

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Friday 23rd September 2022 at 7.00 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Caroline Croft, Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn, Judy Petty and Andrew Wedmore and Jane Oxenford

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Dianne Mower and Cllr Joanna Coleman

District Councillor present: Cllr John Barnes, RDC

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council.

1. Apologies for absence
Received from Cllrs Coleman, Mower, Kirby-Green, ESCC and Doug Edworthy, Tree Warden. In the absence of Cllr Coleman, Vice-Chair, Cllr Petty, chaired the meeting.
2. Disclosures of interest
None were declared.
3. Additional agenda items
There were no further agenda items that had not already been included on the agenda.
4. Adoption of Minutes
The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 6th July 2022 and Wednesday 10th August as true and correct records.
5. Open Forum
 - 5.1 In her absence, Cllr Kirby-Green had submitted a report from ESCC (attached as an appendix). She further reported via email that the government had recently confirmed £41 million of funding to ESCC for bus improvements, more than any other authority has received. On demand bus service proposals are being discussed enabling pre-booking of transport which would be of great benefit to rural areas.

Cllr Barnes reported that the motion to rescind the Beech Farm planning decision had not passed at the recent Full Council meeting. However, a stay notice had been received from the Secretary of State. Worryingly he felt that some Members saw this as a precedent for building similar houses in the countryside, either as friends of the planet or to help meet the land supply problem and there was a genuine danger that decision-making that aspired to be consistent would allow similar houses to spread widely.

The Town Hall consultation ends on Sunday and is now planned to go ahead in two phases - however the estimated costs of £25m will only deliver Phase 1.

A PWLB loan is being used and after the first 2 years, income generated from office space rental and energy savings is then meant to help pay for Phase 2. The ruling group would have done well to complete a survey of the office needs of both the Council and other bodies before designing the overlarge building designed to sit alongside the listed building.

The Licensing & General Purpose C'ttee agreed to make a lump sum payment to staff of 4.5% in addition to a 1% rise in staff costs, the latter element only had been budgeted for. The decision has been deferred whilst a report is prepared on how the deal will be funded. Current spending is well over budget plans and drawing down on reserves is bringing them to a low level. The officer in charge is calling into question the spending on the town hall as the financial situation is not healthy.

Finishing with some better news, Cllr Barnes reported on the use of CIL money to provide village halls with grants to improve their environmental standing. Cllr Wedmore (AW) asked for further details.

Cllr Petty (JP) asked if the legal advice taken regarding Beech Farm had been paid for by ESALC in full? Cllr Barnes will confirm and report back.

5.2 There were no members of the public in attendance.

6. Finance and Governance

6.1 RFO Report

- 6.1.1 The bank reconciliation to 31st August 2022 had been previously circulated and Cllr Wedmore confirmed that having checked online, the balances were correct as stated.
- 6.1.2 The schedule of receipts & payments for July & August 2022 had also been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 6.1.3 The Clerk asked for initial thoughts on budget plans for 2022/'23 with inflation running as high as it is. After a brief discussion, members felt that applying a similar increase to previous years, rather than September's CPI figure, would be appropriate given that the parish council's outgoings were not particularly inflationary. The matter will be revisited at the November meeting.

7. Highways

Cllr Petty provided an update on all Highways matters:

Potholes - a lot of repairs were carried out over the summer, particularly in Hollingrove Hill where there was considerable road patching. However, the patching by Brightling Park, the latest involving a road closure, appears they may have patched the wrong side of the carriageway. The Clerk is investigating. Rectory Hill is in a bad way and apparently still doesn't meet the repair criteria. The Clerk is organising a site meeting with Ian Johnson, Safety Manager soon to discuss this.

Drains - recent heavy rain showed up many blocked drains, and the same problem areas including Jack Fullers experienced problems. The drains simply aren't cleared often enough, but several reports have been logged and some are due to be cleared by the end of the month. The Clerk is maintaining pressure on the new customer service manager.

Hedges - the overgrown hedges in Brickyard Lane had been reported and dealt with by the Highways steward, but only on one side. The Clerk has further reported the matter to the Steward. The overhanging trees on B2096 and around Dallington cause dangerous visibility issues, particularly in higher vehicles. Members agreed and asked the Clerk to raise the issue again with the Steward.

Verges - there had been a few complaints about junctions and the Clerk had requested visibility cuts. AW suggested that it should be possible to establish which areas require visibility cuts and ensure that they are on the list for urban cuts. Feedback has been requested regarding the rural trial, nearing the end of its second year's trial. Cllr Oxenford (JO) said that there were other areas which did get cut which did not present visibility issues, and she would like to see those areas being left uncut. The Clerk was asked to send the map showing the urban and rural cuts to JO who can then markup those areas and bring the matter back to the November meeting for further discussion.

8. Matters arising from the previous meeting:

- 8.1 Generator purchase - JO reported that the VH C'ttee had discussed the matter of purchasing a generator and had concluded that the Clerk should write to UKPN requesting provision of a generator in advance of a storm, for residents to use if necessary. They did however agree to purchase a UPS power pack to allow for phone charging and minor electrical use.
- 8.2 Gypsum mine - deferred to November meeting due to absences.
- 8.3 Welcome pack - AW had offered to revamp and cut down the size of the current pack. He also found it to be very out of date, and rather text heavy. He passed around a new edition for comment. It includes photographs and contact details and reflects the information on the website. Members were complimentary and thanked him for producing a much more user-friendly version. AW will complete the task and then circulate it for final comments. He also made a request for any photos of Brightling that he could incorporate.
- 8.4 Councillor Email addresses – The Clerk is still gathering information but has been in touch with Chris at Kent & Sussex IT Services who will look at domain hosting to include email addresses for around £200 per year. AW warned not to use too small a company if changing domain hosting, as they can disappear overnight with little come back.

