
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 27th November 2019 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Tina French, Andrew Hoad, Ron King, Zoe O’Sullivan and Richard White.

Parish Councillors absent: None

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

In attendance: Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council
5 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

- 1.1 There were no absences
- 1.2 On the motion of Cllr White seconded by Cllr French, Mr Paul Spicer was co-opted to the parish council and welcomed by the Chairman. Mr Spicer signed the Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting.

2. Disclosures of interest

None

3. Additional agenda items

The Chairman decided the following items are urgent, due notice of which have been given to the clerk by 12 noon today (S.O. 10.2).

At 6.3 New planning breach

At 12.3 Consultation on police powers re unauthorised encampments

4. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 25th September 2019 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5. Open Forum

5.1 ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows

- 5.1.1 The County Council is still waiting for details of its financial settlement with Whitehall but the pilot scheme whereby the county received 75% of the income from Non Domestic Rates has now finished.

5.2 RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported as follows:

- 5.2.1 Members of the public are now able to speak and make representations at meetings of the Planning Committee.
- 5.2.2 Speedwatch activity continues and was a feature of the October meeting of RALC.
- 5.2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Monday last received a report which advised how the Council could directly intervene in the housing market, as a developer, to accelerate housing delivery and increase overall housing supply.

5.3 Members of the public

Three representatives of the Ashburnham Cricket Club (ACC), including its Chairman and Captain, made representations about the annual rental charge paid by ACC for the use of the ground, requesting that it be reduced from £450 per annum to £360 per annum from 2020 onwards.

For the record, the fee paid by ACC has been unchanged at £450 per annum since 2015. The fee due for 2019 is also £450. ACC has not yet paid this but has agreed to do so, notwithstanding the outcome of discussions for 2020 onwards.

ACC cited agreements dating prior to 1995 which granted the club free use of the ground. However, no written evidence of such agreements has been found to date and the representatives readily acknowledged that it was reasonable to contribute to the upkeep of the pavilion building. However, such contribution should recognise the many manhours of labour that club members spend on maintaining the wicket and the outfield. ACC requested that the Parish Council consider calculating a new charge that aligns to 'per session' charge rates used for other users of the facilities. This is how ACC derived its view that an annual fee of £360 should be applied (equating to 20 sessions at £18 each).

The Chair requested that ACC write to the Parish Council to set out its case and provide copies of supporting documentation. The Parish Council committed that it would then investigate the history of the case with objective of providing a response before the next Parish Council meeting in January 2020. **(Action : ACC and Clerk)**

6. Planning (updates or decisions in italics)

6.1 On-going applications

RR/2019/1498/P - Distant Holding For Olivers Hill Farm, Olivers Hill, Lakehurst Lane, TN33 9PE - Change of use of existing care farm facility into a school. *Remains undecided*

RR/2019/1569/P - Ashburnham Place, (The Boat House), Ashburnham TN33 9NF - Convert redundant boat house and ancillary shed to overnight accommodation and shower room.

Follows granting of Listed Building Consent. Concerns continue. Approved Conditional.

6.2 New applications

RR/2019/1648/P - Ash Tree Inn, Brownbread Street, Ashburnham, TN33 9NX - Remove two existing outbuildings and replace with one new store building. *Decision overdue.*

Consultations continue.

RR/2019/1694/P - Brays Hill Farm House, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Two storey extension to rear of property and first floor side extension. Internal re modelling of kitchen and bedroom. Construction of detached double garage with storage space above. Alternative to RR/2018/1400/P. *Member resolved to respond to consultation with a comment that they were not unhappy with the proposal but had no further comment.* **(Action: Clerk – post to RDC portal).**

6.3 Breaches and Enforcement

Ongoing: **ENF/107/18/ASH** – Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham – Notice of Breach of Condition of application RR/2012/1053/P served November 2018. *Breach continues. Those on whom notice served pleaded not guilty at Hastings Magistrates Court on 25 November 2019 and a hearing has been set for 13th March 2020.*

New: **ENF/40/19/ASH** Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham – Unlawful extension of lawful development. *Enforcement report 30/5/19*

ENF/208/19/ASH – Old Chapel House, Red Barn, Ponds Green – Erection of building (waiting further information)

6.4 Appeals: Ongoing: Bunces Farm, new barn, RR/2019/855/P, RDC ref 2646

Appeal ref. APP/U1430/W/19/3233415, start date 9 Aug, written representations submitted. *Appeal dismissed, item closed.*

6.5 Neighbouring parishes

Manchester Road, Ninfield - planning for 80 houses (2019/1859/MRM) on land behind with access via Manchester Road *Clerk submitted objections from the parish council. Wealden District Council will discuss at planning meeting in December.*

7. **Community Matters**

7.1 Village Action Plan

Preservation of the rural character of our villages (Cllr Zoe O'Sullivan)
Still under review

Smooth and safe roads (Cllr Ron King)

Some pot holes have been reported and filled. The video showing how to report a fault online at the highways portal is on the village website and Facebook page.

