

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 7th November 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 N Day, Cllr K Godden, Cllr P Hill, Cllr P Seeley, and Cllr J Walker (Items C.103 – C.119b)

In attendance: County Cllr S Shing (Items C.109 – C.110); K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

There were two members of the public present.

Public Session

Planning application on land to the rear of The Old Parsonage – a resident noted the decision of the SDNPA to grant planning consent on application SDNP/19/03323/FUL, contrary to the recommendation of the parish council, and asked whether the council was concerned about this, and whether anything could be done. The Chair advised that the parish council was always concerned in such circumstances and that the SDNPA should supply a note of explanation, which would be in the public domain. **ACTION: KL to remind the SDNPA.**

Council grant to the Bowling Club – the Club Secretary thanked the council for its grant which had made possible an enhanced level of care of the green during the season. The Club hoped to achieve an incremental build of quality in future seasons.

The Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting

C.103 Acceptance of apologies for absence: - Cllr T Bryant, Cllr L d'Urso, Cllr B Wheatley; P Williamson (Tree Warden)

C.104 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.105 Minutes: - The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

C.106 Report of the District Councillor

Members noted Cllr Lunn's report that severe flooding of the Cuckmere had now compromised health and safety in the hamlet of Litlington, which had been cut off. The Environment Agency had been requested to review its decision not to permit the dredging of shingle from the mouth of the river. Residents would be invited to support a petition calling for dredging to be done. **ACTION: KL to notify residents.**

C.107 Business in Progress

The council noted Report 7 on progress since the October meeting, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Dutch Elm disease felling subsidy – members agreed that residents wishing to benefit from the council's 40% subsidy must use contractors approved by ESCC, to ensure that infected material was disposed of correctly.
- b) Date of January 2020 council meeting – members agreed that the meeting should be held on Tuesday 7th January.
- c) Friston build-out – a site meeting had been held to consider the design of the build-out. The draft would be amended to show an extended kerb to protect the slip road, and a fillet to prevent parking behind the build-out. Some lighting would also be provided. The amended design and risk assessment would be shown to the council. Members agreed that Cllr Hill and Cllr Seeley should be authorised to approve the amended design on behalf of the council. The work might then proceed in January 2020. **ACTION: PH/PS**
- d) Remembrance Sunday – all councillors would be welcome to attend the ceremony at the War Memorial
- e) War Memorial railings – these had now been refurbished.
- f) Car park lighting – Wealden District Council's policy was to provide power for electrical vehicle charging points (which would also enable lighting to be provided) but installation would only take place when a consortium of buyers had been assembled to get a bulk deal.
- g) East Dean phone kiosk – BT had now withdrawn its proposal to decommission the kiosk at the present time. Members agreed that this should be used periodically to make sure it was functional
- h) Downs View Lane verge – in answer to queries from residents it was confirmed that only a 1.5m strip alongside the tarmac was to be strimmed. Information had been received that BT Openreach, not residents, had been responsible for leaving flints on the section of the verge near the footpath steps to Sussex Gardens. The council would have the verge cleared **ACTION: PH to organise clearance and instruct contractor to proceed; KL to write to residents.** It was noted that a tree on the verge opposite Chilver Cottage, where the road narrowed, might not be stable and should be inspected. **ACTION: PH.**
- i) Noticeboards – two boards and a supply of magnetic fastenings had been ordered for Downlands Way. The cost was £578 plus VAT. Cllr Seeley and Mr Walker kindly offered to assist the chair in taking down the old boards and fixing the new ones. Members agreed the Friston board should be removed at the same time. **ACTION: PS/SW**
- j) Play area – the swings taken down for safety reasons were inaccessible in the pavilion. They would be retrieved, repaired and re-mounted when the space was cleared for roof insulation work. Mr Walker had kindly offered to help replacing the bolts. **ACTION: ND/SW.**
- k) Recreation ground water supply – a meter reading had been taken and any excess usage for the season commencing 1 April 2019 would be charged to the Cricket Club under their Hire Agreement.
- l) Tree Warden – a meeting had been held to update the Tree Warden's terms of reference, dovetailing his activities with those of the Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group and clarifying actions covered by the council's third party liability insurance. **ACTION: MK to redraft and reissue**

- m) Friston bus shelter – the rebuilding of the bus shelter had been approved in principle [Minutes of the meeting held on 03 October 2019, Item C.99g] on the assumption that it would need to be included in the next budget. However, it appeared that the current budget was underspent and it was agreed that funds should be vired [see also item C.109 below]. **ACTION: PH to notify contractor and get dates; KL to notify the bus company.**
- n) 3 Cornish Cottages – members noted that this long-vacant property stood in a terrace of cottages built by Eastbourne Borough Council after the war for workers on a farm within the borough. Their continued ownership by EBC is now an anomaly it was suggested that Wealden District Council might wish to take over the cottages for its housing portfolio.
- o) Abandoned vehicle – the vehicle had been removed from the shopping precinct.

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

C.108 Appointment of an Administrative Assistant

The council took note of the report of the interview panel (Report 8).

