



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held remotely on the Zoom platform on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021, commencing at 6.30 pm**

**Councillors present:** Cllr M Keller (Chair), Cllr P Hill, Cllr P Seeley, Cllr S Thorogood and Cllr D Wild

**In attendance:** County Cllr S Shing (Items C.347 – C.350); District Cllr M Lunn (Items C.351 – C.358); K Larkin (Parish Clerk); and D Picknell (Admin Officer)

*There were seven members of the public present.*

### **Public Session**

The Chair reminded the meeting that members of the public should direct their contributions to the business on the agenda [SO 3(d)]. Their contributions would then be considered when the relevant agenda items were debated. The following topics were accordingly raised for consideration by the council:

- May 2021 Elections – a resident requested the council to publicise, support and encourage residents to come forward as candidates in the forthcoming elections, in the interests of inclusion and democracy (three vacancies to be filled on the parish council). These important principles should outweigh any questions of cost or inconvenience. The Chair confirmed that the council would address this point under Correspondence.
- Letter of resignation – Mr P Williamson drew attention to his formal letter of resignation as Tree Warden (announced orally at the January meeting).
- Outstanding actions – Mr P Williamson asked how the council would progress proposals previously made by him as Tree Warden (Minute C.332, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021]. The Chair stated that some of these items would be discussed in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Code of Conduct – it was alleged that there had been recent failures relating to the Seven Pillars of Public Life.
- Public Sessions – it was requested that the council should permit residents not only to read their own contributions at Zoom meetings, but also to engage in brief debate.

*The Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting*

**C.347 Acceptance of apologies for absence:** - Cllr T Bryant

**C.348 Declarations of Interests:** - None

### **C.349 Minutes**

- a) The minutes of the ordinary council meeting held remotely on 07 January 2021 were approved for signature by the Chair.

- b) The minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held remotely on 19 January 2021 were approved for signature by the Chair.

### C.350 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) ESCC Budget 2021/22 – a council tax increase of 3.9% was proposed for approval at a meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021
- b) A259 partial closure – on 13<sup>th</sup> February from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm there would be temporary traffic lights on the A259 in the centre of the village to allow the dropped kerb on the pedestrian crossing to be raised to the height of the carriageway (to prevent flooding/silting).
- c) May 2021 elections – these would comprise (i) county council elections; (ii) election of a Police and Crime Commissioner; and (iii) the three local by-elections to the parish council.
- d) Trees at Maryfield – there was no further update **ACTION: SS to investigate**
- e) Poor state of diverted Footpath 26a at Birling Manor – councillors drew attention to the current impassibility of the diverted path, and to the need for the diversion to be made official **ACTION: KL to send information to SS for update.**

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

### C.351 Business in Progress

The council took note of Report 6 by the Clerk on progress made since the January meeting. The following points were discussed:

- a) Licence for alterations to the cricket pavilion – the licence had now been signed by all parties. The Chair recorded the council's thanks to David George and Paul Goodenough who had both worked on this *pro bono*.
- b) County liaison meeting (Strengthening Local Relationships) – the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 2nd March 2021
- c) Poor state of diverted Footpath 26a at Birling Manor – no response had yet been received from ESCC Rights of Way **ACTION: KL to send reminder**
- d) Cuckmere Community Bus service 41 – it was noted that the Tuesday service supported financially by the council was not running and no charges were being incurred (but the Thursday service was running on a limited basis).
- e) Friendly Bench initiative – no local landowner had been able to offer a suitable location
- f) Visit by the Rude Mechanicals theatre company – it was agreed that the visit date previously agreed could be postponed to 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

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

RESOLVED – That the date of the licence agreed for the use of the recreation ground by The Rude Mechanicals be changed to 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

**C.352 Report of the District Councillor**

District Cllr Lunn reported on the following matters:

