
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst held on
Wednesday 22nd March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion.**

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

Parish Councillors absent: None

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

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

1) Apologies for absence

None

2) Disclosures of interest

None

3) Additional agenda items

At item 10 – additional correspondence (thank you letter from Air Ambulance).

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 25th January 2023 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 Council has made payments to the 800 or so Ukraine hosts.
- ii) 8,500 pot holes have been filled. To put this in context it has been estimated that it would cost £3billion to fix all the roads in Kent, Surrey and Sussex and take about 14 years. In fact £2.36mil has been allocated for pot hole repair in East Sussex.

b) RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported as follows -

- i) £19.1mil has been received from central government's Levelling Up fund. £17mil will be devoted to the De La Warr Pavilion and £2.1mil to the Sidley recreation facilities.
- ii) In a ballot 74% of RDC staff who are trade union members voted to reject the Council's latest pay offer.
- iii) The Council are in the process of devolving responsibility for public toilets to town councils. Bexhill and Battle are both considering how to proceed.
- iv) Enforcement of regulations relating to litter and fly tipping has been outsourced and the contractor has been reported as being heavy handed. An example is a shop in Brede that was fined £800 for putting rubbish in the wrong bin on their own premises.
- v) In planning the Council has refused planning permission at Brooks Meadow in Catsfield and the housing company created by the Council to manage the Blackfriars development in Battle is struggling to contain costs. The total is now expected to increase from £12mil to £15mil. The spine road is under construction.

c) Members of the public

Helen and Neil Ridge attended to register their objection to RR/2022/1296/P – Honey Lane

which has gone to appeal following refusal of the application. Mr and Mrs Ridge contributed to the discussion below at 6) d).

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

a) On-going applications *Current position of those previously listed:*

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*

Cllr Fraser reported that he has ascertained that any farm building more than two years old and which is in sound condition benefits from an automatic change of use consent. It was agreed to drop this item from future agendas.

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 council has no reason to believe that this is anything more than a technicality regarding compliance with lending regulations, but has received no response to its enquiries. It was agreed to drop this item from future agendas.

b) New applications *To determine the council's response*
None

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.
The Clerk reported that the Enforcement Officer continues his dialogue with the land owner but is frustrated by the latter's failure to follow through on agreed actions.

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.) *Case closed*

As operations / use of the site is currently sporadic and does not breach planning regulations the enforcement team have closed the case. At present there is no material change of use and it is not expedient to take action at this time

The informant has been advised to report back when use becomes regular and matters can be reviewed again. Owners and representatives have been made clear of the LPA's view on current planning permissions in place for the site.

d) Appeals

Honey Lane RDC planning application RR/2022/1296/P, RDC Appeal ref: 2894, Inspectorate ref: APP/U1430/W/22/3306209

Members are aware that all previous correspondence has been forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate. Nevertheless they resolve to make additional representations. The Clerk will draft something and plans to adapt material put together by a Honey Lane neighbour, Richard Millett K.C.

e) Neighbouring Parishes

RR/2023/217/P – Catsfield Normanhurst Estate, holiday park including 211 eco lodges.
RDC Cllr Gary Curtis commented that if permission were to be granted it would contravene almost every planning policy in force. Traffic alone would add 1500 additional movements per

day. Members resolved to submit reasons for the council's objection to Rother District Council and the Clerk and Cllr Ashworth were asked to draft something for circulation to members. The deadline for submission is 30th April.

f) Rother new Local Plan

Requests from RDC a for a face to face meetings at the Town Hall are expected shortly as neighbouring parishes have received their invitations. The Chairman and Cllr Ashworth both expressed interest.

7) **RFO Report**

a) Internal audit

The clerk reported that the internal audit by Mulberry & Co is booked for 27th April 2023.

b) Receipts and Payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 18th January to 15th March 2023.

c) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) and the Chairman looked at it online. He noted that the balance on the reconciliation statement applies to 16th March and not 15th as shown on the reconciliation statement. The Clerk apologised for the error.

d) Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to 15th March 2023. There were no variations not reported at previous meetings.

e) Earmarked reserves

The RFO tabled a report on movements in earmarked reserves for the year to 15th March 2023.

f) Payments to authorise

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

Details	Payee	Budget head	Total £
Pavilion advert in Parish Mag	Ashburnham Church	General administration	27.30
Annual Assy roadside signs	Dragon Signs	Governance	117.25
Custodian 2nd half year	Jo Fowler	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	325.00
Guttering, play equip, cleaning	DeLuxe Cleaning	Reserves: Pavilion & Grounds	345.00
Website hosting and maintenance	Tim Wakeling	Community	54.00
Pavilion electricity	Opus Energy	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	27.91
Annual donation	Air Ambulance KSS	Community	100.00
Pavilion water	Castle Water	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	48.50

g) Bank Mandate As agreed at the previous meeting, the variation request to Lloyds to add Cllrs King and Sinden as full power signatories has been prepared. Both councillors signed and Cllrs Ashworth and Spicer countersigned (both having been added to the mandate on the previous request).

