

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 8th March 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Caroline Croft, Judy Petty, Andrew Wedmore and Dianne Mower

Parish Councillors absent: Cllrs Jane Oxenford, Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn & Joanna Coleman

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council

1. Apologies for absence

Received and accepted from Doug Edworthy, Tree Warden, Cllr John Barnes, RDC and Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green, ESCC, Cllrs Jane Oxenford, Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn & Joanna Coleman. 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 11th January, with Item 5.2 amended as per Cllr Wedmore's suggestion, as a true and correct record.

5. Open Forum

5.1 Cllr Kirby-Green provided a report (available as an appendix).

Cllr Barnes had sent an update by email:

The budget went through with £1m of unspecified savings and £2m plus drawdown on reserves, but with assurances from the acting CFO that there is work ongoing that gives him confidence that the budget will be delivered. Special expenses are to continue for a further year and there is good reason to believe that there will be increased income.

The number of families who need housing has doubled; the scheme to buy houses has created a virtuous cycle around homelessness, but the figures remain high, creating budgetary pressures. Rother's record on homelessness is a credit to Joe Powell and his department.

Having seen the response to the Government's planning consultation, while greater protection for AONBs specifically could have been further emphasised, it was in general along the right lines.

5.2 Members of the Public - None were present.

6. Finance and Governance

6.1 RFO Report

- 6.1.1 The bank reconciliation to 28th February 2023 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 January & February 2023 had also been previously circulated and was approved by members.
- 6.1.3 The continued engagement of Mulberry & Co. as auditors was approved. The date of the audit has been confirmed as 20th April.
- 6.1.4 The payment to Doug Andrews for fingerpost repair (Inv. 3998 for £40.80) was approved.

7. Elections - 4th May 2023

The clerk provided an update on candidate requirements and election procedures. Nomination papers must be delivered in person to the Town Hall at Bexhill between 27th March and 4th April. The clerk will forward the emails from Rother with links to the forms to be completed and details of a briefing session being held by Rother.

8. Highways

8.1 Drains & Potholes

Cllr Petty said that been a lot of potholes have been reported and repaired since the last meeting. The postponed SLR meeting is taking place on 21st March and items on the agenda include Oxley's Green, New House Farm, overhanging branches on B2096, leaks on Rectory Hill and the road edge (See item 8.2). Cllr Kirby-Green has been very helpful about the patch on Cackle Street which was patched and immediately in need of repair again. The repair process itself needs re-examining which is very frustrating.

In Penhurst Lane, a ditch has been dug and hopefully resolved the surface water problem. However, drains near Longhouses that were meant to be cleared in February, haven't been and JP asked the clerk to chase this up. The kerb stones in the same area that had been damaged, have been replaced.

8.2 Dangerous Road Edge at Mount Farm, Perryman's Lane, Brightling

The owner of this property had received an enforcement notice to cut back trees and hedging. However, the opposite side of the road has the very dangerous edge that has resulted in damage to several vehicles and has been reported many times in the past. The Highways Steward has inspected it and says that it is not their responsibility to widen the carriageway. The clerk has contacted the Road Safety team about appropriate signage to warn users of the narrow carriageway. This will be discussed at the SLR meeting and also a request for a site meeting. AW suggested a barrier could be installed to prevent users going on to the verge and damaging their vehicles.

9. Matters arising from the previous meeting:

- 9.1 Councillor email addresses - The clerk had spoken to 3 providers from the List of Registrars. After comparing prices and service provision, she recommended Geosphere. AW asked if they could organise for a permanent re-direct to the existing website which is currently hosted by Rother and therefore does not incur any costs. He proposed authorising the clerk to purchase the appropriate .gov.uk domain name and work with Geosphere. All those present agreed.
- 9.2 The clerk had written to SE Water regarding the Community Chest Fund payout, and also mentioned the discoloured water in the Netherfield Hill area. Recent works have been carried out in the area affected, but it is unclear what for, and JP asked the clerk to contact SE Water to find out more.
- 9.3 The clerk had written to the landowner regarding the broken stile on Footpath BRI 16. No response to date.
It was subsequently reported that the stile has now been repaired.
- 9.4 JO & JP had inspected and taken photos of the bridge repairs on Footpath Brightling 23/Dallington 13b. No repair work had taken place to the abutments of the bridge, simply the installation of the overbridge. The landowner (Forestry England) says that they aren't obliged to preserve historic monuments, but the district council can exert pressure on them to carry out repairs. The clerk has written to the Rights of Way team in the first instance to find out more.
- 9.5 The clerk updated the council on arrangements for the Annual Parish Assembly on 12th April. Refreshments, publicity and a request for annual reports for the various village organisations is in hand. Members suggested inviting the new PCSO to speak at the beginning of the meeting as she had been very informative at a recent 'Local Lunch'.

10. Community and Business Development

10.1 Broadband

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

10.2 Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships

Cllr Croft stated that there had again not been any crime in Brightling. A quad bike was stolen from a garden shed in Robertsbridge.

