



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 1 December 2022 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, Gilberts Drive, East Dean, commencing at 6.30 pm

Councillors present: Cllr P Seeley (Chair), Cllr M Bustard, Cllr G Fowler, Cllr P Hill, Cllr M Keller, Cllr C Lees, Cllr H Milligan and Cllr S Thorogood

In attendance: County Cllr S Shing (Item C.672); K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

There were no members of the public present

C.666 Acceptance of apologies for absence: Cllr T Bryant

C.667 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.668 Minutes – the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 3 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

C.669 Report of Maria Caulfield MP

The council took note of a written report from Maria Caulfield MP on general constituency matters. Ms Caulfield had also offered a Zoom meeting to discuss speed limits in the parish with the Chair and other councillors.

C.670 Business in Progress

The council received and took note of Report 7 on progress made since the meeting on 3 November 2022. The following items were discussed:

- a) Salary increments for the Clerk/RFO and Admin Officer – members agreed that the salary increment of £1 per hour approved by NALC for backdating to 1 April 2022 should be paid to both officers as recommended at the December meeting

RESOLVED - That the £1 salary increment be approved for both officers w.e.f.1 April 2022

- b) Purchase of a replacement Leafield bin for the East Dean (north side) bus stop at a cost of approx. £400 - £500. This type of bin was now only available in black. Existing bins would be relocated to have a matching pair at the bus stop

RESOLVED - That the purchase of a replacement Leafield bin be approved

- c) Date of the May 2023 Planning Committee meeting – the suggested date of 23rd May had been circulated (the fourth Tuesday, due to electoral timetable).

RESOLVED - That the date of 23rd May 2023 be approved

- d) Use of approx. £2,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding for an access ramp at the pavilion to provide full disabled access to this communal facility. Members were pleased to hear that the Cricket Club had been awarded a grant of £10,000 from the England Cricket Board in addition to the £5,000 approved by the parish. It was agreed to commit a further £2,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funds to the construction of an access ramp at the pavilion.

RESOLVED – That £2,000 of CIL funds be applied to the construction of an access ramp at the pavilion

- e) Village Sign – members took note that a draft design of the proposed village sign had been prepared by a member of the Art Group and would be on the January agenda for approval. In the meantime, any comments/suggestions should be sent to Cllr Keller. Revised quotes should be obtained for mounting the sign (to be financed from CIL funds as previously agreed.)

ACTION: MK/GF

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

C.671 Second Pass of the draft Budget and Precept for 2023/24

The council considered Reports 8 and 8a providing a second draft of the Forward Budget 2023/24, with a commentary on it. Discussion centred on the level at which the precept should be set. It was noted that if next year's precept fell right back to the 2021/22 level of £61,245 the council would run at a deficit of approx. £19,000 over the year. As the council's reserves were currently generous, the balance at 31 March 2024 would actually remain above the lower limit found acceptable by the auditors (i.e. 50% of precept), but the same low level of precept could not be run for a second year, given the upwards inflationary pressures currently running at 10%. In fact, a steep increase would be required in 2024/25 to keep pace. This would not be prudent and would create instability. Therefore it was proposed that the precept should drop back in 2023/24 by a more modest amount, if necessary re-allocating some or all of the £6,000 put away for by-elections, as stated at the Annual Village Meeting on 20 May 2022. The level should thus be set to help residents over a difficult period, whilst maintaining enough stability to keep reserves at the level of approx. two thirds of a year's expenditure (the alternative recommended by the internal auditor). A third draft should be prepared setting a precept between £65,000 and £70,000 and forecasting the effect of a 10% increase in 2024/25. **ACTION: PS/KL**. The levels proposed for individual budget heads were generally approved, subject to creation of a sinking fund for the resurfacing of the tennis court.

C.672 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr S Shing reported on the following matters:

- Jevington Road – the road had now been reopened following completion of the gas main works

- Local Transport Plan consultation – Cllr Shing commended this consultation for the parish's attention
- Exceat Bridge – the revised planning application was now expected to come to the SDNPA for approval in September 2023
- Electric Vehicle Charging points – Cllr Shing asked whether the parish was supportive of current moves by Wealden District Council and the county council to roll out provision of EVCs. Members assured him that the parish was very supportive of these proposals
- New Highways contractor – Balfour Beattie has been chosen to do the county's contract work for 7 years from April 2023
- Funding for Ukrainian family hosts – the county council was offering fresh grants of £150-£500
- Budget implications of the government's Autumn Statement – the forecast of government financial support in 2023/24 had proved to be better than expected but would still leave the county with a projected £30 million deficit (there was no danger of ESCC going bankrupt).
- Gulley pot on the C40 Jevington Road – Cllr Shing had reported that the pot at the junction with the A259 should be emptied.

Members thanked Cllr Shing for his report.

RESOLVED – That the report of the County Councillor be noted

C.673 Parish Council Grants 2022/23

Members considered an application for a grant of £500 from Cuckmere Buses, as discussed in principle at the November meeting (Minute C.663).

