



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 6 April 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 T Bryant, Cllr M Bustard, Cllr G Fowler, Cllr P Hill (Items C.724 – C.733), Cllr M Keller, Cllr C Lees, and Cllr S Thorogood

In attendance: County Cllr S Shing (items C.724 – C.728)

There were two members of the public present

Public Session

A resident asked the following questions:

- What could be done to mitigate the problem of excessive traffic, speeding and noise on Gilberts Drive, as the new speed indicator signs had not helped? Could a noise camera be installed? The Chair in response stated that a majority of comments on the new speed signs had been favourable. However, the parish council was campaigning for a Public Spaces Protection Order to cover the stretch of road from the A259/Gilberts Drive junction to the parish boundary at Beachy Head where the Eastbourne Borough Council PSPO area began. The council would also investigate the possibility of installing a noise camera. .
- Would the parish council consider requesting the SDNPA for funding for a footpath rather than a cycle path to Birling Gap, to serve pedestrians without making it easier for traffic to go faster? The Chair responded that the cycle path proposal was in fact intended to run from Seaford to Eastbourne via Friston Hill, but that the parish council also supported the idea of a footpath to take pedestrians from the old village to Birling Gap in safety, particularly in the section of the route near the Shepherd's Cottage.
- Were there to be no parish council events to mark the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III? The Chair replied that parish council had received instructions from Buckingham Palace not to light beacons for the coronation, so as not to detract from the impact of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, but to look ahead and plan to light beacons in 2024 to mark the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings. The parish council would, however, shortly vote on a proposal to donate £250 to the Residents' Association towards the cost of holding a Coronation Village Picnic on 7th May 2023. It was also hoped to unveil the new rustic village sign, commissioned for the Jubilee, during the Coronation holiday weekend.

A resident spoke regarding Item 10 on the agenda, Requests for Eco Funding. He disagreed that public money should be spent in this way, preferring the approach taken by the council at its meeting on 2 February 2023 [Carbon Impact Report, Minute C.704] which had

concluded that the council 'did not have power, and would not wish to dictate to residents what they should consume in their own homes. Each household must make its own decisions.' He also expressed concern that the identity of the group who wished to commission the mapping exercise was not clear; that the group itself had not done any fund raising; and that there was a lack of specificity about how the information gathered by the mapping exercise would be used, i.e. who would contact landowners, in what terms, and was there any indication as to which parcels of land were most likely to be at issue? The Chair responded that the council would bear these points in mind in their discussion of Item 10 on the agenda.

The Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting

C.724 Acceptance of apologies for absence: Cllr H Milligan; K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

C.725 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.726 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.727 Report of the Member of Parliament

The council took note of a written report from Maria Caulfield MP on general constituency matters.

C.728 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Shing gave a brief update on highway works in the vicinity of the parish. He expressed his appreciation of the work done by the outgoing council and looked forward to working with the new council after the May elections.

C.729 Clerk's Report

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

a) Coronation Village Picnic - members took note that the Residents' Association would organise a Coronation Village Picnic on 7th May 2023 and agreed that the council should donate £250 to the running of this event.

RESOLVED – That a donation of £250 be paid to the Residents' Association

b) Purchase of a new Ukrainian Flag – members noted that the flag which had been flying recently had been damaged, and agreed that a new one could be purchased at a cost of approx. £15.

RESOLVED – To approve the purchase of a new Ukrainian flag at a cost of approx. £15

c) Repair of the fingerpost at the junction of Went Way and Lower Street – the Lead Member reported that one arm of this fingerpost, pointing along the Went Way and labelled 'No Through Road' had rotted away, and the question was whether it

should be replaced, which could be costly, or the post simply made good. The Gilbert Estate was known to be in favour of replacement, but the cost of doing so might outweigh the benefits of doing so. On balance, members were in favour of restoring this traditional feature of the street scene, and Cllr Fowler kindly offered to estimate the cost of the work, which he would be prepared to carry out. This was agreed **ACTION: GF to estimate the cost of full repair.**

d) Speed limits in the parish – the Chair reported that East Sussex Highways had offered to refund the £500 paid by the parish for a feasibility survey, as this could not be carried out before the end of May, due to the forthcoming change of contractor. The parish was nevertheless invited to reapply at the end of May, with some prospect of success in lowering the speed limits on some roads. However, no public funding was anticipated for the roads on the Downlands Estate. An initial approach had been made to Wealden District Council regarding the possibility of Wealden collecting funds on behalf of the Roads Company, and this would be pursued. There would also be a meeting of the informal Downlands Estate Management group on 18 April.

