

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst held on  
Wednesday 29th May 2024 at 7.30pm in the Ashburnham Sports Pavilion**

**Parish Councillors present:** Cllrs Jay Ashworth, Chris Sinden, Paul Spicer, Richard White, Fraser Williamson.

**Parish Councillors absent:** None

**District / County Councillors present:** None

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

**1. Election of Chairman**

The outgoing Chairman, Cllr Richard White, called for nominations for Chairman. Cllr Ashworth nominated Cllr Paul Spicer and Cllr Sinden seconded the nomination. There being no other nominations Cllr Spicer was declared Chairman, signed the Acceptance of Office and took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**2. Election of Deputy Chairman**

The Chairman Cllr Paul Spicer called for nominations for Deputy Chairman. Cllr White nominated Cllr Ashworth and Cllr Spicer seconded the nomination. There being no other nominations Cllr Ashworth was declared Deputy Chair and signed the Acceptance of Office.

**3. Apologies for absence**

ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field, RDC Cllr Chas Pearce.

**4. Disclosures of interest**

None

**5. Additional agenda items**

None

**6. Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 27th March 2024 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

**7. Open Forum**

There were no verbal representations.

**8. Membership of Committees**

a) Planning Committee

The committee is constituted as all members of the Parish Council

b) Finance and General Purposes Committee

Cllrs Ashworth, Sinden, Spicer, White and Williamson.

**9. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

a) Members noted the dates of last revision of Standing Orders as July 2024 and Financial Regulation September 2021. Members resolved to readopt both but noted that the internal auditor recommends adoption of more recent NALC templates.

b) Bank Mandate - Cll Ron King, having resigned, needs be removed from the bank mandate.

**10. Asset Register**

The Asset Register of council property, having been circulated prior to the meeting, was formally adopted.

**11. Membership of external bodies**

Members declined to appoint anyone to represent the council on any external body.

**12. Dates and times of future meetings**

- a) Council meetings were confirmed as the fourth Wednesday of Jan, Mar, May, July, Sep and Nov.
- b) Planning committee meetings will be on the fourth Wednesday of alternate months as and when required.

**13. Date of next Annual Assembly**

The Annual Assembly in 2025 will take place on Thursday 24th April.

**14. Planning**

- a) On-going applications tabled at previous meetings (*updates or decisions on italics*)
  - i) RR/2023/2635/P - The Storage Barn, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst, TN33 9QP - Replacement of the existing implement barn with a newly built, traditionally designed holiday let.  
*Council supported with caution over water supply* *Approved*
  - ii) RR/2024/300/P - Church Farm, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst, TN33 9QP - Renovation of existing Grade II Listed barn. Removal of 2no. existing steel-framed barns, and erection of 2no. replacement steel-framed barns. Associated landscape works.  
*Council supported* *Undecided*
  - iii) RR/2024/50/P - Brownbread Stud, Ashburnham, TN33 9NX - Erection of a residential dwelling house to replace lawful caravan and redundant barn with associated change of use of land to residential.  
*Council supported* *Approved*
  - iv) 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.  
*Withdrawn*
  - v) RR/2023/2637/P - Ash Tree Inn, Brownbread Street, Ashburnham TN33 9NX - Blocking off existing carpark entrance and erecting of picket fence. New relocated entrance into car park.  
*Council opposed* *Withdrawn*
  - vi) RR/2024/430/P - Oak Bank Farm, Ashburnham, Battle, TN33 9PB - Relocation of a building and use as a permanent agricultural workers dwelling, together with the demolition of a lawful residential dwelling (revised resubmission of application RR/2023/668/P).  
*Council supported* *Undecided*
- b) Applications new to a council meeting (*To record or determine the council's response*)
  - i) RR/2024/605/P - Ashburnham Place, Ashburnham TN33 9NF - Installation of Solar Panels onto roofs of buildings within the complex.  
*Council took no position before close of comments 25th May 2024*
- c) Breaches and Enforcements  
None

