



# East Dean & Friston P a r i s h C o u n c i l

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, Gilberts Drive, East Dean, commencing at 6.30 pm**

**Councillors present:** Cllr P Seeley (Acting Chair), Cllr N Day, Cllr L d'Urso, Cllr K Godden, Cllr P Hill, Cllr B Wheatley and Cllr D Wild

**In attendance:** County Cllr S Shing (Item C.170); District Cllr Lunn (Item C.170 - C.171); and D Picknell (Admin Officer)

*There was one member of the public present.*

## **Public Session**

The Village Market – the market organiser reported that following the recent publication by Wealden District Council of an amendment to their Off Street Parking Places Order 2015 to enable businesses to trade in Wealden car parks with express legal authority from Wealden, it had emerged that the East Dean and Friston market had been operating outside of regulations for the last 15 years, insofar as it used Wealden car park land. The market was well established and used as a base by other event organisers, and there was a very strong case for it to continue. However, preliminary enquiries to Wealden about bringing it within the regulations had met a negative response. The organisers requested the support of the parish in making a case for the market to continue. The Acting Chair confirmed that this would be discussed under Urgent Business and that the parish council would support and assist the market in any way it could.

*The Acting Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting.*

**C.164 Acceptance of apologies for absence:** - Cllr M Keller, Cllr T Bryant, P Williamson (Tree Warden) and K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

**C.165 Declarations of Interests:** - None

*The council recorded with regret the passing of George Tickle, who had been Chair of the Council from 1999 to 2003 and was a main mover enabling the building of the Village Hall.*

**C.166 Minutes:** - The minutes of the council meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Acting Chair.

## **C.167 Report of Maria Caulfield MP**

Maria Caulfield MP had reported in writing on the following matters:

- a) Exceat update – the SDNPA's decision on the planning application for the new bridge should be made soon and it was hoped that construction would begin in May

- b) Policing – Sussex police were returning to a community based model where each village and town would have dedicated officers and PCSOs, and 129 extra officers had been recruited to help with this.
- c) Post Office – discussions were ongoing with a prospective new operator. The Acting Chair stated that one possibility was to have a pop-up post office on market day, but an alternative was also under discussion. No further details were yet available.

RESOLVED – That the report of the Member of Parliament be noted

### **C.168 Business in Progress**

The council noted Report 6 on progress since the January meeting, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Parish councillor allowances – members were reminded that those entitled to claim the allowance (i.e. elected members) should notify the clerk if they did not want to claim it.
- b) Memorial bench at Friston Pond – the new bench kindly donated by a local family had been delivered and would be installed in the next two weeks.

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

### **C.169 Budget Monitoring 2019-20 Q.3**

The council took note of report 7 from the Lead Member for Finance. Overall the projections indicated that the Council would underspend its budget by circa £6,306, i.e. a small increase from the £6,140 projected at the end of Q2. Details of the variations were tabulated in the report. There had been slippage in the capital programme, due mainly to the stalling of the Neighbourhood Plan project, which meant that recovery of VAT was also lower than anticipated. In other respects progress on capital projects had been good. A considerable saving had been made on the refurbishment of the War Memorial railings; a windfall of CIL funding had paid for the rebuilding of the Friston bus shelter, and £700 remaining in that budget would be carried over towards the rebuilding of the East Dean shelter in 2020/21. The maintenance work quoted for at the pavilion had been carried out on budget (£2,275), but certain extras had been found necessary: £215 to treat wood worm and £75 for painting the kitchen ceiling. Members agreed that these extra expenses should be approved.

The Vice Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group requested clarification of the protocol for spending money from the NPSG budget. The Lead Member advised that the full council should approve the Group's plan for the staging of the work and the outcomes, issues and expenditures expected to be needed at each stage. Once this was approved the Group would be able to order the planned expenditure. Cllr Godden would assist with any queries. It was noted that the Administrative Assistant whose role included servicing the NPSG had in fact exceeded her allotted hours in her first three months but had not claimed extra remuneration. Members confirmed that any additional hours should in future be claimed for and paid (subject to council approval).

RESOLVED - That the Budget Monitoring Report be noted

RESOLVED – That the additional sums spent on pavilion maintenance (£215 and £75) be approved and paid

