



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 2 March 2023 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 C Lees, and Cllr H Milligan

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

There were no members of the public present. A question from a resident regarding the scope of Item 10 on the agenda, 'Wildlife Verge Corridors', was read out and deferred for consideration at the appropriate point in the meeting.

C.710 Acceptance of apologies for absence: Cllr T Bryant, Cllr G Fowler, Cllr P Hill, Cllr M Keller and Cllr S Thorogood

C.711 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.712 Minutes – the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 2 February 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

C.713 Report of the Member of Parliament

The council took note of a written report from Maria Caulfield MP on general constituency matters, including the news that it was proposed to build a new hospital in Eastbourne. Ms Caulfield had also written to East Sussex Highways confirming her valued support for lower speed limits in the parish.

C.714 Clerk's Report

The council took note of Report 7 providing an update from the parish office on work done in February 2023.

a) CIL funding for a cycle path - members considered whether the council's previous application for CIL funding for a cycle path from Friston Pond to Eastbourne golf club should remain 'live'. The original proposal had come from the South Downs National Park's own Eastern Downs Team, and had been supplemented by the parish council's proposal that if such a path were provided it should have an offshoot to Birling Gap, mitigating the current hazard of having vehicles and pedestrians mingling on that road.

RESOLVED – To make an application for both cycle path proposals to remain in the SDNPA's Infrastructure Business Plan for another round of consideration

b) Mowing the Micheldene triangle - Members also considered adding the grass triangle at the top of Micheldene Road to the mowing contract for 2023 at a cost of

£15 per cut, to be done each time the Greensward is mown (every fortnight in season, 14 cuts in all) at a total cost of £210.

RESOLVED - To add the Micheldene Road triangle to the 2023 mowing contract

c) **Bike racks in the Village Car Park** - Finally members took note of the queries raised by the Gilbert Estate in relation to the proposed installation of bike racks in the village car park (see also Report 15 Correspondence). Wealden District Council had responded to those queries: the racks would not have lighting, as this was not provided elsewhere; the offer of four hoops was based on a decision made by WDC in planning their general installation scheme in 2020/21; the racks were standard and no alternative proposals had been made or requested elsewhere. These responses would be passed on, and in the meantime Cllr Seeley and Cllr Lees would explore possible locations, including the curtilage of the Village Hall **ACTION: PS/CL.**

C.715 Disciplinary and Grievance Policies

The council considered a draft Disciplinary Policy and a matching Grievance Policy for the regulation of relationships between the council as employer, and its officers as employees, both to follow the template prepared by the National Association of Local Councils. Both were approved for adoption, subject to checking the consistency of the wording regarding use of committees etc.

RESOLVED - To adopt the recommended Disciplinary Policy and Grievance Policy with immediate effect

C.716 Annual Village Meeting 2023

The council took note of Report 9 on arrangements for the Annual Village Meeting to be held on 21 April 2023. The Chair drew attention to the purdah requirements in the run-up to the May elections, and advised that the AVM should be planned accordingly. The list of candidates would be known by the time of the council meeting on 6th April, and final arrangements for the AVM would be made then. All councillors were invited to propose topics for discussion, in addition to those already proposed: reduction of speed limits in the village; the strategy for future work on the Neighbourhood Plan; and the future maintenance of the verges in the centre of the village (the so called 'urban' or 30 mph zone). In the meantime the Chair would prepare his own annual report for publication at the AVM. **ACTION: PS; all councillors; KL**

C.717 Wildlife Verge Corridors

The council considered report 10 outlining an offer by East Sussex Highways to treat the rural verges in the parish as Wildlife Corridors in 2023. The statement read out in the Public Session relating to this item was also considered. It was agreed that the offer should be accepted. However, some additional mowing might be done where necessary for highway safety, e.g. on single track sections of the rural roads. The scheme would be run as a pilot for one season, after which ESCC would review it. It was noted that the council had also been requested to consider reducing the mowing of verges in the urban (30 mph) zone under their own mowing contract, when that next came up for review in the autumn of 2023. This would be a topic for discussion

at the Annual Village Meeting. Members expressed a willingness to include related environmental proposals on future council agendas if requested to do so.

RESOLVED - To request East Sussex Highways to treat the rural verges in the parish as Wildlife Corridors in 2023

C.718 Recreation Ground

The council considered Report 11. A request had been received from the Cricket Club to install a notice board at the entrance to the recreation ground, sponsored by the Residents' Association, carrying Club notices and also a permanent reminder of the restriction on flying drones in the area. Members agreed that there was no objection and permission should be given.

