

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

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Jay Ashworth, Chris Sinden, Paul Spicer (Chairman),
Richard White

Parish Councillors absent: RDC Cllr Chas Pearce, Parish Cllr Fraser Williamson

District / County Councillors present: ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field

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

1. Apologies for absence

RDC Cllr Chas Pearce, Parish Cllr Fraser Williamson

2. Disclosures of interest

None

3. Additional agenda items

None

4. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the annual meeting of the Council held on 29th May 2024 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5. Open Forum

a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported as follows

- i) Central government has allocated an additional £1mil for patching the highway and 400 additional patches have been identified.
- ii) The cost of caring for children with special needs has reached new heights. For example, the county has six children with needs so acute that each requires a team of five carers 24 x 7 at a cost of £25,000 per week.
- iii) OFSTED provoked alarm when they proposed a label of Inadequate in respect of these children which would have had dire knock-on consequences. They relented and switched to a Needs Improvement label.

b) Mrs Fay Merrick

- i) Mrs Merrick addressed the council wanting members to know what the current status is of her protracted and numerous planning applications at Brays Hill Farmhouse. Members are familiar in outline of the issues arising from a request for an extension.
- ii) Her summary of the situation is that the first application initially met with an indication from officers that it would be approved in line with all the expert heritage reports. However, at the last minute there was a change of planning officer who rejected it out of hand and recommended refusal which was duly determined. An appeal failed.
- iii) A subsequent application was made and approved, but Mrs Merrick believes it to be unattractive compared with the original and has applied for a pre-application meeting with a planning officer. This has been set up and will be with a Senior Planning Officer, a heritage officer and Mrs Merrick's architect. The purpose of the meeting is to try and find a way through to a better outcome, but she wondered what recourse she would have if the Senior Planning Officer proved obdurate.
- iv) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field responded in the absence of RDC Cllr Chas Pearce and explained the system of delegated powers. If an application is 'Delegated' it means that officers come to a decision that they convey in a written report to councillors in advance of ratification at a full

Planning Committee meeting. That provides an opportunity for the ward district councillor to request that the decision be called in for a decision by the full planning committee.

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

a) On-going applications *Curent position*

- i) 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

- ii) 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/2024/862/P - Brays Hill Cottage - enlargement of existing rear extension to be extended; new garage and front porch.

Undecided

- ii) RR/2024/890/P - Peans Farm, Penhurst - Construction of storage barn

Council has posted comments requesting a Listed Building Consent application *Undecided*

c) Breaches and Enforcement

None

d) Appeals *To note updates and progress*

- i) Oak Bank Farm - APP/U1430/W/24/3340740 / 3000 re application RR/2023/668/P. Appeal hearing set for 4th July 2024 at Battle Town Hall.

7. RFO Report

a) Receipts and payments

Members received the tabled schedule of receipts and payments for the period 22nd May to 17th July 2024.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as of 17th July 2024

c) Income and expenditure against budget.

The RFO tabled a report as of 17th July 2024 (on file). Noted variations included additional pavilion rental income arising from weekly yoga booking.

d) Earmarked reserves

The RFO tabled a report on movements in earmarked reserves for the year to 17th July 2024.

e) Payments to authorise

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

Details	Payee	Budget head	Total £
Pavilion cleaning Jan-Mar 24	Carol Lovett	Pavilion and Grounds	90.00
Annual meet catering	Champagne & Caviar	Revenue:General Admin	175.00
Annual subs	East Sussex ALC	Revenue:General Admin	116.44
Vill hall kitchen flooring	Image Flooring	Reserve: Village Hall	720.00
Pav fire extinguisher maint'ce	ION Safety	Pavilion and Grounds	80.00
Internal Audit	Mulberry Local Aut	Revenue:General Admin	224.00
Pavilion verge area care - 1st tranche	Andrew Keeley		225.00
Pav WiFi SIM card	Smarty	Pavilion and Grounds	20.00
Pav WiFi router	Curry's Online	Pavilion and Grounds	119.99
			1,283.78

- f) Charitable Donations.
- i) Members reviewed the list of regular charitable donations and resolved to replace CAB with Sussex Air Ambulance. Therefore, the charities that will receive £110 as last year are Rother Rural Trust, Battle Area Community Transport and Sussex Air Ambulance.
 - ii) The Chapel will receive £132 as last year.
 - iii) Cllr Ashworth introduced a discussion about funding for the parish magazine, of which she is editor, and for the upkeep of the burial grounds. The finances of the parish magazine are in good shape and it makes a useful surplus each year. On the other hand the cost of upkeep of the burial grounds continues to rise as people are employed for ground keeping. She proposed the sum currently allocated to magazine support should be divided between the church burial grounds and added to the sum that they would otherwise receive. Members agreed unanimously and each church will therefore receive £550 instead of £385.

8. Governance

- a) Members discussed the two vacancies that currently exist for parish councillors. A number of suggestions were aired and members will continue to seek interested parties.