RESOLVED – That a grant of £500 be paid to Cuckmere Buses

Members considered an application from the Parish Magazine for a grant, and it was proposed that £250 be paid as in the previous year.

RESOLVED - That a grant of £250 be paid to the Parish Magazine

Members considered an application on behalf of the Village Show 2023 for a grant of £325. It was agreed that a grant should be paid on the understanding that it would be used to pay for new display equipment, not for ordinary running costs

RESOLVED – That a grant of £325 be paid to the village Show 2023

Members noted that a formal request had been received from the Parochial Church Council for payment of the budgeted annual churchyard maintenance grant of £1,000, and that this had been paid.

C.674 Civility and Respect

The council considered the model councillor/staff protocol recommended by NALC for use by all parishes, and agreed that it be adopted with immediate effect.

RESOLVED - That the NALC model council/staff protocol be adopted with immediate effect.

The council had received a certificate acknowledging its corporate support for the Civility and Respect protocol, and this was signed by the Chair on behalf of the council. It was agreed that as an earnest of good faith all councillors individually should sign and that members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group should also sign as a condition of their membership of the Group. Documentation would be prepared for the January council meeting and passed to the next NPSG meeting on 9th January 2023 **ACTION: PS/KL**. It was further agreed that NPSG meetings should (like council meetings) be recorded for internal use and the recordings deleted after an agreed period.

C.675 Local Transport Plan

The council took note of the current consultation on the East Sussex Local Transport Plan – 4 [open for public comment ending 9 December 2022]. It was agreed that the Chair should respond on behalf of the council **ACTION: PS**

C.676 Boundary Commission Review

The council took note of the current consultation by the Boundary Commission which was reviewing constituency boundaries ahead of the next general election. The parish was intended to remain in the Lewes constituency and the parish council did not need to respond.

C.677 Downlands Estate Management

The council received Report 13 prepared following an informal liaison meeting held on 15 November 2022 between representatives of the Parish Council, the Residents' Association and the Roads Company. The meeting had covered a range of issues from high level management down to details such as potholes, but the key message from the meeting was that the Roads Company needed help raising the funds necessary for the long term maintenance of the Estate roads. In addition, some current practices on the Estate were thought to be irregular by Highway standards. The Chair stated that the parish council had a duty to participate in any future arrangements in recognition of the fact that two thirds of its precept was raised north of the A259. One possibility going forward would be the formation of a Community Interest Company for the future management of the Estate, though such a company might still not have power to raise additional funds. Wealden District Council had confirmed that it would not be possible to split the precept and charge a higher rate on the Estate. Another possibility was that the Roads Company might have power to raise additional funds as a levy on future planning applications, given that they had agreed to take on the covenants previously enjoyed by the companies that had built the Estate, which included such levies. The Company Secretary would share details of the covenants with the parish council. Wider research and legal advice would need to be undertaken before any decisions were made. The Chair would undertake further research and report back to council on Community Interest Companies in the New Year **ACTION: PS**.

C.678 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Chair of the Steering Group commended to council a draft of the Terms of Reference for the Group, as discussed at a Group meeting on 14 November and circulated on 29 November 2022. The ToRs should also include a clause permitting future revision. The Group would be entitled to make decisions, except on matters of policy: these would require ratification by the council.

RESOLVED - That the draft Terms of Reference of the Steering Group be approved with the addition of a clause permitting future revision

The Chair further reported that Mrs Lesley d'Urso, Chair of the Residents' Association, had agreed to be Vice Chair of the Group. The Group would now require expert help and would use the next meeting on 9th January 2023 to establish the scope of the project. The South Downs National Park Authority had advised that currently they did not have the resources to attend but had recommended input from Action in Rural Sussex and contact with the parish of Ditchling which had completed a Plan and was sufficiently similar to East Dean and Friston to provide a useful comparison. Cllr Bryant would also be able to offer support.

A member of the Group had re-opened the question why the parish council was preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The council noted that this was a reasonable question and that it was not a requirement that it should have an NP. The process which had begun in 2019 had been stalled due to the loss of members; disappointment that some of the content originally proposed had been judged unworkable by the planning authority; and then the onset of Covid. The council had promised to re-start the process, and had now done so, but members agreed that a basic reassessment of need should be undertaken as there was a concern that there was an unrealistic perception among residents that a Neighbourhood Plan would be protective. The adoption of an NP would entitle the parish to receive a higher share of Community Infrastructure Levy funds, but only *after* new development sanctioned by the Plan had taken place. The Group would need time to establish what benefits a Neighbourhood Plan could add to the protections already provided by being within a National Park.

C.679 Payments and Receipts

The council took note of Report 15 containing the schedule of payments for December, and the schedule of receipts for November 2022. Two additional items were added to the schedule.

[Note: the complete Payments Schedule is appended to these Minutes].

