

# BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held in THE VILLAGE CENTRE on TUESDAY 10 JANUARY 2023 at 7.30pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ed Erith (EE) Chairman, Steve Bunn (SB), Rod Chapman (RC), Ms Zoe Gleisner (ZG) Stephen Thorneycroft (ST) and Mrs Natasha Vadorin (NV).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** County Cllr Paul Redstone (PR), District Cllr Tony Ganly (TG) and four members of the public.

---

Cllr Erith chaired the meeting and in the absence of the Clerk, Cllr Ms Z Gleisner was asked to take the minutes. Agreed 5:0

- Report from ESCC Cllr Paul Redstone (PR)** followed by any questions from the public or councillors relating to ESCC and update on flooding at the Jubilee Field. **PR** commented that ESCC had received more than 2000 calls about pot holes over the Christmas period. He is still chasing Highways for information about the flooding in the Jubilee Field. **NV** to send pictures of blocked drain and potholes at the Four Oaks end of the village. **NV.**
- 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.
  - Hayes Lane was reported as being impassable for pedestrians. **PR** will investigate.
  - **S. Bowler** asked whether there was any news on the repairs of Cherry Garden Hill and reported fly tipping in the layby at Beckley Flats on the A268. **MM.** He asked for copies of the previous meeting's minutes to be printed and put on the public chairs before the start of the meeting.
  - Kent Lure Club have requested the use of the Jubilee Field to race their dogs for 2-3 hours either on a Sunday morning or Wednesday evening from sometime after Easter. They have insurance, the dogs would be muzzled but off leads for the duration of the race. 10-15 dogs would take part but maybe up to 30. Age range of owners 18-80years. Ms Howse spoke about the lack of parking if there was an event on at the Village Hall.
- Apologies for absence.** Cllr Mrs Langmead (family commitments) and Mrs Ades, Clerk (illness). Accepted.
- Declarations of interest. None**
- Reports from District Cllrs (attached) and Parish Councillors.** **SB** described the incident of dogs being exercised off leads in the Jubilee Field. This is not allowed but the signs at the entrances to the field are defaced and damaged. **ZG** asked that the owner of Combe House on Main Street be asked to cut their hedges – they are causing danger to pedestrians. **Clerk.**
- To consider and approve** the minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 6 December 2022. Agreed. Signed by EE.
- PLANNING** – to consider any planning applications received from RDC and any other planning matters. Full details of all applications and refusals can be viewed on the RDC planning website.
  - RR/2022/2770/P and 2771/L (D) Great Knelle Farm, Whitebread Lane.** Change of use and conversion of a redundant agricultural building (Cart Lodge) to commercial offices. **Approved unanimously 6 in favour.**
  - PLANNING PERMISSIONS**
  - RR/2022/2264/P Gate House, Horseshoe Lane.** Erection of extension to existing free standing 'gazebo' structure to create pool house building.
  - RR/2022/2021/L & 2022/P - Chestnuts, Main Street.** Proposed replacement of C20th utility extension and alterations to existing C20th kitchen extension including new rooflights, alterations to fenestration and fireplace.
  - RR/2022/2630/P - Carpens, Hobbs Lane.** Installation of a solar array to serve the property and associated works.
  - RR.2022/2629/P - Swallowtail Hill Farm, Hobbs Lane.** Installation of solar arrays to serve the property and associated works.

## PLANNING NOTIFICATION

**RR/2022/2981/FN - The Cottage In The Wood - Land adjacent to Hobbs Lane.** Application to determine whether prior approval is required for the erection of agricultural building to be used for storage of machinery, tools, feed and general farming materials. The building will also have space for a farm office and workshop

## PLANNING REFUSALS

**RR/2022/2191/P - Land at Watermill Lane.** Outline application for the proposed erection of a single dwelling (all matters reserved other than site access). The proposed new dwelling would sit outside of the development boundary.

