



Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held remotely on the Zoom platform on Thursday 6th May 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: K Larkin (Parish Clerk); and D Picknell (Admin Officer)

There were three members of the public present.

Prior to the meeting, the Chair made the following statement:

Before I open this meeting, I feel a few words of explanation are necessary.

Firstly, this is the last date at which a formal parish council meeting can be held remotely under the government Coronavirus legislation as that lapses tomorrow. Attempts by NALC and others to get the period extended were refused in the high court recently and the government have declined to provide parliamentary time to legislate for an extension. So, from tomorrow, formal Parish Council meetings must be held with both councillors and members of the public physically present.

However, due to the restrictions in force under coronavirus legislation, indoor meetings are currently banned. Moreover, even after the proposed easing on 17th May, it will still only be possible for a maximum of six non-related individuals to meet indoors. It is not until the full lifting of restrictions takes place, no earlier than 21st June, that anything like a normal council meeting can be held.

This brings me to tonight's meeting, which has been designated as the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The holding of APCMs are specified in the Parish Council's Standing Orders, section 5, and are a mandatory part of these orders which cannot be overruled by order of councillors.

Section 5b states that the APCM shall be held in the month of May, so with the restrictions that I have outlined previously, today is the last day on which it is possible to hold the APCM. In addition, section 5e states that the first item on the agenda must be the election of the chair and vice-chair. This takes precedence over the Public Session, which precedes the normal business of the council agenda.

I am aware that this not a satisfactory situation, particularly as the election of three additional councillors is taking place today and they will be unable to vote until the result of the election is known and they have signed their acceptance of office. As a result, I will propose that the sub-sections of Standing Orders relating to delegation and administrative matters at the Annual Parish Council Meeting (SO 5(j) (v-xix)) should be deferred to a later date. These sections are not mandatory so councillors

can vote to delay their consideration. Further elections may also take place at a later date once full meetings of the council are restored, but that is not for consideration tonight.

C.387 Appointment of Chair – Cllr Hill proposed and Cllr Seeley seconded the motion that Cllr Keller be re-appointed as Chair of the Council.

RESOLVED - That Cllr Keller be re-appointed as Chair of the Council

C.388 Appointment of Vice Chair – Cllr Keller proposed and Cllr Thorogood seconded the motion that Cllr Seeley be re-appointed as Vice Chair of the Council.

RESOLVED – That Cllr Seeley be re-appointed as Vice Chair of the Council

Under SO 10(a) (xv) the Chair moved the motion:

‘That consideration of the non-mandatory business of the Annual Parish Council Meeting specified in Standing Order 5(j) (v-xix) should be deferred to a later date’. The motion was seconded by Cllr Wild.

RESOLVED - That the non-mandatory business of the Annual Parish Council Meeting specified in Standing Order 5(j) (v-xix) should be deferred to a later date.

The Chair then suspended Standing Orders to enable a Public Session to be held

Public Session

Climate change and the Neighbourhood Plan - a resident had submitted a written statement, read by the Chair, referring to the major future challenge of climate change, and arguing that one way for the parish council to play its part in combatting climate change would be to produce a climate-friendly Neighbourhood Plan. The Chair responded that this comment was noted and would be carried forward. However, some other claims in the statement were rebutted: in particular, general elections to the parish council were held every four years (2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 as well as the May 2021 by-election) and all residents on each occasion had the opportunity to stand and to vote if there were more candidates than seats. Regarding allegations made by the resident concerning councillors’ conduct, the Chair referred to the factual statement he had made at the November 2020 meeting in response to the same resident, which was recorded in the minutes.

Standing Orders were re-imposed

C.389 Acceptance of apologies for absence: - Cllr T Bryant

C.390 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.391 Minutes - The minutes of the ordinary council meeting held remotely on 01 April 2021 were approved for signature by the Chair.

C.392 Business in Progress

The council considered Report 7 and the following matters were discussed:

- a) Banking mandate – the council was requested to give authority to the Admin Officer to make payments online from the council's account in the absence of the parish clerk. The Admin Officer should check with the Chair and Vice Chair before making any payments. Cllr Hill should also have read-only access to the accounts.

