
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Ashburnham and Penhurst Parish Council
held on Wednesday 13th January 2016 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Nicky Bishop (Chair), Tina French, Richard Hann, Ron King, Andy Proudfoot and Richard White.

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Carol Andrews

District / County Councillors present: RDC Cllr Gary Curtis, ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field

Also present: Clerk to the Council
8 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence have been received from Cllr Carol Andrews.

2. Disclosures of interest

2.1 No interests were declared.

3. Adoption of Minutes

The draft minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 2nd December 2015 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chair the minutes were adopted without amendment.

4. Open Forum

4.1 ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field advised that the scale of the financial restrictions on County are such that they have to save £25 million this year and £90 million over the next four years. Revenue Support Grant is being phased out and the County is a net importer at present because of the low business tax base. Quite how they will be compensated in future is not clear. As a result, County are likely to increase the precept by 1.99% (the permitted maximum) plus a further 2% which is allowed for Adult Social Care. This will produce an additional £4.5 million which leaves them still £14 million short. Some cuts are inevitable and there is consultation on cuts to the library service. Cllr Field urged members to respond by recommending longer hours of opening but on fewer days. Her suggestion is that people need access when they are not working which means early or late but not every day.

4.2 RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported that he continued to make enquiries about the origins of the new street signs at the entrance to Akehurst Field.

With regard to bins he reported some progress with the contractors and asked for data with times and dates to be forwarded to him so that he can build an evidential case to support his complaints. Cllr Hann confirmed that he will forward the considerable material which he already has.

4.3 Members of the public present came with the specific purpose of discussing the provision of rural broadband. Accordingly, the Chair brought forward agenda item 10.1 to be discussed here.

4.3.1 Cllr Hann reported on the proceedings at a RALC meeting which he attended today where a guest speaker, Andrew Wedmore, gave an account of the current situation. In December 2011 the promise was of rural broadband for all within two years. Now the promise is for 96% by the end of 2017. Plans for the other 4% have not been announced and neither is it clear who they are. Mr Wedmore suggested that the population falls into three categories:

- a) those who have a good provision already will have a superfast one;
- b) those whose provision is currently just adequate will remain just adequate, and;
- c) those who currently have a poor service will probably continue to do so.

- 4.3.2 Mrs Petty, until recently working for Huw Merriman MP, reported that Andrew Wedmore is meeting Huw Merriman next week to provide him with evidence. Huw is keen to involve ESCC not least because they have put up at least £15 million towards rural broadband provision and they need to know what the true situation is from the user point of view to compare with statements from BT.
- 4.3.3 Other members of the public offered the following experiences:
- 4.3.3.1 A contract for BT Infinity was entered into as a test case as the property is very far from any cabinet. As expected, there was almost no signal and, after some difficulty, the contract was cancelled.
- 4.3.3.2 Cell phone technology using 4G is an alternative to fixed line (providing a signal can be received).
- 4.3.3.3 A contract for BT Infinity was entered into but the speed was slower than previously.
- 4.3.3.4 A business user is paying £400 per month for satellite broadband but has two BT business landlines as well because the time delay on satellite is too long for many applications.
- 4.3.3.5 Ashburnham Place are connected to the fibre cabinet at The Pound which has improved general speed to 3 Mb per second and to 10 Mb per second in the house.
- 4.3.4 Cllr Hann advised that Andrew Wedmore is looking for people to join his working party to work with Huw Merriman MP. John Shanks (Resident of Catsfield) was asked to consider joining to represent the interests of Ashburnham as he is clearly well qualified to do so.
- 4.3.5 Councillors considered whether it was appropriate to set up a working party, but concluded that it was better to incorporate rural broadband into the Action Plan which is now due to be revisited as the five years covered by the first plan has now expired.

