
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst held on
Wednesday 25th January 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: Cllrs Paul Spicer, Fraser Williamson.

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

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 25th November 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) The County budget for 2023/24 will be based on an increase in Council Tax of 2.99% + 2% for Adult Social Care. The mental health provision for Children is now so stretched that after a GP referral a child could expect to wait for two years before seeing a specialist. This against a back ground where it is known that adults with mental health problems frequently started them by the age of 14.
- ii) The new highways contract has been awarded to Balfour Beatty. The contract allows for the repair of potholes adjacent to the hole for which the works order is issued.

b) RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported as follows:

- i) RDC were successful in their bid for levelling up funds and secured £19mil for the De La Warr pavilion and the Sidley recreation facility.
- ii) The budgeted overspend will call on reserves to the tune of £18mil.
- iii) The budget includes a spend of c.£700k on consultancy fees in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the town hall for which the planning committee have so far refused permission. The new town hall project was initially proposed at £15mil, but there is talk of escalation to double this figure. ESCC have approved redevelopment of the roads network outside the town hall.
- iv) Planning officers in post are mostly temporary appointments as 'consultants', but moves towards appointments to permanent established posts are progressing with a senior appointment expected in February or March.
- v) A number of affordable housing proposals have been approved by officers using delegated powers, but these have been overturned by the Planning Committee.

vi) In Catsfield the proposal for leisure facilities on the Normanhurst Estate has been turned down by villagers in a consultation. Meanwhile, the Tree Protection Order has been renewed and additional trees included. Elsewhere in Catsfield there is a proposal for 35 houses on a site behind The White Hart Inn and another for 30 on the Brooks site opposite which is actually on a flood plain.

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

a) On-going applications *Current position:*

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

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)

Approved

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.)

Approved

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 sought an explanation of what 'Prior App Required' actually means, but received no reply. Cllr Gary Curtis was asked to investigate.)

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.

Approved 22/12/22

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 supported it.

Approved 16/1/23

b) New applications *To determine the council's response*

RR/2022/2818/P – Akehurst Field, Brownbread Street, TN33 9NX – Application to modify or discharge a Planning Obligation (Sec. 106A) relating to RR/96/1351/P

The clerk has sought confirmation of his supposition that this is a technicality regarding compliance with lending regulation but has received no response. Cllr Gary Curtis was asked to seek clarification.

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

i) **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. The Clerk will enquire as to progress.*

ii) **ENF/364/22/ASH** - New Buildings Farm, Church Road, Ashburnham - Breach of condition 10 imposed on planning permission RR/2020/1721/P (storage of light equipment and timber materials and for no other purpose.)

d) Rother new Local Plan

There has been no request from RDC as yet for a face to face meetings at the Town Hall in which the Chairman and Cllr Ashworth both expressed interest.

7) **RFO Report**

a) Receipts and Payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 18th November 2022 to 17th January 2023.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) at 17th January 2023 and the Chairman confirmed that he has verified it online.

c) Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to 17th January 2023. 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 January 2023.

e) Payments to authorise

On the motion of the Cllr Ashworth seconded by Cllr Gagel members resolved to authorise the following payments:

Details	Payee	Budget head	Total £
Marquee deposit Country Fair	Matt & Keith Pie	Reserves: Community	500.00
Play equipment pre school	TP Toys	Reserves: Community	149.99
Union and Sussex flags	Flagly.co	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	22.97
Duracell PP9's	Amazon	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	11.34
Energizer batteries	Amazon	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	2.29

f) Members confirmed their policy of following National Agreements on pay scales for clerks and adopting the new scale wef 1st April 2023 as reported to the previous council meeting.

g) On the motion of Cllr King seconded by Cllr Ashworth members resolved that the precept for 2023/24 be set at £13,650, an increase of 5%.

h) Members noted that the price of quarterly maintenance and hosting of the parish website will increase from £54 to £60 per quarter.

i) The application for variations to the bank mandate discussed at the previous meeting are progressing with Cllr Ashworth signing at the meeting for upgrade from online authority to full signatory status. The Chairman, currently the only Full Signatory, countersigned. The clerk will obtain the signature of Cllr Spicer for upgrade from online to full signatory and will approach one of the two other Full Signatories both of whom are former parish councillors.

8) **Governance**

a) The clerk noted that reimbursements to the clerk for printing have not changed in some 10 years and that the price of ink cartridges has doubled. Members approved a change of 50% in the rate from 10p to 15p per page for black and white and from 20p to 30p for colour.

