



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2021 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, Gilberts Drive, East Dean, commencing at 6.30 pm**

**Councillors present:** Cllr P Seeley (Chair), Cllr T Bryant, 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 (Items C.433 – C.438); District Cllr M Lunn (Items C.437 – C.438); K Larkin (Parish Clerk); D Picknell (Admin Officer)

*There was one member of the public present.*

### **Public Session**

The Chair welcomed PCSO Scott McCallum and Sergeant Amanda Hover of the new Neighbourhood Policing Team to introduce themselves and speak about the roles and responsibilities of the Team. East Dean and Friston was part of the Polegate area within the Wealden District. A new deployment pattern had been set up to ensure even coverage of the District by officers, with PCSO McCallum as the 'go to' officer for the parish, in partnership with PCSO Sophie Cole. There would be no regular beat (better to turn up unexpected), but the PCSOs would be a visible presence in the parish and were planning to hold monthly Zoom sessions which would be open to councillors [first meeting 16 August 2021], as well as attending local Community Support Action Group meetings [next meeting 10 September 2021], and could be called upon to attend local incidents subject to an assessment of the 'threat/harm/risk' nature of the incident.

Councillors were concerned about the problem of visitors parking on the verge of the Birling Gap Road, particularly on the west side obstructing the only footpath for pedestrians, who were then forced into the middle of the narrow carriageway. The police officers explained that this was not a technical offence; there were no yellow lines to enforce; and PCSOs could not issue parking tickets. However, the fact that the situation was unsafe and that the parking was obstructive was well understood, and discussions were in progress between the Sussex Police and the District Council regarding the regulation and enforcement of parking in the District, which was unique in not decriminalising parking offences to enable civil enforcement to commence.

The officers were involved in Operation Blitz which tackled anti-social behaviour, and Operation Downs Way tackling road safety (the latter in co-operation with Eastbourne officers). Councillors would be welcome to attend Operation Blitz sessions as observers, on request. Councillors stated that the police would be welcome to attend local events, including the monthly coffee mornings which should re-start in the autumn.

Finally a question was raised concerning the difficulty of obtaining a reduction in the speed limit from 40 to 30 mph on the main road unless this could be justified by fatalities. It was advised that the parish could seek advice direct from the Department of Transport and that contact information could be provided.

The Chair thanked PCSO McCallum and Sergeant Hover for their attendance and their input, and they left the meeting.

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

**C.433 Acceptance of apologies for absence:** - Cllr D Wild

**C.434 Declarations of Interests:** - Cllr Bryant, one quote for re-cladding the pavilion had been obtained from his builder.

**C.435 Minutes**

- a) The minutes of the ordinary council meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair
- b) The minutes of the extraordinary council meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were confirmed and signed by the Acting Chair of that meeting.

**C.436 General Power of Competence**

The council considered Report 4 and noted that the council now met the criteria set out in the Localism Act 2011 for adoption of the General Power of Competence.

RESOLVED – That the General Power of Competence be adopted with immediate effect.

**C.437 Report of the County Councillor**

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) Seven Sisters Country Park – the transfer of ownership from the county council to the South Downs National Park Authority had been completed on 31 July 2021.
- b) Traffic lights at Exceat Bridge – an application had been made for the temporary traffic lights to be made permanent until the construction of the new bridge was complete. Cllr Shing supported this application, and the parish councillors concurred.
- c) Parking on the verges of the Birling Gap Road – Cllr Shing defended the stance of the county council, previously discussed, whilst acknowledging that the technically legal parking on verges could be obstructive and unsafe. The Chair reported that he had contacted East Sussex Highways about the possibility of roping off a key stretch of verge to protect pedestrians, and would now measure the length of verge in question and send a plan to ESCC at their request. **ACTION: PS/MK.**
- d) Overgrown verge between Exceat and Seaford – this verge had become so overgrown that the highway footway had become unusable; the verge should

be strimmed for safety. Cllr Shing would advise the relevant county councillor for that area. **ACTON: SS.**

Members thanked the County Councillor for his report.

