

BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE CENTRE at 7.30pm on TUESDAY 11 JANUARY 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Tina Langmead (TL) Chairman, Steve Bunn (SB), Rod Chapman (RC), Ms Zoe Gleisner (ZG), Stephen Thorneycroft (ST).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs V Ades (Clerk), District Cllrs Tony Ganly (TG) and Martin Mooney (MM), County Cllr Paul Redstone (PR) arrived 7.50pm and one member of the public.

Note – due to the bank holidays it was not possible to give the required notice of a meeting on 4 January so it had been advertised and moved to 11 January 2022.

- 1. Public Questions – 10 minutes.** Allow questions (**maximum 2 minutes per person**) from members of the public following which they may leave the meeting if they wish, but must remain silent if they stay. A further period of public question time is allowed at the end of the meeting. **Names of those speaking may be recorded and reported in the minutes.**
- 2. Apologies for absence.** Cllrs E.Erith and Mrs N Vadorin - Covid related and County Cllr Paul Redstone will attend after Rye Foreign PC meeting – all accepted.
- 3. Declarations of interest** whether personal or pecuniary in accordance with the current Code of Conduct regarding matters on the agenda.
- 4. Reports from County, District and Parish Councillors.**
SB said most of the wood from the hedge at the Frog Field had been collected. He is awaiting wood to make selves for phone-box library.
- 5. To consider and approve** the signing by the Chairman of the minutes of the PC meeting of 7/12/21. Agreed and signed.
- 6. PLANNING** – to consider any planning applications received from RDC and any other planning matters.

APPROVED APPLICATIONS:

RR/2021/789/L : Combe House, Main Street. Erection of a fence 3.5 meters long and 1.8 meters high adjoining the eastern side of Combe House and incorporating a gate 0.8 meters in width. (Retrospective).

RR/2021/860/L - Tillingham Lodge Furnace Lane, Broad Oak, Beckley. Replacement link between converted barn structure and house; replacement lean-to roof and extension of utility; new/altered external openings; internal alterations to mezzanine to form a bedroom and wc.

RR/2021/1613/P - Kingsbank House, Kings Bank Lane. Single storey utility room extension and covered porch.

7.50pm – County Cllr P.Redstone arrived.

7. Groundworks

- a. Jubilee Field - Flooding** - meeting with Mr Poole of Dunedin, Main Street and suggestions to improve the drainage system on the field – SB & ST reported Mr Poole is doing work on his garden to improve the flooding, but it was felt the ditch required digging out. SB will speak with the resident who has a digger.
- b. Frog Field update.** We are awaiting the bill from the ecologist. Maintenance work will be required.

TL referred to the war memorial saying it appeared from maps that it lay on church land. Talks are continuing regarding the PC taking on responsibility of the memorial.

- 8. Buddens Green** – progress on hedge cutting to side abutting footpath (GSH Tree Surgery). A good job has been done and residents removed the wood and the site is clear.
- 9. Tree surgery and tree survey – EE.** Absent. **Clerk will remind EE.**

10. **Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations** – plans and application to RDC for a £500 grant. Plans are in place to hold the following events:-
- **Thursday 2nd June** – Cinema Event-held in the church – a film for families in the afternoon and one for adults in the evening.
 - **Friday 3rd June** – Special family church service at 10am followed by a commemorative tree planting ceremony *hoping* with the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex present and then present each child with a tree ready for planting.
 - **Saturday 4th June** – Horticultural Flower and craft show with Jubilee classes in village hall - details to follow.
 - **Sunday 5th June** – Picnic in the Glebe Field with bar and entertainment - details to follow.
11. **Prospect and cost of producing a periodic newsletter.** Discussions took place as to the best way of getting these into the homes of every resident. A newsletter will be produced to go out in early spring.
12. **Rye Food Bank offer** – update on its services, Christmas deliveries and emergency food parcel. TL gave the background of how the food bank operates. She said few, if any people in Beckley made use of it. In addition to providing food it gives simple advice to residents on some of the problems they have. The food bank had asked PC's if they would be willing to hold supplies of non-perishable foods for emergency use. The government has given an emergency fund of up to £250 to assist with emergency food and heating. This fund has already gone.
13. **Milldown Wood** emergency tree felling. Taking place due to alien beetles. Other areas could be affected.
14. **Loneliness:** Ideas to set up clubs and meetings to bring together residents who may live alone. Item for the newsletter and maybe the annual meeting for residents.
15. **Accounts** for approval (*VAT, if applicable, shown for items exceeding £100*). The Clerk said she had forwarded a cheque for £500 on account to GSH Tree Services, who had completed the work at Buddens Green before Christmas. The balance is £1000 below.

Recipient	VAT £	Total £	Recipient	VAT £	Total £
Admin costs – Dec + admin costs		490.54	IdVerde - Dec	34.77	208.64
HMRC		713.94	GSH-hedge BuddensG-balance		1,000.00
Beckley Village Hall - Dec		16.40			

Proposed by ZG, seconded by SB – the payments were approved.

16. **Matters** for consideration as an agenda item for the next meeting.
17. **Public questions** - not to exceed 10 minutes. Ms Howse asked about the rural verge cutting and the verges which had been cut in May 2021 and killed off most of the wild flowers. **Clerk was asked to contact Mr C Broadbent when is the best time to cut and she will speak with ESCC.**
- Date of next meeting – Tuesday 1 March 2022 commencing 7.30pm.**

Reports attached from ESCC and RDC.

