**BARLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Annual General meeting of Barley Parish Council**

**on Monday 9th May 2022**

**PRESENT**

Cllr Jerry Carlisle (Chair), Cllr Ali Hearn, Cllr Yvonne Lee, Cllr Ian Turner, Cllr David King.

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mel Chammings (Clerk), County Cllr Fiona Hill, District Cllr Tony Hunter, District Cllr Gerald Morris, Lynn Brett (RFO), and one member of the public.

**1. APOLOGIES.**

* 1. Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Brian Haughey and Nick Shaw

**2. ELECTION of CHAIR**

**2.1** The current Chair Cllr Carlisle stood down and handed over proceeding to Cllr Ian Turner.

**2.1.1** Cllr Turner nominated Cllr Carlisle as Chair. There being no further nominations Cllr Carlisle was unanimously elected as Chair for the year 2022-2023.

**2.1.2** Cllr Turner nominated himself as Vice Chair. There being no further nominations, Cllr Carlisle proposed Cllr Turner as Vice Chair, and this was seconded by Cllr King. Cllr Turner was duly elected as Vice Chair for the year 2022-2023.

**3.DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Turner declared an interest in planning application 22/00985/FP and subsequently took no part in the discussion nor decision on the Council’s consideration of the application.

**4.MINUTES**

**4.1** The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th April 2022 were read and approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

Proposed by Cllr King and seconded by Cllr Turner.

**5. PUBLIC PARTIPATION**

**5.1** No issues were raised under this item

**6. PLANNING**

**6.1 Planning reference: 22/00985/FP: Application for approval of operational development associated with the conversion of the agricultural building into 2 storey commercial units associated with planning approval 20/01094/PNR granted on 16.07.2020 for change of use from agricultural building to a flexible commercial use under class R (General Permitted Development)**

**Land adjacent to Wells Cottages, Smiths End Lane**

The Council had no objections to this application in principle but

was concerned aboutlight pollution particularly from the significant volume of fenestration. It was suggested that in mitigation the plans could be adjusted so that the front of the building faced towards the open field rather than onto Smith End Lane and the homes directly opposite the site. Members also requested that a condition to limit the hours of operation to 8.00-19.00 hours would be a valid mitigating factor and asked that the planners took these points into consideration.

**6.2** **Planning reference: 22/00605/PIP: Erection of one detached dwelling and garage following demolition of existing outbuilding**

**Land Northeast of Dovehouse Shott, Smiths End Lane**

Barley Parish Council (BPC) considered this application and unanimously resolved as follows:

Barley Parish Council objects to this application and ask NHDC in arriving at their own decision to take the following comments into consideration.

* We note that this is an application for a Permission in Principle (PIP) consent which is a two- stage process. The first stage establishes whether a site is suitable for development as a matter of principle and the second stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed.

This first stage application is therefore to only consider whether the location, land use and amount of development is acceptable in principle.

It is the view of BPC that the development of this site is not acceptable in principle for the reasons below. Additionally, because of the nature of the PIP application, there is no commitment to any particular form of development, its extent, or design etc. other than a general comment in the Planning Statement that a development in a form suggested by some plans accompanying the application may perhaps be envisaged. For a site in a sensitive location such as this we do not believe that a PIP application is the appropriate type of application, rather a full planning application should be required with definitive proposals.

* The applicant suggests in the Planning Statement that the site has the benefit of a commercial use/relationship with the applicant’s business. This requires clarification and we would offer the following comments. The applicant’s business was we understand started sometime in 2012/13 in the existing building located on part of the site the subject of the application. That business however very quickly outgrew the building and, following numerous complaints from local residents and in consultation with NHDC Planning Department (Mr Richard Tiffin who is now regrettably deceased), Barley Parish Council were involved in various discussions, correspondence and meetings with the applicant in 2015 and 2016 urging them to move the business away from this location to more suitable premises elsewhere. In late 2016/early 2017 the applicant did indeed finally move the whole business to their current premises in Newton, Cambridgeshire although the registered address of the company, Ginmeister Ltd is at Dovehouse Shott, Barley.