## ENFORCEMENT NOTICES

**ENF/144/22/BEC. Church Farm Bungalow Main Street.** Large log cabin type building has been constructed in the rear of the property behind the stable block, family of 5 living in it. Pending. MM stated that the occupier was applying for PP.

8. **Vegetable plot** - Further discuss use part of the field for vegetable and fruit growing to help residents during the cost-of-living crisis – discussed at end of meeting.
9. **Flooding from the Jubilee Field** – into adjacent gardens. **Clerk to contact PR to chase ESCC for report.**
10. **Replacement bus shelter at the Four Oaks** – current situation and discuss quotes if work required. NV and SB agreed that the work that had been already carried out (by whom no-one knows??) was sufficient for another year.
11. **Fence and gate at Buddens Green** – quote from Chris Makin for £620. SB proposed, NV seconded carried.
12. **Tree Management policy** - ZG said there was nothing new to report as no survey quotes had been received. It was decided that the policy should be accepted as was and that the committee would manage any tree issues as they arose. ZG was asked to circulate the policy to the committee again and it would be voted on at next meeting. **ZG**
13. **Budget 2023-24** – this has been confirmed to RDC at £25,000.
14. **Bank signatories** – additional signatories required. NV and SB agreed to become signatories. **Clerk.**
15. **Change of date for May 2023 AGM meeting – Wednesday 10 May 2023 at 7pm. TBD**
16. **Accounts** for approval (*VAT, if applicable, shown for items exceeding £100*). Please note a cheque to RALC for £80 dated December 2022 has been cancelled and re-issued for £30. Approval of the accounts was proposed by ZG, seconded by NV - carried.

Recipient	VAT £	Total £	Recipient	VAT £	Total £
Admin costs Dec		446.32	RALC subs.		30.00
HMRC Tax £630.60 - NI £132.24		762.84	RDC - printing		28.00
Beckley Village Hall - Dec		12.60	John O'Conner – Dec	30.75	184.50

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

There followed a discussion about the potential vegetable plot. It was agreed the PC should get a legal opinion in place first. If it was considered part of the field could be used for produce growing then EE should produce a preliminary feasibility study with timings and costs. Costs should be similar to quotes EE gives to any of his clients for a new garden. It was suggested it doesn't go back on the agenda until these two things have been done.

18. **Public questions** - not to exceed 10 minutes. S Bowler wanted to point out the amount of money that the council had put into that field (he included himself in that) and did it really make sense as a project. He also pointed out that Buddens Green still needs to be tied up.

**Meeting closed at 8.25pm.**

**Date of next meeting –Tuesday 7 February 2023 commencing 7.30pm.**

**The minutes were recorded by Cllr Ms Gleisner.**

*Reports attached from ESCC and RDC*

## ESCC Report to Parish Councils – January 2023

This report is written on 2nd January and is for Parish Councils meeting in January. It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother. As most did not meet in December, this report contains everything in my December report plus a few extra items which have occurred in December – notably the pothole situation and the prolonged lack of water which some residents suffered.

Some of the items here are from information circulated by ESCC but which may not have drawn the attention of parish councillors and others.

### Potholes

The snowy/frosty weather followed by heavy rain has clearly caused a big increase in potholes on many roads. Some of these caused a series of accidents or tyre/wheel damage. Highways East Sussex were mostly closed down over the break but there was an emergency number. Somewhat misleadingly the recorded announcement on this first said that it was closed but if you waited it let you press a key for emergencies then asked you to select the appropriate area. I used this to report a problem at Horns Cross and was immediately put through to a Highways person in their car on their way to another emergency.

The assistance director in charge of roads sent out this statement on New Year's Eve:

*The cold weather earlier in the month followed by the never-ending rainfall has played havoc with the roads and we have been plagued with potholes and flooding. I am told we have had over 100mm of rainfall locally this month.*

*Our maintenance gangs have been out between Christmas and New Year attending to numerous potholes and reports of flooding and fallen trees. If you come across potholes or reports from residents, please report them in the usual way via the East Sussex Highways website - we will have additional resources next week and will attend to potholes as quickly as possible.*

I am sorry to anyone who has suffered from this perfect storm of weather and holidays but hopefully some emergency repairs will make driving and cycling less hazardous.

