
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst held on
Wednesday 23rd November 2023 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Jay Ashworth, Nicci Gagel, Ron King, Chris Sinden,
Richard White (Chairman).

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Paul Spicer, Fraser Williamson.

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

RDC Cllr Gary Curtis, Parish Cllrs Paul Spicer, Fraser Williamson.

2) Disclosures of interest

None

3) Additional agenda items

None

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 28th September 2022 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

- i) There are now 1120 Ukrainians living in the county which is 80% of the expected numbers. There are 410 pupils in school.
- ii) The recent Autumn Statement changed the funding for the precept and Adult Social Care. The county can raise council tax by 3% without a referendum plus 2% for ASC. A 5% increase would generate revenue of £6.528 mil.

b) RDC Cllr Gary White sent a written report as follows

- i) The Beech Farm, Seddlescombe planning application – awaiting decision from Minister, JVH has submitted 2nd application the same! But shouldn't be accepted until a decision on the first.
- ii) Warm spaces – still awaiting policy update from Rother.
- iii) Blackfriars development
Running behind schedule, work on spine road to continue until autumn 2024. Actual housebuilding now expected to start spring 2023, finish summer 2025. Currently 12/15 months behind original schedule!
- iv) Normanhurst Recent presentation to public and Parish Council. 120 persons at Catsfield village hall. Unanimous NO from whole village. Planning application mooted as being submitted before Christmas, but would appear to be speculative again as are required to have Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) and this can take up to a year, to cover all seasons.

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

- a) Ongoing applications (having been considered at previous meetings) *Current position (ital):*
RR/2022/813/P - The White Cottage - Land opposite, Brownbread Street, Ashburnham TN33

9NX - Retention of pond and associated earth works. Retention of hardstand next to pond and summer house. (Retrospective) New planting of indigenous species throughout the site.

(Members took a neutral stance on this application.)

Refused

RR/2022/2204/P - Red Barn Thatch, Herring's Road, Ashburnham TN33 9PE - Erection of solar panels within curtilage of Grade II Listed Building.

Undecided

RR/2022/2225/P - Brays Hill Farm House, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Erection of rear extension incorporating internal alterations to a previously approved and extant permission.

(Members were unable to form any view as there is insufficient information online)

Undecided

RR/2022/2231/P - Red Barn Thatch, Herring's Road, Ashburnham TN33 9PE - Proposed balcony extension and sitting room extension to existing holiday accommodation / annexe building.

(Members supported the application.)

Undecided

RR/2022/2026/PN3 – Church Farm, Penhurst Estate, Penhurst Lane, TN33 9QP - Notification for Prior Approval for the change of use to building 1 from agricultural to C1 (Hotel/Guest house) and a change of use from agricultural to B8 storage and distribution to building 2 and 77m2 of its associated curtilage.

Prior App Required

(The Clerk will seek an explanation of what 'Prior App Required' actually means.)

b) New applications *Determination of the council's response to consultation.*

RR/2022/2447/P – Springfield, Forge Lane, Penhurst, TN33 9QR - Amendments for the previously approved RR/2021/2956/P to reconfigure ground floor loggia and alter position of balcony; removal of a window to replace with sliding doors; Extend roof (northwest elevation) to create a small porch; install dormer and replace existing dormer (northeast elevation) with Velux window.

Members viewed the application online and unanimously resolved to support it.

RR/2022/2569/P – Forge Cottage, The Forge, Ashburnham, TN33 9PH – Proposed extensions to the rear and side elevations; internal alterations.

Members viewed the application online and unanimously resolved to support it.

c) Breaches and Enforcement – *to note updates and progress.*

ENF/262/22/ASH – Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham RR/2012/1053/P – Erection Of New Dwelling Without Planning Permission In Relation To Refusal Of RR/2017/1522/P. *Waiting on further enforcement action.*

ENF/303/20/ASH - Springside Farm, Herrings Road, Ashburnham, TN33 9PE - Change of use of agricultural land to store materials for business use. *Latest action: Contra Notice Served, deadline for response has passed. 10th June 2022. Members understand that the land owner is in dialogue with RDC planning and is complying with requirements. Nevertheless they requested that the Clerk enquire as to progress.*

d) Rother new Local Plan

Members were advised that a statutory consultation would soon take place and it may be that face to face meetings at the Town Hall, Bexhill will be requested by RDC. The Chairman and Cllr Ashworth both expressed interest in participating.

