



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held remotely on the Zoom platform on Thursday 3rd December 2020, commencing at 6.30 pm

Councillors present: Cllr M Keller (Chair), Cllr T Bryant (Items C.314 – C.327), Cllr P Hill, Cllr P Seeley, Cllr S Thorogood (Items C.316 – C.327) and Cllr D Wild

In attendance: County Cllr S Shing (Item C.315); K Larkin (Parish Clerk); D Picknell (Admin Officer); and P Williamson (Tree Warden)

There were thirteen members of the public present.

Public Session

The following topics were raised for consideration by the council:

- Role of Tree Warden – three members of the public submitted statements commending and supporting the role of parish Tree Warden, particularly given the importance of trees to the continued life of the planet. There was also support for the current appointee. The Chair stated that these contributions would be taken into account in the discussion of the relevant item on the agenda.
- Transparency – a resident alleged that the papers for the meeting had not been properly published. The Chair stated that the council was not aware of any problem but the website would be checked.
- Participation in the Public Session – a resident complained that it was not clear that contributions from members of the public could currently only be made in writing. The Chair stated that this provision had been brought in at the end of March to facilitate the holding of meetings remotely on the Zoom platform. The wording of the advice given to the public would be reviewed and if necessary clarified.

The Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting

C.311 Acceptance of apologies for absence: - None

C.312 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.313 Minutes: - The minutes of the council meeting held remotely on 5th November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair

C.314 Co-option of a Councillor

The Chair introduced two candidates to fill the vacancy arising from the resignation of Cllr B Wheatley. Both candidates made statements and answered questions posed by councillors, and each was felt to be a strong contender.

The Chair suspended voting on this item to enable the County Councillor to report.

C.315 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) ESCC Budget 2021/22 – no information had yet been received about the level of contribution to be paid by central government in 2021/22.
- b) Temporary traffic lights at Exceat Bridge – the traffic lights noted at the previous meeting had been put in place for four nights whilst repairs were in progress and East Sussex Highways had no funding to keep them there for longer. This might be reviewed in the new financial year. Highways England had been asked to assist but had not yet responded. Members requested that Maria Caulfield MP be asked to press for the provision of lights through her membership of the A259 Committee. **ACTION: SS**
- c) The Twitten (Footpath 25) – a resident had complained that the recent felling of diseased trees on the Twitten by ESCC's contractor had accidentally encroached on her garden. Members agreed there should be no question of the resident being charged for any of this work, and the boundary should be reinstated, ideally following a site meeting. Neither the resident nor Cllr Shing had received notice of the felling. Cllr Shing agreed to investigate. **ACTION: SS**
- d) Drainage on Downs View Lane and Downs View Close – a member reported that flooding continued to be a problem due to blocked gullies. Cllr Shing responded that an inspection had been ordered and he would follow it up. **ACTION: SS**

RESOLVED - That the report of the County Councillor be noted with thanks, and action taken as discussed.

The Chair resumed the business of co-opting a councillor (see Minute C.314 above) and members agreed that the vote should be taken in closed session.

RESOLVED – That the vote on item 4 on the agenda be taken in closed session.

Members of the public moved to the Zoom waiting room whilst councillors voted.

C.316 Co-option of a Councillor (continued)

The Chair proposed and Cllr Hill seconded the motion that Mr Simon Thorogood be co-opted as a member of the council.

RESOLVED - The motion was put to the meeting and declared carried unanimously

Cllr Thorogood signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the virtual presence of the members and officers, and joined the meeting

Members of the public re-joined the meeting and the decision was announced.

The Chair moved that the next item of business, Office of Tree Warden, should also be discussed in closed session due to the confidential nature of the business.

RESOLVED – That item 5 on the agenda be discussed in closed session.

Members of the public again entered the waiting room. The Tree Warden was invited to remain in the meeting and to address the council if he so wished [SO 3d refers]

C.317 Office of Tree Warden

Cllr Wild proposed and Cllr Bryant seconded the motion that the council should discuss the future role of the Tree Warden and the current holder.

RESOLVED - The motion was put to the meeting and declared carried, Cllr Thorogood abstaining.

The meeting proceeded to discuss the issue. Notice was taken of the comments made in the Public Session, but it was also emphasised that there was no intention on the part of the council to cut back on its commitment to the environment. There was support for the proposal that the functions of a Tree Warden should be brought in-house and allocated to a councillor along with environmental concerns generally. A new position of Lead Member for the Environment would need to be created for this purpose. The clerk was instructed to put an appropriate motion on the January agenda. **ACTION: KL**

Members of the public re-joined the meeting and the outcome of the discussion was announced. The Chair assured the public that there was no intention on the part of the council to cut back on its commitment to the environment.

