

BARDNEY GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Full Council

18 May 2023 at the Parish Office where the local public organiser of the bands etc. produced a small amount of paperwork which he had been given regarding the event. This paperwork identified that there was a budget of £2500 which could fund the event. It was agreed to try to move the event planning

Bardney Group Parish Council

Minutes from Extra-Ordinary General Meeting

Bardney Methodist Hall Monday 3 rd July 2023 at 7pm

Attendees

Cllr Ian Fleetwood (Chairman), Cllr John Papworth (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Frank Bates, Cllr Lou Reeves, Cllr Ken Hutchinson, Cllr Ruth Lane, Cllr Barry Newlove, Cllr Lynne Newlove, Cllr Robin Darby, Cllr Brian Lintin, Cllr Barry Percival and Cllr Michael McIlroy.

Acting Clerk/RFO: Laura Allen

Absences

Cllr Mary Corbould and Cllr Samantha Wright

Members of the Public

27 members of the public were present

Meeting commenced at 7pm

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited the public forum to commence:

A summary of matters raised by members of the public and responses are listed below:

1. A member of the public who had recently resigned from being a Parish Councillor justified their reasons for leaving and expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the Council is operating, claiming that it is autocracy and not democracy. The Chairman provided a response that he did not feel the need to stand down at this point in time.
2. A question was asked whether it was true that the Vice-Chairman is sharing false rumours that the previous Clerk was connected with fraud and that is why she left, and was it not a factor of bullying by the Vice-Chairman which is why she really left? The Chairman confirmed he was not aware of the rumour and asked the Vice-Chairman to comment. The Vice-Chairman stated that the bullying was not done by him by a long way as he had no need to bully anyone.
3. A question was asked to clarify who were the St Oswald's Feast Event organising committee? The answer provided was there are two groups of people, the original St Oswald's Planning Group which met in the Methodist Hall and was attended by the previous Chairman of the Council and members of the public. The other was the St Oswald's Feast Working Group which was formed at the extra-ordinary meeting on the 1 st June 2023 and included Councillors Darby, Hare, Lintin and Percival. This year a lot of effort has been put behind trying to run the event as well, but the Chairman would give more detail in his statement.
4. Mr Castle introduced himself as the main public organiser of the St Oswald's Feast Event outside of the Parish Council. Mr Castle stated that the first two years of the event were to everyone's satisfaction and that the new Parish Council had created obstacles to prevent this year's event going ahead. Mr Castle stated that he was experienced in running similar events and was a director of a festival organising company. He felt that his advice had been ignored, including in relation to the licencing requirements and that additional levels of bureaucracy had been created to prevent the event.
5. A question was asked if the design of this meeting to use a small hall had been used to stop people coming in?

The response provided was that the Methodist Hall was the best option as the Village Hall was unavailable due to another booking. It was also noted that discussions needed to take place as soon as possible since making the announcement.

6. A question was asked how the decision to withdraw funding was made by an individual and not a committee? The Chairman stated that no reference was specifically made to withdrawing funding and the amount was within the Parish Council's Budget labelled for events. The Chairman confirmed he did suggest to Mr Castle with regret that the bands should be notified at the earliest opportunity.

7. A question was asked if the Parish Council could pay the committee and have nothing else to do with the event? The Chairman confirmed that more information would be provided in the upcoming statement.

8. It was asked if the Chairman wanted the event to go ahead? The Chairman responded that from his first meeting with Mr Castle, he had expressed his full personal support of live music and the event.

9. A question was asked if it was usual for previous Parish Council decisions to be changed because of new Councillors and can the Council be held to their decisions? The response given was that four current Councillors remain from the previous Parish Council and that although it was not normal for decisions to change, it still depends on circumstances and the outcomes. It was noted that decisions are not taken lightly.

10. It was asked if the problem of releasing the funds had not been an issue, would the event still be going ahead? The response given was that with the information currently held the answer would still be the same.

11. A member of the public expressed their concerns that the Council should recognise how upset the community are over the cancellation of the event, especially with cost of living crisis and where stalls had been booked and money will be lost from vendors who have turned down events elsewhere. The Chairman reiterated that the decision would not be taken lightly and understood that it would not be a popular decision.

12. It was requested that the public should be able to comment on the agenda item when the Council commences their meeting. The Chairman proposed that following his upcoming statement that the Council resolves to suspend Standing Orders to allow the public to comment.

