
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 24th November 2021 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Tina French, Andrew Hoad, Paul Spicer, Chris Sinden and Richard White.

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Ron King

District / County Councillors present: None

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

1) Apologies for absence

ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field, Parish Cllr Ron King

2) Disclosures of interest

None

3) Additional agenda items

at item 6 - Brays Hill planning RR/2021/2710/P

at item 6 - Church cottages Penhurst RR/2021/2711/P

at item 6) d) - Infrastructure Development Plan (consultation), Neighbourhood Plan

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 29th September 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 by email as follows

The County Council is beginning to have more idea where the budget is going. It looks like Council Tax will go up by 1.99% which is just under the referendum limit. It also looks like we can precept 1% for Adult Social Care each year for 3 years but unlike previous schemes there is no flexibility; we have in the past been able to “borrow” from the next year’s allocation. The County Council is still unclear how the new legislation regarding the £86,000 cap on care costs will affect the budget. The cap only applies to the care element of care home fees not the “hotel” cost.

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. *Rother planning officer now in consultation with applicant and requesting guidance on how they wish to proceed given that the extension would not be approved but that the garage construction would be. Applicant has confirmed they wish to proceed with garage only at this time. Item will be removed from agenda.*

RR/2021/1700/P - Ashbourne Oast, Kitchenham Road, Ashburnham TN33 9NA - Convert and extend garage building to create a holiday let with accompanying parking and landscaping. *Members voted unanimously by show of hands to post an objection to this application.*
Remains undecided.

RR/2021/1209/P - Sprays Oast Farm, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QN - Construction of garden room within existing garden shelter and new greenhouse. *Approved conditional.*

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). *Approved conditional.*

RR/2021/1437/P - Olivers Hill, Herrings Road, Ponds Green, Ashburnham TN33 9FB - Erection of a two bay detached garage. *Members discussed online and posted a neutral position with comments.*
Remains undecided.

b) New applications

RR/2021/2148/P - Honeyland, Honey Lane, Ashburnham/Dallington TN33 9FA - Erect agricultural barn. *The Planning Committee met on 21 October and the following objection was posted to the portal "Members oppose this application. There is no viable farming business on this site which is too small to support one. Therefore, there is no justifiable business case even for a normal agricultural barn. The proposed barn is far from a normal agricultural barn and is of a much more sophisticated construction and that is consistent with previous planning history of this site."*

Remains undecided.

RR/2021/2072/P - Springside Farm, Herrings Road, Ponds Green, TN33 9FB - Widened access and agricultural use. (Retrospective) (Resubmission of RR/2021/52/P)
The Planning Committee met on 21 October and the following objection was posted to the portal "Members could see no difference between this application and the previous one. The previous application was refused and members were of the view that this should be refused on similar grounds. Members could see no justification for a change of use and urged refusal and the reinstatement of the site to its previous condition (photograph submitted)."

Remains undecided.

RR/2021/1648/P - Ashburnham Place, Ashburnham Christian Trust Limited, Ashburnham TN33 9NF - Conversion and change of use of existing gardener's bothy buildings and an adjoining lean-to glass house, into a restaurant, including associated internal and external alterations.

The Planning Committee met on 21 October and the following support was posted to the portal, "Members were very supportive of this application believing the development to be in keeping with the character of the site, to be of economic benefit to the community and to be making use of existing buildings."

Refused (today)

RR/2021/2711/P - 1 Church Farm Cottages, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QP - Single storey side extension.

Members viewed the plans and were not opposed to an extension in principle, accepting that it will break the symmetry of this pair of cottages. However, they were unable to support the current application which they see as design which is unsympathetic with its surroundings. Something with a pitched roof and a porch, for example, would be preferable. (Action: clerk to post objection to RDC planning portal.)

RR/2021/2530/P - Furnace Cottage, The Furnace, Penhurst TN33 9PG - Proposed conversion of an outbuilding.

Members viewed the plans and resolved to support them. (Action: clerk to post support at RDC planning portal.)

c) Breaches and Enforcement - none

d) Planning policies

- i) Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) consultation - the Chairman advised that the IDP sets out how money raised from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is used to build new infrastructure such as bypass roads, rail links etc. It is quite high level and involves larger projects that help connect towns and larger settlements. As such the Chairman considered that the Parish Council would not be able to make any meaningful input to the IDP. No further action required.
- ii) Neighbourhood Plan - the Chairman reported that he had investigated this mechanism in response to a question being raised about it at the Annual Assembly. Whilst it is true that the existence of a Neighbourhood Plan provides a framework within which developers must work, our parishes have the protection of being within the AONB and also of being designated in the Rother Core Strategy Plan (2014) as having a new housing target of 1 or zero. Given the human and financial resource needed to create a Neighbourhood Plan, the Chairman recommended no further action and members were content to support that proposal.

