

## BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held in THE VILLAGE CENTRE on TUESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2022 at 7.30pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mrs Tina Langmead (TL) Chairman, Ms Zoe Gleisner (ZG) Stephen Thorneycroft (ST) and Mrs Natasha Vadorin (NV).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs V Ades (Parish Clerk), District Cllr Tony Ganly (TG) 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.  
**The Beckley 10K race** takes place on 6 November between 10-12 noon. Children 10.30am, adults 11am.
- 2. Apologies for absence** accepted from Councillors Steve Bunn (holiday), Rod Chapman and Ed Erith (personal) and District Cllr Martin Mooney (personal) and County Cllr Paul Redstone (meeting).
- 3. Declarations of interest.** None.
- 4. Reports from County, District and Parish Councillors.** Reports received from County and District cllrs.  
**ST** said the water leak at The Forge, Beckley Road, which was believed to have been repaired was still leaking. **Clerk report to County.**  
**ZG** reported the road traffic counter, reported sited on Main Street, has been removed. A fingerpost at Moores Lane was in a poor state of repair. **Clerk report to Philsigns.**
- 5. To consider and approve** the minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 6 Sept. 2022. Approved and signed by TL.
- 6. PLANNING –** to consider any planning applications received from RDC and any other planning matters.  
**RR/2022/2122/L DEL - Chestnuts, Main Street.** Proposed replacement of C20th utility extension and alterations to existing C20th kitchen extension including new rooflights, alterations to fenestration and fireplace. **Councillors voted unanimous support 4.0.**  
**RR/2022/1581/P DEL - Great Bellhurst Bungalow, Hobbs Lane.** Conversion of former fruit storage barn into a single residential dwelling. **Councillors voted unanimous support 4.0.**  
**RR/2022/2191/P DEL - Land at Watermill Lane.** Outline application for the proposed erection of a single dwelling (all matters reserved other than site access). **Councillors voted unanimous support 4.0.**  
**RR/2022/2237/P DEL - Kingsbank Farm, Kings Bank Lane.** Formation of a new agricultural track/hardstanding associated with the erection of an Agricultural Barn under Prior Approval (Ref: RR/2019/2396/FN). Members felt this was an overdevelopment for the site and it was outside the development boundary. **Call in - TG.**  
**Planning Permissions Granted**  
**RR/2022/1887/P -The Spinney, Clayhill.** Addition of solar panels to roof of modern detached garage.  
**RR/2022/1878/P - Lynwood, Main Street.** Erection of first floor side extension.  
**RR/2022/1333/P - Waters End, Furnace Lane.** Erection of bolted sectional galvanised steel observatory.  
**RR/2022/1820/P - Meadow Cottage, The Stream.** Erection of extension as well as garage conversion and new roof to provide first floor living accommodation.  
**RR/2022/1911/D - Grove Orchard, Watermill Lane.** Proposed changes to approved detached garage and annexe (RR/2019/2435/P) currently under construction.  
**RR/2022/1333/P Waters End, Furnace Lane.** Erection Permission granted subject to conditions.  
**RR/2022/1966/P - The Old Rectory, Stoddards Lane.** Planning application for a ground mounted 30.4 kWp solar array together with cable trench up to but not entering of bolted sectional galvanised steel observatory.

**The Clerk said two planning applications had been received this afternoon for comments by 25 October.**

**RR/2022/2264/P DEL Gate House, Horseshoe Lane.** Erection of extension to existing free standing 'gazebo' structure to create pool house building.

**RR/2022/2268/P DEL Goldspur, Clayhill,** Creation of vehicular access to the front of property (onto Clayhill / B2165).

This would mean the PC would have to call an additional meeting this month. She asked TG why Planning allowed only 3 weeks for comments after the planning list was circulated, when PC's met only monthly. TG agreed and said he would 'call in' these two applications. In the meantime, the Clerk would ask members if they had any strong views on the applications. **Clerk.**

7. **Town Hall Renaissance** – The Clerk had written to Ben Hook at RDC. No reply to date.
8. **Newsletter Autumn/winter edition** – articles received and costs for advertisements. Most articles had been received. Newsletter due out in late November/early December. PC had voted not to take advertisements at present.
9. **RoSPA reports** – required work. **Deferred to November.**
10. **Tree Management policy.** How we proceed. **Deferred to November.**
11. **Buddens Green** – housing and update from Graham Maunders AiRS. RDC should have decision for funding in November. **Deferred to November.**
12. **Donation request from Rother Rural Trust** - deferred from September. **£25 agreed 4.0.**
13. **HRH Queen Elizabeth II (deceased)** – Chairman's report on arrangements and events. ESALC had circulated very explicit and helpful information. Most arrangements centred around the church. Flowers were laid at the font; a remembrance book was open in the church and TL read the proclamation on Sunday afternoon. The flag was lowered and raised at the appropriate times.
14. **Urban grass cutting options for 2023** – consider and confirm requirements for submission to ESCC. **Option 2 = 6 verge cuts pa agreed 4.0. Clerk inform Highways.**
15. **Resilience and Emergency plans** – consider should the council appoint a project manager to draw up a template and advise on the best way forward with the emergency services in the event of an emergency. Clerk was obtaining more information and will report to November's meeting. **Clerk-November.**

