

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 6 June 2019 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, Gilberts Drive, East Dean, commencing at 6.30 pm

Councillors present: Cllr M Keller (Chair), Cllr L d'Urso, Cllr K Godden, Cllr P Hill and Cllr J Walker (Items C.45 – C.55)

In attendance: County Cllr S Shing (Items C.45 – C.46); P Williamson (Tree Warden); K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

There were two members of the public present.

Public Session - A resident complained of the tendency among estate agents to advertise properties for sale as suitable for extension to an unrealistic degree. He requested the council to contact the agents and draw their attention to the Village Design Statement. The Chair advised that this would be considered as part of the Correspondence report.

The Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting

C.41 Acceptance of apologies for absence: - Cllr T Bryant, Cllr N Day; Cllr P Seeley; Cllr B Wheatley; and District Cllr M Lunn

C.42 Declarations of Interests: - Cllr M Keller (lives opposite a property named in the Public Session); Cllr L d'Urso (knows the candidate for co-option to the council).

C.43 Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 16 May 2019 and the minutes of the ordinary May council meeting held on 16 May were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

C.44 Co-option of a Councillor

The Chair proposed and Cllr Hill seconded the motion that Mrs Joyce Walker be co-opted as a member of the council.

RESOLVED - The motion was put to the meeting and declared carried unanimously

Cllr Walker signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting

C.45 Business in Progress

The council noted Report 5 on progress since the May meeting, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Friston build-out – East Sussex Highways had requested the parish council to pay £3,074 as their 50% contribution to the cost of the design phase.

Members asked for an estimate of the final cost, as the original budget was only £6,000. County Cllr Shing supported this strategy. **ACTION:KL**

- b) Safety in Birling Gap Road – East Sussex Highways had advised that it would not be good strategy to provide a footway for pedestrians only on the short section of road between the old Sheep Centre and the Shepherds Cottage, and would prefer a comprehensive scheme taking the footway back to the village. Councillors objected that the problem had not been fully understood: the immediate need was for warning signs either side of the blind bend, as the hidden section of the road was the very spot where pedestrians were obliged to walk in the road. County Cllr Shing supported the strategy of checking with the Principal Traffic and Safety Officer. **ACTION: KL**
- c) Verge in Downsvie Lane – a local contractor had been found with the necessary certification and insurance to clear the verge for the parish council for a one-off payment of £300. Thereafter, the council's regular mowing contractor should be asked to add the maintenance of this verge to his contract if possible **ACTION: PH**. The budget for this was currently £200. It was agreed that a further £100 should be taken from reserves.
- d) Notices in the Downsvie shopping precinct – the supplier had finally produced the 'No Parking on Pavement' notices, and Cllr Hill would affix them to the rear fences of the properties facing the shops, the residents having given permission. **ACTION: PH**

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

C.46 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) Meals on Wheels subsidy – there was a current consultation on ending this subsidy, which cost the county council £500,000pa. [Closes 6 August 2019]
- b) Support for working age adults – there was a current consultation on providing targeted support for adults with disability in the 18-64 age group to enable them to live independently or at home as long as possible. [Closes 13 August 2019]. About 2,500 people in the county would qualify: total cost £247,000pa.
- c) Airbourne 2019 – temporary traffic lights would be installed at Exceat Bridge during this event, having proved very useful in previous years.
- d) New bridge at Exceat – the planning application had been delayed until spring 2020 due to careful consultation with South Downs National Park Authority.
- e) Seven Sisters Country Park – this was one of seven country parks which ESCC proposed to transfer into new ownership to save maintenance costs. Cllr Shing objected to the transfer of this particular Park as it was one of the best attractions in the south east. The concern of other county councillors was that the buildings on the site were old and might need expenditure. The transfer was likely to be given the go-ahead by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

RESOLVED – That the report of the County Councillor be noted

C.47 Annual Audit 2019

The Lead Member introduced Report 6. The Internal Auditor had not raised any concerns. He had focused on Risk having previously recommended Key Person Cover and Cyber Crime cover to all councils. The parish was dealing with key person cover through the appointment of an administrative assistant, and had taken out a new Cyber Crime policy. All councils were also recommended to ensure that regular visual inspections of the play equipment were recorded in writing as evidence, in case any insurance claim arose [See the council's Risk Management Strategy para 7.3]. The log sheets should be updated if necessary and brought to the July meeting **ACTION: KL/ND.** The council had previously reviewed the draft Final Accounts which had also been published in the Annual Village Report, and was now requested to give final approval to all the relevant documentation for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019. All items were approved as follows:

RESOLVED – To approve the Final Accounts 2018/19

RESOLVED - To confirm the effectiveness of the council's Internal Audit regime between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019

RESOLVED - To approve the Annual Governance Statements 2019

RESOLVED - To approve the Annual Accounting Statements 2019, with supporting end of year bank reconciliation and Explanation of Variances

RESOLVED - To approve the suggested period from Monday 17 June to Friday 26 July 2019 for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the Unaudited Annual Return

C.48 Administrative Assistant

The Chair proposed that the council should re-advertise this post with the same Job Description as before, with a closing date in mid-July, with a view to interviewing in late July and bringing a recommendation to the August council meeting. The clerk should also put notice of the appointment on the clerks' network.