RESOLVED - To give permission to the Cricket Club to install a notice board at the entrance to the recreation ground

The council also considered a request from a resident to memorialise a relative by planting a tree on the western boundary of the recreation ground with a memorial plaque, and scattering some ashes at the base. A small native tree such as a rowan had been suggested. It was noted that there was no prohibition on the scattering of ashes, subject to the consent of the council as landowner. There were no objections, provided that the position of the memorial tree should be mutually agreed in advance of planting.

RESOLVED – To give permission for the planting of a memorial tree as requested

C.719 Payments and Receipts

The council took note of Report 12 listing the payments for March 2023; there had been no receipts in February 2023. Two additional payments were approved: £1,143.96 plus VAT to Wicksteed for the maintenance of the play area; and £260 plus VAT to Wealden District Council for emptying dog bins and litter bins in Q.4 2022/23. It was proposed that the invoice from Rustic Garden which had come in over budget (£1,260 plus VAT) should be financed by viring unspent funds from the Traffic Management budget. *[Note: the complete Payments Schedule is appended to these Minutes].*

Members were also asked to approve the future purchase of a supply of plastic (recycled) posts for replacement road name signs on the Downlands Estate at a total cost of £200, as this would be more cost effective than periodic replacement of the current wooden posts which were prone to rot. This was agreed. However, the payment would require the remaining funds to be vired from Traffic Management, with an excess of £67 to be vired from another budget head.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £6,539.48 be approved

C.720 Reports:

- a) Chair of the Council – the Chair reported the sad news that Mr Michael Baddeley, proprietor of the Barn Stores, had died. Members requested that a letter of condolence be sent to Mrs Baddeley, in appreciation of Mr Baddeley's service to the community, particularly during the pandemic. The proprietor of Sheppards Café would take over the store from 1 April 2023.
- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 21 February 2023
- c) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring report for the period ended 28 February 2023 (Report 14c). The bank balance at the end of February 2023 was £78,101.16
- d) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – the Chair of the Group reported that at the meeting held on 20 February 2023 there had been full discussion about NP's generally, culminating in a number of proposals. An important factor was the statutory nature of a formal plan and the protection it offered. Research undertaken by the Admin Officer into the reasons given by other parishes for proceeding or not proceeding with their own NPs had revealed that most were driven by the need to control development. It was felt that the EDF project should move slowly and at first should only contain an updated VDS. So the proposals were:
 - Recommend to the Parish a VDS be reviewed;
 - Propose that the **first** NP has one design policy only - being the revised VDS;
 - Engage our Neighbourhood Planning consultant to support and assist with design and draft of VDS using her wide experience in this field;
 - Over the next few months, prepare a communications plan to ensure adequate consultation in the Parish;
 - Ideally, aim to present the draft VDS for consultation at the Annual Village Meeting on 21 April 2023. If not ready, at least an update on NPSG progress;
 - Advertise for a new NPSG member to replace Peter Williamson;
 - Undertake back up research on other aspects of the NP in conjunction with preparation of NP/VDS.

All these proposals were agreed by the council. However, it was suggested that the April and May meeting dates should be cancelled, to enable the council to consult at the Annual Village Meeting, and to give the new Parish Council a chance to bed in, armed with any AVM feedback **ACTION: MB to consult Group members.** The Chair of the Group thanked Mrs Picknell, who would leave at the end of March, for her support and the accuracy of her work as Admin Officer serving the Group. She would be missed.

- e) Tree Warden – on behalf of the Tree Warden it was reported that some fallen branches at Friston Pond were impeding access to the seat and paths, and that Climpsons had been requested to remove them. This would be a relatively small job and quotations had not been obtained.

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- f) Recreation Ground – on behalf of the Lead Member it was reported that the access ramp was now in place though the final landscaping had yet to be completed. The water harvesting system and its ancillary equipment and fence were also installed. Finally, Cllr Fowler had kindly undertaken repairs to the front door of the pavilion as the lock had broken.
- g) Environment – the Lead Member commended the recent efforts made by volunteers to pick up litter from roadside verges, which was a great improvement to local amenities. However, volunteers had been warned not to collect rubbish dumped on private land as Wealden District Council would classify that as fly tipping.
- h) Defibrillators – on behalf of the Lead Member it was reported that more pads were being bought for the defibrillators **ACTION: KL to confirm the amount left in the ring-fenced budget.** The next training session would be held on 27th March 2023 and had already attracted a near capacity number of participants. Further sessions could be offered in future.
- i) Downlands Estate Management – the Chair, Vice Chair and Lead Member for Highways had met representatives of the Roads Company and the Residents' Association on 21 February. The Roads Company had now appointed a new Director and Company Secretary. Following the meeting, Cllr Seeley had written to East Sussex Highways requesting a reduction in speed limits in the parish, and had begun an application for an appraisal exercise to be carried out as a first step. This action had the full support of Maria Caulfield MP and the South Downs National Park Authority. A letter had also been sent to the Chief Executive of Wealden District Council requesting his consideration of a proposal that the local levy for road maintenance on the Downlands Estate be collected through the council tax. Finally, East Sussex Highways had been asked again whether the Estate could be closed to through traffic on occasions when Friston Hill was closed, on the grounds that the Estate Roads were private. The answer had been 'no': the Estate roads were classified as 'Private Streets', i.e. unadopted public highways which are roads which ESCC do not maintain, but may be used by the public.

