



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held remotely on the Zoom platform on Thursday 4th June 2020, commencing at 6.30 pm

Councillors present: Cllr M Keller (Chair), Cllr T Bryant, Cllr N Day, Cllr L d'Urso, Cllr K Godden, Cllr P Hill, Cllr P Seeley, Cllr B Wheatley and Cllr D Wild

In attendance: County Cllr S Shing (Items C.225 – C.228); District Cllr M Lunn; K Larkin (Parish Clerk); D Picknell (Admin Officer)

There were four members of the public present.

Public Session

The Chair read a statement from two residents regarding the greatly increased volume and speed of traffic on the Birling Gap Road, exacerbated by anti-social driving. This had serious adverse impacts on the community: noise, poor air quality, damage to parked cars and to verges, stress, and danger to pedestrians and animals. The Chair stated that the council would discuss this topic under Correspondence and would very likely be supportive of these concerns.

The Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting

C.225 Acceptance of apologies for absence: - P Williamson (Tree Warden)

C.226 Declarations of Interests: - None

C.227 Minutes: - The minutes of the council meeting held remotely on 7th May 2020 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

C.228 Report of the County Councillor

County Cllr Shing reported on the following matters:

- a) Hedge at Exceat Bridge – the Highways department had been asked about strimming this hedge which was now obscuring visibility for motorists. The county council was returning to normality but there would be delays as a backlog arising from the Covid-19 emergency was cleared.
- b) Traffic on the Birling Gap Road – This could be a topic on the next SLR (parish/county liaison meeting) agenda. The date was expected to be 16th June 2020. Cllr Shing requested further information **ACTION: KL to provide**
- c) Closure of East Dean surgery – Cllr Shing would support the parish's request for this to be reconsidered. Maria Caulfield MP had also taken this on board.

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

C.229 Request for Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Cllr Godden moved that approval be given to the holding of elections to these appointments at the July 2020 council meeting. Elections would have been held in May under the normal democratic process had it not been for the emergency coronavirus regulations. Cllr Godden also requested under SO3(s) that the voting be recorded to show whether each councillor present and voting was for or against the motion. The Chair stated that the emergency regulations recognised that full interaction was limited at remote meetings and that changes of appointment in a time of disruption should be avoided. The Chair and Vice Chair would be content for fresh elections to be held as soon as physical meetings could be convened again. The main motion was put to the meeting and there was an equality of votes: Cllrs d'Urso, Day, Godden and Wheatley voting in favour, and Cllrs Bryant, Hill, Keller and Seeley against; with Cllr Wild abstaining). The Chair used his casting vote under SO3(r) to maintain the status quo, and the motion was lost by five votes to four.

RESOLVED – That an election to the appointments of Chair and Vice Chair should not be held at the July 2020 council meeting

C.230 Report of the District Councillor

District Cllr Lunn reported on the following matters:

- a) Covid-19 emergency – this had had an unprecedented impact at all levels and for all persons. Full updates on the district council's activities were being issued regularly, and all service provision had been maintained apart from a brief interruption in the collection of garden waste, for which residents were being compensated by an extension of the period covered for the charge. Work had also begun on a new Local Plan, with a consultation on sites in progress. There would be full liaison with other authorities.
- b) Closure of East Dean surgery – Cllr Lunn agreed to support the parish's request for the closure to be reconsidered, or at least deferred. He would confer with Maria Caulfield MP. Members agreed that an approach should be made to the Clinical Commissioning Group as a matter of urgency. **ACTION: ML/MK**
- c) Financial support for local businesses – Cllr Lunn was obtaining an overview of the considerable amount of support given during the emergency. The Chair confirmed that the East Dean Village Hall Trust had received £10,000 to offset loss of income.

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

C.231 Committee Appointments

There were no nominations for the appointment of Chair of the Planning Committee, or Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Cllr d'Urso gave notice of her intention to resign from the office of Vice Chair of the NPSG. The Chair stated that he would speak to individual members about fresh appointments and hoped to make appointments at the July meeting.

C.232 Business in Progress

The council considered Report 9 by the clerk on progress since the May meeting, and the following matters were discussed:

- a) Provision of dog bins – members reviewed the cost of additional bins and the growing number of locations at which dog poo was being left, as evidenced by recent correspondence on Footpath 8 (The Ridgeway to Old Willingdon Road). It was also noted that even where bins were provided they were often ignored. Members agreed not to provide more bins but to run an educational campaign in the parish magazine and to consider official signage with reference to the fines payable under Wealden's Dog Control Order. **ACTION: MK/KL**

RESOLVED - That no additional dog bins should be provided

- b) Charity of the Year – information on Care for the Carers should be provided on the council website with a link to the charity's website **ACTION: BW/MK**
- c) Strengthening Local Relationships – the next meeting was expected to be on Tuesday 16th June 2020. Details would be circulated to all members.

