

BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE CENTRE at 7.30pm on TUESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2022

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

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

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- 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. There were no questions.**
 - 2. Apologies for absence** received from Cllr N Vadorin- illness – 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.**

PR had spoken with Highways about the accidents at Carmen Bridge on Stoddards Lane and the possibility of having warning signs erected. Highways will look into it.

ZG has the forms for completion to NatWest for herself as a 3rd signatory, agreed at the PC meeting on 2 March 2021, and it was agreed NV would be the 4th signatory. ZG will start the process.
 - 5. To consider and approve** the signing by the Chairman of the minutes of the PC meeting of 11/01/22. Following an amendment to second item of 12 to read '..... **tree planting ceremony 'hoping' with the Lord Lieutenant of**' the minutes were signed by TL as a true copy.
 - 6. PLANNING** – to consider any planning applications received from RDC and any other planning matters.

APPROVED APPLICATIONS:

RR/2021/2693/L & RR/2021/2692/P - Ludley Farm, Ludley Hill. Two storey side extension and internal alterations.

RR/2021/2559/P - Maskot, Hobbs Lane. Proposed single storey rear extension and alterations.
 - 7. Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations** – plans and application to RDC for a £500 grant. Discuss any insurance requirements. TL will check with those concerned over insurance requirements. She thanked RDC for their donation of £500, one of only 10 x £500 awards for the PC's proposed plans, drawn up by TL and NV, to celebrate the event -

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, hopefully with the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex. A free tree for every child to plant for the Queen.

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.
 - 8. Spring Newsletter** - decide date for publication and means of delivery. The newsletter would go out in April and suggestions were made how best to deliver it. ZG will check what Peasmarsh does and SB said he may be able to arrange delivery through his contacts if the PC would cover basic costs. **March.**
 - 9. Groundworks** – consider tenders received with a view to appointing a contractor for 2022. The Clerk had written to nine contractors inviting them to tender. Only four replied; two quotes were in excess of £8k and of the remaining two, which were very close, **members unanimously resolved (6:0) to accept Tom O'Conner's quote for £1845.00 net.**

10. **Tree survey** – EE – Brian Doggett – outcome of any discussions. EE had made some enquiries, but not got anywhere. He was asked to contact Simon Curley and again approach Brian Doggett as a tree survey was urgently required. **Deferred to March.**
11. **Fingerposts** – discuss any information from Phillsigns regarding a survey and costs for renovations. Phillsigns had submitted a quotation for posts they considered required painting or replacing. The PC will decide next month which signs work should be carried out on. A cost sheet had also been received giving prices for individual items. Clerk to request Phillsigns to carry out a survey on all our fingerposts. **Clerk.**
12. **Request from Beckley Village Hall** for annual funding. Ms Howse was asked to return the request form stating for what project money was required.
13. **Accounts** for approval (*VAT, if applicable, shown for items exceeding £100*).

Recipient	VAT £	Total £	Recipient	VAT £	Total £
Admin costs – Jan		1076.92	IdVerde - Oct	34.77	173.87
Beckley Village Hall - Jan		16.40			

The accounts were proposed for payment by ZG and seconded by TL – carried.

14. **Matters** for consideration as an agenda item for the next meeting.

TL said Playdale had submitted a further quotation of £900 to replace the missing fixings for the children's climbing frame, which was in addition to the £900 already authorised to replace and fit the net. This sounded excessive and would be followed up.

15. **Public questions** - not to exceed 10 minutes.

16. **Date of next meeting – 5 April 2022.**

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

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.