

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst held on
Wednesday 24th January 2024 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

Parish Councillors present:	Cllrs Jay Ashworth, Nicci Gagel, Ron King Chris Sinden, Paul Spicer.
Parish Councillors absent:	Cllrs Richard White and Fraser Williamson.
District / County Councillors present:	ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field, RDC Cllr Chas Pearce.
In attendance:	Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council 3 members of the public.

In the absence of the Chairman the meeting was chaired by the Deputy Chairman, Cllr Spicer.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Richard White and Fraser Williamson.

2. Disclosures of interest

None

3. Additional agenda items

At 6) a) additional new planning application.

4. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 22nd November 2023 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of Cllr Sinden seconded by Cllr Ashworth the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5. Open Forum

a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows:

- i) Michael Gove has today announced an additional £600mm to the settlement for local government funding, but £500mm is reserved for adult social care.
- ii) The county council has decided to use £14mm from reserves as part of its budget.
- iii) The increase in council tax will be a total of 4.99% comprising the maximum allowed of 2.99% plus 2% for adult social care.

b) RDC Cllr Chas Pearce reported as follows

- i) The budget consultation had 694 individual respondents plus 7 parish councils.
- ii) 6% of respondents were in favour of tax increases to support the provision of services.
- iii) Council Tax will rise by £5.94 per Band D household.

c) Members of the public

- i) Mr and Mrs David Christman briefed members with drawings and diagrams on the planning application they are lodging with RDC in respect of Brownbread Horse Rescue centre. In essence it is the creation of new dwelling space by converting existing barns. Although it represents a new dwelling there is existing permission for a caravan.

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

a) On-going applications *Current position*

- i) **RR/023/1862/P** - Burnt Barns Farm, Freckley Hollow, Ashburnham TN33 9LZ - Proposed Swimming Pool.
Members have registered a neutral position *Approved*

b) Applications new to a council meeting *To determine the Council's response*

- i) **RR/2023/2324/P** - Wilsons Farm, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Demolition of all existing dilapidated farm buildings and the erection of two cattle housing buildings and a straw, hay and general purpose farm store, installation of an earth banked farmyard

manure store and new slurry lagoon, water attenuation pond, together with all associated surrounding engineering operations.

Having visited the site recently members resolved to give this application their full support.

- ii) **RR/2024/42/P** - Brays Hill Cottage, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Existing rear extension to be extended, proposed new garage and front porch.

Members viewed the application and resolved to give it their support.

- iii) **RR/2023/2600/P** - Brays Hill Farmhouse, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9N - Proposed rear extension incorporating internal alterations to a previously approved and extant permission and the provision of new staircase to attic, access to an existing roof void to form tank room and insertion of en-suite bathroom to attic bedroom.

Given that there is thought to be an existing approval for planning but which was refused Listed Building Consent (and is subject to appeal as shown below), members were unclear as to the relevance of this application. Members agreed to Cllr Spicer visiting the applicants and then briefing members by email.

- c) Breaches and Enforcement None

- d) Appeals

- i) **2962 RR/2022/2226/L** - Brays Hill Farm House - Proposed rear extension. Appeal against Refusal of Listed Building Consent.

7. RFO Report

- a) Receipts and payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 9th November 2023 to 16th January 2024.

- b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as of 16th January 2024.

- c) Income and expenditure against budget.

The RFO tabled a report as of 16th January 2024. (on file). Significant variations were noted.

- d) Earmarked reserves

The RFO tabled a report on movements in earmarked reserves for the year to 16th January 2024.

- 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 £
Marquee deposit Country Fair	Matt & Keith Pie	Reserves: Community	760.00
Custodian second half year fee	Paul Harmer	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	225.00
Custodian second half year fee	Jo Fowler	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	325.00
Pavilion cleaning June-Dec 23 22hrs	Carol Lovett	Pavilion & grounds: maintenance	396.00
Magazine ad for pavilion	PCC	General administration	27.30
Election expenses	RDC	General administration	139.97
Defibrillator	London Hearts	Reserves: Community	750.00
Website hosting and maintenance	Tim Wakeling	Community	60.00

- f) Earmarked Reserves budget 2024/25

Members viewed the end of year forecast for each Earmarked Reserve and noted a draft allocation for next year.

- g) Council budget for 2024/25

Members viewed the final draft of the budget for 2024/25. Formal adoption will be at the March meeting.

- h) Council Tax precept

Members reviewed the effect of the precept shown in the draft budget. Owing to an increase in the tax base (the number of Band D households) from 186.18 to 192.37, an increase in the

precept sum of 6.23% equates to an increase of 2.81% in the sum paid by council tax payers. On the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Ashworth members resolved to set the precept at £14,500 for 2024/25. This equates to £75.38 per Band D household for the year.

i) Pavilion hire charges

The RFO tabled figures showing how inflation (CPI) has affected charges using a base of April 2019. Notwithstanding a modest variation between current charges and those adjusted for inflation members were reluctant to increase them in the current difficult economic climate. On the motion of Cllr King seconded by the Chairman members resolved to hold pavilion hire charges at their current level until 31st March 2025.

