

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 11th November 2020 at 7.30 p.m via Zoom video conference

Parish Councillors present:	Cllrs Caroline Croft, Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn, Judy Petty, Jane Oxenford, Dianne Mower and Andrew Wedmore (Chair)
Parish Councillors absent	Cllr R Wrenn
District/County Councillors:	RDC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green
In attendance:	Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council 2 members of the public

1. **Apologies for absence**

None received

2. **Disclosures of interest**

None

3. **Additional agenda items**

None

4. **Adoption of Minutes**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on Wednesday 9th September 2020 and the special planning meetings of 16th & 30th September 2020 and 30th October 2020 as true and correct records.

5. **Open Forum**

- 5.1 RDC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green reported that the Civil Parking Enforcement, which recently began already appears to have improved the parking on double yellow lines in Robertsbridge. The medium-term financial plan shows a significant overspend and so it is assumed that council tax will be increased. The biggest area of overspending is on homelessness and this will continue to be the case until more homes are built. Cllr Kirby-Green also reported on the recent meeting concerning the white paper on planning with Huw Merriman MP and representatives from many surrounding parishes. Mr Merriman is sympathetic to the issues and was furnished with much more detail. He confirmed that there is considerable opposition to the proposed changes within the Conservative party. Cllr Petty concurred and said it felt reassuring that he is supportive. Cllr Wedmore asked if there was any further action the Parish Council could take at this stage, but Cllr Kirby Green advised awaiting further developments and keeping the item on future agendas.

There was no update from ESCC as Cllr John Barnes was absent.

5.2 Members of the Public

Simon Tayler requested that his comments be minuted to reflect that he thinks anomalies are unaddressed and unresolved concerning his street name and postcode change. It is a daily annoyance that Rother DC still use the wrong postcode and only some delivery databases use the new postcode. He further observed that these issues can be reviewed.

6. Finance and Governance

6.1 RFO Report

6.1.1 The bank reconciliation to 31st October 2020 was previously circulated and the Chairman confirmed that having checked the bank account online, the balances were correct.

6.2 Receipts and Payments

6.2.1 The RFO had previously circulated the schedule of receipts and payments for September and October 2020. This was confirmed to be correct.

6.2.2 Jon Avery's invoice for churchyard mowing was approved for payment and signed by Cllr Wedmore. (£720 including VAT)

6.2.3 The RALC subscription was retrospectively approved having been paid online by the deadline of 30th September.

6.2.4 Section 137 grants: Cllr Wedmore proposed that the annual support grants be maintained to the Brightling Village Hall and the other recipients at the same level as the previous year. He further proposed that Bexhill Food Bank be included for a donation of £55. Cllr Oxenford seconded this proposal, and the motion was carried unanimously.

6.2.4.1 Brightling Village Hall - £1000

6.2.4.2 St Michael's Hospice - £55

6.2.4.3 Rother Citizen's Advice Bureau - £55

6.2.4.4 Sussex Air Ambulance - £55

6.2.4.5 RNLI - £55

6.2.4.6 Victim Support - £55

6.2.4.7 Rother Rural Trust - £55

6.3 Budget 2021/'22

The RFO had previously circulated the first draft of the budget for 2021/'22. An increase of 0.7% (September '20's CPI figure) had been applied to the precept. There were no other significant increases to be allowed for and although the reserves would be marginally used, they were still healthy at approximately 50% of the precept. The Council will confirm the number of properties mid-December which will allow calculation of the Council Tax figure, and the final budget must be submitted by the end of January. The Clerk was asked to finalise the budget for the January meeting.

7. RALC Meeting

From the recent RALC meeting, Cllr Petty reported that much work is still ongoing regarding speeding and anti-social motorbike speeding. The contract with Costain for pothole repair and drain emptying is coming before the scrutiny committee after complaints about the quality of their work and Cllr Petty confirmed that she had passed on local concerns. Also, there is a keen

desire for planning training pertinent to AONB areas and Rother are promising to make more available as soon as possible.

