

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

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Judy Petty (Vice-Chair), Jane Oxenford, Andrew Wedmore, Katrina Blench, Philip Garbutt & Caroline Croft

District/County Councillors: Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green, ESCC

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

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Joanna Coleman and Cllr John Barnes, RDC. In the absence of Cllr Coleman, Cllr Petty chaired the meeting.

2. Disclosures of interest

None

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 meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 20th September as a true and correct record.

**The clerk had forgotten to bring the minutes of the additional meeting held on 4th October for signing. They will be ratified at the January meeting.*

5. Parish Clerk Vacancy

Cllr Petty confirmed the appointment of Sam Dugan as the new parish clerk. The current clerk is providing a handover period until the end of November.

6. Open Forum

6.1 In Cllr Barnes' absence, he had sent a report which is attached as an appendix.

Cllr Kirby-Green reported that the drainage team are due to remedy the flooding that regularly occurs in Ticehurst soon - she is aware that other areas also regularly suffer in a similar way and is escalating as much as possible to Highways. The recent emails from the clerk and Cllr Petty have been passed to Ruby Brittle who is now aware of the various issues in Brightling. She also reported that there is an urgent need for more foster carers and asked if that could be publicised on the website and in The Messenger magazine. ESCC had received a good peer review for its children's services and ASC.

AW asked about Rother's Local Plan and how to raise the issue of equestrianisation which allows an equestrian property to be split into separate lots of land, stables & residential property. Stables are then erected as stand-alone items on the land and can then in time be converted into accommodation. EKG said she would talk to Jeff Pyrah at Rother and AW offered to send her a written summary.

6.2 Members of the public

Rowena Suthers updated the parish council on the acoustic testing that had been carried out by an independent company and Rother DC on the British Gypsum conveyor belt. She felt it was disappointing that BG weren't at the meeting. The replacement rollers have helped to reduce noise levels, but they are no longer installing the sound-proofing previously mentioned. RS had done quite a lot of research into previous parish council minutes and noted that in February, April & May 1991 there were complaints from residents about the noise levels at night. Whether this caused them to cease overnight production is unknown, but the conveyor belt had not run at night until 2020.

Jonthan Hampson, a Snr Environmental Officer from Rother DC spoke about the investigation as he has been involved from the start, although he was limited in the specifics of this case that he could talk about. A noise abatement order had been issued and it was under enforcement, a notice that exists in perpetuity. Noise nuisance has a high bar, and having replaced the rollers, it now falls below that bar, so RDC can no longer enforce it. KB asked if there was a difference between noise nuisance at night-time & daytime hours? JH said yes, there is guidance, but it is judged by the investigating officer.

The clerk was asked to contact BG for an update and to invite them to the January meeting. Also, to investigate a recent change in legislation about noise levels that Cllr Barnes had previously mentioned.

The Beards wanted to inform the council that they had submitted comments regarding planning application RR/2023/2077/P. Subsequently, there have been extensive groundworks and a mature tree felled in order to bring in a large mobile home onto the site. They are now concerned about other mature trees.

The Chairman thanked them all for coming and they left the meeting.

7. British Gypsum – see previous item. AW further added that BG have always been community minded in the past and production levels have varied enormously over the years. PG suggested that the new rollers could be strained by increased production levels and a new noise nuisance threshold may then be triggered.

8. Finance and Governance

8.1 RFO report

- 8.1.1 The bank reconciliation to 31st October 2023 had previously been circulated together with a copy of the bank statement. AW confirmed that the balance was correct as stated.
- 8.1.2 The schedule of receipts & payments for September & October 2023 had previously been circulated and was approved by members.

- 8.1.3 The clerk had circulated initial budget proposals for 2024/'25. Members felt they would prefer to avoid even a small deficit and asked the clerk to rework the allowances and suggested precept increase. The clerk will circulate the amended proposals ready for approval at the January meeting.
- 8.1.4 Members agreed on the increased amount of £63 for the S137 payments to the following recipients:
- 8.1.4.1 St Michael's Hospice
 - 8.1.4.2 Citizens Advice Bureau
 - 8.1.4.3 RNLI
 - 8.1.4.4 Victim Support
 - 8.1.4.5 Battle Foodbank
 - 8.1.4.6 Sussex Air Ambulance
 - 8.1.4.7 Rother Rural Trust
- 8.1.5 The following payments were also approved:
- 8.1.5.1 Satswana subscription - £180 (retrospective)
 - 8.1.5.2 Microsoft Office 365 Subscription - £59.99 (Clerk expenses)

9. Planning Matters

9.1 New planning applications

After brief discussions, the clerk was asked to submit the following comments online on behalf of the parish council:

9.1.1 RR/2023/2117/P – Coldharbour Farm – Units at Battle Road, Brightling

Brightling Parish Council objects to this application as there is no justification given for the creation of a car park. There are no details about the plan and we are concerned about the loss of bio-diversity as a number of mature trees would be replaced by hedging - also insufficient to conceal the visual impact. There is no detail about the plan to reinstate after 5 years, and what would be done with the plastic grid.

