
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 26th January 2022 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Jay Ashworth, Ron King, Paul Spicer, Chris Sinden and Richard White (Deputy Chairman).

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Andrew Hoad

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

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

1) Apologies for absence

Cllr Andrew Hoad (Chairman). In his absence Cllr Richard White chaired the meeting.

2) Disclosures of interest

7) h) Cllr Sinden is Chairman of the Cricket Club

3) Additional agenda items

- a) Tina French informed members that she recently tendered her resignation as a parish councillor to the Chairman. As members are aware, resignations take immediate effect. Members were fulsome in their praise of the contribution she has made to the council since she joined in the summer of 2015. The Chair invited Mrs French to remain at the table as a member of the public and to answer questions as appropriate even though she could not participate in debate.
- b) The Chair welcomed Cllr Jay Ashworth to her first meeting and Cllr Ashworth signed the Acceptance of Office.

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 24th November 2021 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chair the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5) Open Forum

- a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows
The County Council element of Council Tax will rise in April by 4.49% which is made up of 1.99% general rise to keep the council under the 2% cap, 1% Adult Social Care (ASC) precept and 1.5% ASC precept from last year. The Government has allocated £1.7m to help to mitigate the extra cost incurred by the Care Act.
- b) RDC Cllr Gary White reported as follows
The Planning Department has been through much upheaval and reorganisation after a period during which its performance was lamentable. There is now a new management team in charge.
- c) Ramblers Association (by invitation to make a presentation)
Councillors had previously expressed interest in these four topics:

- i) Protecting rights of way - members viewed online the new ESCC rights of way map which now contains names of paths and details of every stile, gate and footbridge. This makes it very much easier to report any damage or missing furniture.
- ii) Requesting new rights of way - a newly developed A3 poster on the Don't Lose Your Way project (DLYW) subject was presented to show more detail about the research work required, which was re-iterated as most effectively done by local people with mapping, historic and on-the-ground interests.
- iii) Permissive paths and the public's rights - essentially their designation is entirely dependent on landowner's gift and may sometimes be with a written County Council agreement.
- iv) Permissive paths crossing land where shoots take place - the presenters emphasised the need for both shoot organisers and the public to be willing to meet each other half way in a spirit of cooperation. Dog walkers should keep their dogs on a very short lead and, if shooting is taking place, wait until the game keeper signals that it is safe to pass. Gamekeepers and shoot participants need to be prepared to pause and give way when a walker wishes to traverse the shoot.

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

a) Ongoing applications Current position:

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. *Council has objected* *Remains undecided.*

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.* *Refused 18 Jan 2022*

RR/2021/2148/P - Honeyland, Honey Lane, Ashburnham/Dallington TN33 9FA - Erect agricultural barn. *Parish Council objected.* *Refused 6 Dec 2021*

RR/2021/2072/P - Springside Farm, Herrings Road, Ponds Green, TN33 9FB - Widened access and agricultural use. (Retrospective) (Resubmission of RR/2021/52/P) *Parish Council objected.* *Remains undecided*

RR/2021/2711/P - 1 Church Farm Cottages, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QP - Single storey side extension. *New drawings viewed on line. Members approved and will comment to that effect on line.* *Remains undecided*

RR/2021/2530/P - Furnace Cottage, The Furnace, Penhurst TN33 9PG - Proposed conversion of an outbuilding. *Parish Council supported.* *Remains undecided*

b) New applications

RR/2021/2956/P - Springfield, Forge Lane, Penhurst, TN33 9QR - Extensions to the front, side and rear of the property and alterations to existing dwelling. *Parish Council has posted support.* *Remains undecided*

RR/2021/2889/P Ponds Green Bungalow, Ponds Green, Ashburnham TN33 9PA - Proposed remodel and restoration of existing bungalow, construction of a side extension and new entrance porch. *Parish Council has posted support.* *Approved, permission granted.*

RR/2021/2948/O - Ponds Green Bungalow, Ponds Green, Ashburnham TN33 9PA - Lawful development certificate for the proposed stationing of mobile home for ancillary use. *The Clerk advised that he has met the applicants and the neighbour on site and it appears there is agreement about the steps which will be taken to improve the visual appearance of the mobile home when viewed from the property diagonally opposite. The clerk has spoken to the planning officer who commented that it appears that occupation is lawful. Remains undecided*

c) Breaches and Enforcement

ENF/303/20/ASH - Springside Farm, Herrings Road, Ponds Green, TN33 9FB - Change of

use of agricultural land to store materials for use. *Awaiting outcome of planning application above RR/2021/2072/P*

