
**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 27th May 2020 at 7.30pm as an online virtual meeting**

The meeting was held under the terms of the following Statutory Instrument:
SI 2020/392 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

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

Parish Councillors absent: None

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

In attendance online: Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council
1 member of the public

1) Election of Chairman

Waived by Statutory Instrument - Chairman Cllr Andrew Hoad continues in office.

2) Election of Vice Chairman

Waived by Statutory Instrument - Vice Chairman Cllr Richard White continues in office.

3) Declarations of Acceptance of Office

Not applicable

4) Apologies for absence

There were no absences

5) Disclosures of interest

None

6) Additional agenda items

None

7) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 20th March 2020 were circulated with the agenda prior to this meeting. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

8) Open Forum

a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows

- i) The County Council has received funding from central government for specific tasks related to the Coronavirus pandemic. It seems likely that the council will still need to make the savings it had planned before the outbreak of the pandemic.
- ii) Schools are due to reopen shortly in stages which have been clearly specified. What is far less clear is how this is to be accomplished while abiding by the regulations such as social distancing.

b) RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported as follows:

- i) Payment of compensation grants for business interruption continues.

- ii) The processing of planning applications has resumed but there is now a backlog of enforcement activity.
- iii) Speeding motorists are still being targeted and a side effect of the lock down is less traffic allowing speeding motorists to go faster still. In response the police have been most helpful and have set up a number of actual speed traps.
- c) Members of the public
No items

9) Planning

- a) On-going applications *Members noted progress*
 - 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. *Remains undecided.*
 - RR/2020/7/P** - Old Sprays Barn, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QN - Proposed bedroom within the loft void of the western (rebuilt) section of the barn with new glazed doors installed in the West side elevation of the southern outshot. *Remains undecided*
 - RR/2019/2311/P** - Honeyland, Honey Lane, Ashburnham/Dallington TN33 9PE - Proposed agricultural barns, *(Refused)*
 - RR/2020/95/P** - Frankwell Farm, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Construction of an orangery/conservatory, swimming pool, and associated outbuilding. *Approved 22 May 2020.*
- b) New applications *To determine the council's response*
 - RR/2020/393/P** - The White Cottage, Brownbread Street, Ashburnham, TN33 9NX - Porch to side elevation. *Members viewed the application and could see no grounds for objection. Members resolved to post a response to the planning portal indicating a neutral view. (Action: Clerk to post response on portal.)*
- c) Breaches and Enforcement – *to note updates and progress*
 - 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. The hearing on 13th March 2020 at Hastings Magistrates court received a late request from the defendant for a large number of witnesses. This was declined and a date was set for a hearing to determine the admissibility of the proposed witnesses. The court process has been interrupted by the pandemic, but the process will continue as and when it is able to. (Action: Clerk endeavour to obtain situation report for next council meeting).*
 - ENF/40/19/ASH** Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham – Unlawful extension of lawful development. *Enforcement report 30/5/19. No further information.*
 - ENF/208/19/ASH** – Old Chapel House, Red Barn, Ponds Green – Erection of building *Planning officer advises no breach and No Further Action will be taken.*
- d) Appeals
None

10) Community Matters

- a) Village Action Plan
 - i) Cllr French reported on matters relating to the rural character of the village. The planned walks with guides have had to be postponed due to the pandemic. The phone box refurbishment continues and will be completed by the end of the lockdown.

- ii) Cllr King reported on ‘smoother roads’ noting that since he has been reporting potholes observed while out cycling, the rate of remedial action has generally kept pace with his reporting. However, some that he has reported have been deemed as not meeting the criteria for immediate repair and this applies particularly to Brays Hill. The rural cut of the verges has been carried out throughout the parishes, but some residents have expressed interest in identifying verges noted for the richness of their vegetation with a view to requesting that East Sussex Highways designate them as areas to be excluded from the first rural cut or such other measures as are viable. **(Action: Clerk to take to the next SLR meeting)**
Finger post repairs have been scheduled for this year at a previous meeting. Cllr King noted that one of the two posts due for total replacement is so rotten at the base, it is now barely upright. This is the one shown on the schematic plan as number 11 and he suggested that it be referred to as Chapel House rather than Slivericks Lower **(Action: Clerk to liaise with contractor to expedite works and rename the post location.)**
- iii) Cllr O’Sullivan reported that communications online were up to date, especially the parish council pages.
Cllr O’Sullivan then displayed the traffic logs and graphs from the village web site showing that the site attracted an average of 10 to 15 visits per day.
- iv) Cllr Hoad reported on superfast broadband connectivity for all and has researched the latest information from the ESCC roll out programme. In summary, Contract 3 to connect those not covered in Contracts 1 and 2 was let in February 2018 with a target of completion by March 2020. However, the data provided by BT on which the contract was based was rejected by ESCC and the whole contract had to be renegotiated with a new completion date of December 2021. The number of households covered by Contract 3 was originally some 7000 and this has been reduced to some 5000.
Public websites have been updated and anyone can now view the status of the provision of superfast broadband to their property. This reveals that there is a category of ‘The remaining few’ who are not covered by Contract 3 and Cllr Hoad has found that alternative means of provision other than the ESCC rollout programme exist. These include the Community Fibre Partnership (Gigabit voucher) scheme and the Universal Service Obligation (USO) published in March 2020, overseen by OFCOM. The USO can attract a subsidy of £3400 towards infrastructure needed to allow a property to obtain a speed of 10 Mbps where this currently not the case and will remain so for at least 1 year. The main challenge is to prove that you currently have less than 10 Mbps in order to trigger the USO process. Cllr Hoad remarked on his own situation where BT currently only guarantees 2 Mbps to his property in contract but says that 10 Mbps is in theory technically possible, thus disqualifying him from the USO provision. **(Action: Cllr Hoad to continue to investigate provision of superfast broadband to ‘The remaining few’.)**

