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**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst  
held on Wednesday 28th July 2021 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

**Parish Councillors present:** Cllrs Andrew Hoad, Ron King, Paul Spicer, Zoe O’Sullivan and Richard White.

**Parish Councillors absent:** Cllrs Tina French and Chris Sinden

**District / County Councillors present:** ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field

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

**1) Apologies for absence**

Cllrs Tina French, Chris Sinden, Gary Curtis

**2) Disclosures of interest**

6. b) Cllr Andrew Hoad

6. c) Cllrs Andrew Hoad and Richard White

**3) Additional agenda items**

None

**4) Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 26th May 2021 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

**5) Open Forum**

ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows

A much delayed council meeting was held as a Corporate Parents meeting. Children in the care of the local authority are deemed to have Corporate Parents. Cllr Field described the meeting as harrowing listening to accounts of children’s experiences during the Covid-19 lockdown.

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

a) Ongoing applications Current position:

**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 after protracted delays. The Clerk has written a third letter to the head of planning and each time action has been promised.*

**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. *Approved, but members learned that the applicant is not taking up the tenancy.*

**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.*

**RR/2020/1867/P** - Forge Lane and Penhurst Lane - Land to the south of, - installation of new field access and gate. *Approved*

**RR/2021/52/P** - Springside Farm, Herrings Road, Ashburnham, TN33 9FB - Widening of existing access and gate, increased permeable hard standing, Agricultural Diversification and erection of a container store. (Retrospective) *Refused. Pending restoration of the site to its previous condition. Action Clerk: Ask RDC for situation report on reinstatement.*

**RR/2021/474/P** - 1 Court Lodge Cottages, The Forge, Ashburnham TN33 9PJ - Construction of pitched roof in place of flat roof to existing single storey extension and conversion of existing loft space including two rooflights and side window. *Approved*

**RR/2021/506/P** - Old Sprays Barn, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QN - Construction of three bay garage with adjacent utility room attached to existing shed. *Members raised no specific concerns but noted that on earlier applications for development at this property, the need for a garage was stated to be non-existent. Online parish comments posted to portal.*

b) New applications

**RR/2021/1209/P** - Sprays Oast Farm, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QN - Construction of garden room within existing garden shelter and new greenhouse. *Members viewed the proposals but will post a comment that they remain neutral on them. (Action: Clerk)*

**RR/2021/1048/P** and **1049/L** - Hill Farm, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QS - Proposed erection of single storey extension, removal of rear porch and demolition of modern garden shed (alternative to approvals RR/2020/2198/P and RR/2020/2199/L).

Cllr Hoad declared an interest as he is the applicant. After a brief description of the changes and answering questions, he left the room.

*Remains undecided. In the absence of Cllr Hoad members resolved to Support the application. (Action: Clerk)*

c) Breaches and Enforcement

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

*Planning Contravention Notice served in March 2021. No further developments.*

**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.)

*At a 2-day trial at Hastings Magistrates Court on 27th and 28th May 2021 the defendants were found guilty on both counts, were fined and must now clear the site of the landscaping business equipment and materials.*

**ENF/40/19/ASH** Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham – Unlawful extension of lawful development. *Enforcement report 30 May 2019*

**ENF/332/20/ASH** The White Cottage, Brownbread Street - Landscaping works and construction of concrete slab . *Information awaited at 24 Jan 2021*

**Penhurst Estate - game shooting operations review.**

Cllr White declared an interest as he is a tenant of the Penhurst Estate and Cllr Hoad declared an interest as a resident directly affected.

Prior to the meeting the Clerk circulated a briefing paper prepared by Cllr Hoad to outline concerns being voiced to him by Penhurst residents. This was viewed by members and then discussed. Residents are worried that shooting activities may be upscaled substantially and include commercial shooting operations. In such a scenario this would be harmful to the peaceful environment that residents and other local businesses enjoy. The discussion paper showed pictures of new fencing, cover crop locations and possible new highways access

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points. It also outlined the noise nuisance from the gamekeeper vehicle driving around the estate at anti-social times plus bird scarers used for crop protection.