### **C.170 Report of the County Councillor**

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) Transfer of Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP) to the SDNPA – this had now been approved by ESCC subject to agreed conditions including an annual payment of £35,000 indexed to RPI for 25 years to ESCC; clauses requiring the SDNPA to seek consent from ESCC for disposal of any land or property in the SSCP; and the option for ESCC to consent to acquire for £1 any asset which SDNPA seeks to transfer, dispose or gift from within the SSCP.
- b) On-street parking charges – ESCC had approved increased charges in the county. Eastbourne would be affected by this change.
- c) Temporary traffic lights at Exceat Bridge – Cllr Shing had supported the installation of lights as requested by the parish council, to ease congestion during the replacement of the water main at Alfriston.
- d) Potholes - the District Councillor informed the County Councillor that potholes were a leading cause of complaints from residents. County Cllr Shing stated that in East Sussex potholes were being dealt with better than in other areas. A working group had recommended that highways, footpaths and potholes should be a priority for budget spending. The Acting Chair asked Cllr Shing to report at the next meeting the cost of paying out compensation compared to the cost of repairing potholes. Cllr Shing agreed to investigate this cost  
**ACTION: SS**
- e) Ash trees on Friston Hill – a councillor asked why the trees on Friston Hill on the left next to the twitten were marked for felling, when the principal problem with them was overgrowth of ivy rather than ash die-back. New research showed that if ash trees were pollarded to prompt them to regenerate, the new growth could be disease-resistant. A request was made that this should be trialled on Friston Hill, as the total loss of so many trees would materially affect the landscape, and be irreversible for many years. Cllr Shing agreed to follow this up if further information could be supplied to him. **ACTION: PH/SS.**

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

### **C.171 Report of the District Councillor**

District Cllr Lunn raised the following matters:

- a) Wealden waste collection calendar – following the switch to publishing the calendar online, saving £35,000, Cllr Lunn was seeking support for residents without internet access and requested the assistance of parish organisations in getting information to vulnerable neighbours. Amendments to the current calendar would be published at Easter.
- b) Wealden Local Plan – the District Council was concerned that the repercussions from the decision of the planning inspector to declare their draft

Local Plan unsound would affect the whole district, including those parishes like East Dean and Friston which were part of the South Downs National Park and did not have Wealden as their planning authority. The district had no five year land supply for new housing, and any potential developers whose applications had been turned down in the expectation of the Plan being declared sound would now be able to demand reconsideration and in some cases compensation, depending on the original reasons for refusal. A shortage of housing numbers had been a key defect in the provisions of the Plan. Wealden should be approving an extra 100 houses a month in the foreseeable future to rectify this, but there was concern that development on this scale would overwhelm existing infrastructure. Maria Caulfield MP was lobbying for a further section of the A27 to be made dual carriageway. In discussion councillors were critical of Wealden's failure in their duty to cooperate with other authorities, and asked who was to blame and what effect there would be on council tax. The bill for repeating the housing element of the Plan exercise would be £250,000 and other costs e.g. increased insurance premiums might also accrue. WDC had not accepted the advice of Natural England regarding the impact of nitrogen deposition on the Ashdown Forest and this decision had received public support at the time. There had been some staff changes, and debate continued.

- c) Flooding of the Cuckmere – there had been a recent meeting of the local drainage board at which the Environment Agency had not been represented. A second wave of flooding had occurred at Christmas and Cllr Lunn repeated his criticism of East Sussex Highways for not providing sandbags and having an answerphone on the emergency line. A fund was being created for the drainage board, but it was arguable that the Environment Agency should be the first line of defence, despite their current policy of non-intervention. The views of the South Downs National Park Authority which was about to take over the Seven Sisters Country Park were as yet unknown. The Acting Chair drew attention to the residents' drop-in sessions being held by the SDNPA on 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February to gather local opinion.
- d) Exceat Bridge – the decision of the SDNPA on the planning application from the county council was expected soon. Consent, if granted, might include speed calming measures.
- e) Village Market – the Acting Chair advised Cllr Lunn of the issue raised in the Public Session. Cllr Lunn agreed to assist the parish and press for the continuation of the market. **ACTION: ML**

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

### **C.172 Installation of Defibrillators**

The council considered Report 8. It was noted that a capital sum of £7,000 had been transferred to the council by the East Dean Responders for the future upkeep of seven defibrillators and it was recommended that the first four should be located at the village hall (where an upgraded lockable cabinet would be provided); the Barn Stores; and the cricket pavilion; the fourth being donated to the Beachy Head Chaplaincy for mobile use. Each new cabinet would cost £455 plus VAT; it would carry a phone number to call to obtain a nine digit key code, but inside the village hall

a permanent code would also be displayed. Two Responders would attend a ceremony to hand over one defibrillator to the Chaplaincy team. A further report would be brought to council with recommendations for placing the remaining three defibrillators. It was noted that the National Trust already had one at Birling Gap.

RESOLVED - That the recommendations for installing the first four defibrillators be approved, with installation costs of £455 plus VAT for each of three new cabinets

#### **C.173 Cricket Club Hire Agreement 2020**

The council confirmed that the Club's pavilion hire Agreement be approved for 2020 on the same terms as in 2019. Cllr Keller was authorised to sign on behalf of the council **ACTION: MK/KL.** Members took note of a report by the Club on their plans for 2020, including the possible installation of a fixtures board at the field entrance: proposals would be submitted to council for approval in due course.

RESOLVED – That the Cricket Club's pavilion hire Agreement 2020 be approved on the same terms as in 2019

#### **C.174 Payments and Receipts**

The council considered Report 10 - the Schedule of Payments for February 2020 and receipts for January 2020. Additional expenses incurred in maintenance work at the pavilion had been approved (Item C.169 above). *[Note: the complete Schedule is published on the council website].* Members noted the income received including the proceeds of £215.63 from the carols event; after deduction of £88.04 for food and wine there would be a net profit of £127.59 to donate to the JPK Project. A generous donation had also been received from a parishioner for the purchase and installation of a new memorial bench at Friston Pond.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £4,203.98 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

#### **C.175 Urgent item**

Village Market – the Acting Chair drew attention to the discussion of this topic in the Public Session and in the Report of the District Councillor. The council had offered to assist with the application for any future licence required for the continuation of the Market. Any licence fee would be paid by the Village Hall Trust. Members approved.

