

## **Bardwell Parish Council**

Chair: Cllr David Ruffles. Vice Chair: Cllr Margaret Berrill

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

## **Minutes of the Meeting of Bardwell Parish Council to held on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Time: 3pm**

**Venue: The Tithe Barn, Bardwell Village Hall, Up Street, Bardwell IP31 1AA**

### **In attendance:**

Cllr David Ruffles (Chair), Cllr Margaret Berrill (Vice Chair), Cllr Mike Allum,

Cllr Karl Ives, Cllr Lenka Lelakova, Cllr Andrew Smith, Cllr Karen Witton.

Clerk/RFO: Pauline Smith

Members of the public: None

### **1. Apologies for absence**

To receive and approve apologies for absence: None

### **2. Declarations of interest**

2.1 **To receive and approve declarations** of disclosable pecuniary interests, and other registrable interests and non-registrable interests as detailed in Annex B of the LGA Model Code of Conduct. Cllr Smith Declared an interest in relation to the budget item relating to Clerk/RFO Salary.

2.2 **To consider requests**, not already received and determined, for dispensations relating to matters on this agenda: None.

### **3. Public Participation Session**

No members of the public were present. No questions had been submitted for consideration/response.

### **4. 2024/25 Budget**

#### **4.1 To consider proposals and agree budget for 2024/25: Proposal £17,448.00**

Following questions raised, discussion and explanations given in relation to various budget lines, the budget as proposed was agreed.

Note: Cllr Smith confirmed that he was excluding himself from the vote in relation to Clerk/RFO salary due to his pecuniary interest (2.1 refers) but was voting in favour of all other budget items.

#### **Resolution:**

**It was unanimously agreed to accept the budget as proposed: £17,448.00**

#### **4.2 To confirm precept request to be submitted to West Suffolk District Council Resolution: The Precept Application was unanimously approved.**

The form was signed by the Chair and Clerk/RFO for the sum of £17,448.00

*30Jan2024: Clerk/RFO has submitted the application to West Suffolk Council.*

*Confirmation of receipt has been received.*

### **5. Next Meeting**

Date: Tuesday 6th February 2024

Time: 7pm

Venue: The Tithe Barn, Bardwell Village Hall, Up Street, Bardwell IP31 AA

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#### Explanations provided to questions raised:

**Q:** Is the annual footpath clearing and weed killing something that could be undertaken by the proposed volunteer village workforce

**A: Weeds growing through the hoggin footpath** on the community field require removing on an annual basis. Whilst this could be done by hand this is not considered effective, hence the requirement for annual spraying.

The person carrying out this work is required to hold specified certification and use appropriate equipment.

It is not cost effective to train a volunteer for this purpose (plus equipment).

**S137 grants.** Historically recipients have been agreed each year.

@£50 per charity. This includes a donation towards the RBL wreath for the Remembrance Sunday service at Bardwell Church. The (agreed) proposal was that

- the budgeted sum be reduced from £400 to £200;
- consideration will be given to donations which cause the budget to exceed this sum towards the end of the financial year.

**Water Supply:** Allotment holders pay a contribution towards the water costs. The parish council pays the standing charge plus an element of the water charges due to water being required for trees on the community field, flower beds near benches, and Jubilee planter. Originally there had been an intention to meter the water supply to the allotment holders via standpipes. Although this did not progress at the time, it could be an option for the future. The allotment holders also have a cube plus water butts beside each shed.

#### Can we time the expenditure so that it falls into 2 different financial years thus avoiding the need for an audit?

**A: Internal audit** cannot be avoided.

External audit is required if the pc exceeds £25,000 in either payments or receipts.

This is feasible depending on when projects are carried out/invoices/grants received.

#### Q: Accounts Package:

**A: Last year was a significant increase** due to changes in the package since inception. Scribe is specifically designed for local councils: the cost is similar to other packages designed for local councils. An appropriate accounts package provides significant benefits and security over spreadsheets, as well as other benefits including training and access by auditors; when there is a change of Clerk/RFO there is no break in continuity as it is cloud based; there is training for any new clerk needing access; no concerns about out of date software, failure of equipment, loss of data etc.

**Election Expenses:** Assume this is to build up funds again ready for next elections?

**A: Yes**

#### Play area – Was there a reason for this new allocation (2023/24)

**A: Yes:** Previously the play area equipment was the responsibility of the BPFA but the PC took over responsibility in 2023 resulting in a need to ensure that it considers the financial cost of ongoing repairs/maintenance and future replacement.

**Grants (other - previously Jubilee): Q: No mention of/should we be including** a sum for grants to organisations e.g. COTG/Village Fun Day/D Day

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**A: One-Off Grants have already been approved during 2023/24** for COTG 2024 (towards cost of signage £600) and Village Fun Day (£400).

Both of these are one-off requests/grants for which the money has been allocated from the parish council's 2023/24 reserves and is now held separately within 'named' earmarked reserves. Therefore, there is no requirement for additional funds from 2024/25 budget to be allocated to these grants (COTG money is likely to be released within 2023/24 year; Peter Sanderson for BPFA has confirmed that he wishes the Village Fun Day funds to be held within the pc account for the time being: unlikely to be required until near the event date.

D-Day event funding (£500): This is a pc led event. As above, the funds have been allocated from 2023/24 reserves and are now held in a named ringfenced reserve specifically for this purpose. Therefore, it is not necessary to draw on the 2024/25 budget and so no additional funding has been included within the 2024/25 budget/precept request.

There are no other known or likely funding requests coming forward for the 2024/25 financial year. Therefore, there is no allocation within other grants. If an unexpected grant request is received, the parish council will need to take account of its financial position/reserves at the time.

Comment/Question: Other possible costs during the year - Possible bulbs for planting around the village/cleaning supplies for signs?

A: The budget can only include known/expected costs: there is a sum included of £500: Other Contingency.

There is often the possibility to obtain free bulbs from various organisations in the autumn.  
Cleaning of signs: Fairy liquid and water.

Comment: This would seem a reasonable increase in view of general Cost of living rises. Important that we show residents value for money, so visibility in terms of gateways etc will be helpful.

Comment: It is not sustainable to continue with zero increases.

**Outcome: Proposed budget 2024/25 unanimously approved: £17,448.00**

**Band D: £55.03      Increase over 2023/24 band D £4.29.**

**Percentage increase 8.45%**

(For information: 2023/24: Budget £16,005: Overall increase in budget: £1,443)