RESOLVED - That Barclays be instructed to amend the bank mandate to permit the Admin Officer to make payments online, and to give read-only access to the accounts to Cllr Hill

- b) Cricket Club business – (i) the Club had signed the new Hire Agreement for the 2021 season which should now be countersigned. Authority to do so was delegated to the Chair **ACTION: MK/KL to arrange signing.** (ii) Disposal of memorial bench no.10 - the Club would now remove the bench and save the inscribed panel. (iii) White line painting – councillors agreed that the Club should have permission to paint an eco-friendly white line as a boundary marker instead of using a rope boundary. (iv) Maintenance of the outfield – the Club had requested permission to deal directly with the council's mowing contractor. Members did not object to this provided that no cuts over and above those specified in the mowing contract were billed to the council. (v) Maintenance of the shiplap exterior of the pavilion – the Club had advised that remedial work should be considered. **ACTION: DW to assess the condition and report to council.**
- c) Proposed hires of the pavilion for one-off events - Micheldene W.I had requested to hire the pavilion on Monday 5th July 2021; and East Dean Church had requested permission to hire the pavilion on Sunday 25th July 2021. Members agreed both hires. **ACTION: KL to issue hire agreements**
- d) Council Guard insurance policy renewal for the year from 01 June 2021 – members gave formal approval to the renewal of the policy for its third and final year with RSA as the policy provider **ACTION: KL to confirm to the broker**
- e) Continuation of informal remote meetings of councillors to make Planning Application recommendations to the SDNPA on behalf of the council - members agreed that this practice should continue until such time as formal remote meetings were re-authorised, or face to face meetings could resume. Meetings would continue to be advertised and open to the public on Zoom.

RESOLVED – That informal remote meetings of councillors to make Planning Application recommendations to the SDNPA on behalf of the council should continue as discussed.

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- f) The Village Chippy – regular Saturday visits by the van had begun under licence from the council. Arrangements would be made to keep vehicles at a safe distance from customers waiting to be served.
 - g) Hand-over of defibrillator to Beachy Head Chaplaincy – a round of maintenance on batteries/pads had been completed and arrangements were in hand for the donation of one kit to the Chaplaincy **ACTION: KL to check for a date.**
 - h) Charity of the Year 2021/22 – all members were invited to suggest possible candidates for consideration at the council meeting on 29th June **ACTION: all members**
 - i) Relocation of dog/litter bins – the suggested new locations had been reported to Wealden for their suitability to be assessed. East Sussex Rights of Way team should also be asked to approve the proposal to mount the relocated bins on their fingerposts or in one case on a bollard (at the Upper Street entrance to Footpath 25, the twitten to Friston Church). **ACTION: KL**
 - j) Yellow lines – information had been sent to Maria Caulfield MP regarding the locations where the additional lines should be provided.
 - k) Condition report on tree at Friston Green – a summary survey by Climpsons had found Dutch Elm Disease, ash die-back, and some trees in poor state due to old age. A quotation had been requested for any remedial work recommended for safety reasons and a report would be brought to a future meeting **ACTION: ST.**

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

C.393 Final Accounts/ Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021

The council considered these items on the basis of detailed reports, as follows:

- a) Report of the Internal Auditor – members took note of Report 8e from the Internal Auditor, in which no issues were raised. [The effectiveness of the council's internal audit regime had been considered at the meeting held on 1 April 2021 and affirmed].
- b) Final Accounts 2020/21 – members took note of Report 8a. The closing balance of £66,421 was very similar to that from the previous year (£65,761). Nevertheless the year had been exceptional due to the Covid-19 emergency and the lockdown, as well as the changed circumstances of the council. In particular, little progress had been made with the Neighbourhood Plan. It had been anticipated that the council would use its reserves (up to £15,000) to cover some costs of the Plan during the year, but this had not been necessary. The strategy could now be rolled over to 2021/22. Members took note in particular of the information in Annex B of the report, listing the authorising powers for each item of expenditure. The list had been prepared in response to the requirement of the External Auditor that the parish be subject to an additional level of review in its Annual Return 2021.