- a) Wealden Local Plan 'direction of travel' consultation – over 1,700 responses had been received and were being assessed
- b) Flooding of the Cuckmere - the increasing frequency of flooding was in part due to the pressure of development in the south of the district. The Environment Agency had agreed to dredge the shingle to alleviate the problem, and negotiations were in progress to determine whether responsibility for this task could be handed to the local Water Management Board. Wealden District Council would support such a transfer.
- c) Seven Sisters Country Park – the transfer of ownership to the SDNPA should take place this year with £1 million of CIL funding being invested by the SDNPA in the improvement of facilities, to include a new local office.
- d) Covid-19 infection levels in the district were now falling, with a 45% drop in the last week, but the Community Hub was still active.
- e) Impact of Wealden Local Plan proposals on Neighbourhood Planning – Cllr Lunn was asked to comment on this and advised that Wealden would have a duty to co-operate with all neighbouring planning authorities, including the SDNPA.

RESOLVED - That the report of the District Councillor be noted.

**C.353 Neighbourhood Plan**

The council considered Report 7 which reissued documents illustrative of the launch of the project and the setting up of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group; the delay and relaunch of the project in 2019; the practical difficulties currently causing the project to be put on hold again; and the requests from a number of residents for it to resume. The most recent Project Plan report (March 2020) was also re-circulated.

It was noted that the NPSG currently had no Chair or Vice Chair, both of whom should be councillors as the project must be council led; and that a number of other members had also been lost. It was hoped that if the council could come up to full strength in May following the planned by-elections to fill three vacancies, the project could then be re-launched with priority support. Members considered whether any tasks could be undertaken in the meantime, such as a digital mapping exercise and/or a survey of trees and hedgerows with a view to forming a management strategy. It was noted that at the last meeting of the NPSG in March 2020 when officers of the SDNPA had given a presentation, they had advised that the remit of the Plan must be very specific and that a lower level of information was needed, suitable for relating to specific 'parent' Local Plan policies. More detailed information could be gathered but would not be considered in the context of a Neighbourhood Plan. It was also noted that the existing East Dean Conservation Area management policies could not be altered by the Plan. However, it could be productive for the remaining members of the Working Groups to hold virtual meetings and informal consultations, reporting directly to the council until the relaunch of the Steering Group. Members agreed that the formal relaunch should be held over until the councillor vacancies were filled, and ideally physical meetings could resume.

**ACTION: DP to update the NPSG members.**

**C.354 Consultation on Craft Market in village car park**

The council considered Report 8 inviting local comment on a proposal that Brighton Craft Fair should hold events in East Dean five times a year, using the village car park. The Village Hall Trust had not objected, on the basis that the Craft Fair already booked the village hall, though it was not clear whether the hall and car park would be used on the same dates. If the car park was used alone there would be no access to public toilets. The Gilbert Estate had expressed concern about pressure on parking, as space was always at a premium at weekends, and was constantly under pressure during the summer. Members agreed that Wealden District Council who owned and managed the car park should be requested to liaise with the Village Hall Trust, and to have regard to the need to keep adequate parking in the centre of the village, especially in the holiday season and at weekends. **ACTION: KL to respond to Wealden District Council.**

**C.355 Payments and Receipts**

The council considered Report 9 - the Schedule of Payments for February 2021 and receipts for January 2021. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes]*. Members noted with approval the completion of the rebuilding of the East Dean bus shelter. There had been positive reactions from residents. Members thanked Cllr Seeley for repairing the handrail on Footpath 8 to keep costs down to £55.95 for materials. It was also noted that the purchase of plants for hanging baskets in 2021 had been increased to include the new brick bus shelter at Friston; the total cost was £101.06, and this was approved. The sanitising of the play area would be done monthly in the coming season (£100 per month for six months initially), supplemented by the notice advising users of their responsibility to take their own precautions over hand sanitising and social distancing.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £6,863.63 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