13. A question was addressed to Cllr Darby to provide answers to issues raised at recent meetings in relation to the payment of the Solicitor's letter last autumn. The Chairman confirmed that the correct information will hopefully be brought back to the next Full Council Meeting.

Main meeting commenced at 7.17pm

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive and accept apologies where valid reasons for absence have been given to the Clerk prior to the meeting in accordance with Local Gov. Act 1972, Sch 12, para 40.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Wright and Cllr Corbould.

2. Declarations of Interests

To receive any declarations of interest under the Localism Act 2011 being any pecuniary interest in agenda items not previously recorded on Members' Register of Interests and any written requests for dispensation.

No dispensations or declarations.

3. To receive an update on St Oswald's Feast Event 2023 and ratify the decision made to cancel this year's event

A copy of the report provided by the Chairman:

A new Parish Council was elected on 18 May 2023 and some of the new Councillors had been asked by residents about St Oswald's Festival and issues involving insurance and licensing. A very limited handover note has been found on the Office Computer moving from the old Parish Council to the new Parish Council and there was only one entry about St Oswald's Feast and that was to check the insurance of the trailer. There was no office diary outlining any on-going events. The Clerk has also resigned from the Parish Council prior to the new Parish Council meeting, which means that the Council has lost its Power of Competence - this means this imposes more

restrictions upon what the Council can do requiring tighter constraints upon this year compared to previous years.

A meeting was held in the Parish Office where the local public organiser of the bands etc. produced a small amount of paperwork which he had been given regarding the event. This paperwork identified that there was a budget of £2500 which could fund the event. It was agreed to try to move the event planning on as quickly as possible because there was very little time and the logistics of co-ordinating everything needed to be done. There was an entry within one printout saying that the generator & toilet hire had been done during January 2023.

An Extra-Ordinary Meeting was called on 1st June to try to address these issues following a period of research. The previous Chairman of the old Parish Council offered no information or audit trail with regard to the event or what position the planning was at. The previous Chairman proposed a working group was formed which was voted upon and approved. As Chairman, I sent an email to all members of the working group the following morning asking them to convene a meeting as soon as possible.

The previous Chairman emailed Councillors on the working group inviting them to a 'St Oswald's Festival planning meeting' to be held in the Methodist Hall on 7 th June. This meeting was run informally because there had allegedly been no time to publish an agenda and put it on the noticeboards.

There is no record within the Parish Office of any previous 'St Oswald's Festival planning meetings' in either electronic or paper format attended by the previous Parish Council Chairman. Those meetings have not had agendas, minutes or been put on any noticeboards. There are no notes, and none have been offered by the local public organiser regarding any of these meetings either. Similarly, there have been no agenda items from the previous Parish Council to recognise any expenditure against the budget of £2500, or recognition of any expenditure other than for a first-aid course for 6 people to attend. There has been some doubt as to whether this training is suitable for the event.

There is a folder on the Parish Office computer labelled 'St Oswald's Festival' which holds the following files which are clearly out of date, and some of which are also the same printouts offered by the local public organiser:

Entertainer Stage Crew Details 2023 15 May last modified 15/05/2023

List of invites 2023 last modified 16/03/2023

List of invites last modified 06/01/2023

Provisional accounts 06-03-23 last modified 06/03/2023

Provisional accounts 10-01-23 last modified 10/01/2023

Sponsorship packages last modified 18/10/2022

Stall booking agreement last modified 10/01/2023

Tasks 2023 last modified 31/01/2023

Toilet hire last modified 10/01/2023

After some inspection of Parish Council minutes, the old Parish Council created a potential of £3000 budget for events in the current year budget, as displayed in minute 81-2022/23, but there is no mention of a proposer or seconder for this item. It must be stressed that this is a budget and that for the money to be spent it should be authorised by the Parish Council who have a duty of care holding the public purse. Financial items should be agreed at Parish Council meetings as agenda items when over a certain limit. A brief look at monies spent towards this year's event show the first-aid course and a music license being the only items, though there may be a cancellation fee for the generator or toilets hidden in the small print of a hire document; neither document exist in the Parish Office to the Parish Council's knowledge. It is very relevant that there have not been any agenda items to debate and ratify any issues involving St Oswald's Festival since last October 2022, where in the Clerk's report a working group would be formed but no names or agenda items followed to date.

The public organiser has been convening 'St Oswald's Planning meetings' in the Methodist Hall attended by the previous Chairman, the events have been publicised on social media and the Hall hire has been paid for using Parish Council funds. These dates include 7 th June, 12 th April and 25 th January. The social media page also includes a 'link' to the Parish Council website identifying the event as a Parish Council event.

