Minutes of the Meeting of Barlaston Parish Council
Held on Tuesday 14 January 2025 at the Methodist Church Hall at 19:15

Present:

Cllr S Tudor (Chair)
Cllr C Hurst
Cllr G Jones
Cllr G Lloyd
Cllr E Philpott
Cllr J Dando
Cllr P Fisher
Cllr L Pickering

Also in attendance:

Parish Clerk: Ms Vivien O'Dunne, Borough Councillor: Alec Sandiford and two members of the public.

Open Forum: A member of the public presented a proposal to replace the village map in the display board on Station Road by the railway crossing. It was agreed to add this item to the February agenda.

239. Apologies: Apologies were received from Cllr Borasinski: it was resolved to accept these. Cllr Oakden wasn't present, and no apologies were received.

240. Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest.

241. Written applications for dispensations under the Localism Act 2011: There were no written applications for dispensation.

242. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting 10 December 2024: These were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

243. Clerk's report: See Appendix A

244. Update from County Councillor Ian Parry: Cllr Parry sent his apologies.

245. Working groups:

- Communications Group: The group is currently working to identify a mutually agreeable time for their next meeting.
- HR Group: Cllr Pickering and the Clerk are scheduled to meet for a one-on-one in February. It was noted that the Assistant Clerk has submitted her final pay claim. A formal letter of thanks will be extended to her for her invaluable contributions, particularly in training the Clerk and providing essential support during her first few months in the role. The Clerk also reported that she will be taking leave during the week commencing January 27th.

246. Training update:

The Clerk informed the meeting that she has completed the ILCA (Introduction to Local Council Administration) course. She has requested approval to enrol in the FiLCA (Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration) course, at a cost of £144, and the GDPR e-course offered by CCLA (£36). It was resolved to approve the Clerk's enrolment on these.

Cllr Lloyd presented a report on the "Empowering the Young Councillor of Tomorrow" course he had recently attended. The course offered recommendations on how to engage young people and increase their involvement in local government. It was resolved that Cllr Lloyd would lead an initiative to investigate the way forward for the council in implementing these ideas.

247. Financial matters and audit recommendations:

I. The bank reconciliation reports were accepted and signed.
II. The schedule of payments report for December 2024 was accepted.
III. The income and expenditure report for the current year-to-date and likely year end position was presented in item 248.
IV. Website migration: the Clerk reported that this is still ongoing.

December Expenditure	GROSS	VAT	NET	Payment
Tesco: mobile phone 134227921519	15.10	0.00	15.10	DD
BT: Phone and broadband: M0634Y	39.30	6.55	32.72	BACS
Viking: 8000 sheet toner Inv 5150463	325.14	54.19	270.95	BACS
Douglas Macmillan Hospice – Grant	200.00	0.00	200.00	BACS

Barlaston PCC – Cemetery Grass Cutting 50%	1,700.00	0.00	1,700.00	BACS
Pozitive Energy – Electric – Village Hall – 26181620246980791	148.58	7.08	141.50	DD
Pozitive Energy – Gas – Village Hall – 26181820246979881	302.60	14.41	288.19	DD
David Ogilvie Engineering – Bench – Invoice: 191515	1,281.60	213.60	1,068.00	BACS
Viking – Paper – Invoice 5214701	34.62	5.77	28.85	BACS
Support Staffordshire – Associate Membership	25.00	0.00	25.00	BACS
Vivien O'Dunne – December Salary	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	BACS
Buxus Green – December Grounds Maintenance Invoice 202421	1,081.50	0.00	1,081.50	BACS
Karen St Leger – December Salary and Mileage	99.04	0.00	99.04	BACS
CPRE membership subscription	36.00	0.00	36.00	SO
Currys PC World – New Office Computer 71609304	754.99	125.83	626.16	BACS
Stafford Borough Council – Bin emptying Oct-Dec 2024	447.31	74.55	372.76	BACS
Income	**GROSS**	**VAT**	**NET**	**Payment**
Interest – Business Bank	123.66	0.00	123.66	
Barlaston Village Hall – Energy bills	546.52	0.00	546.52	
Barlaston Allotment Association	300.00	0.00	300.00	

248. **Parish Council Precept for 2025 / 2026:** The Clerk circulated the predicted year-end financials alongside the proposed budget for 2025/26. It was resolved that the Clerk would notify the billing authority that the amount to be charged to taxpayers would be £114,964, which would maintain the current tax level and not result in an increase in bills for electors.

249. **Earmarked Reserves for 2025 / 2026:** The earmarked reserves were reviewed, and it was resolved to increase the EMR for the proposed playpark project. Additionally, a new asset replacement reserve was introduced.

Reserves	**2024/25**	**2025/26**
General reserve	£30,000	£30,000
V Hall contingency	£10,000	£10,000
Election	£7,000	£7,000
V Hall works	£43,723	£43,723
Play Area	£50,000	£82,650
Asset replacement	£0.00	£5,000

250. **Annual Parish Meeting:** It was resolved to form a working group to organise the Annual Parish Meeting with the aim of encouraging greater attendance and participation. The Villager of the Year award will be presented, and refreshments will be provided. The Clerk will propose an appropriate date and time, taking care to avoid clashes with popular holidays and events, and will bring the proposal back to the February meeting for approval.

251. **Grounds Maintenance report:** The contractors reported that the hedge on the village green had been cut and that they were on schedule with all other tasks.