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

C.233 Arboricultural Consultation

The council considered Report 10a prepared by Arborsense, together with Report 10b prepared by the Tree Warden, and a summary report with five recommendations prepared by Cllr d'Urso (10c). Members thanked Cllr d'Urso for her recommendations, and approved them all.

RESOLVED – That there will be no replacement planting of hedgerow tree species along Downs View Lane in accordance with the advice from Arborsense. The mature hedge will be left to grow. The Hedgerow pack secured from the Woodland Trust will instead be used on the Recreation Ground.

RESOLVED - That at the recreation ground there will be new planting of traditional hedging to fill in the current gap in the existing hedge, and it will be under-planted with the hedgerow flower mix also secured from the Woodland Trust.

RESOLVED – That a trial Wild Flower Strip 35m long be planted in September and cordoned off to allow plants to establish over winter and into next spring.

RESOLVED - To defer any decision about considering or applying for TPO designation on the mature ash trees (1 located on Footpath 33b, and 3 on Footpath 19) until the end of the growing season when their health can be reassessed.

RESOLVED – To request the mowing contractors to keep a greater distance from saplings; and to reduce width of the mown verge in Downs View Lane to allow the hedge to recover fully

C.234 Annual Audit 2020

The council considered Report 11 and was pleased to note that no matters had been raised by the Internal Auditor on the financial year 2019/20. Members thanked Cllr Godden and the clerk for their work on the accounts. Members ratified their approval of the final accounts which had previously been considered at the informal meeting held on 2nd April 2020. The following decisions were made:

RESOLVED – To approve the Final Accounts 2019/20

RESOLVED - To confirm the effectiveness of the council's Internal Audit regime between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020

RESOLVED - To approve the Annual Governance Statements 2020

RESOLVED - To approve the Annual Accounting Statements 2020, with supporting end of year bank reconciliation and Explanation of Variances

RESOLVED - That the report of the Internal Auditor be noted

RESOLVED - To approve the period from Monday 15 June to Friday 24 July 2020 for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the Unaudited Annual Return

C.235 Neighbourhood Plan

Members noted with regret that Cllr d'Urso had decided to stand down as Vice Chair of the Steering Group. The work of the Group had been suspended during the lockdown. The restart should be accompanied by a wider review of planning matters.

C.236 Recreation Ground and Pavilion

The council considered Report 13 by the Lead Member. Cllr Day confirmed that the tennis court had been reopened following the relaxation in government guidelines which took effect on 1st June 2020. Two new basketball nets had been ordered at a cost of £12 (within budget) and the rings treated with rust inhibitor. The play area remained closed pending further government direction.

Regarding the proposal by the Cricket Club to extend the scorer's hut to provide storage for a new roller, members noted that the Gilbert Estate would be prepared to grant a licence permitting the extension, but would be entitled to charge a fee for this. The Estate had proposed that if the field could be cleared of debris, particularly in the south west corner where grass clippings were deposited, the fee might be waived. There was also some bagged rubbish behind the pavilion which should be cleared, and a 1m strip adjacent to the flint wall forming the common boundary with Estate land should be kept clear by periodic strimming. In discussion it was proposed that as the SW corner of the field was full of wildlife, it should be made a planting feature rather than emptied. The Estate's proposal was welcomed in principle, and it was agreed that Cllr Day, Cllr d'Urso and a representative of the Cricket Club should negotiate further with the Estate. **ACTION: ND/LD.**

C.237 Defibrillators

The council took note of Report 14 by the Lead Member on the cash flow forecast for the next two years. The defibrillators already installed could be maintained well within budget over that period. However, further installations had stalled during the lockdown and would be more difficult to locate. Members thanked Cllr Seeley for his work on this project.

RESOLVED - That the cash flow forecast for defibrillators be noted.