h) Regular payments

On the Chairman's motion seconded by Cllr Ashworth, members gave blanket approval to the following regular payments for the next twelve months -

Tim Wakeling, website hosting and maintenance, £54 per quarter,

Microsoft, 365 Office for Business, £7.90 per month,

Opus Energy, pavilion electricity, according to usage,
Castle Water, pavilion water, according to usage.

8) Governance

a) Annual Assembly (Village Meeting) 20th April 2023

- i) The Clerk advised that the usual arrangements were in place and that roadside signs have been prepared. A few village organisations have agreed to mount a display in the main hall.
- ii) Members discussed agenda items and anticipated a question about the precept that, according to Council Tax bills, has increased by 6.4%. Members had previously resolved that the increase should be held to 5%. The difference arises because although the council requested a sum 5% greater than the previous year, there are fewer council tax payers this year so that individuals are asked to pay 6.4% more. Members resolved that in future they should be appraised of the effect on individuals when setting the precept.
Members resolved that the main agenda should follow the same order as the Community item on council meeting agendas and the lead councillor for each will speak to their topic as it arises.

b) Parish Council elections

Members noted the date of Thursday 4th May for a ballot, should it be necessary, and that nominations close on 4th April. Cllr Sinden has reminded members that when submitting their nomination in person, as required by law, it is advisable to first make an appointment with the election office as they check that the nomination is in order when receiving it.

9) Community - Village Action Plan & Lead Responsibilities

a) The human world and society

i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth

- (1) Cllr Ashworth has devoted much time to updating numerous pages on the village web site. A new page has been created showing past events – this could be useful for funding applications for the new village hall as funders look for evidence of activity levels.
- (2) The next project is to revamp the existing page devoted to the new village hall.

ii) Rural Broadband – a correspondent reports that the government (DCMS) is currently in the tendering process for the upgrade of East and West Sussex as a single lot. They have split the tender into two parts. Initial Scope are premises that should be included within the main tender and should be built “as soon as possible after the contract is awarded”. Deferred Scope “is areas that should be upgraded with RGVs or within an ISP commercial upgrade, but where the DCMS isn’t sure the build will happen”. These are quoted for separately and will only be added to the contract, if they fail to get built.

iii) Village events - Cllr Sinden

- (1) The 2023 Country Fair organising committee held their first meeting yesterday. It was noted that the portion of funds raised last year and pledged to support Ukraine has now been paid to an appropriate charity. £1500 has been paid to the Ukrainian fund of International Medical Corps UK.
Young Farmers have agreed to help with organising car parking this year.
- (2) Cllr Sinden noted that short mat bowls is now a regular event twice a month at the village hall and reported that he had been asked if some reduction of the standard booking fee could be considered. However, this is a matter for the village hall trustee and it will be an agenda item at the trustee meeting in April.
- (3) In connection with the coronation of HM King Charles III Cllr Sinden suggested that some mementos be given to children in the village. After discussion about alternatives members agreed that coronation mugs were the most appropriate and these are available at about £10 each. On the motion of Cllr Sinden members agreed to the purchase of 50 mugs and these would be given to young persons less than 16 years old and resident in either parish.

