

# BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE CENTRE at 7.30pm on TUESDAY 1 MARCH 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), Mrs Natasha Vadorin (NV)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs V Ades (Clerk), County Cllr Paul Redstone (PR), District Cllrs Martin Mooney (MM) and Tony Ganly (TG) and three members 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.**

**Mr S Bowler** asked when would Buddens Green field be mown and said the hedge was very untidy. He asked why the field to the rear had not been cut. TL said the front field could not be cut as there were protected newts and the hedge would be attended to. SB was meeting with the new contractors, Tom O'Conner, on Wednesday, and would discuss both items. TL said the field to the rear had been deliberately left as a wild flower meadow, which residents liked. SB said the field was overgrown and not a meadow. He said it had been gifted to the village by a Mrs Barraclough, specifically for affordable housing for residents, and no developer would touch the land in its over-grown condition. TL said there were no plans at present for its development and the process for development could take some time.

**TG will check the Local Plan with RDC.**

- 2. Apologies for absence.** None.
- 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.**

TG reported a Rother resident had put a FOI question to RDC: *"An update on the Mid Term Financial Plan was presented to Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet in November and December 2021. In Appendix A an estimate of £1,660,000 in savings resulting from devolution of discretionary services to Town and Parish Councils is shown. Please provide a schedule showing how this figure was reached. I would like to see the make up by service description within the generic 'Discretionary' heading and the make-up of the Estimate specifically for Battle Town Council and Bexhill Town Council."*

**The reply:** *"it is still the intention of the Council to devolve some discretionary services to Town and Parish Councils, however, there is currently no breakdown or detail behind this figure at this stage. Detailed proposals will be developed following consultation with the appropriate parties."*

PR drew attention to ●ESCC's Non-matched money for highways. TL asked if it could be used to put in 20mph outside of the school. PR thought it unlikely. ●ESCC is unhappy with the Water Board over the way information was delivered following the storms. Many residents couldn't get information and much of what was given out was out of date. Vulnerable residents' information was not always recorded correctly. Many areas did not have water supplies and were told to travel up to 15 miles to find supplies. Water boards must do better and should have their own generators to deal with such emergencies.

**Items 7 and 11 were brought forward to allow PR to continue to Peasmarsh PC meeting.**

**7 Carmen Bridge.** Signage was considered inadequate on the approach to the bridge and Highways was looking into the matter. Mr Bowler asked if ESCC would look at cutting the hedge on the approach. **PR.**

**11 Path across field adjacent the school.** PR said with the lifting of restrictions following Covid-19 it was unlikely ESCC would fund a path across the field adjacent to the school.

8pm – PR left the meeting.

**Reports continued – EE** said following the storms there were many trees leaning towards electric cables, one at the Four Oaks roundabout. Other trees and hedges looked like they required attention. These were not

PC trees or hedges. Many footpaths are overgrown with grass and moss and require clearing. Clerk asked for all locations and she would advise Highways. **Committee.**

**NV** advised the Farmers' Market re-starts 24 April 10 till noon, with current promises of 10/12 stalls.

**TL** said there were reports of mud on road in Rectory Lane. Clerk advised whoever was responsible was also responsible to clear it off the road the same day. **TL would investigate.**

She said the clock on the outside school wall required new lamps. School would obtain a price. **She finished by paying tribute to the very brave people of Ukraine, saying all our thoughts are with them.**

5. **To consider and approve** the signing by the Chairman of the minutes of the PC meeting of 1/2/22. Considered correct, the minutes were signed by TL.
6. **PLANNING** – to consider any planning applications received from RDC and any other planning matters.  
**RR/2022/360/T DEL 4 Royal Oak Close.** (T1-Oak) Raise crown to 3m from ground level and prune back from property allowing a 2m clearance. The applicant informed the members that cyclists and horse riders could not negotiate riding beneath the tree as the branches were so low and they were resorting to riding on the road. This tree is significantly important as it was bequeathed to the village from one of HRH Queen Elizabeth II's nurseries. Members discussed this revised application, which showed pruning back by a 2M clearance from the house, not the original 3M clearance. **Vote - 5:1 in favour and one abstention.**

#### **APPROVED APPLICATIONS:**

**RR/2021/1887/P - Beech Cottage, Horseshoe Lane.** Construction of an agricultural building to be used for the storage of machinery and associated farm track.

**RR.2021/2166/P - 10 Oakhill Cottages, Peasmarsh Road, Four Oaks** First floor extension to provide a bedroom and en-suite bathroom. Bay window and porch at the ground floor.

