
**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst held on
Wednesday 17th May 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: None

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

Newly elected members signed Declarations of Acceptance of Office and Forms of undertaking at the start of the meeting.

1) Election of Chairman

Richard White was proposed by Cllr Ron King and seconded by Cllr Jay Ashworth. There being no other nominations Cllr Richard White was duly elected Chairman and signed the office holders' Acceptance of Office.

2) Co-option of Paul Spicer

On the motion of Cllr Nicci Gagel, seconded by the Chairman, members resolved to co-opt Paul Spicer to the Parish Council and he signed the Declaration and Undertaking for councillors.

3) Election of Deputy Chairman

Cllr Paul Spicer was proposed by Cllr Chris Sinden and seconded by Cllr Jay Ashworth. There being no other nominations Cllr Paul Spicer was duly elected Deputy Chairman and signed the office holders' Acceptance of Office.

4) Apologies for absence

RDC Cllr Chas Pearce and ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field.

5) Disclosures of interest

None

6) Additional agenda items

At 15) b) New planning application RR/2023/668/P Oak Bank Farm
At 18) a) ii) Andrew Hoad PA system

7) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 22nd March 2023 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chair the minutes were adopted without amendment.

8) Open Forum

No representations

9) Membership of Committees

- a) The constitution of the Planning Committee will continue to be all parish councillors.
- b) Members agreed that the New Hall Steering Group be constituted as Cllrs Richard White (Chairman), Jay Ashworth and Ron King with Clive O'Sullivan as a co-opted non councillor. Cllr

Ashworth suggested that an additional co-option would be useful and proposed seeking someone via Facebook.

- c) Members agreed that the Finance & General Purposes Committee be constituted as Cllrs Richard White (Chairman), Jay Ashworth, Chris Sinden and Paul Spicer.

10) Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

- a) Members noted the date of the most recent reviews and confirmed re-adoption of Standing orders (November 2017) and Financial Regulations (September 2021).
- b) Information obtained from Lloyds Bank showed that the existing mandate is neither up to date nor in accordance with the Council's assumptions. This is because several mandate variation requests have been declined by Lloyds as they did not comply with the authorisation signatures on their records and any email notifications from them had not been intercepted from junk or spam mail. Therefore, the RFO has prepared a new Mandate Variation Request to appoint Cllrs Jay Ashworth, Ron King and Chris Sinden as full signatories, to remove from the mandate Christine French, Neil McConkey and Andrew Hoad and for the mandate to be signed by the only two current parish councillors who are full signatories, namely Paul Spicer and Richard White.

11) Asset Register of Council Property

The Asset Register as submitted to the internal auditor and to members before the meeting was approved on the motion of the Chairman.

12) Appointment of members to serve on external bodies

Members declined to appoint a member to serve on any external body.

13) Dates and times of future meetings

- a) Members resolved to continue holding council meetings on the fourth Wednesday of alternate months.
- b) Members resolved to continue holding planning committee meetings on the fourth Wednesday of alternate months (when there is no council meeting) as and when required to meet submission dates.

14) Date and time of the Annual Assembly in 2024

Members resolved to hold the Annual Village Meeting on Thursday 27th April 2024.

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

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

None

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

RR/2023/621/P - St Michael The Archangel Church, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QP - Proposed replacement of timber fencing and timber gates to the west boundary and part of the south boundary of the churchyard.

Members resolved not to take a position either for or against, but to register concern. The planning application is for a significant change to the look of the fencing around the church which is a listed building. The parish council would like to see further discussion between the planners and the Parochial Church Council.

RR/2023/708/P - Little Oak Hall, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QN - Demolition of existing outbuilding and erection of new holiday let unit and single garage to the size and design previously approved under application RR/2020/996/P.

Members resolved to support this application.

