

BARWICK in ELMET & SCHOLES PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 26th May 2020 at 7pm using remote access

PRESENT:

Councillor	Glyn Davies (Chair)		
Councillors	Graham Slater	Joanne Austin	Paul Remmer
	Howard Bedford	Karen Dales	

In attendance: The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and one resident.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR. Cllr. Davies was nominated for the office of Chair. There being no other nominations he was duly elected.

2 APOLOGIES. None.

3 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST. None.

4 TO SIGN AND APPROVE THE MINUTES

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the Committee meeting of 13th February 2020 be approved and that the Chair sign the minutes when able to do so, all in favour.

5. ADDITIONAL WORK REQUESTS, COSTINGS AND ACTION

• Scholes Lodge Lane wall work and garden area

The Clerk had circulated a report detailing the full history of correspondence and discussions at meetings. After considering options such as creating a gap between the wall and the trees, it was **resolved** to accept a quote of £840 and to allow up to £400 to cover any unforeseen additional costs and to instruct the contractor to proceed as soon as he is able to do so. Discussion regarding the adjacent Parish Council (PC) land was deferred to the next meeting, meanwhile Cllr. Walsh would spray and strim to keep it tidy.

• Barwick cess pool

Cllr. Davies had received an estimated cost from a contractor in Pontefract and would seek to obtain a formal quote from this firm. It was noted that Mount Saint Mary's were willing to contribute towards the cost from their own fund-raising and grants. The likely life expectancy of a tank (fifty years) would be a factor in any decision to proceed. It was also noted that the five-year licence for the football club would soon be due for renewal and that a new licence could clarify each parties' responsibilities including emptying the tank and Pavilion maintenance. Options for PC funding were considered including a loan to the club to cover any shortfall from their own fund-raising. A meeting with the club would be arranged. Grass cutting is currently done at the club's own expense. An option to extend the Village Hall was noted.

• Secondary water meters at Scholes

It was confirmed that water meters had been supplied and that no further action was necessary. The Clerk would write to the sports clubs to request their meter readings.

6. ASSETS

The need to inspect trees on PC land was discussed. Cllrs. Bedford and Davies were willing to complete any documentation demonstrating that each tree had been inspected. A professional survey was required once every seven years. The Clerk would look at historic e-mails from 2016 and establish action taken in 2016 to inform discussion at the next meeting.

7. SPORTS PAVILION AND FIELD IN SCHOLES

- It was noted that a Business Interruption grant of £10,000 had been received. This would form part of the budget of the Pavilion sub-committee.
- Drainage of the Sports field in Scholes. Cllr. Remmer had used an Internet mapping tool to look at aerial shots of the field to establish the whereabouts of drainage pipes and had looked at putting in a trial hole. On Saturday 23rd May, Cllrs. Maude, Remmer and Slater had dug and found a drain and

they had then looked for a lateral but didn't find the drain. There was eighteen inches of topsoil beneath which was heavy clay. The next step would be to put a camera up the located drain and to do electronic traces, then to use this to dig further holes and repeat starting the camera from the new location. There would be no cost to the Parish for doing this.

8. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE.

This was considered as part of the next agenda item.

9. PROGRAMME OF WORKS SCHEDULE.

Cllr. Davies shared the programme of works document on screen with the meeting and drew attention to headings which he had added. These headings incorporated works which sub-committees have responsibility for, each sub-committee will feed into the F&GP Committee updates for the programme of works document so that it can be kept up to date making use of the shared drive. It was suggested that the Peace Flame group also feed into the programme of works. The need for Terms of Reference for the sub-committees was noted. The programme of works document would be a standing agenda item.

10. ANNUAL AGENDA ITEMS

- **Insurance**

It was resolved to renew the insurance with Pen (using Came and Co. as the broker) tied to a three-year agreement, subject to confirmation that cover of £10K for boundary walls in each half of the parish was included, all in favour. There was a query regarding allotment cover for which the PC currently has separate insurance cover through the National Allotment Society, it was agreed to refer this to the Allotments sub-committee for consideration.

- **Internal Auditor's Report**

The recommendations of the Internal Auditor's report were considered. It was **resolved** that all items on the asset register with a value of less than £250 be removed and reported separately, all in favour. It was agreed that the four tables bought for the Pavilion be counted as a single item in deciding whether they should be included. Many of the other issues raised had already been addressed (reporting of precept in the minutes, Clerk's expenses) or were in the process of being addressed (paying invoices digitally).

11. OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

- **Scholes Allotments**

It was decided that a request from Scholes Allotment holders for PC support be referred to the full PC.

- **Internal Auditor's Report Regarding Expenses**

The Committee considered the Internal Auditor's report regarding expenses claims since 2016 and in particular two specific claims by the previous Chair of the PC about which concerns had been raised in correspondence from a resident.

One of these concerns related to several claims for weed killer made from December 2017. The resident was concerned about the amount of weed killer purchased during this period. The Committee felt that this should not have been reported as Chair's expenses in the first place and that this expenditure should have been attributed as allotment costs and were satisfied that no further action need be taken.

The other item of expenditure was for computer repairs in 2016 being two invoices totalling £80. The expenses policy does not prevent such claims being made but does require prior PC approval and there was uncertainty whether presenting a list of anticipated payments at the monthly meeting was considered prior approval and whether the former Chair should be asked whether there had been any discussion with any other Councillor about making the claim prior to its submission. There were concerns that micro-management of expenses claims was heavy handed and concerns that PC time

could be better spent than revisiting a 2016 £80 claim. It was agreed that further involvement of external bodies was not in the interests of the PC.

It was proposed to accept the recommendations of the Internal Auditor's report, to not pursue the matter further and to consider the matter closed subject to a review of the expenses policy and on the understanding that future expenses claims presented to the PC display details of such claims in greater depth. The resolution was agreed but not unanimously, although all Councillors accepted the recommendations of the report, two did not feel that doing so brought closure to this matter and commented on the terms of reference given to the auditor. It was agreed that the decision not to pursue reimbursement of the £80 did not affect a previous decision regarding reimbursement of a claim submitted in 2019.

11. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next published meeting date was 10th September but it was felt that the Committee needed to meet before this date and therefore agreed a meeting using remote access technology on 14th July 2020 at 7pm.

Previously published dates were: 10th September 2020 - John Rylie, 12th November 2020 – Pavilion, 14th January 2021 - John Rylie and 11th March 2021 - Pavilion

The meeting closed at 9:35pm