Communication and involvement (Cllr Zoe O'Sullivan)

The Hot Topics top level menu item has been deleted; all pages have been updated; there is a Facebook link to the village Facebook page.

Community and Environment (Cllr Tina French)

The ESCC healthy walks programme has been received and Cllr French is corresponding.

New village hall (Cllr Richard White) *see below at 10.1*

Superfast broadband connectivity for all (Cllr Andrew Hoad)

An invitation to Katy Thomas to address the parish council has been sent.

Good upkeep of our sports pavilion

Planning for 2020/21 is in hand.

7.2 Phone box and museum

Cllr French reported that further refurbishment and decoration is on hold until after the winter season. Preparations are under way for the first exhibition which will feature houses past and present.

7.3 Aircraft noise

The Chairman reported that he had reviewed aircraft overflight data, which is available on the Gatwick Airport web portal and contained in the airport's Noise Committee reports. These reveal that typically 10000 aircraft are flying over the Parish each month and that in summer there are 40 movements per night between the hours of 01:30 and 03:00.

The minimum allowable height to fly over our AONB is 7000 feet and the data reveals that on average only 200 of the 10000 aircraft per month are breaching this threshold. The data does however clearly show that our parishes are directly under one of the main holding patterns, used during peak times, which leads to multiple passes overhead of each inbound aircraft.

It is the view of the Chair that much of the intrusive aircraft noise that we hear is due to aircraft being asked by Gatwick ATC to slowdown their approach speed in order to feed in to the holding pattern. The consequent deploying of slats/flaps/speedbrakes generates a lot of noise. Gatwick does have some longer term plans to reduce noise by amending how it handles air traffic flowing in and out of the airport. Realistically, these actions have a 3-5 year time line.

7.4 Penhurst notice board

In view of the recent refurbishment of the existing notice board on the wall of the granary there is to be no further action and this item is closed.

7.5 Affordable Housing

Members received the report previously circulated by the clerk. Members resolved to introduce the topic to the public arena and to encourage those with a need for housing to register with RDC. Evidence of need is crucial in order to win planning approval for a Rural Exception Site which would be a requirement for housing to be built within the AONB.

(Action: All – find opportunities to discuss the topic and encourage registration of need.)

8. RFO Report

8.1 Receipts and Payments

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to approve the tabled schedule for the period 21 September to 20 November.

8.2 Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as at 20 November 2019.

8.3 Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to the 20 November 2019. There were no exceptional variances.

8.4 Earmarked Reserves

The RFO tabled a report on the movement of funds in earmarked reserves.

8.5 Payments to authorise

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to authorise the schedule of payments previously circulated and attached to these minutes. **(Action: Clerk to submit payments)**

8.6 Budget for 2020/21

The RFO tabled the previously circulated draft budget and commentary notes. Members noted the forecast financial position summary (see table below). The RFO reminded members that the recommended level of general reserves is half of the annual precept, i.e. about £6,000 in our case. There was discussion on the precept level for 2020/21 and members expressed a preference to set it at an increase of 2.5%. The RFO will prepare a final budget for adoption at the January meeting of the council. **(Action: RFO – prepare final budget).**

	<u>2019/20</u> <u>forecast</u>	<u>2020/21</u> <u>forecast</u>
Opening total cash balances	14,226	3,523
Increase/decrease in cash balance	(10,703)	2,072
Closing total cash balances	3,523	5,595
Cash balance is comprised of:		
Ear marked reserves	1,605	2,955
General reserves	1,918	2,640
	3,523	5,595

9. Governance

9.1 No items tabled

10. Premises

10.1 New village hall

10.1.1 Planning and Design: Planning permission expires on 20 February 2020 unless construction work has commenced. Members resolved not to challenge RDC's refusal to accept the cladding and tiles offered and to agree to wooden cladding and a uniform colour of clay tiles. Sample materials will be shipped to Pump House Design this week to enable a Discharge of Conditions application to be lodged. **Action: Clerk – liaise with Pump House)**

