

BARKSTON AND SYSTON PARISH COUNCIL

AT A MEETING of the BARKSTON AND SYSTON PARISH COUNCIL held in the Village Hall, Barkston, on Monday 8 January 2024 at 7.45 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Miss M.E. Nussey in the Chair

Councillors A.C. Card, S. Elnor, A. Hine, S.A. Micklewright, R. Parke, C.I. Pell and A. Rowell.

Also present – District Councillor P. Stephens (part of meeting).

PUBLIC FORUM

One local resident said that she was concerned at certain aspects of the running of the Village Hall, mainly in regard to storage for users of the facilities, and she wondered what they were allowed, or able, to do. It was pointed out that the Parish Council had no control over the operation of the Village Hall, and it was suggested that the resident contact the Secretary direct.

Another resident referred to the recent parking of a vehicle on the grass verge to the side of the War Memorial. This was, in his opinion, a parent waiting for a child from the School, and wasn't right, as damage was being caused to the grass. Agreed to refer to the Area Surveyor.

The Chair thanked the residents for attending, and for their comments. The points made in regard to the highway issues would be considered later in the meeting. The Public Forum was closed at 7.55 pm.

2732. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence, accepted for the purposes of an attendance, were received from Councillor Connor.

2733. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023, a copy of which had been circulated to all members, were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

2734. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared.

2735. ROADS AND FOOTPATHS

Members considered the update circulated by the Clerk on 3 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 Clerk said that he had been advised by the Area Surveyor that an order had been raised and that works were planned for the forthcoming financial year. The team concerned had already visited the site and were preparing to do the drainage works and footway adjacent to the road.

(b) Footpath opposite Village Hall, Barkston – the path appeared to have been cleared, although the Clerk reported that he had still not had a formal response from SKDC.

The Area Surveyor had replied that work to cut more grips to aid drainage in the area would be done as soon as possible, following on from other drainage issues which were more of a priority.

(c) Speed limit reduction, Hough Road, Barkston – a copy of the speed limit policy had been obtained and circulated to all members. Members expressed continued concern at the lack of action in regard to a speed limit, given the amount of traffic using what was a narrow road. The Clerk was asked to enquire which specific parts of the policy applied to the Council's request, and whether there was an appeal process.

(d) Footpath to Picnic Area from village, along Station Road – the Area Surveyor had advised that the area to the north of Station Road appeared to be maintained by the County Council, but that he was not sure if there was enough room for a path. This would also reduce the road width, which could cause problems for vehicles. It was pointed out by the Clerk that the Parish Council's idea was to construct a path within the very wide verge, not the road, and he was asked to clarify this with the County Council.

The Area Surveyor had also replied in regard to the possibility of a path on the south side of the road, advising that this would be put forward as a possible scheme, although there were competing schemes for a finite amount of funding.

(e) Station Road speed limit – similar query to item (c) above, Clerk to seek further details from the County Council.

(f) A607 crossings – the request had been placed on a list for assessment, but the Area Surveyor said that it was doubtful if the request would meet the criteria for an upgrade. Members were concerned at the danger to pedestrians at this narrow part of the A607, particularly as the verge was encroaching onto the path, and the Clerk was asked to ask the Area Surveyor to arrange for the path to be sided back.

(g) Footpath outside 12 West Street, Barkston – repair work completed.

(h) Flooding, A607, Barkston – the recent heavy rains had not resulted in the usual flooding at The Stag junction, as the drains had recently been cleared. There were still proposals for works to improve the situation further in the long term, but these had not been finalised. The Clerk was asked to thank the Area Surveyor for the recent clearance work, but to ask that this be repeated on a regular basis.

(i) Speed restriction sign, A607, Barkston – sign now operating.

(j) Hough Road, Barkston – the Area Surveyor had agreed to look at the area, and to arrange for drainage grips to be cut as well.

(k) Footpath – The Drift towards the bus shelter, Main Road, Syston – this path was narrow and virtually non-existent for much of its length. It was agreed that the Area Surveyor be asked to arrange for the path to be sided back.

2736. PLANNING MATTERS

Comments/decisions:

i Decisions received:

Conversion of existing agricultural buildings into 5 dwellinghouses, Agricultural Buildings, Syston Park - approved

ii Comments made following consultation:

Construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm with battery storage and associated infrastructure including electrical cable route corridor, Land at High Dyke Londonthorpe (PC consulted as a neighbouring authority), comments received from Members sent to SKDC

2737. BURIAL GROUND

The Clerk reported that he had contacted the Funeral Director in regard to the recent case of a grave sinking significantly. A repair had been carried out, but this was still not satisfactory, and he was intending to contact the Funeral Director shortly.

Members raised queries in regard to maintenance of the Burial Ground, which the Clerk answered. There was concern that some stones/memorials were unsafe. The recent risk inspection had not, however, identified any safety issues. Any damaged or unsafe memorials were the responsibility of the plot owners. If there were any unsafe stones, these would be notified to the owners and if works were not carried out, they would be laid flat. The Clerk reminded members that the only involvement of the Parish Council with the plots was in levelling after twelve months since an interment.

2738. PLAYING FIELD

Nothing to report.

2739. PICNIC AREA

A replacement litter bin had been requested from SKDC, although a further supply was awaited. It was suggested that the bin be chained to a nearby tree to prevent a re-occurrence of the recent loss. It was agreed to carry out repairs to the car park surface at the entrance.

