
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 25th November 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 present: Cllrs Andrew Hoad (Chairman), Ron King, Zoe O’Sullivan, Chris Sinden and Richard White.

Parish Councillors absent: Cllrs Tina French, Paul Spicer

District / County Councillors present: ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field,

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

1) Apologies for absence

RDC Cllr Gary Curtis, Parish Cllrs Tina French and Paul Spicer.

2) Disclosures of interest

9) b) i) 2) Cllr Chris Sinden - cricket club fees, Non pecuniary interest as Chairman of the Cricket Club.

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).

6) f) Future village event

7) f) Addition to payments to authorise:

Groundsman £400

W. Keeley & Sons £64.40 +vat

4) Adoption of Minutes

a) The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 30th September 2020 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

b) The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held of 4th November 2020 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of Cllr Richard White (Vice Chairman) and the Chairman of that meeting, the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5) Open Forum

a) Members of the public

Mr Bernard Brown, a spokesperson for the applicant of planning application RR/2020/1672/P, addressed the council. He said that the Netherfield Residents Association (RAUDIN) were making the application for outline permission in order to ensure that a traveller site is ‘readily available’ should it be needed in order to house a traveller family. Having a site ‘readily available’ strengthens the hand of RDC in resisting unauthorised development. The site in question has been identified in the Sites Allocation Policy as being suitable for a traveller family which goes some way to meeting RDC’s statutory obligation to identify such sites. It had been identified by Rother as the most suitable candidate site from a review of 28 other

candidate locations. However, the land owner, Sea Change (Sussex) Ltd has indicated that it is unwilling to sell the land. If this application is granted then RDC would be able to quickly exercise a Compulsory Purchase Order.

After questions for information from councillors, the Chairman exercised his powers under S.O. 10.1.7 to change the order of business and moved to item 5) f) 'Neighbouring Parishes'. *Parish of Sidley - RR/2020/1672/P - Watermill Lane, land on east side of Bexhill - Change of Use and the development of Phase 1 of the Gypsy Traveller allocation in policy area Bex3c; in the form of 2no. pitches, each for the stationing of 1no. mobile home and 1no. touring caravan, for use by Gypsy Traveller families. (Land Title: ESX378524) (Outline).*

After discussions members were unanimous in wishing to 'Comment' rather than to 'Support' the application in an online entry at the planning portal. They wished the comment to register their agreement with the way in which the designated site has been included in the allocations policy, that RDC should be trusted to have done its research correctly in identifying Watermill Lane as the most suitable candidate site and to note that unless this application is granted RDC will not be able to claim to have a site 'readily available'.

b) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows

- i) The infection rate of the Covid-19 virus is now dropping again, and the causes of the recent upsurge are partly attributable to care homes in Bexhill and partly due to university students who, if they test positive and are still registered with their home doctor, have their infection logged as being in East Sussex.
- ii) Expenditure on Covid-19 precautions is currently running some £10 million ahead of the reimbursement promised by central government.
- iii) There is widespread interest in the county in using the grass verges in a programme of trials of establishing wild flowers and wild life habitats.

6) **Planning** (*updates or decisions in italics*)

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

RR/2020/1231/P - Honey Land, Honey Lane, Ashburnham, TN33 9PE - Proposed agricultural barn.

At a recent virtual meeting of councillors it was decided to oppose this application.

Decision: Refused.

RR/2020/1313/P - The Stable Block, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QP - Change of use and conversion to create a 2 bedroom managers flat, 2 additional bedrooms and a new meeting room all for use in association with Penhurst Retreat Centre, including retention of the existing first floor holiday accommodation unit.

Members have already decided at a recent virtual meeting, which included the applicant, to support this application which remains undecided.

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. A resubmission is in progress after concerns were raised by the RDC Conservation Officer.*

b) New applications *To determine the council's response where still required.*

RR/2020/1926/P - Vale Cottage, The Forge, Ashburnham, TN33 9PH - Proposed single storey extension, including demolition of existing. Proposed Juliet balcony to master bedroom and replacement windows to bedrooms two and three. *Members resolved to support the application.*

RR//2020/1742/P – Court Lodge Farm, The Forge, Ashburnham, TN33 9PJ - Proposed flat roofed link between farmhouse and Oast and conversion to provide further accommodation.