**15. RFO Report**

- a) Receipts and payments  
Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 21st March to 21st May 2024.
- b) Bank reconciliation  
Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as of 21st May 2024. Cllr Spicer undertook to go online and verify the account balance at that date.
- c) Income and expenditure against budget.  
The RFO tabled a report as of 21st May 2024 (on file). The RFO drew attention to the cost of maintenance at the pavilion where the basis of the budget adopted has clearly been overlooked

leading to the expectation that budget will be exceeded by up to £1,400. However, he also reported that a prospective weekly booking for yoga teaching coupled with an underspend on part of the fees paid for grounds keeping would reduce that deficit by about half.

d) Earmarked reserves

The RFO tabled a report on movements in earmarked reserves for the year to 21st May 2024 and there have been no charges to reserves in that period.

e) Payments to authorise

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

Details	Payee	Budget head	Total £
Annual subs	ESALC	Revenue:General Admin	116.44
Village Hall kitchen floor	Image Flooring	Reserves: Village Hall	720.00
Annual grant	Ash Village Hall	Reserves: Village Hall	900.00
Annual Assy buffet	Champagne and Caviar	Revenue:General Admin	175.00
Grounds custodian first half yr fee	Jo Fowler	Revenue: Pavilion and grounds	325.00
Insurance premium (annual)	Clear Councils	Revenue:General Admin	702.15
Annual Assy disposable glasses	Dukes Valley	Revenue:General Admin	50.98
Lock for defibrillator cabinet	BPH for Spearwood	Reserve: Community	30.00
Annual meet catering	J Sainsbury	Revenue:General Admin	43.20
Pavilion cleaning Jan-Mar 2024	Carol Lovett	Revenue: Pavilion and grounds	90.00
Pavilion fire extinguisher maint;ce	Mitch Safety	Revenue: Pavilion and grounds	80.00

In addition the following direct debits or other regular payments for services were authorised for the year:

- ii) Website hosting and maintenance, Tim Wakeling, £60 per quarter.
- iii) Pavilion electricity, Pozitive Energy, direct debit.
- iv) Office 365 Business, Microsoft, £8.60+vat per month.
- v) Pavilion water, Castle Water, invoices paid monthly by debit card.

## 16. Governance

a) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

- i) Members approved the Certificate of Exemption which was signed by the Chairman and the RFO.
- ii) Members approved a Risk Assessment statement circulated before the meeting.
- iii) Members reviewed the system of controls and found it to be satisfactory.
- iv) The Chairman read aloud the statements on the Annual Governance Statement which was then approved and signed by the Chairman and the RFO.
- v) The Accounting Statements was tabled and, having been scrutinised by the internal auditor, was adopted and signed by the Chairman and the RFO.

b) Clerk succession plan.

The Clerk advised members that he wished to retire and proposed that he hand over to a successor by 31st December 2025. He suggested that if someone local but without experience were appointed he would be happy to train them, but such a person would need to be identified by July 2025. Cllr Williamson suggested that the council might need to pay two salaries during a period of overlap. The Clerk also proposed that the need to find a successor could be given some

prominence at the Annual Assembly next year. If no local person is found then normal recruitment via the Rother clerks would be necessary.

- c) Internal audit
  - i) Members unanimously resolved to reappoint Mulberry & Co as internal auditors.
  - ii) Members reviewed the recommendations and comments of the internal auditor including the following:
    - A) that the Acceptance of Office forms include agreement to receive council documentations electronically - agreed and implemented today.
    - B) that the council follows JPAG guidance regarding emails which is that councillors have a separate email address for council business. Members were reluctant to make this a requirement for councillors, but resolved that any councillor who wished to have an official email address is free to have one that the Clerk would arrange with our provider.
    - C) that the council adopt the most recent template from NALC for financial regulations and standing orders. The Clerk was instructed to review and report making sure that any implementation is completed before next year's audit.