9. Community and Business Development

9.1 Broadband

Cllr Wedmore had previously circulated a report (attached as an appendix). JP asked if the ultra-fast scheme was still dependent on numbers, and AW responded that despite not reaching the target number, the scheme was going ahead anyway, possibly coincidentally as there is now more competition and a bid to put fibre in all rural areas. It is ridiculously late, but at least it's happening now. JP congratulated AW on all the hard work he had put into the scheme and members thanked him on behalf of residents.

9.2 Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships

Cllr Croft had attended the local police meeting the previous week. No crime has been reported in Brightling. She asked about the signs for the B2096 to discourage motorbikes speeding, but was told that it is not a priority area as there have not been any serious accidents or deaths.

9.3 Defibrillators - nothing to report.

9.4 Environment Policy & Biodiversity

Cllr Wedmore had previously circulated a report (attached as an appendix). AW suggested forming a group, not connected to the parish council, along the lines of neighbouring 'Wild About' groups to aim

to improve environmental issues. He plans to advertise and see if there's any interest. JO said she would be interested in the biodiversity angle and would ask if the Tree Warden may like to join. AW said he would talk to 'Wild About Burwash' who had requested contact and the Clerk offered to forward him their email. JO also suggested that Cllr Coleman may be interested.

9.5 Footpaths & Bridleways

Nothing to report.

9.6 Highways, hedges & potholes

Cllr Petty nothing further to add (see item 7).

9.7 Messenger Magazine

JP had resigned from 'editorship' duties. JO is continuing but it remains a struggle. A new direction is required. JP asked if it is the responsibility of the PC, and AW said no, the PC is not obliged to contribute. The Clerk offered to provide a report following a council meeting, but that's only every other month. Brightling News is what's required. JO asked again for any articles PLEASE and suggested the item is revisited at the next meeting when absent councillors would hopefully be present.

9.8 Phone Box

AW said that it's very sad that the phone box has been 'leaning' for almost a year now and perhaps it should just be sold and removed. The Clerk said that Cllr Coleman had found someone to help right it, but she is currently away. The Clerk will remind her to action this on her return.

9.9 Trees

The Clerk was asked to write on behalf of the parish council to thank Paul Hatfield for diligently watering the walnut tree, a responsibility he can now relinquish with the change of season.

9.10 Utilities

JP said that there had been a water leak in Cackle Street which had been quickly logged and repaired.

9.11 Refuse Collection – nothing to report.

9.12 Village Hall

JO said she had been embarrassed by the VH C'ttee's request to the parish council for a substantial grant, but recent downpours had highlighted the condition of the roof. It is currently being investigated, and whilst reserves are healthy, they will probably be required for a new roof. AW suggested solar tiles, and said it was well-timed with Rother's VH grant scheme. He also felt that the grant request should be for something specific. He didn't mean to be negative, but with such healthy reserves, a specific reason such as match-funding would be helpful. JO will request more detail from the Treasurer.

9.13 Website

Cllr Wedmore had previously circulated a report (attached as an appendix).

9.14 Welcome Packs

See item 8.3.

10. Planning Matters

10.1 JP provided a further update on Beech Hill Farm. There is a pause whilst waiting to hear from the Secretary of State, and depending on the outcome, a judicial review may be the next step which could be very expensive. AW said that shared between many parishes and proportioned by size, it would be a manageable cost. However, he felt it likely that it would be called in.

10.2 New Planning Applications

Members decided that no comments were required relating to these applications.

10.3 Potential local enforcement issues

Some local matters had been brought to the attention of the Clerk and she has made initial enquiries with the Enforcement team at Rother and was waiting to hear a response.

10.4 Decision Notices – **For Information Only**

10.4.1 RR/2022/616/P - Becket House, Brightling

Permission granted for proposed brick piers, sandstone walls with copings and wrought iron pedestrian gate & posts to the northern boundary of the site.

10.4.2 RR/2022/1796/P - 4, Riverhouses, Battle Road, Brightling

Permission granted with conditions (Retrospectively) for erection of HGV and motor vehicle service & repair building.

11. Training - there are no current training plans.

12. Correspondence

Items of Correspondence included Rother Rural Trust's request for funding as well as any worthy recipients. The Clerk had circulated to all members an invitation from Rother DC to a Service of Commemoration for HM Queen Elizabeth II in Bexhill. RSVP to the clerk.

The ESALC AGM takes place on 30th November in Uckfield. Cllr Petty will attend and suggested that the chairman may also like to. The clerk to check with Cllr Coleman on her return.

Town Hall Renaissance consultation - It was decided that the council did not have the resources to deal with this.

Village Hall Trust letter requesting grant funding (see item 9.12)

13. Parish Councillors' Forum

Cllr Croft (CC) said that a lot of the white lines in the area particularly at certain junctions needed repainting, and with the light fading as days shorten, she asked the Clerk to report it to Highways.

AW said he'd been thinking about the Resilience & Emergency Plan and remarked that no parish councillor had taken responsibility to keep it updated. He also offered his generator to people to charge phones etc at Hunters Farm and said that details of that could be added to the plan as well

as the news that the VH C'ttee were providing a UPS power pack. CC and JP offered to take responsibility to keep it updated and asked the Clerk to send the latest version for review.

14. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items - None

15. Future Meetings

The next meeting of the parish council will be in Brightling Village Hall at 7.00pm.

15.1 The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year:

2022: 9th November.

2023: 11th January, 8th March, (12th April Annual Assembly), 10th May (AGM)

Meeting closed at 9pm

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date