#### **C.176 Reports:**

- a) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 21 January 2020
- b) Neighbourhood Planning – a relaunch meeting of the Steering Group would be held on 11 February 2020
- c) Finance – the Lead Member asked whether the budget allocated for new bins at Friston would be required, and whether any additional dog bins were required. Members requested a report for the March meeting **ACTION: KL.** The Tree Warden had requested ballpark approval figures for the following: (i) £2,200 for a digital mapping exercise to identify land parcels and ownership/management for the following survey; (ii) £2,000 for an arboricultural survey of trees, shrubs and hedges and resultant long term

management plan; (iii) £170 for 1000 copies of a colour A4 public service information bulletin 'Our Trees'; and (iv) about £60 for visiting cards for the Tree Warden. Members agreed that the first two items should come from the Neighbourhood Plan budget. Decisions on the second two items were deferred. **ACTION: KL to add to March agenda.**

- d) Rights of Way and Highways – (i) Use of precept for maintenance of privately owned roads: a meeting would be held on 11 February with the Hon. Solicitor and a Director of the Roads Company present; (ii) Friston bus shelter: the brackets intended to hold planters had been vandalised and it was proposed that they be removed; (iii) Graffiti had been painted on the white village gateway, but had been removed.
- e) Recreation Ground – members considered the report circulated by the Lead Member. (i) It was agreed that two gate closures should be provided for the play area, and that £100 should be vired from budget head 503 to 529 for this purpose **ACTION: PH to obtain a quote** (ii) It was agreed that four swings with their bolts should be replaced whilst keeping the existing frames which were sound. Wicksteed had quoted £722.61 plus VAT and it was agreed that the quote should be accepted and the money vired from budget head 664 to 529 for this purpose.
- f) Fund Raising – the Lead Member stated that it would cost over £6,000 for three Interpretation Boards. A sign installed at the East Dean south side bus stop required permission from East Sussex County Council costed at £60, plus £400 for excavation. If wall mounted or placed on the Village Green permission should be sought from the Gilbert Estate. Sited beside the Parish Council car park noticeboard required permission from Trustees of the Village Hall. The Lead Member agreed to send images of the Interpretation boards to the Chair for permissions from the Gilbert Estate and Trustees of the Village Hall to site the boards. Members agreed to discuss the matter at the next Full Parish Council Meeting. **ACTION: LD/PS.**
- g) Members considered the location of a strip for wildflowers on the recreation ground. An acceptable location was agreed behind the tennis courts, up the ramp at the top (west side) of the field..
- h) Village Events – (i) VE Day 75: village clubs and societies had been invited to a meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February to assist the council in co-ordinating and supporting local celebrations. A further email would be issued shortly as there had so far been few responses **ACTION: BW/KL** ; (ii) Presentation to the JPK Project – it was agreed that the sums collected for the Project should now be handed over by the Lead Member (i.e. the profits from the village fete stall; a donation from the Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company 2019 season; the proceeds from the carols event; and the council's guaranteed donation of £500 in 2019/20; total £736.77) **ACTION: BW/KL**

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

### **C.177 Correspondence**

The council took note of Report 13 on correspondence received, and the following points were discussed:

- a) Council subsidy for felling diseased elms – Members agreed that a 40% subsidy should be paid towards the cost of felling diseased trees at Birling Manor, carried out by ESCC’s approved contractor. A further application relating to commercial premises was not approved. **ACTION: KL to release the payment**
- b) Felling of trees on Friston Hill – it was agreed that ESCC should be requested to reconsider their policy. **ACTION: PH**

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

**C.178 Staffing Matters**

The Council was unanimous in confirming Mrs Picknell in her appointment as she had completed her probationary period. It was suggested that it would be an improvement if Mrs Picknell’s job title were changed from Administrative Assistant to Administrative Officer, as she would be fronting the Neighbourhood Plan, and this was agreed.

Members also agreed that the parish clerk’s contract should be amended to reduce the number of hours worked from 20 per week to 15 per week with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020

Councillors wanted to ensure that their officers were correctly remunerated for the hours worked and agreed that if there were shortfalls these should be addressed as the officers were both key to the efficient and effective delivery of council work.

Finally members were keen to ensure that Mrs Picknell should receive any relevant training (courses) to help assist in her development.

RESOLVED – That the appointment of Mrs Debbie Picknell as Administrative Officer be confirmed

RESOLVED - That the contract of the Parish Clerk/RFO be amended to reduce the number of hours worked from 20 per week to 15 per week with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020

**C.179 Date of next meeting: Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 6.30 pm in the Village Hall.**

*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.20 pm.*

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....