As Chairman, I have tried to assist bringing the event forward by making contact with the generator and toilet

hire companies to ensure that those facilities were still available. I made contact with insurance companies to quote for the event and also contacted the previous supplier of the trailer as used for the bands to perform on. I have also contacted last year's first-aid company to see if they might be available but they are fully booked. The Scouts who had assisted with last year's parking arrangements are not available, so an alternative would need to be found. In addition, even though the local public organiser had been making requests on social media for volunteers to come forward, there had not been a big response so there is also doubt about staffing the event.

A Parish Council meeting was held on 20th June where there was an agenda item regarding St Oswald's Festival. There was only one member of the working group present and a report was tabled. This report was labelled 'version 2' and was a note of the informal 'St Oswald's Planning meeting' held on 7 th June, and the notes were created by the former Chairman of the Parish Council who was not present at the meeting due to holiday commitment. The report had been emailed to the Parish Council indirectly through another Councillor on 16 th June, and there had not been a meeting of the 'Parish Council working group' since its formation on 1st June.

On 25 th June an email was received from a resident of Bardney requesting answers to a large list of specific questions including camping arrangements, overnight security, health and safety policies, first aid, contingency plan, risk assessment, traffic management, lost children, volunteers etc. This is a 'Freedom of Information' request and will need to be responded to within a very short time period.

I have asked for advice from the Monitoring Officer of West Lindsey District Council on 26 th June and I explained the situation which I have outlined to you all this evening. Their advice was the Parish Council need to be satisfied that all the correct procedures and information is in place. I spoke with the Bardney Parish Council Vice-Chairman and we agreed that I should without delay contact the local public organiser and update him with the situation; he had been stating on a regular basis that if progress wasn't made soon that it might jeopardise the event. He asked me if the bands should be cancelled and I said in view of the evolving situation that 'I suppose you should'.

The local public organiser made an announcement on 27 th June and it now appears that a smaller event at The Angel has been scheduled for 6 th August. I hope that this event is a success and I would really like to thank the local public organiser for his efforts regarding bringing the bands to Bardney.

I have emailed all Parish Councillors with regard to the issues and lack of information on 27 th June and await any comments from some. As reported on social media one Councillor has resigned.

Before the Parish Council go into closed session, the Council would like to suspend the Standing Orders to allow the public to comment.

It was proposed by Cllr Reeves, seconded by Cllr Hutchinson and **RESOLVED** to suspend the Standing Orders.

1. Mr Castle commented that 90% of residents were happy with what has been done in the past and there were no issues with licensing and insurance previously. The response given was that due to questions being raised through a recent Freedom of Information Request issues for this year needed to be addressed.
2. Mr Castle stated that he had updated the costings for the bands and all information for the bands is available. It was understood that all other information was provided by the previous Clerk. The Chairman emphasised that the information held by the Parish Council and audit trail is very limited.
3. Cllr Darby cited the nine documents listed in the Chairman's report as not a small amount of documents. The Chairman disagreed, especially in view of the dates of many of the documents. Cllr Darby stated that the previous Clerk had resigned on the 9 th May and the Chairman corrected him with regard to the date of the Clerk's resignation. Cllr Darby stated that the report is very descriptive of old Parish Council and previous Chairman and wished to make clear that it is still the same Parish Council.
4. Mr Castle stated that he has a list of volunteers, but had not shared it with the Parish Council. Mr Castle stated in his understanding St Oswald's Feast was a joint Community Event and not a Parish Council Event. Mr Castle's final question was why was the decision so immediate to act upon when a Freedom of Information Request (FOI) has 20 days to respond?

The Chairman responded that the opportunity had arisen to speak with the Monitoring Officer at WLDC while in Gainsborough and that following advice, it was agreed between him and the Vice-Chairman that people should be informed as soon as possible if cancellation is to be the result. The Chairman confirmed that the FOI Request was far more extensive than what has been disclosed at this evenings meeting and that information which is not available will have to be declared in any response.

5. A question was asked why the public were not asked what they thought about cancelling the event and even if information is not written down anywhere, why could it still not be done?

The answer provided was that in order to spend the public purse, requirements must be satisfied and the process must be minuted, recorded and ratified through Council. As it currently stands, the decisions are not there, the loss of the Clerk/RFO has complicated the situation due to less power to act and more pressure is on the Parish Council to move things forwards.