RR/2020/1743/L – Court Lodge Farm, The Forge, Ashburnham, TN33 9PJ - Proposed flat roofed link *At the Planning Committee on 4th Nov members decided to comment but remain neutral. It remains undecided. The Chair noted that The Planning Officer had been in direct*

contact with Historic England (HE) to confirm their support for the proposed development. This support has been restated by HE.

RR/2020/1721/P - New Buildings Farm, Church Road, Ashburnham, TN33 9NU - Change of use of buildings from agricultural to bespoke Class B8 storage of light equipment and timber materials. *At the Planning Committee on 4th Nov members decided to express concerns and request more information. but remain neutral. It remains undecided. The Chair noted that ESCC Highways have requested that more information being tabled regarding vehicular access and turning areas, as a condition before any development could start.*

RR/2020/1570/P - The Stables, Brays Hill, Ashburnham, TN33 9NZ - Change of use of land from agricultural to residential and proposed construction of one bedroom holiday let. *At the Planning Committee on 4th Nov members decided to oppose the application. It remains undecided.*

c) Breaches and Enforcement - New – *To note the following new cases:*

ENF/303/20/ASH - Springside Farm, Herrings Road, Ashburnham, TN33 9PE - Change of use of agricultural land to store materials for business.

The clerk advised members that he understood that a retrospective planning application is in the process of being submitted. This case is likely to need approval for “Change of use”.

Breaches and Enforcement - Ongoing - *To note developments on the following:*

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.)

A further hearing in the Magistrates Court took place in the last few days and time has been set aside for a 2-day trial on 27th and 28th May 2021.

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

ENF/191/20/ASH - Buckwell Ghyll, Lakehurst Lane, Ashburnham - Breach of Appeal - using property for residential.

New breach. No reports yet received.

NFA at this time but officers advise that enforcement will start before 4 yrs has elapsed. Start date of breach has been determined by affidavit from complainant and from the land owner.

d) Appeals

None

e) Rother District Local Plan Update

The Chairman reported that RDC are refreshing their Local Plan which seeks village submissions with first draft ready by summer of 2021, submission to the Secretary of State in the autumn of 2021 and adoption in summer 2022. Currently there is a call for sites by 7th December 2020. **Action: Chairman to continue liaison with Ashburnham Estate trustees regarding land being suitable for affordable housing.**

f) Neighbouring Parishes

Parish of Sidley - **RR/2020/1672/P** - item taken at 5) a)

7) **Community Matters**

a) Village Action Plan

The Chairman noted that since responsibilities were first allocated, Cllrs Chris Sinden and

Paul Spicer have been co-opted to the council and a review of the allocations will be made.
Action : Chairman.

- b) Meanwhile, reports from those currently leading each topic were made as follows:
- i) Rural character preservation - Cllr O'Sullivan picked up the earlier comment from ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field regarding verge cutting and development of wild flowers and outlined local discussions. The clerk informed members that RALC are hosting a meeting on 16th December which will be led by Fergus Garrett, Chief Executive of Great Dixter and Keith Datchler OBE, an international authority who established over 100 acres of wild flower meadows on the Beech estate. **Action : Clerk and ZOS will join this meeting.**
 - ii) Smooth and safer roads - Cllr King referred to yesterday's SLR meeting and noted that drainage on Henleys Hill was something he had reported several years ago, but that no action had been forthcoming.
He has reported the surface water always present at the junction of Church Road and Brownbread Street to Southern Water who have investigated and claim to have effected repairs. He now waits for further action from Highways after the Highways Steward promised yesterday to revisit what he admits is a problem area.
Communications - Cllr O'Sullivan informed members that there is still more work to be done on the website in relation to 'Accessibility' and that she will be consulting Tim Wakeling, the website host.
Superfast broadband - The Chairman reported that he continues to pursue the Universal Service Obligation route in respect of Hill Farm. Following a second, higher, estimate of the cost of providing FTTP he has reached deadlock and is invoking the process for registering a failure to agree which will get passed to the relevant ombudsman.
- c) Affordable housing - the Chairman advised that the 'call for sites' in the Local Plan update (see 6) e) above) represents an opportunity to register a site as a possible location in the future.
- d) Phone box and museum - until the spring there is little to be done to further this project.
- e) Covid-19 Rother will be in Tier 2 after the current lockdown ends on 2nd December. The Chairman will draft a short newsletter to go out in hard copy to all residents, as an update to that sent in the summer. **Action : Chairman**
- f) Remembrance Sunday - the event was judged to be a great success with those attending standing in front of the pavilion instead of in the road. There is a record of who attended and they are to be asked for a view as to whether or not future remembrance services should follow the same route, i.e., stand in the grounds and not in the road. **Action: Clerk to consult those who attended.**
- g) Future village event - Cllr Sinden suggested that the remembrance service offered a model for a Christmas event of carol singing. Members endorsed the idea and suggested it be pursued. **Action: Cllr White will enlist support from those in the village whose support would be needed including the churches.**

