
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 27th January 2021 at 7.30pm as a virtual online 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 Tina French, Andrew Hoad, Ron King, Zoe
O’Sullivan, Paul Spicer and Chris Sinden.

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Richard White

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

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

1) Apologies for absence
Cllr Richard White

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).
6) f) Rother Local Plan
6) g) Affordable housing
6) h) Rother Planning Consultation
7) d) Village social event

4) Adoption of Minutes
The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 25th November 2020 and of the Planning
Committee meeting on 6th January 2021 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the
Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5) Open Forum
a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows
i) Cabinet has set the increase in the county rate at 1.9% plus 1.5% for Adult Social Care.
ii) Covid-19
(1) infections are generally falling, but Eastbourne remains high at 800+ per 100k pop’n;
(2) 90% of infections in the county are found to be the new virus mutation;
(3) 1600 children are in school (12%);
(4) the provision of laptops is negotiated between the government and the school;
(5) no births are being registered as all capacity is taken on recording deaths.
b) RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported as follows:
i) Although Covid-19 rates in Rother are falling, road traffic remains high.
ii) The Black Cat speeding device is being rolled out in areas with speeding problems.

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

a) On-going applications *Situation reports on the following:*

RR/2020/1313/P - The Stable Block, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QP - Change of use.
Members supported this application. 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. *A resubmission is in progress after concerns were raised by the RDC Conservation Officer. Remains undecided.*

RR/2020/1926/P - Vale Cottage, The Forge, Ashburnham, TN33 9PH - Proposed single storey extension.

Members supported the application. Approved conditional. Item will now be closed.

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. *Members commented but remained neutral. Remains undecided. Applicant continuing a protracted dialogue with Conversation Officer and will appeal if refused. Cllr O’Sullivan noted that an appeal against a failure to make a decision can be lodged with the Planning Inspectorate.*

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.

Response posted at portal is that Members are undecided and need more information on vehicular access and turning areas, as a condition before any development could start.

Subsequently revisions were requested by East Sx Highways regarding entry and exit and a new block plan has been posted (any changes made are not apparent). Remains undecided.

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.

Members opposed. Application withdrawn. Item will now be closed.

RR/2020/2198/P - Proposed erection of single storey extension, alterations to rear porch and demolition of modern garden shed.

At the Planning Committee on 6th January 2021 members supported this application.

Remains undecided.

b) Neighbouring Parishes

Parish of Sidley - **RR/2020/1672/P** - Watermill Lane, Bexhill - Change of use to permit traveller site.

Members commented but were not opposed. Permission granted. Item will now be closed.

c) New application (received today)

RR/2020/1737/P and **RR/2020/1738/L** - Old Brew House, Brown Bread Street, Ashburnham TN33 9NX - Replacement front door with like for like. Creation of opening between existing bathroom and toilet by removing part of wall. Construction of 750mm high stone or brick wall to retain bank as part of garden landscaping to include timber deck, timber shed and wood storage area. New wood fencing above wall.

Members have not yet considered this application. Decision due by 12th March 2021

d) Breaches and Enforcement

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

Application requested 7 Dec '20

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.)

2-day trial at Hastings Magistrates Court on 27th and 28th May 2021.

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

ENF/332/20/ASH The White Cottage, Brownbread Street - Landscaping works and construction of concrete slab . *Information awaited at 24 Jan '20*

e) Appeals
None

f) Rother Local Plan The local plan is being updated to cover the period 2019 to 2039. A key ingredient of this is the Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). From the HELAA a “Call for suitable development sites’ was made in late 2020. Next there will be two rounds of consultation with Parish Councils once the revised local plan has been drafted, starting with the first consultation in autumn this year. This will then lead to adoption of the final plan in summer 2022. The Parish Council has submitted a detailed report to HELAA describing the key sustainability attributes of the parish, aimed at ensuring that no inappropriate developments arise but rather supporting the projects that we deem as needed. We have been complimented on the thoroughness of our response.

g) Affordable Housing From the HELAA team and the Rural Housing Enabling (RHE) team we have now established that the essential ingredients needed to secure approval for a small scale affordable housing project in our parish are:-

- A clearly identified need for affordable housing based on a well structured and formal needs survey having been carried out.
- A supportive landowner who is willing to make available a small parcel of agricultural land upon which to build the housing units.
- A commitment by the project owner to retain control of who is allowed to buy or rent the AH units such that priority is always given first to local people in need.
- Agreement from the planning authority that the village has been declared as “sustainable”. This means that anybody occupying the affordable housing units and who most likely will not have their own transport, will have the ability to easily access shops, schooling, medical facilities and recreation facilities etc.

The Chairman reported positively on the first three points. The RHE team are willing to assist and sponsor the cost of doing a needs survey for us, the Ashburnham Estate have very kindly indicated two potential sites that they would be prepared to consider contributing to the project and we would construct a Community Land Trust to control the allocation of affordable housing units. However, the planning policy makers have strongly questioned us on the sustainability issue.

