



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 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 G Fowler, Cllr P Hill (Items C.483 – C.490), Cllr M Keller, Cllr C Lees, Cllr H Milligan and Cllr S Thorogood

**In attendance:** K Larkin (Parish Clerk); D Picknell (Admin Officer)

*There were no members of the public present.*

**C.483 Acceptance of apologies for absence:** - Cllr T Bryant, County Cllr S Shing, District Cllr M Lunn

**C.484 Declarations of Interests:** - None.

**C.485 Minutes**

- a) The minutes of the council meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair, subject to the amendment to item C.458(a) recommended at the informal meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021
- b) The minutes of the informal meeting of councillors held on the Zoom platform on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

**C.486 Report of Maria Caulfield MP**

The council received and took note of a written report from Maria Caulfield MP on constituency matters. A question had previously been raised about progress on the Exceat Bridge project, in particular whether the necessary funding was now in place. Ms Caulfield reported that the county had now received £7.9 million from the government, which would enable the Bridge plans to be completed, subject to the grant of planning permission by the South Downs National Park Authority.

**C.487 Business in Progress**

The council received and took note of Report 6 on progress since the informal meeting on 4 November 2021. The following were discussed:

- a) Village Design Statement – members took note of the discussion of this item at the informal meeting held on 4 November 2021 [Item C.473 (a)].

RESOLVED - That the Village Design Statement be reviewed as a matter of urgency and submitted to the SDNPA for adoption as a supplementary planning document in its updated form

- b) Flint wall in the Downlands Way precinct (formerly part of the bin bay) – members requested that the ownership of the wall be verified by the Hon.

Solicitor, and that a check be done as to whether it was supporting anything, before a decision could be made as to its demolition and the future use of the former bin area **ACTION: KL to contact DG.** It was noted that the bins currently around the precinct had not come from the old enclosure, which had become a fly tip.

- c) Infrastructure projects potentially suitable for a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funding application – the following were proposed in order of priority:
- Proposed new village sign **ACTION: MK to draft the application to the South Downs National Park Authority**
  - Proposed pavement from Old Willingdon Road to Windmill Lane **ACTION: KL to locate former proposals and PH to draft the application**
  - Proposed reinstatement of Downs View Lane bus stop **ACTION: KL to draft the application based on information supplied by County Cllr Shing**
  - Upgrade of the play area to provide equipment for older children – this should be held over pending community consultation

The deadline for applications would be 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022. It was agreed that in normal circumstances the community should be consulted in advance for ideas and preferences, and this should be an agenda item at the next Annual Village Meeting (20 May 2022) to propose applications in 2022/23 **ACTION: KL**

#### **C.488 Risk Management Strategy**

The council considered Report 7 reviewing the council's strategy and proposing updates. The following items classified as 'High' risk were discussed:

- External Audit, para 2.1 – there had been no update to the model Financial Regulations issued by the National Association of Local Councils. The current model had been fully implemented by the council, hence no risk of failed External Audit. The notional risk should be downgraded to Medium
- Secure Storage for data, para 5.1 – this had been categorised as High risk as the council currently had no cybercrime insurance, the previous policy having been withdrawn from the market. The council's current three year policy agreement with WPS Council Guard would end on 31 May 2022 and fresh quotes should be sought from three potential providers (WPS; BHIB; Aviva) in the spring **ACTION: KL.** At least one of these might include cybercrime insurance. In the meantime, all financial data was copied to four councillors and to the Admin Officer on a monthly basis and should be easily recoverable if the main office computer were hacked.
- Risk of Personal Injury, para 7.1 – Cllr Fowler would undertake future visual inspections of the play area and the risk of injury on the equipment should be reduced to Medium. It was no longer considered necessary to use anti-viral spray on the play equipment, though this could be reviewed.

- Emergency Plan Risk prioritisation – the incidence of disease such as a pandemic had previously been rated as moderately likely but with significant impact. It should in future be rated as High due to the substantial operational impact which had been experienced and the likelihood of a recurrence. It was agreed that the Emergency Plan should be reviewed to reassess what kind of event should trigger the calling of an emergency in the parish **ACTION: PS to bring forward proposals; KL to update the contact details in the confidential Appendix to the Plan.**
- General – all councillors were invited to notify the Chair or Clerk of any other points where they would like to propose amendments **ACTION: all councillors.**

#### **C.489 Budget and Precept 2022/23**

The council considered Report 8, the second review of the budget and precept proposals for 2022/23. The clerk advised that one item of capital expenditure in the current year had been omitted from the forecast: £4,663 for the speed sign to be installed in Gilberts Drive. This would reduce the projected end of year bank balance.