Cllr White informed members that the shoot is a small private syndicate and not a commercial shoot. In his view the planting of cover crops is not a new activity and the new fences themselves may create additional hedgerows once hedging is planted. He advised that none of the pictured highway access points are new albeit were previously overgrown. He is not aware of timber operations requiring a license (trimming and not felling) and the structures are not expected to be permanent. Due to the integration with another shoot, he expects that the number of shoots in Penhurst will be roughly the same as in the past, ie 10 per year. He commented that although 2,500 birds being reared may sound a lot more than in the past, the Beech Estate were rearing 20,000. Release of a large number of game birds does diminish the insect life but the stewardship scheme seeks to counter balance this in other ways. Cllr White's conclusion, therefore, is that there is no need for residents or the parish council to be alarmed.

The question was put before members to decide whether or not the Parish Council should contact the new owner of the estate on behalf of residents to ask for more details and clarity regarding his plans. One member pointed out that the council has not approached any other owner with such a request, but the counter view was that no others have made such a large step change in investment in shooting. Members did accept that land use may change over the coming years as support schemes change.

The question was put to a vote and by a majority of 3 to 2 members resolved that the clerk be instructed to write a carefully worded and non-confrontational letter to the new owner.  
*(Action: clerk to write to the new owner of the Penhurst Estate)*

## 7) RFO Report

### a) Receipts and Payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 19th May 2021 to 20th July 2021.

### b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as of 20 July 2021. Cllr French, although not present, emailed to say that she has been on line to the bank and can verify the figures.

### c) Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to the 20 July 2021. There were no exceptional variances other than the previously noted VAT receipts and payments due to timing changes of work on the playing field lease and on the entrance widening.

### d) Payments to authorise

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to authorise the following payments:

Details	Payee	£	+ vat £	Total £
<b>PAYMENTS &gt;= £100</b>				
Internal audit	Keith Robertson	132.00	0.00	132.00
Clerk expenses	B P Holdstock	146.76	0.00	146.76
Report on lease	Heringtons	1594.00	302.80	1896.80
Insurance premium	BHIB	506.60	0.00	506.60
<b>PAYMENTS UNDER £100</b>				
Window cleaning	Nigel Turner	26.00	0.00	26.00
Varioius tasks	Robert Dedman	64.00	0.00	64.00
Repair leaking tap	FMS Ltd	30.00	6.00	36.00
Paid by debit card				
Janitorial supplies	Viking Direct	17.89	3.58	21.47
				2,829.63

e) Payments of charitable donations

Members resolved to repeat the donations of £100 made last year to Citizens Advice Bureau, Battle Area Community Transport and Rother Rural Trust. These are in addition to the normal support payments to the parish magazine and the chapel. Members further resolved on having a contingency for up to another three donations in the year if a direct application is made from an organisation.

f) Internal audit report

Members received the report together with a commentary from the clerk (RFO) prior to the meeting. Before reviewing the report members determined that details of finances and future plans are best considered outside of an ordinary parish council meeting and resolved to set up a Finance & General Purposes Committee for the purposes of reviewing audit recommendations, financial regulations and a three year plan for the parish council finances including the precept. The first meeting will be convened before the next council meeting at the end of September and is initially constituted as Cllr Andrew Hoad (Chairman) and Cllrs Chris Sinden, Paul Spicer and Richard White. The following matters arise from the internal audit report and will be considered by the F&GP:

- i) The auditor, Keith Robertson, is relinquishing the role and a replacement will need to be found.
- ii) The audit trail for salary payments needs to be strengthened and, until Financial Regulations are amended, the clerk will submit a payslip to support requests for bank authorisations.
- iii) A revised layout of the earmarked reserves movement statement was tabled at this meeting and will be adopted as the future presentation.
- iv) The auditor urged the council to develop a three year view of its finances and to take account of various scenarios arising from the proposed new village hall.

g) Financial regulations

The RFO proposed that the regulations be amended to permit payments under £100 to be authorised by circulation of e-copies of invoices rather than printing them for circulation at the council meeting. On the motion of the Chairman, members agreed to adopt this practise.

h) Internet banking

Members resolved to continue the current arrangement whereby any two of the following four councillors may authorise payments submitted to the bank by the clerk as RFO:  
Cllrs Tina French, Andrew Hoad, Paul Spicer and Richard White.

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**8) Governance**

- a) No items tabled

**9) Community - Village Action Plan & Lead Responsibilities**

- a) Rural character preservation (Cllr O'Sullivan)

Cllr O'Sullivan noted that having designated three areas of verge as wildflower protection zones, attention in the community has now switched to cutting verges to aid visibility especially at junctions. *(Action: Cllr Spicer agreed to contact ESx Highways to find out details of the rural verge cutting programme.*

- b) Website and communications (Cllr O'Sullivan)

Cllr O'Sullivan continues to liaise with Tim Wakeling on the accessibility compliance work.