C.318 Business in Progress

The council took note of Report 8 by the Clerk on progress made since the November meeting. The following points were discussed:

- a) Consent for alteration to scorer's hut – an architect resident in the parish had very kindly volunteered to produce formal drawings of the proposed alteration as part of the necessary documentation
- b) Signing/checking documents – the production of invoices in PDF form would be facilitated by the recent purchase of a new printer/scanner for the parish office. **ACTION: KL to send copy invoices to PH.**
- c) Donation to Citizens' Advice Bureau – bank details were still awaited **ACTION: KL to follow up**
- d) Churchyard maintenance – members took note of a letter of thanks from the Parochial Church Council.
- e) Fly tipping in Downs View Lane – this had been reported to Eastbourne Borough council but there had been no response **ACTION: DW/KL to follow up**
- f) Strengthening Local Relationships – the next SLR (county liaison) meeting was not scheduled until April 2021, but in the absence of progress on

outstanding issues such as flooding in Downs View Lane the Chair of SLR requested that a meeting be arranged in January/February **ACTION: KL**

RESOLVED - That the Progress Report be noted and action taken as discussed

C.319 Budget and Precept 2021/22

Members took note of Report 9 and Appendix 9a assessing the out-turn for the end of this financial year; forecasting the levels of income and reserves against expenditure predicted for 2021/22; and providing a first estimate of the precept demand for 2021/22. In particular it was noted that there was a projected underspend of approx. £7,000 for the end of this financial year; and that the precept could reasonably be held steady in 2021/22 without cutting back on services, and with a continued provision of £16,537 for revenue funding of capital projects. Reserves would remain healthy but not excessive. Members reviewed the individual budget heads and the following points were made:

- Emergency fund provision – a budget of £500 should be allocated
- Hire/rent of the Village Hall – this budget would be underspent in 2020/21 because meetings in person had been suspended. The budget of £1,525 included annual rent of £375 payable to Wealden District Council as the landowner, the remainder being for hires. The Village Hall Trust would normally refund the £375 to the parish council but had not yet been asked to do in this financial year. The Chair proposed that at least half of the unspent budget should be paid to the Trust to offset their loss of income caused by Covid-19 restrictions. Members supported this proposal. It was noted that village halls had been eligible to apply for government small business grants during the restricted periods and that a successful application had been made for East Dean village hall.
- Office equipment – it was proposed that a small reserve be built up for the replacement of office equipment.
- Play area safety inspection and maintenance – the inspection fee budget and the general maintenance budget should be increased
- Friston Pond maintenance – a budget of £750 should be set aside each year and put into a reserve if not spent. The dipping platform would need to be replaced within a few years.
- Capital Projects – the council might wish to purchase a speed limit sign (solar powered and moveable, as recommended by the Sussex Police), and/or speed guns, at a combined cost of approx. £3,300.

There was support for holding the precept steady in 2021/22 at £61,245, equivalent to approx. £61.25 per Band D household. However, Wealden District Council had not yet confirmed the level of the tax base for 2021/22. The budget and precept would be finalised at the January 2021 council meeting.

C.320 Mowing Contract 2021, 2022, 2023

Members took note of Report 10 containing the proposed package of tender documents and the revised contract specification as discussed at the November

meeting [Minute C.303]. Tenders should be received in time for the January meeting and a new contract awarded at that meeting. The current contract would expire at the end of February 2021. **ACTION: KL to issue documents to contractors.** East Sussex County Council retained oversight of the mowing of highway verges in the 30 mph zone and would require full documentation from the parish council and the chosen contractor in due course.

RESOLVED - That package of tender documents for the council mowing contract in 2021, 2022, and 2023 be approved for issue by the clerk forthwith.

C.321 East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

The council took note of the current consultation documents, and were critical of the fact that no mention was made in it of the parish of East Dean and Friston, nor of adjacent parishes within the National Park, despite the area being in prime walking and cycling country. It was agreed that the Chair of the county liaison committee (SLR) should comment on this via the consultation website. The clerk should also notify District Cllr Lunn **ACTION: KL.**

C.322 Planning application SDNP/20/05024/HOUS - 95 Michel Dene Road BN20 0LA

Single storey side extension

The council took note of the recommendation of the Planning Committee at their meeting on 17 November 2020 not to object to this application.