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

#### **C.438 Report of the District Councillor**

District Cllr M Lunn reported on the following matters:

- a) Seven Sisters Country Park – the completion of the transfer of ownership to the SDNPA was welcomed. A million pounds of CIL funding had been allocated to the opening of a new, local office for the SDNPA, and this would serve as a hub for the locality including the Forestry Commission and National Trust. It would open in 2022. There would be a new car park and parking officers on site, and overflow parking would be available in Friston Forest at peak times.
- b) Parking on the verges of the Birling Gap Road – Cllr Lunn reiterated the arguments supporting the decision of the District Council not to decriminalise parking, as previously discussed.
- c) Management of the Cuckmere Estuary – the Environment Agency had rejected the application from the Pevensey and Cuckmere Water Levels Management Board to take over the de-shingling of the estuary, apparently preferring to keep control of the whole river. Councillors were concerned that the EA's own management of the estuary was too reactive and could permit future flash flooding, as it had in the past, leaving Wealden District Council with no option but to invoke emergency powers. Flash flooding could be exacerbated by the large numbers of new houses being built upstream. In addition, no action was being taken on the management of the west bank which was in danger of collapse. The remit of the South Downs National Park Authority in relation to the estuary management was not yet clear. The EA had not commented on the statement in the application from the local Water Board that they had the desire, budget and expertise to manage the estuary, which was seen as a tourist asset. Councillors agreed to lobby the Environment Agency in support of the local Water Board. **ACTION: PS/KL**

Members thanked the District Councillor for his report.

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

#### **C.439 Report from Maria Caulfield MP**

The council received a written report from Maria Caulfield MP. Members noted in particular an item on 'Broadband and hard to reach communities', stating that the government had signed a Shared Rural Network agreement with mobile phone providers which should improve 4G coverage. This was a misunderstanding: the sharing would improve access but not coverage. Due to the lie of the land, full

coverage would only be achieved locally by installing a new mast on the A259, as demonstrated in the technical appraisal undertaken by Telefonika in 2017. Telefonika had not proceeded with the installation, apparently on commercial grounds. It was therefore recommended that all service providers should contribute to the installation of additional masts. A copy of the appraisal should be sent to the MP **ACTION: KL.**

RESOLVED – That the report of the Member of Parliament be noted and action taken as discussed

#### **C.440 Parish Council Roles**

The council considered Report 7 by the Chair provisionally allocating roles to members, and these proposals were agreed.

RESOLVED – That the Planning Committee should be chaired by Cllr Bryant and that all members should be entitled to attend and speak.

RESOLVED – That the following should be Lead Members:

- Environment – Cllr Milligan
- Tree Warden – Cllr Thorogood
- Traffic Management Working Group – Cllr Seeley
- Speed Watch – Cllr Thorogood
- Rights of Way/Strengthening Local Relationships (=county liaison) – Cllr Lees
- Recreation Ground and Pavilion – Cllr Fowler
- Communications/website/Parish Magazine – Cllr Keller
- Fund raising – Cllr Milligan
- Village Flowers/water rota – Cllr Hill
- Village defibrillators – Cllr Hill
- Coordinator for Her Majesty's Jubilee 2022 – Cllr Keller

Further consideration would be given to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group at the October council meeting when the potential scope for such a plan should have become clearer. Some local planning authorities preferred to limit the scope to 'land use' (meaning housing supply) or topics such as design which could add detail to their Local Plans in limited ways. A government White Paper was expected and could bring in further changes.

The Chair stated that if any member would like further information or training that could be provided 'in house' they would be welcome to raise topics for an informal meeting session in September when traditionally the council did not meet. It was suggested that the council should formulate a 'mission statement' and this was agreed. **ACTION: all councillors to consider proposals.**

#### **C.441 Other Appointments**

The council took note of the external bodies on which it should be represented, and appointments were made accordingly. The Chair of the council would continue to be a Trustee of the Village Hall Trust *ex officio*. Mr Stewart Fuller would continue to liaise between the council and Cuckmere Buses.

RESOLVED – That the following representatives be appointed:

- East Sussex Association of Local Councils – Cllr Seeley
- Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Cllr Milligan
- Police Community Support Action Group – Cllr Thorogood

Members also considered the appointment of an Internal Auditor and agreed that Peter J Consultants should be invited to continue for 2021/22, but that the appointment should be reviewed for 2022/23 in accordance with best practice. [The External Auditor would continue to be appointed externally].

RESOLVED - That Peter J Consultants be appointed Internal Auditor for 2021/22.

#### **C.442 Business in Progress**

The council considered Report 9 on progress since the council meeting on 29 June 2021, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Licence for the hire of the recreation ground and pavilion by the Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 - a draft had been circulated and was agreed. It was noted that in previous years the company had paid a £50 fee to charity, but this might not be appropriate in 2021/22 depending on the financial situation of the theatre. **ACTION: PS/KL**

RESOLVED – That the draft licence be approved and signed on behalf of the council

- b) Amendment of licence for The Village Chippy – the change of day from Saturdays to alternate Wednesdays was approved. **ACTION: PS/KL**

RESOLVED - That the licence for The Village Chippy to visit the shopping precinct be amended as discussed

- c) Cladding the pavilion – [*Cllr Fowler declared an interest at this point as he had submitted one of the quotations to be considered*]. Members considered two formal quotations for re-cladding the pavilion and resolved to accept the lower of the two, from Cllr Fowler, in the sum of £2,850. **ACTION: GF**

RESOLVED – That a quotation in the sum of £2,850 from Cllr Fowler for re-cladding the pavilion be accepted.