2740. CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk reported a letter from SKDC in regard to the holding of a stock of sand and sandbags to aid in flood prevention. He said that the Council already had a stock of sand, delivered some years ago, and kept in the Bier Shelter at the Burial Ground. At the time, however, sandbags had not been supplied. He had therefore ordered a stock of 100, to be kept with the sand. The Clerk was asked to arrange for appropriate publicity to be undertaken so that residents could access the bags in the event of flooding occurring.

2741. SKDC LIFE SAVING TRAINING

The Clerk reported that SKDC had offered a further round of life saving training, on Tuesdays and Fridays from 19th February to 26th March. It was agreed to ask for a Friday date and publicise accordingly.

2742. SOUTH KESTEVEN PROSPERITY FUND

Councillor Micklewright introduced his update report, which had been previously circulated to members. He outlined the background to the scheme and reminded members that applications were being accepted for year 3 funding, which would be acceptable from 1 April.

Initially a request for parishioners to suggest ideas had been circulated and published via the Parish Council's website and on local social media. In addition, Councillor Hine had canvassed Syston for ideas, and Councillor Micklewright himself had asked Barkston residents for their thoughts. Although the response was limited, the ideas received, which were scheduled in the report had been categorised against the funding criteria. Some ideas were

categorised as being the responsibility of other agencies, e.g. the County Council. He believed, however, that all ideas met the criteria.

The list of ideas was considerable. Many overlapped and some of those submitted should be done by other agencies. Bids submitted should include quotes from contractors, and could not be submitted until an agreement on which to submit had been reached, and agreement had been obtained from other agencies, such as the Cricket Club or Playing Field Committee. He proposed in the report that proposals be categorised into 'High Priority', 'Desirable' and 'Unnecessary'. Councillor Micklewright suggested that members take the report away for consideration and then contact him with comments and opinions as to which projects would fall into which of the three categories noted above. He would then redo the report with comments/priorities included, and recirculate before a decision was taken on which proposal to support. As time was short, comments were required by the end of the month. After discussion, Councillor Micklewright's proposal was agreed.

It was agreed to forward the highway issues raised by residents to the Highway Authority.

2743. VILLAGE HALL

The Clerk reported that Councillor Connor had attended the last meeting of the Village Hall Committee as an observer, and had sent a note of his views, together with a copy of the minutes. Councillor Connor had suggested that the note/minutes be noted for now, not circulated to members, and discussed in full at the next Parish Council meeting, when he would be present, and this was agreed.

It was agreed to appoint Councillor Connor as the Parish Council's representative on the Village Hall Committee.

2744. GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE DEVOLUTION PROPOSAL

The Clerk reminded members that he had recently notified them of the proposals to combine Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire into one authority. A consultation was currently running until 29 January, and members were asked if they wished to respond as an authority or individually. Comments could be made online or via a paper survey. After a discussion, it was agreed that members would respond individually if they wished.

2745. CLERK'S RESIGNATION

The Council noted the Clerk's decision to resign with regret, and considered the action which would need to be taken to fill the vacancy. The Clerk suggested that the vacancy could be advertised on the LALC website free of charge, although for a £60 fee an advertisement could also appear on the Lincolnshire County Council's website, Facebook and LinkedIn. Appropriate information would also be placed on the Parish Council's website, notice boards and on the local social media. It was agreed to advertise as suggested above.

Given that the Clerk's wish was to retire at the end of March, a question was asked as to the situation if a replacement could not be found, and the Clerk said that he would ask LALC if there were any consultants available to fill any gap in the appointment.

2746. 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 January 2023 meeting. 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 2023/24.

2747. RISK INSPECTION

The risk inspection had been carried out on 28 December. No issues were found which required attention.

2748. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(a) Financial update

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 2024/25.

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 based on the NALC pay scale point 21. The pay scales for 2024/25 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 1.4.24. It was agreed to continue to calculate the Clerk's salary on that basis.
- (ii) Administration – an estimated sum of £500 had been allocated to the General Fund to cover expenses in appointing a Clerk. Agreed.
- (iii) War Memorial – an annual increase of £100. Agreed.
- (iv) Playing Field – the annual increase for 2024/25 is 2023/24 plus 3% = £4538. Agreed.
- (v) Picnic Area – a sum of £500 had been included in the Charity Fund to cover maintenance. Agreed.
- (vi) General Fund – a precept of £3500 would maintain a balance of approximately £17000 in the general reserve. Excluding the Playing Field Account, the Council had reserves of around £21700. Agreed.
- (vii) Poors Land Charity – the budget of £100 for the Christmas decorations had been overspent by over 50% in each of the last two years. A provisional sum of £150 was suggested. Agreed.

Projects for consideration - no costed projects had been submitted by Councillors.

Funding non budget items or projects – within the above precept calculations, monies available were – Section 137 £1762 and Poors Land £854. Any expenditure above these sums would require a commitment from the General Fund.

The Clerk asked members to note that adoption of all of the recommendations in the report would require a precept of £12138, compared to last year's precept of £12550, and would be the 8th reduction in a row. There were 254.3 band D properties (last year 255.3), meaning that the Council Tax band would be £47.75 (last year £49.14), a reduction of 2.8%.

It was agreed to precept for £12138 – General Fund - £3500; Burial Ground - £4000; Playing Field - £4538; War Memorial £100, for the financial year 2024/25.

(b) Accounts paid and for payment

RESOLVED:-

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

Rachel Metcalfe (Christmas decorations)	£166.12
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The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Dated..... Signed.....
Chair