

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Ashburnham and Penhurst Parish Council
held on Wednesday 29th July 2015 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Nicky Bishop, Tina French, Richard Hann, Ron King,
Andy Proudfoot, 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

An apology for absence has been received from Cllr Carol Andrews.

2) Disclosures of interest

a) Cllr White declared a non pecuniary interest in item 10. He represents the parish council on the Village Hall Management Committee of which he is chair.

3) Adoption of Minutes

The draft minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 19th May 2015 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chair the minutes were adopted without amendment.

4) Open Forum

- a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported that the county council is still under great financial pressure and awaiting the outcome of the spending review. It is expected that savings of £90 million will have to be made.
- b) RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported that the refuse collection service is still receiving many complaints and that the service is under review.
- c) Public Participation
- i) The Chair proposed that a public participation session be routinely incorporated into the early part of the meeting agenda. Based on widely available guidelines the length of the session would be limited, speakers would have a time limit and speakers would have no further entitlement to speak during the meeting unless called upon to do so by the Chair. The meeting resolved that for this meeting speakers would be limited to 3 minutes each.
 - ii) Mr Phil Tarrant wished to draw councillors' attention to two planning breaches at Little Acres, Brays Hill, Ashburnham. He notified RDC exactly 6 months ago and the enforcement team allocated the references ENF/14/15/ASH and ENF/15/15/ASH. On 6 April 15 letters were sent to the occupants of Little Acres requiring them to submit a planning application to allow the works carried out (new flue and weather boarding on gable end to listed building; new building and tarmac drive). Mr Tarrant read a list of the breaches which he had identified and noted that four months after RDC's request, no applications have been made. He requested that the parish council press RDC for enforcement action.
 - iii) Mr John Cumming addressed the council on the subject of planning application RR/2015/1480/P (agenda item 6 b)). The application is for the conversion of the upper floor of a barn into residential accommodation. Having recorded his objections at the Planning Portal he urged the parish council to make the dominant issue of their response the preservation of the AONB.
 - iv) Mr Brian Thompson addressed the council. He is the applicant for planning application RR/2015/1480/P and asked the council to support his application because of the nature of

the land based enterprise in which he is engaged (Care Farm).

5) Finance and RFO Report

- a) On the motion of the Chair, council approved the following payments:
 - i) Upperbridge parish website license renewal £163.20
 - ii) Rother District Council: uncontested election expenses £117.35
 - iii) Baker Architectural Services – levels and trees survey £420
 - iv) Clerk salary July, Aug, Sep £184.14 per month
- b) On the motion of the Chair, council resolved to adopt the RFO's reports (circulated with the agenda and attached to these minutes as *150729APPC_BankRec2015Q1.pdf* and *150729APPC_IncExp2015Q1.pdf*) regarding the financial position and bank reconciliation to the end of the first quarter of the financial year.
- c) Council noted that workplace pensions become a statutory obligation on employers by 2017 and the parish council has been notified of its staging date of August 2015. The clerk has registered himself as the designated point to receive future communications from the Pensions Regulator.
- d)
 - i) Council noted the RFO's report that the current Internet banking arrangements do not meet good governance requirements which are that online payments should require the involvement of more than one person. HSBC are not able to provide internet banking which meets these governance requirements.
 - ii) On the recommendation of the RFO and the motion of the Chair, council resolved to proceed with an application to open an account at Unity Trust Bank. This bank is a not-for-profit social enterprise which only provides banking services for other social enterprises including many local authorities. They are within the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and offer a range of flexible arrangements for initiating and authorising online payments.
 - iii) Council resolved that it should require any two signatories from three to authorise a payment and that the three signatories should be Cllrs Nicky Bishop, Andy Proudfoot and Richard White. This would translate to two signatures on a cheque or two authorisations for an online payment for subsequent authorisation by two others. The RFO will continue to draw cheques as required or will initiate an online payment. As a backup, Cllr Richard Hann will be registered as one another able to initiate an online payment.

