
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 29th July 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, Chris Sinden and Paul Spicer.

Parish Councillors absent: Cllrs Zoe O’Sullivan, Richard White

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

In attendance online: Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council

1) Attendance

- a) Apologies for absence - Cllr O’Sullivan, Cllr White.
- b) Mr Chris Sinden - On the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr French, members resolved to co-opt Chris Sinden to the remaining vacancy on the parish council. Having previously signed a Notice of Acceptance, Cllr Sinden joined the meeting.

2) Disclosures of interest

None

3) Additional agenda items

None

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 27th May 2020 were circulated with the agenda prior to this meeting. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5) Open Forum

- a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows:
 - i) The County Council met recently and currently have a £17m difference between the sum they have expended due to the Coronavirus and what they have received from central government all of which is tightly ring fenced for specific purposes. However, they have every expectation that this will be balanced off. To put it in context, the annual budget of the County Council is some £400m.
 - ii) The mandatory inspection of children’s mental health services has recently been carried out and the narrative outcome is broadly positive. However, there is a depressingly familiar theme of GPs not recognising children’s mental health needs sufficiently and not referring them. There continue to be different approaches by different agencies involved and a continuing impediment to progress caused by concerns about data sharing breaching confidentiality protocols.

b) RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported as follows:

- i) Cllr Curtis was pleased to accept the Chairman's thanks for his facilitation of a grant from Hastings Direct of £500 to offset the additional costs to the parish council of meeting the Coronavirus challenge.
- ii) Many District Council staff are still working from home, but planning visits are resuming on 11th August.
- iii) Speed Watch activity continues under the auspices of RALC with Keith Robertson (Crowthorne) leading the programme.
- iv) RDC staff headcount is now down by some 39 people either due to redundancy or natural wastage. Limited recruitment of replacements is in progress, but there is bound to be a reflection in reduced service levels in areas short of manpower.

6) **Planning**

a) On-going applications *Members noted progress on the following:*

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. *Approved with conditions 2nd June 2020. Item closed.*

RR/2020/393/P - The White Cottage, Brownbread Street, Ashburnham, TN33 9NX - Porch to side elevation. *Approved with condition 5 June 2020. Item closed.*

b) New applications *To determine the council's response*

RR/2020/996/P - Little Oak Hall, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QN - Proposed conversion and extension of existing outbuilding to form new holiday let and construction of new single garage.

The council resolved to post Support for the application and to comment that they are in favour of supporting the rural economy with holiday lets.

(Action: Clerk to post response on portal.)

c) Breaches and Enforcement – *members noted the current position on the following open cases:*

ENF/107/18/ASH – Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham RR/2012/1053/P – Breach of Condition Notices A and B served 28 Nov 2018. Notice A: “. . .storage of business use and agricultural items on the hardstanding surface without permission . . not within Oak Bank Farm”; Notice B: “. . the hardstanding is being used for the storage of business use and agricultural items.” (permitted use is for domestic storage and parking, not for any business use.)

There is no appeal against a Breach of Condition Notice and enforcement takes place in the magistrates court. Enforcement hearings in court started but were suspended temporarily when the Coronavirus lockdown came into force. (Action RDC Cllr Curtis: to request a situation report)

ENF/40/19/ASH Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham – Unlawful extension of lawful development. *Enforcement report 30/5/19. No further information.*

(Action RDC Cllr Curtis: to request a situation report)

d) Appeals

None

7) Community Matters

a) Coronavirus response

The Chairman summarised the response so far mentioning the hot line, the 0800 chat line and the newsletter mailed to every household. Members expressed some surprise at the lack of any reaction to the newsletter but felt that it was right, in the absence of the Annual Assembly this year, to continue with the newsletter programme. It was agreed that mid-October is the right time for a second newsletter.

b) Village Action Plan

- i) Cllr King reported that pot hole repairs have increased using both jet patching (Forge Lane, Lakehurst Lane, Farthing Lane) and the rectangular patches (Brownbread Street). He senses that repairs are now more methodical and less rushed than previously.
- ii) Cllr French is considering organising a litter pick, possibly at August Bank Holiday weekend. (**Action Cllr French: explore support for a litter pick.**)
- iii) Cllr Spicer expressed continuing disappointment at the lack of repairs to Honey Lane which is apparently not sufficiently bad as to warrant a position higher up the table of ESCC Rights of Way team priorities. However, it continues to deteriorate. Other footpaths and rights of way are very overgrown with nettles and brambles and Cllr Spicer has seen no clearance or maintenance activity.

c) Affordable housing

- i) The Chairman noted that a new consultation on housing provision is expected this year from RDC and members agreed that the parish council needs to be prepared to mount a major response informed by the recent meeting with affordable housing officers.