10.3 Defibrillators - nothing to report.

10.4 Environment Policy & Biodiversity

AW held the first meeting of the newly formed Environment group - 8 had attended and 1 sent apologies. The next meeting is taking place on 11th March, after he attends a nearby meeting on solar farms.

10.5 Footpaths & Bridleways

Nothing further to report (see item 9.4)

10.6 Highways, hedges & potholes

Cllr Petty nothing further to add (see item 8). She asked the clerk to follow up with Anthony Becvar about a rural street cleaning enquiry.

10.7 Messenger Magazine

The clerk will submit a meeting report, an article about the upcoming elections and a notice for the Parish Assembly. JP has already sent an item about the annual litter pick.

10.8 Phone Box

Nothing to report in Cllr Coleman's absence. On the two Post Boxes, the clerk reported that the one at the junction of Willingford Lane & Observatory Road which had been removed following a traffic accident, is due to be replaced in the coming weeks. Also, on the Ludlow box in the wall at The Old Post Office, a specially made plate was made and has now been fitted.

10.9 Trees

Nothing to report.

10.10 Utilities

CC said that there hadn't been any major issues. There were a couple of planned power cuts whilst a telegraph pole was recently replaced in the woods, and there are a few more scheduled. UKPN were efficient with updates and had provided for tea & coffee and the ability to charge devices.

10.11 Refuse Collection – nothing to report.

10.12 Village Hall

JP reported that the energy survey had taken place a few days ago, and the committee are also investigating solar tiles. The consumption of gas for heating has been reduced since using the app.

10.13 Website

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

10.14 Welcome Packs

Cllr Wedmore said that the welcome packs are now ready for distribution.

11. Planning Matters

11.1 New Planning Applications

11.1.1 RR/2023/189/P - Bannisters, Deer Park Road, Brightling

Proposal: A garage conversion to create store, office and annexe.

After a brief discussion, the council decided there were no objections but would like the conditions concerning external lighting, satisfactory details of heating and energy to be included and that the building never be sold under separate title. The clerk to submit the following comments online:

Brightling Parish Council supports this application but would like to see the following conditions included in any permission granted:

- 1. No, or limited, external lighting in order to support the 'Dark Skies' policy.*
- 2. Planning permission should not be granted until satisfactory details of heating and energy use have been supplied, to conform with Rother's policy SRM1: Towards a Low Carbon Future.*
- 3. The building would never be sold under separate title from the main residence*

11.1.2 RR/2023/217/P - The Normanhurst Estate, Catsfield TN33 9AL

Proposal: Outline planning application with all matters reserved apart from principal points of access and Parameter Plans and Detailed Design Guide for the development of up to 211 holiday lodges, associated

amenity buildings (including reception, leisure uses, resort retail and restaurant, maintenance and refuse storage buildings), affordable workspace, associated buildings and structures, new and secondary access roads, up to 350 car parking spaces, pedestrian and cycle routes, public open space, along with landscaping and biodiversity enhancements and sustainable urban drainage including the creation of new lakes and ecological ponds and other associated engineering works.

AW said that he was strongly against this development and proposed that the parish council object primarily due to its sheer size. The parking, increased traffic and damage to an area within the HWAONB were all concerns raised by other members and they all agreed to submit an objection. The clerk wrote the following comments on the planning portal:

Brightling Parish Council strongly objects to this application for the following reasons:

The size of the development in an area within the HWAONB, the increased traffic and population on the local infrastructure, the destruction of natural habitats and bio-diversity that would result from the building of cycle tracks, paths and the lodges themselves and the precedent it could set for similar size developments in AONB's.

11.1.3 RR/2023/121/P - Fonthill Farm, Fontridge Lane

Brightling Parish Council had no comment on this application.

Informally the very recent application at Wyland Wood, Willards Hill, Brightling (RR/2023/439/P) was discussed. As members had no objections aside from the conditions of external lighting, they suggested that the clerk submit comments online using her delegated authority. The following comments were therefore submitted:

Brightling Parish Council supports this application and would like to ensure the following conditions are included with any permission granted:

- 1. No, or limited, external lighting in order to support the 'Dark Skies' policy.*
- 2. Planning permission should not be granted until satisfactory details of heating and energy use have been supplied, to conform with Rother's policy SRM1: Towards a Low Carbon Future.*

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

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

Nothing to report.

12. Correspondence

12.1 Letter from Hadlow Down PC re highways

JP proposed writing a letter to support Hadlow Down PC in their motives and suggest that they raise it with ESALC and at the next RALC meeting to garner further support.

12.2 The request for a donation towards the planned Coronation Event on 7th May 2023 had been previously circulated. Cllr Croft said that as a local business, they had offered to sponsor the Punch & Judy show, which is what the funding request was for, and CC will let the event organiser know.

13. Parish Councillors' Forum - No councillors present had anything further to raise.

14. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items - Nothing to add here.

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:

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

Meeting closed 8.28pm

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date