

BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held in THE VILLAGE CENTRE on TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2023 at 7.30pm

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

IN ATTENDANCE: County Cllr Paul Redstone (PR), District Cllrs Martin Mooney and Tony Ganly (TG), four members of the public and Mrs V Ades, Clerk.

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.

A resident reported a *fallen* Chevron ~~missing~~ by Cherry Garden Hill. TL reported two missing signs at Carmen Bridge. A28 - Rose and Crown Pub area road requires attention. **PR**

Continuing with road conditions, **PR** had visited Hayes Lane and there were many potholes which he has reported to Highways, but as the lane is little used this probably won't receive priority.

Owner of Broadlawns (planning application RR/2022/3016/P-Del) said the application was to provide accommodation for his sister who was currently in a wheelchair.

2. Apologies for absence accepted from Cllr Mrs N Vadorin- illness.

3. Declarations of interest – EE item 6 - RR/2022/2529/P-(D) Watcombe House. TL item 12a Village Hall donation.

4. Reports from County, District and Parish Councillors.

PR said potholes were being fixed in the village and there are plans to spray patch the whole of Hobbs Lane.

A 4.99% increase in county council tax had been agreed, made up of 3% council tax and 1.99% adult social care extra. This is the maximum amount agreed by government. He has visited the Jubilee Field to look at flooding problem and it appears unclear who is responsible. He will liaise with Highways and SB. **PR.**

7.45 – PR left the meeting to attend at Peasmarsh PC.

DC's were questioned about the £17M awarded to the De La Warr Pavilion and £2M to Sidley. MM said the De La Warr generates a lot of business and provides entertainment and employment in Bexhill. TL asked couldn't some of that money been provided to keep open the swimming pool in Rye. Beckley schoolchildren have lost this facility and swimming is on the school curriculum. MM said RDC is not obliged to provide swimming facilities.

ST again reported the potholes in Horseshoe Lane.

SB said he had approved two dog signs which the Clerk would order. He has repaired the fingerpost at Kings Bank Lane/Horseshoe Lane. The noticeboard by the Four Oaks required more substantial wood and he would attend. The Clerk asked that he make the purchases and let her have the receipts for reimbursement. Members thanked him for his work. **SB.Clerk.**

TL said the Manroy site had been cleared again. She said she could not find the 3 grit bins in the village provided by ESCC. Clerk had written ESCC and they will send an inspector to investigate. **Clerk.**

5. To consider and approve the minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 10 January 2023. Agreed.

6. 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/2022/2529/P-(D) Watcombe House, Horseshoe Lane. Erection of single storey west elevation extension. **Additional information/amended plans and/or description RR/2022/2670/L-(D) Watcombe House, Horseshoe Lane.** Erection of single storey west elevation extension. With one declared interest, members voted unanimously **5:0 in support.**

RR/2022/3016/P-Del - Broadlawns - Land adjacent to, Whitebread Lane. Erection of a chalet style house served by relocated vehicular access. Members noted the application was for a building outside of the development boundary. Members **voted 4 against support, 1 in favour, and one abstention.**

RR/2022/3005/L BECKLEY/BREDE DEL Tillingham Lodge, Furnace Lane, Broad Oak, Beckley TN31 6ET. Extend mezzanine and oak balustrading. New openings in rear wall of cottage element to access eaves storage area.

Internal window between extended link and passage to ground floor bedrooms. Move door to bedroom 2 into passage. Replace existing window to north elevation. After discussing the application and noting that the property lies on the dividing line between Brede and Beckley, members voted **unanimously (6:0) in support.**

RR/2023/60/P DEL Great Knelle Farm, The Old Dairy building, Whitebread Lane. Conversion of a redundant agricultural building (The Old Dairy building) to a residential dwelling. **Unanimous support 6:0.**

RR/2023/61/L DEL Great Knelle Farm, The Old Dairy building Whitebread Lane. Conversion of a redundant agricultural building (The Old Dairy building) to a residential dwelling. Members discussed the two applications and voted **unanimously 6:0 in support.**

RR/2022/2911/P Swan Meadow, Main Street. Proposal Construction of timber lodge with associated access track and curtilage. Members noted this application was for a building well beyond the development boundary and the proposed track to it took an extremely long route in an unusual direction, passing the back gardens of some listed properties. Additionally, the proposal required changes to the property's curtilage. **Members voted unanimously 6:0 against support.**

PLANNING PERMISSION

RR/2022/2771/P & RR/2022/2771/L- Great Knelle Farm, Whitebread Lane. Change of use and conversion of a redundant agricultural building (Cart Lodge) to commercial offices.

7. Interview results for replacement Clerk/RFO. One applicant had been interviewed, but she could not give a starting date and was entitled to a pension package (ZG to investigate), so another applicant had been invited for interview. Ongoing. **ZG.**

8. Groundworks contract 2023 – costs to be advised at the meeting and a contractor appointed. The Clerk advised she had received the following quotes from groundworks contractors:-

- a. John O'Conner £21 39.50
- b. IdVerde £2237.40
- c. Countryman £12,630.