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

a) The human world and society

i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth reported that she is planning an update to the village website to remove redundant material and to add items about the new village hall.

ii) Village events - Cllr Sinden reported:

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- (1) Village events are quiet but a Quiz Night at the village hall is planned for March. The walking club continues to meet regularly.
 - (2) The Coronation of King Charles III is on Saturday 6th May and advice from government is for communities to organise celebrations on Sunday 7th. Cllr Sinden will investigate the cost of memorabilia such as coins or medals with a view to handing them out to children on 6th May. A street party outside the Ash Tree Inn was thought to be a great aspiration but difficulties in organising it were recognised. Cllr Sinden will liaise with the Revd Gary Cregeen to see what the churches are doing.
 - (3) The Country Fair in 2022 was a fund raiser for the new village hall with a percentage going to support Ukraine. Cllr Ashworth explained that the delay in making a donation is due to the difficulty in identifying a charity working in the area that the Fair organisers wanted to support, namely support for vulnerable Afghan women refugees. It was agreed that if Cllr Ashworth has not been able to identify a suitable charity after another two or three weeks, she will confer with the Fair organisers and seek their approval to donate to the Bexhill Hub.
- iii) Phone box museum - Cllr Gagel was hoping to have had sight of a copy of the purchase contract from BT but the clerk advised that he has not been able to locate one. As it is a standard contract he will enquire of other parish clerks if anyone has a copy they can share.
 - iv) Public health: exercise facilities - Cllr White advised that play equipment for pre-school children is now in situ next to the pavilion.
- b) The natural world
- i) Verges – In his absence, Cllr Spicer circulated a copy of advice from Fenella Lillywhite, the liaison officer at ESCC Highways. 2022 was a trial year piloted by just a few parishes including ours. In 2023 the scheme will be rolled out county-wide and the documentation is due shortly.
 - ii) Rights of way – no report
 - iii) Environment: Litter - Cllr Ashworth advised that a litter pick will soon take place and the target date is Saturday 4th March which will enable it to be publicised in the parish magazine.
 - iv) Environment: Ecology and climate change (a correspondent) – no report
 - v) Environment: Aircraft noise (a correspondent) – no report.
- c) The built environment
- i) Highways - Cllr King reported:
 - (1) The horrendous position regarding potholes since the recent bad weather is receiving much of his attention but the response from highways to most of his complaints is that they are not sufficiently serious as to warrant taking priority over other emergency issues.
 - (2) Residents complained to the clerk without result that pedestrians find it difficult to walk from the Lodging Houses to the pavilion when they need to take refuge from passing vehicles due to overgrown hedges, particularly blackthorn. They then complained to Cllr King who personally cut back the offending vegetation.
 - (3) The collapse of a drain on the Kitchenham Road between Hammer Hill and Ashburnham Place was noted by all. This is now causing significant flooding at that spot and highways have been made aware of it.
 - (4) The state of grit bins is causing some concern and the clerk showed a table of the site locations and ownership of those in the parish. Cllr King requested a copy so that he can pursue matters.
 - (5) As requested by the last council meeting the Clerk has obtained an estimate from Douglas Andrews, following his survey of all the posts, for the maintenance of them in 2023. This was displayed for viewing and members agreed that the indicative total of £250 plus VAT should be accepted. The Clerk will instruct him to proceed.
- d) Premises
- i) Village Hall – the Clerk reported that:
 - (1) The Electrical Condition Report required by the insurance company has been completed and lodged.

- (2) He has cut back the ivy on the front of the hall in response to the request from Strutt & Parker.
- (3) The foul waste treatment Klargestar has been emptied according to the annual contract.
- (4) In response to the request from Cllr King, he has started to dispose of surplus chairs and has so far sold the folding wooden ones for a sum of £120 (£4 each).
- (5) The Charity Commission have been informed of the appointment of the Parish Council as sole managing trustee and this together with the change in the governing document is now visible on the public portal.
- (6) The Clerk asked members to review arrangements for the future care of the grounds. He proposed that maintenance of the garden area in front of the hall be combined with care of the area around the war memorial and that Paul Harmer be approached to see if he would take that on. Jo Fowler would continue to look after all other aspects of grounds maintenance at the pavilion.

After discussion members suggested that Paul Harmer be approached with a proposal that the job entails monthly visits to the village hall and fortnightly ones to the war memorial for a season of about 40 weeks from mid March to mid October in return for an annual payment of £~~XXXX~~ *redacted on public copy*. The Clerk will proceed with discussions on that basis. If Jo Fowler is relieved of the task of keeping the war memorial area tidy there was thought to be no need to change her annual fee of £~~XXXX~~ *redacted on public copy* on this occasion.

- ii) Pavilion – Cllr Ashworth reported that Clive O’Sullivan is in discussion with the captain of the cricket club and the owner of the collapsing shed adjacent to the pavilion and hopes to have a resolution soon resulting in proper accommodation for the cricket club mowers.
- iii) New village hall – Cllr White reported that Pump House Designs have completed most of their task, approved at the last parish council meeting, of providing drawings and specifications for all the electrical work. Cllr White reported that after the first iteration of the designs, Pump House were given modifications to incorporate, that these are now done and they are about to go out to tender for specimen quotations from one or more contractors.

Members agreed that the time line target is to be able to go the Village Annual Assembly in the third week of April with a rigorously evidenced estimate of the cost of the project and some guidance on how that sum might be raised.

10) Correspondence

- a) Anthony Ramsay has written to express thanks from Penhurst Church for the donation towards the upkeep of the burial grounds.
- b) The Village Hall Appeal Fund have accompanied their donation to the Parish Council of £1,500 with a letter expressing the wish that it be applied expressly for the purpose of furthering the new village hall project. It will be added to earmarked reserves accordingly.

11) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

None

12) Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be the final one of the Council’s four year term and will take place on Wednesday 22nd March 2023 at 7.30 pm in the sports pavilion.

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Signed (Chair)

Date