11) Membership of Committees

- a) Members confirmed that all councillors are deemed members of the Planning Committee.
b) Members confirmed that membership of the New Hall Steering Group will be unchanged and as follows:
Cllrs Ron King, Zoe O’Sullivan and Richard White (Chairman)
Co-opted members: Nicky Bishop, Keith Finch, Nick Heasman and Clive O’Sullivan (Vice Chairman)

12) Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Members resolved that Standing Orders are not in need of revision and that Financial Regulations, having last been updated in February 2020, remain up to date.

13) Asset Register of Council Property

Members viewed the asset register which requires no amendment since last year.

14) Membership of external bodies

RALC is the only body on which the parish council has an automatic right to be represented, but has chosen in the past not to appoint a regular representative. Members remain of that view but would like to be aware of the agenda published before the meeting so that, if something of interest appears, they have the option of attending the meeting. **(Action: Clerk to monitor agendas.)**

15) Dates and times of future meetings

- a) Members resolved to continue to hold ordinary council meetings on the last Wednesday of July, September, November, January, March and May.
- b) Members resolved to schedule planning committee meetings (if required) on the last Wednesday of June, August, October, December, February and April.

16) To confirm the date and time of the Annual Assembly

- a) Due to the Coronavirus pandemic it was not possible to hold the Annual Assembly, which comprises the annual parish meetings of Ashburnham and of Penhurst, on the planned date of 23rd April 2020. There remains a legal requirement to hold parish meetings, but these remain on hold.
- b) Members resolved on the date of Thursday 22nd April 2021 for the Annual Assembly next year.

17) Governance

- a) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)
 - i) Risk Assessment
 - (1) The risk assessment was circulated to members before the meeting.
 - (2) Cllr King had noted the need for the action column on the pavilion electricity supply to include a 5-yearly certification renewal. The risk assessment was amended accordingly and adopted.
 - ii) Systems of internal controls
 - (1) Systems were reviewed earlier this year and new Financial Regulations adopted in February 2020. No further review at this time was thought necessary.
 - iii) Members viewed the Annual Governance Statement and agreed that 'Yes' could be indicated against each statement. Accordingly, the Chairman was authorised to sign the hard copy in his possession. This will be later couriered to the Clerk for countersignature and submission. **(Action: Clerk to scan and submit to external auditor with AGAR pack.)**
 - iv) Members viewed the Accounting Statement forming part of the AGAR and approved hard copy for signature by the Chairman. This will be later couriered to the RFO for countersignature and submission. **(Action: Clerk to scan and submit to external auditor with AGAR pack.)**
- b) Internal auditor
On the motion of the Chairman, members resolved to re-appoint Keith Robertson as the internal auditor for the financial year 2020/21.
- c) Coronavirus variations to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations:
On the motion of the Chairman, members resolved to make the following variations to regulations until such time as the earlier of the council meeting face to face or government restrictions on movement being eased -

- i) Invoices to be approved for payment may be listed but not tabled at a meeting.
- ii) Invoices requiring two signatures for approval shall be signed by one councillor during the meeting with the second signature being obtained on a separate occasion.
- iii) The cricket pavilion will remain closed and unavailable for booking until government advice indicates it safe to reopen. The field, excluding the cricket square, remains open for individual recreation.
- iv) Responses to planning application consultations will be determined by email with the majority view prevailing.

