Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Barlaston Parish Council
Held on Tuesday 13 May 2025 at the Methodist Church Hall at 19:00

Present:

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

Also in attendance:

Parish Clerk: Ms Vivien O'Dunne.
Borough Councillor: Alec Sandiford
2 members of the public were in attendance.

Open Forum: The members of the public present had each submitted an application for the casual vacancy for Parish Councillor in the Barlaston Park ward. Both candidates were invited to give a five-minute presentation outlining their skills and suitability for the role.

358. **Welcome:** The retiring Chairman welcomed those present.

359. **Election of Chairman for 2025/26:** Cllr Borasinski was duly elected Chairman for the forthcoming year in absentia. It was resolved that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office may be signed by Cllr Borasinski either prior to or at the next meeting of the Council. It was further resolved that Cllr Tudor would chair the current Annual Meeting of the Council.

360. **Election of Vice-Chairman for 2025/26:** Cllr Tudor was elected as Vice-Chairman.

361. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Cllr Borasinski, it was resolved to accept these. Cllr Oakden was not present and no apologies were received.

362. **Declarations of interest:** There were no declarations of interest.

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

364. **Committee/Working Group structure:** It was resolved to defer the decision on working groups and committees' membership, dissolution, reformation, and chairmanship to the next meeting.

365. **Sole Trustee Representative:** It was resolved to defer the appointment of a representative to the next meeting

366. **Banking arrangements:** It was agreed that the Parish Council would continue to bank with Lloyds Bank. It was further resolved that Cllr Philpott, as an existing signatory, be granted access to online banking.

367. **Asset Register:** The Risk Register, dated 31 March 2025, was reviewed and formally approved by the Council. It will now be published on the Council's website.

368. **Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the Year ending 31 March 2025**

I. The Annual Internal Audit Report was received and accepted. It was noted that the general reserves covered 0.44 years of expenditure, which was considered an acceptable level at year end
II. Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025) of the Annual Return was duly accepted by the Parish Council and signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.
III. Section 2 (Accounting Statements 2024/2025) of the Annual Return was duly accepted by the Parish Council and signed by the Chairman.
IV. The date for the advertising of the exercise of public rights was set for the 3rd June and will conclude on the 14th July 2025.

369. **Budget Details for Financial Year 2025/26 including earmarked reserves:** The budget for the 2025/26 financial year was circulated and duly accepted. Earmarked reserves for the year were also agreed and set as follows:

£10,000 – Village Hall Contingency
£7,000 – Election
£43,273 – Village Hall Works
£82,650 – Play Park *(including an increase of £32,650 in 2025/26)*
£5,000 – Asset Replacement Fund *(new fund)*
It was noted that this allocation will be reviewed annually and it was resolved that the Clerk would

draft a reserves policy for approval.

370. **Internal auditor for 2025/26:** It was resolved to appoint Kim Squires as the Internal Auditor for the 2025/26 financial year.

371. **Governing Documents:**

a) Standing Orders: An updated Standing Orders document, incorporating changes issued by NALC, was circulated to all councillors. It was resolved to adopt the revised Standing Orders.

b) Financial Regulations: An amended Financial Regulations document, incorporating changes issued by NALC, was circulated to all councillors. It was resolved to adopt the revised Financial Regulations

c) Risk Register (dated 31st March 2025): The Council reviewed and approved the Risk Register dated 31 March 2025. This will be published on the Council's website.

372. **Schedule of Parish Council Meetings for 2025/2026:** It was noted that meetings will be held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, with the exception of August. The scheduled meeting dates are: 8 April, 13 May, 10 June, 8 July, 9 September, 14 October, 11 November, 9 December, 13 January, 10 February, and 10 March

373. **Subscriptions and memberships for 2025/2026:** The Council reviewed its annual subscriptions and resolved to renew them for the 2025/26 financial year. The following subscriptions were approved:

- SPCA (Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association) – £475.98 (includes NALC membership for training, governance, and model documents)
- SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) – £190.00 (Clerk's professional body and training)
- Rialtas – £203.00 (Accounting software licence)
- Rural Market Town Group – £105.00 (Rural news, planning seminars, and networking)
- Support Staffordshire – £25.00 (Village halls and community support advice)
- Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) – £36.00 (Planning and environmental updates)

374. **Insurance renewal:** It was resolved to renew the Council's insurance policy with Clear Councils for the 2025/26 financial year at a cost of £1,288.14.