RESOLVED - That the Final Accounts for 2020/21 be approved

- c) Intermediate Level Review – members considered Report 8c prepared in response to the External Auditor’s requirements for this Review. The report set out the evidence on which the council’s responses to each element of the Intermediate Level Review should be based, including detailed evidence in relation to each of the nine assertions required in AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statements. In regard to Assertion 2, Internal Controls, the council noted the need to have a second person authorised to make online payments: a resolution to permit the Admin Officer to do this had been passed earlier in the meeting [Item C.392(a) above]. In regard to Assertion 3, Compliance with Laws, Regulations and Proper Practices, the council noted that there was a reasonable expectation that the General Power of Competence could be regained following the election of three new councillors on 6th May 2021. Also in regard to Assertion 3, the council reviewed its actions during the year and was satisfied that although some remedial actions had been required in response to complaints, those actions had been carried out. The following resolutions were made:

RESOLVED - That Report 8c in its entirety be supplied to the External Auditor together with the council’s Employer PAYE Reference number and/or a copy of their Employer Payment Record for the tax year 2020/21; Employer’s Liability Certificate 2020-21; Council Guard insurance policy schedule; and (if required) copies of officer contracts for verification; all to be accompanied by the minutes of this meeting

RESOLVED – That it be noted that no exceptions had been raised by the External Auditor in relation to the AGAR 2019/20

RESOLVED – That a ‘Yes’ response should be made to each of the nine assertions required in AGAR Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 and that the Chair and Clerk be authorised to sign Section 1 on behalf of the council for submission to the External Auditor

- d) AGAR Section 2: Annual Accounting Statements 2021 – members considered Report 8(d) containing the recommended statements based on the final accounts, with supporting end of year bank reconciliation and Explanation of Variances.

RESOLVED - That the Annual Accounting Statements in AGAR Section 2, with supporting documents, be approved for signature by the Chair and Clerk and submission to the External Auditor.

- e) Public Rights Notice – members considered Report 8(f) and noted that the council was ahead of schedule and could post the notice earlier than the recommended dates of Monday 14 June to Friday 23 July. It was agreed that the notice should be posted as soon as the Annual Return documents had been submitted to the External Auditor, and left in place until 23 July.

RESOLVED – That the Public Rights Notice be displayed early as discussed and left in place until 23 July 2021.

Councillors expressed their appreciation to the Parish Clerk for the hard work that she had put into producing an extremely long and detailed review document, as well as the final accounts.

C.394 Repairs at the play area

The council considered Report 9 regarding repairs required to the rope bridge at the play area. A safety sign had been placed on it and Wicksteed had been requested to supply parts and labour for the repair, but had so far only supplied the parts at a cost of £759.76 plus VAT. Members agreed that the repair should be professionally done for insurance purposes and that Cllr Wild should have delegated power to authorise expenditure on labour in excess of the budget if required. **ACTION: DW/KL.**

RESOLVED - That Cllr Wild should have delegated power to authorise expenditure on maintenance at the play area in excess of the budget for 2021/22.

Standing Orders were suspended to enable a resident to inform the council that some nail spikes were coming out of the little fence inside the main gate to the play area. Members thanked the resident and Standing Orders were re-imposed.

In further discussion it was agreed that Cllr Hill and Cllr Seeley would inspect the fence and organise remedial action. **ACTION: PH/PS**

C.395 National Association of Local Councils: Consultation on Electronic Communications Infrastructure

The council considered responding to the consultation on NALC report PC4-21, proposing amendments to the General Permitted Development Order for electronic communications development, to support the deployment of 5G phone masts. Members were critical of the fact that 4G was not yet available throughout the whole parish, despite the fact that permission had been given in 2017 for a mast near the A259 on the basis of information from Telefonika that there was a proven technical case for it. The phone company had subsequently decided that it would not be commercially viable. It was agreed to respond to the consultation saying that where there was a proven technical case for a mast it must be provided **ACTION: KL.**

Members also noted that the old TV transmitter mast in the field above The Link was still in place despite the fact that the new mast was now in active use, and the removal of the old mast (in poor condition) had been a condition of the permission to install the new one. **ACTION: KL to ask Argiva for the timetable for its removal.**

C.396 Payments and Receipts

The council considered Report 11 - the Schedule of Payments for May 2021 and receipts in April 2021. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes].*

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £5,257.95 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

C.397 Urgent Items

The Chair reported that a complaint had been made to South East Water regarding incorrect road closure signage at the junction of Gilberts Drive and the A259 which had failed to include the words 'except for access'. Cllr Seeley would also take this up with East Sussex Highways. The signage had now been removed.

