



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 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, Cllr B Wheatley and Cllr D Wild (Items C.149 - C.163)

**In attendance:** County Cllr S Shing (Item C.152); P Williamson (Tree Warden) (Items C.144 – C.151); K Larkin (Parish Clerk); and D Picknell (Admin Assistant)

*There were two members of the public present.*

**C.144 Acceptance of apologies for absence:** - Cllr T Bryant, Cllr L d'Urso; and District Cllr M Lunn

**C.145 Declarations of Interests:** - None

**C.146 Minutes:** - The minutes of the council meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**C.147 Report of the District Councillor**

District Cllr Lunn had raised the following matters in a written report:

- a) Flooding of the Cuckmere – Cllr Lunn had made a formal complaint to East Sussex Highways for not providing sandbags to residents, and for having an answerphone on the Emergency phone line. [See also Item C.152 below]
- b) Wealden draft Local Plan – the draft had been rejected by the Planning Inspector at the public examination stage on grounds of non-cooperation with neighbouring authorities. The District would be obliged to accept increased housing numbers to which it was opposed, and which could overload existing infrastructure.

RESOLVED - That the report of the District Councillor be noted

**C.148 Report of Maria Caulfield MP**

The constituency MP had sent a written report on the following matters:

- a) Local post office – negotiations had begun with the Post Office over the opening of a new branch in the village and Ms Caulfield was assisting with this.
- b) Flooding of the Cuckmere – negotiations were in progress with the local water company who might undertake future dredging on a regular basis to reduce further flooding.

RESOLVED - That the report of the constituency MP be noted.

**C.149 Co-option of a Councillor**

The Chair proposed and the Vice Chair seconded the motion that Mr Daniel Wild be co-opted as a member of the council.

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

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

**C.150 Business in Progress**

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

- a) Healthy Wealden website – the three parish walking maps would be added to this website. Map 2 would be amended to take account of the closure of The Drove (WDC was aware of this): **ACTION: PH**
- b) VE Day 75 – Several village organisations had activities in mind. The council would assist by dovetailing these and contributing to set-up costs. A circular should be sent out to all clubs and societies including the Village Hall Trust inviting them to attend a planning meeting in February **ACTION: BW.** An article should also be placed in the parish magazine **ACTION: MK**
- c) Road maintenance using the precept – the Hon. Solicitor would advise. Further guidance should then be sought from NALC **ACTION: KL**
- d) Interpretation boards – images of suitable boards used in Seaford were viewed and considered suitable as a basis for seeking local permissions **ACTION: LD**
- e) Downs View Lane replanting – a planning condition from 1982 had required wild cherry trees to be preserved. No mature trees had been removed in the recent clearance work but it was not known whether the cherry trees still existed. The council would proceed with a replanting scheme for the back of the verge seeking permission from Eastbourne Borough Council as landowner, and advice from the Tree Warden, prior to final approval. **ACTION: LD/PW**
- f) Theatre visit donation 2019 – the £50 donation from 2019 should be requested and delivered to the JPK Project with the proceeds from the village fete stall and the carols event as soon as possible **ACTION: BW/KL**

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

**C.151 Tree Warden Terms of Reference**

The council considered Report 12 recommending updated Terms of Reference for the Tree Warden. The ToRs did not refer to the proposed digital mapping of the parish as this was a project to be undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (of which the Warden was a member) using the NPSG budget. However, maintenance of a digital map, once available, would become part of the Warden's role.

The Warden reported that elms on Gilberts Drive outside The Fridays might need maintenance. This should be reported to the county council as the owners of the verge. **ACTION: PW.**

RESOLVED – That the updated Terms of Reference of the Tree Warden be adopted with immediate effect.

### **C.152 Report of the County Councillor**

The Chair informed Cllr Shing of the reports received from the district councillor and the constituency MP [Items C.147 and C.148 above]. Cllr Shing responded and reported as follows:

- a) Flooding of the Cuckmere – the County Highways Department would only supply sandbags for use on the highway, and in the recent floods there had been no locations where they could have been placed or would have been effective. The answerphone on the emergency phone line would always give information about a further number that could be rung in the event of a true emergency.
- b) County Council budget 2020/21 – final proposals would be considered by the Cabinet on 21 January and might require savings of £5 million (less than had been expected). The next 10 Year Plan would prioritise investment in roads. The increase in basic council tax for 2020/21 was projected at just under 2%, with a further increase of just under 2% for adult social care. On this basis the tax for a Band D property would increase by £57.10pa.
- c) Speeding on Downland Estate roads – the parish council requested information to enable a potential application to be made for traffic regulation. Cllr Shing agreed that this information should be provided free of charge and requested copies of correspondence suggesting otherwise. **ACTION: SS/KL**