9. Community - Lead Responsibilities

- a) The human world and society
 - i) Communications - Cllr Ashworth continues to post to social media. She noted that advance notice of parish council meetings is not posted and plans to start doing so and to encourage attendance.
 - ii) Village events
 - 1) Cllr Sinden noted the forthcoming events including the Flower Show and Country Fair this weekend. In this context the Chairman flagged up the need to secure the services for next year of what might be termed a tribute band who perform The Beatles' music.
 - 2) Cllr White reported that this year's event attracted more stall holders than ever with added attractions including falconry and radio controlled tractor racing.
 - 3) Cllr Ashworth reported that Tim Keeley has donated a Keeley cricket bat and she has obtained a license for a raffle. The proceeds will be entirely in aid of a tribute to the late Bob Parsons, for many years the cricket club groundsman. The draw will take place in September.
 - iv) Police liaison - no report.
 - v) Phone box - no report.
 - vi) Public transport - Cllr Richard White noted the continuing success of Flexibus which he estimates is running at about 80% capacity. New buses are coming to the fleet on 24 month leases which suggests that the future of the service is assured until at least that far ahead.
 - vii) Public health: defibrillator - Cllr Sinden reported that Tony Smith, formerly a Community First Responder, had accompanied him on an inspection of the machine at The Ash Tree Inn. This had caused concern due a red light flashing. However, this appears to have been a transient problem, possibly overheating, and all appears in order.
 - viii) Public health: exercise facilities - Cllr White noted that after the Country Fair, once funds raised for improved facilities at the pavilion are known, additional play equipment was on the agenda for possible improvements.
- b) The natural world
 - i) Verges
 - 1) Cllr Spicer noted that Highways seem slow to clear high vegetation growth at junction sight lines. The Clerk has requested urgent action where Compass Lane emerges onto Kitchenham Road.
 - 2) Cllr Spicer confirmed that Ashburnham and Penhurst only receive one cut per year and in the autumn after wild flower seeds have set.
 - ii) Rights of Way- (Cllr Spicer). Nothing to report.
 - (iii) Environment: Litter - Cllr Ashworth advised that litter picking will not be possible until verge vegetation has died down.
 - (iv) Environment: Ecology and climate change.
 - (v) Environment: Aircraft noise.
- c) The built environment

- i) Highways
 - 1) The Clerk advised that Highways have been asked to look again at Hammer Hill road sides where a head on collision seems inevitable as traffic in both directions tends to move to the centre of the road to avoid the degraded surface. Although the potholes may not meet the normal intervention criteria there does seem to be a case for immediate action on safety grounds.
 - 2) Some doubt over responsibility for keeping the culvert clear below the newly constructed bridge in Farthing Lane were quashed at the recent SLR meeting. Highways categorically accepted responsibility and said that they would inspect and clear twice a year in April and in October.
 - 3) Finger posts have been surveyed for maintenance needs by Dougl's Andrews who has submitted his estimate for this year's work. The Council were pleased to accept the quotation and the Clerk will arrange for it to go ahead.
 - 4) Cllr Ashworth asked if something could be done to avoid the recent consequences of an emergency road closure. Southern Water requested a license for an emergency closure of Hammer Hill while the school bus was in transit. The bus had to turn back and return the children who missed a day's school. The work had not in fact been started so it was entirely unnecessary. The Clerk will explore options with Highways and ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field suggested contacting Neil McGuire at ESCC as a start as he controls the buses.
- v) Housing
 - vi) Premises: Village Hall - The Clerk reported that WiFi provision has not progressed as the Open Reach database has not been updated to reflect the addition of the village hall to the post code directory. He will contact Direct Save Telecom to see if a workaround can be engineered.
 - vii) Premises: Pavilion - The Clerk reported that the new WiFi provision is based on a SIM card from Smarty which is a virtual network on the Three system. The signal is very poor. Members were shown some options based on the O2 system and opted for one with a 50mb limit per month which is significantly cheaper than unlimited data. Unlimited is deemed unnecessary.

10. Correspondence

- a) Laurence Keeley has communicated with the Council over the Rother Local Plan.
- b) Eight members of the organising committee of the Country Fair signed a joint letter to the parish council in response to the Council's letter to them following the annual village meeting. In their reply they reiterated that their decision to switch their fund raising efforts from support for the village hall to a project to build a new one was taken reluctantly and because they felt that maintenance of the existing village hall is an open ended consumption of funds. However, they accept that the new hall project cannot proceed at present and noted the concern of the annual village meeting that unspent funds raised to date might be put on deposit for a few years pending a decision on their application. In response to that concern they are pleased to advise the Parish Council that they will come forward in the Autumn of this year with suggestions on how to use the money for immediate improvements to facilities at the pavilion. Parish councillors welcomed their intentions.
- c) A resident in Pontoons Green has contacted the Chairman to complain about dog barking at night which appears to come from the Farthing Lane area. Not wanting to create bad feeling he asked for advice. After discussion members were all of the same mind that it was best to talk to the CPSO about it and the CPSO would almost certainly follow it up with a visit.

11. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the parish council will be on Wednesday 25th September 2024

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Signed (Chair)

Date