORIAL AREA AND AGREE WAY FORWARD**  
 As acknowledged at Full Council, the Parish Council have been approached by several residents to see if a suitable site could be found to build a lasting memorial from the painted pebbles and rocks that have been left around the village for people to find during Lockdown.  
 Members agreed that it was important to mark the situation using these souvenirs, which would need to be varnished or coated in some way to protect the artwork from the weather.  
 Suitable areas were discussed, including outside the Library, the Heritage Garden or around the War Memorial. It was felt that it should be somewhere central to the Village and the library would be first choice.  
 Councillor Paxton has already approached CBC Libraries who have confirmed their support.  
 Councillor Shingler has also offered his support.  
 This item will be discussed and progressed further at the next meeting, once the library is back open.
- 20/091 TO CONSIDER THE RE-OPENING OF THE PARISH OFFICE AND APPROVE ANY ACTIONS AND COSTS REQUIRED**  
 Following the relaxation of some government restrictions, the Parish Office could now be opened to the public from 10am-12noon, as before, subject to a full risk assessment and mitigating arrangements being put in place. The Clerk has completed the Risk Assessment which was overviewed by the committee. Additional cleaning products, signs and a barrier are required to comply with the risk mitigants required. Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** a budget of up to £200 to cover the costs incurred in re-opening the office, **SECONDED** by Councillor Selley and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.  
 Government guidelines are still advising staff to work from home where possible. However, it would be beneficial if the office staff spent at least part of the week working together to ease communication. Members confirmed that the office could re-open if the staff were comfortable with the mitigated risks, suggesting an initial two-week trial period.
- 20/092 TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE REIMBURSEMENT OF ANY COSTS INCURRED BY THE OFFICE STAFF AS A RESULT OF HOMEWORKING DURING LOCKDOWN**  
 Since the start of Lockdown on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the Office staff have been required to work from home on a regular basis. They have incurred some costs in respect of personal mobile usage, printer ink, electricity, etc. Members also acknowledged the inconvenience of setting up home office areas to work. Following discussion about the difficulty in quantifying the exact costs, Councillor Selley **PROPOSED** that the staff should be paid in line with HMRC allowance for home working at £6 per week (maximum £26pm), back dated to the start of Lockdown, **SECONDED** by Councillor Gardner and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**. Any additional specific expenses will be considered as appropriate.
- 20/093 TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE COSTS FOR THE NEW GROUNDSMAN'S TRAINING COURSES**  
 The new Groundsman will need to participate in several day courses to bring his skills up to date and ensure we are covered by our insurers for the use of equipment and pesticides. Courses at Shuttleworth are currently suspended but they hope to reinstate them from September. Total cost of the 5 Courses required is £1161. In addition, First Aid training is recommended through St Johns Ambulance at a cost of £145 for the Emergency First Aid at Work 1 day course. Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** approval of total costs of £1306 for training, **SECONDED** by Councillor Gardner and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.  
 Pending the completion of these courses, any tasks requiring the use of machinery or pesticides will be undertaken by the existing two groundsman.
- 20/094 TO CONSIDER THE REQUIREMENT FOR A DBS CHECK FOR THE NEW GROUNDSMAN**  
 Historically, the Groundsman have been DBS cleared at enhanced level to undertake their role in the community (mainly where they could come into contact with children – play areas/changing rooms). However, advice from BRCC now suggests that DBS clearance is not required. The new Groundsman has an enhanced DBS Certificate undertaken in 2018 as part of his previous role. Following discussion, Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** that a DBS check at the highest level possible should be sought, **SECONDED** by Councillor Gardner and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.
- 20/095 TO RETROSPECTIVELY APPROVE THE COST OF UNIFORM FOR THE NEW GROUNDSMAN**  
 Uniform and protective footwear for the new groundsman were purchased from Prestige Design & Workwear Ltd. Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** retrospective approval of the costs of £170 plus VAT, **SECONDED** by Councillor Selley and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.

**20/096 TO RETROSPECTIVELY APPROVE THE ADDITIONAL COST FOR THE ANNUAL WEBSITE SUPPORT**

At the Committee meeting in March, approval for the new Website was agreed at a one-off cost of £600. In addition, the Parish Council have had to pay £100 for the annual support of the site, to ensure it is kept up to date. Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** retrospective approval for the additional £100 to Eyelid Productions Ltd, **SECONDED** by Councillor Paxton and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.

**20/097 TO REVIEW HOW ZOOM MEETINGS ARE WORKING AND CONSIDER ANY IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRED**

Zoom virtual meetings have been undertaken during June. Members reviewed the experience. It was agreed that a public spokesperson should address the Council on behalf of residents within the allotted time slot. Councillors should be responsible for muting their own audio sound. Any councillor wishing to speak must raise their hand to alert the Chairman. Committee meeting should be scheduled so that if more than one is required on a particular evening, they are in line with the Clerk/Assistant Clerk responsibilities.

**20/098 TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE 2020/21 S137 GRANTS POLICY**

The latest version of the Policy (version 8) was reviewed. Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** the approval of the s137 Grants Policy 2020/21, **SECONDED** by Councillor Selley and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.

**20/099 TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE THE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The latest version of the Policy (version 2) was reviewed. Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** the approval of the Complaints Policy (V.2), **SECONDED** by Councillor Selley and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.

**20/100 TO CONSIDER APPROACH FROM AP WIRELESS (UK) LTD REGARDING THE RENTAL AGREEMENTS FOR THE TELEMASTS AT THE LUTON ROAD SPORTS GROUND**

The Clerk has been approached on several occasions by AP Wireless regarding a review of the current agreements in place for telemast rental (currently O2 and T-Mobile) at the Luton Road Sports Ground. This item was deferred to Full Council for consideration.

**20/101 ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE OR FOR INCLUSION ON THE NEXT AGENDA**

Further to the discussions at the last Highways & Environment Committee meeting, the Clerk has now discussed the Tree Survey with Andy Jones, CBC Trees & Landscapes Officer, in particular the need to address the 'further inspection for internal trunk decay within 1 month' recommendation. Following his advice, Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** to approve the cost of £850 for PR Newson Ltd to undertake the further inspection, **SECONDED** by Councillor Selley and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.

Following the recent Government Announcement and guidelines published on 26<sup>th</sup> June, The Council discussed the re-opening of the play areas and outdoor fitness equipment. It was agreed that regular cleaning of the equipment and enforcing a limit on the number of users was not practically possible. The equipment is inspected weekly for wear and tear and the annual ROSPA inspection was undertaken in May. After consideration, Councillor Thomas **PROPOSED** the re-opening of the play areas and fitness equipment on 4<sup>th</sup> July subject to completion of a risk assessment and suitable signage, **SECONDED** by Councillor Paxton and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**.

Councillor Paxton suggested the Parish Council investigate 'alternative' signage to encourage the disposal of rubbish in the parks and open spaces.

The Clerk advised that a meeting was being held on 1<sup>st</sup> July in Arnold Recreation Ground with Bedfordshire Police and local volunteers to form a new Street Watch team.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.