

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on  
Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

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

District / County

Councillors present: ESCC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green, RDC John Barnes

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council

1. Election of Chairman  
Cllr Oxenford proposed that Cllr Joanna Coleman remain as Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Mower and was unanimously supported. Cllr Coleman was duly elected as Chairman.
2. Election of Vice Chairman  
Cllr Wedmore proposed Cllr Judy Petty remain as Vice-Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Oxenford and unanimously supported. Cllr Petty was declared Vice Chairman.
3. Declarations of Acceptance of Office  
Cllrs Coleman and Petty signed their respective Acceptances of Office. Other members had also signed their acceptances of office on arrival and the clerk countersigned them all.
4. Apologies for absence  
None were received.
5. Disclosures of interest  
None were declared.
6. Additional agenda items  
There were no further agenda items that had not already been included on the agenda.
7. Adoption of Minutes  
The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on Wednesday 8th March 2023 and the additional meeting held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March as true and correct records.
8. Asset Register of Council Property, Scheme of Delegation and Risk Assessment  
There were no changes to the asset register showing the value of assets as £3,859 which had been previously circulated by email together with the scheme of delegation and the risk assessment procedures. Cllr Coleman proposed the approval and re-adoption of these items, Cllr Croft seconded the proposal, and all members present unanimously agreed.

9. Appointment of members to serve on external bodies & lead responsibilities.

RALC – Cllr Mower offered to remain as representative of the Parish Council on this association of local councils. Cllr Coleman will also attend when possible.

Village Hall – Cllr Jane Oxenford

All councillors were content to retain their current Lead Responsibilities, with further confirmation after co-option of the additional councillor.

10. Councillor Vacancy

Cllr Coleman suggested some local residents that she plans to approach in person about co-option. After some discussion and other suggestions, the clerk reminded members of the deadline of 26<sup>th</sup> June, and Cllr Coleman offered to start the process the following week.

11. Dates and times of future meetings

Members agreed and adopted the following dates for meetings in the remainder of the council year:

2023: 12th July, 13th September, 8th November.

2024: 10th January, 13th March, 8th May (AGM).

12. Date of the Annual Assembly

Members agreed the date for next year's Assembly as Wednesday 10th April.

13. Open Forum

13.1 Cllr Kirby-Green's main point to report was that Balfour Beatty (BB) have taken over as the new contractor with Highways. The outgoing contractor appeared to do very little for the last 8 weeks and the roads are terrible, worse than before. However, BB are aware of the huge task ahead, and appear to have lots of energy. More quality checking will take place and they have more machines. Cllr Petty said that the new website for reporting problems, and checking the progress of open cases is not functioning well, and with the changes of personnel it is hard to contact the right person. EKG offered to forward the new contact details for the Highways Steward and others and raise the issues mentioned.

Cllr Barnes reported that Rother is a hung council after the elections. A new Leader of the Council is required, but there is an interim CFO and the first council meeting is taking place on 26<sup>th</sup> May. No decisions have been taken as members have been in purdah.

13.2 No members of the public were present.

#### 14. RFO Report and Governance

##### 14.1 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

14.1.1 The clerk had previously circulated the report from the Internal Auditor and mentioned some specific items about publishing more financial information on the website and councillor allowances.

14.1.2 Having reviewed the internal systems of control, and read aloud the Annual Governance Statement, it was approved by members, adopted and signed.

14.1.3 The Accounting Statement had previously been circulated and was approved by members and duly signed.

14.1.4 The Clerk confirmed that the Council is still exempt from the need to submit the AGAR to the external auditor, as gross income and expenditure are less than £25k. The meeting authorised the Chairman to sign the Certificate of Exemption.

14.1.5 The dates for the Notice of Elector's Rights were confirmed by the clerk and approved.

##### 14.2 RFO Report

14.2.1 The RFO had previously circulated the schedule of receipts & payments for April 2023.

14.2.2 Cllr Coleman confirmed that the balances were correct as stated and in accordance with the previously circulated bank reconciliation to the year-end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The clerk had also circulated copies of the bank statements to show the balances at the year end.

14.2.3 The following payments were approved:

14.2.3.1 Dragon Signs (Inv.4582) - £100.51 (paid retrospectively)

14.2.3.2 Champagne & Caviar Annual Assembly canapés (Inv.66/98) - £66.00 (paid retrospectively)

14.2.3.3 ESALC 2023/'24 subscription (Inv. 1307) - £104.73 (paid retrospectively)

14.2.3.4 Geosphere (Inv. 21UG006-0007) - £168 (paid retrospectively)

14.2.3.5 Clerk's Expenses - £127.98

14.2.3.6 Zurich Insurance renewal - £236.99

14.2.3.7 Mulberry & Co. (Inv. 21046) - £171.18

14.2.4 The RFO had previously circulated the end of year statement of income and expenditure against the forecast and the statement of reserves. There were no questions, and the statement was approved.

14.2.5 The Clerk's salary for the year 2022/'23 had been agreed in the budget plans at £10.98/hr for 30 hours per calendar month (£329.40 per month). In addition, the clerk will receive a home office allowance of £6/wk. This equates to £312/year, as agreed in the budget plans for 2023/'24 and will be paid by BACS on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. Members approved this as a regular payment.