7) **RFO Report**

a) Receipts and Payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 20th September to 17th November 2022.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) and the Chairman undertook to verify it online.

c) Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to 17th November 2022. There were no variations not reported at previous meetings.

d) Earmarked reserves

The RFO tabled a report on movements in earmarked reserves for the year to 17th November

2022.

On the motion of the Chairman, members resolved to reverse the decision made at the previous meeting regarding the payment for the stainless steel kitchen units. Members resolved that it should be paid for from the Village Hall Appeal Fund and not from the parish council.

e) Payments to authorise

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

Details	Payee	Budget head	Total £
Stainless sink units (to be repaid)	Village Hall Appeal	Reserves: Village hall	400.00
Bell Orchestra half fee	Village Hall Appeal	Reserves: Community	162.50
Custodian half year fee	Jo Fowler	Pavilion & grounds	325.00
Annual sub incl Geo mapping	RALC	General administration	80.00
PA system, Remem Sunday	James Harris Hire	General administration	65.00
Combination padlock	Amazon	Pavilion & grounds:	24.99
Zoom license	Zoom U.S.	General administration	143.88
Sumup card reader	Screwfix	General administration	30.00
Remembrance Sunday wreaths	The Poppy Shop	General administration	120.00
Exhibition display panels	Creative Solutions Ltd	Reserves: Community	549.60
Toddler wooden climb frame	TP Toys	Reserves: Pav & Grounds	149.99

f) Budget for 2023/24 – First Draft

- i) Running expenses were reviewed and members suggested revisiting the provision for electricity costs in view of the monthly support grant being received during winter months. The budget provision for charitable donations and parish magazine support was approved knowing that in July next year there will be a review of the payments which are generally made in September thus providing an opportunity to confirm the amounts.

Regarding the precept, members took the view that a 5% uplift rather than the 8% included in the first draft would show to council tax payers that the parish council was in line with County which is capped at that level.

The Reserves Budget was reviewed and members instructed the clerk to ask the contractor to carry out a further review of the posts so that a planned maintenance budget could be prepared for next year the following year.

8) Governance

- a) The Clerk advised that there are two questions he will be putting to the insurers. Are the cricket club mowers stored classed as held in trust and what limits and exclusions, if any, might apply to the play equipment?

9) Community - Village Action Plan & Lead Responsibilities

a) The human world and society

- i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth reported that she has a planning meeting scheduled in December with the fund raising mentor so that a plan of regular news items can be set up including links to community-building events such as the village bonfire.
- ii) Village events - Cllr Sinden reported that community-building events have continued including the village bonfire and the art exhibition plus regular events such as Coffee Stop on the first Friday of the month. There will be carol singing events before Christmas.
- iii) Police liaison (Cllr Williamson) – no report.

