**Barley Annual Village Meeting**

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the Town House on Wednesday 11th May 2022**

**Present:**

22 members of the public, 5 parish councillors and the parish clerk attended the meeting.

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Brian Haughey

**Chairs Report**

The Chair of the Parish Council Cllr Jerry Carlisle welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed items arising from last year’s Annual Parish Meeting and updated the meeting generally on the activities of the Parish Council over the course of the last 12 months on a number of matters.

Improvements to prevent flooding on Picknage Road had been completed.

Works to London Road to resolve the surface water drainage issues was still to be finally completed. There was concern from villagers affected by this work and they were advised to write directly to HCC Highways, who were responsible for the work. There was support for a working party to plant appropriate foliage on the embankment in the autumn to soften the industrial look of the kerbing and slabs.

Cllr Carlisle informed the attendees that a condition survey of all the drains in the village would be carried out shortly and the results would be valuable in proposing further work to improve drainage.

The Council had been successful in its bid to the Road Safety Fund and subsequently the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) commissioned a speed camera, which is currently installed on London Road near the Chequers PH. There had been significant teething problems which were only resolved recently. The first 100 advisory letters to those caught speeding by the camera were sent out in April.

Barley Assistance, set up to support the villagers during the height of the pandemic had served its purpose and would be wound down including the food bank. Thanks were given to all those who had volunteered and donated to the cause.

Many planning applications had been dealt with during the year but the Chairman commented on two in particular. The Permission in Principle application to develop land east of Picknage Road, about which the Parish Council had organised a village meeting in November 2021, and subsequent to which the Parish Council had objected to the proposal, was currently now the subject of a planning appeal by the developer, having effectively been refused by NHDC. The plans to develop the Drayton’s garage site had been approved for 10 residential units subject to a number of conditions relating to, for example, surface water drainage and site contamination.

Parking in the village is still a problem.

Cllr Carlisle advised that, because of the financial needs of the Parish Council, it had unfortunately been necessary to increase the precept for the first time for 10 years. The Council accepted that in the current economic climate the timing of the increase was unfortunate and, following feedback from the village, would generally in future consider smaller annual increases where possible.

**Presentation of Annual Accounts**

**BARLEY PARISH COUNCIL ye 31/3/22**

* Opening balance £59080, Closing balance£32322, expenditure over income £26758
* Over previous 3 years Income & Expenditure had been fairly constant. However, the 21/22 year saw significantly higher costs. Incomes were quite consistent as VAT has yet to be recovered (which would bring the income back into line with previous years). Expenditure exceeded income by £26.8k
* Precept has remained unchanged at £22k, but as reported above has increased to £28k for 22/23
* Income from letting the Club Room has recovered following a “holiday” due to Covid. The final rental on the old lease will be received in the 22/23 accounts and so the receipts were less than a full year in these accounts.
* Bank balances have reduced quite significantly (£27k) because of the higher costs. Monies are still earmarked for a number of projects that have yet to take place; these may include replacing the container with one or more newer ones, replacing the cess pit behind the Scout Hut, possible sports changing rooms, Town House Roof
* Expenditure
* Parish Council continues to pay the Insurance costs for the Town House
* Professional fees:

Payroll provision-part year, Audits for the Parish Council, survey fees relating to Club Room

* IT – licence fees and consumables
* Village maintenance: includes footpaths and Village Plan costs
* Town House Roof: long term renovation/repairs could be quite costly, decided in 2019/20 to put aside £5k pa for future repairs; survey was done and some relatively minor repair work at the back costing £12k has been completed
* Other maintenance included Club Room air conditioning and insulation £7.8k
* Barley Assist: money was given by Fiona Hill from her Herts CC budget to help with financial consequences of Covid, a group was set up including the PC and the money has been held by the PC- bal.£444 transferred to Barley Charities.

Budget set for 2022/23:

Income increased to £45.6k from £29k. This includes increased Precept (+£6k), full year Club Room rental and VAT refund not yet received.

As previously mentioned, costs allow for Changing Rooms, Containers, Drainage etc. and the continued transfer to a sinking fund for the Town House roof.

**BARLEY TOWN HOUSE ye 31/3/22**

* The opening bank balance was £28182, and closing balance was£26912, leaving expenditure over income as £1270
* Lettings have recovered on previous year although not quite back to former levels in 21/22. However, the year 22/23 is expected to see full recovery and growth
* Expenditure exceeded income by £1270 in the year largely due to additional maintenance costs which had been previously anticipated (£6145 including window and stairway repairs).
* Support continues from the Parish Council -paying the insurance and putting aside money for a roof fund
* Lettings continue to improve in 2022/23 as well as regular hirers incomes.
* Electricity costs have increased significantly and will continue to do so in the year 22/23. New contracts have been sought and letting rates have been revised to cover additional costs.