**Clerk reported on 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 below.**

16. **Review the Internal Audit report** 31 May 2022 and confirm recommendations have been met.
  - a. Council email addresses are being used. ST was requested to get his PC address set up.
  - b. Consideration for an interim half yearly internal audit. **Members agreed not necessary 4.0.**
  - c. GDPR training. We don't keep personal details, but we have a policy to follow should this change.
  - d. Policies for review or updating (see 17 below)
17. **Policies for adoption, review or updating** –
  - a. **Standing Orders** – reviewed and agreed.
  - b. **Financial Regulations** reviewed and agreed.
18. **AGAR** – return and publication. The external auditor approved the accounts and made no comments. The first notice for the public to inspect the accounts had been published on 9 June and the notice to inspect the AGAR return was published on 7 September with the return.
19. **Budget costs-v-expenditure** – Review to date and give consideration to the 2023/24 budget and any projects for consideration. Consider any suggestions received from residents. The Clerk reported the figures are very healthy to date, but large costs will be incurred shortly, hopefully they won't take us beyond the budget. The Clerk asked for members to bring to the November meeting any ideas for 2023/24 expenditure in the village. Members of the public are invited to give ideas for consideration.

The Clerk said payments had been received of £12500, 2<sup>nd</sup> half precept, our insurers, BHIB, had returned an overcharge of £60 and RDC had made payment of £423.50 awarded for arrangements made by TL for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June.
20. **Business Register and Employment Survey 2022** - for completion - Information only.
21. **Accounts** for approval (*VAT, if applicable, shown for items exceeding £100*). **BVH amend to £195.50.**

Recipient	VAT £	Total £	Recipient	VAT £	Total £
Admin costs Sept		446.00	PKF Littlejohn Auditors	40.00	240.00
HMRC tax £630.00 NI £132.24		762.34	Rother Rural Trust		£25.00
Beckley Village Hall- Aug/Sept £14.50		<del>196.50</del>	Ralph Hobbs-Frog Field ecologist		345.00
Queen's PJ refreshment costs £181.		195.50	Bourne' Amenity 6 x bark	90.96	545.76
John O'Connor – Sept	30.75	184.50	British Legion - Wreath		20.00

The accounts were proposed for payment by ZG, seconded by NV and agreed.

**The Clerk** said KSS Air Ambulance had written thanking us for the £300 donation.

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

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

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

***The meeting closed at 8.25pm.***

*Reports attached from ESCC and RDC*

## ESCC October report ESCC – Councillor Paul Redstone

**Grass Cutting of Verges** - As last year I receive many comments and feedback on this. It is true to say that it divides residents. Some would like to see all verges in villages and perhaps rural roads cut frequently. Others would like most verges left to grow to support wildflowers and 'biodiversity'.

I offer the following comments:

- Cutting more frequently costs more, whether paid directly by parish councils or indirectly by ESCC, both of which come out of council tax.
- Where verges are left to grow but there is a safety issue, typically a 1m swathe will be cut from the edge of the road if this gives sufficient visibility even if this looks untidy in some cases
- The weather in the last few years has varied. For example, this year in the summer the drought meant that growth was low, but recent rain may cause a spurt in growth. In other years it is different, making scheduling difficult.
- Typically, wider verges are cut to 2m from the road. If the verge is wider this means that more persistent vegetation can grow such as small bushes. Apparently, such locations are cut back to the hedge (i.e. further than 2m) every 3 years

ESCC Contracts Management have sent out the following e-mail asking for feedback and **I would encourage all parish councils to complete it:**

### **Rural Grass Cutting Trial Update**

As you are aware, this is the second year we have undertaken this trial with the hope that it would be a more typical season. In contrast to last year, it has been a very dry season which has limited the amount of grass growth. However, this variation still provides us with important evidence of the impact of the trial.

Going into September the rain seems to be making up for the earlier summer months which may cause the grass to suddenly spring up. Therefore, as always, if you see a problem you can [report it as per normal via our website](#) or through the East Sussex highways contact centre.

In comparison to last year, this year we have seen a reduction in contact and feedback around the rural trial. What we have received has been generally positive.