8) RFO Report

a) Receipts and payments

Members received the table of receipts and payments (on file) for the period 22nd May - 24th July 2020.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) to 22nd July 2020 and Cllr French will go on line and verify the balances shown.

c) Income and expenditure

- i) Members received a report of income and expenditure to 24th July 2020 against the full year budget.
- ii) Previously noted variances related to the Coronavirus and its effects on income and expenditure. Since the last meeting a reduced refund of VAT has become apparent as expenditure related to the playing field entrance widening and the new lease did not happen in the last financial year as expected and remains outstanding.

d) Earmarked reserves

The RFO tabled a report of expenditure from reserves noting that the underspend on Community because of the cancellation of the Country Fair marquee is almost exactly offset by the unplanned Community expenditure on Coronavirus hygiene supplies.

e) Payments to authorise

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to approve the payments listed on the schedule forming an attachment to these minutes.

9) Governance

- a) The annual review of the bank mandate was conducted. Members confirmed that those mandated to sign cheques and to authorise submitted online payments are Cllrs French, Hoad and White.
- b) The authority to submit online payments for authorisation is held by the RFO. Members believe it to be prudent to have a second authorised submitter. **Action Clerk: contact Lloyds bank to make the necessary arrangements.)**

10) Premises

a) New village hall

Members noted the minutes of the New Hall Steering Group (NHSG) on 1st July 2020.

i) Planning and Design: nothing to add to the NHSG minutes.

ii) Construction: nothing to add to the NHSG minutes.

iii) Funding: nothing to add to the NHSG minutes.

iv) Landlord and Legal:

(1) At the last parish council meeting members were advised that a revised draft lease had been received from Strutt & Parker in the previous 48 hours. Since then, members reviewed the lease and constructed a letter to S&P highlighting three significant points of issue with a request that they be given further consideration. The letter also contained an offer to purchase the land as a way of obviating landlord and tenant issues. The letter was sent by the Chairman on behalf of the Council on 23rd June 2020.

(2) An email reply to the Council's letter was received yesterday, 28th July 2020, and was immediately circulated to members who now engaged in a vigorous discussion.

(3) Members continue to be disquieted at both the tone and the substance of communications from S&P. They did not wish to be continually reminded of the munificence of estate trustees - a view they do not share given the mutual benefit arising from their potential relinquishing of the site of the current village hall.

(4) With regard to the reply received yesterday, they felt that it amounted to little more than a peremptory dismissal of the Council's letter of 23rd June. Members also felt that the reply partly misrepresented the current position in the negotiation and failed to address all of the points in their letter and specifically made no response to the offer to buy the land.

(5) Furthermore, members remain unconvinced that S&P are fairly representing their client's view and that their representation is authentic.

(6) Members resolved to convey their thoughts to S&P and to take up the offer of a virtual meeting via Zoom.

b) Pavilion and Sports Field

i) Lettings – The Clerk advised that the weekly booking by the Art Club recommenced at the beginning of July. In the last two weeks cricket activity has returned with matches planned for both Saturday and Sunday and some mid-week evening fixtures too.

ii) Pavilion Maintenance - The Clerk reported that preparatory work has started for coating the exterior cladding with wood preservative.

The Clerk asked for guidance on the making good of part of the car park surface which was damaged by entrance widening and foundation laying works. Members suggested taking professional advice from those in the village engaged in ground works and hard landscaping.

iii) Sports field maintenance - the cricket club have carried out seasonal maintenance on the outfield and have had their gang mower sharpened and serviced during the winter months at a cost to the cricket club of some £1,200. Agents for the Ashburnham Estate have given the club permission to garage the mower in the adjacent New Buildings Farm barn which has yet to find a tenant.

c) Village Hall

i) The clerk, in his capacity as Hon Sec of the Village Hall Committee, reported that the oil tank has been replaced with a fully bunded tank. The old one was unbunded and subject to an exclusion clause on the insurance policy. The cost attracted the subsidy of 75% from Ashburnham Thanksgiving Trust.

11) Highways and Byways

a) SLR meeting

The meeting scheduled for 16th June was cancelled due to the pandemic and a new date has been set for Tuesday 24th November 2020 at 2.15pm in the pavilion.

b) Street naming

The clerk reported on the response to the enquiry he was actioned to make at the last meeting regarding post code changes. Members viewed the reply from RDC's Digital Transformation Officer stating that the district council are not involved in and have no jurisdiction over post code allocations. These are the preserve of Royal Mail who create them in a way which best facilitates the delivery of mail.

Members expressed reluctance on embarking on any further street name changes in the near future.

12) Correspondence

Mrs Pat Winfield has asked if the parish council will pursue the reinstatement of Lingham Lane as the name of the road between The Pound and Mansfield Cross.

13) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

None

14) Dates of Next Meetings

a) Council meetings The dates of the meetings for the remainder of the council year are: 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