

BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held in THE VILLAGE CENTRE on TUESDAY 5 JULY 2022 at 7.30pm

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs V Ades (Parish Clerk), District Cllrs Tony Ganly (TG) and Martin Mooney (MM), County Cllr Paul Redstone (PR) *arrived 7.40pm* and two 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. **None.**
 - 2. Apologies for absence** due to illness received and accepted from Cllr Mrs N Vadorin and Cllr S Thorneycroft.
 - 3. Reports from County and District Councillors had been received and read.**
TL reported: the rough sleeper on Hobbs Lane had gone; there will be a Friends of the Church Car Boot Sale 24/25 September; giant hogweed and brambles on Hobbs Lane were reported and a pedestrian had reported an overtaking and speeding vehicle along Main Street which narrowly missed her when walking along the pavement. TL will report to PR when he arrives. Addresses were given regarding overgrown hedges. **Clerk will send letters.**
 - 4. To consider and approve** the minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 7 June 2022. Amendments were made to Item 7 to read *'There were no plans to have the rear field cut'* and after item 15 *'The next meeting would be Tuesday 5 July 2022'*. TL then signed the minutes as a true copy.

TL was congratulated on and applauded for her excellent work in arranging four days of events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

7.40pm Cllr Redstone arrived after attending the Peasmarsh meeting and TL reported the following:-

Hogweed and bramble overgrowth in Hobbs Lane.

PR will raise with Highways.

On speeding PR suggested we invest in or hire from another parish a speed camera or black cat device.

Encroachment of grass and vegetation across many pavements is causing many pedestrians to walk in the road. Wheelchair, mobility scooters and pram users also have to use the road. PR asked members to take photos and details of the areas and log these on the ESCC website.

All members.

PR is awaiting a response from school transport about the Beckley to Robertsbridge bus.

TL asked the DC's how planning decide one barn requires planning permission when another doesn't. TG said he didn't know the details of the applications. The Clerk will send details of two recent applications. **Clerk.**

- 5. PLANNING – to consider any planning applications received from RDC and any other planning matters.**
RR/2022/1355/P DEL Kings Bank Barn at Kings Bank Farmhouse, Kings Bank Farmhouse, Kings Bank Lane. Conversion of the Barn at King's Bank Farmhouse to ancillary accommodation for Kings Bank Farmhouse. Members **supported the application 5:0.**
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PLANNING PERMISSION

RR/2021/2253/FN Kings Bank - Land at, Main Street, Beckley. Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed agricultural barn. Formal Approval of Details not required

PLANNING REFUSAL

RR/2022/955/P - Grove Orchard, Watermill Lane. Proposed changes to approved detached garage and annexe (RR/2019/2435/P) currently under construction, including addition of open sided carport.

- 6. The Rother Constitution** - questions to District Councillor (TG) to explain

1. Additions can be added to the Planning agenda up to the day of the meeting.
 - 1a How does this compare with the rules for parish councils? TG said last minute information can be considered at a Planning Meeting.
 - 1b Does it represent openness and transparency? TG felt PCs could also consider last minute planning information.
 2. Explanation of the new ‘delegating’ system. **TG was not happy with this - ongoing**
 3. Time-scale for the ‘calling-in’ procedure. Clerk said the time-scale of 28 days from date of receipt at planning was insufficient time for parish councils, resulting in many having to call an extra meeting each month. **TG agreed and said he would now be calling-in every application in his ward.**
7. **Town Hall Reconnaissance** – request information from District Councillor (TG) regarding advertising the plan, the consultation period, evidence of need, costs and who will pay. **TG** said this was a cabinet decision and proving very controversial with Rother residents. He agreed the consultation period for members of the public to comment had been extremely short. The £14M building costs plus £5/6M for roads and infrastructure is only phase one and those costs would almost certainly increase over time with tax payers footing the bill. Final figures for the development were unknown. TL said it seemed very unfair that costs for improvements in Bexhill were spread throughout the rural areas which didn’t reap any benefit. MM said the town hall was a heritage asset for Rother. TG said he felt this project would be the subject of much controversy and ongoing.
 8. **Trees** – how to proceed if we carry out our own tree inspections. The clerk had contacted our insurers, BHIB, who advised we could carry out these ourselves every two years. We should produce a risk assessment form to log information. RC will assess the trees at the play area and do periodic checks. TL said an ecologist had visited the Frog Field and she would ask for his report. Any other trees must be included on the risk assessment. **RC.**
 9. **Defibrillator for Hobbs Lane area** – where should it be positioned. Ebrofrost have agreed the defibrillator can be mounted on their wall where there is a light and a security camera. Members unanimously (5:0) agreed to the purchase of a defibrillator approx. £1K, using £666 CIL money, plus a wall cabinet up to £400. **Clerk.**
 10. **Repair or replace the noticeboard at the Four Oaks.** SB will purchase the materials and repair the boards. **SB.**
 11. **Newsletter** September/October edition – the Clerk will contact the clubs to request articles for inclusion. **Clerk.**
 12. **Flower meadow seed** - consider purchasing at £4 per bale. Members agreed we would purchase bales once we knew which areas and how much was required – September. **Clerk to advise Mr Broadbent.**
 13. **Playdale invoice** – request for payment of an additional £1183.92. The Clerk said Playdale had made an error on their invoice for £1190.45 when they confirmed this amount included all items required to replace and fit the netting to the climbing frame. In fact, they had omitted two items amounting to £1183.92. She had advised them the parish council had accepted their confirmed quote of £1190.45 and was therefore unable to correct it for them. Members agreed.
 14. **KSS Air Ambulance** – consider donation request. **Members agreed £300.00** to be paid in September.
 15. **Policies for adoption, review or updating** – The Clerk will send the following policies to members for reading before September’s meeting.