RR/2023/668/P - Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham TN33 9PB - Demolition of existing dwelling and construction of permanent agricultural workers dwelling (part

retrospective). *Members resolved to oppose this application which is virtually a repeat of application RR/2017/1522/P. Although supportive of the need for a new dwelling, the proposed location is almost the same as previously proposed, refused and lost on appeal. Nothing has since changed except that the site of the demolition proposed on this application is no longer occupied and is the obvious best location being at the heart of the farm and almost completely hidden from view.*

- 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. *New application RR/2023/668/P means that this breach case can be closed.*
- 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.
- d) Appeals
Honey Lane RDC planning application RR/2022/1296/P, RDC Appeal ref: 2894, Inspectorate ref: APP/U1430/W/22/3306209
The Appeal has yet to be determined.
- e) Rother new Local Plan
Requests from RDC a for a face to face meetings at the Town Hall have been expected for some months as neighbouring parishes have received their invitations. The Chairman and Cllr Ashworth both expressed interest if the invitation ever materialises.

16) RFO Report

- a) Receipts and Payments
Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period ending 10 May 2023.
- b) Bank reconciliation
Members received the bank reconciliation to 10 May 2023 (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 10th May 2023. Coming so soon after the start of the financial year discussion on variances was deferred.
- d) Earmarked reserves
The RFO tabled a report on movements in earmarked reserves for the year to 10th May 2023.

e) Payments to authorise

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

Details	Payee	Budget head	Total £
Annual subs	ESALC	Revenue: General Admin	116.08
Finger Post Maintenance	Douglas Andrews	Reserves: Finger posts	402.00
Annual Assy buffet	Champagne and Caviar	Revenue: General Admin	137.50
Internal audit	Mulberry and Co	Revenue: General Admin	270.00
Coronation catering	C.Sinden	Revenue: General Admin	55.30
Pavilion janitorial supplies	Nisbets	Revenue: Pavilion and grounds	71.96
Annual Assy paper tablecloth	Amazon	Revenue: General Admin	10.99
Annual Assy paper napkins	Amazon	Revenue: General Admin	4.69
Pavilion padlocks	Amazon	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	10.99
Annual Assy disposable glasses	Dukes Valley	Revenue: General Admin	24.89

17) Governance

a) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

- i) The Certificate of Exemption was viewed, approved and signed by the Chairman and the RFO.
- ii) A Risk Assessment was circulated before the meeting and members made the following observations –
 - (1) The risks associated with the play equipment now on the field are not mentioned and the omission ought to be addressed.
 - (2) The mower is back in the pavilion store room and the risk associated with the petrol it contains should be recognised on the risk assessment.

The clerk will draft some text and circulate for comment.

- iii) The systems of internal controls were reviewed and the following comments of the internal auditor were noted -
 - (1) Members do not wish to proceed with setting up generic council email addresses and are content to note that in the event of an investigation by the Information Commissioner their private emails would have to be scrutinised.
 - (2) A Privacy Notice will be added to the parish web site.
 - (3) The current NALC model for Standing Orders will be reviewed and adopted as thought to be appropriate.
 - (4) The current NALC model for Financial Regulations will be reviewed with a view to adoption.
 - (5) According to the Internal Auditor the council is not complying with the requirement to make available on its website the Annual Governance Statement and External Auditor's Report and Certificate for the past five years. The Clerk will rectify this omission at the earliest opportunity.

- iv) The clauses of the Annual Governance Statement were read to the meeting which approved its adoption and signing by the Chairman and the Clerk.
- v) The Accounting Statement forming part of the AGAR was displayed at the meeting which approved the adoption of the Statement which was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.
- b) Internal audit
 - i) Members resolved to re-appoint Mulberry & Co as the internal auditor for the financial year 2023/24.
 - ii) Members took note of the internal auditor's recommendations and responded as above at a) iii).