e) Cycle rack in the village car park – members took note of the correspondence with the Gilbert Estate and of the Estate's preference for having simple chains attached to the walls of the car park, perhaps in a similar location to the Electric Vehicle charging points. Members agreed that once the EV locations were clarified the possibility of locating bike fastenings nearby should be pursued again **ACTION: Clerk**

RESOLVED – That the Clerk's report be noted and action taken as discussed

C.730 Annual Village Meeting 2023

The council took note of Report 8 on arrangements for the Annual Village Meeting to be held on 21 April 2023. Members agreed that the topics raised by the parish council should include the reduction of speed limits in the parish; and an update on Neighbourhood Planning. Refreshments had been ordered, and all councillors were requested to help with setting up the Hall from 2.30 pm on the afternoon of 21 April **ACTION: all councillors.** Seven candidates had been nominated to stand in the forthcoming general parish elections (all were serving councillors seeking re-election). There were nine seats on the council, so the seven nominees would be declared elected unopposed, and two further members would need to be co-opted in May. It was agreed that a call for candidates should be put out at the Annual Village Meeting and in the parish magazine **ACTION: PS; MK.** The vacancies would not need to be offered for by-election provided they were filled within a specified period of the day on which the general election was held [*Note by the Clerk: the specified period is 35 days, ending on Wednesday 7th June 2023*]

RESOLVED – That the report on arrangements for the Annual Village Meeting 2023 be noted and action taken as discussed

C.731 South Downs Local Plan Review/Parish Neighbourhood Plan

At the request of the Planning Committee [Minutes P.480 ND p.484, 21 March 2023] the council noted requests from the South Downs National Park Authority that all

parishes wholly within the National Park should prepare a Parish Priorities Statement, and also complete a Settlement Facilities Assessment. The SFA had already been submitted, being a purely factual document; the PPS should be submitted by October 2023.

Regarding the report from the Deputy Chair and another member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group [Planning Committee Report 10, 21 March 2023] it was noted that the Chair of the Group and Cllr Lees would hold an informal meeting with them on 11 April and would report back to the May council meeting

ACTION: MB; CL

The Chair of the NPSG would give the presentation at the Annual Village Meeting and had submitted the content to the SDNPA for checking, in order to provide robust guidelines as to what could and could not be included in the main body of an NP (which should have the same legal status as the Local Plan), and what would be the status of any material relegated to an appendix. He would also give advance notice to the AVM of the preparation of the Parish Priorities Statement, on which the community would be consulted.

C.732 Requests for Eco Funding

The council considered Report 10 outlining two requests for funding submitted by the Climate Friends group in the parish. The Chair stated that he had in addition received an email from Mr P Williamson (convener of the group) just before the meeting, in support of allocating funding of £4,500 to a mapping exercise. Members also took note of the comments made in the Public Session in opposition to this proposal. There was disappointment that no member of the group had chosen to attend the meeting.

In discussion members expressed concern that the group appeared to have no clear structure and no bank account, leaving its authority unclear; and that the South Downs National Park Authority which had offered a contribution of £3,000 towards the cost of the mapping exercise subject to match funding, consequently could not release the funds to the group. Equally, the SDNPA would not enter into communication with the parish council to confirm the availability of the £3,000 to the council, or to confirm any terms and conditions attached to the funds, the parish council not having been a party to the original application for match funding.

There was a further concern that the council's budget for 2023/24 had been set without knowledge of the application and had made no provision for it. In a previous year the precept had been raised to cover the cost of by-elections, and when that budget had remained partly unspent the council had been asked at the Annual Village Meeting 2022 to use the excess to reduce the precept. This had actually been done in 2023/24, holding back some funds for elections, but also running down reserves to achieve a reduction in the precept to alleviate the burden on households caused by inflation. The council had in addition contributed £5,000 in the 2022/23 financial year to the cost of a rainwater harvesting project at the recreation ground, for which the Cricket Club had been very active in raising funds.

