



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held remotely on the Zoom platform on Thursday 1st April 2021, commencing at 6.30 pm

Councillors present: Cllr M Keller (Chair), Cllr T Bryant, Cllr P Hill, Cllr P Seeley, Cllr S Thorogood and Cllr D Wild (Items C.374 – C.378)

In attendance: Maria Caulfield MP; County Cllr S Shing (Items C.3.74 – C.379); K Larkin (Parish Clerk); and D Picknell (Admin Officer)

There was one member of the public present.

C.374 Acceptance of apologies for absence: - None

C.375 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.376 Minutes - The minutes of the ordinary council meeting held remotely on 04 March 2021 were approved for signature by the Chair.

The Chair suspended Standing Orders

Public Session

The Chair welcomed Maria Caulfield MP who reported on the following matters:

- Exceat Bridge – temporary three-way traffic lights were in operation to relieve congestion and residents were invited to report any problems. The planning application for the new bridge would shortly be considered by the South Downs National Park Authority’s planning committee. Councillors thanked Ms Caulfield, Cllr Shing and Cllr Lunn, all of whom had worked to promote this project.
- Dredging the mouth of the Cuckmere to reduce flooding – a five-year management plan had been agreed between the Friends of the Cuckmere and the Environment Agency. Negotiations continued on the possibility of a management transfer.
- Traffic management – there was a valid local concern that the parish had become a hotspot during the lockdown. However, calls for a public enquiry were not realistic unless all local options had been exhausted first. Regular police patrols were in place but the ‘rule of six’ made it harder to enforce social distancing. Ms Caulfield would encourage East Sussex Highways to update their data. Cllr Wild would share the results of the recent Sussex Road Safety briefing with councillors.

Members thanked Ms Caulfield for her report.

The Chair re-imposed Standing Orders on the basis that Ms Caulfield MP could continue to contribute in closed session.

C.377 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- Exceat Bridge – the current temporary traffic lights had been provided by East Sussex County Council; they would be replaced by permanent lights within the next month.
- Traffic Management – lobbying activities must be suspended during the period of Purdah preceding the county elections on 6th May.
- Downs View Lane – East Sussex Highways had agreed that run-off from the highway must be diverted more safely and were investigating alternatives
- Pedestrian crossing needed at Seven Sisters – the parish welcomed the investment proposed for the Country Park by the SDNPA, but pressed for a pedestrian crossing to be installed on the A259 between the north and south car parks. This would be a serious danger spot for pedestrians even with a new 30 mph speed limit. All the parish and town councils in the area were agreed on this. The parish council would make representations to the SDNPA Planning Committee requesting that installation of a crossing be made a condition of planning consent **ACTION: DP.** Cllr Shing responded that there would be a controlled crossing at each end of the new bridge. A safe crossing between the two car parks would potentially be difficult to achieve. However, it was acknowledged that large numbers of visitors could step out at this point. Ms Caulfield agreed to raise the matter with Rupert Clubb **ACTION: MC.**
- Felling of diseased elms – it was noted that a new boundary fence had been installed alongside the twitten (from Upper Street to Friston Church) where recent felling had opened access to a private garden. Diseased trees had now been identified at Crowlink Place; it was understood that ESCC had been in contact with the resident and felling had begun.

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

C.378 Business in Progress

The council took note of Report 6 on progress made since the March meeting, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Cricket Club Hire Agreement 2021 – the draft Agreement appended to the report was approved **ACTION: KL to notify the Club**
- b) Appointment of Internal Auditor 2020/21 – members agreed to appoint Peter J Consultants who had confirmed their willingness to serve. The External Auditors (appointed externally) would be PKF Littlejohn, and the parish would form part of the 5% sample that would be subject to an extra level of inspection. **ACTION: KL to liaise with auditors and make as much progress as possible by 6th May.**

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- c) Council Guard insurance scheme provider – the council accepted the recommendation of their broker to move to The Military Mutual as the new scheme provider from 1st June 2021. **ACTION: KL to liaise with the broker.**
 - d) Meeting arrangements after 6th May 2021 – the Chair and Vice Chair expressed their willingness to continue in office after the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 6th May, but to resign in order for fresh appointments to be made when face to face meetings resumed. An Extraordinary Meeting could be summoned for this purpose if appropriate (e.g. after the Planning Committee meeting on 20th July 2021). The other meeting arrangements made in March [Minute C.367] were reviewed and affirmed, subject to any changes in government requirements.
 - e) Bench 'In memory of HP who loved the Downs' – no family had laid claim to this bench which was in a poor state. The Cricket Club should be allowed to recycle it but to keep the memorial inscription on display. **ACTION: KL to notify the Club**
 - f) Survey of trees on Friston Green – Climpsons had this in hand.
 - g) Opening the pavilion – members noted that the water had been turned back on and the pavilion could be opened for use by the Residents' Association's planting team on Saturday 17th April 2021.
 - h) Litter picking – the RA would also borrow the equipment to do a team pick in the near future. Members recorded their thanks to the Association for their valued community volunteering.
 - i) Tennis court – the court had now been opened in line with government advice.