9.1.2 RR/2023/1773/L – Holly Tree Cottage, Perrymans Lane, Brightling

Brightling Parish Council has no objections to the submitted like for like internal repairs.

9.1.3 RR/2023/1924/P – Hollingrove Barn, Hollingrove Lane, Brightling

Brightling Parish Council has no objections to the demolition and rebuild of the fire damaged building. If any additional external lighting is introduced, we ask that it respects the protection of the dark skies policy.

9.1.4 RR/2023/2049/P – 1, Twelve Oaks, Hollingrove Lane, Brightling

Brightling Parish Council supports the installation of solar panels as detailed in this application.

9.1.5 RR/2023/2077/P – Lake Cottage, Manor Farm, Brightling Road,

Brightling Parish Council strongly objects to this application on the basis of appearance, siting, size and materials not being in keeping with the AONB. There is a concern that mature trees will need to be felled, and that the size of the proposed building is too large on the plot. If Rother are minded granting

permission, then we would like the following conditions included: 1. No, or limited external lighting, in order to protect dark skies. 2. Any new hardstanding is of a porous or semi-porous material to reduce water run-off.

9.2 Open Enforcement Cases – any updates are circulated to members for information.

10. Grass Cutting option - 2024

After a brief discussion, members agreed unanimously to maintain the present option (1) of standard cuts. The clerk will circulate any information regarding the results of the wild verge trial.

11. Highways

JP reported from the recent Strengthening Local Relationships (SLR) meeting saying that many other councils have stopped holding them altogether as they achieve very little. EKG mentioned that a monthly meeting after an email of current issues works well but the previous contact in the Customer Services department hasn't been replaced yet. JP had sent EKG an email listing all the same old problems at Oxley's Green; cascading water down Rectory Hill; missed and inadequate drain clearance down Cackle Street; flooding at Darwell junction; blocked drain in Penhurst Lane. JP asked if there were meant to be more people checking the work, under the new contract? EKG said that yes, 30% of work is being randomly checked. She offered to follow up on all matters and report back.

12. RALC Meeting – There was no update in Cllr Coleman's absence.

13. Dark Skies Festival

KB said that the next meeting of the Environment Group is on Sunday 12th November when funding for the planned activities for the festival will be discussed. At present, some suggested ideas include use of the Wonderdome planetarium, a dark skies talk and a moth report. Most activities will take place in late October 2024.

14. Community & Business Development

14.1 JP went through the list of responsibilities asking councillors to indicate which areas they would be responsible for. The following items have the new councillor's initials by them to confirm allocation, and any associated reporting.

14.2 Reports

i. Broadband – AW had previously circulated a report (attached as an appendix).

ii. Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships – CC reported that a churn planter had recently been stolen from outside a property in Brightling. There was also a fire in Prinkle Wood which appeared to be a burnt-out vehicle.

iii. Defibrillators - CC confirmed the de-fib at Darwell Hole is fine. The Clerk needs to register both locations on The Circuit, the national register of de-fibs which is proving tricky.

- iv. Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity – KB & AW who had circulated a report (attached).
- v. Footpaths & Bridleways – KB. The clerk offered to send her the link to the map of footpaths for reference numbers. JO mentioned the damage to the bridleway in Rounden Wood after recent tree felling work. The clerk will verify the location and report it to the Rights of Way Team.
- vi. Highways, Hedges & Potholes – JP - see item 11.
- vii. Messenger magazine – JO together with reports from the clerk.
- viii. Phone Box – JC needs to chase for the quote approved at the last meeting to arrange for a concrete base which will stabilise the phone box. CC proposed that it be used as a book exchange as there is no longer one in the VH. A future item for discussion once the phone box is finished. Some councillors felt it looked rather neglected and perhaps it would be better removed.
- ix. Trees – PG
- x. Utilities – CC – The clerk was asked to invite UKPN to Annual Assembly.
- xi. Refuse Collection – CC
- xii. Village Hall – JO, who thanked the PC for the £700 donation.
- xiii. Website - Cllr Wedmore had previously circulated a report (attached as an appendix).
- xiv. Welcome Packs – KB

15. Parish Councillors' Forum

CC mentioned scam emails that she has been receiving on the new .gov.uk emails.

AW asked EKG about Flexibus, and the experience he had which wasn't very good. She reported that usage in this area had the lowest take-up which is probably because locations are restricted & the app doesn't always work. She asked AW to forward the email chain to her to follow up.

16. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Item

16.1 ESALC AGM – 14th November, Uckfield Civic Centre – no councillors were available to attend.

16.2 Rother's Annual Parish Conference, Brede Village Hall – 5th December – no councillors were available to attend.

16.3 The next meeting of the parish council will be in Brightling Village Hall at 7.00pm. The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year:

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

Meeting closed at 9.09pm

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date