SB proposed and ZG seconded John O'Conner be awarded the contract. Agreed (6.0).

Clerk to advise.

9. Flooding from the Jubilee Field – into adjacent gardens. PR reported at 4 above.

10. King Charles III Coronation - discuss celebration plans. A quiz has been arranged for Saturday evening 6 May, the WI will provide refreshments and a raffle will take place of donated items. Monies raised will be donated to the Village Hall. Clerk will check if a licence is required. The PC has already agreed to make £500 available and limited grants for celebration costs are available from RDC. **Clerk.**

Scouts have been asked to make arrangements to acknowledge the Coronation.

11. Newsletter - agreed a newsletter would not go out until after the elections in May.

12. Consider requests for donations.

- a. Village Hall – donation request towards £2k for new flooring. SB proposed and ZG seconded a donation of £500 – **carried 6:0.**
- b. Beckley Pre-School – donation request towards new shed to house the play equipment. RC proposed and SB seconded a donation of £500 – **carried 6:0.**

13. Policies – the following policies were agreed and adopted

- a. **Tree Management policy**
- b. **Media and Communications policy**
- c. **Expenses policy**

14. Sovereign Sports – water supply required on field to carry out maintenance work. Clerk to ask Sovereign to supply own water. **Clerk**

15. Missing dog waste bin from Main Street – replacement bin and fixing post required – agreed. **Clerk**

16. Damaged fingerpost at junction of Horseshoe Lane and Kings Bank Lane – repaired by Cllr Bunn.

17. Bank reconciliation – approval. Approved and signed.

18. Accounts for approval (*VAT, if applicable, shown for items exceeding £100*).

Recipient	VAT	Total £	Recipient	VAT £	Total £
Admin costs - Jan		1086.16	John O'Conner – Jan	30.75	184.50
Beckley Village Hall - Jan		12.60	Makin Fencing		620.00

Accounts were proposed by ZG, seconded by TL and carried.

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

20. Public questions - not to exceed 10 minutes.

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

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Reports attached from ESCC and RDC

ESCC Report to Parish Councils – February 2023

Potholes

I can do no better than give the latest update to Councillors from the Assistant Director responsible for highways (dated 26th January):

Our contractor continues to work hard, around the clock, to repair potholes and has again taken on additional resources again this week and now has 23 gangs repairing potholes, 13 more than usual. They have repaired 2861 potholes since the beginning of January, 1086 in the past week. We have 3762 potholes in our reporting system awaiting repair, the majority of which will be 28 day repairs, but the number of potholes being reported has slowed now that the weather has been dry for a few days and the ice has disappeared.

Un-repaired or failed repaired potholes. The Council policy is to repair only those potholes and other safety defects that meet our intervention criteria, we are not required, and do not have the resources, to repair every pothole or defect on the highway. Where a pothole or cluster of potholes doesn't meet the criteria for reactive repair, the Highway Stewards can recommend them for inclusion in our planned maintenance patching programme. Where our contractor carries out a temporary repair of a pothole, or if an earlier repair fails, they will repeat the repair at the contractor's cost. Most, and probably all, ESCC Councillors are unhappy with road conditions and potholes. The challenge will be how to fund extra expenditure on roads. I am hoping that we can reach an agreement on re-prioritisation of some funds in the highways budget.

County Services and Budget

Following the RPPR process a draft budget was approved at Cabinet on 24th January and is expected to be approved at Full Council on 7 February. The key headlines are:

- No cuts in services
- Increase of 3% in council tax and 2% in social care precept, the maximum permitted by government without a referendum

I believe this illustrates the council's careful and prudent approach to budget planning. We have not had to make the cuts that are necessary in some other councils. We would all like to spend more on areas such as roads but at a time of the pressures on cost-of living it is unfair to try to increase taxes more than necessary.

Fire and Rescue Service

Last month I highlighted that we were forecasting a deficit of about £3M on a budget of £42M for this service. In fact, the government settlement was better than expected so the deficit, while serious, is less than this. Two options for funding were considered based on government limits: a £5 flat increase in the band D precept for the FRS (proportionally adjusted for other bands) or a 2.99% increase. The former would result in a budget deficit of about £1M, the latter about £1.6M. The proposal going to the Fire Authority on 9th February is for the £5 increase which reduces the cuts needed.

The legal requirement is to produce a balanced budget, though we can use reserves in the short term if we have a plan showing we are moving towards balance. But we will have to make some cuts and have identified some changes to manning, appliances and similar. These are all based on the IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Plan) as our top priority is clearly safety. Most will require public consultation and we are initiating this, though the local elections in May which give a period of purdah and which include the 6 Brighton-based councillor members of the Fire Authority mean that these have to be delayed until mid-year. So many savings will not occur until 24/25, which is one reason for using some reserves next year.

