



BARLEY
Annual Village Meeting
WEDNESDAY 17TH MAY 2023 at 8PM

Minutes

In Attendance:

28 members of the public, 6 parish councillors, RFO and Parish Clerk.

Apologies:

Representatives from the Scouts and Barley School were unable to attend.

Barley Parish Council Chairman's welcome and report:

Welcome to you all.

For those that don't know me, my name is Brian Haughey. I moved to Barley in July '97 and I've been a Parish Councillor for around 5 five years, and for my sins on Monday was voted to be Chairman. However, before I go any further, I feel that it is important to me to mention three other people.

Firstly, and very sadly, we lost Mel Chammings earlier this year to Cancer. Mel had been a Barley Parish Councillor, but actually found her niche as our Parish Clerk, a role that she carried out with great professionalism. She was also involved in helping to manage the Town House as well as being involved with other clubs and aspects of village life. She is certainly missed by me and I am sure is missed by her other friends and colleagues. Greg, who I am sure many of you will also know, is arranging for a Bench in her memory to be placed outside of the Town House which she helped to manage. I think that that is a very fitting tribute!

Secondly, Alice Robertson. Alice has stepped into the breach as our new Parish Clerk, a role that she has already taken up and started to make her own. She is also a lot younger than many of us older guys on the Council, which is a breath of fresh air, but will hopefully cause an interest in the village from a whole new and younger generation to replace the likes of me, Jerry and Ian. Much as we might like to think it, we won't be here forever.

Lastly, but definitely not least, Jerry Carlisle, who I am sure everyone knows. Jerry has given incredible service to the village and the Parish Council for more decades than he probably cares to remember. Luckily for us, he is still on the Parish Council and will continue as Vice Chairman. I know that his vast knowledge will still be essential, and I look to continue serving with him.

Moving on; most of you don't normally come to Parish Council meetings. Come along one evening, even if just out of curiosity. There is a lot that they do, and as a villager, until I joined the Parish Council, I was not aware of the enormous amount of work that they did, and looking back, various councils have done a lot of work to be proud of.

Parish Councillors don't get paid, and they don't just pitch up once a month on the first Monday of the month. It takes a lot of time outside of that meeting to make sure that, for instance, that the Plaistow is well kept and particularly safe for kids, and we have regular Inspections from both ROSPA and Broadmead Leisure along with Ian Turner, to ensure that we always not only comply to all legislation, but always keep it a safe place.

Looking after our village treasure, the Town House, is another role, although this is handled by a sub-committee under the guidance of Nick Shaw. This is a big job on its own and we would like more villagers to get involved as we have monthly, 6 monthly and annual inspections, weddings, parties, and general day to day tasks and maintenance. As I said earlier, none of us are getting any younger. Talk to Nick about getting involved.

Planning Applications always play a part in every Parish Council meeting, where we try to maintain a balance between growth and meeting needs and still keeping the feel of a village. If you have an opinion on plans, make them known, don't just expect that the Parish Council deals with it to your expectation without getting involved. Some we win, some we lose. Sometimes the more weight behind an argument the better the outcome! You only have to look back a few years to the Fox & Hounds scenario.

Meetings with both HCC and NHC on subjects like Road Safety, Cleaning, Drainage etc., all take a lot of extracurricular time.

On the plus side we have one of the best Tennis Clubs around, on the Plaistow. It is successful and is the best value probably anywhere in the country. It is self-organising and running, but it is a subcommittee of the Parish Council.

However not everything that happens in the village is down to the Parish Council. Events like the recent Picnic on the Plaistow, Jubilee events amongst others are actually organised by villagers, so take a bow for that, but we as a Parish Council will always try to support this type of event where possible. On the subject of Events, the Barley Show Committee, another sub-committee of the Parish Council, have lashed out on a brand new Marquee, which is essentially for the Flower Show. It's 8 metres by 16 metres. It would be nice to have a good cadre of people to help put it up, and nearer the time we will send out to all volunteers, a YouTube video as to how to put it up. The first outing for this will be the

Barley Show is on Saturday 8 th July, so don't go booking holidays for that weekend, or the days before.