Cllr O'Sullivan has scanned and made e-copies of all the parish council minute books from the start in 1894. On the motion of the Chairman members were unanimous in passing a vote of thanks to Cllr O'Sullivan for undertaking this gargantuan task single handed. Ways of making the archive available on line will be explored given the possible limitations on file size.

- c) Affordable Housing (Cllr French)

- i) In her absence, Cllr French submitted some notes and had nothing further to report on this topic.

- d) Environment, Sustainability & Wellbeing (Cllr French)

In her absence, Cllr French submitted the following notes -

- i) Public transport - the new community timetable continues to operate without problems.
- ii) Refuse collection & waste management - RDC have given notice that there may be some disruption to services due to Covid-19 related issues, principally staff absence arising from the NHS app pinging people advising that they need to self-isolate.
- iii) Payphone box museum - a request has been received to use it in conjunction with a scarecrow competition in the autumn.
- iv) Priest in Charge (vicar) - a new Priest in Charge has been appointed part time for Ashburnham church and will live at The Granary. His licensing is planned for mid-September.

- e) Highways (Cllr King)

- i) Roads and ditches maintenance - the potholes now being repaired are being completed to a much higher standard with cutting out of each patch.
- ii) SLR meetings with East Sussex Highways - the next meeting is due in November.
- iii) Finger post maintenance - the summer maintenance programme is in place.

- f) Rights of Way / Verges (Cllr Spicer)

- i) It has come to light that the area in Church Road near the cricket field was originally intended to have been on the side nearest the cricket field. In the event it was the opposite side of the road which had been designated, but this has proved to be a better option as it avoids any conflict of interest with the cricket club who strim the ditch on their side of the road.

- g) Premises (Cllr White)

- i) Pavilion - the Custodian of the grounds, Mr Danny Whyman, has suffered a heart attack and is out of action until further notice. The clerk reported that he has the work covered for the rest of this season with Mr Terry Whyman. Cllr White and the clerk will liaise and keep a record of the work undertaken with a view to being able at the end of the year to

quantify the work needed and to be able to invite tenders from interested parties should Mr Danny Whyman be unable to continue.

- ii) Village hall - Cllr White reported that the Village Hall Committee are seeking a new Secretary and Treasurer as the existing office holder has expressed a wish to retire.
- iii) New village hall - the New Hall Steering Group has met once since the pandemic restrictions were lifted and members are working on developing costings for the fitting out. Initial explorations of the process of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board have revealed that the parish council will need to have a financial strategy in place to which end the proposed F&GP will be a necessary vehicle.

h) Village events and facilities (Cllr Sinden)

- i) Public Access Defibrillators - in his absence Cllr Sinden is known to be working on training sessions and hopes to mount one at the next Annual Village Meeting.
- ii) Annual Village Meeting - members resolved that this year's meeting, postponed from April, should be held soon after the next parish council meeting at the end of September.
- iii) Community events - members resolved that the annual service of remembrance should be held inside the recreation ground rather than in the road. Because that means standing behind the war memorial and being thus unable to see the names, members resolved that a pull-up banner should be procured displaying the names. (*Action: clerk to procure*)
- iv) Post box - Cllr King reported that the post box which fell off its mount at New Buildings Cottages is to be replaced. The clerk was able to find the right contact in Royal Mail and an email has been received today confirming that the replacement is a work in progress.

i) Rural connectivity (Cllr Hoad)

A formal offer from Open Reach in respect of the Ashburnham and the Brightling Demand Led Community Fibre Schemes has been received and accepted. Openreach are now in the process of getting our Rural Gigabit Vouchers (RGV) soft reserved from central government (DCMS). This is the so-called Pre-Registered Package (PRP) stage and should normally only take 3 weeks but like everything else in the Covid era it is taking much longer. We expect to hear that this has been completed in another 3 weeks time. In the meantime we have confirmed that ESCC still have top-up funds (£1000 per premise) available for us to use. This is good news because it means that we will only need about 65% of all premises to pledge their RGV to get us over the cost target line.

Once we hear from Openreach that the PRP is done we will start in earnest with the promotional work to encourage people to pledge their RGV to the project. A dedicated pledging website will be set up in order to make this as easy as possible for everyone.

10) **Correspondence**

None

11) **Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items**

None

12) **Date of Next Meeting**

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 29th September 2021.

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Signed (Chair)

Date .....