5. RFO Report

- 5.1 Cllrs noted the opening of the new banking arrangements with Unity Trust Bank.
- 5.2 Reserves on deposit are currently with Scottish Widows. However, Unity Trust Bank also has a deposit account and the RFO will determine which is the more favourable.
- 5.3 Cllrs noted a report of expenditure and income against budget until the end of third quarter which was circulated before the meeting and is attached to these minutes.
- 5.4 Cllr French confirmed that she had this evening reviewed the HSBC current-account balance which is as shown on the bank reconciliation at the end of third quarter. The reconciliation statement was emailed prior to the meeting and is attached to these minutes.
- 5.5 On the motion of the Chair the council approved the following payments:
- 5.5.1 James Harris £25 – hire of PA system, Remembrance Sunday
- 5.5.2 Carol Lovett £19.12 – refreshments, Remembrance Sunday
- 5.6 Cllrs noted following receipts:
- 5.6.1 Reimbursement for wreaths £87 (all those purchasing wreaths having paid).

6. Planning

- 6.1 The outcome or status of previous applications was noted as follows:
- 6.1.1 RR/2015/998/P – Ashburnham recreation ground – proposed new village hall *Undecided*
- 6.1.2 RR/2015/1952/L - Little Acre, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Retention of white painted timber weatherboard on south west elevation. (Retrospective) *Approved with conditions*
- 6.1.3 RR/2015/1963/P - Clearview Farm, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Retention of agricultural barn and farm track. *Approved with similar conditions to those sought by the Parish Council.*
- 6.1.4 RR/2015/2251/P - Burnt Barns Farm, Freckley Hollow, Ashburnham, TN33 9LZ - Relocation of former agricultural worker's cabin and its conversion to tourist accommodation. *Application withdrawn by applicant.*
- 6.2 New applications – none

6.3 Updates to the following breaches and enforcement were noted:

- 6.3.1 ENF/ASH/2011/293 - Brays Hill - holiday let rules breached - enforcement action. Holiday home used as permanent home. *Awaiting information*
- 6.3.2 ENF/177/15/ASH - Naulakha, Lakehurst Lane, Ashburnham - Alterations to holiday let and possible permanent residential use.. *Visit being arranged.*
- 6.3.3 ENF/193/15/ASH (new) – Buckwell Ghyll, Lakehurst Lane, Ashburnham – caravan noted.

6.4 The following new appeal was noted:

- 6.4.1 RR/2015/1480/P – 2356 Buckwell Ghyll, Olivers Hill Farm, Lakehurst Lane, TN33 9PE - Provision of integral residential accommodation within existing Care Farm Building.
N.B. If the council wish to discuss this they will need to do so at properly called meeting of the planning committee. This would be on 10th of February which is two days before the deadline for submission of representations. Council made no decision on this point and any councillors who do make representations must do so on their own cognizance.

7. Highways matters

7.1 Finger posts

- 7.1.1 The clerk reported that JAKK have today embarked on the work on the finger posts at The Pound and Penhurst.
- 7.1.2 Cllr Hann reported that an issue with a finger post pointing to the 1066 Way. The clerk will send him a map of the rights of way so that the precise location can be pinpointed before forwarding the problem to the Rights of Way Officer.

7.2 Verge cutting

- 7.2.1 The clerk reported that the verges missed in the rural areas have still not been cut which is no doubt due to the weather.
- 7.2.2 A new contractor, Costain, has been appointed for verge cutting.

7.3 Potholes

- 7.3.1.1 Cllr Hann reported that a new date of 29 January has been set for resurfacing the Ponds Green end of Forge Lane.
- 7.3.1.2 The Chair thanked Cllr Hann and the team for all their work on getting potholes attended to.

8. Premises

8.1 New Village Hall

- 8.1.1 The Chair reported on discussions with the planning officer regarding the justification of the need for a new hall. Guidance received was that reasons such as the size of the old hall being too small for major events such as a barn dance or a pantomime would be deemed valid. Suggesting that a larger hall designed to encourage hiring by people outside the village would be a valid reason but would not be enough on its own. The Chair will write a draft justification and circulate it.
- 8.1.2 The Chair reported on other planning issues such as the main windows which were deemed to be unsuitable for the AONB. Adding shutters would be one form of mitigating the impact which will be considered.
- 8.1.3 In terms of the overall size and bulk, Cllr White suggested that the building could be made smaller by not having a small meeting room and considering the pavilion as being the only small meeting room that would be needed by the village. Councillors welcomed this suggestion.
- 8.1.4 The spending on professional fees to date and on the next stage were considered with some concern expressed over the slow pace and the additional costs which were being incurred as a result of frequent modifications to the design. In terms of progress it was agreed by the time of the Annual Assembly on 21 April significant progress needs to be made and at the

very least the final design finalised by the end of March.