There is concern over our use of reserves which are in any case below what is considered sensible and our medium-term plan shows these increasing again after the next two years.

Unfortunately, there continues to be misleading information being circulated, spreading unnecessary fear amongst residents. I would encourage everyone to wait for the proper assessments and strategy.

A second challenge to the FRS is, of course, the decision by the Fire Brigades Union to call a strike having rejected a pay rise of 5%. Detailed planning to minimise risk to the public is being undertaken. Our budgets only include provision for 5% so a higher settlement would pose some challenges.

Finally, the inspection of HMICRFS of East Sussex FRS has been published. I will report on this next month but it is good and shows excellent progress on the recommendations made last time.

Bus Services 254,304,305 - Hastings-Hawkhurst-Wadhurst-Tunbridge Wells

Stagecoach withdrew a number of bus services at the end of October 2022. These were operated on a commercial basis up to that point. These are key routes which support an important public transport need. To maintain the service East Sussex County Council (ESCC) have urgently adopted them as contracted services paid for by ESCC.

Northern Rother District Councillors' Report February 2023.

Draft Revenue Budget 2023/2024

Members were concerned that not all relevant information had been provided to them to enable detailed scrutiny of the budget, including the **true costs of the Blackfriars development**, the savings identified through

the FSP and how and where the £32,000 grant from Government to cover the additional burdens placed on the Council through the Elections Act and Voter ID would be spent; The proposal before Cabinet at its next meeting on 6th February is a Council Tax increase for 2023/24 at Band D of £5.22 (2.70%) and set at £198.60.

The offer of £1.5 million capital funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC), contingent on match funding from the Council should be noted.

The draft Revenue Budget has been balanced for 2023/24 by the planned use of £2.035 million from Usable Revenue Reserves. However, this is not a sustainable approach and it is imperative that the Council continues to deliver on key initiatives such as the Financial Stability Programme (FSP) and the Service Planning process, which are aimed at generating additional income and cost savings. Without such action, the financial forecast shows Reserves will be under considerable pressure and will fall below £5 million within a couple of years. This also increases the Council's vulnerability to being able to cope with unexpected cost increases. There are other risks and uncertainties within the budget forecast, which is not unusual when forecasting five years ahead. Delivering a sustainable future for the Council remains challenging if the Council is to maintain delivery of essential services to the public.

Public Spaces Protection Order (No 1A) - Dog Control:

The PSPO (No 1A) Dog Control expires in January 2024. There is the opportunity to amend the Order. The Public, Police, PCC, ESCC, P&TCs will be consulted about renewing the Order.

Rother Health and Well-Being: Leisure Facilities Strategy:

The results of the consultation on this matter show that there is overwhelming support for the strategy as drafted, with perhaps some additions to support future provision for the next 10 years and beyond.

Old Lydd Road, Council Led Housing Development.

the Director – Place and Climate Change will be granted delegated authority to accept the £185,000 grant from the Brownfield Land Release Fund Round 2, for the purposes of delivering this project; an addition to the Capital Programme of £395,000, funded by £185,000 Brownfield Land Release Fund and £210,000 capital borrowing be authorised to facilitate the remediation and delivery of the site for housing (to be reimbursed by eventual capital receipt).

the Director – Place and Climate Change will be granted delegated authority to procure the contractor/s required for the remediation works and close the carpark, subject to planning approval, including procuring contractors and entering into other contracts as necessary for the completion of this phase of the project.

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on their recommendations for the Members' Allowance Scheme to be paid for the period 2023-2027.

Cabinet considered the recommendations made by the IRP, commented thereon and referred all recommendations to full Council. This will enable a full and robust debate by all Members on the Allowance Scheme. Whilst in the interests of economy and administration the Council had requested that the IRP made recommendations on allowances for the 4 year period (2023-2027), the rationale for recommending a one year increase is noted. Should Council approve the recommendations, it will be necessary for the Council to reconvene the IRP in Autumn 2023 to review the allowances to be set for the remainder of the Council term 2024-27.

Recommendation to COUNCIL: That Duncan Ellis be designated as the Council's Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) Confirmed with effect from 20 February 2023.

Levelling Up Funding.

The award of Levelling Up Funding is a significant step forward for the creative economy in the district. The £23m project at the De La Warr Pavilion will secure the future of this building as an economic driver and hub for the community. The Sidley Recreation Ground Project will provide a key community asset for the district's most deprived ward. It will build upon previous investment in that site and ensure that the skate park and BMX track are serviced with appropriate facilities. It will also ensure the Heart of Sidley Community Interest Company will have an income generating opportunity providing for their long term sustainability, providing services to their community.

Cllrs. Tony Ganly & Martin Mooney.