

BARSHAM AND SHIPMEADOW PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the **Annual General Meeting** held on 5th June 2024
At 7.30pm at the Barsham Village Hall.

Members Present : Peter Holmes (PH) David Adcroft (DA) Zachariah Miller (ZM)

Apologies for Absense : Zane Blanchard (ZB) Pauline Midwinter (PM)

Election of Chairperson : PH proposed ZB as Chairman , this was seconded by ZM.
Motion was carried

Election of Vice Chairperson : DA proposed PM as Vice Chair, PH seconded , motion was carried

Receiving the Declarations of Acceptance of Office from the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.

To sign as a correct record the minutes of the AGM held on Wednesday 10th May 2023 : Minutes were signed by PH, Proposed DA, seconded ZM

Audit of Parish Council Accounts 2023/24: Annual Governance and Accountability Return: Minute reference 35-0624

Financial Report for Year ending 31st March 2024 :
Balance £ 6,613.35

Chairmans Report:

As attached

PH proposed a vote of thanks to ZB for all his hard work, DA seconded

There being no more issues , the Annual General Meeting was closed at 8.05 pm

Signed:

Dated:

Barsham and Shipmeadow Parish Council

Annual General Meeting

7.30pm Wednesday, 15th May 2024

Chair's Report

During the past year, the members of Barsham & Shipmeadow Parish Council have continued to manage PC business as effectively as possible; despite being significantly under strength. However, we were most fortunate to increase our number to 5 with the co-option of Mr Zak Miller, representing Shipmeadow, in July 2023. However, being a group of 5 Parish Councillors, rather than the 8 who should represent the two parishes of the Benefit, continues to add considerably to the responsibilities and workload of each individual member of the Parish Council. As stated in 2023, service as a Parish Councillor is a work of community support without financial reward and I yet again thank and commend these 4 Councillors for their dedication and commitment to the task they have undertaken on behalf of the 550 or so residents of the two parishes. It is devoutly hoped that B&SPC will remain a viable and credible community voice during the years ahead.

As in 2023, the absence of a salaried Parish Clerk results in the administration of the council by the Parish Councillors, who continue to share the various finance, reporting, administration, external meeting, and correspondence roles between them. My sincere thanks are expressed to Cllrs. Adcroft, Holmes, Midwinter and Miller for taking on these roles. The appointment of a part-time salaried Clerk would have to be met by a large increase in the precept, but this remains a course of action which the Parish Council do not wish to take - especially during the present cost of living crisis. With this in mind, we requested the lowest possible increase in the Parish precept for this year. This now stands at £1,376.85 - an increase of only £13.35p on the 2023 figure of £1,363.00, just under 1%.

The PCs financial position during 2023-24 remained quite buoyant: Receipts (including the 31st March 2023 balance of £5,916.62) totalled £8,302.12p, and Payments totalled £1,688.57p. As at 31st March 2024, the PC had a balance of £6,613.55p. However, it must be reported that the action taken by HSBC (in December 2021) to introduce bank charges for the administration of the PC account has resulted in total monthly charges of £42.00 in 2021/22, £102.00 during 2022/23, £104.00 during 2023/24, and £16.00 during 2024/25 to date. These additional demands upon PC finances have resulted in a loss of £264.00. This represents 4.96% of our total parish precept of £5,317.90 for the same period - and increasing each month. This annexation of public money to support the major banks deprives the PC of resources which should more properly be applied in the service of our parishioners.

In 2022, we carried out the various formalities for the 2021-2022 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and completed the Internal Audit to the satisfaction of our Internal Auditor, Mr Jeremy Davis FCCA (Retd). We also posted the required Public Notice documentation, as per regulations. However, new SAAA regulations received from PKF Littlejohn in 2023 concerning the auditing of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2022-2023 left us in some doubt as to the correct procedure to be followed for 2022-2023. It seemed that we had to appoint a new Auditor. Mr Davis also read the new regulations and concurred with this view. This left us without an Internal Auditor for the completion of the 2022-2023 AGAR process. We awaited word about the appointment of an external auditor by the Secretary of State as all smaller authorities are 'opted-into' the central procurement of external auditors by default, and B&SPC wisely decided not to attempt the very complex procedures associated with 'opting out' of the SAAA central scheme. After some weeks, having heard nothing, we contacted PKF Littlejohn for some clarification, and received the advice that we would be within the regulations to continue to appoint Mr Davis to be our auditor. However, this all took time, and we were not able to present the completed 2022-2023 AGAR at the May 2023 AGM. The PC will action the required additional procedures as part of the AGAR process for 2023-2024, and Mr Davis has agreed to continue in his

role as our Internal Auditor. The required Certificates of Exemption were duly completed and submitted for both years.