RESOLVED - The motion was put to the meeting and declared carried unanimously.

The Chair thanked Mrs Jane Tatum for kindly providing temporary cover for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Members considered and approved the Job Description proposed for the temporary position, and agreed that the work should be done on a month by month basis and invoiced to the council. The temporary contract would be covered by a letter from the Chair. **ACTION: MK**

RESOLVED - That the Job Description for the temporary cover of the NPSG be approved

C.49 Rejuvenation of Shopping Area – East Dean in Bloom

Cllr d'Urso introduced Report 8 with the update that the Residents' Association had very kindly agreed to donate £500 to the provision of new planters for the precinct, and that the Downland Butcher, the Barn Stores and Divine of East Dean Hair

Boutique had each offered £100. A Gardening Club member was already maintaining two planters outside the doctors' surgery on a voluntary basis, and the Club therefore would not wish to take on additional responsibility in this area.

The precinct would first need to be tidied up, and sturdy planters provided. The project should then be added to the council's budget for the coming years. A resident had queried whether the scheme would unduly favour the precinct businesses over those located elsewhere, but members agreed that as the precinct was council property their intervention would be justified. The maximum set-up cost would be £1,114 plus the cost of plants: a sample quote was £128, but residents could also be invited to donate plants. The Lead Member for Finance advised that the cost envelope should be £1,500 of which £800 had been promised, leaving a balance of £700 to be funded by the council. It was agreed that Cllr d'Urso should secure the promised funding and then order the containers. **ACTION: LD**

RESOLVED - To approve the East Dean in Bloom project subject to receipt of voluntary contributions

C.50 Council Grant Scheme

Members considered Report 9 on applications received for council grants in the current financial year. It was noted that the application received from the Residents' Association for a council contribution to the East Dean in Bloom project had already been discussed and approved [Minute C.49 above]. The application from the Parochial Church Council for a grant of £1,000 for churchyard maintenance had been approved under a different budget head, and it was agreed that this should now be paid. A request had been received for a grant of £250 for the parish magazine, and members agreed that this should be paid from the Public Relations budget in view of the use made by the council of the space allocated to them without charge in the magazine.

It was further agreed that all the other grants applications should be approved in full, as follows: Bowling Club - £650; Community Watch - £250; Hedgehog Street - £200; the JPK Project (Charity of the Year) - £500; total £1,600. The Donations budget would therefore save £1,400 out of the £3,000 allocated.

RESOLVED - To approve payment of all the above grants under the relevant budget heads

C.51 Tree Warden Report

Members considered Report 10 from the Tree Warden. The Warden stated that his main request was for the council to have a professional tree survey done. This would depend on first assembling information on the extent of land owned by the parish council, and land over which the council might have influence, to ensure that the information obtained could be acted upon, e.g. by planting more trees where appropriate. Private residential properties would not be included. One of the interested suppliers, not required to be VAT-registered, had provided a quote of £1,448.08 for the parish-wide provision of digital land ownership mapping. It would be helpful if major land ownerships bordering the parish could also be included. Ideally the data should also be downloadable onto the Parish Online mapping service to

which the council subscribed [**ACTION: KL to check with Ordnance Survey**]. In discussion, members noted the complexity of land ownerships in the parish, particularly on the Downlands Estate, but agreed that the information could be valuable and that further quotes should be sought [**ACTION: NPSG to seek recommendations from Action in Rural Sussex**].

The second phase would be a professional tree survey based on the land known to be relevant to the council, and this would give a full sense of the value of what was growing to the community. However, the cost would exceed the budget of £14,500 for the NPSG in the current year, even though grants might be obtained. The Residents' Association would consider support. It was agreed that the NPSG be invited to consider this further and make any recommendation for expenditure to the council **ACTION: NPSG**.

The Warden recommended certain tree works, as follows:

- a) TPO line of Robinia (False Acacia trees) – a resident had complained several times about one of these trees near the Micheldene Road entrance to the Downlands Estate having a dead bough overhanging a neighbouring garden and possibly placing her own property at risk. There was also dead wood in the canopy. The trees were on Crown Estate land, and therefore not maintained. There appeared to be no public safety issue as the affected branches overhung private property. The cheapest quote obtained was £672 incl. VAT which exceeded the budget of £250 for tree maintenance in the current year. Members agreed that the resident should be advised, in view of these limited resources and the fact that the council had no liability in the matter, to negotiate with neighbours to have the work carried out privately. **ACTION: KL**
- b) Ash Dieback - it was recommended that the council ensure that any ash trees for which it might have responsibility should be monitored, owing to the safety hazard potentially caused by this disease. Members agreed
- c) Trees on the Greensward – there was evidence of some trees having been damaged by strimming, and the council was recommended to contact its contractor to ensure that no contact was made with the trees when strimming. In addition, the Greensward Company would be advised to undertake remedial work to include removing a small amount of turf from around the base of all young trees and then applying mulch. **ACTION: KL**

The Warden advised that other matters he had raised could be referred to the Planning Committee for consideration. Members thanked the Warden for his comprehensive report.