RESOLVED – That Mrs Debra Picknell be appointed as an Administrative Assistant at a salary of £12 per hour for 10 hours per week, with effect from 11 November 2019.

C.109 Quarterly Budget Monitoring

The council took note of the report from the Lead Member for Finance (Report 9). The community had generously provided more donations than expected for the East Dean in Bloom project, and it was agreed that the unspent budget allocation be returned to reserves but ring-fenced for the project to continue in 2020/21. The sum allocated for winterisation of the pavilion had not been required, and overall the budget for capital projects had been underspent (see in particular the sums allocated for refurbishment of the war memorial and insulation of the pavilion). Regarding the rebuilding of Friston Bus shelter [see also item C.107m above], members noted that £500 had been budgeted for flooring the shelter, which had only cost £60. This should not be treated as capital expenditure but as general maintenance. The total cost of the rebuild would be £3,750 which could now be paid for from CIL money.

Several large projects were currently in prospect and it was agreed that all must be coordinated and functional. The Neighbourhood Plan project had temporarily stalled for unavoidable reasons. The Chair of the Steering Group was requested to bring forward a financial plan, with details of the procurement process for consultants, for consideration at the January council meeting. The Group could then be re-booted.

RESOLVED – That the unspent budget allocation of the East Dean in Bloom project 2019/20 be returned to reserves but ring-fenced for the project to continue in 2020/21

RESOLVED – That the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group be requested to prioritise the preparation of a business plan for the delivery of this project including budget profile and timetable

C.110 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) Climate Emergency – the county council had resolved at its meeting on 15 October to take appropriate action, and a Working Group had been set up to consider how best to budget for this. Cllr Shing was on the Working Group
- b) Exceat Bridge – site survey work had shown that there was more clay than expected where the foundations should be dug and the specification for the foundations should be increased.
- c) Closure of Exceat Bridge – a temporary closure would be in place from 11 – 15 November from 9.00 am to 3.30 pm to permit repairs to boundary fencing.
- d) Flooding on the Litlington Road – Cllr Shing supported the petition currently circulating requesting the Environment Agency to permit dredging of the shingle to alleviate the current severe flooding.

RESOLVED - That the report of the County Councillor be noted.

C.111 Funding of Future Roads Maintenance

The council considered Report 10 by the Lead Member for Finance. This proposed that the council should initiate a consultation process on the best method of financing the future maintenance of the un-adopted Estate roads. This would be a complex discussion involving the Roads Company representing 554 households; consultation with all residents living off the Estate, principally south of the A259 (approx. 208 households); and possibly ultimately the creation of a new corporate management structure. Currently the number of houses on un-adopted roads was thought to be 604, though only 554 were covered by the Roads Company. The status of a few roads was currently not clear. The percentage of eligible households making the necessary, but voluntary, full contribution to the Roads Company was slowly falling, and there was concern that its finances could reach a tipping point. The parish council currently had the General Power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 and could probably take action, subject to legal advice.

Members considered what would happen if the Estate roads were to deteriorate beyond the capacity of the Roads Company to keep up with maintenance. As a backstop, East Sussex County Council could do emergency work but this would be re-charged to the adjacent householder(s). This would clearly be unfair, as some roads were much more heavily used than others. The county council would not adopt the roads, which had not been built to a sufficient standard and were in a complex patchwork of ownerships.

The cost of increasing the parish precept to raise £55,000 pa for roads maintenance would be £55 per Band D household, i.e. not a large sum in absolute terms, but double the current precept, and therefore likely to be very controversial, as not all households would benefit, but all would be charged. The principle of taxation was that all should contribute to all services, even though usage would vary from one

household to another. Members discussed whether in that case a rebate could be given to those households not on un-adopted roads. The drawback would be that there might then be pressure to give rebates for other elements of the council tax, which would not be feasible. The Chair had raised the matter with the Chief Executive of Wealden District Council who had advised that legal opinion should be obtained and then a formal parish poll conducted before any decision was made.

As a first step it was suggested that legal opinion should be sought on what the Roads Company could legally charge, as on the one hand it appeared that the maintenance covenants are no longer enforceable (and in any case are for insufficient amounts today as they take no account of inflation), but on the other hand incoming purchasers were told by their solicitors that the charges must be paid. It was also noted that if a parish poll were held on a day when the village hall was already in use as a polling station, the cost of the exercise to the parish might be reduced. However, a poll had first to be ordered by a parish meeting.

RESOLVED – That the following actions be taken:

- Cllr Godden and Cllr Seeley to hold a meeting with the Roads Company;
- The clerk to consult the Hon. Solicitor and Wealden District Council on the principle of the parish having power to contribute to the maintenance of un-adopted roads, under the General Power of Competence; and on the question of what standing the parish council would have if (theoretically) the Roads Company were dissolved.

C.112 Interpretation Boards

In the unavoidable absence of the Lead Member this item was deferred to the December meeting.

