

Minutes of the Meeting of Ashburnham and Penhurst Parish Council

held on Wednesday 24th September 2014 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion

Councillors present: Cllrs Roger Burfoot (Chair), Nicky Bishop, Andy Proudfoot, Gill Ratcliffe, Pat Winfield.

In attendance: Brian Holdstock (Clerk), ESCC Cllr Katherine Field

1) Disclosures of interest

Agenda item 9: Personal interest – Cllrs Bishop, Hann and White – members of the Village Hall Management Committee

2) Apologies for absence

Cllrs R.Hann, R. White, RDC Cllr A. Davies

3) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 30th July 2014 were adopted and signed by the chairman.

4) Finance

- a) The Chairman, as RFO, reported that the total of all bank balances is £12,848 (£15,515 in July)
- b) Forthcoming payments are to -
 - i) Hailsham Roadways (for Pavilion car park) £1143 plus vat
 - ii) SSALC training day for new parish clerks £87.50
 - iii) **Resolved** that payments of the above be approved
- c) The benefits of a new subscription to the Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) Community Building Advisory Service were tabled. **Resolved** that a subscription at the Tier 2 level be started commencing 1st October 2014 at a cost of £150 p.a. plus vat (proposed Cllr G. Ratcliffe, seconded Cllr A. Proudfoot).
- d) Future auditing arrangements are due to change with the abolition of the Audit Commission. It is proposed that parish councils of the size of Ashburnham will be exempt from external audit but that internal auditing arrangements by councillors be strengthened.
- e) The internal independent auditor, John Cumming, is now in at least his third year and, for the sake of good governance, a new auditor will need to be found for year ending 31st March 2016. The clerk will research alternatives.
- f) Councillors discussed the budget for 2015/16.
 - i) Reserves are all currently held under the heading of general reserves and the total is significantly greater than that recommended. However, reserves which are 'earmarked' for specific purposes are unlimited.
 - ii) Cllr R. Burfoot proposed and Cllr G. Ratcliffe seconded a motion that £10,000 of the reserves be 'earmarked' for a new village hall and this was **resolved**.
 - iii) Budget headings for next year were discussed and the draft budget will be prepared with the inclusion of headings for -
 - (1) Pavilion - income and expenditure on running expenses
 - (2) Grounds maintenance – sports field costs
 - (3) Training
 - (4) Governance including publications
 - (5) Community
 - (6) Web site
 - iv) The precept has remained at £7,000 for a number of years. New costs are envisaged including a salary for the clerk and expenses related to a new village hall. **Resolved** that the clerk research what percentage increase in the precept

would be needed in April 2015 in order for it to match the cumulative inflation increases since the precept was last raised.

5) Planning

a) Existing applications

RR2013/1927/P - Andersons Wood, Lakehurst Lane, Woods Corner - Laying crushed concrete on 200 metres of existing forestry track. Laying a culvert underneath the track. – Refused. *Appeal: APP/U1430/C/14/2219517 (clerk to verify if the appeal is against refusal or against enforcement).*

RR2014/1463/P & 1464/L - Old Barn, Lakehurst Lane, Ashburnham - Demolition of modern extension and erection of two storey extension and internal alterations. *Approved 27 Aug '14*

RR2014/1466/L - Hill Farm House, Tower House Road, Penhurst - Replace two windows (one timber, one metal) with timber windows. *Approved 27 Aug '14*

b) New applications

RR2014/2199/P - Court Lodge Farm, Ashburnham, TN33 9PJ - General purpose agricultural building with solar panels. **Resolved** that the council register that they have 'no objections'.