18) RFO Report

a) Receipts and payments

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to approve the tabled schedule for the period 17th March to 21st May 2020.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) to 20th May 2020 and Cllr French confirmed that she had been on line and can verify the balances shown as being correct.

c) Income and expenditure

i) The RFO tabled the end of year income and expenditure report against budget. Given that the previous council meeting was held only 10 days before the end of the financial year there were few changes in the end of year report from the March budget report. **(Action: RFO post online as part of statutory publication set.)**

ii) The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget. There are significant variations as follows:

- (1) Income enhancement of £10,000 due to receipt of Business Support Grant.
- (2) Forecast income reduction due to closure of pavilion and cricket ground.
- (3) Expenditure reduction due to cancellation of marquee for Country Fair and Flower Show.

d) Earmarked reserves

Members noted the reserves position at the end of the previous financial year and approved the allocations to reserves for FY20/21 proposed by the RFO. These are in line with the budget proposals earlier in the year with the significant exception that the allocation to the reserve for the new village hall can be increased to £7,000 as a result of receipt of the Business Support Grant. The revised allocations will mean that the council is forecast to end the financial year with general reserves equalling approximately 50% of the annual precept which is in line with published accounting guide lines.

e) Payments to authorise

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to authorise the list of payments forming an attachment to these minutes. **(Action: Clerk to submit payments from bank.)**

f) Regular payments

On the motion of the Chairman members approved the following regular payments which arise from continuing contracts.

- (1) Clerk salary 30 hours per month at hourly rate in accordance with National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) Salary Scale Point (SCP) 7 in the range LC1. (£10.16 per hour from 1st April 2019) *Members viewed the NALC agreement*
- (2) Castle Water - water supply to pavilion, invoiced in arrears periodically.
- (3) Opus Energy - electricity supply to pavilion, paid by direct debit.

19) Premises

a) New village hall

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- i) Funding: the clerk reported that he has made enquiries about a Community Grant Scheme award from RDC to support preparation of a business plan, feasibility study and tender preparation. However, the advice from the head of department is that such an application is unlikely to succeed as it does not guarantee overall delivery of the project.
 - ii) Landlord and Legal: the Chairman advised members that a revised draft lease has been received from Adams & Remer, acting on instructions from their client, Strutt & Parker. This was received in the last 48 hours and comparisons with the previous draft have yet to be made.
 - iii) Construction: Cllr White reported that nothing has been heard from Wealden AM since meeting them and their indication that they can make costed proposals for varying degrees of involvement in the project. He also reported that nothing has been heard from Ash Plant Hire (Ian Roberts) since his promise some weeks ago to complete the entrance widening works by replacing the height restriction bar. **(Action: Cllr White to follow up Wealden AM and Ash Plant Hire.)**
 - iv) The Chairman suggested that some targets need to be set to move the project on. It was proposed to target the following activities for completion by the end of July :-
 - Finalisation of the new lease
 - Obtain detailed quotation from Wealden Agricultural and start benchmarking process.
 - Further explore who could assist us to write bids and secure grant funding.

b) Pavilion and Sports Field

- i) Lettings – Members noted with satisfaction the receipt of a Business Support Grant of £10,000 which more than compensates for loss of income from lettings during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- ii) Closure of facilities - No target date for reopening of facilities at the pavilion can be set until government announcements have been made defining what is permissible. However, public pronouncements indicate that cricket is unlikely to resume before August.
- iii) Maintenance - the clerk reported that mowing of the cricket field, apart from the square, has been undertaken twice by Louke Van Der Meer. The first time was a pro bono gesture from Louke and on the second occasion the parish council contributed to the cost of his time and diesel fuel. Members agreed that if the field needs mowing before the cricket club take it on again, then Louke should be asked on the same terms as the second cut. The clerk reported that plans are in hand to treat the pavilion exterior cladding with wood preservative.
The clerk also asked members to remain aware that after the completion of the entrance widening works some making good of the car park surface will be required.

c) Village Hall

- i) The clerk, in his capacity as Hon Sec of the Village Hall Committee, reported that a Business Support Grant of £10,000 has been received. Repairs to the guttering are complete and painting of the fascia boards on each of the dormers is also in hand and due to be completed shortly.

20) Highways and Byways

a) SLR meeting

The meeting scheduled for 16th June has been cancelled due to the pandemic. **(Action: Clerk to approach East Sussex Highways for a new date in November.)**

b) Street naming

Members were concerned by the inconsistency of post code changes arising from the street name changes. For some residents the street name has not changed but their post code has and

for other residents the reverse is true, i.e. street name changed but post code remains the same.
(Action: Clerk to write to Street Naming Officer for explanation.)

c) Street signs

The width restriction sign in Old Thatch Lane near its junction with Penhurst Lane has been set upright again.

21) Correspondence

RDC have advised that the process of introducing of Civil Parking Enforcement continues and the installation of parking machines and relining of roadways is imminent. Publicity regarding the proposals will take place in August with a view to the scheme going live in October.

22) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

None

23) Dates of Next Meetings

- a) Council meetings The dates of the meetings for the remainder of the council year are:
29th July, 30th September, 25th November and in 2021, 27th January, 31st March and 26th May (Annual Meeting).

Annual Assembly Thursday 22nd April 2021.

- b) 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.

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Signed (Chair)

Date