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £5,463.21 be approved

C.680 Reports:

- a) Chair of the Council – the Chair and Vice Chair had attended the East Sussex Association of Local Councils AGM, and the following points were to be noted: (i) the Sussex Community Housing Hub was able to offer support from Village Agents who could advise e.g. on the preparation of a Neighbourhood

Plan; (ii) Legionella compliance: the Emergency Plan advisor for ESALC had agreed to train the pavilion caretaker and the Lead Member for the Recreation Ground in how to keep the pavilion free of this hazard; (iii) Peers of the Public Realm: this was a local initiative to record and save historic street furniture. The organisers would approach the parish clerk for details of any local items for inclusion (e.g. the George V letterbox in Old Willingdon Road). Residents could be asked through the parish magazine to contribute suggestions; (iv) Elections in May 2023: for the first time, photo I.D. would be required of everyone attending to vote in person. From 2024 the same would apply to postal voters.

- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 15 November 2022
- c) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring Report for Month 8, 2022/23. The bank balance at the end of November 2022 was £99,286.37.
- d) Rights of Way and Highways – (i) the draft minutes of the county liaison (SLR) meeting held on 8 November 2022 had been circulated; (ii) Mowing contract 2023: it was noted that the current contract had one more year to run. The Lead Member would contact the contractor to discuss the arrangements; (iii) Spreading bark chips on footpaths: it was agreed to request Climpsons to supply some bark chips in several small dumps in locations convenient for spreading; (iv) Vandalism: a hanging basket at Friston bus shelter had been torn down and thrown aside. It would be replaced. A notice might be added stating that the location was monitored.
- e) Tree Warden – the parish was about to receive three trees, a gift from the South Downs National Park Authority, for planting at the recreation ground as previously agreed. Exact locations would need to be agreed, and the Residents' Association would be consulted as to whether any could be planted in the wildflower strip **ACTION: ST/GF**
- f) Recreation Ground – (i) Grant from the England Cricket Board: the grant of £10,000 for rainwater harvesting had been approved, and work on the project must begin before the end of January as a condition of the grant. The construction of the access ramp would be phased in with this. It was agreed that a site meeting be held with Mr Pankhurst to plan ahead **ACTION: PS/GF**; (ii) Repair to door of storage shed: a hinge had come loose, and Cllr Fowler kindly agreed to repair it **ACTION: GF**; (iv) Play area maintenance – no date had yet been set for the maintenance work to take place; (v) Pavilion water supply: the water had been shut off for the winter and the system drained, but subsequently it had been turned back on by persons unknown and caused some overflow. It was now shut off again.
- g) Defibrillators – the recent training session had been excellent and very well attended (20 trainees). There was still demand for training and a further session would be arranged. Members thanked the Admin Officer for her work in setting this up. Very few people knew the locations of all the defibrillators in the parish, and the Lead Member would prepare a map for the website and the parish magazine **ACTION: PH**.

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

C.681 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 18 on correspondence received since the November meeting. This included the response received from the Leader of East Sussex County Council to the letter sent by the Chair of the parish council on the subject of speed restrictions.

C.682 Date of next meeting: - Thursday 5 January 2023 at 6.30 pm in the Small Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.19 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....

APPENDIX

PAYEE	DETAILS	SUB TOTAL	VAT	TOTAL	REF.NO	DATE	NOTES
Wicksteed Leisure Ltd	Safety inspection fee	102.00	20.40	122.40	1932	11/11/2022	Paid
P Seeley	Refund manhole lifting key	7.99	-	7.99	1933	18/11/2022	Paid
Parochial Church Council	Churchyard maintenance grant	1,000.00	-	1,000.00	1934	18/11/2022	Paid
Wealden Citizens Advice	Support grant	275.00	-	275.00	1935	18/11/2022	Paid
EDF Bowling Club	Support grant	600.00	-	600.00	1936	18/11/2022	Paid
P Seeley	Refund wine for village Xmas lunch	103.32	-	103.32	1937	18/11/2022	Paid
P Seeley	Refund Remembrance Sunday bugler	50.00	-	50.00	1938	01/12/2022	
Grants (Eastbourne) Ltd	Rewilding of Greensward	600.00	120.00	720.00	1939	01/12/2022	
HMRC	PAYE/NICS - November 2022	243.05	-	243.05	1940	01/12/2022	
K Larkin	Office costs/mileage - November 2022	51.56	-	51.56	1941	01/12/2022	
D Picknell	Office costs - November 2022	136.64	-	158.77	1942	01/12/2022	
East Sussex Pension Fund	Pension contributions - November 2022	494.32	-	494.32	1943	01/12/2022	
K Larkin/D Picknell	Net salaries - December 2022	1,560.00	-	1,560.00	1944/1945	23/12/2022	TBC: -The proposed increment of £1 per hour would give each officer an additional gross income of £780 over the whole year
P Seeley	Mileage for SALC AGM 30 Nov 2022	19.80	-	19.80	1946	01/12/2022	
Village Hall Trust	Hall hires- November 2022	57.00	-	57.00	1947	01/12/2022	
TOTAL		5,300.68	140.40	5,463.21			
RECEIPTS							
Barclays bank plc	Bank interest	0.36	-	0.36	BGC	08/11/2022	
TOTAL		0.36	-	0.36			