

**Parish of Penhurst Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Parish of Ashburnham Annual Parish Meeting**

**Thursday 25th April 2019 from 7.30 pm in the village hall**

Approximately 30 members of the public plus RDC Cllr Gary Curtis, ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field and parish councillors attended by the parish clerk assembled from 7pm for a light buffet reception and to view the exhibits staged by a range of village organisations. The business meeting commenced at approximately 7.30 pm. In accordance with Local Government Act 1972 (c.70), Sch 12, s.17, the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Nicky Bishop, presided.

The Chair of the Parish Council, Cllr Nicky Bishop, welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that the first parish meeting of the evening would be the Penhurst Parish Meeting, chaired by Cllr Andrew Hoad who is Deputy Chairman of the Parish Council and a resident of Penhurst. The Ashburnham Parish Meeting will follow which she will chair.

**Penhurst Parish Meeting (chaired by Cllr Andrew Hoad)**

Approximately 5 Penhurst electors were present.

**1. Parish Council report – planning applications in Penhurst**

- 1.1 RR/2018/504 - Hill Farm – approved – pc supported
- 1.2 RR/2018/2906 - Old Sprays Barn – approved – pc supported
- 1.3 RR/2018/2316 - Peans Farm – undecided – pc has objected

**2. Street Naming**

- 2.1 Following public consultation via the village web site it is proposed to approach the Street Naming Officer at RDC and request the following changes.
  - 2.1.1 Hammer Hill stops at the Ashbourne River and Church Road starts at 1 & 2 Old School House. In between is The Pound and not Lingham Lane.
  - 2.1.2 Red Barn reverts to Herrings Road
  - 2.1.3 Tower House Road, Penhurst becomes Penhurst Lane.

**3. Litter**

- 3.1 Two well attended litter picking sessions have been held in recent weeks. Large amounts of litter were collected and the sessions provided an enjoyable social occasion with the widest participation in terms of age profile of the pickers.
- 3.2 Further litter picking sessions will be organised before the hedgerows grow much more. Thanks were expressed to Helen and Andy Hoad for organising the litter picking.

**4. Notice Board at Penhurst**

The notice board on the wall of The Granary has disappeared. It was in a state of decay and Cllr Hoad indicated that the Parish Council will be seeking permission from either Penhurst Retreat or Penhurst Church Parochial Church Council to erect a free standing notice board just inside their curtilage. Unlike the old board it will be glazed.

**Ashburnham Parish Meeting (chaired by Cllr Nicky Bishop)**

Approximately 25 Ashburnham electors were present

**1. Welcome and call for agenda items**

The Chair called for items additional to the published agenda but not were requested.

**2. Apologies**

A number of electors sent their apologies for absence.

**3. Sussex Police Report**

- 3.1 Police Inspector ‘Jonny’ Hartley, Hastings and Rother Prevention addressed the meeting. The incidence of local crime, according to the statistics, is low and the burglary at Rocks Farm is, happily, an exception. In response to a question about response times he advised that the response base is at Hastings meaning that 25 minutes would be a typical response time.
- 3.2 With regard to repeat offending with litter throwing from cars (200 Budweiser cans discarded over a few months) he suggested that a call be made to 101 with a request that the community team be notified.
- 3.3 In response to a question about sheep worrying by dogs he advised that there is a rural crime strategy and the person to contact is the former CPSO, Daryl Holter, who is now the Wild Life and Crime Officer.

**4. County Councillor report (ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field)**

- 4.1 The County Council’s portion of this year’s Council Tax has risen by 2.99%. The County Council is still having to make serious cuts to services. This is in spite of lobbying Central Government which resulted in some extra cash. However it is “one off” and has been used on continuing expenditure so the effect will be to move the problem to next year.
- 4.2 The County Council has developed a “core offer” which is a mixture of statutory services and services which are not statutory but are deemed essential. Most services are now targeted at those who need them currently which means that those who do not quite qualify are left exposed and potentially vulnerable. Cllr Field said that she is particularly concerned that the subsidy of £4.10 per meal for those who qualify for meals on wheels has been withdrawn. Not only did this service provide balanced nutrition for service users but it ensured regular human contact for people who are often isolated.
- 4.3 The County’s Capital Programme has also been reduced because less revenue has been allocated to it to allow for more spending on front line services. Maintenance items have also been moved to the Capital budget. This means that there will be less money to spend on infrastructure improvements.
- 4.4 On a brighter note Ofsted has awarded the Council “outstanding” for Children’s Social Care, only five Local Authorities have gained this grade. It is to be hoped that budget cuts to preventative services will not threaten this service because it is not the grade itself which is important but what it says about the service provided to a vulnerable section of the community.
- 4.5 Despite what has happened in some parts of the County, the Council is still committed to its small schools. The Government’s National Funding Formula is likely to prove difficult for smaller schools so a small group of Councillors and Officers looked in depth at the issue and how the worst effects might be mitigated. The conclusion which has been agreed by the whole Council is that small schools should consider formal arrangements to combine and share management functions

etc while maintaining the school itself in its community. This will mean that this vital part of community life can continue.

