

Minutes of Barston Parish Council

Meeting: 8pm 13th March 2019

Barston Institute

Present: Jeremy Emmett (Chair); Paul Hadley (Vice Chair); Robert Cookes; Kay Sumner; Lee Bould and Ken Flood (Clerk).

Chairman Jeremy Emmett opened the meeting by introducing and welcoming Cllr Bob Sleigh and Alan Brown from SMBC.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

Minutes of January's Meeting

The Chair duly signed the minutes of January's meeting.

Matters Arising

ANPR invoice had been paid. The Wyevale Garden Centre development would be discussed further under the main agenda together with our budget. The Chair gave an update on the repercussions of the problems associated with the 4-way control traffic problems experienced last year and confirmed that he was still in contact with the organisation who would make amends by doing something, yet to be decided, for the community.

Budgets

The Chair and Cllr. Cookes had an earlier meeting with Cllr. Bob Sleigh and Alan Brown Assistant Director (Highways & Environment) about our dissatisfaction over services provided by SMBC. In the absence of clear and appropriate service level agreements (SLAs) in relation to these services Barston Parish Council (BPC) had established a budget that would allow it to be more self-determined in providing adequate services. BPC's approved budget had shaped its 2019/20 Precept.

Chair (Cllr Emmett) proposed to go through each relevant line of cost to establish what would and would not be devolved.

Having introduced grass cutting as the first item, Alan Brown who had brought along some maps, used one to state the following:

- Overall SMBC provide 4 cuts of grass a year.
- Grass near the village telephone box is cut on a 12-day cycle
- Across the borough 57% of roads are gritted; however, in respect of our community, only one main route is gritted.
- Barston could pay per mile for additional gritting services.
- Health and Safety regulations negate parishes from doing their own gritting.
- Potholes – Barston being rural provides a reduced risk in comparison to other roads and Fix My Street is appropriate for reporting potholes, which will be remedied.
- Verges could be seeded with wild flowers.

At this point Cllr Sleight spoke to confirm the reduction in SMBC's budget - £150m in 2014/15 to £147m for 2019. He further made the point that 75% of SMBC's funding came from council tax not business rates and of how business revaluation saw SMBC having to refund £7m to Birmingham Airport and enjoy less income from businesses. He went on to share the cost of Children in Care and Social Care e.g. SMBC budget for senior citizens was £7.5m. He stated that the budget for Highways is £10m.

Cllr Emmett (Chair) thanked Cllr Sleight and Alan Brown and returning to BPC's budget, acknowledged the constraints and moved on to hedge trimming. Cllr. Cookes pointed out that there existed areas of disputed or unclear responsibility for hedge maintenance. Alan Brown requested clarification of specific problem areas.

Alan Brown stated that roads were swept on a 6 weekly schedule (excluding unkerbed roads). He confirmed that it was possible for BPC to use SMBC's contractors.

Road repairs by other than approved SMBC contractors are simply not permitted.

Alan Brown would investigate the possibility of micro-salting.

The Chair completed the list by flagging ANPR, Best Kept Garden, new signage and Christmas lights. SMBC would need to be consulted in relation to signage.

Public Forum

Parishioner Jenny Wilcox expressed her concerns about the scheduling and quality of grass cutting and the effectiveness of the current contractors Amey. Alan Brown explained that contracts are let in 7-year blocks and reviewed after 4 years and that they randomly check 10% of work carried out by contractors with 900 face-to-face interviews with residents each year. Alan Brown stated that there was an 86% satisfaction with current contractors and services.

Liz Flood asked about tree felling at Wyevale and if car debris, following an accident could be removed from Waterfield Hill. Ivan Eley asked why young offenders are used no longer on community projects (while implying such

activity might reduce knife crime). Cllr Sleigh clarified that such initiatives are no longer permitted by law.

Cllr. Bould raised road issues in Brook Green Lane and Cllr Sleigh confirmed they were being investigated.

A parishioner who recently had undergone an operation, raised the question of the five sets of speed humps on Hampton Road Knowle, the discomfort they caused and questioned whether the number could be reduced.

A parishioner reported a 'tree down' blocking Ryton End Lane.

Pete Sumner announced that there would be a Heart Start event on 1st May. He asked for an indication of attendees as soon as possible.

Finally, Cllr Emmett asked for volunteers to organise Best kept Village and Jenny Wilcox and Jane Emmett responded by accepting the role.

Cllr Emmett would advise in the Newsletter and website of a clean-up date for Tidy Village.

Finance

Clerk, Ken Flood said that the bank balance stood at £894.89 taking into account march' outgoings, the cheques for which were duly signed.

Airport

Parish representative David Elliott, told the meeting that the CAA report was now up for signature. CAA had signed off the North turn. He further reported that noise monitoring showed that 1100 flights exceeded 70BDA (a danger to health). He asked that the ladies from Eastcote Lane, having read the report, contact him in that regard.

Planning

Manor View had been received and was being dealt with. Discussion ensued about the development on Knowle Road which had caused concern to some parishioners. The case simply raised awareness of how the look and feel of our community environment can be changed for the worst.

Cllr. Cookes raised the subject of planning in relation to Wyevale. Speaking to Cllr Sleigh he spoke of an early meeting with SMBC planner Jon Hallam about our concerns about drainage, parking and trees. During that meeting Jon Hallam explained that BPC had no rights to be kept abreast of the various planning consents still outstanding.

It is now clear that tree felling is far more extensive than was advised by Jon Hallam and it will change the look and feel of the area.

David Read advised that BPC should be more proactive with Tree Preservation Orders.

Security ANPR

The Chair proposed and the meeting supported the proposal that Chris Wild should be co-opted to the ANPR team.

A.O.B.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9.40pm with the Chair advising that the next meeting and AGM will be on 15th May 2019.

Ken Flood 16th March 2019