There has never, so far as we are aware, ever been any application or consent granted for a commercial use on the site and we believe the applicant’s initial operations out of the building were not sustained for long enough to create an Established Use for commercial purposes. The hardstanding referred to, that exists beside the current building on the site the subject of the application, was the result of a prior use of the site (including the current building) as a chicken farm which ceased trading and the chicken huts were demolished prior to the present house and garden known as Dovehouse Shott being built several years ago. That use as a chicken farm was, we understand, an agricultural use together with the remainder of the site not included in the application and which remains the permitted use.

* The site lies outside the defined village boundary for Barley of not only the Saved Policies of the current NHDC Local Plan No 2 with Alterations but also of the Emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan which is now at an advanced stage and where its policies can be apportioned significant weight as evidenced by a number of recent planning appeal decisions.

Policy SP2 of the Emerging Local Plan directs that development within Cat A villages, of which Barley is one, will be allowed but only within the defined settlement boundaries. Saved Policy 7 of the current NHDC Local Plan states that development proposals will normally only be permitted if the site lies within the main settlement boundaries of the village; involves retaining and improving an existing building which contributes to the character or visual quality of the village; the proposal would maintain or enhance the character or visual quality of the village or surrounding area. Within a Conservation area the positive preservation or enhancement of its character will be expected.

The proposed development does not meet the criteria for allowable development under either Plan and therefore clearly represents an inappropriate form of development and should be refused.

* While we are not in a position to comment on the current deficit in the NHDC housing land supply, the benefit of a single dwelling of unknown size and design in this location is questionable and it is our view that the overall planning balance in respect of this proposal does not constitute sustainable development. It will also make virtually no difference at all to the land supply issue.

* The application site is quite divorced from the core of the village which sits within the defined village/settlement boundary of Barley and where its various but limited village amenities and facilities are located. It is our view that the limited, poor, and unlit pedestrian access for older or disabled people or those with young children to those facilities from the site is such that they are unlikely to be usable during the hours of darkness or the winter months. This will only serve to encourage a reliance on private cars demonstrating the location is not sustainable to facilitate a residential dwelling without harm to the sustainability objectives of the latest NPPF and the Emerging Local Plan policies which encourage development within the defined settlement boundary of the village.

Furthermore, the economic, social and environmental benefits of this proposal referred to in the Planning Statement are de minimis in the extreme so far as being any justification for supporting the proposal as sustainable development.

* The site immediately adjoins the Barley Conservation Area (BCA) and although not directly within the BCA it is within its setting. This part of Smith’s End Lane is largely open in character with either open fields or quite extensive but enclosed land to the rear of existing properties fronting the Lane and where to date restricted development into these back-land areas has maintained the openness of the location. Development as proposed will erode and cause harm to the significance of the BCA which covers the whole of Smith’s End Lane.
* Many of the existing properties fronting Smith’s End Lane are listed, mostly Grade II. These assets make a valuable contribution to the setting of Smith’s End Lane and the proposed redevelopment of the existing former chicken shed would change the character of the built form on the site as a whole and its associated land causing a harmful impact on its contribution to the setting of these listed buildings in the immediate area.

Having regard to all the above considerations Barley Parish Council believe this application should be refused and we urge NHDC to do so. We are aware that there are several other objections to the application from local residents.

**7. FINANCE**

**7.1** The RFO had previously distributed the list of payments for approval at this meeting.

Barley Parish Council

M Chammings 304.40 Clerk April

L Brett 352.40 RFO

Blackdog 642.00 Jubilee book printing

HMRC 336.77 re pay roll

Barley Community grp 100.80 over 60’s insurance

Proposed Cllr Turner and Seconded Cllr King

Barley Town House

Swift Fire 144.00 Replace emergency light

Bulb 177.32Electricity

NHDC 99.44 Refuse

NHDC 93.60 Recycling

Dolly’s Vintage 100 Wedding attendance

M Chammings 298.75 Letting fees

R Saklatvala 93.75 Letting fees

Proposed by Cllr Hearn and seconded by Cllr Lee

**7.2** End -Year accounts

The RFO presented the accounts.

