

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 11th January 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

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

Parish Councillors absent: None

County/District Councillor
present: Cllr John Barnes, RDC and Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green, ESCC

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council and 5 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence
Received and accepted from Doug Edworthy, Tree Warden.
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 9th November as a true and correct record.
5. Open Forum
 - 5.1 Cllr Kirby-Green provided a report (available as an appendix). The main issue is potholes. Extreme weather conditions together with depots closing over the Christmas/New Year period have meant that repairs have been of inferior quality. Highways are aware and are doing their best by increasing the number of teams who are working round the clock. The best thing is to keep reporting problems.

Drainage - a recent site visit with Cllr Petty and a resident together with the new Head of Drains at ESCC had inspected drains in the area. Verges need to be cut back for some to function properly, but this is done by a different team which has been the victim of cutbacks. There is a new contract and EKG is hoping to bring about change in the contract criteria as these dictate how the work is carried out.

Cllr Barnes reported on 3 matters: the closure of Rye swimming pool which was due to an insufficient subsidy from Bexhill leisure centre. Rother were asked for £80k+ and disappointingly were not forthcoming. As a coastal authority, and with an elderly population, swimming is beneficial for mental

& physical health, but there is conflict between cabinet members about the duty to provide leisure services which will become more apparent after the election.

The Town Hall project is subject to an affordability review. Phase 1 costs have now amounted to £25m, but whether office accommodation should be included remains a sticking point.

Lastly, there is a budget consultation open until the end of January. He strongly urged everyone to respond as reserves are being used and it is a difficult situation.

One piece of good news is that the purchase of houses for people who are temporarily homeless has been a success. It is much better than using hotels which are expensive and creates a virtuous circle providing funds. The scheme will be extended to purchase flats over shops.

5.2 Members of the Public

Representatives from British Gypsum provided an update. Having fitted significant sections with the new composite rollers, an independent noise survey had been carried out. The reading this time was a reduction of 11.9 decibels which is a considerable difference in the amount of noise pollution. Rother DC will carry out their own survey as part of the noise abatement order. Another £40k worth of rollers have been ordered to extend the works and they continue to carry out daily surveys to monitor noisy sections of the conveyor.

Rowena Suthers said that it was certainly a lot quieter, noticeably quieter. She is more concerned about the summer months when they spend more time in the garden.

AW asked some questions about the lifespan of the new rollers and BG's commitment to insulate as well? They confirmed that the new rollers have a longer lifespan than the steel rollers, and within 12-18 months, all the old rollers will have been replaced. Insulation is an ongoing investigation as it needs to withstand the heat within the bays in the summer and be fire retardant etc. but they are trialling certain materials. JC asked about the time frame for this, which was confirmed as 6-12 months.

Finally, BG confirmed that it has been a positive result all round as the reduced friction of the new rollers is proving more efficient and providing a 20% power saving.

6. Gypsum mines update - see previous item 5.2.

7. Finance and Governance

7.1 RFO Report

- 7.1.1 The bank reconciliation to 31st December 2022 had been previously circulated and Cllr Wedmore confirmed that having checked online, the balances were correct as stated.
- 7.1.2 The schedule of receipts & payments for November & December 2022 had also been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 7.1.3 The Clerk presented the final draft of the budget applying a 2% increase to the precept which members approved.
- 7.1.4 The precept request form was duly signed by the clerk who will submit the form to Rother before the deadline of the end of January 2023.

7.1.5 The following payments were approved:

7.1.5.1 Jon Avery - Churchyard mowing - £360 (Retrospectively)

7.1.5.2 Rock salt purchase (currently not in stock - the clerk will purchase when available)

8. RALC Meeting

DM had attended the RALC meeting earlier in the day. The main points to note were responding to the budget consultation online, the Town Hall project being put 'on hold', the Planning Dept. catching up on its backlog and no longer outsourcing to Capita (apart for some maternity cover) and Olivia Carroll from Sussex Police with a very clear message about improving policing in the area. There was also an emphasis on encouraging all crime to be reported, even if it seems trivial, as it helps to build a picture, particularly in rural areas.

9. Highways

Cllr Petty said that the recent SLR Meeting had been cancelled as the Highways Steward was ill - it is due to be rearranged as a matter of urgency. She also reported on the site meeting with EKG and Mark Stapley, the new Head of the Highways Drainage Team. They inspected drains at various locations throughout the village, including the ongoing problem at Jack Fullers and Oxley's Green. MS had worked on the improvements there a couple of years ago and was aware of the issues and offered to escalate it.

Several residents had brought matters to the attention of Highways and the PC. The main problems are: drains that are blocked; drains hidden in undergrowth; drains set too far back in the verge and drains set at the wrong camber in the road. All of which makes them ineffective. JP has asked for EKG's help in requesting that drain clearance should take place more frequently in rural areas, that it should take place during daylight hours and not until after hedge cutting. JP said regular street cleaning and verge cutting back would be ideal but understands that due to cutbacks such service is unlikely. The drains between the Brightling Road junction and the Hollingrove junction are due to be cleared in February.