c) Enforcement Update

i) ENF/64/14/ASH - Burnt Barns Farm, Ashburnham - Unauthorised residential caravan. *Application requested*

ii) ENF/ASH/2011/293 - Brays Hill - holiday let rules breached - enforcement action – prosecution process instituted 16 May 2013; *prosecution commenced for non compliance 23 July 2013*

iii) ENF/ASH/2013/10 - Oak Bank Farm - Breach Of Planning Permission regarding commercial parking – inspection visit made which confirms commercial parking – *owner requested to address the issue or face prosecution.*

iv) ENF/ASH/2013/229 – Oak Bank Farm - Breach Of Planning Permission And Control RR/2012/1053/P and RR/2013/298/P - inspection visit made which confirms breaches – *owner requested to address the issue or face prosecution.*

v) ENF/ASH/2013/231 - Anderson Wood, Ashburnham - Importation of MoT type 1 onto bridle path. Application requested and received end of Sep 2013. *Enforcement action eff 14/6/14 - 3 mths to comply. Appeal above refers.*

6) Highways matters

a) A new temporary steward, Mick Sherwood, has taken over Area 3.

b) The Restricted Byway from The Furnace to Little Sprays, which runs through the Beech Estate, has become impassable. A local resident has coordinated representations to the Beech Estate as a result of which the Wills family, now both owning and managing the estate, have responded with a range of pledges which include the clearing of the byway and the maintenance of public access to a range of features subject only to the needs of their organised shoots. **Resolved** that ESCC Rights of Way team be requested to liaise with the owner/managers of the Beech Estate to monitor the future condition of the byway.

c) Recycling of Farthing Lane and Freckley Hollow has been completed.

d) A specimen copy of the weekly highways bulletin received by the clerk was tabled for councillors' information. Councillors requested that the bulletin be forwarded to them weekly.

e) Potholes continue to be a source of concern to councillors and Cllr Hann will be asked to pursue matters with ESCC.

7) Governance

a) The previous parish council meeting resolved that the position of clerk be changed from one of zero salary to normal employment terms commensurate with the job. As requested, the clerk has previously circulated members with details of his researches into normal employment terms. National agreements specify the hourly rate for part

time employment according to the scope of the job. For councils of this size the rate for an unqualified clerk is £9.01 per hour but councils are free to define the number of hours per month they wish to contract for.

- b) **Resolved** that the clerk position move to one of paid employment with effect from 1st January 2015 at an hourly rate of £9.01 for 20 hours per month, the hours per month to be reviewed in the light of future experience (proposed Cllr R. Burfoot, seconded Cllr A. Proudfoot).

8) Sports Pavilion

- a) The car park has now been resurfaced but some concern was expressed about the weeds growing through the new shingle.

9) Village Hall

- a) The clerk reported to members that he had carried out some investigation about different models of ownerships of village halls. Having talked to six other councils who own village halls it was found that half own and manage them in the same way as this council manages the sports pavilion and the other half own as custodian trustees and have set up charitable trusts at arms length to manage them (similar to the mode of operation of the Ashburnham village hall). If this council were to build a new village hall it would have the option in due course of operating it under either mode.
- b) Cllr Bishop, vice chair of the village hall management committee, reported on progress with a new hall.
 - i) Members of the committee met with RDC planners on site and received some encouragement. Once the committee have provided some written evidence of the consultation process and of the disposal of the old hall should a new hall be built, then RDC will put their comments in writing.
 - ii) RDC planners were shown one scheme for a stand alone building and three for extensions to the sports pavilion. They commented that extending the existing pavilion to provide a new village hall would create some challenges with regard the incongruity of the bulk of the pavilion and the hall. They also commented that the stand alone building was 'absolutely in the right place'.
 - iii) The village hall committee have the ambition to achieve planning permission by spring of 2015 and to be in a position to go to the second stage of consultation on May 5th (election day).
- c) Members discussed Cllr Bishop's report.
 - i) Council took the view that although the village hall committee has the necessary mandate from the electorate, the village hall committee's governing document (its 1962 trust deed) does not give it the necessary powers to spend its net income (after paying expenses) towards the establishment of a new village hall.
 - ii) It is clear that the parish council is able to give itself powers to spend on the establishment of a new village hall and item 4 f) ii) above is the first step. In anticipation of setting up a more formal arrangement for the management of such a project, members felt that it would be prudent for the parish council to obtain estimates of the full cost of obtaining planning permission, including design fees, from more than one professional firm. The clerk will review action on this point with the village hall committee once a written response from RDC planners has been received.
 - iii) Members felt that very soon, and perhaps before the next council meeting, a consultation with AiRS should be set up to seek information and advice about a range of issues surrounding the building of a new village hall. These issues include VAT registration, raising loans and increasing the council tax precept.

