

BARKSTON AND SYSTON PARISH COUNCIL

AT A MEETING of the BARKSTON AND SYSTON PARISH COUNCIL held in the Village Hall, Barkston, on Monday 9 January 2023 at 7.45 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Miss M.E. Nussey in the Chair

Councillors A.C. Card, P.C. Connor, Miss M. Costall, S. Elnor, A.Hine, S.J.Kelly, C. I. Pell and A. Rowell.

Also present – County Councillor R. Wootten.

2644. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor Ian Stokes.

It was noted that District Councillor Rosemary Kaberry-Brown had resigned.

2645. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022, a copy of which had been circulated to all members, were taken as read and approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Hine in the list of those present.

2646. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared.

The Clerk reminded members that there was to be a briefing on the new Model Code of Conduct on 17 January at the Guildhall Arts Centre, Grantham. Details had been circulated.

2647. ROADS AND FOOTPATHS

Members considered the update circulated by the Clerk on 2 January, with reference to issues raised at and since the last meeting in relation to the following:

- (a). Blocked drains, Minnetts Hill/Church Street – the drains had been cleared, and a comprehensive scheme for action remained on the list for action as a priority in the next financial year.
- (b). Parking provision, end of West Street, Barkston – the request for a wider cut of the verges to make parking easier had been made, but the requested update had not been received. Clerk to remind the Area Surveyor.
- (c). Road edges, Hough Road (near railway bridge), Barkston – scheme still on a list for completion, along with the uneven road near The Spinney. Area Surveyor advised that this would be chased to ensure quicker action.
- (d). Community Speedwatch – Belton & Manthorpe Parish Council had now agreed to defer further action on the scheme until March 2023 at the earliest. In the circumstances, it was agreed that Barkston and Syston would do the same. Clerk to report to the next meeting on action suggested.
- (e). Road sign, A607, near refuge/garage – the Area Surveyor had reported that this had been passed to colleagues to be repaired, or to consider an alternative.

(f) Flooding, A607 – the area at The Stag/A607 had again flooded on several occasions following recent heavy rains, and the road was flooded to the centre line, causing a significant danger. The issue had been reported by the Clerk and several Councillors, as well as members of the public, and the Area Surveyor now reported that the flooding may be caused by a blockage. He was not able to confirm if this was a collapse or caused by detritus, so the main survey unit had been arranged which could clear any blockage to get the water flowing again. If something more substantial was required a repair would be arranged. This was considered a priority, and a visit had been arranged for next week.

(g) Grantham Transport Strategy – this had been circulated to members for comment, following an email from Councillor Davies, the County Council's member for Highways. Comments from one member were received and forwarded to Councillor Davies.

(h) Definitive Map – the source of the original query on this had been identified, and members had been reminded that they could make observations. Comments were received from one member, which were checked by the Clerk on the copy of the map in his possession, and answers given. There were no issues to feed back.

2648. PLANNING MATTERS

(a) Comments/decisions:

i Decisions received:

Remove a Norwegian Spruce tree in rear garden, The Old Crankcase, Church Street, Barkston – approved

Removal of structural limb from Sycamore in rear garden, The Coach House, Church Street, Barkston - approved

ii Comments made following consultation:

Installation of free standing and roof mounted PV panels and siting of containerised battery storage units, Copper Hill Industrial Estate, High Dyke, Wilsford (Parish Council consulted as a neighbouring authority) – no objection

Erection of extension for storage area, Cancer Research UK, Heath Lane, Barkston – no objection

Section 73 application to vary condition 05 of planning permission S22/0471 to allow for a maximum of 8 dogs utilising the site at any one time, in relation to public bookings and a maximum of 12 dogs for dog sitter use, Land north of The Leas, Hough Road, Barkston – objection (Clerk read details of the objection made)

(b) Land off Drift Lane, Barkston – SKDC asked for an update, following the decision to serve a planning contravention notice. As a reply had not been received, Clerk asked to request an urgent response from SKDC.

(c) Dog training/walking site, Hough Road, Barkston – breaches of conditions had been reported to SKDC. Following email correspondence, it had been established that there were other breaches of conditions as well as the non-provision of the carpark. SKDC had responded that the applicant was required to provide a dog waste bin, hitherto not done, and to provide the car park, by the end of March 2023. The Clerk advised that he had queried the length of time given to the applicant to comply with conditions, but SKDC were of the opinion that an enforcement notice at this stage was not appropriate in the circumstances, as the breaches caused only low to middling harm. If the conditions were still not complied with, then formal action would follow.

2649. BURIAL GROUND

Nothing to report.

2650. PLAYING FIELD

Councillor Kelly reported that safety inspections had taken place, and he had been engaged in replacing some of the logs on the play equipment. There was one more log awaiting installation, but this was not a safety concern.

The Playing Field Management Committee would shortly be meeting to consider improvements, principally to the pavilion and patio doors. Some money needed to be spent, and this would be considered, as there was a surplus in the accounts.

2651. PICNIC AREA

The Clerk reported that he had, together with Councillors Connor and Hine, met Grantham Collage students to look at their designs for the information board. All had been impressed with the results, and following suggestions made for the content, copies of the latest draft had been provided.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillors Hine and Connor, together with the Clerk, be authorised to agree the final design. This was agreed. After discussion it was agreed that the board, when finished, be sited near to the picnic area sign.

2652. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk referred to a letter from LIVES, requesting that the Council consider a donation to fund the purchase of a set of defibrillator pads, as part of a campaign to replace existing units, which had reached the end of their service life. In support, LIVES had pointed out that if only half of the 390 Councils written to donated just £80, this would collectively fund a surplus stock of pads, and also fund the service and maintenance of the units for their 10 year life. Members considered this to be a reasonable request, and it was agreed to make a donation of £80.