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

#### **C.443 Traffic Update August 2021**

The council considered Report 10 by the Chair providing an update on village traffic issues and recommending that expenditure of £5,183.06 be approved for the purchase and installation of a speed radar sign from ESCC Highways. The cost would be lower than that previously approved in principle. However, in the longer

term, an additional sign and more sites would be recommended and this would be discussed in the context of budgeting for 2022/23.

RESOLVED - To approve expenditure of £4,663.17 plus VAT and £519.89 for the purchase and installation of a radar sign and all associated licencing fees (total £5,183.06)

#### **C.444 Council Grant Scheme**

The council considered Report 11 detailing two requests so far received for support from the council in 2021/22. It was agreed that the Wealden Citizens' Advice Bureau should be paid £250 from the general grant scheme, and Cuckmere Buses should be paid £500 from the fund set aside for the regular support of bus service 41 to assist it through the transition out of lockdown.

RESOLVED - That a grant of £250 be paid to Wealden Citizens Advice

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

#### **C.445 Payments and Receipts**

The council took note of Report 12, the schedule of payments for August 2021 and receipts for July 2021. One additional invoice was noted, from Wicksteed in the sum of £432 for maintenance of the clatter bridge at the play area. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes]*. It was also agreed that the donation of £500 payable to the council's charity of the year (Beachy Head Chaplaincy) should be paid forthwith rather than at the end of the financial year. Members were pleased to note that the new parking signs had been purchased and installed in the shopping precinct.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £4,748.44 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

Members also approved the use of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) receipts for the purchase of Speedwatch equipment. The sum available was £329.27, received in October 2020. Previous CIL receipts had been spent on the re-building of bus shelters.

RESOLVED - That £329.27 CIL money should be used for the purchase of Speedwatch equipment.

#### **C.446 Reports:**

- a) Chair of the Council – members took note of the Annual Report of the outgoing Chair for the year 2020/21 (Report Item 14(a)). This would be publicised in the September parish magazine. The council thanked Cllr Keller for his comprehensive report and agreed that when the next Annual Village Meeting was held in 2022, the Annual Reports he had prepared in 2019/20 and 2020/21 when no AVM could be held should be picked up and included in the Annual Report for 2021/22 to maintain continuity of the record.

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- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 20 July 2021
  - c) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring Report for Month 4, 2021/22 (Report Item 14(c)). The bank balance at the end of July was £80,570.90. It was proposed that the council should consider moving more of its reserves into its savings account, leaving approx. £15,000 in the current account. It was agreed that the banking arrangements should be reviewed in October.
  - d) Traffic Management Working Group – Speedwatch had begun, and two speeding motorists and one biker had been caught and notified to the police.
  - e) Rights of Way – Two dog bins had been moved to their new locations, and one additional bin had been installed. The latter had caused a complaint and would be re-installed in a new location once relevant permissions were obtained.
  - f) Environment – (i) The National Trust had redecorated the Farrar Hall. The council should compliment them on this, as many residents had fond memories of the Hall when it had been in public use **ACTION: KL**. (ii) Dutch Elm Disease – there were some infected trees in the parish which were not being dealt with. Infected trees should not be logged and sold. Advice would be re-issued in the parish magazine **ACTION: MK**

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

#### **C.447 Correspondence**

The council took note of Report 15 on Correspondence received since the meeting on 29 June:

- a) Bin enclosure at the shopping precinct – the enclosure was no longer fit for purpose as the entrance was too small, the bins had been relocated on the pavements and parking areas, and the enclosure had been fly-tipped. A quotation would be obtained for clearing the tip and for removing/altering the enclosure. The Chair would consult the shop owners. **ACTION: PS**
- b) Overhanging hedge on the A259 (north side) between Gore Farm Close and Downs View Close – a complaint had been received, and the need for action would be investigated. **ACTION: PS**
- c) National Resilience Strategy – members took note that the government was consulting on this, but did not wish to comment.

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

#### **C.448 Dates of meetings in 2022**

The council took note of Report 16 proposing dates for meetings in 2022. The majority of dates were agreed, but the June meeting would be moved to the second Thursday in the month (9<sup>th</sup> June 2022) to avoid a clash with the four-day Jubilee Bank Holiday. The council would meet in September (Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022). The Annual Village Meeting would be held on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022. **ACTION: KL to publish these dates.**

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**C.449 Date of next meeting: Parish Council Meeting – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 6.30 pm in the Small Hall of the Village Hall.**

*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.33 pm.*

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....