8) RFO Report

- a) Receipts and payments – members received and approved the tabled schedule of payments for the period 24th September to 18th November 2020.
- b) Bank reconciliation – members received a bank reconciliation as at 18th November 2020.
- c) Income and expenditure – members received the tabled report against budget to 18th November 2020. There were no variances not already explained by the Corona-19 pandemic.
- d) Earmarked reserves – members received the tabled report of movements to date in reserves.

- e) Annual support grant payments are generally paid at the end of the calendar year. Following a review and on the motion of the Chairman, members approved the following list of payments -
Battle Area Community Transport £100 (as previously)
Rother Citizens Advice Bureau £100 (as previously)
Rother Rural Trust £100 (new)
Parish magazine support £300 (as previously)
Ashburnham Chapel £100 (as previously)
Church yard maintenance £350 to each PCC (an increase from £300 which has been paid annually since 2011).
- f) On the motion of the Chairman members authorised the list of payments attached to these minutes (which include the late items noted at 3) and support payments listed at 8) e) above.
- g) Budget for 2021/22 - The RFO circulated a draft, with a commentary, prior to the meeting. The budget will be formally adopted at the January council meeting where the precept will also be set.
- Meanwhile, members were content with the proposals in respect of routine expenditure and examined the proposals for allocations to earmarked reserves which were also thought to be appropriate. However, expenditure from earmarked reserves is difficult to predict, especially from the reserve for the new village hall. Showing zero expenditure from this reserve was not thought to be prudent and might send the wrong message. Therefore, a sum of £1500 was proposed as an estimate and this will be incorporated in the final draft. It means that the effect of the budget is cash neutral, the precept remains unchanged and there is an increase of £1,400 in earmarked reserves. **Action: RFO table final budget at January meeting of the Council.**

9) Governance

- a) Addition to bank mandate - Cllr Spicer has been added to the cheque signing mandate but has yet to be approved by Lloyds for internet banking. **Action: RFO and Cllr Spicer to follow up.**

10) Premises

- a) New village hall (Cllr White reporting)
- i) Planning and Design: consultations with users continues.
 - ii) Construction: works on the entrance widening remain unfinished. Wealden AM have promised a global figure, correcting the typos in their earlier figure, within 10 days.
 - iii) Funding: funds raised so far and remaining unspent amount to £3,920 which is held in the Appeal Fund.
 - iv) Landlord and Legal: the Chairman advised that the revised lease clearly contained errors regarding the outcome at the end of the lease. These were drawn to the attention of Strutt & Parker who agreed that Adams & Remer appeared to have departed from their brief. The matter will be rectified and in the meantime Adams & Remer have requested payment of an additional £500 for work carried out beyond the initial brief (redrafting clauses on termination and compensation and drafting a side letter relating to the operational management of the facility permitting it to be placed by the parish council in the hands of the newly formed charity, The Ashburnham & Penhurst Community Centre).
 - v) Commissioning and Handover: the clerk reminded members that at some point they will need to address the issue referred to in iv) above, i.e., the terms of reference for the new charity. Members were in agreement that the timing when this topic would be relevant would be at the point where commitment to construction start was achieved.
- b) Pavilion and Sports Field
- i) Lettings
 - (1) Members noted that regular hiring by the Art Club will recommence next week after the 4-week Covid-19 lockdown.
 - (2) Members received prior to the meeting correspondence from the cricket club outlining the heavy expenditure they have incurred this year in machinery maintenance. The

club are proposing that the hiring fee for this year be £405 and that next year they seek to attract visiting teams to hire the ground on Saturdays. The club asks that they be allowed to keep the fees for 7 Saturday matches in order to start a capital equipment fund. Beyond 7 matches, revenue would be shared with the parish council.