1 Church Farm Cottage, Penhurst - possible breach of planning regulations regarding erection of oak building adjacent to the cottage. *The clerk has visited and it appears that the height of the building exceeds that permitted without planning permission. Members discussed and resolved that, in order to be consistent with the council's approach to the notification of possible breaches, the clerk be instructed to alert the planning officer.*

7) **RFO Report**

a) Receipts and Payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 19th November 2021 to 19 January 2022.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as of 19th January 2022.

c) Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to the 21 January 2022. There were no exceptional variances other than those previously noted.

d) Earmarked reserves

The RFO tabled a report on movements in earmarked reserves for the year to 21 January 2022.

e) Payments to authorise

On the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr King members resolved to authorise the following payments:

Details	Payee	£	+ vat £	Total £
PAYMENTS >£100 FROM BANK				
Magazine support donation	Ashburnham PCC	300	0.00	54.60
PAYMENTS >£100 BY DEBIT CARD				
2 goals and 4 corner posts	The Soccer Store	179.96	35.99	215.95
Jubilee marquee deposit	The Main Event Marquee Co	230.46	0.00	230.46
PAYMENTS <= £100 FROM BANK				
Parish magazine advert 1/8 page	Ashburnham PCC	27.30	0.00	27.30
Annual donation	Rother Rural Trust	100.00	0.00	100.00
Annual donation	BACT	100.00	0.00	100.00
Annual donation	Rother CAB	100.00	0.00	100.00
Smoke detector replacement	SJF Electrical Services	80.00	16.00	96.00
Cleaning Nov and Dec 2021	Carol Lovett	67.50	0.00	67.50

991.81

f) Clerk's salary scale

On the Chair's motion seconded by Cllr Spicer, members resolved to amend the clerk's contract of employment by moving the NALC pay point from LC1 point 7 to LC1 point 12 with effect from 1st January 2022.

g) Pavilion hire charges

On the Chair's motion seconded by Cllr Ashworth members resolved to increase pavilion hire charges by 5.9% which is the movement in the CPI index since April 2019 when the charges were last increased. The former and new charges are -

	per session	parishioners	organisations
From April 2019	£60	£30	£18
From April 2022	£64	£32	£19

h) Cricket club hire charges

Cllr Sinden declared his interest as Chairman of the cricket club and took no part in the discussion. The clerk informed members that he had come to an amicable agreement with club committee members that the formula for setting the annual charges paid by the cricket club for use of the facilities would be:

The number of Sunday matches played multiplied by the rate per session in force for village organisations plus 50% of the fees charged by the cricket club for anything in excess of 10 Saturday matches per season.

On the motion of Cllr Spicer seconded by Cllr King members resolved to adopt the above formula for setting seasonal charges paid by the cricket club.

i) Parish council budget for 2022/23

Members reviewed the draft budget tabled at the November meeting and made no policy changes. Members resolved to adopt the budget as tabled including minor updates reflecting any new information.

j) Precept for 2022/23

On the Chair's motion seconded by Cllr Spicer members resolved to set the amount to be raised by precept at £13,000 which represents an increase of 3.1% on the current year.

8) Governance

- a) In the light of the resignation of Cllr Tina French there is now a casual vacancy on the council. The Clerk will post the statutory notice on the notice board and notify RDC. Having very recently interviewed for the previous vacancy (filled by Cllr Ashworth), members resolved to invite the other candidate, Fraser Williamson, to be co-opted provided that in the next 14 days there is no request by 10 electors for an election.

9) Community - Village Action Plan & Lead Responsibilities

a) Rural character preservation (Cllr)

No report

b) Website and communications (Cllr)

No report

c) Affordable Housing (Cllr)

No report

d) Environment, Sustainability & Wellbeing (Cllr)

The Chair invited Tina French to report on topics she would like to hand over -

- i) Rother Rural Trust is a valuable informal means of support which the council should not lose sight of.
- ii) Wellbeing in the form of parish walks continue to be well supported.
- iii) Pre-Christmas attempts to provide recreational activities for children, including pre-school, did not succeed. The pop-up goals purchased are not only much too small but also much too portable and could be folded up and put in the boot of a car in seconds. Another use for them needs to be found, but in the meantime the search for something suitable and affordable needs to continue. Mrs French volunteered to find pictures of possible equipment and circulate them. Cllr Ashworth volunteered to develop ideas for trails and for log based climbing activities. Cllr White volunteered to approach the Keeley's for suitable materials.

