



**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 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 T Bryant (Items C.180 – C.190), Cllr N Day, Cllr L d’Urso, Cllr K Godden, Cllr P Hill, Cllr P Seeley, Cllr B Wheatley and Cllr D Wild (Items C.180 – C.191)

**In attendance:** County Cllr S Shing (Item C.184); District Cllr Lunn (Items C.184 – C.186); Cllr V Rowlands (SDNPA) (Items C.184 - C.186); P Williamson (Tree Warden); and K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

*There were no members of the public present.*

**C.180 Acceptance of apologies for absence:** - None

**C.181 Declarations of Interests:** - None

**C.182 Minutes:** - The minutes of the council meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**C.183 Business in Progress**

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

- a) Trees: public service information bulletin – it was agreed that a budget of £170 should be allocated from reserves to the design and printing of an information sheet to be circulated with the parish magazine and on the council website  
**ACTION: PW**
- b) Visiting cards – it was agreed that the parish council should order a supply of generic visiting cards updated from the template previously used **ACTION: KL/PW**

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

*The Chair suspended discussion of the Progress Report to enable visiting contributors to make their reports, as follows:*

**C.184 Report of the County Councillor**

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) Temporary traffic lights at Exceat Bridge – the temporary lights had resolved the tailback problem and Cllr Shing had formally requested East Sussex Highways to leave them in place until the new bridge was completed. A decision was awaited.

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- b) Post Office – the search for a candidate to run the local post office continued. The Chair stated that there was no further news on the proposed weekly pop-up post office scheme.
  - c) Highway maintenance – the county council had resolved to increase expenditure on the repair of potholes and road markings, as well as gully maintenance.
  - d) Felling of trees on Friston Hill – members reported their concern that there had been no consultation and very little notice of the closure of Friston Hill. A request had been made for traffic management at the entrances to the Downlands Estate. Cllr Shing had not received prior notice but would investigate **ACTION: LD to forward emails.**

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

### **C.185 Report of the District Councillor**

District Cllr Lunn raised the following matters:

- a) Wealden Local Plan – the failed draft plan had been formally withdrawn with attendant consequences as previously notified.
- b) Seven Sisters transfer to SDNPA – the Policy Resources Committee welcomed the prospect of new investment in this facility and strongly supported the opening of an SDNPA office to serve the local area. The transfer was subject to DEFRA approval.
- c) Cuckmere Drainage Board – Wealden remained concerned at the disagreement between the local Drainage Board and the Environment Agency over what should trigger the dredging of shingle; the Board argued that it should be when the water level overtopped the shingle but the Agency preferred deferral. The SDNPA would not become a party to these decisions.
- d) Eastbourne Borough Council draft Whole Estate Plan – the Chair stated that the draft Plan proposed a road charge to users of the Beachy Head Road, with exemptions for Eastbourne residents. This would be unworkable, and Cllr Lunn agreed to lobby against it.
- e) East Dean Village Market – members were pleased to hear of Wealden's confirmation that the market could continue. It was in fact advertised on WDC's current parish bulletin. This outcome was much appreciated.

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

### **C.186 Report of the SDNPA Parishes Representative**

Cllr Rowlands reported on the following matters:

- a) Enforcement - an SDNPA officer would be willing to attend a future parish Planning Committee meeting to discuss current concerns. A full update on current cases had been supplied to the parish Admin Officer, together with a full list of SDNPA officer contact details. This was much appreciated.
- b) Seven Sisters – the county council's legal team was awaiting information from HMRC prior to submission of the transfer application to DEFRA for approval. It was hoped that approval would be granted in the autumn, permitting works to be carried out on site over the winter. The public consultation had been useful and

key requests had been for a safe crossing of the A259, and for proactive intervention on flooding, though on the flooding issue the SDNPA had no direct responsibility. Cllr Rowlands defended the input of Environment Agency officers, whose numbers had been cut by 40% in recent years.

- c) DEFRA funding settlement – there would be no uplift in government funding for the SDNPA in the coming year, and a large proportion of the budget must be spent on specified measures to support climate, biodiversity and nature recovery networks. The government wanted every child to spend a night under the stars: laudable but very expensive. The SDNPA was already promoting farm clusters to co-operate in achieving carbon neutrality, and this was a productive initiative. A local cluster was based at Charleston. Cllr Lunn supported this initiative.
- d) The Environmental Land Management System ('ELMS') – this system would become mandatory in 2024 but the SDNPA was ahead of the curve with implementation and aspired to become carbon net zero in the foreseeable future.
- e) Sustainable Construction rules – the SDNPA had recently introduced new rules which the parish was aware of; however, there was concern locally that success depended on enforcement, which would be weak unless the construction rules were integrated with building regulations.
- f) 'Take a Lead' – the Chair stated that this campaign targeted at dog walkers was good in principle but should be extended to include open downland such as Beachy Head where it was not uncommon for dogs to go over the cliff, resulting in the call-out of the coastguard and RNLI. Cllr Rowland agreed that this should be included in future advice.