The now very overdue repairs to the Barsham War Memorial will be undertaken as soon as possible. The Council has retained the finance required to complete this task but will need to obtain a new set of estimates for the work. The process was initially hindered by the Coronavirus pandemic. The required wooden posts and chain will be installed after we have received new estimates for the work. This will prevent further casual parking on the monument which has been the cause of the damage. The cost of this work has no doubt increased due to the present economic climate; however, as reported in 2023, there exists a dedicated War Memorial Account held by Barclays Bank in Beccles. This branch has now closed. The former PC Chair who was signatory to this account, Mr Ken Bower, died in 2022. The account presently holds £258.01p. It seems that we must apply for a mandate change for the PC to transfer the money, which will be put towards the cost of the work.

After a 2-year project, in July 2023, the Quiet Lanes Suffolk signs were fitted onto their poles on Clarkes Lane, Low Road, Church Road and Hall Road. Sadly, the Hall Road sign was stolen shortly afterwards, and the Clarkes Lane sign was knocked to the ground. Both signs are yet to be reinstated.

The PC continues to monitor any developments concerning the potentially pending RES Planning Application for a very large, industrial-scale 100 hectare (approx. 250 acre) Solar Farm within both parishes and we continue to seek further information and details concerning the scheme. However, things have gone very quiet. We are mindful of the potential impacts of the proposed development upon the immediate environment and wildlife. We are also mindful of the effects upon the businesses, properties, and well-being of a good number of parishioners, the potential for renewable energy production, the potential loss of good agricultural land at a time of great uncertainty about global food production and escalating food costs, and the loss of agricultural sector employment within a PC area with shrinking employment opportunities.

In July 2023, the PC learned that Beccles Town Council was selling off some Speed Indicator Devices, having purchased new solar-powered installations. A bid was submitted for one of the old machines, but unfortunately, we were unsuccessful. This was a great pity, given the recent history of speeding accidents along the B1062 at Barsham Bridge and the partial destruction of a resident's home on NYE 2022. Happily, after over a year, the resident has been able to return to her home. It is a pity that these local circumstances did not influence Beccles Town Council in the potential allocation of the SIDs and that these simply went to the highest bidder.

I am happy to report that the severe flooding events which used to occur so regularly at Barsham Bridge and contributed to the 4 NYE crashes and the partial demolition of the house, badly damaged vehicles, and driver injuries, have now ceased due to the works carried out by ESC Highways Department. However, along other areas of the B1062, such flooding events remain a regular occurrence after heavy rain. Hopefully, these areas too will have the required safety work done.

Once again, the PC observed its solemn duty on the 11th of November 2023 in a well-attended and respectful Remembrance ceremony at the War Memorial. This was attended by a good number of parishioners and the two bugle calls were played by a Sir John Leman music student. Thanks to Mrs Taylor of SJLHS for her continued support. Thanks also, as ever, to Mr and Mrs Smith for their maintenance of the War Memorial and for organizing the two Remembrance wreaths via the Beccles RBL.

The work of developing a Neighbourhood Plan with our immediate PC neighbours will occupy most of the coming year at least and involve a great deal of commitment and effort. The initial contacts have been made and we now need to move forward. We are fortunate in that we may call upon several good sources of advice and support to assist us in this work. I hope that I may report that good progress has been made at the 2025 AGM.

In conclusion, I again thank your councillors for their commitment and hard work as they fulfil their various and varied duties as members of the Parish Council. Their work continues to be much appreciated by this Chairman.

Zane Blanchard

Chair

Barsham & Shipmeadow Parish Council

15th May 2024