RESOLVED – To ratify the recommendation of the Planning Committee not to object to the application

C.323 Payments and Receipts

The council considered Report 13 - the Schedule of Payments for December and receipts for November 2020. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes]*. Two items exceeded budgetary provision, as expected: £2,750 for essential work at Friston Pond; and £570 for essential works at the play area [November Minutes C.300f and C.305 refer]. It was proposed that the excess should be covered by virement from the unspent Pavilion Maintenance and Other Services budget heads. Cllr Hill reported that he had spent £57.82 on additional lights and an extension lead for the village Christmas tree. These items were not within budget but it was agreed that the council should refund the purchases and vire money from Other Services. Members noted that the Village Hall Trust would kindly permit the electricity supply from the Hall to be used free of charge.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £6,691.89 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

RESOLVED – That invoices approved beyond budgetary provision be paid for by virement from Pavilion Maintenance and Other Services.

The Chair proposed and Cllr Seeley seconded the motion that that a one-off payment of £250 be made to the clerk in recognition of the additional hours worked in recent months. This would be within the existing Council Office budget.

RESOLVED – That the clerk be paid an additional sum of £250 (before tax) for additional hours worked

Cllr Hill reported on possible arrangements for a drive-in carol service which the council had supported in principle in November [Minute C.307(f)(ii)]. It was now proposed to hold the event on the village car park, subject to the permission of Wealden District Council as the owners and managers of the car park. The event would cost approx. £300 and would be supported by the Residents' Association and the Village Hall Trust. It was proposed that the cost be split between the three organisations, each contributing £100. Members agreed that this should be done and the parish council should contribute £100 to be vired from Other Services.

RESOLVED - That a budget of £100 be approved for a drive-in carol event

C.324 Urgent Items: - None

C.325 Reports:

- a) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the remote committee meeting held on 17 November 2020
- b) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring report for the period ended 30 November 2020. The bank balance at the end of November 2020 was £84,293.16.
- c) Traffic Management Working Group – the Chair of the Group reported that eight residents were now qualified to do Speedwatch but further progress was held up by Tier 2 restrictions. The Group was liaising with the Sussex Police and with the Birling Gap group which was pressing for recognition by East Sussex Highways of the three accidents that had occurred in recent months. Cllr Shing was also supporting these efforts.
- d) Rights of Way and Highways – (i) Footpath 8 – the remains of a redundant fence still needed to be removed **ACTION: KL to follow up.** (ii) Laying bark chippings on muddy paths – this would be required when feasible e.g. at the gate from Friston churchyard extension into Hobbs Eares, but was currently subject to Covid-19 restrictions on working parties. (iii) Felling subsidy – residents should be reminded of the 40% subsidy offered by the parish for the felling of diseased elm trees in private gardens.
- e) Recreation Ground – (i) consent for alterations to the scorer's hut – this was proceeding slowly. (ii) Play area – the signage needed to be updated to reflect Tier 2 Covid-19 requirements **ACTION: DW.** The broken fence had been replaced and new self-closures provided for the gates. The padlocks would now be taken off the tennis court. (iii) Play area Phase 2 upgrade – the council might wish to consider this in the coming year.
- f) Cuckmere Community Bus – the council took note of the Managing and Operations Report for the Stakeholder Meeting on 30 November 2020

(previously circulated); and the Finance Director's Report for the same meeting (previously circulated)

RESOLVED – That the above reports (a) – (f) be noted and action taken as discussed.

C.326 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 16 on correspondence received and the following points were discussed:

- a) Felling subsidies – the council did not offer subsidies for felling ash trees suffering from ash die-back. This disease did not spread as readily as Dutch elm disease and correct disposal of debris was not so significant.
- b) Concerns raised by the Roads Company – it was noted that among a number of issues raised by the company, the diversion of traffic through the Estate when Friston Hill was closed was the issue of most immediate concern to the parish council. It could not be prevented, but the parish council should press for residents to be compensated if they suffered loss or damage as a result.
- c) Complaint regarding tree felling in the Twitten (Footpath 25) – see item C.315(c) above
- d) Census 2021 - the council had been advised that the next Census was now being planned for 21 March 2021, and would be the first census to go online (at least in part – paper forms would still exist). The council would invite the government officer in charge in the Wealden District to give a presentation at a future council meeting **ACTION: KL**. The Community Watch was standing ready to assist.

RESOLVED - That the above items a) – d) be noted and action taken as discussed.

C.327 Date of next meeting: Thursday 7th January 2021 at 6.30 pm by remote means

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.28 pm

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....