Moving the Container still continues to be a problem with 2 new extra Planning Consents coming into play, and our old enemy Health & Safety also causing problems. But it has to be done, as even a company that specialises in Container Repairs, have advised to get a new one. We will keep trying and will succeed somehow.

We hope that we can move forward with the Scouts on coming to an amicable arrangement on their aspirations for a new Scout building, but we see this as probably they do, as a longer term project. I am sure that they would welcome any help in moving that project further forward.

I now have come to an unsavoury subject. We have at last one, if not more, dog owner or owners who continue to allow his/her dog to defecate on footpaths in Barley. This is totally, totally unacceptable, anywhere. If you see this happening, please say something. It is unhygienic and is totally disrespectful to other villagers who are expected to clear up after you. There are Dog Bins around. Please use them.

This year we will try to move further forward on Road Safety. In conjunction with Councillor Fiona Hill, along with Hertfordshire Highways, we need action, particularly on the cross roads which has seen a rise in crashes, at least 4 in the last 6 months. We still keep getting requests from villagers for 20 mph zones, which we will also explore along with Councillor Hill. 20 mph Zones are springing up all over the country not only because of speed, but to help lower emissions. We will continue to campaign for 40 mph buffer zones at the entrances to the village, particularly on the B1368. Other villages on the same road as us have had them for some years, so there is precedence. We also have the Speed Cameras supplied by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner. We are not so convinced about the figures supplied from The Chequers site, and we have not had any figures at all for 2023 from the new position near the Cross Roads. The kit does seem to have quite a few malfunctions with engineers physically needing to attend. From our own figures, the highest speed this year at the Cross Roads is 84 mph on April the 7th, even with the Camera in place, with many in the 60's and even more in the 50's. I would like, although not at this moment though, to hear any opinions as whether you think that this has made a difference on your perception of speeds, anywhere in the village, or not. If you have any suggestions or comments, please come and see me or Councillor Turner later, or indeed any time.

Again, in liaison with Councillor Hill we believe that there might be an up and coming opportunity for funding for public EV Charging which could be useful for those in the village who cannot charge at home, and as a benefit to visitors to the Town House, so we will be keeping a tight watching brief on that, and apply as soon as more information becomes available.

The highways drains are still a topic for further investigation. Some of the village has had a comprehensive check, but more still needs to be done for the rest of the village. Again, Councillor Hill's workload is being loaded by us to push hard to investigate the rest of the village. While on the subject of Drains, Councillor Hill has funded a Grate on the entrance to the pipe that goes under the Picknag Road taking water from the 'Brook'. This

has created two scenarios. The first is that it stops detritus going into the pipe and blocking it which has led to flooding in the past to some of the houses. That's good. No blocked pipe. The second scenario is that it catches the detritus, but if the grating is not cleared, it has the same effect as a blocked pipe, so whilst some of us already carry out this last task, I would ask residents, particularly in Picknage Road, once in a while to put on some Wellie Boots and try to clear it with a spade or garden fork and just put it on the side. This is particularly helpful after rain when more detritus comes down the 'Brook'. A little self-help could go a long way. We will be looking at getting rid of the pile of detritus as soon as possible.

Still on the subject of roads in Barley! In my opinion the sweeping of the roads within the village rates to be classified as extremely poor. Certainly London Road is in a terrible state even with grass growing out of what has not been swept. We have a monthly dated timetable from NHC, but I haven't seen a Sweeper Unit this year at all. One villager told me, when asked, that they hadn't seen a unit since last June, which didn't surprise me. A quick show of hands if you have seen a Sweeper Unit at all this year. We know that there is a problem with parked cars, but even if we asked residents to try to shift cars on the dates that we have been given, the Sweeper unit has to show up; otherwise it makes a mockery of the whole situation. We are going to call NHDC to account on this problem and to get them to put together plans that they should, can, and will carry out.