10.1.2 Construction: Entrance widening remains to be completed but this does not qualify as a commencement of construction required to perpetuate the planning permission. A requirement is for some work which needs approval from the building inspector to be completed. **(Action: Cllr White – completion of entrance widening works)**
Pump House Design are ready to issue construction notes which would enable suitable work, such as a drainage trench, to be completed. Building Control inspectors will be contacted to agree on a piece of work and a local ground works contractor, Sackville Plant

Hire Ltd, Cowbeech, engaged to carry out the work in January. **(Action: Clerk – liaise with Pump House and Sackville Plant Hire).**

10.1.3 Funding: The RFO will circulate a statement of cash flow and liabilities in December. **(Action: Clerk)**

10.1.4 Landlord and Legal: The Chairman and the Clerk met with Strutt & Parker, the agents for the Ashburnham Estate (the landlords) earlier today. The Chairman expressed general satisfaction with the content of the meeting and with the promise from the agents that a new lease could be signed before Christmas. This would avoid any need for express permission for the digging of a trench referred to above at 10.1.2. The agents clarified that there would be no objection to the parish council delegating responsibility for the operation of the recreation ground and its facilities to the newly formed charity once the new hall is built, but that they would not agree to assigning the lease. **(Action: Chairman & Clerk – continue liaison with agents.)**

Members discussed the necessity of obtaining the council's own legal advice but considered the financial risk to be negligible and not warranting instructing a lawyer. It was agreed to look for some less formal oversight from a local law firm. **(Action: Clerk – contact a senior partner at Gaby Hardwicke.)**

10.1.5 Commissioning and Handover: Following the meeting earlier today with the agents for the landlord, discussions will commence with the Ashburnham & Penhurst Community Centre about the nature of an arrangement, such as a management contract, which will delegate to the charity the operation of the sports field once the new hall is built.

10.2 Pavilion and Sports Field

10.2.1 Lettings – the discussion on fees policy for 2020/21 is reported at 5.3 above.

10.2.2 Pavilion maintenance – the clerk proposed that the exterior cladding be treated next year and quotations will be obtained from suitable contractors. **(Action: Clerk)**

The replacement wall heaters are not compatible with the temperature control system in the pavilion and modifications are being explored. The problem is that heaters available today have an integral programmer and this cannot be overridden by the pavilion room thermostat. **(Action: Clerk)**

10.2.3 Sports Field maintenance – all work on landscaping has been completed and the only remaining work is the planting of a small section of country hedging after the entrance has been widened. **(Action: Clerk)**

10.3 Village Hall

10.3.1 Cllr White had nothing to report.

11. Highways and Byways

11.1 Finger posts

Douglas Andrews, Wheelwright, has completed a survey of all the posts and yesterday submitted his assessment and cost of future work. **(Action: Clerk – evaluate and prepare a programme of work to be submitted to the council at its January meeting.)**

11.2 SLR meeting

Members noted the minutes of the last meeting which was on Tuesday 5th November 2019.

11.3 Street naming

The Chairman requested the help of RDC Cllr Gary Curtis in bringing this work to a conclusion. **(Action: Cllr Curtis)**

11.4 Footpaths

The footpath from Winters Farm to The White Cottage on Brownbread Street has been flagged up as needing attention where it crosses the rivulet at its northern end. The Rights of Way Officer is talking to the landowner about a permissive diversion in order to cross at an easier point. **(Action: Clerk)**

12. Correspondence

- 12.1 A letter of thanks for the support grant has been received from the Ashburnham Chapel.
- 12.2 A rough sleepers survey was carried out in the parishes on 19th Nov '19 by RDC.
- 12.3 Consultation on police powers re unauthorised encampments received (closes 19 Feb 2020)

13. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

None

14. Dates of Next Meetings

- 14.1 Council meetings are scheduled for the last Wednesday of alternate months at 7.30pm in the Sports Pavilion and the dates of the meetings for the remainder of the council year are 29th January 2020, 25th March and 27th May (Annual Meeting).
Annual Assembly Thursday 23rd April 2020.
- 14.2 Planning committee meetings are scheduled for the last Wednesday of the alternate months in which there is no council meeting at 7.30pm in the Sports Pavilion.
If there are no planning matters to consider the meeting will not be called.

..... Date

Signed (Chair)