Members were concerned to note the high and unbudgeted level of expenditure on by-elections in the current year, which would have to be covered from the Projects budget and/or from reserves. A comparable amount could theoretically be required again in 2022/23, as the council must always comply with a legitimate call for a by-election, though the event would necessarily be unpredictable. The budget would have to cater for this by raising the precept and/or decreasing the amount of precept dedicated to projects, or running down reserves, there being limited scope for cutting back on routine items of expenditure under the other main heads of the budget.

It was agreed that an informal meeting should be held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 7.00 pm on the Zoom platform to sift through the budget and precept proposals and achieve an appropriate balance. The amended proposals would go on the agenda for 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022 when the budget and precept demand 2022/23 would be finalised. **ACTION: PS/PH to review the second draft; KL to provide illustrations of the effect of raising the precept; KL/DP to set up an informal budget meeting on 14 December 2021.**

#### **C.490 Greensward Renaturing Project**

The council considered Reports 9 and 9a regarding a request from the East Dean Greensward Company Ltd for a grant of £500 to finance the creation of a renatured area on the Greensward. There was support for the principle of undertaking environmental projects, but concern that this particular project required public money to pay for a project on privately owned land. The parish council did already pay for the mowing of the Greensward, and for occasional tree works. However, such a use of public money had to be justified to the auditors, every year, and was only permitted on the basis that it had been the local custom for many years and appeared to have public support, the land being a registered village green. Members were reluctant to authorise more than this basic maintenance whilst having no say on the usage of the property, no offer of match funding from the landowner, and a Projects budget reduced due to the unexpected cost of by-elections. The Lead

Member for the Environment stated that the planting of the wildflowers could not now proceed until the autumn of 2022, and proposed that the project should be held in abeyance until the next financial year, and that in the meantime the council should seriously consider setting aside a section of the budget for environmental projects generally. There was support for this proposal in principle.

#### **C.491 Proposed Friston Pond Nature Site**

The council was invited by the Lead Member for the Environment to approve in principle the submission of an Expression of Interest to the South Downs National Park Authority to have Friston Pond designated as a Nature Site. This would contribute to the SDNPA's stated policy of renaturing some 13,000 hectares by 2030. There was support for this proposal and the Lead Member was encouraged to proceed (deadline 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022) **ACTION: HM/PS/ST.** If the Expression of Interest were accepted, the council would need full information on the practical consequences of accepting the designation, before giving final approval.

#### **C.492 Council grant scheme**

The council considered Report 11 giving further information on the cost of the equipment required by the Short Mat Bowls Club, and agreed to pay the club a grant of £300 to cover the cost of 4 Jacks and 4 Delivery Mats.

RESOLVED - That a grant of £300 be paid to the Short Mat Bowls Club

#### **C.493 Payments and Receipts**

The council took note of Report 12 and agreed to give retrospective approval to the ordering of poll cards for the December by-election. This unbudgeted expenditure had been ordered by the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk due to the tight schedule required by Electoral Services at Wealden District Council.

RESOLVED - That retrospective approval be given to the ordering of poll cards for the December by-election.

Members then considered the schedule of payments for December 2021 and receipts for November 2021. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes]*. An additional payment of £38.00 for the hire of the village hall in November was also noted and approved.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £14,552.47 be approved

#### **C.494 Reports:**

- a) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 16 November 2021.
- b) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring Report for Q.3, Month 8, 2021/22. The bank balance at the end of November had been £79,034.12.
- c) Traffic Management Working Group – East Sussex Highways had now painted three additional 30 mph roundels in Gilberts Drive, one near the

junction with the A259 for motorists heading south, and two more by East Dean Church (i.e. one on each carriageway). A letter of thanks to be sent to Highways **ACTION: KL.**