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

C.379 Update on Village Traffic Issues

The council took note of Report 7 by Cllr Seeley, and discussed the following recommendations:

- a) Speedwatch – it was proposed that once the village hall reopened the council should invite CSO Steve O'Connell to provide the hands-on training of the speed radar equipment to village volunteers. The group would commence physical speed watch checks in the village at agreed locations in the summer of 2021. The council would need to make a donation of £500 for the purchase of the equipment upon completion of training. This was agreed.
- b) Speed and Traffic Monitoring – this was required for the longer term collection of data on the Beachy Head Road / Gilberts Drive and the A259, to help the parish, East Sussex Highways, the South Downs National Park and Eastbourne Council with their strategic direction regarding the future of these key highway links that affect the village. It was proposed that two periods be used to collect data – the Bank Holiday at the end of May and then a period in July prior to schools breaking up. The total cost to the parish (set out in the report) would be £1,900, but Eastbourne Borough Council should be invited to contribute and/or to finance a comparable exercise on their side of the common boundary. This was agreed in principle, subject to further negotiation. **ACTION: PS.**

- c) Radar sign purchase - It was proposed that the council buy a solar powered radar speed sign for use in two locations on the A259 and in Gilberts Drive, within the 30 and 40 mph zones. The exact locations were currently under discussion and would be subject to all highway and planning approvals. The total cost detailed in the report would range from £2,320 plus VAT to £4,814 plus VAT, depending on the amount of work required for each installation. This would be a large commitment to be funded out of the precept but members agreed in principle that the cost would be justified and that Cllr Seeley should continue with negotiations. There could also be a case for requesting East Sussex Highways to paint 30 mph roundels on the tarmac in Gilberts Drive to slow motorists coming north to the A259 junction where there was no suitable location for a radar sign.

RESOLVED - That a donation of £500 to the Sussex Police for Speedwatch equipment be approved

RESOLVED – That finance of up to £1,900 for data collection be approved in principle subject to further negotiation with other relevant authorities

RESOLVED - That expenditure of up to £4,814 plus VAT on the purchase and installation of radar speed signs be approved in principle subject to further negotiation with East Sussex Highways, all highways and planning approvals, and final approval by the parish council in due course

The council thanked Cllr Seeley, Cllr Hill and the Admin Officer for their work on Traffic Management, ensuring that the parish would take action to the fullest extent permitted by the legislation. An update should be sent to the Gilbert Estate **ACTION: KL.**

C.380 Village Defibrillators

The council took note of Report 8 by Cllr Seeley, providing an update on the current state of maintenance of the village defibrillators, and recommending expenditure on 4 batteries and two sets of pads at a total cost of £1,040 plus VAT (batteries) and £82 plus VAT (pads) = £1,122 plus VAT, to be paid out of the dedicated fund donated to the council by the former East Dean Responders. This would ensure that maintenance would be fully up to date. One unit was to be handed over to the Beachy Head Chaplaincy. The handover should be arranged as soon as the easing of lockdown made it possible. **ACTION: KL to liaise with the Chaplaincy and former Responders.** Three units were in store awaiting placement. Members thanked Cllr Seeley for his continuing work on this project.

RESOLVED – That expenditure of £1,122 plus VAT from the dedicated defibrillator fund be approved for the maintenance of batteries and pads

C.381 Charity Donation

The council took note that an unspent budget of £203 remained for donations from the 2020/21 financial year. It was agreed that this should be given to the council's

Charity of the Year 2020/21: Care for the Carers, who had not received any proceeds from village events, as would have happened in a normal year.

