



BECKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held in THE VILLAGE CENTRE on TUESDAY 9 JANUARY 2024 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Councillors, Mrs Natasha Vadorin (NV), Mr Steve Bunn (SB), Mrs Catherine Penny (CP), Mr Joel Mitchell (JM) and Mr Stephen Thorneycroft (ST).

IN ATTENDANCE: County Cllr Paul Redstone (PR), District Councillor Tony Ganly (TG), The Clerk M Philo and ten members of the public.

1. Public Questions at 7.31pm

Gooseley Farm Oast Planning Application

Residents made the following comments:

- In an earlier local plan, the land had been allocated as amenity land for the village hall to expand into.
- The two gates on to the site along Main Street had been put there to allow the water board access to a burst pipe. The curbs there are not dropped as with official accesses. The site access is from the nearby lane.
- Residents should work together to protect the village.
- Building on the site would remove the space noted in the local plan as being part of Beckley village character bringing in the landscape and AONB into the village and of significant importance to user experience, by joining together the two parts (Four Oaks and Beckley).
- Concern that one of the proposed properties' would overlook a neighbour.
- Concern over the loss of habitat for wildlife and birds
- The site is visible from footpath 3 which is designated as part of the Sussex Border Path.

The meeting convened at 7.44pm

2. Apologies

District Councillor Tony Biggs.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. The meeting adjourned for Reports from County and District Councillors 7.45pm

i. County Councillor Report

A report had been circulated and Councillor Redstone highlighted the county council budget setting challenges but the council would be solvent. The biggest challenge was the cost of caring for vulnerable children due to increasing numbers and difficulties recruiting staff. Central government had transferred some savings from HS2 line curtailment, to help to repair the roads. East Sussex had received £1.2 million. Due to the recent weather conditions potholes had been temporarily filled and the contractor would be returning later for a permanent repair. A resident had approached the parish council about the potholes along Horseshoe Lane which had been made worse by the roadside ditch clearing.

ii. **District Councillors Reports**

The District Council budget for 2024-2025 needed £3 million shortfall covered.

5. The meeting reconvened at 8.00 pm

6. Planning

i. **Applications considered:**

- a. **RR/2023/2322/P Gooseley Farm Oast, Main Street: Outline planning application for up to 4 dwellings and associated infrastructure, with all matters reserved except for access.**

Upon later communication with Rother District Council Local Plan officers, it was advised that there was no amenity allocation with the current applicable plan. If that had been the case in an earlier plan this was no longer extant.

It was resolved to object to the application for the following reasons:

- With the development over time, this site is now a significant open space/development gap in size and user experience bringing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty into the village. Development on the site will affect the street scene and feeling of being in the country side which is noted in the current Local Plan as a feature of the village.
- There is an official access from the lane down to the farm. These gates, referred to in the application, were installed by the water services to allow them access, which explains why there is no drop kerb in front of them. Parking for large events and the regular village market overflows along the road in front of the site.
- The council would have preferred to see a full application without reserved matters, as experience has seen the final application being significantly different to the outline application.
- Without a full application it is difficult to comment on the application as seen from the footpath, overshadowing and loss of amenity for neighbouring properties. All of the former are of concern for the council.
- There are currently nine large unsold houses in the village. Large properties do not reflect local need for housing.

It was further resolved to request District Councillor Ganly to call in the application to be decided by the full planning committee.

- b. **RR/2023/2494/P Taihoa Land adjacent, Kings Bank Lane: Demolition of existing former workshop and replacement building to provide 1 x unit holiday accommodation.**

It was resolved to comment as follows:

The council considered the application and were concerned that a change of use may be required but not applied for and that there should be evidence that the workshop is no longer needed. The council also noted that more information would have been helpful.

ii. **Planning Permission Approved:**

- a. **RR/2023/2389/P Old Teachers House, Main Street: single storey extension to replace existing conservatory, double garage and associated hard standing. Approved.**

- iii. **Planning Applications Refused – None.**
- iv. **Enforcement – None.**
- v. **For notification only – None**

7. Approval of the Minutes of 12 December 2023

The minutes were unanimously agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed.

8. Finances

i. Monthly balance and sign off

a. NatWest

Current Account		Reserve account
Bank statement 30 th November 2023	£ 40,387.91	£ 610.87
Unpresented cheques	<u>£ 960.40</u>	Interest <u>£ 0.73</u>
Running balance	<u>£ 39,427.51</u>	<u>£ 611.60</u>
Bank statement 31 st December 2023	£ 36,186.01	£ 611.60
Unpresented cheques	<u>£ 965.45</u>	Interest <u>£ 0.70</u>
Running balance	<u>£ 35,220.56</u>	<u>£ 612.30</u>

b. Lloyds Bank which currently holds no funds

- ii. **Third Quarter Financial Report** (available at the end of the minutes)
- iii. **Additional Signatories for bank accounts**

It was resolved that Councillors Penny and Mitchell to be authorised as full power signatories for NatWest and Lloyds Bank (with online banking for Lloyds Bank)

iv. Budget for 2023-2024

A final draft had been circulated to councillors. Estimated running balance at 31st March 2024 is £ 30,709 including a general reserve of £ 12,500 (50% of precept), leaving £ 18,209 approximately. Council should consider what the council will dedicate £ 18,000 to.