Even if you don't have the internet, Facebook or any of the other social media applications, you will always see what is coming up at the next Parish Council meeting by checking either the Notice Board at the Town House or in the High Street. The agenda's will be put up a week in advance of the meeting. There is no excuse for not knowing what's going on, and possibly getting involved.

I'm going to stop now and make way for Councillors Hill and Morris to say a few words, as I know that they have another meeting to attend, and then I will ask our Financial Officer, Lynn Brett to report on our financial situation. Lynn has one of the hardest jobs having to liaise not only with and on governmental requirements, but with banks that don't want to talk to you even though they have your money.

After Lynn I'll open the floor to all village groups to who might wish to say something of their activities or to try to enrol you, one way or another into those activities. After that, please enjoy another glass of wine and if you feel that you want to raise a question, or make a point, please come and talk to us.

Thank you.

Reports from County and District Councillors

Report from County Councillor, Fiona Hill

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to update you on Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) issues. (Welcome to Alice who is proving to be a great asset in just a few weeks.)

Since my last annual report, we have seen the Platinum Jubilee and the tragic loss of our wonderful late Queen, who was an inspiration to us all and is very much missed. The Proclamation of King Charles III and his Coronation have also now taken place. It was wonderful to see the number of events and street parties that took place in the division I represent, including Barley – so thank you.

The terrible situation in Ukraine continues and HCC continues to support residents coming into the County. The County Council will advise anyone wishing to sponsor a family and support their needs for visas, education, health and other requirements.

The County Council set its budget for 2023/24 of over £1 billion (excluding the DSG of £1.2 billion) and this was approved at Council in February 2023. The increase of 4.99% includes 2% ringfenced for Adult Social Care and Health. ACS remains the highest part of the budget, at £443m, followed by Children's Services, recently judged as outstanding, at £225m.

Education has had to change to rise to the challenges presented by the pandemic. Following two years of assessed grades, we saw a return to exams, with changes so that pupils were supported. Schools have now returned to the "new" normal with over 94% of maintained schools being judged Good or Outstanding. Step2Skills, the Adult Learning service, 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 completely reopened and are providing many of the services that existed prior to 2020, with new services to accommodate those who prefer to access remotely. The home service has been vital and includes a chat service, for those who are unable to access libraries in person. The Summer Reading Challenge returned to normal and there were, again, a vast number of participants, with awards for those children who completed the whole challenge. It is also positive to see Royston Library used as a warm hub and accommodating the outreach services for Barclays Bank and the Police drop-in sessions.

Health and Social Care remains a key priority for the County Council and Public Health initiatives are proving vital to reduce pressure on the acute hospitals, through the prevention agenda.

I continue to work with stakeholders such as the Parish Council, Police/OPCC, for the benefit of residents in Royston and the villages. We work together on Speeding and Parking issues, such as educating drivers through mitigation measures including Cameras, Speed Indicator Devices, Speed and Volume surveys and DriveSafe, together with Police checks and the Free After 3 parking initiative.

I have also responded to numerous consultations, many relating to Planning and recently the Emerging Minerals and Waste Local Plan, the proposed weight limit on the A507 and the Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure plans.

The HCC initiative of HertsLynx is continuing to be extremely popular in the towns and villages, with the service now expanded, but there has been another challenge with Stagecoach cutting many services, including the only bus between Royston and Cambridge. I am delighted that another operator, Centrebus, came forward, so there is still a link between the two counties. The Highways Locality Budget has enabled many roads and footpaths, in Barley, which would not currently meet the criteria for general funding, to be improved and there will be further schemes for the village in the Integrated Works Programme.

I have supported Barley Parish Council on various planning applications and general issues that arise throughout the year and have provided grant funding through the community Locality Budget, which is available again this year, for various projects taking place in the village. A full list of all the grants allocated in my division is available.