- d) Highways and Rights of Way – the council took note of the report of the A259 MRN South Coast Corridor Study Stakeholders' Workshop (October 2021), which was agreed to be positive but aspirational. It was also reported that the current works on the A27 would make it possible to cycle direct from Eastbourne to Lewes; (ii) the council took note of the Cuckmere Buses Managing Directors' Report, 22 November 2021; (iii) Path clearance - the Lead Member and the clerk were dealing with a seasonal round of requests for path clearance. A supply of bark chips had been delivered at Friston Pond for spreading on paths that could become boggy in winter; (iv) Roundel path signs – a supply of these free signs had been promised by East Sussex Rights of Way to improve local signage without installing cumbersome posts on privately owned verges, where they might not be welcome.
- e) Recreation Ground – (i) Cllr Fowler had completed the agreed programme of works to the pavilion (principally a complete re-cladding). The building was now sound, including the barge boards, and only the doors had not been replaced: Cllr Fowler would assess their condition and report on any maintenance requirements. The council thanked Cllr Fowler for the work which had been done to a high standard. The building had been closed for the winter and the water turned off. It was agreed that for future ease of access to the water main and the meter a manhole key should be obtained **ACTION: GF/PS;** (ii) a bench in the play area needed repair. Cllr Fowler kindly agreed to do the repair and to monitor the condition of benches generally so as to maintain a rolling programme of maintenance.
- f) Platinum Jubilee events – the National Trust had responded positively to the council's request to site a beacon on Went Hill and a site meeting had been arranged with the local Lead Ranger on a spot just outside the Site of Special Scientific Interest but visible both from the recreation ground and from a distance. Natural England might still need to assent to the use of the site, and the tenant farmer must be consulted. The beacon would be mounted on a temporary post of composite construction which could be cleanly removed afterwards, and a more substantial oak post provided for mounting the permanent village sign next to the Birling Gap Road. The programme for the event on the recreation ground on 2<sup>nd</sup> June was taking shape and a local band had kindly offered to provide music at the pavilion free of charge. An event licence etc. would be obtained. It was noted that the parish no longer had the contact previously relied upon to bring marquees for the village fete. It was suggested that a call be put out in the Parish Magazine for anyone who could supply a new contact for hire of a marquee. Hiring was to be preferred to purchase, as marquees were typically not durable **ACTION: MK.**

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

### C.495 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 15 on Correspondence received since the informal November meeting, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Overhanging hedge on Hillside – the hedge to the rear of 17 Deneside had begun to obstruct sightlines on Hillside. As the property was unoccupied it was agreed that Climpsons should be requested to cut the hedge back  
**ACTION: CL.**
- b) Dog bin for Elven Lane – a potential site had been identified and the adjacent householder would be consulted **ACTION: ST.**
- c) Signage at the Crowlink/Jevington crossover of the A259 – a resident had reported that motorists crossing southwards wrongly assumed that the crossover was one way in that direction, but in fact it was two way. East Sussex Highways should be asked to inspect the site and improve the signage **ACTION: CL to contact IJ.**

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

#### **C.496 Officer Annual Appraisals**

*The Clerk and Admin Officer left the room during discussion of the following items:*

- a) Clerk/RFO appraisal – the council considered a confidential report by the Chair.

RESOLVED – That the clerk's salary should move to scale point 24 backdated to 1st April 2021 and should be further increased to scale point 25 on the national scale with effect from 1st April 2022.

- b) Admin Officer appraisal – the council considered a confidential report by the Chair.

RESOLVED – That the Admin Officer's salary should move to scale point 16 backdated to 1st April 2021 and should be further increased to scale point 17 with effect from 1st April 2022.

Councillors also noted the recommendation from HMRC that the home office working allowance be increased from £18 to £26 and that this be with effect from 1st April 2021.

RESOLVED - That the home working allowance paid to the Clerk and the Admin Officer should be increased to £26 per officer per month backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

The council recorded its thanks to the clerk and the Admin Officer for their hard work and significant input to keeping the Council running, particularly during the past 18 months.

*The Clerk and Admin Officer returned to the room.*

#### **C.497 Date of next meeting: Parish Council Meeting – Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 6.30 pm in the Small Hall of the Village Hall.**

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*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.20 pm.*

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....