



Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 21st October 2021

Chair's Report

It is a pleasure to welcome you here in person for this year's Annual Parish Meeting. The Pandemic certainly caused us to be more flexible, adaptable, and more significantly, caring towards our community. The sense of 'togetherness' in the village became quite apparent and definitely something to build on. On behalf of those who gave and received support right across our community a 'huge' thank you.

As a Parish Council we had to adapt to changes in protocol, ensure compliance and the safety and wellbeing of our residents. Signage, sterilising play equipment, distributing support grants, risk assessments, just some of the minutiae running alongside such a global event. In order to operate as a PC 'zoom' has come to mean so much more than speed. It has enabled us to hold our PC meetings, listen in to various consultations and go about our business. It has created another layer of administration for the Clerk in order for us to meet our statutory obligations. (Thank you, Ian, for coping so well).

The Parish Council meet on alternate months to allow working groups to discuss issues, gather data, identify problems and possible solutions, attend consultations, talk to various experts and report back to the PC. This enables us to maximise our time and resources.

What has the Parish Council been doing over the last year?

Administration

The PC has fulfilled its responsibility regarding the Clerks annual appraisal, it continues to review and update policies according to purpose and any new legislation. The PC has responded to central government initiatives regarding Covid procedures, submitted responses to consultations and notified the public. Parish Councillors have a legal requirement to attend meetings and a register of attendance is kept and absences approved at formal PC meetings. Nearly all councillors have undertaken Councillor training, but the courses have been somewhat sporadic. Cllr. Woolhouse is the PC representative at Village Hall meetings. We have a minuted part of the formal PC agenda to allow communication between BRIG and the PC.

I would like to thank Mike Radford who stood down as a Parish Councillor this year after many years of service to the council and the residents of Barton. Additionally, we thank Will Westlake for his time on the Parish Council.

The Clerk attends regular training sessions and engages with the support network that this provides in the sharing of ideas. He engages with CAPALC (Cambridgeshire & Peterborough association of

Local Councils) for further advice or information as needed. The SLCC (The Society of Local Council Clerks). As a PC, we have experienced delays in responses from Council departments due to staff being redeployed. But, as we all know this has been anything but a 'normal year'.

The Parish Council is very receptive to listening to residents' complaints, issues, and concerns. We can only deal with those issues that are brought to our attention, via the clerk. Equally it would be nice to know if there is anything which residents might feel the council needs to consider and for that purpose, please feel free after tonight's meeting to speak to the Councillors here.

Communication and Social engagement

This is an area in which the PC continues to work on. Clearly last year, meeting the needs of residents who were self-isolating, food and medication were high on the agenda. On a weekly basis SCDC community support would alert us to where help was needed, this was then followed up with phone calls, visits etc. We applied for all of the community support grants that were available and advertised these via the website, notice board, school newsletter etc. I can report that there was only one occasion when this fund was applied for and consequently any unused funds were returned as requested by SCDC. As a PC we were not eligible for the larger 10K support grants which some of the other facilities in Barton were able to draw upon to support their loss of income.

We felt it important at Christmas time to do something which the whole community could enjoy in a socially distanced way. The Barton Christmas tree was erected and lit on the green next to the pond, with decorations provided by the primary school and residents who wished to participate. The Twelve Days of Christmas encouraged residents to spot the various displays around the village – much positive feedback was received. (Thank you, Margaret, for the set of photographs.) Christmas dinners were distributed to those who requested them or were eligible

We continue to build the links between school and the PC, the nursery hedge was cut and cleared, 2 Councillors attended the road safety training to support the school in their temporary road traffic order in School Lane, to facilitate the safe passage of parents and children who were not able to wait on the playground. The PC supported the children with their road safety campaign and gave them a slot to present their concerns at a PC meeting inviting the relevant bodies to attend.

We continue to refine parts of the website to ensure it is up to date, reflects what is happening in our community and inform the residents. Given the number of consultations such as EWR and OX-CAM ARC. It is at this point I would urge residents to subscribe to the website so that individuals can receive news alerts and bulletins. As a council we are aware that not everyone is on-line, so we post events and news in the more traditional way via noticeboards, the Parish magazine and letter drops door to door as deemed necessary.

Planning

The Parish Council continue to review all planning applications in line with current policy and publish these on the website as well as the weekly schedule provided by SCDC, on the new PC noticeboard. We are still awaiting the decision regarding Barton House as to when this will go to full planning committee. In the meantime, we have spoken at length to children and youth services, district councillors and residents of Holben Close and Wimpole Road. This has taken a considerable amount of engagement by the Parish Council to support the residents. Further, the Parish Council has held meetings with applicants to further understand some of the larger scale developments that have

been applied for, to talk through issues and concerns as well as requesting conditions through the due planning process. There have certainly been many planning applications to work through. A member of the PC attends (via zoom) a quarterly planning review held by County Cllrs, District Councillors. This enables us to ask specific questions, get advice on the planning process as well as requesting future training/workshops in particular areas. It also allows cross parish engagement. The PC understands the sensitivity towards development in its immediate environment and takes into consideration the varying viewpoints, material concerns and scale before arriving at a decision. We welcome these viewpoints from residents, but also point out that the PC is just one corporate response whose voice carries the same as an individual response.