Members thanked Cllr Rowlands for her visit and her practical support.

RESOLVED - That the report of the SDNPA representative be noted and action taken as discussed

### **C.187 Business in Progress (resumed)**

The council resumed consideration of the Progress Report as follows:

- a) Charity of the Year donation – Cllr Wheatley would contact the JPK Project to arrange a handover date. Any councillor would be welcome to attend. **ACTION:**  
**BW**
- b) Felling of trees on Friston Hill – the council should press for the verge to be replanted. The County Council had been requested to make a contribution to the Roads Company in compensation for the damage likely to be caused to the fragile Estate roads and verges by heavy traffic during the closure of the Hill.
- c) Installation of Defibrillators – work was complete at the Village Hall and the pavilion. Work was on hold at the surgery whilst further negotiation took place. Three new batteries should be purchased at a cost of £150 each (current batteries would expire in 2021; standard battery life was four years). In addition there should be two packs of pads with each defibrillator but there had only been one supplied: more had been purchased at a cost of £174 plus VAT. The second phase of installations would improve coverage north of the A259.
- d) Memorial bench – the installation work had been done by councillors at no cost but the donor had paid £75 in expectation of employing a contractor. The donor

should be consulted with a view to planting snowdrops around the bench, and elsewhere **ACTION: KL**

- e) No.1 Waterworks Cottages – some clearance work had been done by persons unknown. It was suggested that Compulsory Purchase powers might be invoked if the unoccupied property met the qualifying criteria **ACTION: BW/KL to investigate**

RESOLVED – That the Progress Report be noted and action taken as discussed

### **C.188 Finance (a) Financial Regulations**

Financial Regulations – the Lead Member for Finance introduced Report 8a, recommending that the model regulations published by NALC in 2019 should be adopted in place of the current regulations, as they provided more detail and clarification on processes and procedures and greater coverage to protect the Council, its Clerk and Members. A summary of proposed changes to the Model was set out in the Report, and a complete copy of the Regulations as proposed was appended to it. It was agreed that the council's banking arrangements should be reviewed so that online payments could be made in the absence of the clerk **ACTION: KL to investigate**

RESOLVED – That the NALC 2019 Model Financial Regulations, amended as proposed in Report 8a, be adopted with immediate effect.

### **C.189 Finance (b) Procurement**

The Lead Member for Finance introduced Report 8b updating members on the council's requirements when procuring works, goods and services, and recommending procurement thresholds for 2020/21. Members discussed the threshold below which it would be acceptable to obtain oral rather than written quotes, and agreed it should be raised to £500, provided that:

- If the expenditure was in the budget and approved by the council then quotes would not be required. An example would be plants for East Dean in Bloom.
- If the expenditure required virement then quotes must be obtained
- If the expenditure occurred unexpectedly and required immediate authorisation for practical reasons, this could be done by the clerk under emergency powers, up to a limit of £500.

RESOLVED - That the council's recommended procurement thresholds be approved as amended

### **C.190 Neighbourhood Plan**

The Chair of the Steering Group invited members to note the revised draft Terms of Reference for the Group, but to defer making a decision until the April meeting, as a further amendment might be required. This was agreed.

Members took note of the draft minutes of the Steering Group meeting held on 11 February 2020 and in particular the revised Appendix setting out the membership of four Working Parties to consider (1) Housing and Development; (2) Environment,

Heritage and Countryside; (3) Traffic and Transport; and (4) Community, Infrastructure and Business. These memberships had yet to be finalised.

#### **C.191 Finance (c) Members' Allowances**

The Lead Member for Finance introduced Report 8c identifying the practicalities involved in paying members' allowances. Members took note. In particular, it was noted that if money budgeted for allowances remained unclaimed it would go into reserves. If a member proposed to vire money from reserves to another budget head, such as the council's grant scheme, this would require the approval of full council. It was further agreed that allowances should be payable in arrears at the end of September and the end of March, and that to qualify for payment the member in question should have attended a minimum of three meetings in the previous six months.