As mentioned in 5f, we do not expect to get feedback on our ‘Sustainability’ report before the autumn of this year hence the RHE team have said that they are not prepared to launch a housing needs survey for us until early 2022.

Members then discussed the merits of pressing ahead with its own housing needs survey at once or deferring further action until the autumn of this year. The reluctant consensus was to defer. **(Action: Chairman will include the topic in the next newsletter to be mailed shortly.)**

- h) Rother Planning Service Consultation RDC are to hold an online focus group workshop to collect thoughts and experiences of the Planning Service. Cllr French plans to attend and Cllr O'Sullivan will aim to free up her time to join her. If she is unable to do so then Cllr Hoad will take her place.

7) Community Matters

- a) Covid-19 There have been no calls to the village action line. The clerk has been posting news at least once a week about the level of infections or the vaccination programme. Members commented that the community website was providing a useful platform for sharing experiences.

- b) Defibrillators Cllr Sinden is to take the lead for Public Access Defibrillators (PADs). He is in the process of assessing current provision and future needs. He suggested that greater publicity needs to be given to the provision of a PAD at The Retreat in Penhurst where the PAD is provided and maintained by St John Ambulance. The parish council provided the cabinet.

Cllr Sinden is in conversation with the former Community First Responders (CFRs) in the village who had to relinquish their machines when they ceased to be CFRs. He has their assurance that if the monitor light is flashing on the only PAD in the village (at The Ash Tree Inn) then all is well. He will recommend the purchase of an additional machine if appropriate.

Members agreed with him that there is a training need and that village events represent an opportunity to demonstrate the use of a PAD.

(Action: the Chairman and Cllr Sinden will liaise with the W.I. and M.I. and seek to publicise PAD location and application by using the parish magazine and Facebook communication channels.)

- c) Village Action Plan and Lead Responsibilities

- i) The Chairman has coordinated a review of allocations following the co-option of Cllr Sinden to the parish council. The aim is to harmonise the responsibility for key actions in the VAP and the Lead Responsibilities published on the village website. **(Action: Cllr O'Sullivan to redraft the appropriate section of the village website and post the revised copy of the VAP.)**

- ii) Website, communications, rural character preservation (Cllr O'Sullivan) - The website received 227 views in January and the most visited pages were the home page and the churches page.

Cllr O'Sullivan reported that she is obtaining a quote for a third party assessment of the extent to which the website meets the new accessibility requirements. She also reported that a history section is to be developed in conjunction with the clerk who is arranging to have the minute books from 1894 - 1970 digitised. After that date there are already digital records. Finally, she and the clerk are exploring an alerts function whereby visitors may register to receive an alert whenever changes are made to the site. **(Actions: Cllr O'Sullivan to evaluate cost of third party assessment of accessibility; Clerk to evaluate cost of alerts function plus progress on digitising the minutes archive.)**

- iii) Care of natural environment, community services including affordable housing, former payphone box (Cllr French) - The call in the parish magazine for photos to populate the former payphone box produced a useful response. Furthermore, Cllr French has been given access to documents from the former Ashburnham History Group organiser (Philip West-Kelsey). Affordable housing was covered at 6) g) above.

- iv) Rural broadband (Cllr Hoad) - In collaboration with the Chairman of Brightling Parish Council a request has been submitted to Open Reach for a large scale Demand Led Community Fibre Partnership scheme, covering Brightling, Penhurst, Ashburnham and the fringes of Ninfield / Netherfield. These are strategic schemes whereby residential and business premises occupiers pledge the value of their Gigabit vouchers to the scheme

using a portal set up by Open Reach to service the application. Between them the two chairmen have uploaded individual details of some 666 premises.

Open Reach are now evaluating the proposal and if the estimated cost is less than the aggregate value of the Gigabit Vouchers by a margin of not less than 30% then the scheme will proceed. Using the good offices of a Mr John Shanks, an expert who lives in Catsfield, the estimated cost of the scheme is in the region of £500k and the value of the vouchers is £800k. The first response from Open Reach is due on 9th February 2021. Time is of the essence as 31st March 2021 is when Gigabit Vouchers are withdrawn and no new claims will be possible.

Elsewhere it is noted that OFCOM have cleared parts of the broadcast spectrum (700Mhz) to enable the auction of more 5G contracts. 5G represents the next best option for premises not able to be connected via Fibre To The Premises (FTTP).

d) Village social event (post Covid-19)

Members were unanimous in the desirability of an event as soon as restriction lifting allows but were unable to make any plans at the moment. A date in August is in mind.