As a minor comment, I know that some residents have criticised repairs to potholes in wet weather. In fact in such cases Highways normally use a special filler that is good in such weather – it fact it requires water to properly seal!

### Loss of power and water

Again, many areas suffered a loss of power and also of water as a consequence of the snow. I communicated with both South East Water and UK Power Networks during this time. Here are some key points:

- UKPN typically seem to be over optimistic about repair times. This delays the time they decide to bring in generators, prolonging loss of power.
- The SEW outage was apparently due to loss of power at a pumping/treatment station. This seems to be the same issue as occurred after Storm Eunice. I know Huw Merriman raised this with SEW at senior level as it suggests they need generators in place, which appears not to have happened.

I was also critical of the time it took to get bottle stations in place within the villages. In one case (Staplecross), following my prompting, they came and surveyed the designated site which they deemed OK for the delivery HGV but apparently the forklift truck was not able to work in the snow! Clearly needs some process improvement.

Restoration of supplies to some houses was also delayed by airlocks. With SEW saying water was back on but for some it was not. I would expect airlocks to occur in similar places after an outage so this information should be collected and used.

I am seeking meetings with both bodies to see how the situation can be improved for next time. We all recognise that outages occur but the response to them needs to be better.

### Medium Term Financial Plan and Funding

The budget deficits forecast in the medium term at county remain a major concern. The autumn statement provided some news on this. Local authorities can now increase council tax by 3% without a referendum (previously 2%) and additionally the adult social care premium by 2%. Of course, at a time when many are facing financial hardship any increase is undesirable.

The budget also depends upon the settlement from the government. We expect this to be known on about 21<sup>st</sup> December.

### Fire and Rescue Service Budget

The East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) is managed by the Fire Authority which has ESCC and Brighton and Hove Councillors. I am a member of the Fire Authority and have also just become chair of the Policy and Resources Panel following the sad death of the Brighton and Hove councillor who previously chaired it. ESFRS is funded by a separate precept, collected with council tax.

The service faces significant financial challenges with a forecast deficit of about £3m next year out of a budget of about £42M. Some of this could be funded by increases in the precept but this is limited, so some changes to the service are being

discussed as you may have seen in the media. However, there is some misleading information being circulated so I would be sceptical of any scaremongering stories you read. I would encourage you to the proper assessments and strategy.

### **New Strategy for SEND children**

A new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) strategy to enable young people to reach their full potential in every area of life has been launched. The strategy will be used to inform the work of everyone with children and young people with SEND across the county, providing them with the opportunities and support they need to achieve their ambitions and prepare for adult life.

Families, schools, and other professionals from services in areas such as social care and health took part in a ten-month consultation process to develop the strategy, including extensive work with children and young people to identify areas for improvement.

An East Sussex SEND Strategy Governance Board has been established which will oversee SEND work across the county and monitor the delivery of the strategy.

The SEND Strategy 2022-2025 is available online. [here](#)

A short video about the strategy can be viewed [here](#).

I have a particular interest in SEND children in East Sussex as a member of the ESCC Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel which decides on some individual cases concerning free transport for school for children or young adults, most of whom have SEND. I am also a governor of two schools and have special reporting responsibility for SEND. Providing for the needs of a growing number of SEND children is a challenge and taking an increasing budget, but such children deserve our support.

(In the interests of disclosure, I should add that I have a granddaughter with Down's Syndrome, though she is not in East Sussex).

### **East Sussex residents encouraged to discover their past at The Keep**

Residents across the county are being encouraged to find out more about their family history with free access to over six million digitised Sussex parish records. The digitised documents span 457 years of Sussex history and include details of baptisms, confirmations and marriages alongside birth and death records. These records are now available to search online via Ancestry, the world's largest genealogy website, with free access available at The Keep.