7. **Carmen Bridge - dealt with above.**
8. **Dunedin – work carried out to alleviate flooding in the garden.** Following a resident's request for information regarding this work, SB met with the owner and inspected the works, which have been done to avoid further flooding at the property; it in no way adds to the flow of water currently entering the culvert in front of Dunedin and indeed many other properties on Main Street. The ditch runs parallel to Dunedin and is currently incapable of supporting extreme rainfall routed into the rear garden and ultimately the basement of Dunedin. Additional pipework to alleviate this issue has been installed and it now enters the culvert only a few metres before the existing ditch. The enquirer has been informed.
9. **Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations** – Any amendments to planned programme and discuss any insurance requirements. The church's insurance will cover any events held on its premises.
10. **Spring Newsletter** - decide means of delivery in April. The draft stands at 4 pages and Rother Reprographics will print 500 for £55. SB has contacts who will deliver to the whole village on or around 15 April. The PC will cover their costs. Members agreed the annual meeting for residents will be called 'Annual Village Meeting' and they resolved to have a new AO size sign made for the event at a cost of approximately £35 from Rother Reprographics. Smaller notices would be laminated and displayed around the village.
11. **Path across field adjacent the school** – dealt with above.
12. **Tree survey** – follow up with Steve Curley and Brian Doggett. EE has spoken with Steve Curley and received details of three plans. He will meet with him again before April's meeting. **EE.**
13. **Fingerposts** – authorise work for Phillsigns to carry out. **It was resolved** to have all the work carried out as detailed in Phillsigns quotation for £1035. Repaint sign at bottom of Kingsbank Lane. Repaint and provide one arm to sign at Horseshoe Lane at junction with Main Street. Repaint the signs at Rectory Lane (Main Street junction) and Stoddard Lane and Church Lane junction and completely replace 3-arm sign at Horseshoe Lane. The sign at the junction of A268 and Kitchenour Lane is missing and will require a price to replace. **Clerk.**
14. **Playdale – arrangements for repairs to the climbing frame on playground.** New order with fixings included has been placed at £1190.45– delivery approximately 8/12 weeks.
15. **Storms Eunice and Franklin**
  - a. Trees which came down in storms and arrangements made for clear up. Makin Fencing has been instructed to remove the fallen tree on the field adjacent to the school and repair the fence - £465.00.

b. Should the Village Hall be used in emergency conditions and under what arrangements? Ms Howse said if the village is without electricity and/or water it seemed senseless in opening the village hall.

16. **Emergency call-out list** of residents with special equipment which could be used in emergencies. Ideas were discussed to create a register of people who would help in emergencies or who have 4x4 vehicles, chain saws etc. However, insurance could prove a problem. **TG will check with RDC.**
17. **BVH donation request** – carried over from February 2022. Money had been requested to assist with repairs and renovations to the building. With one declared interest (TL on the Village Hall Committee) members voted 6:0 to award £500, which would be paid in April.
18. **NatWest account - new signatories** as agreed at earlier meetings Cllrs Mrs Zoe Gleisner and Mrs Natasha Vadorin will become 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> signatories. The Clerk read out a NatWest statement :-  
*'If we add or remove Authorised Signatures in the "Add or remove individuals" section of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's "About your business" section.*  
*If we change the Signing Rules in the "Account Signing Rules" section of this form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in this form's "About your business" section.*  
*The Bank can phone the individuals we've identified as "Call Back Contacts" to confirm or correct any instructions or information that we've given the Bank and the current mandate will continue as amended'.* **Unanimously agreed by members.**
19. **Bank reconciliation** – agree quarter 3 - 1 October – 31 December 2021. Agreed – signed off by TL.
20. **Review year-end financial position.** The figures to the end of February 2022 had been circulated and the Clerk estimated we should finish the year with a closing balance of approximately £27K. With an approximate overspend of £12K against the budget ZG said this was made up of a £5.5k grant not yet received, £2k on salary costs, £1.5k on the fallen tree in Buddens Green and £2.5k on the frog field budgeted for in previous years.
21. **Accounts** for approval (*VAT, if applicable, shown for items exceeding £100*).

Recipient	VAT £	Total £	Recipient	VAT £	Total £
Admin costs – Jan		227.32	Netwise	63.00	315.00
HMRC-Tax £823.60 NI £263.07		1086.67	Mrs Langmead-Homebase compost		54.00
Beckley Village Hall – Feb		16.40			

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

22. **Matters** for consideration as an agenda item for the next meeting.
23. **Public questions** - not to exceed 10 minutes.