6) Planning

- a) *Existing applications (status to note)*

RR/2015/928/P Burnt Barns Farm, Freckley Hollow - variations of Conditions 2 and 5 of planning permission RR/2014/349/P - alter internal layout and external elevations – *approved conditional 8/6/15*

RR/2015/998/P - Ashburnham Recreation Ground, Church Road, Ashburnham, TN33 9NU - Proposed new Ashburnham & Penhurst Village Hall. *Undecided*
- b) *New applications (to formulate the Council's response)*
 - i) RR/2015/1480/P - Buckwell Ghyll, Oliver's Hill Farm, Lakehurst Lane, TN33 9PE - Provision of integral residential accommodation within existing Care Farm Building. *Undecided*

Council supported the ethos of the business but did not believe that residential accommodation could be justified if the criteria are planning policy RA3 (iii). The majority view was that other criteria should apply which would permit the application to be supported with conditions. The conditions are that permission for living on site should be limited to the lifetime of the care farm business and, in any event, be personal to the applicants. The Council resolved by a majority that, with these conditions, the application

should be supported as a mixed use live/work enterprise. By a majority the Council view was that the integrity of the AONB is not disturbed if permission is granted.

- ii) RR/2015/1719/P - Keeleys Yard, Red Barn, Ponds Green, TN33 9PE - Proposed new office space and staff facilities. *Undecided*

Council resolved that the application should be supported with suitable conditions which would prevent further changes of use, especially a change to residential accommodation.

c) *Enforcement Update*

- i) ENF/14/15/ASH - Little Acre (Clear View Farm), Brays Hill, Ashburnham - New building and tarmac drive – *Application requested*
- ii) ENF/15/15/ASH - Little Acre (Clear View Farm), Brays Hill, Ashburnham - Works To Listed Building (New Flue And Weatherboarding On Gable End) – *Application requested*

Council shared the concern expressed by the public earlier in the meeting at the lack of enforcement action since this breach was first noted. Council took the view that six months is too long to wait for a planning application and resolved that a letter be sent to the planning authority urging them to ensure that a planning application is submitted before the September meeting of the parish council. They further resolved that a copy of this letter should be sent to the occupants at Little Acre with a covering letter expressing the parish council's "significant concern" at this breach.

d) *Appeals (outcome to note)*

- i) APP/U1430/W/15/3003547 - Corner House Farm, Brown bread Street, Ashburnham TN33 9NY - Erection of agricultural machinery store – *Appeal against refusal of application RR/2014/2396/P - Appeal dismissed 30/6/15*

e) *Out of area (to note)*

Coldharbour Farm (Telegraph Point) Appeal A: APP/U1430/A/14/2227208; Appeals B and C: APP/U1430/C/14/2227209 and 2227210 – *Appeal determined. Appeal succeeded in terms of not enforcing immediate vacation by resident. Three years have been granted for the resident to find alternative accommodation. Appeal dismissed in terms of permanent residential use – when the resident leaves, the site must be restored to its former condition.*

7) Governance

a) Standing Orders

- i) Council resolved to adopt a standing order governing public participation at meetings of the Council. This will be based on the practice outlined by the Chair at 4) c) above.
- ii) Council noted that a full review of Standing Orders is being undertaken by the clerk.

b) Transparency Code

- i) Council noted the requirements of the new regulations in force since April 2015, 'Transparency code for smaller authorities' summarised in NALC Legal Briefing L02-15: "The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 which sets out a new audit framework for local public authorities which are currently covered by the Audit Commission regime. Under the new audit framework smaller authorities, including parish councils, internal drainage boards, charter trustees and port health authorities, with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 will be exempt from routine external audit. In place of routine audit, these smaller authorities will be subject to the new transparency requirements laid out in this Code. This will enable local electors and ratepayers to access relevant information about the authorities' accounts and governance."

- ii) The Clerk advised the Council that the way that it prepares its responses to planning applications is non-compliant with regulations because it does not provide equality of opportunity for applicants to address the Council. This is because the interval between full council meetings is greater than the period set for the submission of responses. Council resolved to meet on the last Wednesday of the month in those months when there is no Ordinary Council Meeting for the specific purpose of considering any new planning applications. If there are none, the meeting will be cancelled.
(Explanatory note: these meetings will be constituted as the Planning Committee of the Parish Council. Membership of the Committee consists of all councillors.)