The entire Sussex Parish Registers collection has been brought online through an exclusive collaboration between the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office, the West Sussex Record Office and Ancestry. The records were digitised over the course of the pandemic whilst visitor access to The Keep was limited.

Those interested in researching their family background but are unsure where to begin may benefit from attending one of the centre's visitor induction sessions, whilst 'Welcome Wednesdays' offer an opportunity for first-time visitors to learn more about The Keep and the specifics of research conducted at the centre. More information about these sessions can be found here. Free access to Ancestry is also available at all libraries across East and West Sussex.

### **Cases close to Beckley which I deal with every month:-**

**Development off the Paddocks, Northiam.** Please look at previous reports for the full background.

Contractors still park in the Paddocks or Goddens Gill. Whilst legal in most cases, it causes inconvenience to residents. I continue liaison with the site manager and developer which has helped in some cases. Some contractors have parked on the A28, which causes other issues. Parking by the scout huts has been suggested but the area does not yet appear to be used.

*I met with the developer and site manager in December and as far as I know the scout hut area is now being properly used.*

Cllr Paul Redstone - ESCC

---

## **Northern Rother District Councillors' Report January 2023.**

### **Temporary Closure of Rye Swimming Pool:**

Members received a presentation by the Chief Executive Officer of Freedom Leisure (FL), outlining the reasons for and the events leading up to the temporary closure of Rye Swimming Pool. FL had been operating the leisure centre service for Rother District Council (RDC) since 2006 and had two managing contracts – Bexhill Leisure Centre and Bexhill Leisure Pool until 31 March 2024 and Rye Leisure Centre until 31 March 2026.

FL had experienced dramatic increases to their energy costs, which they had first advised all their clients of in autumn 2021. They were currently in receipt of the Government's Energy Bill Relief Scheme until 31 March 2023, at which point the Government would conduct a review of the protection for 'vulnerable' sectors. In addition, membership of the facilities had only recovered to 80-85% of the pre-COVID-19 levels, inflation was at its highest for 40 years, impacting staff and other costs and the cost of living crisis was impacting consumer behaviour.

Members were presented with a timeline of the events and discussions that had taken place, ultimately leading to the temporary closure of the swimming pool, together with details of the financial impact and other measures and mitigations that had been taken by FL to offset the additional utility costs and financial pressures.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and the following points were noted during the discussions:

- under the current circumstances, FL would not look to extend their contract in Rye beyond March 2026, as the site was not viable;
- solar photovoltaic (PV) panels might reduce utility bills by 20%, but would take four to five years to pay for themselves;
- opening hours were reduced initially after the COVID-19 pandemic, but were subsequently reviewed and reverted back;
- Rye Leisure Centre served a large catchment area;
- there was little wet facility competition in the district due to its viability;
- £90k had been requested from RDC in order to keep the swimming pool open, which was not possible without RDC making further savings;
- nine primary schools had been using the swimming pool;
- an initial study had been undertaken by RDC with Energise Sussex Coast to consider the installation of solar PV panels at Rye Leisure Centre, but no application had been made to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Panel yet, as the scheme was still in the feasibility study phase;
- RDC had been working with Rye Town Council (RTC) and FL to explore options to be able to reopen the pool and to look at how the current operating model could be changed in order for it to be viable;
- the two sites in Bexhill previously made a surplus which had been used to underwrite the site in Rye;
- various schemes had been introduced to encourage increased membership, such as GP health referral schemes, increased scope of youth membership and an over 65 membership, different pricing options and revamped catering facilities;

### **King Offa Housing Development (KORD):**

In 2019, the Council was awarded £500,000 from the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) Round 1 (a cross-government initiative) alongside Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES) to fund demolition/highway works on the KORD which formed part of the Old Bexhill High School Site. The BLRF was established to support council-led developments with remediation works on previously attributed Brownfield land e.g. industrial plots, garages, yards and carparks etc.