C.398 Reports:

- a) Chair of the Council - the Chair thanked the Admin Officer for her work hosting the council's Zoom meetings and proposed that the account should be maintained when face to face meetings resumed. This was agreed.
ACTION: DP
- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the remote committee meeting held on 20 April 2021. The parish's SDNPA representative, Cllr Rowlands, would be hosting a remote meeting on Enforcement matters for representatives of all her parishes on the 18th May. Cllrs. Keller and Seeley would be attending on behalf of the council. This would be followed by the regular parish planning meeting, to be held remotely at the later start time of 7.00 pm.
- c) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring Report for Month 1, 2021/22. The clerk reported that the bank balance at the end of April was £93,961.12, including the first tranche of the precept for the year.
- d) Traffic Management Working Group – The Lead Member reported that a site meeting would be held with East Sussex Highways' principal Traffic and Safety Officer to inspect the proposed locations for radar speed signs (**ACTION: PS, PH, ST**). Three quotations had been sought and one had so far been received. A report would be brought to council on 29th June. It was hoped to progress with Speed Watch training as soon as lockdown restrictions permitted. Members queried whether speed signs always had to be 350m from a junction, and whether the dead end road to the village car park should count as a junction for this purpose.
- e) Rights of Way – the summer influx of visitors had begun and many were walking along the A259 up Friston Hill, which was extremely dangerous. It was agreed to raise with East Sussex Highways the possibility of signing the footpath from Upper Street to Friston Church (FP 25: the Twitten) as 'Friston - walking route'.
- f) Recreation Ground – members noted that the cricket season had begun.
- g) Environment – (i) the Lead Member reported that following the planting session kindly carried out by the Residents' Association at the recreation ground, a surplus of wildflower seeds was available for potential users. Five lots had so far been given out. The seeded areas must be properly prepared and maintained and mown twice a year. Some would be sown at Friston Green when the current round of tree maintenance was complete. More could be offered for the churchyard, the village hall garden, and the car park.
ACTION: ST/KL. (ii) The Lead Member suggested that a picnic area could be created on the southern boundary of the recreation ground under the evergreen oaks. This would be on part of the Biodiversity Strip. Members

agreed that a report should be brought to a future meeting. In the meantime, details of the Biodiversity Strip and of the covenants on the land including the Field in Trust deed should be circulated to all councillors **ACTION: KL.**

- h) Cuckmere Buses – the council took note of the minutes of the Stakeholders' Meeting and the Annual General Meeting, both held on 12 April 2021. Members agreed that the bus provided a valuable service for a number of residents.

RESOLVED - That the above reports a) to h) be noted and action taken as discussed

C.399 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 14 by the clerk on correspondence received since the April meeting, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Traffic issues – members took note of correspondence between the Beachy Head Estate and Maria Caulfield MP regarding a campaign to change the status of the Beachy Head/Birling Gap Road to facilitate traffic calming measures. The council supported this aspiration and would proceed with the practical measure of Speed Watch.
- b) State of the Jevington Road – the council was concerned to note that no resurfacing was proposed as the road was to be dug up for a new gas main. It was agreed that the Vice Chair should raise this with East Sussex Highways at the forthcoming site meeting.
- c) Mowing at the Village car park and at The Fridays garages – these areas were owned and maintained by Wealden District Council. **ACTION: KL to supply location details to councillors.**
- d) Planting of hedges – a resident had proposed fresh planting in a strip of land owned by the council at the end of The Link **ACTION: KL to supply an asset map to all councillors.**
- e) All weather table tennis – a resident had proposed installing a table between the pavilion and the tennis court. However, this space was needed for access of the new roller from the storage shed to the pitch for maintenance. Alternatives were considered but none deemed suitable, and there was no budget for such an item in the current financial year **ACTION: KL to respond accordingly.**
- f) Proposed café in Downlands precinct - a resident had requested shorter opening hours than those proposed, but the Chair advised that the deadline for further comment had passed. **ACTION: DP to respond to the resident.**

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

C.400 Date of next meeting: An informal meeting of councillors to be held by remote means on Thursday 3rd June 2021 at 6.30 pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.22 pm

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....