#### 15. Highways - nothing further to add (see Item 13.1)

#### 16. Annual Assembly 2023

Councillors discussed the low turnout this year, partly due to the weather, the lack of a guest speaker and the Local Lunch that had been held earlier the same day. They felt that reading reports from societies & clubs should be revisited with a seated arrangement rather than standing. JP suggested inviting Crowhurst parish to speak next year about environment / energy schemes that they are implementing.

#### 17. Councillor Emails

Councillors who had set up their new email accounts had experienced some teething problems which the clerk had raised with the provider. These have now been resolved, and she urged remaining councillors to start using their new email accounts. She will then update all necessary contact information.

#### 18. Litter-Pick Report

Cllr Oxenford reported that lots of people turned up and mostly reported not finding as much litter as normal, perhaps due to doing it slightly later in the year.

#### 19. Lead Responsibility Reports

##### 19.1 Broadband

Despite having been told that the project was delayed, Cllr Wedmore had received reports of lots of very recent & current activity by BT Openreach and subsequently confirmed with them that the project to upgrade Brightling and surrounding areas is now underway. Most of the work should be finished by the end of July hopefully.

##### 19.2 Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships

Cllr Croft didn't attend the last meeting, and no report had been received to date. The Patrol Plan was discussed, and the policing priorities confirmed. The clerk will update it, together with contact details and send the report to Sussex Police.

##### 19.3 Defibrillators - nothing to report.

##### 19.4 Environment & Bio-Diversity

Cllr Wedmore reported that the newly formed group haven't decided on action points yet, and they are due to meet with representatives from Crowhurst. A resident had sent suggestions for Rother's planning dept. to encourage energy efficiency in older properties e.g double glazing in windows. He asked the district & county councillors the best method to get those incorporated as he felt any national consultation comments would likely be overlooked. Cllr Barnes said that the Local Plan update should be out for consultation soon and further suggested that the Northern Parishes Group could add weight. Members agreed that it would be useful to engage with the planning department. JB confirmed that the final stage of the Local Plan goes before the (national) Planning Inspectorate.

#### 19.5 Footpaths & Bridleways

The overbridge repairs on the nearby footpath were discussed after further investigation. Landowners don't have any statutory responsibility to preserve them and Cllr Kirby-Green reported that similar activity had had happened elsewhere, and unfortunately there is nothing to be done.

#### 19.6 Highways, hedges & potholes - nothing further to add to the earlier discussion (item 13.1).

#### 19.7 Messenger Magazine

AW reported that the magazine is looking for someone to support the editor and reminded the meeting that anyone can write content.

#### 19.8 Phone Box

Cllr Coleman reported that she has arranged for someone to provide new concrete for the base to be made solid and will report back to council about costs.

#### 19.9 Refuse Collection - nothing to report.

#### 19.10 Trees- nothing to report.

#### 19.11 Utilities- nothing to report.

#### 19.12 Village Hall

Cllr Oxenford reported that the most urgent matter is to find a new Treasurer. Cllr Petty said that the survey for the Village Hall Energy project had taken place and the results with recommendations for each VH are expected by the end of May. A local surveyor had also examined the roof and suggested solar panels would be better located on the billiard room roof. The next committee meeting is at the end of the month.

#### 19.13 Website - nothing to report.

#### 19.14 Welcome Packs

Cllr Wedmore said that the new welcome pack can be printed as required and is now only 2 sheets of A4 folded into an A5 leaflet. The clerk said that there were recent new residents in Giffords Oast, Battle Road and Cllr Mower offered to deliver to them.

### 20. Planning Matters

All planning decisions and details of enforcement had been circulated to members for information. JP asked Cllr Barnes if he had further details about the enforcement at Brightling Oast and he offered to investigate. JP asked if the department took any notice of parish council comments considering recent decisions?

### 21. Future Training Events

Cllr Coleman's training session has been changed to 7<sup>th</sup> June. The clerk offered to circulate the programme of training offered by Mulberry & Co. which is used by many councils, and asked members to let her know if any items were of interest.

22. Parish Councillors' Forum

Cllr Croft asked about the lorry activity on the Battle Road with a large amount of spoil being taken to Giffords Farm? Cllr Kirby-Green offered to check if a Tipping Licence is in place and the clerk will send her the details.

23. Clerk's Update (including any correspondence)

The clerk mentioned the current DLUHC consultation which is very technical and detailed. Members agreed that council doesn't have the resources available to respond in this instance.

24. Future Agenda Items

Cllr Petty suggested a request be made to Balfour Beatty to attend a meeting perhaps to a group of councils to discuss their plans and the opportunity for a Q&A.

25. Future Meetings

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

25.2 The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year (subject to confirmation of agenda items 11. and 12. above):

2023: 12<sup>th</sup> July, 13<sup>th</sup> September, 8<sup>th</sup> November.

2024: 10<sup>th</sup> January, 13<sup>th</sup> March, (10<sup>th</sup> April Annual Assembly), 8<sup>th</sup> May (AGM)

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date .....