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

* The Opening balance was £59080, Closing balance £32322, with expenditure over income being £26758
* Over previous 3 years Income & Expenditure had been 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 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 balance was £28182, closing balance £26912, with expenditure over income at £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.

**Members resolved to accept the end of year accounts**.

**7.3** Annual Governance& Accountability Return (AGAR)

The RFO provided guidance on the AGAR which would be completed by Barley PC following the Auditors report.

**7.4** Signatories

Cllr Carlisle and Cllr Turner agreed to be added to the online bank sign off process. The RFO would provide guidance.

**7.5** Quotes and charges

The quote from Broadmead leisure for the replacement of a post (£135) was considered excessive. It was agreed that further work would be deferred until after the Rospa inspection due in May.

**8. REPORTS FROM COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

**8.1**

**County Cllr Hill** reported on the items that she had been involved with over the last month.

* The meeting with Kate Hooper had taken place and further information on drainage issues from officers had been received
* The works on London Road would be completed when the TRO was obtained
* The Drainage condition survey would take place in June
* The excessive debris at the foot of Bakers Lane had been 90% cleared
* County Cllr Hill and District Cllr Morris would follow up on the problems associated with the street cleaning schedule
* The clerk would ask for clarification and an update on further enhancements to the speed camera.

**9. REPORTS FROM WORKING PARTIES, COMMITTEES & PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

**9.1** The Town House

The Clerk reported on behalf of Mr Shaw.

**9.1.1** The recent Health and safety checks were all satisfactory and a one of the emergency lights had been updated.

There continued to be an intermittent electrical problem affecting the undercroft which was being investigated.

**9.1.2** An update on the lettings position included:

* 17 weddings booked for this year, five for 2023 and one for 2024
* The new price list was published on the website

**9.2** Plaistow

Items identified from the latest check include:

* Further picnic disc seats require replacement, and all are loose.
* **Action:** Clerk to seek quote from Broadmead Leisure for replacements and to notify the company that discs replaced by them are loose
* Paling in fence damaged. **Action**: Cllr Turner
* Football net ties are missing**. Action**: Cllr Turner
* Path from mid gate to main gate is overgrown. **Action**: Clerk to contact Countryside Management
* The wall opposite the tennis court adjacent to the school requires attention. **Action**: Clerk to write to the owners to repair
* Low overhanging branches of trees prevent proper ground maintenance. Bulllard’s had quoted a price for removal of the branches of £300. Members agreed this price. **Action**: Clerk to write to Bullard’s to check the price and commission the work to be done if the quote is as expected.

**9.3** The Queens Jubilee event

**9.3.1**

The event organisation was well in hand.

* In the event of wet weather, it was agreed that a marquee would be installed in the school field area a week in advance of the event. **Action**: Cllr Turner
* The RFO would check whether the event would be insured under the Parish Council insurance and what the requirements would be for a first aider. **Action**: RFO
* Cllr Hearn agreed to be a contact in an emergency.

**9.4** Council Face Book page

**9.4.1** It was agreed to set up a Council Facebook page. Cllr Hearn and the Clerk would be the administrators. **Action**: The Clerk and Cllr Hearn

**9.5** Tennis Club

**9.5.1** Cllr Lee had drafted a head of terms for the agreement between the Club and the Council. A planned meeting with the tennis club chair would be rescheduled so that the framework would be agreed.

**10. CLUB ROOM**

**10.1** It was resolved to sign the new lease of the Club Room which the Chairman has now received from the Councils’ solicitors Messrs Curwens. The lease is for a term of 10 years expiring on 24.05.2032 subject to a tenant’s option to break at the end of the 5th year. The rent is also subject to upwards only review at the end of the 5th year.

**11. CLERKS REPORT**

**11.1** Key items to note were:

* A vacant allotment plot was now available.
* We had been successful in our bids to S106 monies for play and leisure
* BPC standing orders had been revised and were posted on the website

**112. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA**

**10.1** The next meeting would be on Monday 6th June 2022.

**Items for future discussion**

1. Tennis club Agreement
2. Completion of the AGAR
3. Completion of Financial Risk Assessment

The meeting ended at 22.35