18) Community - Village Action Plan & Lead Responsibilities

- a) The human world and society
 - i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth noted that the feedback about the village events around the Coronation were all positive.
 - ii) Village events - Cllr Sinden also expressed satisfaction about the way that the event on the Sunday of the Coronation weekend proved popular with villagers.
An offer of second hand public address equipment has been received from Andrew Hoad suggesting that its value is about £500. Members considered the practicalities of its storage and operation and thought that this would be a significant investment which needs careful consideration. It was suggested that James Harris, who normally provides all the public address requirements of the council, be consulted and the Chairman undertook to do this.
 - iii) Police liaison – Cllr Williamson is still trying to contact the traffic inspector in order to discuss options for controlling speed past Ashburnham Place on the A271. He noted that a 50mph speed limit has recently been set on the A21 near Bewl Water which demonstrates that it is possible to create new sections which speed limits.
He also expressed gratitude to the CPSO who came with her vehicle to the Coronation picnic which proved a great hit with the children.
 - iv) Phone box museum - Cllr Gagel reported that she organised a display to publicise the Coronation weekend events using the phone box and the adjacent notice board. Members applauded it as the first demonstration of the use of the phone box in this mode as discussed at the last council meeting. She intends that the next event to be similarly promoted will be the Country Fair.
 - v) Public health: exercise facilities - Cllr White asked members to think about what other equipment could be added to the goals and the play slide now in regular use.
- b) The natural world
 - i) Verges – Cllr Spicer reported that the verges were showing the benefit of the pause on mowing until the autumn and reiterated that if lines of sight at junctions were impaired then the county highways department would be quick to rectify the issue.
Cllr Ashworth reported that the pause in cutting has produced an excellent display of orchids in Penhurst Lane. In another area there are some invasive species and she will pursue appropriate action for containment.
 - ii) Environment: Ecology and climate change – the Clerk reported that Dr Lucie Bolton, RDC's appointed officer to head up the authority's response to climate change, is keen to speak to the council and that she plans to come to the council meeting on 26th July.
- c) The built environment
 - i) Highways
 - (I) Cllr King reported that the maintenance of finger posts planned for this summer has been completed by the contractor, Douglas Andrews. The Clerk asked members to be aware that any finger post on an A road is considered by the county Highways department to represent a danger to motorists. While they have no plans to remove them and replace them with metal signs, considered to be passive, they would probably do so if they were

approached with a request to part fund maintenance of such signs. The parish has only one such sign – on the Kitchenham Road / Hammer Hill junction.

- (2) Quiet Lanes were brought to the attention of members by the Clerk who reported that a correspondent had suggested that Penhurst could become a Quiet Lane area with signage at the junction of Forge Lane and Church Road, at Darwell Hole at the end of Penhurst Lane and at the Stevens Crouch T-junction of the A271. Members thought that the first line of investigation should be with the SLR meeting which is scheduled for next Tuesday. The outcome will be reported to the July council meeting.
- ii) Housing – Members have been circulated with a proposal from Laurence Keeley for a housing development of some scale which would fund the building of a new village hall. This was reviewed the New Hall Steering Group at its last meeting and the council took the same view as the committee, i.e. it would never get approval either from the planners or the village.
- iii) Premises
 - (1) Village Hall - The Clerk reported that the overgrown garden has now been cleared meaning that Paul Harmer can commence his duties of strimming it monthly. The AGM of the trustee is to be held this Saturday at the pavilion before the start of a coffee morning.
 - (2) Pavilion - The Clerk reported that the new storage lockers, approved at the previous meeting, have now been constructed in the visitor's changing room.
 - (3) New village hall - Cllr White reported that the committee are now focused on obtaining costings for the internal fit out including plumbing costs. A suggestion has been aired that local landowners be approached for donations but it was felt that it was premature at this stage.
The Clerk asked for approval for the Council to subscribe to the AiRS Village Hall Advisory Service at an annual cost of £144. Members approved but felt that it should be funded by the Village Hall Appeal Fund so as not to muddy the waters around the council's pledge to the annual village meeting not to resource the new village hall project financially.

19) Correspondence

Laurence Keeley regarding housing development proposal.
Andrew Hoad regarding offer to sell public address equipment.

20) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

Dr Lucie Bolton will address the next council meeting about RDC's response to the climate emergency.

21) Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 26th July at 7.30 pm in the Ashburnham sports pavilion.

..... Date

Signed (Chair)