**C.356 Urgent Items**

The Chair reported that a recent meeting of the Residents' Association, attended by councillors, had discussed the problem of dog waste deposits proliferating in the parish, and becoming a public health issue. The council should assist in tackling this. Cllr Hill would do a plan showing all litter bins and dog waste bins and consult the RA with a view to rationalising and finalising locations. The RA would place an article in the parish magazine, and had supplied information posters which Cllr Seeley would laminate and distribute. The Chair had sourced stickers advising that litter bins could be used for depositing bagged dog waste, and these could be purchased at £8 per pair. It was agreed that there should be an agenda item at the March council meeting. District Cllr Lunn was consulted and advised that Wealden should be consulted prior to actually signing all litter bins as suitable for dog waste. **ACTION: KL**

**C.357 Reports:**

- a) Planning Committee – members took note of the draft minutes of the remote committee meeting held on 19 January 2021

- b) Finance – the bank balance at the end of January 2021 was £72,052.50. The Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 31 January 2021 was not yet complete as some virements had yet to be logged, which would affect the expenditure figures for individual budget heads but not the overall figures. **ACTION: KL to circulate when complete**
- c) Traffic Management Working Group – the Chair of the Group reported that he was obtaining comparative prices for solar powered speed signs (approx. £2,000 - £2,500 per sign). Highway verge licences and/or planning permission might be required for their installation, depending on the sites chosen. This would be discussed at the SLR meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and a report brought to the April council meeting. **ACTION: KL to add to SLR agenda**
- d) Rights of Way and Highways – Cllr Hill had organised the bark chipping of rights of way, all being done by contractors (for safety reasons) at a cost of £350 per day for a maximum of 2.5 days. Some areas would need a second deposit but the work would soon be complete. Members thanked Cllr Hill. Favourable comments had been received from residents.
- e) Environment Report – the Lead Member reported that a productive meeting had been held with representatives of the Residents' Association. A monthly Environment report should be included on all council agendas in future. **ACTION: KL**
- f) Recreation Ground – the Lead Member raised the following matters: (i) the licence for alterations to the pavilion had been signed; (ii) the tennis courts had been locked; (iii) there had been an accident at the play area, when an adult coming down a slide with a child had injured his hand on a protruding bolt, though no safety issues had been highlighted on the annual independent inspection report. It was agreed that the regular informal inspections should be logged for insurance purposes. **ACTION: KL to supply a log sheet to DW.**

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

### **C.358 Correspondence**

The council took note of Report 12 by the clerk on correspondence received, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Tower swap at The Link – if the delay in completing the changeover continued, the clerk should write again to Arqiva **ACTION: KL**
- b) By-election in May 2021 – members agreed that a poster campaign should be launched to encourage residents to stand. Information would also be published on the website and in the parish magazine, and all members should spread the word. **ACTION: MK/PS/all members**
- c) Seven Sisters Country Park Grazing – members noted the call by the SDNPA for potential grazing management of this site, but did not have any suitable contacts.
- d) Resignation of Tree Warden – the council took note of Mr Williamson's formal letter of resignation.

- e) Poor state of diverted Footpath 26a – this should be raised at the next county liaison meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021. **ACTION: KL**
- f) Consultation on the preparation of the Eastbourne Downland ‘Whole Estate Plan’ – this topic was referred to the Planning Committee for consideration **ACTION: DP**

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

*Under Standing Order 3(d) the Chair proposed that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, by reason of its confidential nature. This was voted on by members and passed unanimously.*

**C.359 Complaint against the Clerk**

Councillors considered a formal complaint from a resident against actions taken by the Clerk. After hearing representations from the complainant’s representative and from the clerk, members considered the complaint in private. The unanimous decision of all councillors present was that the complaint was not upheld. Councillors further expressed their satisfaction and support for the way in which the clerk carries out her duties on behalf of the council.

*[The above minute written by the Chair]*

**C.360 Date of next meeting: Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 6.30 pm by remote means**

*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.18 pm*

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....