
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst held on
Wednesday 26th July 2023 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

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

Parish Councillors absent: Cllrs Chris Sinden, Richard White

District / County Councillors present: ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field, RDC Cllr Chas Pearce

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

The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Chairman

1) Apologies for absence

Cllrs Chris Sinden, Richard White

2) Disclosures of interest

None

3) Additional agenda items

None

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 17th May 2023 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chair the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5) Open Forum

- a) Dr Lucie Bolton, RDC Environment Strategy Officer, made a presentation to the meeting regarding RDC's response to the climate emergency. She outlined the role of local authorities and showed the emissions in Rother District with a breakdown by economic sector such as agriculture and transport. She showed pie charts of the carbon footprint for the parishes of Ashburnham and Penhurst and explained what support RDC could offer parishes including access to an LGA tool to chart a footprint.
- b) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows:
- i) Flexibus continues to be rolled out and members were keen to know of first hand experience locally. Parish Cllr Nicci Gagel advised that on Friday 28th July she was expecting a guest who planned to use it.
 - ii) County are taking £7mil out of reserves to support highways maintenance.
 - iii) Government money has been obtained to support social prescribing.
 - iv) There are 630 children in care in the County at present.
- c) RDC Cllr Chas Pearce reported as follows:
- i) Being a new district councillor he has been undergoing a comprehensive induction programme which is now complete.
 - ii) RDC's finances are generally in better shape than predicted and no cuts in services are planned.
 - iii) Money from central government's levelling up fund is being deployed.
 - iv) There will be no life guards on the beach at Bexhill as it has not been possible to recruit staff.
 - v) In 2025 it is planned that all items of waste will be collected from households.

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

a) On-going applications *To note progress or determination*

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.

Approved conditional see amended plan

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.

Approved conditional

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.*

Remains undecided

b) Applications new to a council meeting. *To determine or record the council's response*

i) **RR/2023/1090/P** - Springfield, Forge Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QR - Erection of annexe with linkway connected to main dwelling.

Councillors conferred by email and no objection was lodged.

Remains undecided

RR/2023/1101/P - Parkes Farm, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Revised scheme to RR/2022/302/P for the proposed erection of a manege and barn for storage of hay and machinery.

Councillors conferred by email and no objection was lodged.

Refused

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

i) **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 was asked to contact the planning officer again to see if there was any update since he reported that he was in dialogue with the land owner but was frustrated by the latter's failure to follow through on agreed actions.

d) Neighbouring parishes

i) **ENF/58/20/BAT** – Traveller site - Land to the Rear of Firtree Cottage, Netherfield Hill, Netherfield Battle – Without planning permission, the material change of use of the Land from agricultural use to a mixed use of agriculture and the stationing of caravans for residential purposes.

ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field is also an RDC councillor and briefed members on some of the history. Members were already aware that several years ago travellers purchased a large parcel of land (more than 5 hectares?) and set up a residential community without planning permission. Power supplies have been installed plus some system of waste disposal. It is very close to an area of Ancient Woodland.

RDC were very slow to take action and lost much initiative and that ground has never been made up. All RDC action has been delegated to officers. The travellers cannot be evicted as they own the land. Enforcement notice was served, a retrospective planning application was lodged, refused and appealed and the appeal was lost too. A new planning application was

lodged but has now stopped as officers, rather than continuing with enforcement action, have granted permission for continued occupation for three years by which time they anticipate that permanent traveller sites, already identified, will be deliverable. Compulsory Purchase of the site is an option for consideration which would be followed by eviction. In the meantime the travellers have moved further away from the Ancient Woodland.

e) 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.

7) **RFO Report**

a) Receipts and Payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 10th May to 19th July 23.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) and those authorised to view the account online were asked to verify in due course.

c) Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to 19th July 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 19th July 2023.

e) Payments to authorise

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

Details	Payee	Budget head	Total £
Construct storage lockers War memorial & V Hall strimming	Andy Strevens	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	360.00
Grounds Custodian duties	Paul Harmer	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	225.00
Shed for mower storage	Jo Fowler	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	325.00
IKEA mugs	Village Hall Appeal Fund	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	120.00
Privacy statement on website	Jay Ashworth	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	123.75
	Tim Wakeling	Community - Website	26.00
Paper towels. Toilet rolls	Viking Direct	Pavilion and Grounds	71.96
Hose union bib tap	Screwfix	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	13.10
Water timer	Amazon	Reserve: Pavilion & Grounds	18.97
			1283.78

f) Charitable donations

On the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr King members resolved to make charitable donations this year as follows: Burial grounds upkeep - £350 each to Ashburnham and Penhurst churches. Donation of £120 to Ashburnham Chapel.