RESOLVED – To note the report of the Tree Warden and take action as discussed.

C.52 Payments and Receipts

The council considered Report 11 - the Schedule of Payments for June 2019 and receipts for May 2019. *[Note: the complete Schedule is published on the council website]*. Two additional items were added to the schedule: a £20 refund to S Mills

for topping up the council's mobile phone; and £74.59 to the pavilion caretaker for cleaning and supplies in the month of May.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £3,486.50 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

C.53 Urgent Business

The Chair stated that there had been a recent case of vandalism on Footpath 24, where the squeeze gate with its memorial plaque had been torn off its hinges and the safety barrier and path sign at the A259 end had also been torn down. Information was being sought from residents [**ACTION: PH**]. The incident had been reported to the police. The barrier and sign post were thought to be the property of East Sussex County Council [**ACTION: KL to notify them**]. A resident had offered to contribute to the replacement of the squeeze gate, and it was agreed that other contributions should be invited through the parish magazine [**ACTION: MK**]. Any shortfall should be made up by the council as the squeeze gate was a feature of the village.

C.54 Reports

The following items were discussed:

- a) Chair of the Council – (i) the Chair thanked all councillors for their preparations for the Annual Village Meeting on 17 May 2019, which had been well received. (ii) Website accessibility – new regulations would be introduced during the autumn requiring all websites to be as accessible as possible to users with disabilities. Government guidance was available and Vision ICT should be asked for guidance [**ACTION: KL**]. A report would be brought to council. (iii) South Coast Classic cycle race – this professional event taking place on 27/28 July would pass through the village several times. The police should be asked to cone Gilberts Drive to prevent parked cars causing a safety hazard [**ACTION: KL**].
- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 21 May 2019
- c) Neighbourhood Planning – the council took note of the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019. The minutes of the meeting held on 16 April would be available shortly. The Vice Chair of the Steering Group agreed to bring the council a timescale for the completion of the project. [**ACTION: LD/NPSG**].
- d) Finance – the balance at the end of May 2019 was not available. [Note by the clerk: the balance was £76,298.10].
- e) Rights of Way and Highways – (i) Missed bin at Friston Pond – the collecting crews had at some point let this bin drop off the schedule. Wealden District Council would not reinstate it without charging for it (£250pa). Members agreed to let this bin go as there was other provision close by. (ii) Footpath 8 – hedge letters had been sent to the householders whose hedges were overhanging this right of way. (iii) New memorial bench – one enquiry had been received regarding the opportunity to purchase a new bench to stand at Friston Pond, but potential donors were still being sought. [**ACTION: KL to send details of all benches to LD**].

- f) Recreation Ground – (i) Play Area fence – a third quote was needed **[ACTION: PH/ND]**. The new fence should be constructed at the end of the cricket season. The cost might exceed the budget. (ii) Warning signs during cricket matches – these were now in place to warn approaching motorists of the danger of stray balls reaching the highway. Members advised that signs would be best placed adjacent to the speed limit signs during matches. (iii) Turfing the entrance to the recreation ground – Rook Construction should be advised that the ground level had dropped behind the new manhole cover and presented a safety hazard. The council would consider re-turfing in the autumn, but vehicular access to the field might need to be restricted. (iv) Cricket Club Fun Day 9th June – a cleaner would be needed to cover for the regular provider. The council would be willing to pay the standard rate of £10 per hour.
- g) Fund Raising – (i) Play Area fence - the Lead Member reported that Sport England would not donate funds to a parish council. (ii) Moving the cricket square – an application was being compiled for the Big Lottery Fund **[ACTION: KL to supply bank statements etc.]** The application for CIL funding would be decided upon by the SDNPA in September. (iii) Habitat information – the Lead Member would meet SDNPA Park Rangers to look at the provision of habitat information for the locality as the standard barcoding system would not work due to poor mobile coverage. (iv) Fireworks at Christmas – Frontier Fireworks had enquired whether an event would be held in 2019. It was agreed that Cllr Hill should investigate the feasibility **[ACTION: PH]**

C.55 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 14 on correspondence received since the May meeting, and the following matters were discussed:

- a) Council grant scheme – members noted a complaint made by a resident about the use of precepted funds for this scheme. However, it was noted that the scheme had general support. The councillors did not claim the allowances to which they were entitled, and this saved the parish £1,500 a year.
- b) Estate agents' sale particulars – members noted a complaint made in correspondence and in the Public Session regarding sale particulars which presented properties as extendible to an unrealistic degree. Members agreed that the main local agents should be supplied with copies of the current Village Design Statement and asked to be mindful of its requirements **ACTION: KL /MK**

C.56 Date of next meeting: Thursday 4th July 2019 at 6.30 pm in the Village Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.17 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....