RESOLVED - That to qualify for payment of a Member's Allowance a councillor must have attended a minimum of three meetings in the previous six months.

#### **C.192 Neighbourhood Plan: Project Management Plan**

The Vice Chair of the Steering Group introduced Report 9c, setting out the objectives of the Plan; the process and timetable to deliver the Plan; and the resource requirement, currently estimated at £30,000 on the basis of comparison with the parish of Shipley which was working within similar parameters and had reached the submission stage. The Steering Group recommended two imminent items of expenditure: approx. £2,200 for a digital mapping exercise; and £2,000 for an arboriculture survey. The Environment, Heritage and Countryside Working Party had also requested an ecological survey at a cost of £100. These items were strongly recommended and would have longer term benefits beyond the lifetime of the NPSG. Some other survey material could be drawn direct from the SDNPA's freshly made Local Plan at no cost. The only other immediate cost would be the Admin Officer's salary. Further ahead, the major cost would be contracting consultants to prepare the draft Plan document for consultation and then submission, at a cost of approx. £15,000. The Group would be able to apply for grants from April 2020 onwards, on the basis of a detailed projection of expenditure.

In discussion, members endorsed the preliminary Project Management Plan and requested an update with further budgetary detail in three months' time (June 2020). The Lead Member for Finance kindly volunteered to oversee the finance and procurement processes and to bring monthly statements to the council, ensuring that all purchases would have prior council approval. To assist this process, the NPSG was requested to appoint at least one councillor to serve on each of the four Working Parties.

Members noted that the finished neighbourhood plan would give the community a voice in shaping future development, based on thorough consultation, and facilitate the updating of the Village Design Statement which had been produced prior to the finalisation of the SDNPA's Local Plan. The NP consultation process, backed by government funding, would allow the Neighbourhood Plan to attain the same legal

status as other documents that formed part of the SDNPA's statutory development plan, once it had been approved at a referendum. Thereafter, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicated otherwise.

RESOLVED - That the preliminary Project Management Plan be approved

RESOLVED – That Cllr Godden be appointed to oversee the NPSG's finances and procurement arrangements

### **C.193 Dog Bin and Litter Bin Review**

The council considered Report 10 and agreed that the two additional litter bins at the East Dean bus stops should be retained. It was noted that a collection charge would be imposed on these bins from April 2020 onwards, at a cost of £250 plus VAT per bin per year. As the budget for 2020/21 had already been set, this sum would need to be vired from reserves.

Members also reviewed the provision of dog bins and litter bins across the parish and agreed that an additional dog bin would be useful at the Upper Street end of the Twitten (Footpath 25) if a suitable site were available for installation **ACTION: KL to check cost and location.** The cost of emptying would be £250 plus VAT per year.

RESOLVED - That £500 should be vired from reserves to the dog/litter bin budget (658) in 2020/21

### **C.194 Downs View Lane Planting**

The council considered Report 11 recommending that professional advice be sought on the replanting of the Downs View Lane verge, to ensure that the replanting should be successful, sympathetic, and add correctly to the biodiversity of the area without causing any adverse effects. The verge might be unstable as the ground was 'made up'. The report could also cover the Biodiversity Strip at the recreation ground, and the best approach to planting a wildflower strip there. The estimated cost would be £100 (to be met e.g. from the ROW General Maintenance budget and/or the Recreation Ground General Maintenance budget). Free plants could be obtained for the Downs View Lane verge.

RESOLVED –That arboricultural advice be sought at a cost of approx. £100

### **C.195 Draft Eastbourne Downlands Whole Estate Plan**

The council considered responding to the current consultation by Eastbourne Borough Council on their draft Whole Estate Plan. The only proposal of direct local interest was the imposition of a road charge on the Beachy Head Road. However, the Eastbourne Town Solicitor had already stated that this could not be implemented as the Borough did not own the road. Members agreed not to comment as a council, but would be free to do so in a personal capacity.

### **C.196 Councillor Responsibilities**

The Chair proposed that Cllr Wheatley should become the Lead Member for Village Events, Charities and Grants, as these items were inter-related. Cllr Wheatley confirmed that she was willing to serve. This was unanimously endorsed.

