

Agenda Item 8

NOTES ON A MEETING HELD AT HOLMEFIELD HOUSE ON 24th AUGUST 2015

PRESENT;

Pendle Borough Council (PBC)

Cllr Iqbal
Cllr Greaves
Mr Philip Mousdale

Barrowford Parish Council (BPC)

Cllr Oliver
Cllr Windley
Mr Iain Lord

INTRODUCTION

The Meeting was held to discuss the proposed Transfer of Services

Cllr Greaves explained the rationale behind the proposed Transfer of Services to local Councils. The financial position of PBC is critical. There has been no Rate increase for 3 years and future growth is expected to be capped at 1% - also Government funding is to be cut by 50% resulting in a projected deficit of £4 million next year.

The benefits claimed by PBC of transferring Services are;

- (a) Precepts are not capped and so could be increased
- (b) Many Services can be better managed and maintained under local control

DISCUSSION

The Services intended to be transferred are;

ROADSIDE SEATS (18 in total) – PBC will no longer maintain or replace them.
Cllr Oliver said that he will seek the Parish Councils agreement to take them over

BUS SHELTERS (7 in total) - will no longer be maintained by PBC. The estimated annual cost is £744

Cllr Oliver said that he would recommend to the Parish Council that they be taken over subject to;

1. PBC to Indemnify BPC against any major capital expenditure that might arise from extreme vandalism,
2. A Structural Survey to be carried out on the stone built Higherford shelter and any necessary work carried out by PBC.

FOOTPATHS AND RIGHTS OF WAY

The proposal is that individual Parishes should be invited to subscribe to PBC's Countryside Access Service to cover the maintenance of Footpaths and Rights of Way. Two different figures have been quoted for the cost of the initial subscription that would be required from BPC - namely £1525 or £767 pa. This needs to be clarified

Mr Lord pointed out that many footpaths were overgrown and neglected and that in other local areas they obtained financial support directly from the County Council.

The BPC representatives therefore indicated that, at this time, they would explore direct funding to carry out the maintenance work independently.

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OTHER MATTERS

Cllr Oliver tabled details of a number of small pieces of land in Barrowford currently owned by PBC which the Parish Council would request to be transferred to them and the reasons for this (See the attached Report).

Cllr Greaves said that it was his personal opinion that these should be transferred as requested without charge and he would have this discussed at the next meeting of PBC's responsible committee.

FUTURE TRANSFERS PROPOSED.

PBC intend that Multi Use Games Areas and Barrowford Public Park will all be the subject of the 'Close, Transfer or Sell' policy in the year ahead.

The inclusion of the Park and the financial implications are alarming and will require imaginative, partnership and innovative solutions if it is to be protected.

Cllr Windley pointed out that in addition to the items discussed earlier, BPC had already taken on responsibilities for Festive Decorations and Public Toilets which together with the ongoing annual repayments of £12500 for the purchase of Holmefield House mitigated against taking on more stringent financial commitments. It was suggested that some restructuring of the outstanding debt should be considered.

The BPC representatives requested early visibility of the present Park operating costs to establish the scale of this serious problem.

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The following is a report relating to the possibility of transferring of Pendle Borough Council land into Barrowford Parish Council control.

Devolution/Transfer of Services to Parish & Town Councils: Additional Items the Parish Council May Consider Taking On.

After a general discussion between the Chair and Vice Chairman and the Clerk, the Chairman would like Pendle Borough Council to look at transferring certain parcels of land currently in Pendle's ownership. Some of these pieces of land have moderate to high maintenance costs, whilst some are not maintained. These fall into two categories: ones that have a small income and others that do not generate income but which the Parish feel should be maintained to a better standard than is currently done.

The pieces of land that the Council would like to see transferred to the Parish Council were all part of the original holdings of the old Barrowford Urban District Council.

These pieces of land include the following:

1. The area of maintained garden running between Gisburn Road and Broadway.
2. The small rectangle of land abutting 1 Rushton Street, currently partially maintained by the Barrowford in Bloom Group although significant additional works would be needed to improve this area.
3. The triangle of land at the junction of Hilltop and Church Street which was voluntarily maintained by the Parish Council prior to Liberata and which is partially maintained by the In Bloom Group.
4. The Rose Garden situated between Gisburn Road and Church Street adjacent to the Hilltop site. This has been leased to the Parish for over a decade at a peppercorn rent.
5. The three garages situated at Hilltop abutting no. 3.
6. The narrow strip of land situated between Riverway and the triangular area known as the Bowling Green.
7. The small garage site situated between Pendle Street and Holme Street.

The rationale for requesting these particular sites in each case is shown below site by site:

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1. **Broadway:** This area has been maintained to a reasonable standard with regular mowing (although the frequency has recently been reduced) and pruning but over the years the garden has stagnated with the shrubbery dominating the site. A second reason is that it is perceived that this was left an open area as a reminder of the demarcation between Lowerford and Netherford which existed prior to the building of the council estate. The Parish Council is keen to see this area retain its present open space form and is concerned that in recent years the garden has come under threat for parking provision.
2. **Rectangle of Land at Rushton Street:** This area has been an eyesore for many years due the distortion of the mass paving by the root systems of shrubs/trees that were planted in gaps in the paving. In recent years the Parish has assisted the In Bloom Group remove a few extra slabs and introduce limited planting, but to significantly improve the area more extensive works need to be carried out.
3. **Triangle at Hilltop:** This area has not been included in a maintenance budget for over a decade and after repeated requests to Liberata years ago nothing was done until two years ago when the In Bloom Group started limited herb planting.
4. **Rose Garden:** This has been leased to the Parish Council but a recent email from Liberata has requested work to be carried out. This may lead to the Parish terminating its tenancy as we have no control over the long term future of the rose garden since the tenancy can be terminated at a reasonably short notice.
5. **Garage Site at Hilltop:** The reasons for requesting this site are twofold: firstly the income will partially defray the costs of maintaining the other sites; secondly all three garages are currently used by their tenants for storage and in the main shopping area of the village where parking is at a premium the loss of three parking places should not be allowed.
6. **Strip of Land at Riverway:** The Parish Council raised its concerns when this piece of land appeared on a list of council land that could be sold. The strip forms the entry to an area known as the Bowling Green which is currently used by the proprietors of the main shopping block in the centre of the village. To lose access to this area would increase pressure on road-side parking and reduce the vibrancy of the shopping centre. The Chair-

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man feels that the long term future of this land should be with the Parish as the need to generate income is not as critical as for the Borough.

7. **Garage Site at Pendle Street:** This site is again not included in a maintenance schedule and has been subject to numerous complaints along with the Nora Street garage site. Again the Parish would use the income to maintain both that site and the others included in the list.