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- (4) The village celebration of the coronation will take the form of a picnic lunch on Sunday 7th May 2023 on the cricket field. The churches are holding a Rogation Sunday service in the morning at Rocks Farm and this will end by 12.30 to allow attendees to travel to the village.
- (5) There will be a Quiz Night at the village hall on Saturday 27th May.
- iv) Police Liaison – Cllr Williamson
- (1) Online Teams meetings have taken place but there is little new to report.
- (2) Cllr Williamson is seeking a one to one meeting with an officer responsible for road safety in an attempt to engage with accident prevention measures on the A271, especially between the Ashburnham Place entrance and the Hammer Hill junction. Ideas he has in mind include good signage of the entrance to Ashburnham Place.
- v) Phone box museum - Cllr Gagel reported that she is working on a plan to make the old phone box into a celebration centre rather than a museum. It could be used to herald forthcoming village events such as the Country Fair or Remembrance Sunday and would link with the former parish notice board which is next to the phone box and would provide event information. She is also working on creating a cut out of “Tommy Soldier” which could be sited adjacent.
- vi) Public health: exercise facilities - Cllr White noted that we now have something for pre school children to play on at the pavilion.
- b) The natural world
- i) Verges – Cllr Spicer reported that for a second year the verges will not be cut until the autumn except where it would cause a hazard not to do so.
- ii) Rights of way – nothing new to report
- iii) Environment: Litter - Cllr Ashworth reported that the most recent pick involved 10 people and that 12 bags of litter were filled and collected by the local authority.
- c) The built environment
- i) Highways - Cllr King
- (1) Two parish councils are mounting campaigns and looking for support. Burwash are seeking to take ESCC to court over a failure to maintain the highways satisfactorily and Hadlow Down are seeking to have the new highways contract published so that provisions can be examined. The council declined to join the campaigns.
- (2) Cllr King is in the process of examining all the salt bins following receipt of a map from the Clerk. Starting with Tower House Road he has already found a number to be missing. He plans to ensure that they are all filled prior to next winter. Cllr Ashworth suggested that a seasonal note could be put out on the village website in future years reminding people to check the bin nearest them.
- (3) Cllr King noted that blocked drains and gulleys would be easier to report if their location could be described more precisely. The Clerk recalled that a previous highways contractor had published an online map showing all the drains and asset numbers. Such a map of assets must still exist and the Clerk undertook to try to obtain a copy.
- (4) Cllr King noted that mud has been dragged onto the road from the barn opposite Peans in Forge Lane. Members believe that the barn in question belongs to one of the Braxtons.
- (5) The Clerk reported that he has been asked by residents at Tower House in Penhurst Lane if the parish council can do anything to address the problem of speeding which appears to be increasing and is of great danger to horse riders who now have the backing of the Highway Code which stipulates that horse riders should be passed at no more than 10 mph and a distance of 2m. In an exchange of correspondence the resident offered the participation of other horse riders with installing any warning notices the parish council might provide and in obtaining the consent of any landowners where a notice situated in the hedge or just inside a field boundary would be useful.
- Members discussed the matter and wondered if Penhurst Lane is any worse than all the other roads in the village when it comes to horse riders being passed by traffic. They were not averse to funding the cost of notices but speculated that if notices were to be put

in Penhurst Lane, other residents might ask for them in their lane which would concern the parish council as it is keen to minimise clutter from street furniture and to preserve the rural character of the lanes. The Clerk was asked to convey its views to the resident and to suggest that if they wished to pursue it they would need to come forward with a specific proposal for each notice layout and design and its siting.

ii) Premises

(1) Pavilion

- (a) The Clerk reported that we have a new regular hirer, i.e. Sussex Astronomical Society who will meet intermittently late evening whenever there is a notable observation to be made. They will notify the clerk a few days in advance and will welcome visitors from the local community.
- (b) Grounds maintenance arrangements are now in place along the lines outlined at the last council meeting. Jo Fowler continues as Custodian looking after the cricket ground with the exception of the strimming around the war memorial area. This latter will be undertaken by Paul Harmer who will also trim the garden area in front of the village hall monthly once it has been cleared.

(2) New village hall

- (a) Cllr White reminded members of the New Hall Steering Group meeting recently which received the closest estimates yet of the total estimated cost of the project. He confirmed that there has been no expenditure by the parish council which is not covered by donations from the Village Hall Appeal Fund.
- (b) On the motion of Cllr Ashworth members resolved that the parish council should re-join the AiRS Community Buildings Advisory Service at an annual subscription cost of £144

(3) Village Hall

- (a) The Clerk advised members that they need to meet as a group separately in their role as Sole Managing Trustee of the village hall charity. He proposed Wednesday 5th April for the first meeting as it would fall just after the end of the financial year and before the Annual Assembly. Members agreed to the date and elected to hold the meeting at the village hall at 7.30 pm. The timing of the Annual General Meeting will be decided by trustees when they meet

10) Correspondence

- a) Nikki Bowditch, Tower House re horse rider safety [9) c) (4)]
- b) John Shanks re Normanhurst Estate planning application.
- c) Andrew Hoad re Normanhurst Estate planning application.
- d) Kent and Sussex Air Ambulance thank you letter for donation.
- e) Anonymous letter from a resident asking why the parish council is doing nothing to remedy the poor visual appearance of Ponds Green Farm and of the property opposite the Old Post Office. The parish council has no powers in this matter and is not aware of any breach of planning regulations.

11) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

12) Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the parish council will be at the earlier than usual date of Wednesday 17th May 2023. It will be the Annual Meeting of the council and the first of the new council following elections on 4th May.

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Signed (Chair)

Date