**BARLEY PARISH CHARITIES ye 31/12/21**

* The opening balanced was £19080, and closing balance was £18683, leaving expenditure over income of £397
* Chairmans review – we continued through 2021 to deal with effects of the pandemic and some direct requests as a result of this. Help has usually given where requested either from an individual, or occasionally the request has come via another party on behalf of the recipient, for instance via Playschool treasurer or the Rector.
* Barley Pantry has been supported throughout however it was felt that it was no longer as necessary and is now being wound up. Posters thanking people for their support are being put up as well as notices for alternative sources of support should people be in need. Also, there are still notices regarding contacts for Barley Assist and also on the website.
* Looking ahead, we anticipate there being ongoing requests because of the situation we face regarding fuel, utilities, cost of living increases and we feel we are in good order to be able to react accordingly.

**Reports from local organisations**

Town House

The Town House like other organisations suffered during the pandemic and that had resulted in an increase in weddings this year postponed from the previous two years. Because of the current cost of living crisis, prices had been increased.

Tennis Club

The club now had 134 members, but more always welcomed. The fee is £35 per year per householder. The team won the league this year! Now have 2 coaches, one of whom is exceptionally good with children. The fundraiser this year is a sweepstake, so please support it. Everyone is welcome at the Barbeque on 26th June.

Cricket Club

The club still has two teams running in the leagues. The first team recently had 9 people out of 11 from the village which was very encouraging. Still very keen for new members.

Barley Boys

This is a men’s social club which meets for drinks and dinner once a month. Ladies are invited to two events per year. It was suggested that the Club ought to have a page on the website.

Bell Ringers

This is a secular group that meets for practice every Tuesday evening at 8pm. As well as providing a bell ringing service for church events including weddings, the group has been booked for Town House weddings. New members are always welcome, just come along.

Gardening Club

The club membership list is growing and at only £10 a year for membership, recruiting new members is still important. The programme for this year includes speakers on various subjects, two day trips and two evening trips. Non members are always welcome on our trips.

Flower Show and Village Show

It is good to see the Flower Show and Village show combining into one event again this year on 9th July. The Flower Show needs sponsors to help fund the prize money for the winners of the multitude of categories, and sponsors will be recognised in the brochure which is now well in hand.

Community Group

The Community group has returned to the Town House again and meets every two weeks. There is a varied programme of speakers and the occasional day trip organised for this year

The Church

A vote of thanks was given to Alison White who was the driving force behind the Flower Tower which has raised £12,000 so far for the restricted fund for a kitchen and toilet facilities. Sadly, our vicar, Reverend Ruth Pyke will retire in July. We wish her well in her retirement.

Knitting Club

The knitting club meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday every month in the Chequers for 7pm. We welcome anyone who wants to natter as well as knit, croquet, or sew etc.

Royal British Legion

The barley group will again be hosting the cheese and wine fundraiser in November, and someone will be available at the Village Show to tell you all about the organisation.

Village Hub

The village hub is now up and running and meets at the Chequers every 3rd Thursday of the month between 10.30-12.30. Good coffee, delicious cake and meeting your village friends makes this a morning date for your diary

Reg Cording

Reg thanked everyone for his presentation last summer. Everyone agreed that it was a richly deserved reward for someone who has been a stalwart member of the village over many years.

Village Plan Review

Yvonne Lee outlined the next steps of the review. The results which summarised the key areas of concern for people in the village would be posted on the website. She stressed that this was a village plan for villagers and hoped that there wud be enthusiasm to take some of the items forward as Alice Robertson and Jill Profit had done in setting up the village hub.

County Cllr Fiona Hill’s ANNUAL REPORT TO BARLEY PARISH COUNCIL – MAY 2022

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to update you on Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) issues. I am very aware that COVID continues to have an impact on every individual, to some degree or other. The County Council continues to monitor and give guidance, working with the Government and NHS, in its capacity as the Public Health body. We now have the terrible situation in Ukraine. Again, there is partnership working, helping house families coming to the U.K. and the County Council will advise anyone wishing to sponsor a family and support their needs for visas, education, health, and other requirements (update given on current numbers).

The County Council continues to face financial challenges but has, again, managed to balance the budget with minimal impact on front line services and an increase of 3.99% in Council Tax, 2% of which is ringfenced for Adult Care. This equates to £1.13 per week for a Band D property. We expect to spend £2 billion next year (£1 billion for Schools and Education, £400 m on Adult Care and Health, £200 m on Children’s Services, further funding of £10m for children and young people in our care, £2m for SEND and running our holiday programme (HAPPY) that includes a free, healthy meal, £134 m on Highways, recycling, and waste, plus budgets for numerous other services.