A question was also raised as to whether there was any overlap between the proposals now on the table, and the biodiversity research offered by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Residents' Association, drawing on relevant expertise within the parish and operating within the remit and budget of the NPSG.

In conclusion, members stipulated that if the Climate Friends wished to pursue either of their grant applications, at least one member should make a presentation to the council in person. In the meantime the applications would be put on hold.

C.733 Sheppards Village Stores and Sheppard's Café

The council considered Report 11 and noted that a Premises Licence Application had been made for Sheppards Village Stores. Representations could be made to the Licensing Authority by 13 April 2023. There was support for the grant of the licence to increase the viability of the village shop.

A resident had suggested that if two parking bays in the shopping precinct were moved nearer to the carriageway then space could be released for an outdoor dining area adjacent to the café. The café owner had confirmed that she was interested in this proposal, and there was support for the concept among councillors. However, there was some concern that it would not be possible to reverse out of the relocated bays without entering the carriageway at a blind spot. Members asked whether an alternative arrangement of the parking bays might work, and it was agreed that this should be investigated **ACTION: PS**

Members therefore agreed to support the proposal in principle, subject to a full safety evaluation. If the project were ultimately approved, the Hon. Solicitor should be requested to draw up appropriate terms and conditions, including a lease or licence.

RESOLVED – That the licensing application be supported

RESOLVED - That the proposed creation of an outdoor seating area for Sheppards Café be approved in principle, subject to a safety evaluation and terms and conditions to be agreed

C.734 Payments and Receipts

The council took note of Report 12 listing the payments for April 2023 and receipts in March 2023. *[Note: the complete Payments Schedule is appended to these Minutes].*

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £5,416.78 be approved

C.735 Reports:

- a) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 21 March 2023
- b) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring report for the period ended 31 March 2023 (Report 14c). The bank balance at the end of March 2023 was £69,863.97

- c) Highways – there was strong support for tackling the problem of speeding bikes causing noise and safety hazards. Incidents should be reported to Operation Crackdown by as many residents as possible, to ensure a response. This would be publicised in the parish magazine and at the Annual Village Meeting **ACTION: MK; PS.**
- d) Tree Warden – the need for tree surgery on some trees at The Grange was being actively pursued by the Village Hall Trust and the Tree Warden
- e) Recreation ground – the Lead Member reported on the following matters: (i) a site had been agreed for the planting of the memorial tree approved in principle at the March meeting; (ii) the vehicle entrance to the recreation ground was in a very poor state and required some resurfacing. There could be several ownerships in this area (parish council; Gilbert Estate; East Sussex Highways) **ACTION: TB to investigate.** The council would however, have a right of access and a corresponding right to make good the access **ACTION: GF to research materials with Mr Pankhurst.** (iii) the Cricket Club notice board would be installed to the left of the vehicle entrance (blocking the way for anyone attempting to drive a vehicle round the side of the gate). (iv) the Cricket Club had requested permission to provide a memorial bench and to plant a tree in honour of their past president, Neil Gamble, who had recently passed away. It was agreed that a bench could be provided in the space near the pavilion where a broken bench had been removed, but that there was little or no space left for planting a tree. Further consideration would be given to this at the May council meeting. (v) the refurbished floor of the pavilion required painting, and the caretaker had reported a need for new carpeting in one of the changing rooms, and a new door mat. **ACTION: GF to investigate.** (vi) The water had been turned back on at the mains when the rainwater harvesting system was installed, but had yet to be turned on inside the building. This would be done and the meter would be read: a very high water bill had been received, possibly caused by the starting up of the water harvesting system. (vii) A bolt was missing from the rope climber in the play area **ACTION: GF to use a spare to replace it.** (viii) Rustic village sign – Cllr Keller reported on progress, including a preview of the final development of the design and the arrangements for installation. The design should be on display at the Art Group exhibition on 1 May, and it was hoped that the sign would be installed in time for the Coronation on 6 May 2023.
- f) Downlands Estate Management – the next meeting of the group would be held on 18 April 2023
- g) Council website – Cllr Keller reported that he was preparing handover notes on the management of the website, and would pass them to the clerk for future use **ACTION: MK; KL**

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

C.736 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 15 on correspondence received since the March meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Correspondence Report be noted

The Chair noted that the following item of business should be discussed privately by reason of its confidential nature. A member of the public left the room.