Donations of £100 each to Rother Rural Trust, Battle Area Community Transport, Rother CAB, Sussex Air Ambulance.

g) On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to appoint Mulberry & Co as internal auditors.

8) Governance

- a) Members noted and approved the record of councillors who operate the Council's internet banking which is as follows: Submit payments for authorisation – the Clerk; Online Banking approval of payments submitted by Clerk – Cllrs Ashworth, Spicer and White; Full Approval power for making variations to the mandate – Cllrs King and Sinden.
- b) The Clerk advised that parish records have been deposited at The Keep, ESCC's archive. All the minutes from the start in 1894 until recent electronic records are now with The Keep.

9) Community - Village Action Plan & Lead Responsibilities

a) The human world and society

- i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth reported that she continues to populate Facebook with news and that she is using the CANVA template which facilitates integration of generated content with Facebook and Instagram.
- ii) Village events – In the absence of Cllr Sinden members noted arrangements for the Country Fair and Flower Show to take place on Saturday 29th July 2023.
- iii) Police liaison – Cllr Williamson reported that theft of lead from church roofs has flared up again.
- iv) Phone box - Cllr Gagel reported that publicising the Country Fair is the current topic being promoted at The Pound. She suggested that the adjacent notice board is at the end of its useful life and that a replacement of similar size (6 x A4) but with glazing would be advisable. The Clerk will obtain prices and submit proposals to members at the September council meeting.
- v) Defibrillator - In the absence of Cllr Sinden members expressed thanks to him for registering the parish defibrillator with The Circuit, the national database.
Members suggested that the location of the defibrillator as defined in the app What3Words be widely publicised and The Clerk undertook to identify the relevant three words.
It was also suggested that a laminated set of instructions on how to open the cabinet be sited next to the appliance and The Clerk will liaise with the landlady of The Ash Tree Inn to obtain consent. Finally, the difficulty with arranging a demonstration was discussed and it was noted that Crowhurst have had success in this area. The Clerk will find out details.

b) The natural world

- i) Verges – Cllr Spicer reported that there were some issues about the height of the grass in some places impeding visibility and posing a safety hazard. Although access to the Highways portal is the normal way of reporting there is an emergency number given of 03456 080 193. He has tried it twice and gave up the first time after 20 minutes and no reply and again after 30 minutes and no reply. He will raise the matter at the next SLR meeting.

The ditches have all been cleared as part of the four yearly Highways maintenance schedule and Cllr Spicer was complimentary about the knowledgeable response from the machine operator when questioned about covering the wild flowers with the spoil removed from the ditch. The operator advised that studies have been carried out and there is no adverse effect on the flowers beyond the current season. Nevertheless, Cllr Spicer has taken up the matter with Fenella Lilywhite at Highways.

- ii) Rights of way – no report
- iii) Environment: Litter - Cllr Ashworth advised that litter picks are in abeyance until the autumn as the grass is now too long to see the litter.
- iv) Environment: Ecology and climate change – Members took note of the RDC presentation at the start of this meeting and requested copies be circulated to them.

c) The built environment

- i) Highways - Cllr King reported that he continues to report pot holes and monitor responses. There is no news about a drainage scheme for Brays Hill and this will be pursued at the next SLR meeting The collapsed drain on Kitchenham Road (A227) shortly after turning left onto that road from the Hammer Hill junction remains unattended to despite numerous attempts to

get action. Given the typical speed of traffic on that stretch it is surprising that no accidents have been reported.

ii) Premises

(1) Village Hall

(a) Members agreed that the next meeting of Trustees will be on 25th October 2023.

(2) Pavilion

(a) Members wished to express thanks to the captain of the cricket club, Bernie Baker, for all his work in not only maintaining the cricket field but also the boundary hedge.

(3) New village hall

(a) The clerk reported that the subscription to the Village Halls Advisory Service run by AiRS is now active.

10) Correspondence

Nigel White wrote to the council expressing support for the Highways ditch clearance programme even if it meant sacrificing some wild flower for a season and took the view that road safety took precedence over other considerations.

11) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

None

12) Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 27th September 2023.

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Signed (Chair)

Date