2653. REVIEW OF POLICIES AND APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Council reviewed the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Assessment, Audit Plan and Planning Policy. No changes had been made since the November 2021 meeting, or in the case of the Planning Policy since the May 2022 meeting, when the revised policy had been agreed. The Council confirmed agreement with the policies as listed above.

The Council confirmed the appointment of Mr John Jackson as Internal Auditor for the year 2022/23.

2654. PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

(a) Advertising

The Clerk reminded members that consideration had been given to advertising on the Council's website. Since the last meeting, he had developed a scale of charges based on those used for advertising in the now defunct 'In Touch' magazine, and he gave examples for the information of members. If the principle of advertising at a nominal cost was agreed, he said that he intended to contact all previous advertisers.

The Council discussed the Clerk's report and considered what to do with any resultant finance, noting that VAT would be appropriate. It was agreed that the finance received could be used

for charitable purposes within the two parishes, such as maintenance of the defibrillators or Christmas decorations; and that any advertisers should be advised accordingly. It was also agreed that information should be placed on the Barkston Facebook and Syston Whatsapp groups. Clerk to update on the proposal at the next meeting.

(b) Number of 'Hits' on the website

The Clerk reported that statistical information on the number of 'hits' or visits to the website was available by accessing the 'Website Analytics' link on the Home Page of the website.

2655. RISK REPORT

The risk inspection carried out on 10th November had been reported to the last meeting. As part of the report the inspecting group had noticed that the SKDC owned seat at the entrance to St Nicholas Close was damaged and dangerous, and it had been suggested that this be removed. SKDC had been contacted and had removed the seat promptly. They had also been asked if it was the intention to replace the seat and, if not, whether the Parish Council could. The District Council had said that it was not their intention to provide another seat, but they had no objection to the Parish Council doing so. It was agreed to consider any replacement later in the meeting, during the discussion on the budget.

In regard to the War Memorial, attempts had been made to contact the local memorial masons, so far without success, and it was agreed to defer to the next meeting for the Clerk to report.

2656. GOV.UK EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR COUNCILLORS

The Clerk reminded the Council that he had circulated information on a suggestion that all Councillors should have Gov.uk email addresses, to separate the 'official' contacts to and from the Parish Council from their personal business. Members discussed the possible change, and it appeared that there was no support for a Council wide change to Gov.uk addresses, although one member indicated that he intended to set up a separate address for Parish Council business using his own computer. It was agreed to leave it to individuals to set up their own addresses, if they so wished, but to consider the situation at the next meeting.

2657. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(a) Financial update and budget 2023/24

The Council received and noted the financial updates at the present date, and also the likely financial position at the end of the current financial year, together with the budget report for 2023/24.

The Clerk then explained the accounts in detail with reference to the above circulated documents, and took members through the recommendations for expenditure in the report, as noted below, following which members made decisions as follows:

- (i) Clerk's salary – the Clerk's current hourly rate was the NALC pay scale point 21 (£15.02 per hour). The pay scales for 2023/24 had, however, not yet been published, and so an estimated increase of 3% had been applied. The actual increase, when published, would be backdated to 1.4.23. It was agreed to continue to calculate the Clerk's salary on that basis.
- (ii) Administration – the Clerk's travel expenses had remained unchanged for a number of years, and it was considered that a review should be undertaken. It was noted that the current HMRC rate avoiding tax was 45p per mile, which was the rate used by a number of local Parish Councils. It was agreed to calculate the Clerk's travel at the 45p per mile rate, and to backdate this to 1st April 2022.

- (iii) War Memorial – an annual increase of £100 would mean that £1142 was available. Agreed.
- (iv) Playing Field – the annual increase for 2023/24 is 2022/23 plus 10% =£4406. Agreed.
- (v) Picnic Area Information Board – project authorised in 2022/23 financial year, although there is a small increase in the cost to £1090 it is already in anticipated expenditure, therefore no financial commitment in 2023/24. Noted.
- (vi) General Fund – a precept of £3000, to approximate 2022/23 levels, leaving a balance of approximately £19500 in the general reserve. Excluding the Playing Field, the Council has reserves of £22500. Agreed.

Projects for consideration – website advertising, if set up, would require a potential cost, but this would be offset with the advertising revenue. Noted.

Seat – St Nicholas Close and elsewhere – agreed to fund the provision of two seats, one at St Nicholas Close and one on Main Street, Syston, in the area of the former recycling bins.

Street light, West Street, Barkston – considered in May 2022 and deferred to this meeting for consideration. Cost estimated at £1350. After consideration, agreed no further action.

Gov.uk email addresses – in view of the discussion earlier in the meeting, no further action.

Dog waste collection – a total annual cost of approximately £780. Agreed no action.

The Clerk asked members to note that adoption of all the recommendations in the report would require a precept of £12550, compared to last year’s precept of £12400, and would be the 7th reduction in a row. There were 255.3 Band D properties (last year 249.2), meaning that the Council Tax band would be £49.16 (last year £49.68), a reduction of 1%.

It was agreed to precept for £12,550 – General Fund - £3000; Section 137 - £1544; Burial Ground - £3500; Playing Field - £4406; War Memorial - £100, for the financial year 2023/24.

(b) Accounts paid and for payment

RESOLVED:-

That payment of the following accounts be approved and confirmed (all online):

Rachel Metcalfe (Christmas decorations)	£88.62
Anglian Water Business (Supply 12.8.22 – 12.11.22)	£12.16
BDG Mowing Contractors (Mowing – October)	£462.00

The meeting closed at 9.11pm.

Dated..... Signed.....

Chair