8. **Proposed letter to Forestry Commission**

The Chairman explained the background to the felling of trees and subsequent eucalyptus tree planting in the parish, and that the Forestry Commission although aware of the issue, had not been in contact since January '20. Doug Edworthy, Tree Warden, concurred and suggested that an official letter from the Parish Council to the F.C should be a first step in chasing up the lack of response. Further measures may then be required and should be considered. Cllr Oxenford suggested that the urgency of the situation could be conveyed more strongly and that the considerable height of the trees should also be mentioned. Cllr Wedmore proposed that a drafted letter (previously circulated) with amendments, should be sent on behalf of the Parish Council and Cllr Oxenford seconded the motion.

9. **Rother Climate Conference**

Cllr Wedmore had attended remotely the recent conference on climate change in the district. The four main points covered were: RDC's response to the climate emergency, verge cutting and wildlife, ESCC's response to the climate emergency and a presentation from Viridor on how our waste is processed. There is also a newly appointed environmental officer who appears very keen to engage. Overall, the conference had some useful points, and of special interest was how waste was dealt with in the locality.

10. **Postcodes changes within the parish**

The Clerk provided the following report:

Having checked with the Royal Mail's Address Maintenance Team, they confirmed that the new postcodes recently issued came about after being informed by Rother's Street Naming Dept. of new road names. They confirmed that postcodes must reflect the correct address so although the location is identical, the manner of recognising it must be different to reflect the new detail in the address. Mount Farm has had Perrymans Lane added to its address (i.e it used to be Mount Farm, Brightling and is now Mount Farm, Perrymans Lane, Brightling) and this was enough to trigger a new postcode. Similarly, although The Street was added to several properties around the church, all the properties were together in this new detail and so the existing postcode could remain in place. Postcode changes happen automatically after a street name change to better identify the address.

They confirmed that old & new postcodes run alongside each other for 12 months and ultimately new postcodes help aid identification of a section or area more precisely, making deliveries and sat nav systems more efficient.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for this report.

11. Grass cutting programme

RALC had recently made a request for any comments from local parishes regarding the grass cutting programme in readiness for a meeting with ESCC. Following the proposal by the Chairman, and seconded by Cllr Oxenford, the following comments were agreed upon for submission:

On A-roads and B-roads, the current programme of cutting should continue. On all other rural roads there will be a few stretches where a summer cut will be required for reasons of road safety. These stretches can be specifically identified by the Parish council and notified to ESCC. All other minor rural roads should by default only be cut between October and February, and in line with the recommendations of plantlife.org. Cuts outside these months should only take place on specific stretches of road that have been notified as needing them.

Furthermore, the application for Brickyard Lane's verges to become a wildflower verge had been completed by Caroline Foster as a member of the public. Cllr Wedmore proposed that this application be submitted on behalf of the Parish Council and Cllr Oxenford again seconded the proposal and the motion was carried unanimously.

12. Brightling & COVID 19

A review of the situation in Brightling regarding anyone who may need shopping or medication by Cllrs Croft & Petty revealed that no one required anything thus far. Cllr Wedmore confirmed that he had re-posted the statement on the village website with contact numbers etc. The village Emergency Plan previously circulated with updated information was approved with some amendments pointed out by Cllr Oxenford. The Clerk will publish the amended version on the village website.

13. Community and Business Development

13.1 Broadband

The latest information from Cllr Wedmore regarding broadband is that ESCC have announced a £1000 top-up to the vouchers of up to £3500 per property that are already available under the Gigabit Broadband Voucher scheme. However, the £1000 top-up vouchers are only available until the end of March 2021. This may make them almost unusable in practice, due to the time needed to get a project off the ground. There remain about 15 households without superfast or any date by which they will get it. That is around 10% of the households in Brightling. The four properties at Mountfield Park Farm got a quote of £65,000 for FTTP connection. Even with all the vouchers subtracted, this is still far more than what they would be prepared to pay. It is likely that it will be a similar situation for the other not-spot (broadly speaking the area around Willingford Lane) although it is not known if there is a quote for this area.

13.2 Crime, Anti-Social behaviour & Police relationships

Cllr Croft reported that more motorbikes were reportedly in Darwell Woods on Sunday. Cllr Wedmore confirmed that the PCSO is extremely helpful and sympathetic to the situation but needs vehicle number plates to take anything further.