It was resolved to set the precept for the financial year 2024-2025 at £ 25,000 for the year. The average (Band D) council tax payer would pay £ 44.38 per annum (est.).

9. Highways

Covered during the report by the County Councillor.

10. Jubilee Fields, Play Area and MUGA Repairs and Improvements

- i. Report on regular checks of Jubilee Field: nothing to report.
- ii. Wildflower Meadow
John O’Conner had made a good job of cutting and clearing the meadow.
- iii. Jubilee Field – Gap in Hedge
Awaiting better weather.
- iv. Ditch Clearance to resolve flooding
The ditch had worked well during the recent rains.
- v. Frog Field Information Board
The design had been sent to the printer.

- vi. Shelter
Awaiting drier weather.
- vii. Junior and Toddler Climbing Frame
Councillor Bunn would assess the work required by the next meeting.
- viii. Flooding of entrance area to the field used by the school.
The clerk was requested to find a contractor to resolve the issue.

11. Land at Buddens Green

- i. Councillor Bunn will be attending the RDC Residential Development Seminar on the 11th January.
- ii. The contractor is assessing the field ground conditions to be able to carry out the field clearance.

12. Bus Shelters, Defibrillators and Noticeboards

New pads for the RAC defibrillator are due shortly.

13. Fingerpost Maintenance

Opposite King's Bank Lane: awaiting the fingerpost return

14. Neighbourhood Watch

It was resolved to acquire and donate various signs to the group:

£ 2.50	50 window stickers in a set x 3	
£ 1.20	1 wheelie bin x 30	
£ 6.00	1 Road sign x 4	Therefore total £ 67.50 plus delivery. (LGA 1972, s.137)

15. Society for Local Council Clerks Membership

It was resolved to fund a share of the clerk's subscription between the three councils (Beckley Pett and Iden). £ 80.15 (total £ 229)

16. Accounts

It was unanimously agreed to draw the following cheques

£ 782.17	Clerk's Salary including paye (£ 76.80)
£ 16.40	Beckley Village Hall Trust – December Meeting Room Hire
£ 36.00	Maiden Accountancy – January to March Payroll (vat £ 6)
£ 53.01	Refund N Vadorin – printing of December Newsletter
£ 33.20	M Philo – Office and two trips to Beckley 45p a mile
£213.96	John O'Connor – December grass invoice (vat £35.66)
£120.00	Gibbs and Son – Tree clearance at Frog Field (vat £20)

The following additional December Payments were noted

£ 40.45	Refund C Penny – keys for noticeboards (vat £ 6.74)
£ 3,360	Gibbs & Son – Jubilee Field ditch clearance (vat £ 560)

17. Information for Councillors

- i. The date for Parish Meeting was provisionally set as being Thursday 16th May at 6pm.
- ii. Councillor Vadorin would contact the pub and church about any interest in managing a Lamp of Peace as part of D-Day 80th Commemorations.

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

Clerk's email cannot be removed from the website alone as it is attached to org.uk. All emails would have to be moved to 365 and laptop review was outstanding. The clerk wondering whether the council should consider using a .gov address as recommended.

19. Date of next meeting – 13 February 2024 commencing 7.30pm.

20. Public Questions 8.55pm

In response to query, the NatWest reserve account only held a small sum as the letter requesting a transfer into the account had been rejected as the bank did not recognise one of the signatories on the letter.

It was suggested that some of the £18,000 in hand funds could be used to clear the land drift from the pedestrian refuge on Oak Hill.

Meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Beckley Parish Council Third Quarter Financial Report 2023-2024

Receipts for the period - £78.10

As the precept (Beckley Parish Council share of council tax) was paid in the two first quarters, only receipts were from the tennis court – 46.60 and £31.50 for a cancelled cheque. Additionally, £2.21 interest was made on the bank accounts.

Payments for the period (net of vat)- £8,703.22 (gross £9,524.28)

In the third quarter, the parish council will usually be completing maintenance and repair of council assets, so most invoices for work are paid in this quarter. Smaller projects are also completed in the third and fourth quarters of the financial year.

Tennis Shelter New Perspex Covering	£798 (vat £133)
Fingerpost on Main Street opposite Kings Bank Lane is being refurbished now.	£1,396 (50% to be cashed on completion)
Jubilee Fields ditch clearance	£ 3,360 (vat £2,800)
Frog field design with bleed etc for printer	£50
Keys for noticeboards	£40.45 (vat 6.74)
Refurbishment of Four oaks Council Noticeboard	£9.49

We have to thank Councillor Bunn for his voluntary labour refurbishing the noticeboard.

Regular payments are made, each month, for grass cutting at £213.95 (vat £35.66).

For a small parish the council's running cost form a significant part of its expenditure

Office including clerk, office costs, training, newsletter, auditor	£3,205.74
Meeting room	£56.70
Subscriptions	£80.00

At the quarters end, the bank balances stood at £36,186.01 and £612.30.

The running balance considering un presented cheques was £35,832.86.

Costs (remaining projects and running costs) for the last quarter are estimated at £4,510.69 which may leave an end of year balance of around £30,000. Within this the council holds a reserve for emergencies of £12,500, being 50% of the current precept of £25,000. That leaves the council with about £18,000 to allocate to future works or could be used to reduce the precept for 2024-2025. It should be noted that in April the council will claim back vat for 2023-2024 estimated as being £1,800.