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- iv) Phone box museum - Cllr Gagel reported that she is in contact with Tina French and plans to meet her to pick it up. In the meantime she asked if the Clerk could provide her with any relevant information about the BT sale contract and any plans showing the footprint in the context of the highways verge.
- v) Public health: exercise facilities - Cllr White advised that Clive O’Sullivan is developing a design specification for execution by others. In the meantime a piece of simple play equipment consisting of a slide and low climbing frame has been purchased for £125 plus vat and that it can be put in situ before Christmas.
- b) The natural world
- i) Verges – In the absence of Cllr Spicer the clerk reported that the pilot no trim policy was discussed at the SLR meeting last week and feedback was mostly positive, but with one resident in Church Road commenting that the overhanging bracken made it dangerous for pedestrians.
- ii) Rights of way – no report
- iii) Environment: Litter - Cllr Ashworth advised that the next litter pick will be next Spring.
- iv) Environment: Ecology and climate change (a correspondent) – RDC have appointed Dr Lucie Bolton as Environment Strategy Officer in the Directorate of Place and Climate Change and the Clerk is exchanging correspondence with her.
- v) Environment: Aircraft noise (a correspondent) - the Clerk reported that there has been no acknowledgement from Huw Merriman M.P. to the letter sent about moving the holding stacks for Gatwick away from over land to over sea. The letter was sent by surface mail hard copy only to the minister’s office a few days after he became the minister. The Clerk will send again by the more usual channel which is as an email attachment to Frances McKenna who runs his office.
- In the meantime, the Gatwick Area Conservation group have a meeting on 7th December and Mr Clive O’Sullivan has informed the council that he will be attending and will report back.
- c) The built environment
- i) Highways (Cllr King)
- (1) Matters arising from SLR yesterday – Cllr King reported that the Highways team had been questioned about initiatives such as ‘Twenty’s Plenty’ and ‘Quiet Lanes’. Their response was that there is insufficient evidence of their effectiveness to warrant the expense of setting them up and, therefore, they do not support them.
- (2) Speed monitoring – Cllr King reported that discussions had been held at the SLR meeting regarding the use of speed monitoring equipment. The advice is that on roads where only the national speed limit applies it is not permitted to deploy such equipment. Cllr Ashworth noted that a speeding motorcyclist was pulled over last Sunday which shows that police are taking seriously the issue of speeding on the section of the A271 passing Ashburnham Place.
- ii) Premises (Cllr White)
- (1) Village Hall
- (a) The Clerk advised members that at a recent special meeting of the Village Hall Management Committee, the members adopted the resolutions appointing the Parish Council as sole managing trustee. The Clerk proposed that the parish council schedule two meetings a year in their role as the trustee and that they should take place in early April and sometime in October. The April meeting would allow them to consider what report to make the Annual Assembly and the AGM of the trust might be incorporated into the Annual Assembly.
- (b) Cllr King noted that the number of chairs stored at the village hall vastly exceeds the maximum need and that they are seriously impinging on the free space in the hall. Members agreed that the surplus chairs be disposed of and those in good condition should be offered for sale – current prices seem to be in the range of £3 - £5 per chair. Cllr King undertook to take some photographs so that the Clerk could set up an offer on eBay or FaceBook Marketplace.

- (c) Strutt & Parker have written asking that ivy growing up the wall of the village hall be removed.
- (2) Pavilion
- (a) The Clerk gave a progress report on the operation of the new Custodian appointment (Ms Jo Fowler) made at the start of the season for a one year trial following the sudden illness of Mr Danny Whyman in July 2021. The Clerk suggested that it was working well apart from the need for more regular strimming of the war memorial area. Members approved the clerk approaching Mr Paul Harmer, who lives almost opposite, to see if he would take over that part of the work.
- (b) The Clerk suggested that WiFi should be provided at the pavilion using a mobile phone SIM card in a router. This would cost approximately £90 plus vat and a subscription to a Telco network operator at a cost of some £8 pcm for a monthly data allowance of 8Gb which would be more than enough. Members instructed the Clerk to proceed at once.
- (c) The Clerk asked for guidance in responding to a request to use candles at a wedding reception booked in the pavilion next spring. Members suggested that permission be granted provided the candles are in proper candle holders and that they are not left unattended.
- (3) New village hall
- (a) Cllr White referred members to the recently circulated minutes of the last New Hall Steering Group which recommended that the Council contract with Pump House Designs for interior design work as quoted – “Prepare lighting and electrical layouts, to include general specifications of lights which can be interpreted for costing purposes but will be subject to client approval with the chosen contractor. Drawings are to include decorative lighting, emergency lighting and low-level power requirements throughout. Once drawings are approved we can obtain a quote from our recommended electrical contractor - £925 +VAT.
Prepare a mood board / ideas for the W.C’s including finishes, sanitaryware and fittings - or the W.C’s including finishes, sanitaryware and fittings - £350 + VAT.”
On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to proceed and place the order.
- (b) Members noted that the Village Hall Appeal fund now has a balance of £14,000 and expressed the wish that some donations be made to the Parish Council to defray the costs of recent and forecast expenditure.

10) Correspondence

- a) Battle Area Community Transport – donation request.

11) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

12) Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 25th January 2023.

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Signed (Chair)

Date