13.3 Defibrillators

Nothing to report

13.4 Footpaths & Bridleways

Nothing to report

13.5 Highways, Hedges & Potholes

Cllr Petty reported that carriageway erosion opposite Mount Farm which has damaged numerous vehicles had been reported, inspected, and deemed not yet in need of repair. At Cllr Wedmore's suggestion, the Clerk was asked to forward the information to Cllr Barnes to try to add weight to the request. The ditching timetable had been released and some ditches in the parish were due to be cleared soon, although others are not timetabled for clearance until November 2021.

13.6 Phone Box

Cllr Oxenford confirmed that she would ascertain the next steps required for renovation.

13.7 Trees

Nothing to report.

13.8 Utilities

The Clerk had previously circulated Tom Miles' of UK Power Networks email with an update on planned works to improve supplies including the planned power cut on Monday 16th November. This should lead to fewer power outages. Cllr Wedmore asked the Clerk to thank him for his email and progress report and to invite him back to a meeting in the future for further information.

13.9 Refuse Collection

Nothing to report. However, following the Chairman's positive feedback on the Viridor presentation (see item 9), there was a request for the Clerk to look into the possibility of a tour of a local waste processing centre when such visits are allowed again.

13.10 Village Hall

Cllr Oxenford confirmed that the village hall is currently closed, but the AGM will go ahead via Zoom next week. She thanked the Council on behalf of the village hall for the annual grant.

13.11 Website

Cllr Wedmore reported that the village website is not currently compliant with new accessibility requirements for public body websites that recently came into force. However, the cost for commercial providers to run the website is prohibitive and would not allow the website in its current form. Presently the website is conceived as a community resource and details such as 'Information for residents and visitors' listing local pubs and shops cannot be included as they are seen as promoting commercial organisations. Therefore, Cllr Wedmore proposed that the best option may be to split the website into Parish Council business and a wider "community" website with one linking to the other. Rother manage other local websites and already have a

compliant framework which could be made to fit. Cllr Mower seconded this proposal to go back to Rother as the most practical solution.

13.12 **Welcome Packs**

Cllr Oxenford explained that she was hoping to get hold of an email address to send the welcome pack to a couple of newcomers, once she had the opportunity to introduce herself and the information, rather than randomly sending something through.

14. **Planning Matters**

14.1 RR/2020/1672/P Watermill Lane, Land on the east side of Bexhill

The Chairman proposed the following comment be submitted on behalf of the Parish Council which was seconded by Cllr Croft and carried unanimously:

Brightling Parish Council believes that a proper due process has been followed in selecting Watermill Lane as a suitable Gypsy and Traveller site and therefore Brightling Parish Council supports the inclusion of the Watermill Lane in the Site Allocation Plan.

The Clerk was asked to make the necessary submission online.

14.2 After consultation with local landowners and further discussion, it was concluded that there were no suitable development sites in Brightling for the HELAA site request.

14.3 RR/2020/1726/P Brightling Place, Oxley's Green TN32 5HD

Proposal: Swimming pool and pool house in garden adjacent to the house.

After discussion, the Chairman proposed the following statement be submitted in relation to this application:

BPC has no objections to this application, subject to the following conditions:

a) in line with our dark skies policy, there should be no external or underwater lighting.

b) details should be required about any heating system to ensure compliance with Local Plan policies SRM1 (ii) and SRM1 (v)

Cllr Mower seconded the proposal, and the motion was carried unanimously. The Clerk was asked to submit the comments online.

15. **Training**

No current proposals.

16. **Parish Councillors' Forum**

No items were raised.

17. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

The various items of correspondence had been previously circulated and were commented upon as follows:

- 17.1 Letter to Doug Edworthy – good to see some appreciation from a local resident. Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn confirmed that he & his family had also found the guided walk in Dallington Wood excellent.
- 17.2 What 3 Words email – Cllr Wedmore explained the premise of the ‘What 3 Words’ programme for emergency services but as it is in its infancy, it was decided not to take further action at this stage.
- 17.3 Tom Miles’ email – already commented upon under item 13.8
- 17.4 Hands of Hope newsletter – an excellent local venture, a good news story.

18. Future meetings

- 18.1 Meetings of the parish council will be in Brightling Village Hall at 7.30pm or via Zoom dependent on government advice.
- 18.2 The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year:
2021: 13th January, 10th March, (14th April Annual Assembly), 12th May (AGM)

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Signed (Chairman)

Date