C.238 Payments and Receipts

The council considered Report 12 - the Schedule of Payments for June 2020 and receipts for May 2020. *[Note: the complete Schedule is appended to these Minutes].*

RESOLVED – That the payments totalling £4,687.58 be approved and the clerk be authorised to make the payments

C.239 Urgent Item

The Chair invited members to consider the traffic problems in the Birling Gap Road which had been raised in the Public Session. These problems had even featured on the national news. Vehicles were speeding illegally and recording time trials around a route known as ‘the ring’, and this problem was being prioritised by the Sussex police, who had also issued a large number of lockdown penalty notices at Birling Gap on a recent Bank Holiday weekend. The Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Inspector at Eastbourne and the MP for Eastbourne were discussing initiatives to which East Dean should contribute, as the situation had become intolerable for residents.

Members agreed there should be a package of short-term and long-term solutions. In the short term, the parish council, the District Council and the Sussex Police should use existing powers as fully as possible to tackle speeding. The longer term solutions should not involve relocating the congestion from Birling Gap to East Dean, but could include traffic calming measures as proposed by the Gilbert Estate. The input of East Sussex Highways should be sought at the next SLR meeting (16th June 2020), and residents would be welcome to submit comments for that meeting via the parish council.

Standing Orders were suspended to enable residents to state that they would contribute to this process. Standing Orders were reimposed.

C.240 Reports:

- a) Chair of the Council – (i) notice had been received that the Beehive and the Thai restaurant would re-open for takeaways in the coming weeks; (ii) a person claiming to be from the parish council had entered a residential garden, allegedly to view scaffolding. The person was unauthorised and an alert had been circulated by the Residents’ Association
- b) Planning Committee – the council took note of the draft minutes of the remote committee meeting held on 19 May 2020

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- c) Finance – the council took note of the Budget Monitoring report for the period ended 31 May 2020 (Report 17c). The Lead Member stated that there were some underspends due to capital projects being put on hold in the lockdown, and that the Neighbourhood Plan project would need to be revisited when appointments were reviewed in the autumn. A resident had queried the size of the budget and the level of reserves, but reserves were in line with normal protocols, and the parish council was implementing an investment plan for community assets. No adverse comments had been made by the auditors.
- d) Rights of Way and Highways – the Lead Member asked whether 40 plastic boxes used for bark chippings could be stored at the pavilion. Currently there was no space, but the possibility of clearing space in the loft would be investigated. **ACTION: ND/PS.**
- e) Recreation Ground – the Lead Member had been in contact with representatives of the Cricket Club, who hoped to proceed with moving the cricket square in the autumn. The parish council was requested to order the work, as landowners, using funds raised by the Club, and it was hoped that they could then reclaim the VAT. Cllr Godden advised that the tax implications required further research, and it was agreed that a report should be brought to the council at a future meeting **ACTION: KG/KL to contact WDC for advice.** The Club could still finance the project (with the contribution of £5,000 from the parish council), if the VAT were not reclaimable.
- f) Fund Raising – the Lead Member reported that most funds were on hold during the lockdown, and potential applications were also on hold.
- g) Village Events, Charities and Grants – members took note that village clubs and societies might be suffering financially, and agreed that the parish council should support them so far as it could, and through them the village hall and the wider community. The Lead Member would put an article in the parish magazine, calling for applications for grant funding in 2020/21, with no deadline for applications. **ACTION: BW/KL**

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

C.241 Correspondence

The council took note of Report 18 by the clerk on correspondence received since the May meeting. The following were discussed:

- a) Footpath 8 – it was confirmed that this path should be chipped in the autumn.
- b) The mirror at the junction of Micheldene Road and Wenthill Close – Cllr Seeley confirmed that this mirror was the property of the Residents' Association. It has slipped and he had restored it to its proper place.
- c) Strimming of verges on Friston Hill – a complaint from residents' that a portion of the verge adjacent to their property was being missed, would be brought up at the SLR meeting on 16th June 2020.
- d) Closure of East Dean Surgery – members noted the action already taken by the Chair, and reiterated that a letter must be sent to the Clinical

Commissioning Group [see also Item C.230 (b) above]. This would stress that the proposed timing of the closure was wrong **ACTION: KL/MK/ML**

- e) Traffic management for East Dean/Birling Gap/Beachy Head – see Item C.239 above.
- f) Complaint – members noted that a resident had complained about comments made in the minutes of the Planning Committee regarding enforcement action at East Dean Place. The same resident had submitted a Subject Access Request.
- g) East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service – the parish council had been requested to support a lobby group and petition opposing cuts to fire and rescue services. The approach appeared to be political, but the parish council had a policy of remaining non-political. The Eastbourne fire station did not appear to be affected. Members of the council could sign the petition as individuals if they so wished.

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

C.242 Date of next meeting: Thursday 2nd July 2020 at 6.30 pm by remote means

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.51 pm

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....