10) Community Matters

- a) Annual fete and flower show – role of parish council

- i) Cllr Bishop introduced this item and gave the background which is that the joint organising committee, comprised of W.I. and Gardening Club, feel that some new organising body, independent of clubs and societies but containing representatives from them, should take over the organising of what has become a major village event.
 - ii) Cllr Bishop proposed that the parish council offer its services as host organisation meaning that the organising committee would become a sub committee of the parish council and thus subject to the same governance regime as the council. These include servicing by the clerk, publication of open meetings and minutes, financial regulation and underwriting and recovery of VAT.
 - iii) Cllr Bishop's proposal was that the surplus funds generated by the event be returned to the organising clubs in proportion to the gross revenue they raised. It was **resolved** that the clerk request the necessary information from the 2014 organisers and redraft the event accounts as if this new arrangement was in place so that all parties could see what the effect on their income would be.
 - iv) **Resolved** that it was too soon to formally set up a sub committee at this meeting, but that consultations could commence with interested parties.
- b) Remembrance Day service
- i) Members of M.I. have volunteered to put up and remove the road closure signs.
 - ii) Gill Ratcliffe and Carol Lovett have undertaken personally to provide light refreshments in the pavilion after the service.
 - iii) Arrangements are in hand for a p.a. system to broadcast the chimes of Big Ben at 11 a.m. followed by the last post after the two minute silence. A mic will also be available for the leader of the ceremony.
 - iv) Organisations who have promised to lay wreaths, in addition to the parish council, are the W.I., PANTS and M.I..
- c) Village notice board
- i) The new notice board is now in situ at The Chapel and the old one will be relocated at The Pound once its posts have been renewed.
 - ii) The clerk will obtain sufficient keys to the notice board so that village organisations who need one may have their own.
 - iii) A permanent acknowledgement of the contribution of the W.I. to the cost of the new notice board will be placed inside the cabinet.

11) Correspondence

- a) A request to submit a quotation for insurance when it falls due has been received from a specialist firm of brokers – Carne & Company, local council insurance. The clerk has responded with information regarding renewal dates next year.
- b) A copy of notice of consultation about the provision of affordable housing has been received from Wealden District Council. No action is to be taken.

12) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

- a) The Localism Act 2011 has a major section on 'Transparency and Openness' and a briefing paper is available which the clerk will circulate to members before the next council meeting. General practice is now for councils to set aside a specific time, generally about 10 minutes at the start of a meeting, when members of the public may address the council for a limited time and on only those topics on the published agenda.
- b) The clerk will circulate a proposal for a revision to the wording of the standing order on voting which currently is at odds with approved practice.
- c) Cllr Proudfoot requested that an update be provided at the next meeting regarding the roll out of digital broadband and the options for high speed internet access.

13) Date of future meetings

- a) The planned date for the next meeting was 26th November 2014. This will be the main budget planning meeting and to enable all Councillors to be present it was *agreed* that the meeting date be moved to 12th November.
- b) The scheduled date of the May Annual Meeting of the council will need to be brought forward from the agreed date by 7 days to comply with Standing Order 2a which states that 'In an election year, the Annual Meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the new councillors elected take office.' The meeting will, therefore, be held on 20th May 2015 and not the 27th.

.....
Signed (Chairman)

Date