I am grateful to all at Barley Parish Council for welcoming 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 would particularly like to thank the previous Chairman, Jerry Carlisle, for his invaluable experience, hard work and support, personally, to me. Personal thanks also to Yvonne Lee for her support. She will be missed on the Council. I am also grateful to Sir Oliver Heald, KC MP and District Councillors Gerald Morris and previous County/District Councillor Tony Hunter, for their unstinting support, so that we can all, hopefully, benefit the community.

Cllr Morris report.

Congratulations Brian on becoming the new chairman of the Parish Council. There are plenty of challenges ahead. I'm sure you appreciate that Jerry is going to be a difficult act to follow.

I am very grateful having again been elected as your District Councillor. Most of the credit goes to County Councillor Fiona Hill, she was my agent and it was her management and bullying of me that I remain your District Councillor.

District Council elections were one third of us every four years, however, the sequencing is changing in 2024 to all out; which means all Councillors will be up for election at one time. That means next year, if I am selected, I have to do the same again. Since becoming District Councillor 12 years ago, I've always said that we live in a beautiful part of England and I have always tried to stop governments changing it too much.

Whilst the Local Plan for housing was adopted by North Herts Council last year. I was one of the few that voted against it. It's called a Local Plan but the rules are laid down centrally, and it's not local at all.

Much of the housing that is planned to be built in our district is in the wrong places. 80% of the selected housing sites will be on green belt. Whilst generally, I do not have a problem with some new housing, providing it is in the right place and there is the local infrastructure to accommodate it.

Fortunately, Barley it's not at present a village that has been selected for any substantial development other than the development that is taking place at the moment.

Locally we have been highlighting the lack of sewage treatment plant capacity in some of our villages. These are Barkway, Therfield and Kelshall fortunately, not Barley. This means that when it rains heavily untreated sewage runs into our so-called pristine local chalk streams. I suspect that the upgrading of these plants will take some years. I've been trying to ensure

that the three villages with problematic sewage treatment plants do not have any more housing built until these plants are upgraded. Unsurprisingly Council officers are being difficult.

Whether it be District Councillors or Council Officers they talk the environmental talk, and then do not support what they say, whether it be polluting rivers, or planning to build thousands of houses on the green belt.

It would be a start, if Council officers actually answered their telephones, and not, as a present, switch directly to voicemail. Fortunately, so far, North Herts has not followed South Cambridgeshire Council, where they are trying out going down to a four-day week, because of the enormous, supposed pressure they are under!

Apologies, for being somewhat negative, but I do seem to spend an enormous amount of my time in trying change poor decisions."

A question from a member of public was asked about the planning in Barkway. Cllr Morris confirmed an outline plan has been approved but further detailed plans had yet to be submitted.

Presentation of Annual Accounts

BARLEY PARISH COUNCIL ye 31/3/23

Banks

- Opening balance £32,322, Closing balance £43,098, excess income over expenditure £10,776. Bank balances have therefore recovered with the reduced expenditure.
- 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

Incomes

- Incomes were in line with budget at £46,587. This was an increase on the previous year £28,995, an additional £17,592.
- This included vat recovery £8,689 and the precept increase £6000. Specific grants were received £1,310 (NHDC 280+435+595) and the income from Club Room recovered (after Covid holiday) £1,708. There was a slight shortfall on allotments and other incomes.