C.737 Deputy Clerk Contract

The Chair reported that as yet there had been no applications for the post of Clerk. The advice from the East Sussex Association of Local Councils was that higher pay of at least £20 per hour must be offered to attract applicants. The present clerk would be in office until the end of May, and had agreed in principle to carry on thereafter if required. She had been offered and would accept payment at Spine Point 23 (£15.67 per hour) for a 10 hour week on taking up the post of Deputy Clerk on 1 June 2023. It was proposed that she should keep her pension and leave entitlement after changing roles, and that her other terms and conditions of employment should continue as before.

RESOLVED – That Dr Larkin’s terms and conditions of employment on taking up the role of Deputy Clerk be approved as discussed

C.738 Date of next meeting: Annual village Meeting, Friday 21 April 2023, doors open 5.30 pm

Annual Parish Council Meeting and ordinary May council meeting, Thursday 18 May 2023, 6.30 pm

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....

ANNEX

PAYEE	DETAILS	SUB TOTAL	VAT	TOTAL	REF.NO	DATE	NOTES
C Lees	Refund posts for street names	151.97	30.39	182.36	1996	08/03/2023	Paid
East Sussex Highways	Feasibility Study	500.00	100.00	600.00	1997	08/03/2023	Paid
R Franklin	Cleaning bus shelters Jan/Feb 2023	120.00	-	120.00	1998	08/03/2023	Paid
P Seeley	Mileage - SDNPA visit to Midhurst	51.30	-	51.30	1999	10/03/2023	Paid
C Lees	Refund Royston Close sign	81.10	16.22	97.32	2000	17/03/2023	Paid
James Hallam	Insurance premium adjustment	20.43	-	20.43	2001	22/03/2023	Paid
D Picknell	Office costs - March 2023	26.00	-	26.00	2001A	28/03/2023	Paid
M A Penney	Donation to BHASS Explore - litter pickin	150.00	-	150.00	2002	28/03/2023	Paid
Various	Councillor allowances (aggregated) 2 of 2	350.00	-	350.00	2003, 2005, 2006, 2007	28/03/2023	Paid
P Hill	Refund defibrillator pads	82.00	16.40	98.40	2008	29/03/2023	Paid
2023/24 Financial year:							
ESCC	Pension contributions - March 2023	287.71	-	287.71	2009	06/04/2023	
HMRC	PAYE/NICS - March 2023	470.21	-	470.21	2010	06/04/2023	
Grants (Eastburne) Ltd	Mowing contract - March 2023	938.00	187.60	1,125.60	2011	06/04/2023	
K Larkin	Office costs - March 2023	38.78	-	38.78	2012	06/04/2023	
Village Hall Trust	Hall hires 0 March 2023	57.00	-	57.00	2013	06/04/2023	
R Franklin	Cleaning bus shelters - March 2023	60.00	-	60.00	2014	06/04/2023	
Cuckmere Buses	Support grant March-April 2023	504.10	-	504.10	2015	06/04/2023	
P Seeley	Refund refreshments for AVM 2023	156.87	-	156.87	2016	06/04/2023	
K Larkin	Net salary - April 2023	820.00	-	820.00	2017	28/04/2023	tbc
Business Stream	Pavilion supply	200.70	-	200.70	D/D	13/04/2023	
TOTAL		5,066.17	350.61	5,416.78			
RECEIPTS							
Barclays	Bank interest on defibs account	5.11	-	5.11	BGC	06/03/2023	
Barclays	Bank interest on Saver a/c	17.82	-	17.82	BGC	06/03/2023	
TOTAL		22.93	-	22.93			