7) RFO Report

a) Receipts and Payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 24 September to 18 November 2021.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as of 18 November 2021.

c) Income and expenditure against budget and reserves statement

The RFO tabled a report and statement (on file) against budget to the 18 November 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 £
PAYMENTS >£100				
Burial grounds maintenance	Penhurst PCC	350.00	0.00	350.00
Burial grounds maintenance	Ashburnham PCC	350.00	0.00	350.00
Annual support grant + 20%	Ashburnham Chapel	120.00	0.00	120.00
Pavilion grounds custodian	Mr D Whyman	400.00	0.00	400.00
Cover for custodian illness	DeLuxe Cleaning Services	240.00	0.00	240.00
Pavilion cleaning Apr - June	Carol Lovett	153.75	0.00	153.75
Pavilion cleaning July - Sep	Carol Lovett	187.50	0.00	187.50
Entrance height barrier	Ash Plant Hire	600.00	1.00	601.00
171 verge excavation licence	East Sussex County Council	399.61	0.00	399.61
Remembrance Sunday banner	Dragon Signs	131.50	26.30	157.80
Zoom subs renewal	Zoom US	143.88	0.00	143.88
PAYMENTS <= £100				
Planning training event 2 places	ESALC	40.00	8.00	48.00
Remem Sunday pa system	James Harris Hire	45.00	0.00	45.00
Annual Assembly catering	Champagne & Caviar	100.00	0.00	100.00
Annual Assembly eats	Lidl	36.87	0.00	36.87
Clerk expenses	B P Holdstock	65.21	0.00	65.21
115 verge bollards permit	East Sussex County Council	60.14	0.00	60.14

3,458.76

e) Internal auditor

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to adopt the recommendation of the Finance & General Purposes Committee and appoint Mulberry & Co as internal auditor for the current financial year.

f) Budget for 2022/23

Members received a draft budget for 2022/23 which has been proposed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The budget proposes that the precept sum be raised by inflation (CPI figure) which means approximately 3%, but the final figure will be determined when the final budget is adopted at the next meeting (in January).

Members were content to adopt the budget as a starting point on which to consider proposals later in this meeting under item 9). After this meeting the draft will be revised to reflect decisions made at the meeting.

8) Governance

- a) Casual vacancy - on the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr French, members resolved to co-opt Jay Ashworth to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Cllr Zoe O'Sullivan. This is line with the recommendation of the interview panel.
- b) Annual Parish Meetings - actions arising are considered in 9) below.
- c) Live streaming of council meetings - members considered this option at the request of a parishioner. Members noted that the experience, including that of the W.I., was that simply transmitting the meeting via a Zoom link was wholly unsatisfactory. Zoom works on the basis of individuals each sat in front of a camera and simply pointing a camera into a room where a meeting is taking place results in a poor experience and difficulty in deciphering what is being said. The clerk reported on an email discussion he has had with other Rother clerks. The consensus is that a live stream needs to be done professionally with more than one camera, is expensive to set up and is a luxury beyond the means of most councils. Members resolved to take no further action and to continue to encourage interested parishioners to come to meetings in person.
- d) The question of changing the date of the January 2022 meeting was removed from the agenda as the Vice Chairman is now able to chair the meeting in the anticipated absence of the Chairman.

9) Community - Village Action Plan & Lead Responsibilities

- a) Rural character preservation no report
- b) Website and communications

- i) Compliance with the Accessibility regulations has reached the stage where former councillor Zoe O'Sullivan had made as many of the required changes as she is able to. The remaining changes can be made by Tim Wakeling, who hosts the website and who has quoted as follows:

Keyboard and input method changes to improve focus visibility, tab order and touch target size as recommended, including fixing the menu so submenus display correctly with keyboard and in the right order; this is likely to be a fiddly job — 6 hours = £264

Page title tweak — ½ hour = £22

Text size and form label adjustments, carefully implemented and tested — 2 hours = £88

Colour contrast adjustments, carefully implemented and tested — 2 hours = £88

Members felt that they had no choice but to authorise the necessary work to the value of

£462.