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

### **C.153 Budget Development 2020/21 to 2022/23**

The council considered Reports 8, 8a and 8b setting out the Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2020/21 to 2022/23, and the Capital Investment Plan for the same period in accordance with the Financial Regulations. The revenue budget would remain stable and continue to provide for current services following the pattern set in 2019/20 when it had been overhauled, but for 2020/21 it should include some adjustments requested at the Budget Working Group meeting on 17 December 2019 plus inflationary changes. It should also include councillor allowances instead of expenses which had been very little used [see Item C.156 below]. The budget of just over £14,000 allocated to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in 2019/20 remained unused as the Plan had remained in its early stages. This unspent budget would be carried over. The precept would need to be increased by 2% to £61,245 and the tax base as calculated by the district council would be slightly reduced from 1000 to 997. On this basis the amount payable per Band D household would increase by an average of £1.20 to £61.43.

RESOLVED – That the Base Budget 2020/21 and future years be approved

RESOLVED - That the precept for 2020/21 be set at £61,245 (£61.43 per Band D household)

Members then considered the capital investment plan, and noted that a sum of £22,969 could be spent in capital projects without either increasing the precept above the 2% actually agreed, or lowering reserves beyond a prudent minimum set at £35,000, i.e. about half the value of the council's annual turnover, following NALC guidelines. The £22,969 already had built into it a 20% buffer for contingencies. The list of capital projects provisionally put forward by the Budget Working Group could cost £47,000 but should be understood as a list of aspirations, each of which should be the subject of a separate business plan including costing, scheduling and viability before actual approval. Continuing the council's 'Investing in our Community' theme, these aspirations included a play area upgrade (phase 2 of the upgrade undertaken in 2018); rebuilding a second bus shelter; providing interpretation boards; applying for traffic regulation on the Downlands Estate; environmental landscaping of the recreation ground; a tree planting programme; and resurfacing the tennis courts. A sum should also be set aside for obtaining counsel's opinion on using the precept to support the maintenance of un-adopted roads in the parish. It was noted that the available budget could increase if further CIL money or other grants were received during the year. A sum of £7,000 would be received from the East Dean Responders following the dissolution of the charity and would be identified separately and held in 'trust' by the council.

RESOLVED - That the capital investment plan be approved in principle subject to future consideration of a detailed business plan for each project prior to final approval

Members thanked Cllr Godden for these reports.

#### **C.154 Code of Conduct**

The council considered Report 9 on amendments to the Code of Conduct proposed by East Sussex County Council to deal more effectively with cases of harassment or bullying, particularly of one councillor by another. It was agreed that the amendments should be adopted. The council's own complaints procedure should also be revised to specify that a complaint by one councillor against another should initially be reported to the Chair for mediation, or in the event that the complaint concerned the Chair, the Vice Chair. A draft should be brought to a future meeting for approval.

#### **ACTION: KL**

RESOLVED – That the amendments to the Code of Conduct proposed by East Sussex County Council be adopted with immediate effect

#### **C.155 Email and Internet Usage Policy**

The council considered Report 10 containing a draft email and internet usage policy recommended by the Society for Local Council Clerks. It was agreed that in paragraph 4.4 specifying the guidelines to be observed by staff members and councillors in email usage, reference should also be made to 'specialist advisers'. Subject to that, the policy was approved. It was noted that disclaimers attached to

emails might have no legal weight but could still act as a deterrent to indiscriminate copying on. More weight would attach to the occasional use of the word 'CONFIDENTIAL' in the subject line of a sensitive email.

RESOLVED - That the draft Email and Internet Usage policy be adopted as amended, with immediate effect

#### **C.156 Parish Councillor Allowances 2020/21**

The council took note of the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel which had been advertised as required by Regulation 30 of the 2003 Regulations. The Panel had expressed its preference that an allowance scheme be adopted by all Councils, even if not claimed by individual Councillors. The Panel had a general concern that many councillors were either unaware that they could receive a small annual allowance or felt coerced into refusing it. The recommended sum was £167pa for each elected councillor except the chair, who should receive £288. Historically East Dean and Friston parish council had never paid allowances, and found it objectionable that allowances were not payable to co-opted members (currently two in number). However, members agreed that to meet the concerns of the Panel, the council should adopt the recommended scheme for 2020/21, leaving individual members to tell the clerk if they did not want to receive their allowances.