Standing Orders - updating

Code of Conduct - updating

Financial Regulations - review

Transparency Act Regulations - compliance with for Adoption

Clerk.

16. **Accounts** for approval (*reclaimable VAT, if applicable, shown for items exceeding £100*). TL said the Jewson account of £131.68 was to be reimbursed to SB. – **Agreed.**

| Recipient | VAT £ | Total £ | Recipient | VAT £ | Total £ |
|------------------------------|-------|---------|--------------------------|-------|---------|
| Admin costs April | | 529.42 | T Langmead – r’bursement | | |
| Beckley Village Hall- June | | 8.20 | Lidl – refreshments QPJ | 21.95 | 49.57 |
| HMRC tax & NI | | 762.24 | Jewson-cement (£181.25) | | 131.68 |
| John O’Conner - June | 30.75 | 184.50 | N Vadorin -reimbursement | | 16.36 |
| Mulberry & Co Internal audit | 33.00 | 198.00 | Flyers QPJ | | |

Proposed by ZG and seconded by EE the accounts were approved for payment.

17. Matters for consideration as an agenda item for the next meeting.

18. Public questions - not to exceed 10 minutes.

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 6 September 2022 commencing 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Reports attached from ESCC and RDC.

ESCC Report to Northern Rother Parish Councils – July 2022

Chairman's Teas for Volunteers

I have received more nominations for these events and have passed them on. I know some of those invited have been delighted to receive invitations and rightly see them as showing that their community recognises their contributions. Please keep them coming! The first event is in early July but there will be others.

County Budgets

ESCC have started the process of planning budgets for next year (i.e. from April 2023), in a process called RPPR (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources). For those interesting in seeing the full papers, the cabinet meeting for 27th June has these as agenda item 5 – see [Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 27th June, 2022, 10.00 am.](#)

It is a particularly challenging year for budgeting for multiple reasons:

- Inflation is high, putting pressure on salary costs
- Fuel prices have increased significantly
- The government have again only provided a one-year financial settlement, making medium term planning more challenging
- There remain some effects from the pandemic
- We are proud to have welcomed many Ukrainian refugees but this has some cost implications
- Challenges arising from the reforms in health and social care, for example the cap on personal contributions

This means that we are currently forecasting deficits of about £6.5M in 2023/24 rising to £15M in 2025/26 but this depends on the financial settlements from central government.

Cases

Each month I will give summaries/updates for a sample of current cases across Northern Rother. I currently have about 16 which are being progressed. For ones which have been on this list for some time, this month's updates are shown in italics. **Only Beckley or local cases are shown below:-**

Homewood School Bus Service

A number of children from Northiam, Beckley and Peasmarsh apparently attend Homewood school in Tenterden and travel on the 294 service provided by Hams Travel. Hams have said that this will be discontinued at the end of June. I understand that it is a discretionary service and it is also complicated because the school is, of course, in Kent.

I spoke last week to the East Sussex Lead Member for Education who is looking into it, but I think I may need to contact Kent County Council. I have to say I am not hopeful of a satisfactory outcome but this will cause significant expenditure and inconvenience to parents who then have to drive to Tenterden and back twice a day. It would be helpful to know the numbers who travel on this service, though I will also contact Hams. Could clerks or others let me know of numbers if possible.