252. **Meadow Road lease:** The Clerk reported that a miscommunication between the Borough and the solicitors had caused a delay. She assured Councillors that the issue would be resolved promptly. Additionally, the Clerk is investigating insurance cover for the land.

253. **Cricket Club lease:** The Clerk reported that she had been in contact with a representative from the cricket club, and the solicitors are still in dialogue with each other. It is hoped that further progress will be made before the next meeting. The Clerk is also investigating insurance cover for the land.

254. **Neighbourhood Plan review:** Cllr Borasinski had submitted a report on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan review. It was noted that the former Clerk has expressed her willingness to continue providing support in a consultancy capacity.

255. **Signage for the Downs Carpark:** It was resolved to order the sign along with the 2.5m post @ £193 + VAT

256. **Parish Council vacancy: Barlaston Park Ward:** The Clerk reported that no election requests had been received, and as a result, the Council can proceed with the co-option. The Clerk will advertise the vacancy on social media and the notice board. This item will be added to the February agenda, and all interested parties will be invited to submit their CVs and attend the Public Forum to introduce themselves.

257. **Parking issues:** At a previous meeting, Cllr Parry mentioned that H bars may be beneficial to residents of Broughton Crescent, but he would require input from them to pursue further. It was resolved that the Clerk would write to the residents of Broughton Crescent, providing Cllr Parry's contact details and requesting that they contact him directly if they wish to pursue this matter.

258. **Key-holder for the Barlaston Park notice board:** In addition to being the key-holder for the dog bag bins, Cllr Dando also agreed to be the keyholder for the community side of the notice board.

259. **Blocked culvert on Station Road:** see item 260.

260. **Downs Car Park remedial works:** Cllr Hurst proposed maintenance works for the car park, including scraping off mud from the surface, filling potholes, and laying 2 tonnes of hardcore. Additionally, the contractor would clear the ditch and entrance to the culvert. It was resolved to allocate a maximum budget of £750 for these works.

261. **Missing signage on Hartwell Lane:** It was noted that the sign is still missing despite reporting online to Highways by both residents and the Clerk. The Clerk will remind residents (via the usual channels) that they should continue to report highways issues via the "Report It" section of the County Council's webpage and encourage others to do the same in order to facilitate action.

262. **Risk Assessment updates:**

- Downs Car Park pathway: The Clerk is awaiting a quote for these works.
- Defib location awareness: This in an outstanding action; not urgent as residents will always be directed to their nearest defibrillator by the 999 call-taker.
- Drainage issues on the village green: An outstanding action; a budget has been agreed. The contractor will have to wait for the ground to dry out.

263. **Weekly play reports / recommendations from appointed Cllrs:** Cllr Hurst gave a verbal report and will submit the hard copy reports to the Clerk after the meeting.

264. **Grant application:** It was resolved to grant £500 to Barlaston PCC to cover half the cost of printing and distribution of the Parish Gazette to all households in December. The Parish Council share news via the Gazette on a monthly basis.

265. **Correspondence:**

- A thank you letter from the Douglas Macmillan Hospice
- A letter was received from the Parish Council's internal auditor, Kim Squires, thanking the Council for appointing *Kim Squires Internal Audit Services* for the current financial year. The letter also confirmed that she is independent of the Council, with no familial or other links to the Council.

266. **Planning decision: Appeal 24/39525/FUL - Cocknage Farm Barns Woodpark Lane Cocknage:** An appeal has been made to the Secretary of State in respect of the above site, following the refusal of planning permission by Stafford Borough Council. The Parish Council has been invited to withdraw, amend, or add to their previous comments. It was resolved that the Clerk would respond, stating that the proposed fencing, in both design and materials, does not respect the sensitive nature of the Green Belt and would negatively impact its visual and environmental quality.

267. **To receive items for inclusion in next agenda**

Public rights of way: Cllrs Fisher and Pickering
Notice Board proposal: Public forum
School Crossing Patrol
Co-option of Parish Cllr for Barlaston Park
Blocked Gulleys in the Parish
Annual Football match on the village green: Cllr Pickering
Doctors Surgery: Cllr Philpott

268. **Date of next meeting:** –11 Feb 2025

Appendix A

Clerk's Report December 2024

161 **Wedgwood Memorial College** – no updates received

190 **Memorial bench:** The new memorial bench has been installed

215 (iv) **Support Staffordshire** The Parish Council are now members of Support Staffordshire

220 **Consultation response:** The Clerk responded to the consultation on behalf of the Parish Council regarding remote attendance at Parish Council meetings and Proxy Voting

222 **Bus Shelter repair:** The works have now been completed

223 **Missing bin on Station Road**: This has been reported to Stafford Borough Council

225 **Christmas Lights**: Cllr Tudor has sent a Thank You card to the new residents of the Old School House and to the proprietor of the Village Stores

226 **Letter of appreciation**: The Clerk has written to Mr Mirceta to thank him for his contribution on behalf of the Parish Council

229 **Speedwatch:** The Clerk has written to the coordinator to feedback from the December Parish Council meeting and has offered to advertise for more Speedwatch volunteers via the Parish Council Socials

231 **Civic Amenity Visits 2025:** These have been booked for the following dates: 25th January, 12th April, 26th July, 25th October. The lorry will park in its usual spot on Lakewood Drive between 10:00 and 12:00.

232 **Homes Plus Allotment site:** There has been no progress with this. It will be added back to the agenda once a meeting has been scheduled

233 **Tree works on the Village Green:** These are scheduled for the 27th and 28th January

Office Computer: This has now been purchased and the Clerk will complete the data transfer