Members expressed gratitude for the work the cricket club do on maintaining the cricket ground and were of the view that a viable and thriving cricket club is in everyone's interest. On the motion of the Chairman, members resolved to set the hiring fee at £405 for this year and for 2021/22 and, as a gesture of support, proposed that the club keep the income from the first 10 Saturday games rather than 7.

ii) Pavilion maintenance

(1) The clerk advised that work on recoating the exterior cladding was completed in the last few days.

(2) The clerk advised that the opportunity provided by the one month lockdown had been taken to paint the interior above the ring beam. Effectively, this means just the main room. The walls below the ring beam were painted in 2018 with a plan at that time to do above the ring beam the following year.

iii) Sports Field maintenance

(1) Dog fouling continues to be an issue and, according to village social media, it is not just at the cricket field. The clerk advised that he has posted two notices at each of the three entrances. One notice is a request to clean up and the other is a sign made from elements of the Rother District Council bylaw making it clear that it is an offence not to clean up after your dog.

Members agreed that it was sensible to give more publicity to the issue and Cllr O'Sullivan will put out something on social media.

(2) Members discussed the question of making good the verge adjacent to the war memorial where cars habitually park in order to gain pedestrian access to the field. This issue was raised with ESx Highways yesterday at the SLR from which it was clear that it is a question of self-help. Members agreed that the clerk should first source some collapsible bollards which could be sited on the verge and to then apply for a licence from ESx Highways for 'street furniture' to be sited there. If all goes to plan it would be possible to back fill the erosion with top soil and seed it in the spring. In the meantime, the clerk has fixed 'P' parking signs at the new entrance to encourage people to park there when the main gates are closed.

c) Village Hall

i) The clerk, as Secretary to the Village Hall Committee, advised that funds in the village hall current account are £10,950 and there is a further £2,568 held in the Appeal Fund. This latter amount qualifies for 3:1 uplift from Ashburnham Thanksgiving Trust for major maintenance works.

ii) In the same capacity, the clerk reported that the gable ends have been repainted and the missing finial restored.

11) Highways and Byways

a) Finger posts

Members were reminded that 2021/22 will be the second year of the two year proactive maintenance programme outlined last year and were content that year two proceeds as planned, i.e., repairs and maintenance to posts #3 The Pound, #5 Forge Lane, #7 Old Thatch Lane (lower) at a budget cost of £1,000 plus vat and less approximately £300 subsidy from ESx Highways.

b) SLR meeting

Minutes of the meeting yesterday have been circulated to those who attended and will be sent

to the remaining three councillors shortly. It was noted that there is a new Highways Steward (who attended the meeting) and a new Customer Service Manager (who did not attend).

c) Street naming and post code changes

Penhurst Field has a new postcode which is unique to them. This was created at the request of RDC after discussions with the residents.

12) Correspondence

- a) BACT have requested a support grant (which was approved at 8) e) above).
- b) RALC - Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) consultation + NALC climate change survey. Cllr O’Sullivan advised that she has looked briefly at these and concluded that it is larger authorities who are targeted. She noted that there were some 10 pages of text for every authority in Rother. **Action: the clerk is requested to ask other parish clerks what response their authority is making to the LCWIP.**

13) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

Review of councillors’ published Lead Responsibilities and of their Village Action Plan leads.

14) Dates of Next Meetings

- a) Ordinary council meetings are scheduled for the last Wednesday of alternate months at 7.30pm in the Sports Pavilion and the dates of meetings for the remainder of the council year are as follows - 27 Jan 2021 (Budget and precept setting), 31 Mar 2021, (Parish Meetings Thursday 22nd April) and 26 May 2021 (Annual Meeting of the Council)
- b) To note that planning committee meetings are scheduled for the last Wednesday of alternate months.
If there are no planning matters to consider the meeting will not be called.

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Signed (Chair)

Date