Expenditure

- Maintenance and repairs include works to Town House £6,171, Picnic Table £425, Club Room AC £244
- Parish Council continues to pay the Insurance costs for the Town House
- Professional fees: Audits for the Parish Council (£825+£300), Curwen's relating to Club Room new lease £2,203
- Plaistow maintenance includes new trees which were covered by grant, £280; gates £747 and other ground maintenance £1,320
- Donations included Jubilee costs £1135, RCT £250 Air Ambulance £250 and Childrens Christmas party £400
- Village maintenance: includes footpaths £1034 and Churchyard £300 and dog bins costs £480
- Printing and stationery include RFO/Clerk expenses £494 plus inks £73 and Jubilee printing book cover £535
- IT includes MS, Norton, Website licences.
- 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 and taken from Sinking Fund 21/22

Budget set for 2022/23:

- Precept was £28k 22/23 and is £29.4k 23/24
- 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 31/3/23

- Opening bank balance £26912, closing balance £29843, leaving income over expenditure £2931
- Lettings have recovered on the previous two years and exceed former levels, being 76% up on 21/22 £20418
- Expenditure increased on previous year by £4625 in total
- Electricity (which included a correction to previous year, understated) was £3961 (£562 21/22)
- Letting Officer fees increase in relation to lettings, £2904 (£1156 21/22)
- Cleaning includes schedules deep clean and janitorial supplies (£2522 compared to £140)
- Marriage licence £1310 is renewed every 3 years
- Equipment included new cooker £450 and hand driers £358
- Extinguishers/Alarms includes regular maintenance plus repairs/call outs and Electrical repairs £523
- Support continues from the Parish Council -paying the insurance and putting aside money for a roof fund

Reports from local Organisations

The Town House: Nick Shaw - Chairman of the Townhouse Committee.

Nick expressed his sadness at the loss of Mel Chammings, the previous Parish Clerk who did so much for The Town House and the village.

He reported that Ella, Manager at the Fox and Hounds Pub, has now taken over the role of Lettings Manager.

Various updates and maintenance to The Town House have been implemented, including new hand dryers, a smart meter, electrical work, and some interim roof work, explaining that due to the age of the building, it will continue to require regular maintenance and some bigger projects such as replacing the roof are necessary.

Darren Partt of Barley Maintenance Company was thanked for his contribution to the village with his restoration of the floors of The Town House which he does every 2 years free of charge.

A new member of the Committee is required to help with the running and stewardship of The Townhouse. If anyone is interested, please contact Nick Shaw or the Parish Clerk.

Barley Cricket Club: Matt Doggett – Chairman

Barley Cricket Club have a fairly healthy club with 2 teams, however more players are needed and anyone interested in playing for the village would be very welcome and should enquire directly with the club.

Groundsmen are required to help with the maintenance of the cricket pitch and outfield. The club are very grateful to Rod and Anne Symes who continue to dedicate so much time in maintaining the pitch. If you can help - please get in touch!

The Scouts: Stuart Farrow - Group Scout leader

The Scout Group, based in our hut behind the town hall provides activities and adventures for boys and girls aged from 6 to 16 from the village and wider local area.

We run 4 age groups; Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers, with a current total of over 120 children taking part every week and a large waiting list for all sections.

During the year these groups take part in a wide range of activities, ranging from cooking, crafts, hiking, climbing, water activities, expeditions and several weekend camping trips through to an annual weeklong summer camp for Scouts and Explorers. Last year this was held in Dorset.

The group is funded only by regular subscriptions from those taking part and from regular fundraising and run by volunteer leaders and Executive committee members. Over the last year or so we have reinvigorated plans and fundraising for a new building to replace the current hut, which is aging rapidly and energy inefficient. Preliminary plans have been prepared and discussed with representatives from the Parish council and we have now

progressed to the point where we are in the process of appointing an architect. We have already raised a significant amount of money to support this project.

We are very grateful for the support we receive from residents and the parish.

Finally, we would be delighted to speak to anyone who would like to get involved with our various sections as leaders!

Barley Social Hub: Alice Robertson

Barley Social Hub supports Barley's Social Community by helping facilitate events for the village. We have been raising money for new facilities in The Church with musical events, organising the village Jubilee and Coronation events, and have plans developing for more social events in the coming months. We have also established a successful coffee morning every 3rd Thursday of the month, currently kindly being hosted by The Fox and Hounds pub.