375. **To approve minutes of the Parish Council Meeting 8 April 2025:** These were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

376. **Clerk's report:** See Appendix A

377. **County Councillor:** No report

378. **Working groups:**

- Community & Health: It was resolved to abstain from distributing the questionnaire in its current format, as the quality of the data it would capture was considered unlikely to be reliable. It was further resolved to revisit this matter in six months.
- Youth engagement: Cllr Lloyd reported that no-one attended his recent drop-in session at the Village Hall. He intends to hold another session during the summer school holidays

379. **Training courses**: It was noted that the Clerk had completed and passed the Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration (FiLCA). Councillors requested details of available training opportunities for the new financial year.

380. **Financial matters:**

I. The bank reconciliation reports for April 2025 were accepted and signed.

II. The schedule of payments report for April 2025 was accepted.

III. Disposal of the Council's outdated computer: The Council considered a proposal for the disposal of an outdated office computer which was purchased in 2017 and is no longer required for official use and has no significant resale value. *The Clerk declared a pecuniary interest in this item, left the room and took no part in the discussion or decision.*

It was noted that the device is outdated for operational purposes, and has limited residual value. The Council agreed that it would not be economical or practical to retain or resell the equipment. It was resolved to approve the disposal of the outdated computer by sale to the Clerk for a nominal sum of £5.00. The asset register will be updated accordingly.

IV. **Investment Account for Reserves**: Information on the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, including its key benefits, was circulated. A decision was deferred to the next meeting. It was also agreed that the Clerk would draft an Investment Policy for future consideration.

April Expenditure - Standard	GROSS	VAT	NET	Payment

Tesco: mobile phone – Bill ref – 134240603789	15.10	0.00	15.10	DD
BT: Phone & Broadband – Invoice M067 KF	39.30	6.55	32.75	DD
Pozitive Energy – Village Hall Gas – 26181820257671016	393.53	0.00	393.53	DD
Pozitive Energy – Village Hall Electric – 26181620257687010	156.90	0.00	156.90	DD
Bradley's Tax & Accountancy Services: Invoice 2025/547	162.36	27.06	135.30	BACS
1st Barlaston Guides – S137 Grant (approved at April meeting)	599.98	0.00	599.98	BACS
Staffordshire Parish Council's Association	475.98	0.00	475.98	BACS
Rural Market Town Group – Invoice RMTG/25/26/6 Part Payment	105.00	17.50	87.50	BACS
Stef Giblin – Website rebuild/Transfer/Hosting/Backup Inv BPC-1001	849.60	0.00	849.60	BACS
Barlaston Bowling & Tennis Club – S137 Grant (approved at April meeting)	212.00	0.00	212.00	Cheque 0025870
Rialtas – Invoice SM31008. Licence, Support & Maintenance	243.60	40.60	203.00	BACS
Staffordshire LGPS – April	528.74	0.00	528.74	BACS
Vivien O'Dunne: expenses (mileage)	5.49	0.00	5.49	BACS
Vivien O'Dunne: Salary April	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	BACS
Mrs K Squires: Invoice 25/28 Internal Audit 2024/25	224.50	0.00	224.50	BACS
SLCC: Invoice MEM254441-1 Membership 2025/26	190.00	0.00	190.00	BACS
Viking: Office Consumables	27.20	4.53	22.67	BACS
Buxus Green – Additional Grass Cut March 2025 Inv 202426	600.00	0.00	600.00	BACS
Rural Market Town Group – Invoice RMTG/25/26/6 Part Payment	21.00	3.50	17.50	BACS
Buxus Green – Monthly Grounds Maintenance Inv 202425	1081.50	0.00	1081.50	BACS
Income – Standard	**GROSS**	**VAT**	**NET**	**Payment**
Interest – Business Bank	116.46	00.00	116.46	
Stafford Borough Council – Precept	58,508.50	0.00	58,508.50	

Exclusion of the press and public under S2 and S3 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 during consideration of item 381 below because of the confidential nature of the items for discussion.

381. **Salary scale increase:** The Clerk's performance had been reviewed it was resolved to approve a salary increase from point 26 to point 27 on scale LC2, effective 1 April 2025, in accordance with her employment contract.