- 4.6 Following an accident in the summer to a small child the skate ramp in Battle has been closed. It is on County Council land but is not owned by the County Council which is the cause of the problem because no organisation has a budget for the repairs necessary to make it safe so it can be reopened. The cost is in the region of £4,500 + VAT. The County Council has agreed to contribute the cost it would have had to pay to dismantle it and Battle Town Council is looking at ways to make it usable again. This is not just a resource for young people in Battle.

## **5. District Councillor report (RDC Cllr Gary Curtis)**

- 5.1 RDC now receive no revenue grant from central government. Under a pilot scheme they do retain 75% of business rates.
- 5.2 A new joint waste and recycling scheme, in conjunction with Hastings and Wealden, will start in late June 2019. The new contractor is BIFFA and it is hoped that key employees with first hand knowledge of the routes will be TUPE'd across from the current contractor, Kier.
- 5.3 The lack of affordable housing continues to be an issue and the council is developing a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. The fact that 'no fault evictions' are soon to be abolished may reduce the number of people finding themselves homeless.
- 5.4 Civil Parking Enforcement will be rolled out in the next year as widely publicised.
- 5.5 RDC are making Community Support Grants available to the tune of £60k.
- 5.6 'My Alerts', the weekly alert service by email now has 16,400 subscribers who receive alerts every week.
- 5.7 Mobile phone coverage in rural areas and the operators are said to be 'nearing a deal' to improve them.
- 5.8 Cllr Curtis thanked the Parish Council for the way they receive him at council meetings and hopes to be re-elected on 2nd May.

## **6. Parish Council Report (from the Chair)**

- 6.1 Meetings
  - 6.1.1 The council has met 6 times during the year meeting on the last Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm in the pavilion. We generally have 2 members of the public, sometimes more and extend our thanks to those who have attended. The council would welcome more regular attenders.
- 6.2 Councillors
  - 6.2.1 As the council has now come to the end of its four year term, Cllr Bishop thanked the following co-optees for their service – Carol Andrews and Neil McConkey. Thanks are also due to Cllr Ron King who resigned during the term.
  - 6.2.2 The election on 2nd May is not contested and Cllr Bishop welcomed two new councillors who have been declared elected – Zoe O'Sullivan and Ron King. Vacancies still exist for co-optees.
- 6.3 Planning
  - 6.3.1 There were 4 applications made in the 12 months about which the parish council was consulted and all were approved. The parish council did not take a position on any of them but did comment on 2.
- 6.4 Financial Report
  - 6.4.1 The Clerk and RFO gave a short PowerPoint presentation explaining how parish council finances are organised and how budgetary control is applied.

## 6.5 Community Support

6.5.1 The parish council is supporting the Flower Show and Country Fair again with a donation of the marquee. Cost is £750 again thanks to generosity of Meridian Marquees who have held the price the same for several years. An increase is expected in 2020.

6.5.2 Rural Broadband – Cllr Andrew Hoad advised that coverage is almost complete for high speed broadband but a few areas remain without.

6.5.3 Cllr Tina French, leading the parish council support for the refurbishment and conversion of the old payphone box, advised that restoration is nearing completion and work can start on compiling the museum-cum-tourist attraction discussed.

6.6 Highways. The parish council has engaged with the Strengthening Local Relationships initiative whereby they meet with representatives of East Sussex Highways twice a year. Initial outcomes are not encouraging but Highways have been requested to make a presentation at the next meeting about the strategy for road surface renewals as many roads are now beyond pothole repair.

## 7. Village Hall (Cllr Richard White)

7.1 Entrance improvements at recreation ground – license from landlord received and work to be completed before end of July.

7.2 Permission from the Ashburnham Estate has been requested to permit the Parish Council, which is the tenant of the recreation ground, to under-lease to the new charity formed for the purpose of managing the new hall. Estate trustees have been informed that if permission is withheld and the parish council owns and manages the hall the liability for business rates will be at least £6,000 per year it is estimated.

7.3 The new hall design sub committee have resolved to adopt a steel frame construction having evaluated Glue-Lam. Design development to Building Regs standard is planned by the summer at which point it will be possible to seek tenders for construction.

7.4 The current village hall had an exceptionally good year for annual rental income which increased from approximately £2,000 to £3,300. However, insurance costs have risen from £350 to over £800 as the Ashburnham Estate have revalued all their properties including the village hall. The terms of the trust deed oblige the village hall management committee to insure for current rebuilding costs. The committee has £3,800 ring fenced in the Appeal Fund which, were it to be used for major maintenance work, would attract a subsidy from Ashburnham Thanksgiving Trust of £3 for every £1.

## 8. Closing remarks

The Chair advised that she has not sought re-election to the parish council and closed the meeting by inviting those present to sing the Ashburnham and Penhurst Song which they did with enthusiasm.