RESOLVED - That the above Reports (a) to (i) be noted and action taken as discussed

C.721 Correspondence

The council considered Report 15 on correspondence received since the February meeting. Particular note was taken of the recent efforts by volunteers to clear litter from highway verges, which was much appreciated. It was agreed that a donation of £150 should be made to the group of volunteers, to support their future efforts. However, the volunteers should also be made aware that the parish council expected all litter picks to be done in compliance with Wealden District Council regulations regarding fly tipping etc.

RESOLVED - That a donation of £150 be paid to the Beachy Head and Seven Sisters Extreme Plastic Objects Removal team

The Clerk left the room for the discussion of the following item

C.722 Resignation of Parish Clerk/RFO

The council took note of Report 16 by the Chair on the status of the two officer positions on the parish council. The resignation of Dr Katrina Larkin as Parish Clerk/RFO with effect from 31 May 2023 was noted. It was agreed that the position of Deputy Clerk should be offered to her with effect from 1 June 2023, at a reduced rate of pay to be agreed, and for a 10 hour per week contract. **ACTION: PS/ST to prepare a draft contract for approval at the April meeting.**

It was further agreed that the council should proceed with the due process of advertising and appointing a Parish Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer in conjunction with the East Sussex Association of Local Councils, who would charge a fee of £200 plus VAT.

RESOLVED - To offer the post of Deputy Clerk to Dr Katrina Larkin w.e.f.1 June 2023

RESOLVED – To advertise the post of Parish Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer forthwith with the assistance of ESALC

The Clerk returned to the room and was told of these decisions

C.723 Date of next meeting: Thursday 6th April 2023 at 6.30 pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....

ANNEX

PAYEE	DETAILS	SUB TOTAL	VAT	TOTAL	REF.NO	DATE	NOTES
D L Thornton	Resilience Planning Package	120.00	-	120.00	1978	10/02/2023	Paid
ESALC Ltd	Appraisal training	40.00	8.00	48.00	1979	10/02/2023	Paid
Tansleys Printers Ltd	Reprint walking maps	200.00	-	200.00	1980	17/02/2023	Paid
G Fowler	Repairs to pavilion doors	198.55	-	198.55	1981	02/03/2023	
Rustic Garden	Spreading woodchips on rights of way	1,260.00	252.00	1,512.00	1982	02/03/2023	
K Larkin	Office costs - February 2023	38.78	-	38.78	1983	02/03/2023	
D Picknell	Office costs - February 2023	49.40	-	49.40	1984	02/03/2023	
Microsoft	Microsoft 365 auto renewal	59.99	-	59.99	D/D	02/03/2023	
Village Hall Trust	Hall hires - February 2023	57.00	-	57.00	1985	02/03/2023	
P Martin-Smith	Refund village sign materials	110.89	-	110.89	1986	02/03/2023	
HMRC	PAYE/NICS - February 2023	295.79	-	295.79	1987	02/03/2023	
ESCC	Pension contributions - February 2023	287.71	-	287.71	1988	02/03/2023	
	NOT used				1989	Not used	
Sovereign Alarms	Maintenance charge 2022/23	31.25	6.25	37.50	1990	02/03/2023	
Sovereign Alarms	Replace fire extinguishers	117.38	23.48	140.86	1991	02/03/2023	
K Larkin/D Picknell	Net salaries - March 2023 (aggregated)	1,698.26	-	1,698.26	1992/1993	28/03/2023	
D Picknell	Final payment in lieu of leave/overtime	tbc	-	tbc	1994	31/03/2023	
Wicksteed Leisure Ltd	Play area maintenance	1,143.96	228.79	1,372.75	1995	02/03/2023	
Wealden DC	Bin emptying - Q.4 2022/23	260.00	52.00	312.00	D/D	28/03/2023	
TOTAL		5,968.96	570.52	6,539.48			