RESOLVED - That Cllr B Wheatley be appointed as Lead Member for Village Events, Charities and Grants

### C.197 Village Events

The following items were discussed:

- a) VE Day 75 - The council took note that there had been little support for the formal celebration of this anniversary on 8 May 2020. It was agreed that the provisional hall booking should be cancelled **ACTION: KL**
- b) Village Fete - members agreed that the council should support the Fete on 11 July 2020 by donating £250 towards the setting up (within budget), and by booking two stalls (one for the Neighbourhood Plan), as in 2019. Child-friendly stalls had been requested, and sales discouraged.
- c) Village Hall 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration - it was agreed to support this event on 17 October 2020 and to vire the VE Day 75 budget towards the setting up of the event, if required
- d) Parish council grants 2020/21 – applications should now be invited for consideration in May **ACTION: KL**
- e) Charity of the Year (2020/21) – suitable charities should be proposed for consideration at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May. Several requests had already been received **ACTION: KL to send details to BW**

RESOLVED - That the oral Village Events report be noted and action taken as discussed

### C.198 Payments and Receipts

The council considered Report 15 - the Schedule of Payments for March 2020 and receipts for February 2020. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes]*. It was noted that an additional payment of £53 should be made for the gate closures at the play area, and this was agreed (invoice awaited). It was noted that no invoice had yet been received for the strimming of the Downs View Lane verge.

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £5,817.57 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

### C.199 Urgent item

Coronavirus – the Chair had arranged to meet the Editor of the Parish Magazine and a representative of the Community Watch to consider parish support in the event of some residents needing to self-isolate. Guidance and advice would be published in the parish magazine and on the council website.

### C.200 Reports:

- a) Chair of the Council – invitations should be issued shortly for the Annual Village Meeting (24 April 2020), and a report brought to council at the ordinary April meeting (02 April 2020). The Neighbourhood Plan would be featured;

other suggestions would be welcome from members and from village organisations **ACTION: KL**

- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the committee meeting held on 18 February 2020
- c) Finance – the council took note of Report 17c on Budget Monitoring for the period ended 29 February 2020. [Note the bank balance at the end of February 2020 was £70,572.82].
- d) Rights of Way and Highways – the council took note of Report 17d on the meeting held on 11 February with the Hon. Solicitor and a director of the Roads Company to discuss use of the precept for maintenance of privately owned roads. The percentage of non-payers on the Estate was currently 10%-12%, i.e. better than had been feared, and more could be done to pursue non-payers. In addition the Roads Company would advertise their valuable work, and look into the recovery of VAT. Specialist legal advice should now be sought from NALC, and advice sought from East Sussex Highways on imposing a weight limit on vehicles using the Estate roads **ACTION: KL.** The preliminary conclusion was that the parish council should not take over any responsibility for roads but could legitimately assist the Roads Company by way of grant if deemed appropriate in the future. The council recorded its thanks to the Hon. Solicitor for his advice.
- e) Recreation Ground – the Lead Member reported on the following matters: (i) the replacement of the swings had begun and would soon be completed, weather permitting. (ii) The Cricket Club expected the cricket square to be moved in September. They would then need a new roller for maintenance, and a larger storage facility. They had requested permission to enlarge the width of the old scorer's hut by 0.5m for this purpose and to re-orientate it towards the play area, with new double doors. Councillors had no objection in principle but noted that the Gilbert Estate would need to approve the proposal under the terms of their restrictive covenant. (iii) The Cricket Club had also suggested installing a ramp which would provide wheelchair access to the play area and easier access to the scorer's hut. The Lead Member had advised that the council would require full details including drawings in order to consider this proposal. (iv) Dog training – a member of the public had reportedly been using the recreation ground for commercial purposes. This was not permitted. (v) The pavilion would be re-opened and the water turned back on at the end of March, weather permitting.
- f) Fund Raising – the Lead Member reported on the following matters: (i) Interpretation Boards - pre-application planning advice was being sought on the chosen locations. The Gilbert Estate would also be consulted regarding the proposed site in the Village Car Park. (ii) East Dean in Bloom – a plaque recording the sponsors of the project had been prepared for installation in the shopping precinct, on the wall of the Downlands Butchers, with kind permission of the owner.

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

## C.201 Correspondence

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

- a) Swings at the play area – a resident had complained about the delay in restoring the swings, and had also requested fresh investment in the play area. The resident should be reassured that plans for a Phase 2 enhancement were already in progress, and that a considerable sum had recently been spent on renewing the play area fence and gates. **ACTION: KL to respond**
- b) Mobile phone mast – Maria Caulfield MP had received information that the additional mast on the A259 would not be required due to advances in technology. Members thanked the MP for pursuing this matter but were sceptical of the reason given and queried whether the requirement to share masts with other providers might be a factor in the decision not to proceed with this installation.

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

**C.202 Date of next meeting: Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020** at 6.30 pm in the Village Hall.

*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.44 pm.*

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....