ESCC Report to Parish Councils –Dec 21-Jan 2022 – Cllr Paul Redstone

This report is written in late December and is for Parish Councils meeting in January. It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother. December is a slightly slower month in terms of meetings at decisions at county, but there were some which affect Northern Rother.

Budgeting

At this time of year we are beginning the budgeting process for next fiscal year (i.e. from April 2022). A key part of this is the 'settlement' in which the 'Ministry for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC)' (as the government department responsible for local government is now called) sets out how much money from central sources will be available to local government. There was an announcement on the 16th December, even later than normal, and the impact on this for ESCC is being assessed. I will report in more detail on this over the next few months, particularly as the overall spending patterns come through, but here are some headlines:

- The increase in national insurance will be a significant burden, particularly for services such as care for the elderly and children where costs are dominated by staff costs. There are several increases in central grants such as the Services Grant and the Social Care Grant which should help. There is also a 'Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund' which is intended to allow councils to pay fair costs for social care staff which will help with recruitment and retention.
- Council tax referendum limits are confirmed at 2% (or £5 for district councils and fire authorities where this is more than 2%). No limits are set for town and parish councils. At a time when household budgets are under particular strain, keeping council tax increases to the minimum is a key priority.
- The settlement is for a single year only as there are to be consultations on funding reform over the next year. This makes medium term financial planning a little challenging though the underlying rationale is understandable.
- We still await details of a number of areas of special grants including for supported families, disadvantaged children, highways and SEND capital distributions and the new support for cyber security, all of which will affect our overall budget.

In summary watch this space!

Pavements and Weeds

There has been a lot of debate about the best ways of dealing with weeds, with particular emphasis on the use of glyphosate. After detailed consideration of alternatives a decision was taken to safely use a glyphosate-based herbicide until a suitable alternative becomes available and we will work with neighbouring authorities to continue exploring alternative options.

Compared to towns such as Bexhill which has huge number of pavements, this has relatively little impact, but it is a factor in our villages. Weeds are a significant hazard, particularly for the elderly or infirm. I would be pleased to receive views from anyone in Northern Rother.

Highways and Customer Service

There has been much discussion on this and on multiple occasions I have raised the issue of poor customer service and responsiveness from highways. We have to accept that resources are limited, even with the recent one-off £5M extra funding, but nevertheless poor communication exacerbates this. This seems to have been taken on board by highways (which is subcontracted by ESCC to the Costain CH2M consortium). We now have a new customer service manager, Deborah Dodge responsible for the East of the county, working with our highway steward. Early signs are that communication and coordination is improving.

As a reminder I always suggest that issues are raised on the highways portal at <https://www.eastsussexhighways.com/report-a-problem> This will generate a case number and you will be kept up to date. Let me know the case number as well which allows me to 'encourage' highways.

Cases

Nothing for Beckley.

Northern Rother District Councillors' Report - January 2022.

Community Infrastructure Levy Governance.

The Levy allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area in order to fund infrastructure projects.

Cabinet agreed to set up a new Levy Panel comprising Members and Officers and that Levy funds be distributed in accordance with the Council's Levy Governance and Funding protocol.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Cabinet agreed to improve access to the Reduction Scheme for self-employed people who are also carers or are registered disabled.

The current scheme reflects previous national benefits in assuming a minimum level of working and income. It was agreed that the current scheme disadvantages those households where full-time work is not possible and where they are carers or are disabled. Changes will be effective 1 April 2022.

Public Spaces Protection Order.

A new PSPO up to 2023 was approved by Cabinet. Members agreed to replicate the existing PSPO with additional restrictions on alcohol consumption and aggressive begging in public spaces in Battle and alcohol consumption in public spaces in Camber.

Hybrid Meeting Protocol.

Members have agreed a policy that covers how Members and the public will be able to join committee meetings remotely. Whilst current legislation does not permit formal decision-making committees to be held as hybrid meetings i.e. all voting committee members must be physically present in the meeting room, non-committee members, non-voting committee members, officers and members of the public with speaking rights will be able to join the meeting remotely.

Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 2 – 2021/22.

The revenue forecast for Quarter 2 shows a deficit of over £2.79 million, £93,000 greater than the approved planned use of reserves. The Capital Programme is forecast to slip by £53.5 million in 21/22 due to timing differences, some of which are caused by delays due to Covid-19.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23-2026/27.

Cabinet believes the Council can deliver a balanced budget without the use of reserves by 2026/27 with a combination of sound financial management and the successful delivery of the Financial Stability Programme.

Performance Report Second Quarter 2021/22.

The focus for 2021/22 has been set on 5 themes:

Housing and Communities – to monitor the delivery of the Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Economic Development and Poverty – to monitor the impact of the Pandemic on household incomes, council tax and business rates collection.

Waste Collection – to monitor the proportion of household waste collected that is sent for reuse, composting and recycling.

Additional Income – to monitor significant non-tax income as a part of the Council's revenue streams.

Planning processing – to monitor the processing times of applications.

Designation of Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

Members agreed that Lorna Ford, Deputy Chief Executive be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer and that Lisa Cooper be designated as the Council's Deputy Monitoring Officer with effect from 17 January 2022.

Cabinet also agreed to designate Antony Baden as the Council's Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) with effect from 1 January 2022.

Councillors Martin Mooney and Tony Ganly.