RESOLVED – That the allowance scheme recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2020/21 be adopted and advertised

#### **C.157 The Local Electricity Bill**

The council considered report 13 requesting their support for a re-launch of this private member's bill which had been talked out of Parliament in 2015. However, following the December 2019 general election it was not clear who in parliament now supported the bill, or who was organising the campaign behind it. Councillors were concerned that the bill would propose relaxing planning conditions for onshore windfarms, which would be an inappropriate move within the South Downs National Park. It was therefore agreed that the council would not support the bill, though individual members would be at liberty to do so.

#### **C.158 Draft Regional Transport Strategy for the South East**

The council took note of the draft Strategy currently out for consultation, but considered that there was reasonable local transport provision, and no specific proposals the council would wish to bring to the consultation.

#### **C.159 Payments and Receipts**

The council considered Report 15 - the Schedule of Payments for January 2020 and receipts for December 2019. *[Note: the complete Schedule is published on the council website]*. Members were pleased to note that the rebuilding of the Friston bus shelter had been completed to a very good standard.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £6,867.01 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

**C.160 Urgent item**

The Chair reported that following the loss of a child's drone a number of complaints had surfaced about the use of drones in the parish. The Drone Code should be re-publicised in the parish magazine **ACTION: MK.** Drones should not be flown within 150 feet (50m) of people or property.

**C.161 Reports:**

- a) Chair of the Council – (i) Defibrillators: the council had now taken ownership of seven defibrillators previously owned by the East Dean Responders and had arranged insurance. A sum of £7,000 would be received for future maintenance and would be held in a separate account. Cllr Seeley would arrange the initial installations and would report further in February **ACTION: PS.** (ii) Donation of a memorial seat – a resident was considering donating a bench to fill the vacant spot at Friston Pond. This donation would be most welcome **ACTION: KL to liaise with the donor.**
- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 17 December 2019
- c) Neighbourhood Planning – members requested that a full update be brought to the February council meeting **ACTION: TB/LD/DP**
- d) Finance – the bank balance at the end of December was £71,930.25
- e) Rights of Way and Highways – (i) No.1 Waterworks Cottages: a complaint had been received about an overgrown area at the back of the water tower, and Cllr Seeley had met a helpful representative of South East Water on site. However, the overgrown area was actually in the garden of No.1, which was offset from the property. An attempt should be made to identify and contact the absentee owner **ACTION: KL/TB.** (ii) Rights of Way on the north side of Friston Hill: an enquiry had been made as to why two rights of way leading to this part of the A259 were not signposted. The reason was that the locations were very dangerous and the use of the paths was discouraged.
- f) Recreation Ground – (i) Play area: Cllr Day had arranged a site meeting on 17 January with Wicksteed's Sussex coordinator to discuss phase 2 of the play area upgrade and a future safety review. Proposals would then be brought to council. (ii) A large quantity of picket fencing was being stored in the pavilion by the Cricket Club. This could not be permanently installed at the recreation ground and the club should be requested to remove it by the end of January **ACTION: KL.** (iii) Pavilion insulation work: this was almost complete, but live woodworm had been found in the roof (and in a cabinet) and had been treated. Members thanked Cllr Day for overseeing these projects.
- g) Village Events – see Item C.150b above.

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

**C.162 Correspondence**

The council took note of Report 18 on correspondence received, and the following points were discussed:

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- a) Illegal hunting at Crowlink – the council condemned this illegal activity but was not the landowner (actually the National Trust). Members noted with approval that the Sussex Police were fully informed and taking action.
  - b) Downs View Lane Verge – see Item C.150e above
  - c) Rocks at the entrance to Micheldene Road – members noted that these had not been installed by the Residents’ Association and were not on council property. No further action should be taken.
  - d) Council bank balance reports – the Lead Member advised that a sum of £5,000 could be considered ‘material’ on a budget of £70,000. However, the brief monthly report in the parish magazine could not go into such detail.

RESOLVED - That the Correspondence report be noted

**C.163 Date of next meeting: Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020** at 6.30 pm in the Village Hall.

*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.54 pm.*

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....