The Council was in the process of completing the land swap with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) which had been significantly delayed. It was noted that ESCC was required to provide the land with vacant possession, although Rother District Council was assisting with finding alternative premises for the current tenant.

It was crucial that the Council procured and spent the BLRF Round 1 funding before the deadline of March 2024. In 2019, outline planning permission for a mixed use development was approved on the KORD which was subject to a Section 106 agreement. Since that time, the construction industry had significantly changed therefore officers had reviewed the viability of the scheme and re-evaluated the established delivery route for the project. Results showed that there was an appetite to deliver housing and once remediation works were completed, officers would approach housing developers to deliver the site.

The development of this site had always been a two phased project with housing delivery followed by leisure facilities; whether leisure facilities would form part of the second phase would be dependent on the outcome of the current consultation into the Council's leisure strategy and would be a decision for the ruling administration at the time.

The £500,000 funding would be used as follows: £400,000 for an additional lane and junction work on the A259 and Combe Valley Way; and £100,000 for demolition and contamination remediation works. A further £305,000 would be required from the Capital Programme to progress the site to the next stage.

Following discussion, Cabinet was supportive of the scheme being progressed to ensure deployment of the allocated funds and recommended that £805,000 be included within the Capital Programme. Cabinet agreed that, subject to formal approval of the scheme, delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to accept the £500,000 BFRF Round 1 grant to procure the contractors to deliver the site. It was also agreed that an additional £305,000 be taken from the Capital Programme to progress the project. Capital receipts received from the transfer of land would be reimbursed into the Capital Programme.

### **Fees and charges:**

Cabinet gave consideration to the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services that detailed the latest review of the Council's fees and charges for 2023/24 and the proposed recommended increases.

It was recommended that most of the fees and charges made by RDC be increased by 10% with the following exceptions:

**Beach and Foreshore:** As beach huts remained in high demand, it was recommended that the fees be increased to £694 (16%) per annum and the minimum transfer fee be held at £2,000 for 2023/23. It was recommended that reasonable tent site charges increase by 16%, boat licence fees by 20%, winches and equipment box fees by 23%, sailing/angling boat fees by 20% in 2023/24.

**Car Parking:** It was recommended that the car parking charges remained unchanged for 2023/24. It was recommended that parking permit prices across the district be increased by 43% (from £350 to £500 per annum). Due to significant increase in costs to manage Camber Western Car park, it was recommended that the summer season tariffs (from 1 April to 30 September) be increased in all Camber Sands car parks. The increased charges would be as follows: £3.00 (up to 1 hour), £7.00 (1 to 3 hours), £14.00 (3 to 6 hours) and £18.00 (6+ hours).

**Bulky Waste Collection:** It was recommended that the fee for the Council collecting four to six and seven to nine bulky waste items increased to £75.00 and £110 respectively.

**Garden Waste Collections:** The charge for garden waste had been increased to £50 from 15 July 2022. For comparison the garden waste subscription charges in neighbouring authorities were: Hastings £73, Eastbourne £57, Lewes £70 and Wealden £55. The total cost of the service was approximately £625,000 per annum. The projected income for 2022/23 at £50 per annum per bin at the current rate of just over 20,500 subscribers was approximately £1m. It was therefore recommended that the annual subscription be increased to £55 per annum which would result in an income of £1.1m.

**Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS):** As a revisit to rate a premises under the FHRS was not a statutory duty, it was recommended that a scale of fees be introduced.

**Health Certificates (for food exported):** Food exported required a health certificate. It was recommended that a scale of fees be introduced.

**Proof of Life Verification for Foreign Pensions (Appendix 9):** From April 2023, the Council would be introducing a £25 charge to carry out 'proof of life' verifications for foreign pensions. This charge is similar to charges made by other local authorities.

Cllrs. Tony Ganly & Martin Mooney.