- ii) A proposal has been received from a GoCompare affiliate to put a link on the village website to a flood risk warning website. Members did not wish to take up the offer and there will be no further action.
- c) Affordable Housing (Cllr French)
 - i) The Chairman reported on a recent conversation with Amy Fearn, Rother Housing Development Officer and learned that the right time to conduct a full needs survey will be next Spring.
- d) Environment, Sustainability & Wellbeing (Cllr French)
 - i) Householder support contained within the measures reported by ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field were reviewed with a question as to how best to publicise them to parishioners. It was suggested that a new page on the village website could be created which would contain signpost links to sources of support. In addition to the recently announced measures, the page could contain details of the location of local food banks and a link to the recently notified loneliness helpline.
 - ii) Payphone box museum - Cllr French is still seeking contributions.
 - iii) Play area for children – At the annual Parish meeting it was suggested by a member of the public that a simple play area for pre-school children was needed. Subsequently, other local views expressed a need to also cater for middle-teenagers (say, 13- 16 year olds). The Chairman reported that a provisional sum of £2000 has been put in the April 2022/23 budget for purchase and installation of playground equipment. Members agreed to research and collaborate on the preparation of a road map for how to best use the allocated funds. The road map is to be presented in the January meeting. In the meantime, solely as an interim measure, members resolved to proceed at once with the purchase of some football goals, sanctioning a spend of up to £100 for this purpose. The council has considered insurance implications, but insurers confirm that current cover is sufficient both for public liability and material damage to equipment.
- e) Highways (Cllr King)
 - i) The SLR meeting with East Sussex Highways scheduled for 9 November will now take place on 7 December. The agenda includes the council's bid for road maintenance funding for the five key areas identified by Cllr King.
 - ii) Roadside hedge owners liaison - members instructed the clerk to send a letter of thanks to Sam Foord who has cut many of the hedges in Penhurst in his own time and at his own expense.
 - iii) Hammer Hill is due to be closed for several days in January to permit Open Reach works. A posting has been scheduled on the village website a few days prior to the closure and Cllr French is arranging for social media postings to be made as well.
- f) Rights of Way (Cllr Spicer)
 - i) ESCC Rights of Way team liaison - the section of the 1066 Way which starts opposite Suttons in Brownbread Street proceeds down a hill to a stream crossing. There is no way of crossing the stream without traversing a large area of thick mud caused by stock in the field. The official point of the crossing is in a place difficult for the construction of a proper crossing and the landowner (Mrs Jane Andrew) has given permission for it to be moved a short distance to the field boundary where it would be much easier to construct a crossing. Cllr Spicer intends to liaise with Mrs Andrew and the Rights of Way team to see if the construction of a crossing can be put into a firm works schedule.
 - ii) Nicky Bishop has asked if representatives from local footpath groups can brief the parish council on the forthcoming registration process for rights of way. Members suggested the January council meeting would be appropriate.
- g) Premises (Cllr White)
 - i) Pavilion - the Clerk reported that the W.I. are moving their monthly meetings from a Monday evening in the village hall to a Monday afternoon in the pavilion.

- ii) Village hall - Cllr White was pleased to report that Ben Mitchell (Mitchell Construction) has offered to repair the guttering and to replace missing tiles free of charge as a goodwill gesture provided another party can provide access. Monty Worssam, Kitchenham Farm, has offered to lend a telehandler and cage plus an operator for a day or so to enable the tiles to be replaced.
- iii) New village hall
 - (1) The New Hall Steering Group is due to meet on 2nd December 2021.
 - (2) The recent village bonfire night raised over £500 to add to funds raised to date.
 - (3) With respect to fund raising, Jay Ashworth recently attended a meeting of Rother Voluntary Action (which was hosted by ACT) and will brief committee members at the next meeting of the NHSG on 2nd December.
- h) Village events and facilities (Cllr Sinden)
 - i) Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations 4th June 2022
 - (1) On the motion of Cllr Sinden members resolved to reserve a marquee and accept the quotation from the Main Event company of £1,730 to include tables and chairs.
 - (2) Members supported the outline funding plan proposed by the Finance & General Committee which is that an outlay of £2,000 will be offset by income of £1,000.
 - (3) Members debated whether or not the Platinum Jubilee celebrations will be in addition to or instead of the annual Flower Show and Country Fair. It was agreed that the events could not be combined as they are of a different nature and early June would be very restrictive for a flower show. It was agreed to defer a decision regarding funding until the January council meeting.
 - ii) Community events - following the village bonfire and the Service of Remembrance, the next events are the lunch hosted by The Chapel, village walks and carol singing round the village.
- i) Rural connectivity (Cllr Hoad)
 - i) Super Fast Broadband - the Chairman reported that we have now experienced a 5 month delay waiting for the DCMS to pre-allocate Rural Gigabit vouchers to our proposed Community Fibre Partnership scheme. Until the DCMS have done this we are unable to start the process of securing pledges from members of the public to avail of these vouchers. In essence we are stalled at this point. No amount of chasing Openreach or DCMS has unstuck this situation. Consequently, the Chairman has written a letter to our MP, Huw Merriman, asking for his help and intervention.

10) Correspondence

Air Ambulance has written a letter of thanks for the council's donation.

11) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

- a) CEE Bill
- b) Rights of Way preservation

12) Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 26th January 2022.

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Signed (Chair)

Date