RESOLVED – That a further donation of £203 be made to Care for the Carers, forthwith

C.382 Payments and Receipts

The council considered Report 10 - the Schedule of Payments for April 2021 and receipts in March 2021. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes].* The cost of maintaining the play area had been higher than expected (£1,755) but was accepted.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £6,856.06 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

C.383 Urgent Items

A planning application for change of use to a café, and an alcohol licence application, had been made in relation to the former surgery premises in Downlands Way. The licensing hours requested were 9.00 am to 6.00 pm Sunday to Wednesday, and 9.00 am to 10:30 pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The deadline for comments to the WDC licencing committee was 27th April, and it was proposed that both applications be considered at the next parish Planning Committee meeting on 20th April. **ACTION: DP to add licence application to the Planning Committee Agenda**

C.384 Reports:

- a) Chair of the Council – (i) the South Downs National Park Authority had held a very positive briefing session for local councils on their forthcoming takeover of the Seven Sisters Country Park, expected to be completed by the end of April. The old visitor centre would then be closed for redevelopment (subject to planning permission) until January 2022, and during the summer of 2021 there would be a temporary information caravan, toilets and a takeaway trailer in the south car park. Projected visitor numbers were ½ to 1 million per year. The new centre would include a toilet block and in-house catering, and a new office as an eastern hub for the Park Authority: the CEO promised he would be there 2 or 3 days per week. Councillors particularly welcomed this development. Other plans included the conversion of a barn at the Foxholes camping site into a bunk house (hostel), and the conversion of farm workers cottages into family holiday lets at modest prices. An environmental programme was also planned. (ii) Parish council by-election on 6th May: - the editor of the parish magazine had agreed that an insert could be placed in the May edition listing all the candidates, should there be more than three applicants resulting in the need for a ballot. The copying would be done using the facilities of the Parochial Church Council, by kind permission.
- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the remote committee meeting held on 16 March 2021

- c) Finance – the council took note that the closing balance on the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 was £66,421.80 (this compared with £65,760.91 at 31 March 2020). Expenditure had largely caught up with the budget in the last quarter of the year.
- d) Traffic Management Working Group – see minute C.379 above.
- e) Rights of Way and Highways – (i) the council took note of the draft minutes of the Strengthening Local Relationships meeting held with ESCC representatives on 02 March 2021 (reported orally at the March council meeting, minute C.371 (e)). (ii) Litter bins and dog bins – all bins had now been labelled for litter and/or dog waste and their locations were under review in consultation with the Residents' Association. Any new locations would be subject to approval by Wealden District Council **ACTION: KL to ask about the cost of locating bins, and the approval procedure.** A paper would be brought to the May meeting. Members thanked Wealden for stepping up weekly collections from one to two. (iii) Double yellow lines – it was noted that the parish had risen to the top of the list for installation of additional yellow lines some years ago, but that this had stalled because of a dispute between WDC and the police over enforcement. Ms Caulfield advised that Wealden was in a minority of councils that would not finance enforcement, due to the high cost which would necessitate imposition of parking charges, but that the new Chief Constable was willing to reopen the question by including special issues that Wealden might want to be considered. Ms Caulfield would speak to the Chief Constable on behalf of the parish **ACTION: MC; KL to supply maps of the proposed locations of yellow lines in the parish.**
- f) Recreation Ground - see the Progress report minute C.378 above.
- g) Environment – (i) an incidence of Dutch Elm Disease at Crowlink had been reported to the county council, and felling appeared to have begun. (ii) Wildflower planting at the recreation ground would take place on 16th, 17th and 18th April, due to the kind help of volunteers from the Residents' Association. A further supply of seed had been donated by the Rotary Club and should be used at Friston Pond, as well as offered to other village organisations (e.g. the parochial church council; the Greensward Company; the Gardening Club). Proposals for other locations would be welcome.

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

C.385 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 13 by the clerk on correspondence received, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Lewes Local Plan – members noted that due to the failure of this Plan it would be difficult to resist proposals from developers for additional housing numbers in Lewes, which could impact on adjacent areas through increased traffic etc.
- b) Poor state of the Jevington Road – there had been a local petition to get this road repaired. The parish would continue to press for it through their county liaison meetings.

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- c) Roadside litter – a resident had lodged a valid complaint but the parish council had no leverage in this matter. Fly tipping should be reported to Wealden District Council and would be dealt with.
 - d) The Farrar Hall – a resident had enquired whether this building was in use: it was in use by an artist who mounted displays at Birling Gap. The landowner was the National Trust
 - e) Accident on the Birling Gap Road – members noted a recent serious crash on the bend near Birling Manor which East Sussex Highways should be aware of in view of the volume of complaints about speeding traffic on this road, and the need for restrictions.
 - f) Digital Mapping – the council took note of advice from the planning authority that digital mapping was not essential to the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, but could be useful. The SDNPA could provide a basic set of maps free of charge, as the parish council had signed up to the Public Sector Mapping Agreement. It was agreed that the SDNPA should be requested to supply as much data as could be shared. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group could then review any additional needs. **ACTION: DP.**

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

The council thanked Maria Caulfield MP for her attendance, which was much appreciated.

C.386 Date of next meeting: Annual Parish Council Meeting - Thursday 6th May 2021 at 6.30 pm by remote means

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....