Cllr Lane stated that she did not realise it was a community event, however the money being asked for from the Parish Council and the decision made was not referenced in the minutes from the October 2022 meeting, or anywhere else, which has put the Council in a bad position. There are no clear minutes or statements within the minutes of the Parish Council.

Mr Castle stated he received verbal agreement from the Parish Council that the money was available and that it was not his job to check the legalities.

6. It was asked if the Council think it is a poor show not to put any events on this year and if they are a good advocate for the current community? The response provided was that the Council have hope and visions to ensure properly audited events are created and supported, but given the current information trail it is a very difficult.

7. It was asked if the event could be put on the agenda to still go forward? The Chairman stated that it was appreciated that the local pub had now stepped in for this event, and there was nothing to stop another event going forward with the correct audit trail in place, but trying to make this event go ahead on the said dates is hard work. The Chairman also stated that he was very pleased that an event involving some bands would go ahead that weekend at the Angel pub. There was nothing to stop another event going forward in the future but it would need an audit trail to allow the funding to go into place.

8. A question was raised regarding the perceived hypocrisy from the Council following an undocumented meeting with WLDC leading to this decision. The Chairman responded that advice given was discussed with the Vice-Chairman on how the event could go ahead and that efforts were made to bring it all together before notifying Mr Castle. The Chairman stated that the position of the Parish Council could be shown from the records currently held in the Parish Office in relation to the event, and that he had personally tried to bring the event together as quickly as he could – he had been working towards making the event possible for quite a lot of hours trying to get insurance, trailer hire, toilets and generator to ensure as much infrastructure could be in place, but he had been waiting on various people. He had given Councillors a full list of dates and actions at the last Parish Council meeting since the membership had changed – the Parish Council were aware of the amount of work involved and some Councillors had criticised him for doing work beyond their expectation.

9. Following a statement about preventing the Working Group from meeting, it was questioned why there was an issue with the October 2022 Minutes. The response provided was that the item in the budget which was revised at that meeting was not proposed and seconded, and the current Chairman could not answer for the previous Council. Cllr Darby stated that three current Councillors were present at that meeting and questioned no proposers and seconders being incorrect. A question was asked in relation to allegations on Social Media about the event cancellation being pre-ordained before the election? The Chairman categorically stated that was not the case and there were no false agendas.

10. Cllr Reeves stated that she had not been elected as part of a group but chose to stand as an individual with her own views in the recent elections.

7.50pm Members of the public left the meeting with only 6 remaining.

It was proposed by Cllr Fleetwood, seconded by Cllr Newlove and **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders and resume the meeting

The Chairman stated that the Council should now ratify the decision to cancel this year's event. It was recognised that a lot of effort was behind it and all Councillors wanted it to go ahead, but due to issues with the paper trail it is not clear, it is not ratified and the decisions do not appear in the minutes on the decisions by the previous Council, a decision is needed.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Reeves that with the information the Council currently have the event should not go ahead. This was **seconded** by Cllr B Newlove.

Cllr Lane suggested going to the community and asking if they would like to fund the event. The Chairman pointed out that this event was only a few weeks away and time wouldn't allow, but postponement or another

event could be brought forward, not necessarily of the same type.

Cllr Darby requested that a recorded vote takes place.

Councillors in favour of cancellation: Cllr Reeves, Cllr Bates, Cllr Fleetwood, Cllr Lane, Cllr McIlroy, Cllr L Newlove, Cllr B Newlove, Cllr Percival

Councillors against cancellation: Cllr Darby, Cllr Papworth, Cllr Lintin

Abstentions: Cllr Hutchinson

The motion was passed to cancel the event with eight Councillors in favour.

7.58pm All members of the public left the meeting

4.To resolve to move into closed session in accordance with the public bodies(admission to meetings) act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed in relation to the following matters:

It was proposed by Cllr Fleetwood, seconded by Cllr Lintin and **RESOLVED** to go into closed session.

5. To consider and review the circumstances surrounding the cancellation of the 2023 St Oswald's Feast Event

6. To receive an update on and consider Payroll/Pension Issues

It was proposed by Cllr Fleetwood, seconded by Cllr Percival and **RESOLVED** to accept the report provided by the acting Clerk/RFO.

7. To agree an External and Independent Review of the Parish Council

It was proposed by Cllr Lane, seconded by Cllr B Newlove and **RESOLVED** with eleven in favour and one against to appoint LALC Deputy Chief Executive Andrew Everard to conduct an independent review with a cost for the Parish Council in order to move forward. All Councillors were asked if they wished to highlight any issues.

Meeting Closed at 8.27pm