Clerks Report Annual Meeting 19th MAY 2025

Introduction

This report outlines the key tasks and projects undertaken by the clerk from 1st April 2025, detailing progress and significance within the community.

These responsibilities encompass enhancements to infrastructure, allocation of financial resources, and involvement with community initiatives. Additionally, it is important to note that the completion of these tasks required working beyond the clerks contracted hours to ensure timely and effective execution.

1. Cemetery Path Resurfacing

Following a comprehensive **risk assessment**, the decision was made to resurface the cemetery path to enhance safety and accessibility. The quotes for replacement of the pathway were between £6,000.00 - £10,000.00 therefore I elected to replace the surface only at a cost of £2250.00. This item was not included in the budget for this year, however, I felt that the work was urgent to ensure that users of the main path to the cemetery offices had safe access. Therefore I used reserved funding to cover the cost.

2. Planning the Parish Meeting

The formal **parish meeting** agenda was produced to discuss ongoing projects, address community concerns, and discuss decisions regarding upcoming initiatives. This includes the Distribution of Grant Cheques and Community Awards. All recipients were duly invited. I procured community awards to be presented to 6 recipients to recognise their outstanding contributions within the parish and prepared grant cheques.

4. Annual Meeting

The formal **annual meeting** agenda was produced. The **annual meeting** is a crucial event where we review and approve all policy documents that govern local councils. This ensures that policies remain up to date, compliant with regulations, and aligned with internal and external audits. The meeting also serves as a platform to assess the past year's achievements, discuss financial reports, and set objectives for the upcoming year. The annual meeting includes the election of officers, internal audit report and approval of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Given its importance, extensive preparation and pre-meeting documentation resulted in additional hours worked to ensure compliance and accuracy.

5. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)** is a mandatory financial and governance report that ensures transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal requirements. The **internal audit** process involves reviewing financial controls, assessing governance procedures, evaluating risk management, and preparing an audit report.

Internal Audit Process

a) **Reviewing Financial Controls** – Ensuring that financial transactions are properly recorded and managed.
b) **Assessing Governance Procedures** – Checking compliance with regulations and policies.
c) **Evaluating Risk Management** – Identifying potential risks and ensuring mitigation strategies are in place.
d) **Providing an Audit Report** – The internal auditor issues a report confirming whether the council's financial and governance systems are adequate and effective.

AGAR Submission Process

The AGAR consists of several key sections:

I. **Annual Governance Statement** – Confirms that the authority has followed proper financial and governance practices.
II. **Accounting Statements** – Provides a summary of the council's financial position, including income, expenditure, and balances.
III. **Internal Audit Report** – Assesses the effectiveness of financial controls and governance procedures.
IV. **Submission to External Auditor** – The completed AGAR is submitted for external review, ensuring compliance with statutory requirements.
V. **Exercise of Public Rights** – A period is set where residents can inspect financial records and raise any concerns.
VI. **Notice of Conclusion of Audit** – Once the audit is completed, the results are published.

These audits require **extensive preparation and documentation**, resulting in additional hours worked to ensure that **Barnton Parish Council remains fully compliant** with all government regulations. This includes reviewing policies, financial statements, risk assessments, and ensuring that all required documentation is submitted accurately and on time.

6. Cenotaph Installation

A phased approach was taken for the **transfer of the memorial plaque** from Jubilee Corner to the cemetery and the installation of a new cenotaph (including the roll of honour) at Jubilee Corner

- **Transfer of the memorial plaque** to prepare for the new structure. Now complete
- **Installation of foundations** to ensure stability. Now complete
- **Removal of shrubs.** Now complete
- **Installation of the base** for structural support. Due week beginning 19 May 2025
- **Installation of the new cenotaph**, marking a significant milestone in the project. Due week beginning 16th June 2025

7. Additional Infrastructure Enhancements

Several supporting installations are planned to enhance the site:

- **Installation of railings** for safety and aesthetics. Due week beginning 14th July 2025
- **Installation of surface wiring** to support lighting Due week beginning 19 May 2025

- **Installation of resin-bonded resurfacing** to provide a durable and visually appealing finish. On order for week beginning 21st July 2025.

8. Normal Duties

- **Management of Funerals, staff, website, allotments and day to day administration**

I have continued to ensure that **funeral arrangements** are handled respectfully and efficiently. This includes liaising with families, funeral directors, and maintaining cemetery records. **Invoices** have been paid on time and **finance records updated**. **Staff payroll and leave** have been managed along with all **general enquiries** to the office. I have ordered x10 **additional granite vaults** to cover demand and planned their installation with the contractor. Allotment invoices were produced and paid on time.

- **Cemetery Software and Mapping Training**

Training in **cemetery software** and **cemetery mapping** is currently being undertaken to improve record-keeping, enhance efficiency and ensure accurate documentation of burial plots. These training sessions require additional time and effort to integrate new systems into daily operations.

- **Production of the Village Newsletter**

The **village newsletter** is in production and is scheduled for distribution to all properties in **June 2025**. This publication provides important updates, community news, and information on upcoming and past events and is an excellent tool for community engagement. The preparation and design of the newsletter requires significant time and effort to ensure accuracy and engagement.

- **Management of a Successful VE80 Event**

A **successful VE80 event** was held on **8th May**, commemorating the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. This involved event planning, risk assessment and coordination with local organisations to ensure a meaningful and respectful celebration for the community.

9. Additional Hours Worked

Due to the scope and urgency of my workload, I have worked beyond my contracted hours to ensure that all tasks were completed efficiently and on time. This additional time was necessary to manage logistics, oversee installations, and handle administrative responsibilities associated with these projects. I have agreed to take these additional hours as annual leave to avoid imposing a financial burden on the council.

10. Conclusion

The completion of these tasks reflects a commitment to community development, safety, and heritage preservation. While the workload has been substantial, the extra hours dedicated to these projects have ensured their successful execution. Continued monitoring and maintenance will be necessary to ensure the projects are completed on time. I am confident that the War Memorial will be ready in time for Remembrance on 9th November 2025. (A dedication service to be held in October is planned) **… END…**