8) RFO Report

- a) Receipts and payments – members received the circulated schedule for the period 16 November 2020 to 20 January 2021 which is now on file.
- b) Bank reconciliation – members received the circulated reconciliation at 20 January 2021 and Cllr French reported that she had been online and is able to confirm that it is correct.
- c) Income and expenditure – members received the circulated report against budget to 20 January 2021. There were no variations not already noted at previous meetings.
- d) Earmarked reserves – members received the circulated report of movements in reserves.
- e) Payments to authorise – on the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Spicer, members resolved to authorise the payments on the list attached to these minutes. **(Action: clerk to process authorised payments)**
- f) Clerk’s salary - on the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Spicer members resolved to adopt the joint council National Salary Award for clerks E01-20: 2020-21 (published Aug 2020), at salary point 7 in scale LC1. The award increases the hourly rate from £10.16 to £10.44 effective from 1st April 2020. The contract of employment remains at 30hrs per mth.
- g) Members reviewed the second draft of the budget for 2021/22. The Chairman suggested that the allocation to the earmarked reserve Community Support be increased from £2,500 to £3,000 to take account of a possible purchase of a PAD and the hire of a marquee for a village post-Covid event. Members agreed and on the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Sinden the budget for 2021/22 was adopted as shown on draft 2 with the one alteration above to the Community reserve allocation.
- h) On the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr O’Sullivan, members resolved to set the council tax precept for 2021/22 at £12,607, the same as the previous year. **(Action: Clerk to notify RDC)**

9) Governance

- a) Members noted that the Annual Assembly scheduled for 22 April 2021 is unlikely to be able to go ahead as restrictions are most unlikely to have been lifted by then. Other options were discussed but members felt unable to make any plans at present.
- b) The Clerk advised members that -
 - i) SI 2020/392 which enables this council meeting to proceed as an online meeting did not include any provision to waive the need for annual parish meetings, and
 - ii) the government has said that the statutory instrument will not be renewed when it expires on 7th May 2021. The National Association of Local Government is lobbying for it to be renewed.

10) Premises

-
- a) New village hall
- i) Planning and Design: no meetings held in the last period.
 - ii) Construction: Cost revisions still awaited from Wealden AM Ltd.
 - iii) Funding: no new activity
 - iv) Landlord and Legal: the new lease has now been received from Adams & Remer acting for the Ashburnham Estate. As previously resolved a third party legal review will be conducted. **(Action: Clerk to instruct Heringtons Solicitors accordingly)**
- b) Pavilion and Sports Field
- i) Lettings – the Clerk reported that Saturday fixtures were being arranged throughout the season by the visitors, Kerala Strikers. Members requested that the Clerk review the option of applying for the new support grants now available. **(Action: Clerk to review Business area of RDC website.)**
 - ii) Pavilion maintenance – the Clerk reported that during the lockdown the opportunity to complete the interior decoration had been taken. The area above the ring beam (in the main room) has been repainted. The exterior weather boarding has also now been recoated. He reported that it is planned to paint the exterior joinery (windows and doors) with one coat in 2021. Having been thoroughly decorated in 2019 after some years of neglect, a maintenance coat is thought to be prudent.
 - iii) Sports Field maintenance – the Clerk reported that the boundary to the north from the road boundary and extending round as far as the village bonfire site has become very overgrown with nettles and brambles. He has discussed renovation with the Custodian (Mr Danny Whyman) who agreed that once it was brought under control he was content to add maintenance of it to his list of duties. However, a one off clearance task is required and on the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Spicer members resolved to adopt the Clerk’s suggestion and authorise a fee of £350 for the several days’ work entailed. **(Action: Clerk to action with the Custodian.)**
- c) Village Hall
- i) The Clerk reported that, as Secretary to the committee, he has made the Annual Returns to the Charity Commission in respect of the village hall charity and the new Community Centre charity.

11) Highways and Byways

- a) Finger posts
- The clerk reminded members that the planned maintenance for 2021 is as follows -
- i) #3 The Pound: repaint c.£250
 - ii) #5 Forge Lane: a bit split, mend and repaint c.£400
 - iii) #7 Old Thatch Lane lower: rough but sound, cap loose, some cracked letters. Paint c.£400
- b) SLR meeting agenda 20 April 2021 (online)
- A review of the work to date on improving drainage at Henley Bridge and of progress in securing a date for major renovations in Farthing Lane and at the T-junction with Brownbread Street at Pontoons Green.
- c) Street naming
- No new activity. Item to be removed from agenda.
- d) Footpaths
- The Clerk has advised ESCC Rights of Way team of the need for repairs on the footpath running from Winters Farm, across Tumbling Bay and so to Brownbread Street. A stile is broken, one or more planks in the bridge are broken and a board walk needs to be constructed to cross the stream just before Brownbread Street.
- Cllr Spicer advised members of the contents of the Highways Act 1980, S.146 where it states that the landowner is responsible for the upkeep of stiles. **(Action: Clerk to contact the landowner and request renewal of the stile.)**
- Cllr Spicer also reported that repairs to Honey Lane following the flooding have been effected.

12) Correspondence

- a) A letter of thanks from The Chapel for the parish council's donation.
- b) Notice from RDC of the online consultation about the planning service.

13) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

New village hall project review following signing of new lease.

14) Dates of Next Meetings

- a) Council meetings - the dates of the meetings for the remainder of the council year are 25th March, 27th May (Annual Meeting of the Parish Council). *22nd Feb councillors Zoom.*
- 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.

.....
Signed (Chair)

Date