



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 6 January 2022 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, Gilberts Drive, East Dean, commencing at 6.30 pm**

**Councillors present:** Cllr P Seeley (Chair), Cllr M Bustard, Cllr G Fowler, Cllr P Hill, Cllr M Keller, Cllr C Lees, Cllr H Milligan and Cllr S Thorogood

**In attendance:** District Cllr M Lunn; K Larkin (Parish Clerk); D Picknell (Admin Officer)

*There were no members of the public present*

### **Public Session**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Michael Bustard to his first meeting following his success in the December by-election. Cllr Bustard had signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Elections and Co-options: The council took note of a written submission from Mr P Williamson and Mr R Coomber, objecting to the article published by the council in the January edition of the parish magazine, entitled 'Democracy at Work?'. The complainants said: 'we object to the apparent stance being taken towards local voters, who activated their legal right to ensure two elections were held in 2021 to fill vacancies on the council'. The council was requested to add the topic to the Correspondence report for the February council meeting, and this was agreed.

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

**C.498 Acceptance of apologies for absence:** - Cllr T Bryant

**C.499 Declarations of Interests:** - None.

### **C.500 Minutes**

The minutes of the council meeting held on 1 December 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **C.501 Report of the District Councillor**

District Cllr M Lunn reported on the following matters:

- a) Wealden Local Plan – the publication of the draft Plan had been delayed by internal discussion of, and opposition to, the housing numbers that central government required the District to provide for in the Plan. The numbers were felt to be excessive and calculated on a questionable basis. The distribution would impose an unreasonable burden on the Low Weald area which was the only part of the District not subject to special protection, and the local infrastructure could not support the numbers. Eight hundred of the homes for

which planning permission had already been granted had not yet been built, and a number of those which had been built could not be sold. It appeared that developers were holding back further building to maintain high prices. In addition, some London Boroughs were now doing deals to buy Wealden houses, as prices outside London were lower than those in London. This was felt to be unacceptable. The District council was lobbying central government to agree that the unsold or unbuilt homes already approved should be counted as part of the future housing provision in the District. The parish council was urged to keep abreast of this debate as the outcome would indirectly affect even those parishes within the South Downs National Park.

- b) Management of the Cuckmere Estuary – the Environment Agency would continue to take responsibility for removing shingle that was blocking the estuary, but had rejected the proposal to ‘de-main’ the river and hand management to the local Water Management Board. Debate therefore continued over the trigger point at which clearance should be done, i.e. whether it should be done in response to flooding or pro-actively to prevent flooding. A meeting was imminent and Maria Caulfield MP would attend, as well as local councillors.
- c) Exceat Bridge – the South Downs National Park Authority had not yet granted planning permission for the new bridge due to concerns that the pedestrian crossing point at the Seven Sisters Country Park a short distance away (round a blind bend) could be made unsafe if traffic moved faster with no extra provision made to protect pedestrians. The problem was under discussion with East Sussex County Council. Parish councillors in response noted with approval that the safety issue was one they had raised and must be satisfactorily resolved. Further information would be requested from County Cllr Shing (**ACTION: KL**).

Members thanked Cllr Lunn for his report.

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

### **C.502 Business in Progress**

The council received and took note of Report 6 on progress made since the meeting on 1 December 2021. The following were discussed:

- a) Reinstatement of Downs View Lane bus stop – members recorded their thanks to East Sussex Highways who would now reinstate the stop at no cost to the parish.
- b) Emergency Plan – the current version of the Plan should be issued to all councillors with a request for any amendments to be discussed at the February meeting. The Chair and Clerk would revise the confidential appendix containing contact details. **ACTION: PS/KL**.
- c) Flint wall in the shopping precinct – an enquiry about ownership had been referred to the Hon Solicitor.

- d) Community Infrastructure Levy application for Outlook footpath – the details of the proposal drawn up in 2014/15 were still available but with no details of cost. An estimate still needed to be obtained **ACTION: PH/KL**
- e) Phone box on A259 – the status of this kiosk should be checked as a notice on it still proposed decommissioning. The Birling Gap Kiosk was already scheduled for retention. **ACTION: KL**

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

### **C.503 Budget and Precept 2022/23**

The council considered Report 7 with Appendix 7a, reflecting the discussions held at an informal meeting of councillors on 14 December 2021, as proposed in the minutes of the full council meeting held on 1 December 2021 [Item C.489]. The following resolutions were made unanimously:

RESOLVED – That the Report and the draft budget and precept 2022/23 set out in the Appendix be noted and approved

RESOLVED - That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on councillor allowances 2022/23 be noted

RESOLVED – That a precept demand of £71,500, equivalent to £71.88 per annum per Band D household, be approved for the financial year 2022/23

Members referred to the correspondence submitted in the Public Session on the subject of paying for by-elections. If the sum budgeted for by-elections in 2022/23 were not spent (this would be known by October, as no by-elections would be held in the six months prior to the general parish elections in May 2023), the council would consider several options e.g. whether to reduce the precept in 2023/24 and roll the budget over, or spend it. Members thanked the clerk/RFO for her work on the budget.