Penhurst Lane still has a surface water problem, and JP has spoken to the Highways Steward about it. It is a safety issue particularly when it freezes. She has also reported the burst water pipe on Rectory Hill.

DM mentioned the flooding at Stacy's Corner and by Gifford's Farm. EKG suggested that reporting them as a hazard should escalate the urgency.

10. Matters arising from the previous meeting:

10.1 Councillor email addresses - the clerk had no further information to date.

10.2 VH generator purchase - VH have purchased a power pack. UKPN confirmed that they would not provide a generator in the event of an extended outage, but they would refill one if owned by the VH.

11. Community and Business Development

11.1 Broadband

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

11.2 Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships

Cllr Croft stated that there had not much crime in Brightling. There have been several shed break-ins, theft of catalytic convertors and vans tools stolen from van break-ins. The plea from the police is that all crime should be reported, even if it seems trivial. JC asked CC to write a report for The Messenger to inform residents of the best way to report a crime.

11.3 Defibrillators - nothing to report.

11.4 Environment Policy & Biodiversity

AW had appealed for interested members to join a working group and had received some interest. He is hoping to get the group off the ground.

11.5 Footpaths & Bridleways

There is now a wooden overbridge on Brightling 23/Dallington 13b in Brightling Park. JP reported that Gardie Grissell understands that all constructions within Brightling Park are listed and therefore the landowner (now Forestry England) has a duty to preserve them. JP and JO agreed to inspect the work to see whether, in addition to the new overbridge, any preservation work had been undertaken and will report back.

JO reported a broken stile on Brightling 16 footpath on the corner into the woods. The clerk was asked to write to the landowner.

11.6 Highways, hedges & potholes

Cllr Petty nothing further to add (see item 8).

11.7 Messenger Magazine

JO again encouraged the submission of any articles for the Brightling pages. The clerk will submit a meeting report.

11.8 Phone Box

JC reported that Jamie French has now righted the phone box, but the plinth is not very robust. When the weather improves, they will inspect further and continue with improvement work. A "Work In Progress" sign is in the phone box to inform passers-by.

11.9 Trees

Nothing to report.

11.10 Utilities

No major issues. The clerk was asked to invite Tom Miles from UKPN to speak at the Annual Assembly.

11.11 Refuse Collection – nothing to report.

11.12 Village Hall

JO reported that the VH has applied take part in Rother's Village Hall Energy Project the aim of which is to provide funding to facilitate energy-efficient alterations. The VH Committee is awaiting a survey by the Scheme organisers to see whether Brightling is eligible. If so, possible grant funding will have a bearing on decisions to replace the VH roof which is reaching the end of its life. However, the VH was built very cheaply, and the roof structure probably wouldn't be strong enough to support solar panels. JO then made a specific request for PC grant funding to purchase an app and associated

system for calendar driven heating costing approx. £700. They have also bought the power bank (£100). JC said it still feels like a rather vague request, and although the PC supports the request in principle, more details should be supplied.

Finally, JO reported that the “Warm Wednesdays” initiative has not taken off and has ceased.

11.13 Website

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

11.14 Welcome Packs

Cllr Wedmore had previously circulated the final draft of the revised welcome pack. There were no further additions, so members agreed that it is now approved and available for distribution.

12. Planning Matters

12.1 New Planning Applications

12.1.1 RR/2022/2787/P - Giffords Farmhouse, Battle Road, Brightling

Proposal: A new garden building to provide a home office/studio ancillary to dwelling.

After a brief discussion, the council decided there were no objections but would like the conditions concerning external lighting and satisfactory details of heating and energy to be included. The clerk will submit comments online.

All decision notices, details of appeals and enforcements have previously been circulated to all councillors for information.

12.2 RR/2022/840/P - Beech Hill Farm, Sedlescombe

The only update was that a second application has been submitted (RR/2022/2690/P) for the same proposal which like the first, is subject to a holding notice. The clerk was asked to submit the same comments as before using her delegated authority objecting to the application.

13. Correspondence

13.1 Letter of thanks from Victim Support.

13.2 Government consultation on National Planning Policy - JP had circulated a draft response. AW will suggest some additions and circulate to all members. The deadline to respond is 2nd March.

13.3 SE Water cheque - JC suggested writing to thank them but point out that money would be better spent improving infrastructure. Other members agreed and the clerk was asked to write a letter on behalf of the parish council.

14. Parish Councillors’ Forum

JP - Annual litter picking date needs to be set. After a brief discussion, 15th April was agreed and will be duly publicised.

JP asked the clerk to follow up on the missing post box at the top of Willingford Lane, removed after an accident. JO also asked the clerk to investigate the missing ‘peak’ on the post box at The Old Post Office.

AW asked when the vicar was retiring. JC believed it is the end of June.

15. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

16. Future Meetings

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

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

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

Meeting closed 9.09pm

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date