**Mr Bowler** said he would like answers about having the field cleared to the rear of Budden's Green. He felt the school should be asked for a contribution towards the cost of the fallen tree and repair to the fence. TL said the field belonged to the PC and the damage caused was the PC's responsibility. Mr Bowler disagreed. The Clerk said if the falling tree had injured somebody it would be the PC's responsibility through its insurance, not the school's responsibility.

**Date of next meeting – 5 April 2022 commencing 7.30pm.**

**The meeting closed at 9.35pm.**

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*Reports attached from ESCC and RDC.*

## ESCC - Report to Parish Councils – March 2022 – Cllr Paul Redstone

### Community (Matched) Funding Changes – Important Opportunity!

Community matched funding provides up to 50% funding for road safety improvements, the other 50% being provided by parish councils or similar. However, this has resulted in a surplus of unallocated funds from this budget over the years. At a meeting of the Lead Member for Transport and the Environment on 21<sup>st</sup> February it was agreed to allocate most of the surplus (£750,000) to road safety schemes but crucially *these do not have to have matched funding and have broader criteria.*

They expect to be able to fund 7 to 10 schemes a year, each at a maximum of £40k. Typical schemes might be:

- Centre island £10,000 to £30,000
- Village gateways £2,000 to £5,000 per site
- School safety schemes £10,000 to £50,000, which could include enhanced signing/road markings, a 20mph speed limit, an advisory 20mph speed limit (when lights are flashing) or traffic calming
- New speed limit - £10,000 to £30,000

I understand that the criteria for this can take account of feelings in the community and less simply hard road safety statistics. I attach to the end of this report a screenshot of the scoring criteria which will be used. As you can see this includes things like accident rate but also Community Value. We await full details but **I encourage each parish to identify changes which might fit these criteria and perhaps begin to assemble evidence of community support.**

### Storm Eunice

As I write the impact from this continues though at much reduced level with disruption to power supplies and water. At the time my power went off I was actually on an ESCC Emergency Planning briefing remote meeting!

Many of us are very unhappy with some aspects of the way this was handled. The power workers in the field clearly worked very hard in the face of overwhelming number of incidents, far more than we would normally expect but I think some serious questions need to be asked such as:

- Why was the information from UK Power Networks so unreliable? Initially they will not have assessed damage so this is reasonable at first, but days later the information was still changing.
- Why was the UK Power Networks web site so slow/overloaded making it far more difficult to get updates via mobile phones
- The loss of water supplies is very serious and could be catastrophic for some. Should South-East Water not have generators for this eventuality? When bottled water was provided, why was it felt reasonable that people in Beckley, for example, should go to Sedlescombe or Battle?
- ESCC has a Resilience Forum but this seems to have no online presence. I do not think it has resources but is more for strategic preparation, but some sort of online presence should be essential.

Huw Merriman has raised issues nationally and directly with UK Power Networks and South East Water, speaking directly to the senior management in these organisations and making things happen. I have passed him more details of the above issues which he will raise with them.

I know at least some parish councils in response to requests from parishioners are looking at what local resilience measures could be put in place, even discussing generators, emergency food stores etc. But I think we need to be realistic in our expectations. Generators which could help a whole community are massively expensive. The last time we had such a storm was in 1987, a few years before I moved to this area. But there may be practical and affordable steps which could be considered.

I have already raised questions at County and will be collecting feedback from parish councils over the next month which I shall feed back. I hope to have an opportunity, directly or indirectly, to question UKPN and SEW to see what lessons can be learnt for such future occurrences.

### Budget Update

The new council tax was confirmed at full council on 8<sup>th</sup> February and is:

- Core council tax of 1.99%
- Increase of 1.5 % in the adult and social care precept, carried over from last year when ESCC did not apply the full amount permitted by government
- Increase of 1% in the same precept for this year

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.

### Cases

Each month I will give summaries/updates for a sample of current cases across Northern Rother. I currently have about 12 which are being progressed. Currently there are no issues for Beckley.