C.113 Christmas Event

The council considered a report by Cllr Hill and Cllr Seeley advising that the Horsefield would not be an appropriate site for a firework display due to the potential for disturbing horses and other livestock. However, following positive discussions with the Gilbert Estate an alternative event was proposed, reviving an old village custom of lighting the village Christmas tree and forming a roving carol singing troupe. The procession would form at the village hall, where mulled wine would be served from 4.00 pm; take in The Grange care home on its route; and finally return to The Tiger for the lighting of its tree and further refreshments. Mr Dann would provide the music as in previous years. There would be **minimal** cost to the council as the tree lights and decorations were already in store. The event would be held on Sunday 1st December 2019.

RESOLVED - That the parish council should support the holding of a village Christmas tree and lighting and roving carol singing event on Sunday 1st December, in partnership with The Tiger Inn, as discussed.

C.114 Precept for highway work/urban verge cutting 2020

The council noted that it could continue to self-deliver this service in 2020 under the current mowing contract with a contribution of £341 from East Sussex County Council, unchanged from 2019.

RESOLVED – That the council should continue to self-deliver this service in the 30mph zone in 2020

C.115 Dissolution of East Dean Responders

The council took note of Report 14 regarding the decision of a Special General Meeting of Responders members on 18 October 2019 to accept the recommendation of the Trustees that the charity be dissolved by the end of 2019. Members agreed in principle that the parish council should take ownership of the defibrillators owned by the charity for siting in various locations around the village. However, some of the defibrillators appeared to have been allocated to other authorities, and expenditure would be required to install the remaining ones in cabinets with electricity supplies, and each location must have an adequate mobile signal as a phone call would have to be made to obtain a key code for the cabinet. Cllr Hill was nominated to liaise with the Responders. **ACTION: PH to liaise with the Chair of the Trustees.**

RESOLVED - To agree in principle to assist the Responders by taking over some defibrillators for future maintenance in the parish

C.116 75th Anniversary of VE Day

The council agreed to consider holding an event to mark this anniversary on Friday 8th May 2020, which would be a public holiday. Cllr Walker kindly agreed to lead on this and to report to a future meeting. The Chair would supply a brief and some contact details. **ACTION: JW/MK**

C.117 Payments and Receipts

The council considered Report 16 - the Schedule of Payments for November 2019 and receipts for October 2019. *[Note: the complete Schedule is published on the council website].*

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £10,060.87 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

C.118 Urgent item

The Chair stated that the mobile phone signal in the village had been extremely poor in the recent bad weather. The clerk should ask Telefonika about the timing of installation of the new mobile phone mast, referencing safety concerns and problems obtaining security codes for mobile banking. **ACTION: KL**

C.119 Reports

The following items were discussed:

- a) Chair of the Council – (i) the council was requested to buy the wine for the village Christmas lunch on 5th December, as in previous years. Members agreed that £100 could be spent on this. Councillors would serve the wine on

the day. (ii) At the recent Parish Conference the Police and Crime Commissioner had stated that every ward would have a named PCSO, and rural crime task forces would be set up. (iii) Climate Emergency had also been discussed and both ESCC and WDC had appointed members to lead on this. The parish council should likewise consider the environmental implications of all future decisions. Members agreed.

- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 15 October 2019
- c) Neighbourhood Planning – the Group should reboot in the New Year
- d) Finance – the bank balance at the end of October was £88,899.65. A first draft of the 2020/21 budget would be brought to the December meeting, following the model established on 2019/20 which had achieved a good balance. It was agreed that the Community Infrastructure Levy money received from the SDNPA should be spent on the Friston bus shelter.
- e) Rights of Way and Highways – (i) the council took note of the draft minutes of the county liaison (Strengthening Local Relationships) meeting held on 22 October 2019. The Chair reported that a complaint had been made at the Parish Conference about the decision of Wealden District Council to rely on the police to enforce yellow lines but that WDC were refusing to take over parking enforcement as that would mean having to charge for parking to cover the costs. (ii) A complaint had been received about a hedge overhanging the pavement on the north side of the A259, but this had now been trimmed. (iii) Footpath 25 also required strimming down the lower half. **ACTION: PH to instruct the mowing contractor.** (iv) The blocked gulleys at the entrance to Downs View Lane were to be cleared.
- f) Recreation Ground – the insulation of the pavilion roof would commence on 21 November, and would improve the energy efficiency of the building
- g) General Power of Competence – Actions properly begun under this power, which the council currently had, could be continued even if the council ceased to hold the power. Cllr Godden would speak to East Sussex highways about the provision of a 20 mph limit on the Downlands Estate. Other ideas would be welcome.

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

C.120 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 19 on correspondence received, and the following items were discussed:

- a) Bollards between Gore Farm Close and the shopping precinct – reflectors should be placed on these to improve safety at night. **ACTION: MK**
- b) The Drove – the council would always be willing to take further action to establish a right of way along The Drove provided that new evidence came to light to support it.

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

C.121 Date of next meeting: Thursday 7th November 2019 at 6.30 pm in the Village Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.01 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....