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- iv) The Chair reminded members of the importance of litter picking walks which not only benefit the environment but also provide a good social gathering. Members agreed that March would be a good time before the verges have grown much more.
- e) Highways (Cllr King)
- i) Minor pot hole repairs continue but there is no progress on repairs to more serious damage to the surface. Cllr King took the view that some of the road surfaces represent a danger, especially to cyclists, and intends to seek the support of Ian Johnstone, ESCC Traffic and Safety Manager, who is a regular attendee at our SLR meetings with ESx Highways.
- f) Rights of Way / Verges (Cllr Spicer)
- i) Honey Lane is a cause for concern as the newly reconstructed surface is in danger of being eroded by water coursing down when it rains. A new drainage system of ditches and culverts was constructed, but it is frequently blocked not least by the material produced by cutting hedges with a tractor mounted flail. Cllr Spicer will take up the matter with the ESCC Rights of Way team.
- ii) Cllr Spicer received no response to his invitation for people to nominate additional verges for designation as a wild flower protection verge. Therefore, it will be just the initial three sections designated in 2021 which will continue to be protected.
- g) Premises (Cllr White)
- i) Pavilion
- (1) The Custodian (Danny Whyman) continues to be in poor health and there are no prospects of him being able to resume his duties in 2022. After discussion, members agreed that other people should be approached including the former Custodian, Nigel White. However, it was also agreed that the Clerk should develop a specification for what exactly needs doing each year before embarking on discussions with any prospective custodian.
- (2) The Chair, Cllr White, reported that the new country hedge planting along the northern boundary is doing well but that it ought to be extended by another 50 metres. Members agreed on him procuring the necessary hedge plants and organising a working party to plant them.
- ii) Village hall - the only regular users now are the table tennis club. The committee secretary is posting monthly 'save the date' notices in the parish magazine to try and encourage people to come to the Village Hall Committee AGM (a public meeting) on Tuesday 17th May 2022.
- iii) New village hall - members discussed the correspondence received from Ron Ridley which prompted a lively debate about the new hall and the need for it. It was noted that the pavilion has proved to be a very successful venue meeting almost all needs. As a result the number of people keen to support fund raising for the new hall project is limited while at the same time no one has enthusiasm for fund raising to support the existing village hall.
- The Clerk was instructed to reply to Mr Ridley assuring him that there would be no new call on the precept for funds for the new hall without a vote taking place among the electors and that the parish council's main preoccupation at the moment is to seek outside funds for the project.
- h) Village events and facilities (Cllr Sinden)
- i) A village coffee morning, organised by M.I., is to take place at the pavilion on 28th February 2022 with the aim of enlisting support for activities to celebrate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. This will be coupled with displays of the scale model of the new village hall and other supporting material.
- i) Rural connectivity (Cllr Hoad)
- In the absence of Cllr Hoad the Clerk reported on the lengthy correspondence (all circulated to members) Cllr Hoad has had with Open Reach, Huw Merriman MP and Julia Lopez MP, Minister of State for Media, Data, and Digital Infrastructure. Julia Lopez confirms that there are no delays in issuing the Rural Gigabit Vouchers (RGVs) which have been ready for some

time waiting for Open Reach to draw them down from DCMS. However, in the intervening months since Open Reach ceased to pursue the project with enthusiasm, they have undergone a total volte face with regard to their strategic objectives and how they aim to meet them. Our schemes have been put on hold indefinitely until they fit with their revised plans.

Whereas we were given to understand that Open Reach were the only infrastructure provider and that it was simply a question of reaching the threshold of householders who would pledge their RGVs to the project, it now appears that another infrastructure provider is active on parts of the area covered by our schemes, that the economic case is thus compromised, and that there is every likelihood that the least commercially attractive areas for broadband rollout will become isolated islands where no one will provide a fibre optic based service.

10) Correspondence

- a) Barbara Beaton, a member of the Art Group, has kindly donated her AV equipment to the parish council on the occasion of her retirement. This consists of data projector, screen and flip chart. The Clerk was instructed to write a letter of thanks to her.
- b) Ron Ridley (see 9) 3) g) above.
- c) The Chapel, thanks for the donation.
- d) Ashburnham PCC, thanks for the contribution to the upkeep of the churchyard.

11) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

It was noted that Mr Denis Keeley has undertaken flood clearance work of his own volition at the bridge on Hammer Hill. The Clerk was instructed to write a letter of thanks to him.

12) Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 30th March 2022.

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Signed (Chair)

Date