## 17. Community - Lead Responsibilities

- a) The human world and society
  - i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth reported that she continues to post to the village website and to social media. She intends to remind organisations that have a page on the village website that they already have login details enabling them to update their page themselves; it does not need the Administrator to do it.
  - ii) Village events - Cllr Sinden noted that numerous events are under way, particularly the Country Fair & Flower Show at the end of July. The Chairman advised that Hailsham Young Farmers are planning to ask if they can use the marquee on the evening of the Country Fair for their summer party and will propose that a proportion of funds raised go to the village hall. Members thought this an excellent idea and await an approach. A local resident has suggested that the parish council consider purchasing their own marquee for regular use. In discussion it was suggested that a second hand marquee in fair condition might cost a few thousand pounds. The major objection is having somewhere to store it and having a team of people skilled enough to erect it. This will not be taken forward.
  - iii) Police liaison - Cllr Williamson had nothing to report other than that Ashburnham continues to be happily absent from topical reported crime.
  - iv) Phone box - awaiting expressions of interest in continuing the work of former Cllr Nicci Gagel.
  - v) Public health: defibrillator - Cllr Sinden reported that the new defibrillator, located at the pavilion, is now on the national database.
  - vi) Public health: exercise facilities - Cllr White reported that in due course some funds may become available from the Country Fair organisers' activities.
- b) The natural world
  - i) Verges - Cllr Spicer, the Chairman, reported that another year of refraining from cutting verges until late in the summer after wild flowers have seeded is paying huge dividends in terms of scale and diversity of wild flowers in the verges.
  - ii) Rights of Way- Cllr Spicer had nothing to report.
  - iii) Environment: Litter - Cllr Ashworth confirmed that no litter picks will take place until the vegetation has died back in the autumn. Cllr White confirmed that the Country Fair organisers will make a robust plan for dealing with waste arising from the event so as to avoid last year's requirement to employ a contractor.
- c) The built environment
  - i) Highways
    - A) Following the resignation of Cllr Ron King there is no lead councillor for this topic and Cllr Richard White agreed to step into the breach.
    - B) Members were concerned with the state of some of the roads in Penhurst such as Tower House Road. Cllr White said that it was important that people keep on reporting issues online at the portal.
    - C) Members were also concerned with the deterioration of the surface on Hammer Hill on the first bend after leaving Kitchenham Road. The poor edges both sides means that drivers in both directions are likely to move to the middle of the road on a blind bend and an accident is waiting to happen.

- D) The next SLR meeting with ESx Highways is on Tuesday 9th July 2024 by which time the Farthing Lane bridge repairs will have been completed after 7 months. Members supported the suggestion from the Clerk that the agenda for the SLR include, "Farthing Lane bridge debrief: questions for an enquiry - a) what has it cost?, b) why was water allowed to flow over the road and bridge for the past three or four years?, c) what steps are going to be taken in future to keep the culvert clear?, d) how do individuals make a claim for compensation?, why were the warnings about the bridge made by the parish council at the May 2023 SLR dismissed?
- ii) Housing - the Rother Local Plan consultation has a touring exhibition with stops in Bexhill and Battle. The Clerk will circulate the venues and the times and encourage people to visit.
- iii) Premises: Pavilion
- A) The Clerk indicated that there were issues regarding strimming around the war memorial. In short, last year's operative has not continued nor been in communication. In the short term the Clerk is covering it in order to know first hand how long the task takes and what frequency is needed to maintain the appearance. A new operative will be sought. For the rest of the maintenance covered by the 'Custodian', Jo Fowler, members were content and endorsed her decision to comply with the Management of Hedgerows (England) regulations 2024 banning hedge cutting between 1st March and 31st August.
- B) A new hiring for weekly yoga classes is in prospect which will make a useful contribution to hiring revenue. The hirer wants a Friday morning class and the Clerk will discuss with Coffee Stop if it is possible to accommodate their monthly slot of one and a half hours with a weekly yoga class of one hour.
- iv) Premises: Village Hall - the Clerk advised that the annual grant of £1,500 from the parish is not necessarily a cash sum but the total value of cash plus goods and services supplied.

**18. Correspondence**

None

**19. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items**

None

**20. Date of Next Meeting**

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 24th July 2024

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Signed (Chair)

Date .....