## Scoring Criteria for Community Funding

<b>Crash history (see note 2)</b>	
KSI	6
Slight	2
None	0
<b>Road Class</b>	
A-class urban / rural	4
A-class inter-urban	6
B – class	8
Other	10
<b>Local conditions</b>	
Residential area	4
Shops	4
Schools / elderly / disabled	6
Hospital / clinic	6
<b>Local Impact</b>	
Cycling/ Walking Improvements	6
Improve compliance of existing measures	8
<b>Feasibility</b>	
TRO Required?	-5
Cost £40K or less	8
Low maintenance	4
Deliverable within financial year	10
<b>Deliverability (see note 3)</b>	
Very deliverable	10
Some difficulties	-5
Very difficult	-10
<b>Link to County Schemes</b>	
Current / future scheme	-10
Proposed scheme	-5
No proposals	10
<b>Community Value</b>	
High	10
Medium	8
Low	2

## Northern Rother District Councillors' Report March 2022

The draft Revenue Budget has been balanced for 2022/23 by the planned use of **£3.296m from Reserves**. This was not sustainable, and it would be imperative that the Council delivers on key initiatives such as the Financial Stability Programme and Property Investment Strategy which are aimed at generating income and cost savings. Without action, the financial forecast shows Reserves would be under considerable pressure and may fall below acceptable levels over the next five years. This was attributed to several reasons including significantly increased costs of the joint Waste and Recycling contract. The Council would also be vulnerable to unexpected costs that might arise. There are also risks regarding the impact of the Fair Funding Review and the income from business rates. Delivering a sustainable future remains a significant challenge for the Council.

### Capital Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27.

The Council's CP totalled £132m of which £80m was unsecured funding. A significant part of the CP related to the Council's approved Property Investment Strategy (PIS) and loan funding to the Council's company Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd. To date, approximately £20.6m had been expended or committed on 11 properties/sites. Income of approximately £1.1m was included within 2022/23 Revenue Budget for PIS assets that had been acquired.

The updated CP continued to minimise the use of Revenue Reserves to fund capital expenditure. For 2022/23, some £1.0m was planned to be used, but this reduced thereafter. Largely this would be replaced by low cost borrowing where appropriate which, whilst having a revenue impact, was spread over a longer time period.

### **Redevelopment of Beeching Road/ Wainwright Road, Bexhill**

Consideration was given to the confidential report of the Director – Place and Climate Change regarding proposals for comprehensive redevelopment at Beeching Road and Wainwright Road, Bexhill. The Director – Place and Climate Change outlined the history of the area and current position.

After consideration of several proposed redevelopment options, Cabinet recommended that the sum £15m be added to the Capital Programme. It was agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to enter all necessary contracts, leases and agreements to facilitate the redevelopment of land at Beeching Road and Wainwright Road, Bexhill, in consultation with the Property Investment Panel and the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Strategy and Transformation and Finance and Performance Management.

### **COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) – Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief Scheme.**

Consideration was given to the report of the Revenues and Benefits Manager that set out details of the Government’s COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) – Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief Scheme to assist businesses affected by the pandemic and who were ineligible for existing support linked to business rates. The Council would be reimbursed where relief was granted using discretionary powers under section 47 of the local Government finance act.

Cabinet formally approved the CARF scheme and agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to finalise the amount of reduction and detailed criteria.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging in Car Parks Owned by Rother District Council.**

Cabinet gave consideration to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services which detailed the delivery of electric vehicle (EV) charging points in Council owned car parks across the district. The report had been considered by the Climate Change Steering Group on 13 January 2022 and a copy of the Minutes had been appended to the report for Cabinet’s consideration. A key priority in the Council’s Rother Environment Strategy adopted in September 2020 was air quality, sustainable transport and energy. Government statistics detailed that transport was the largest source of carbon dioxide emissions (37%).

At present there were nine EV charging locations across the district namely Cooden Beach Hotel, Yeomans Hyundai Bexhill, Aldi Bexhill, Flimwell Park, Battle Brewery, The Bell in Iden, Flackley Ash Hill Hotel in Peasmarsch, The Gallivant in Camber and Route 1066 Café at Johns Cross. Unfortunately, not all were accessible to the public. The Council owned 44 car parks, 16 were free of charge (predominantly rural) and 28 were pay and display (predominantly urban). It was noted that East Sussex County Council (ESCC) was responsible for the provision of on-street EV installations.

Cabinet approved the procurement of a Provider to install EV charging infrastructure in selected Council owned car parks at nil capital investment to the Council. It was essential that a robust attractive specification be presented at the procurement stage to ensure that the Council received a suitable and sustainable long-term contract. It was noted that significant investigation had commenced regarding understanding the market.

### **Civil Parking Enforcement’**

It is proposed:

- 1/ that car park charges be suspended in The Polegrove, Bexhill and Rye Salts for 12 months and then either reinstated or removed according to levels of use
- 2/ That on-street directional signage for long stay car parks be reviewed on a continual basis as business as usual
- 3/ recommendations on changes to car park charges remain within the annual ‘fees and charges’ report as part of the overall setting of the Council budget.

**Councillors Tony Ganly and Martin Mooney.**