### **We would like your Feedback**

The point of a trial is to allow us to understand the impact this change could have if rolled out wider, so your feedback is very important to us and we welcome both positive and negative comments. If you have any comments on the trial, including what you have been hearing from your residents or anything we could have done better, please let me know.

The [online feedback form](#) is also still open, so please feel free to share it with your residents.

As you are aware Beckley from your area have been taking part and we have recently asked for their feedback as well.

### **What happens next**

We will review any feedback along with any operational issues encountered, costs and an overview of the flora and fauna observed in the verges during the trial to allow us to take a decision on any changes going forward. At present I cannot advise an outcome, but will be able to let you know more in the coming months.

If you have any questions, please do let me know. Otherwise, I look forward to receiving your feedback.

### **Current Bus Services**

Issues and concerns about bus services continue. Some of these concern school buses and these issues seem to have been resolved, though I am still looking at issues regarding payments/season tickets.

More recently there have been issues with Stagecoach announcing that some services will be discontinued or reduced. These are mostly commercial services (i.e. not subsidised) but may have some ESCC subsidies for some particular services such as in the evening. Stagecoach believe that a number of services are no longer viable. I can sympathise with this as we know that drivers are in short supply and fuel more expensive, both of which push up costs.

I have been keeping in touch with ESCC officials on this. At the time of writing (30<sup>th</sup> September) from a meeting this morning, it is looking like ESCC has reached agreement with Stagecoach to provide some significant subsidies to allow services to continue, though perhaps with some changes. I expect an announcement early next week. The situation is changing rapidly so there may be more information by the time you read this. I recognise that this is important to many people, particularly those with limited or no access to cars.

## **Bus Service Improvement Plan**

As I said last month, ESCC has been recently successful in winning about £42M from central government for the 'bus back better' programme, more formally known as the Bus Service Improvement Plan and this has just been confirmed. The funds have some constraints, for example some monies are for bus infrastructure which will not really help us in rural Northern Rother. However, I am pushing for some funds to help us make more use of buses, particularly for those without cars, but ideally for many more as it reduces congestion and carbon dioxide emissions.

One option which is included in the proposal is for Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) which is somewhere between taxis, which are booked for a specific person or persons, and buses which run to a fixed schedule. I expect DDRT to be implemented as a bus/minibus but with a route and timetable which depends on demand. Potentially this could be a very good solution for the villages of Northern Rother. Watch this space!

## **Community Hubs**

As part of addressing the pandemic, ESCC in partnership with district and borough councils established a series of 5 community hubs, one per district/borough, to support those with particular vulnerabilities or with a need for social contact or similar. These were intended to refer people to other services and involved council staff as well as those from the voluntary/charitable sector.

This worked well in many ways, but an organisation has been commissioned to review the engagement with stakeholders. These are seen as a key part of the social and healthcare integration where East Sussex has the Better Together programme.

Although initially these were seen as physical hubs, at least some of the services provided are online, so they may be renamed Community Networks.

Many parishes are developing emergency plans which have some overlap with such hubs, probably not for online access but for physical help. I am exploring whether and how this could work alongside the main hubs and would welcome feedback.

**Cases** - Each month I will give summaries/updates for a sample of current cases across Northern Rother. I currently have about 20 which are being progressed. The following is near to Beckley:-

## **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. *Recently I noticed that one of the layby parking spaces seems to have gone due to a raised area by the entrance to the new site. I believe the new site parking will replace this but in the short term one slot often used by Paddock residents seems to have gone. I am checking this against the approved plans.*
- 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. I understand that the developer has agreed with the Parish Council to fund a survey of the modified route and will await the results of this.
- There is understandable concern amongst residents about the disruption during the construction process itself. The developer is aware of this and *has built* 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 have regularly visited the site and it seems to be running well.*

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

*I have received suggestions from nearly all 7 parishes for the location of bottle stations. I will be checking these, taking photos and the exact coordinates, then pass these to SEW. There are no guarantees, but I am hopeful that they will see this as a good model which could be adopted elsewhere as well.*

## Asylum Seeker Dispersal

The South East Migration Partnership, who represent the Home Office's various resettlement programmes in the region, have been in consultation with local government councils in recent months as they seek to revise the criteria for dispersing those seeking asylum in the U.K.

Historically, the dispersal of asylum seekers has been focused on specific areas of the country only. The Government recently moved to a system of U.K. wide dispersal following consultation on its New Plan for Immigration. The consultation has concerned the criteria to be applied when dispersing asylum seekers to accommodation across the U.K. Asylum seeking households are accommodated by the Home Office who source and manage property via third party contractors. The local authority may later become responsible for accommodating households who are successful in their application for asylum and are awarded some form of leave to remain in the country.