I continue to chase this but am getting no response from the bus company.

Development off the Paddocks, Northiam

I have received multiple correspondence from residents and others about this development, but there are clearly several misconceptions about this, for example the need for a stopping up order. I have had multiple discussions with officials at ESCC and have passed on their comments to residents.

Some key points:

- Planning permission was granted in 2019 and mentioned stopping up orders but county have confirmed that none is required.
- Parking places are being moved not lost. In fact, the number of parking places available seem to be more than guidance would require
- One part of a water drainage pipe (sometimes called a sewer though in fact it is not for foul water) is being rerouted. This was put in by a previous developer and the parish council given some funds which are held in a 'sewer account' to be used in case of problems and which I believe now total about £80k. I know of no evidence that the rerouting will cause problems. The sewer account has never been needed
- There is understandable concern amongst residents about the disruption during the construction process itself. The developer is aware of this and is building a car park for contractors within the site. They are also trying to maintain good communications with residents. ESCC officials are keeping close to this as am I. I would encourage residents to keep me informed of any issues

I understand that there was opposition to this development and sympathise with this, but planning permission was granted and it is going ahead.

Councillor Paul Redstone – ESCC

Northern Rother District Councillors' Report July 2022.

Bexhill Town Hall "Renaissance" project.

this link will give you access to the report on the RDC website:

<https://www.rother.gov.uk/business/local-regeneration-projects/town-hall-renaissance/>

The project was originally planned to be cost neutral. However, we have seen no figures or a cost/benefit analysis. It is proposed to hear a planning application for this project at the Planning Committee this month. An interesting letter from a Battle resident published in the Observer on 17 June addresses the process under which the consultation was conducted:

"The fact that a project to do up the Bexhill Town Hall is given a fancy name should start the warning bells ringing for Rother taxpayers. But whether one supports the concept or not It is appalling that RDC should announce a "public consultation" for just one day on the scheme- only giving just 5 days notice and then only notifying a select group of people - all within Bexhill. They claim it was "widely broadcast" on the Rother website. It was not. It was not even included in the Rother Alerts email which RDC claims goes to 20,000 email accounts each week. If you can find the webpage featuring this public consultation there is a note saying the public can see the scheme details on the website from 15 June and have until midday on Sunday 19 June to register their comments. Four whole days to find, read about, consider and submit a comment on a £14 million project Rother taxpayers will have to fund! It is even more disturbing that it is not just the residents who have been given no adequate notice of this public consultation. Two of Battle's District Councillors are members of the RDC Cabinet. They were unaware of this public consultation until Friday 17 June. They have not seen the details of the scheme. One subsequently asked for a postponement of the event. This was denied. This begs the question: who is running Rother District Council? Where is the openness, transparency and accountability the Rother Alliance claims to espouse? **Bernard Brown, Netherfield Road, Battle."**

Performance Report fourth quarter 21/22.

Out of 13 key performance indicators only three are performing satisfactorily. Recycling, Planning applications, additional income generation, Council Tax & Business Rates collection rates, net additional homes provided all fall below the level expected. Indeed, the target for "additional income generation" for 2021/22 was set at £107,000. The actual result is zero.

Contracting out of Homelessness Reviews.

Cabinet agreed to appoint a new agent to fulfil the Council's obligations to review homelessness decisions under sections 202 and 204 of the Housing Act 1966 (as amended).

Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme.

In February 2022 the Government announced

a Council Tax Energy Rebate of £150 to households liable for

Council Tax and reside in properties with a tax band A-D AND

A Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate to support households not eligible for the main scheme, including those in bands E to H.

Rother has been allocated £294,000 to fund the discretionary scheme, allowing support to be provided to an additional 1,960 households that meet the criteria:

the household is liable for Council Tax and resides in a property with a Council Tax band E-H or the household is not liable for Council Tax and reside in a dwelling with a Council Tax band A-D but are responsible for energy bills **AND** receive benefits **OR** has a net income of not more than £257.69 per week for a single person or £384.62 for a couple and has capital of not more than £6000.

New Cricket facility for Sidley Cricket Club at St. Mary's Recreation ground.

Sidley Cricket Club has been granted a 50 year lease to develop, at the Club's expense, a cricket square and artificial wicket.

Councillors Tony Ganly and Martin Mooney.