We would like to help re-establish Spring Music - an annual music concert that was a feature in the village calendar for many years – if you or anyone you know is interested in running this event, please get in touch.

The Community Group: Marion Drury

The group have a strong membership attendance which is capped at 40 but visitors are always welcome. Our programme is very varied and includes talks, outings and quizzes. Information in The Diary publication gives details every couple of weeks of what's on, and this is also featured on the village noticeboard.

Gardening Club; Alison White

The Gardening Club have 90 people on mailing list and meet in the Town House on the first Wednesday of the month. The annual fee is just £10 and £2 for visitors. You also don't need to be a member to come along to some of the events which including speakers & garden visits to name a few. Please get in touch for more information.

Knitting Group – Alison White

We meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at the Chequers pub and no fee! Anyone is welcome.

Bell Ringers – Ian White

Barley's Bell Ringers meets on Tuesday evenings 8-9pm have a dozen ringers which is very healthy. We ring for Communion services and for weddings in the Town House as well, not just in the Church. New recruits are always welcome if anyone would like to come and if you would like to go up and see the bells and view from the top of the Church it is possible on request!

The Tennis Club – Rebecca Sims

We currently have 138 family members which equates to over 350 people. Fees are £40 to join for the first year and then drops to £35 a year which makes us one of the most affordable Tennis clubs in the country. Consideration to maintain the court is needed as it

costs £17,000 per court to resurface, and a further £7,000 to repaint. We try to stretch maintenance out to around 5 years or more where possible, but need to ensure fundraising events and opportunities are driven to raise funds.

We have social meetings on Thursdays and children's coaching programmes are also available.

We are trying to change the structure of the club to a charitable organisation.

The Barley Charities – Geoffrey Wilkerson

Geoffrey Wilkerson – quieter year this year than last year due to covid and job losses and problems paying bills. Last request for help was about a year ago. Invited people to ask for help if they need it. They do a Christmas gift to about 10 individuals mostly pensioners who are in need for a bit of extra help. Open to suggestions for any help.

Brief explanation of the history of the charity – started with bequeathed money and also a piece of land that is rented out that also contributes to the fund.

The Church – Geoffrey Wilkerson

It's been a year of losses. First we lost Ruth Pyke who retired, and then we lost Sarah Richardson who has moved to the Sandon area. Both made a great impact to the village in the time they had been here. Hoping to find a replacement – advertised 3 times, and one candidate unfortunately withdrew a week before the interview was due to take place. In the meantime the local unpaid clergy – Sonya and Anne in Barkway are helping where they can.

We also have the loss of one of our Church Wardens Charles Wrangham but welcome Vanessa Martin taking over the role.

Various people continue to help the Church with fundraising; Homestall will be hosting the church fete on the 10th June.

Barley Show; Glyn Stacy

Successful show last year with around 400 people. Usual Barley show fete stalls. Alison white is contact if you would like a stall on the day. Cash surplus of £900 odd. Some donated to Ukrainian red cross appeal, Barley Charities, Wood Green Charity for example. The surplus that is built up to get enough money to reinvest in equipment needed for the Show and have purchased a new double marquee for the event. With a further donation earmarked towards the container that houses the equipment. Thanks to all the sponsors and volunteers. New helpers are always needed so please do contact the Barley Show Committee.

Flower show – Please enter! Lots of different categories to enter and it would be wonderful if we could flood the entries in memory of Mel.

Royal British Legion – Sue Williams

Chair of local branch – Anstey Reed and Nuthampstead and Barley. Cheese and Wine supper last year raised £1500. Total Remembrance collection was over £6,000 from all the villages. This year they will take a stall at Barley Show on the 8th July. Another Cheese and Wine with Quiz taking place this October. Wanted to take the opportunity to thanks the village and villagers.

End

Cllr Brian Haughey, Chairman of Barley Parish Council thanked all contributors and attendees for coming.