Amenities and Open Spaces

Much has been achieved in this area over the last year.

In the children's play area resurfacing of the basketball area, repair of the climbing wall and more significantly a complete renovation of the roundabout which was first installed to commemorate the Queen's coronation. The restored roundabout was officially reopened in September with contributions from BRIG, PC and BVCT. – Thanks to John Boocock and David Hodge for their expertise and many hours spent restoring it.

Temporary works using ballast and gravel to fill the potholes at the entrance to the recreation ground were completed, however a longer-term solution is needed, and the PC are looking at this as a potential project with other village users. A gate rota was established for the opening and closing of the recreation gate and the PC is always looking for new volunteers to add, to make it less onerous on the few.

During the last year the PC have had ongoing discussions with Community Heartbeat regarding the purchase of a defibrillator. A very essential piece of equipment to assist those who experience cardiac arrest. We have all seen footage of when this life saving equipment has been put to good use. Given the recreation ground is a centre of activity, the PC felt it necessary to locate a defibrillator near the buildings. I can report that the defibrillator is now in place on the exterior wall of the Bowls Club. A training day has now been approved and community group users will be invited to attend a training session. The PC would like to thank Barton Gardeners for a contribution towards the defibrillator, along with the Barton Village Charitable Trust.

The football pitch is used regularly now by Comberton Crusaders U13 & U14 teams playing in a local league and training. Much time has been given to the conditioning and repair of the pitch.

An annual playground inspection was completed and works to be carried out were identified. We still have an issue with the skate ramp, but the PC are currently looking at options for repair.

Both the PC and residents have been hugely helpful in bulb planting around the village so that Spring was a riot of daffodils. Regular litter picking by individuals (Richard Newstead) help to keep our village clean. A more recent village wide litter pick was also successful. The PC have had to report several fly tipping incidents, an unsightly and antisocial activity. If residents witness anything of this kind, please report it to the clerk and or the police.

The PC would like to thank the guides for the cleaning of village road signs, Sue Clemmo for the painting of the rails around the pond and on the Cambridge Road. John Boocock and David Hodge for the endless hours they dedicate to maintenance in the village. I never see John with an empty car!

The welfare of the pond and its livestock have been regularly assessed and reed clearing has taken place, not only for the good of the pond, but for road visibility for traffic.

A grass and verge cutting policy is underway as the contract is due for renewal and using the advice and support of Vince Lea (CRT) as to how we manage certain areas for the benefit of the environment, whilst keeping residents happy about 'the look'. Cutting and collecting are quite critical to this process, as well as set aside areas for insect life. The PC participated in a No Mow May which had varying responses. We have also engaged with residents on an as needs basis with regard to vegetation overhanging footpaths and maintaining hedges to enable pedestrians to have full access to pavements.

The PC has had to deal with issues of 'burning' within the village and have sought advice from the Environmental Health Department. This information has been shared via the Parish magazine and via the website.

Cllr Langford has undertaken training on behalf of the Parish Council with regard to Zero Carbon Workshops as a precursor to more successful grant applications, but also to meet future needs in this area.

Leases:- This has been reported on previously. Regarding the lease situation between Barton PC and BRIG, historic issues have come to light regarding the existing lease, the vesting of BRIG's interest in the Charities Commission and the PC's obligations under a deed of dedication of the recreation ground.

Until the situation can be clarified, we the PC, are not able to grant leases to BRIG, The Tennis Club and Bowls Club. SCDC (as the freeholder of the land) is aware of the situation *but has not been minded to assist. Ian Sollom has also been extremely helpful in furthering our cause with SCDC.*

The PC has held meetings with BRIG and drawn up an action plan to move its lease forward pending resolution of these issues. *In due course, similar meetings will be held with the other relevant organisations to move things on in the background."*

Traffic, Transport and Travel

Whilst we are going to hear from Councillor Martin shortly regarding Barton's successful LHI bid, I would just like to thank Cllr Martin and the WG for their coordination, efforts and relentless approach in addressing the public, meeting both Councillors at County Council and District Council level and MP for South Cambridgeshire, in raising awareness of our traffic issues. His tenacity for asking and responding to direct questions, presenting evidence has been extremely rigorous.

The PC have a schedule of lampposts which have now been fully approved to site the MVAS equipment which is moved around the village regularly to monitor and collect traffic data.

As speed watch Co-ordinator Cllr. Martin has ensured regular speed watch sessions at the approved sites around the village. Thanks to our regular volunteers (Patrick De Backer, Margaret Penston, Robert Stopford) who support the council in this valuable work. The data collected is sent to the police who assess it.

Cllr Martin has also been engaged in EWR presentations to the residents of Barton, attended EWR consultation meetings and had direct conversations with Antony Brown MP. There have been regular report backs via the website and at PC meetings.

The WG have also been responsible for monitoring the issue of cycling on non-cycle paths around the village, particularly when it has caused issues for residents with mobility problems, abuse to pedestrians and damage to parked cars.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the Councillors and the Clerk for their continued hard work over what has been an unusually difficult year.

Sarah Pitchford

Chair Barton Parish Council