8.2 Village Hall

8.2.1 Cllr White reported that the W.I. have expressed the wish to decorate the small room at their own expense and this was welcomed as was the general clearing up of the small room.

8.3 Pavilion

8.3.1 The Clerk reported that one of the four heaters in the pavilion has now failed and an electrician has been called to report and replace as necessary. This is the second of the four heaters to fail.

8.3.2 Proposals for the hard and soft landscaping around the war memorial have been previously circulated and firm costings have now been received. Councillors were generally in approval of the scheme but wanted to make sure that the connecting path between the gate and the pavilion was of a generous width. The total cost including VAT is in the order of £2100. The Diamond Jubilee Fund has £1280 to contribute towards this and VAT of £352 will come back to the Parish Council in the following financial year. The net cost overall is therefore approximately £850. On the motion of the Chair council resolved to undertake the work in the current financial year so that the planting can be done during the dormant period.

9. Budget for 2016/17

9.1 The draft budget for the year was circulated prior to the meeting. The following specific items were resolved:

9.1.1 On the motion of the Chair seconded by Cllr Hann, council resolved that the clerk's contract of employment is to be amended and the hours per month increased from 20 to 30 with effect from 1 January 2016.

9.1.2 On the motion of the Chair an LCD monitor will be purchased for use in the pavilion primarily to display planning application documents.

9.1.3 Councillors noted the funding of professional fees related to the new village hall. Councillors were open minded about seeking alternative quotations for the next stage of design development (noted as stage iv in the overall plan).

9.1.4 On the motion of the Chair seconded by Cllr Proudfoot the budget attached to these minutes was adopted for 2016/17/

9.2 Councillors discussed the precept for 2016 /17and, after discussion, resolved that the precept should be maintained at its current level adjusted only for inflation. Given that the CPI for November 2015 shows an increase of 0.1% the precept increases from £8226 to £8234.

10. Community Matters

10.1 Rural broadband – this item was taken at 4.3

10.2 The clerk reported that permission was being sought from the Penhurst Estate and the Conservation Officer for a suitable site for a new noticeboard at Penhurst.

11. Correspondence received

11.1 Thanks from The Chapel for the donation of £100.

11.2 Thanks from St Michael's Penhurst for the grant of £300 for the maintenance of the burial grounds.

11.3 Circular letter concerning celebrations to mark the Queen's birthday 21 April 2016 which will include the lighting of beacons. Councillors noted that this is the day of the Annual Assembly and resolved to combine the two events. It was decided that the Annual Assembly should start in the village hall at 7:30 PM with a business meeting after which the public would be invited to make their way to the pavilion for a reception and the lighting of a beacon. Cllr White undertook the investigation of constructing a beacon.

11.4 ESCC consultation on library opening hours. The clerk was instructed to circulate this to all councillors with a reminder to adopt the recommendation of Cllr Field to press for changes to the opening hours to suit modern users of all ages wanting to make use of technology. The

suggestion is to press for early and late opening and to compensate this by restricting the number of days in the week when the library would be open.

12. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

None

13. Circulation folder

- 13.1 Magazines sent to the council and other hard copy circulars will be placed in a folder for circulation between councillors. It was agreed that the sequence should be in alphabetical order by surname.

14. Dates of Next Meetings

- 14.1 Councillors noted the revised schedule of ordinary council meetings in 2016 (on the second Wednesdays) at 7.30pm in the Sports Pavilion, which is as follows:

9th March
11th May
13th July
14th September
9th November

- 14.2 Councillors noted the revised schedule of meetings of the Planning Committee in 2016 (on the second Wednesdays) at 7.30pm in the Sports Pavilion, which is as follows:

10th February
13th April

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Signed (Chair)

Date