### **C.504 Jubilee Beacon Village Sign**

The council considered Report 8 by the Lead Member on an application to the South Downs National Park Authority for a grant of £500 towards the cost of re-purposing the Platinum Jubilee Beacon as a permanent village sign. The materials for the beacon had already been purchased. The total cost of the re-location would be approx. £1,000, i.e. the application was for a 50% grant. Enquiries were in hand as to whether the permanent siting would require planning permission. The Gilbert Estate's covenant over the recreation ground applied to any 'messuage or dwelling', not to the erection of a sign, but the Estate should be consulted as a courtesy.

RESOLVED - That the application to the SDNPA for a grant of £500 from CIL funds for the erection of a permanent Jubilee Beacon village sign be approved

### **C.505 Designation of Wildlife Verge on A259**

The council considered Report 9 on a proposal from East Sussex County Council that they should designate the verge on the south side of the A259 running from the

parish boundary east towards Eastbourne as a Wildlife Verge. Members supported this proposal unanimously, but noted that the verge in question lay outside the parish boundary, and that Eastbourne Borough Council should be consulted. **ACTION: KL to confirm the parish's support to ESCC.**

#### **C.506 Friston Forest Plan 2021-2031**

Members took note of the draft Forest Plan 2021-2031 recently published by Forestry England. In discussion there was praise for the draft Plan which sought to ensure the future health of the forest by gradually matching the types of trees to the changing climate and environment. Given the extensiveness of the forest, this should be a matter of considerable interest to the parish and its residents.

RESOLVED - That the draft Friston Forest Plan 2021/2031 be noted

#### **C.507 Payments and Receipts**

The council took note of Report 11 containing the schedule of payments for January 2022 and receipts for December 2021. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes].* An additional payment of £120.49 to John West for the repair of finger posts was also noted and approved.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £3,891.15 be approved

#### **C.508 Reports:**

- a) Chair of the Council – following a change in personal circumstances, Cllr Milligan had requested to step back from her role as Lead Member for the Environment, and would take up Communications via Social Media. Councillor Bustard would become Lead for the Environment. Cllr Keller would continue as Lead Member for Communications via the website and parish magazine. Members agreed and took note.
- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the remote informal committee meeting held on 21 December 2021.
- c) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring Report for Q.3, Month 9, 2021/22. The bank balance at the end of December had been £75,896.40.
- d) Traffic Management Working Group – the installation of the speed reactive signs ordered from East Sussex Highways was still awaited.
- e) Highways and Rights of Way – (i) Signage for rights of way on the Downlands Estate – the installation of the small roundels was in progress; (ii) Overgrowth on footpaths – several cases were still current; (iii) Two-way traffic signage at Jevington/Crowlink interchange – a response was awaited from East Sussex Highways; (iv) Spreading bark chips on rights of way – Climpsons had kindly agreed to deliver two more loads of chips to the Pond area; (v) Hedge overhanging Hillside – the occupants of the property in question had recently returned, so Climpsons had not been instructed to trim the hedge; (vi) Overgrowth in Micheldene Road – further action was required on a section of narrow verge on the right hand side after the A259 junction **ACTION: KL/ST to identify the properties involved**

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- f) Recreation Ground – (i) Cllr Fowler (Lead Member) would bring costings for the maintenance of the pavilion doors and some benches to the February meeting (**ACTION: GF**); (ii) the boundary post next to the vehicle gate to the recreation ground was too short to prevent unauthorised vehicle entry and should be replaced **ACTION: GF**.
- g) Platinum Jubilee events – Cllr Keller (Lead Member) reported that the National Trust had agreed to the temporary placement of the Jubilee Beacon on their land, subject to the grant of a formal licence and approval of a risk assessment **ACTION: MK**. The council should also have appropriate event insurance cover. The national programme of timings for the lighting of beacons had been put back half an hour to 9.45pm which would lengthen the time to be filled after dusk at the recreation ground. It was hoped to arrange for a band to play, possibly for two half hour sessions. It was also hoped to obtain an alcohol licence so that a bar could be run. Commercial approaches were now being made to the council, e.g. for mounting a firework display, but so far were not cost effective. The national organisers requested participating authorities to register, but the event could be registered as private to keep it local. The event protocol also included an invitation list for local dignitaries.
- h) Cuckmere Buses – the documents from the Stakeholders' Meeting on 22 November 2021 were noted. Members were pleased to see that the service was operational again.

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

### **C.509 Correspondence**

The council took note of Report 14 on Correspondence received since the December meeting, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Flint wall in the Downlands Way precinct – members took note of two letters, including one from the Local History Group, requesting that the wall should not be demolished because of its local amenity and historical value. The council would await advice from the Hon. Solicitor on ownership.
- b) Upper Street/ Flooding on 259 – there was ongoing discussion with East Sussex Highways regarding the problem of debris from Friston Hill causing mess at the Upper Street junction and flooding further down the hill. Wealden District Council had recently sent their street sweeper to clear the area, and this was much appreciated. **ACTION: PH to obtain more photos for Highways.**
- c) Visit by The Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company – the Company had requested to book their annual visit on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This was agreed provided the Cricket Club did not have a home match on that day. **ACTION: KL/DP to arrange**

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

**C.510 Date of next meeting: Parish Council Meeting – Thursday 3 February 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 7.30 pm.*

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....