8) Highways matters

- a) Finger posts
- i) The council received a report from JAKK Design, an approved contractor, on the condition of finger posts at Penhurst church, Dubbs Lane/Forge Lane junction and Mansfield Cross. The report included costed proposals for repairs or replacements.
 - ii) Council requested a report on the condition of the post at The Pound.
 - iii) Council resolved to request a 50% subsidy from East Sussex Highways for complete replacement of the post at Penhurst Church plus one other – either The Pound or Dubbs Lane/Forge Lane. Whichever of these two is the least expensive, the Council is minded to pay for out right.
- b) Council noted that Rights of Way maps have been deposited by Strutt and Parker on behalf of ATT at several locations in the parish.
- c) Verge cutting – the clerk reported that a second cutting of the verges is due in the next few weeks. Council noted that the cut this year is narrower than previously making it ineffective in Lakehurst Lane where the bracken has simply fallen into the road.

9) Sports Pavilion

- a) The Clerk reported that there are currently no outstanding maintenance issues.

10) Village Hall

- a) Cllr White declared a non pecuniary interest as a member of the Village Hall Management Committee.
- b) Cllr White reported that the Village Hall Management Committee was now reduced in size to 7 - himself as chair, three elected members and 3 representatives of local organisations. This is felt to be adequate now that the duties of the committee are restricted to maintenance and housekeeping.
- c) New Hall Steering Group
- i) Council received the minutes of the inaugural meeting (*attached as 150729NHSG_Minutes150626.pdf*)
 - ii) Council received a report from Cllr White that the fundraising events subgroup had met and the following events are in train. A 100 club, a barbecue and Pimms tent at the Flower Show and Fete and a quiz night on 17 October.
 - iii) Cllr Hann reported that the grant funding group are meeting on meeting 18 August.
- d) Planning Permission for new hall
- i) Cllr Bishop (Chair) reported that discussions with the planning authority continue and that changes to the position and orientation and to the visual appearance of the mass or bulk of the building are being developed. Revised sketches are awaited from the architect. The planning authority advises that the use of the building as a community hub would add weight to the application.
 - ii) Council referred to the contribution to the cost of developing the planning application which will come from village hall funds. This has been agreed in outline. The Clerk will

prepare a report for the next council meeting.

11) Community Matters

- a) New parish website: Council received a report from Cllr Bishop on behalf of the three councillors (Cllrs Bishop, Hann and Proudfoot) tasked with evaluating competitive tenders for the new website. They were unanimous in recommending Sam Wakeling who had quoted £1280. On the motion of the Chair, duly seconded, Council resolved to accept the quotation and place the order and to authorise the initial deposit payment of 30%.
- b) Council noted that road closure has been ordered by RDC for the remembrance Sunday service on 8 November. Council resolved to ask the new vicar at St Peter's, Paul McVeagh, to officiate at the service.
- c) The clerk reminded Council that the Local Action Plan in force is for the five-year period ending 2015. Council deferred consideration of this until the next meeting by which time details of any resources available will have been explored by the clerk.

12) Correspondence received

- a) RDC are conducting an Open Space and Recreation Study and have requested up-to-date information on the ownership and management of the sports field and St Michael's Church. The clerk will respond.
- b) Wealden District Council have circulated all statutory consultees, including this parish council, about amendments to their affordable housing strategy.
- c) The Fire and Rescue Service have circulated details of the vulnerable persons support scheme which is offered throughout the county.

13) Training and Conferences

- a) On the motion of the Chair, duly seconded, Council agreed to share the cost of the Clerk's CiLCA training with Brightling Parish Council. The total cost is the training package at £320 + CiLCA registration fee for subsequent marking and accreditation £250. 50% of £570 (£285). The achievement of this qualification is a condition of the clerk's Conditions of Employment.
- b) The clerk reported that places on training courses for new councillors currently cost £60 for courses run by SSALC. Council noted the cost but expressed no current wish to take up places for general training, but did express interest in any available training about planning matters.

14) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items – none

15) Date of next meetings

- a) The date of the next meeting remains as advertised: Wednesday 23rd of September 2015 at 7:30 PM in the Ashburn sports pavilion.
- b) The date of the November meeting is to be deferred by one week to Wednesday second of December 2015 at 7:30 PM in the Ashburnham sports pavilion.

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 10.10 pm

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Signed (Chair)

Date