Education has had to change to rise to the challenges presented by the pandemic. Following two years of assessed grades, this year will see a return to exams, with changes so that pupils are supported. Unfortunately, it was not possible to hold events such as Youth Makes Music, Youth Speaks and the Technology Tournament, last year, but schools are now returning to normal. Hertfordshire Adults and Family Learning Service has now been rebranded as Step2Skills and is continuing to reach out to a wide range of residents and help them gain the qualifications, skills, and confidence to enable them to move into employment. Libraries have also reopened and are providing many of the services that existed prior to 2020. The home service has been vital and includes a chat service, for those who are unable to access libraries in person.

Integration of Health and Social Care remains a key priority and we welcome the additional funding to support the care of our residents. The County Council has also provided additional funding to support the wonderful care staff who work so hard to care for so many people. Integrated Health and Social Care and prevention through Public Health, is vital to reduce pressure on the acute hospitals. I have continued to promote greater recognition for Mental Health issues, particularly in young people, more awareness of Carers’ issues, Dementia, Domestic Abuse and Sepsis, all of which have a devastating impact on people’s lives.

I continue to work with stakeholders such as the Police/OPCC, for the benefit of residents in Royston and the villages. We have been working together on Speeding and Parking issues, such as educating drivers through mitigation measures including Cameras, Speed Indicator Devices and Speed and Volume surveys, together with Police checks and the Free After 3 parking initiative. We have, jointly, commented, objected, and participated in various consultations and work continues making the A505 safer, for vehicles and pedestrians.

The HCC initiative of HertsLynx is proving to be extremely popular, in the towns and villages. We are also working on joint Youth projects.

The Highways Locality Budget has enabled many roads and footpaths, which would not currently meet the criteria for general funding, to be improved and there has been resurfacing work in various areas of the village. Drainage works have taken place in London Road and will be completed as soon as the permit has been obtained. There is now a grille in the ditch between the High Street and Picknage Road. We are also working on measures to resolve other drainage issues in the village and investigation works will take place shortly, to ascertain where the main problems are and how these can be resolved.

There is now a Camera, through the OPCC, in Barley and we are investigating other mitigation measures in the village, including rumble strips/signs.

I have also supported Barley Parish Council on various planning applications and general issues that arise throughout the year, including promotion of street closure permits for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

I have received a substantial number of grant applications through the Community Locality Budget, and we were, again, provided with an additional fund, a small amount of which was granted to Barley Town House. It has been difficult to allocate, as there are so many invaluable organisations, but I hope the amounts provided have helped to make a difference.

I am grateful to the Chairman, Clerk, and councillors on Barley Parish Council for welcoming me to and supporting me at their meetings and for their work carried out to ensure the wellbeing of residents and protection of the village. Thanks, should also go to all the dedicated individuals and groups in Barley. I am also grateful to Sir Oliver Heald, QC MP and District Councillors Gerald Morris and Tony Hunter for their unstinting support, so that we can all, hopefully, benefit the community of Barley.

District Cllr Gerald Morris’ report to Barley Annual Village Meeting

The Local Plan. Briefly. Still awaiting the Inspector's report concerning the ’soundness' of the plan.

As I have mentioned before, fortunately a plan or not has a minimal effect on Barley in that no sites were selected to be included in the plan. As we know and have seen that does not mean that houses will not be built. Because infill development and what they called windfall sites are still permitted.

Whilst the plan period runs from 2011–2031 and we are halfway through the plan period still without an adopted Local Plan. That said, the NHDC plan officer will I believe be looking into the creation of a new plan post 2031 and calling for sites that could be selected.

However, based the glacial track record of the current plan this will take many years.

NHDC officers are still primarily working from home. I found that the service provided pre-pandemic was sometimes below par. Now, with officers rarely visiting the office, I find the service has unsurprisingly not improved.

I know that many people like to complain about policing. However, we are incredibly lucky living here because there is virtually no crime. You may have been interested to learn that earlier this month.

More than 140 people were arrested during a three-day operation to target cross border offending. Across the three days, 141 people were arrested for offences including burglary, robbery, theft of motor vehicles and drug offences.

Additionally, 37 vehicles were seized, 16 weapons were recovered, and 48 drug seizures were made. More than

14,500 in cash was also recovered by police

On a lighter note. As you may know there is a new owner of Newsells Park Stud. In addition to running, it was probably the top stud in Europe. He is also creating a vineyard and winery. He has just planted 45,000 vines in 34 acres of the land. With the winery complex following on a little later.

Finally, should anybody be interested in taking in Ukrainian refugees. I have acquired a little knowledge of the procedure and would happily pass this on to anybody that is interested. They can either email me on my personal email address or call me on my mobile.

Thank you.

**Any other business**

There being no further business the chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 21.45