In more recent weeks, the South East region has learnt that it is forecast to receive in the region of 7,200 asylum seekers (individuals not households) by December 2023; subsequently, the South East Migration Partnership has launched a separate consultation of local authorities in the South East to inform the draft **Regional Model** they are developing. We have consulted the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Leader in our consultation response, which was required within a very short timeframe earlier this month.

The consultation focuses on two proposed options for apportioning numbers of asylum seekers throughout the South East, in one option those asylum seekers already accommodated in the South East, mainly in hotels or army barracks in Kent and Crawley, are deducted from the overall number the region receives. In the other proposed option, these asylum seekers are not deducted from the overall total. In either scenario, Rother District Council is forecast to welcome approximately 70 people by December 2023. The reason being that those already accommodated in hotels and army barracks are discounted from the overall total allocated to the South East, and the remainder allocated to those areas which have no asylum seekers in this type of interim accommodation. The Council's response has recommended that those asylum seekers already accommodated in hotels and army barracks are discounted from the number the region is expected to welcome by December 2023 overall.

**Joe Powell** - Head of Housing and Community Services

## Village Halls Energy Project

The Village Halls Energy Project (VHEP) aims to reduce the carbon footprints of village and community halls across the district by reducing reliance on oil and gas as a fuel source, and decreasing electricity drawn from the national grid by 2025. An application for £500,000 from Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) [Climate Emergency Bonus Fund] was submitted in June 2022 and approved by the Strategic CIL Allocations Panel in July 2022.

To support the Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, it was important that village and community halls across the district improved their energy costs and reduced their levels of emissions, particularly those fuelled by oil. Also, as a result of inclement weather, these buildings might be needed as potential Rest Centres for the Council in the future.

Following a review, it was clarified that 40 halls were eligible for the VHEP, 37 of which had already confirmed their desire to participate in principle. Efforts had been made to ensure that at least one hall in every Parish area of Rother was invited to participate however to date no eligible venues had been identified in Bodiam (no village hall) or Rye Foreign. It was noted that the eligible venue identified in Ashburnham and Penhurst had declined the opportunity; it was understood that they were currently working on plans to construct a new village hall.

There were two phases to the VHEP, as follows:

**Phase 1 – £42,000:** to complete site assessments, prioritising measures for energy efficiency and decarbonisation in-line with the energy hierarchy "Lean, Clean and Green". The report identified the criteria for the awards to be determined which was approved by the Climate Change Steering Group on 26 June 2022. A target date of March 2023 had been set to confirm and prioritise the best range of measures for installation within budget.

**Phase 2 – £458,000:** a procurement process to acquire suitable contractors for the works as detailed in Phase 1. Installations would be completed systematically between June 2023 and May 2024 until the full budget was spent.

## The Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle 2023 Scheme

The proposed Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Grants scheme offers funding to Parish and Town Councils and properly constituted community groups and charities who are committed to helping the Rother District to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle and meet its environmental aims. Funding can be granted for a variety of projects and activities including workshops, practical equipment, education and awareness raising. 11. It is proposed that RDC match funds, pound for pound, relevant expenditure to a limit of £1,000 of grant funding per application. A total fund of £15,000 is cb220905 – CGS Round 1 recommended and would be allocated on a first come, first served basis. A scheme guidance and application questions (online application form) are attached at Appendix B for consideration.

#### **Community Grants Scheme.**

The following grants were approved:

1. Brede Parish Council	£11,000	
2. Fairlight Parish Council	£5,060	
3. Northiam Village Hall	£10,500	
4. Rye Harbour Sailability	£8,875	
5. Winchelsea Beach Community Association	£30,000	Total: £65,435.

#### **Technical Advice Notes – First Homes and 100% Affordable Housing.**

Officers proposed:

- 1) amendments to the Planning Committee scheme of delegation, to enable proposed increases in affordable housing to be delegated to the Director – Place and Climate Change and determined in accordance with adopted planning policy, as detailed in the 100% Affordable Housing Technical Advice Note, be approved;
- 2) the publication of Technical Advice Notes, to support the Adopted Development Plan be agreed; and
- 3) the Technical Advice Notes relating to First Homes, 100% Affordable Housing and Windows in Bexhill Town Centre be supported.

**This a hugely important issue of concern to rural villages such as ours.** The proposal would take the decision on 100% affordable homes out of the hands of the elected members of the Planning Committee and allow officers to take the decision. It was opposed at the Scrutiny Committee led by Cllr. Maynard who made an excellent presentation on why he opposed the proposal, a presentation well worth:

***Go to the RDC Website, click on " check it", then "more check it options", then "committees and meetings", then "committees, agendas and minutes, then "overview and scrutiny committee", then "29 Sep 2022", then "view the webcast".***

He proposed that the proposal be refused and this was agreed by the committee.

**Councillors Martin Mooney & Tony Ganly**