382. **Community awards:** It was agreed to hold the presentation during a service at St John's Church on 15 June at 10:30am. It was resolved to allocate a budget of £500 from the entertainment budget to cover food expenses. The Clerk will make the appropriate arrangements.

383. **Key Issues for Discussion with new County Councillor**: The Council discussed and agreed a list of priority issues to raise with the new County Councillor in preparation for a future meeting. The key topics included Wedgwood Memorial College, flooding, gulleys, school crossing, double yellow lines, and potholes. These priorities will be communicated to Cllr Bagguley ahead of the meeting

384. **Parking and Traffic Concerns**: The Clerk reminded councillors that the PCSO had been informed about the ongoing parking issues on Station Road and that the Parish Council has no enforcement powers in this regard. In response to several recent reports of tankers travelling through the village, the Clerk will advise residents to provide details including date, time, and location of any sightings. The Clerk will also write to Severn Trent to request that tanker drivers are reminded of the designated access route to Strongford Works.

385. **Grounds Maintenance:** A report from Buxus Green was received and noted. It was resolved to approve a 2.6% increase in contractual payments, in line with the Consumer Price Index.

386. **Meadow Road lease:** An update was received from the Council's solicitor, who has forwarded further queries to the Borough Council on behalf of the Council.

387. **Cricket Club lease:** The Council noted a delay from the solicitor due to staff illness. The lease reply to the cricket club's solicitors is complete and awaiting dispatch.

388. **Neighbourhood Plan:** The Clerk provided a timeline of progress and correspondence with the Borough Council's Planning Policy Manager, including requests for informal feedback. An update has been requested from the Planning Policy Manager, who is currently away until 19th May.

389. **Casual Vacancy (Barlaston Park Ward):** Two applications were received. The Clerk declared a personal connection to one of the candidates (being their sibling) and left the room, taking no part in the decision-making process. Professor Arnold was duly elected. The Clerk will inform the Monitoring Officer upon receipt of the signed Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

390. **Gate licenses:** It was resolved to defer this item as the meeting was approaching the two-hour limit, in accordance with Standing Order 3(x)

391. **Risk Assessment:**

- Downs Car Park pathway: Cllr Hurst will bring back a quote to the next meeting.

392. **Weekly play area reports:** The Clerk received the April reports. It was noted that a new padlock is required for the access gate at the MUGA. The Clerk gave a reminder that the record sheets must be completed weekly, not as a monthly summary, to comply with insurance requirements.

393. **To receive and determine grant application:** A grant application for £150 was received from the community group for the VE Day event at the village hall. It was resolved to approve the grant.

394. **Planning decisions:** No planning applications were received.

395. **Correspondence:** The Council noted a letter from the new County Councillor for Stone Rural, Sean Bagguley, introducing himself and confirming his attendance at the meeting on 10th June.

396. **Items for inclusion in next agenda:** Request from Duke of Edinburgh volunteer, Flagpole on the Village Green, Replacement of Conference Pear tree on the Green.

397. **Date of next meeting: 10 June 2025**

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Appendix A

Clerk's Report April 2025

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

262 **Village Green Drainage**: The work will be completed when the ground has dried out.

290 **Flashing Lights for the School Crossing:** We will be inviting new County Councillor, Sean Bagguley to a future meeting to discuss this.

291 **Culvert adjacent to the village green:** Cllr Hurst will obtain a quote for a new sediment trap in the spring

317 **Staffordshire Societal Resilience Summit:** The Clerk will add back onto the agenda for discussion when progress has been made on this.

319 **Annual football match on The Green:** The Clerk will write to the Cricket Club later in the year to request that players and attendees refrain from parking on the grass.

338 **VE Day Celebrations:** The event was a success, with good attendance. Highlights included memorabilia displays, tea and cakes made from authentic wartime recipes, and a sing-along. The Clerk has shared photos on Facebook and will also upload them to the website. The bench arrived on 6th May and is expected to be installed before the meeting on 13th May.

346 **Allotment site off Meadow Road:** The Clerk has informed Homes Plus that the Council have resolved not to accept the offer to lease the site.

347 **Footpath 3:** This will be repaired once the landowner is in receipt of the wire to repair the fence with.

350 **Signage on the Downs Car Park:** The 'Park at your own risk' sign for the Downs Car Park has now been ordered and will be installed once received.

351 **Defib awareness map:** I have passed on the details of the location of all our public access defibrillators and the local artist will proceed when time allows.