8. Governance

- a) No agenda items

9. Community - Lead Responsibilities

a) The human world and society

- i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth has added more events to the website and publicised the start of the W.I. Library.
- ii) Village events - Cllr Sinden noted forthcoming events including the PANTS Radio Play on 2nd March. He has been trying to book a local Beatles Tribute Band for the Country Fair weekend but is having a problem making contact. The Chairman volunteered to assist him.
- iii) Public health - Cllr Sinden confirmed that all members had supported the bid for a public access defibrillator (AED) at half price due to a subsidy from the Dept of Health and Social Care. The bid was successful and the new AED will be installed at the pavilion on the end wall nearest Church Road.
- iv) Police liaison - no report in the absence of Cllr Williamson.
- v) Phone box - Cllr Gagel reported that the new notice board at The Pound is operational and sought members' advice on an appropriate way to make the key available (she plans to obtain some more). As the Chairman lives close by he agreed to be a key holder and for that to be publicised on the notice board.
- vi) Public transport - Flexi Bus is proving very popular especially with volunteers working at Ashburnham Place. Cllr Ashworth has given it publicity in the parish magazine.

b) The natural world

- (i) Verges - nothing to report.
- (ii) Rights of Way- nothing to report.
- (iii) Environment: Litter - Cllr Ashworth plans on a litter pick on a Saturday in late March.

c) The built environment

i) Highways

- 1) Cllr King reported that although pot hole repair in general remains a serious problem, six significant ones had recently been repaired in Lingham Lane.
- 2) At The Old Post Office, Ponds Green, the treated outfall from the waste treatment plant flows into an adjacent drainage ditch. It has become blocked and the outfall is backing up into the plant and beyond to the property. After strenuous efforts by Cllr King the drainage team from East Sussex Highways are currently working on the problem which appears to be in an underground pipe.
- 3) The clerk requested that members approve a change in the scheduled date of the SLR meeting so that they occur after a parish council meeting thus giving members the opportunity to craft the agenda. Members agreed and the Clerk will seek to have the SLR meeting on the Tuesday of the next week but one after the council meeting. This allows time for Highways to respond to the agenda and do the research necessary.
- 4) Farthing Lane partial closure due to the bridge becoming dangerous continues to be a concern. The bridge failed in November and there is a general view that May is the earliest that the road will be opened again. Cllr Field suggested an approach to Karl Taylor, head of operations at Highways. The Clerk will make contact and ask for details of the rebuild plan, the stages in the plan and when those stages are reached.
- 5) The Clerk reported that Highways alerted him to the fact that they had issued a purchase order authorising a 50% subsidy on the cost of repairs to two finger posts in 2023 but that no monies had ever been paid. On checking, the Clerk found that he had

issued an invoice against the Highways order but had not realised it remained unpaid for which he apologised to the Council. A fresh copy was emailed to Highways who paid the £379 due within seven days..

- ii) Premises: Village Hall - (Clerk)
 - 1) The Clerk reported that bookings continue to grow with new bookings from the W.I. for a fortnightly library, monthly village lunches, the churches for Plough Sunday and PANTS for a Radio Play.
 - 2) Maggie Evans, the organiser and provider of the village lunches, has drawn attention to the state of the kitchen which might not pass an inspection which RDC are entitled to make. Members of the Trustee group have separately approved the purchase of a new cooker. The Clerk has made arrangements for redecoration and will explore options for new floor covering.
 - 3) Other repairs and renewals remain in abeyance, mainly until better weather. A section of trim around the fascia on the elevation above the entrance door (at the rear of the building) has fallen off and when it is replaced the whole of that elevation will be cleaned and painted as necessary. The entrance doorway will also be redecorated.
 - 4) The Community Infrastructure Fund was asked if repairs to the car park surface would qualify for a grant. It does not because the grant is for additions to the infrastructure and not renewal. Cllr Field suggested that the Community Infrastructure Levy might be an option.
 - 5) The hedge around the boundary of the car park has not been cut for many years and the Clerk is looking at options including hiring a contractor with a tractor mounted flail. Members suggested that before that the need should be publicised asking for volunteers.
 - 6) The Clerk noted that space in the small meeting room is at a premium now that there is an additional table tennis table and the library bookshelves. If the folding tables stored there could be put on a wheeled trolley than everything in the room would be readily moveable on wheels.
- iii) Premises: Pavilion - the Clerk has been advised by the Cricket Club that Kerala Strikers, who used the ground on Saturdays, have not paid the fees due and the Cricket Club are taking legal action to recover the debt. In 2025 it is likely that Bexhill Third will start to use the ground on Saturdays.

10. Correspondence

None

11. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

- a) The Chairman, Cllr White, has signalled that at the March meeting he wishes there to be an in depth discussion about the New Village Hall project.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 27th March 2024.

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Signed (Chair)

Date