

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 13th March at 7.00 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

Parish Councillors Present: Cllrs J. Petty (Vice-Chair), K. Blench, C. Croft and A. Wedmore

District/County Councillors Present: Cllr J. Barnes, Rother District Council (RDC)

Also Present: Sam Dugan, Parish Clerk, and 2 members of the public

1. Public Forum

- 1.1.** A member of Brightling Environmental Group (BEG) provided Cllrs with an update on the group's work to promote awareness of Dark Skies, along with a request for the Council to support efforts with neighbouring Parish Councils and the High Weald AONB to achieve certification as a 'Dark Sky Community' by 2026.
- 1.2.** Eoin Wallace from British Gypsum provided an update that monitoring equipment has been installed along a stretch of the conveyor near properties on Hollingrove Road. There is now a commissioning period, followed by ongoing monitoring and review of data. This monitoring equipment is permanent. There have been no further noise checks from RDC. Eoin committed to continue to update Council and confirmed overhead housekeeping works have been completed. The tracks adjacent to the conveyor are improved, but poor weather has not helped. Cllr Wedmore sought clarification about frequency of housekeeping along whole stretch of conveyor; Eoin confirmed there will be weekly checks along the line and encourages the public to report any issues back to the mine.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received and accepted from Parish Councillors Joanna Coleman, Jane Oxenford and Philip Garbutt, and ESCC County Councillor Eleanor Kirby-Green.

3. Disclosures of Interest

None.

4. Additional Agenda Items

Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the Clerk's probation.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on Wednesday 10th January 2024 and the extraordinary planning meeting held on Thursday 15th February 2024 as true and correct records, and authorised the Vice-Chair to sign them.

6. Reports from District and County Councillors

Cllr Barnes provided Council with an update regarding RDC's recent budget, noting high increases in certain charges to improve revenue - particularly green waste collection which is set to increase by 37%. Car parking charges have also increased. Savings plans have been built into departmental budgets, which increases likelihood of delivery meaning drawdown on reserves at the end of the year should be much less. Strike action of RDC staff has been called off following offer of one-off settlement. Purchase of accommodation for temporarily homeless was a good decision and RDC is managing costs well to meet huge homeless need. Cllr Barnes provided updates to the progress of RDC Local Plan.

7. D-Day 80th Anniversary

- 7.1. Councillors received details of beacon lighting by residents and confirmation of insurance arrangements.
- 7.2. Councillors **RESOLVED** to express their support and thanks to residents for their hard work and efforts to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day.
- 7.3. Councillors discussed options for purchasing a commemorative D-Day flag to be potentially raised from the church flagpole. Councillors expressed environmental concerns (polyester) and limited visibility. Councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to not purchase a commemorative flag.

8. South East Water

- 8.1. Councillors discussed questions to be submitted to South East Water Stakeholder Officer ahead of attendance at the Annual Parish Meeting 10/4/24. Cllr Blench highlighted a recent newspaper article in the Financial Times reporting 70% increases in charges to customers in coming years.
- 8.2. Following discussions, Councillors **RESOLVED** to delegate to the Clerk to submit questions focussed on poor customer service, price increases, dividends, and pipe infrastructure.

9. Highways and Drainage

- 9.1. Councillors received the minutes of the Strengthening Local Relationships meeting held 16/2/24.
- 9.2. The Clerk updated Councillors about the status of correspondence with Cllr Dowling (ESCC), and that a full response has not yet been received.
- 9.3. Cllr Petty provided further updates on highways and drainage:
 - 9.3.1. Steward has confirmed areas for works – Cackle Street, Rectory Hill, Brickyard Lane - but not given dates.
 - 9.3.2. Cllr Barnes added that poor weather and continuous rainfall has impacted on ability to complete works.
 - 9.3.3. Various potholes identified since SLR meeting have been temporarily worked on.
 - 9.3.4. Balfour Beatty has stated that most drains are to be worked on this month, but it is not clear what this entails.

- 9.3.5. Drains along Cackle Street (inc. behind Longhouses) are to be worked 19/3/24. The numbers supplied by Balfour Beatty bear no correspondence to drain numbers on maps. Cllr Petty to seek clarification.
- 9.3.6. Cllr Barnes encouraged local landowners to maintain agricultural ditches.
- 9.3.7. Cllr Petty expressed praise for Liz Humphreys at Balfour Beatty for her engagement with Brightling through emails and SLR meetings.
- 9.3.8. B2096 continues to experience flash flooding during and after heavy rain, but investigations show no current blockages. Cllr Petty expressed need for a regular check to clear to promote safety on a busy road. Cllr Barnes agreed to raise with Cllr Kirby-Green.
- 9.3.9. Cllr Wedmore noted that the 'Slow' painted road markings near the village hall need replacing. The Clerk was requested to include in next SLR meeting agenda.

10. Affordable housing

- 10.1. Cllr Wedmore detailed with Councillors information received from Action in Rural Sussex (previous circulated). Cllr Wedmore provided historical information from 2007/8 where affordable housing was raised and caused division in the village; the proposed site at the time did not progress. Cllr Wedmore expressed the view that affordable housing in the village would be good to see, but would require significant drive, commitment, and time to push it forwards.
- 10.2. Cllr Blench shared her knowledge of potential interested parties and expressed interest in exploring options further.
- 10.3. Cllr Barnes informed Council that RDC housing task force is due to review Rother's housing strategy, and given limited resources of Brightling PC, suggested exploring whether there would be interest in establishing a consortium with Dallington and Ashburnham. Cllr Barnes highlighted how the use of Community Land Trusts can give Parish Councils and residents greater control.
- 10.4. Cllrs **RESOLVED** to revisit affordable housing again in a future meeting with more Cllrs present.
- 10.5. Cllrs present expressed broad agreement to affordable housing in the Parish in principle, but that much more attention, with all Cllrs present, is required.
- 10.6. Cllr Barnes advised that, should Cllrs be minded to pursue affordable housing in the future, the Clerk should examine exception sites within the NPPF.

11. Policies and website

- 11.1. Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt the Data Protection Policy previously circulated by the Clerk.
- 11.2. Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt the Freedom of Information & Document Retention Scheme previously circulated by the Clerk.
- 11.3. Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt the Accessibility Statement for the Parish website previously circulated by the Clerk.
- 11.4. Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt the Privacy Policy for the Parish website previously circulated by the Clerk.

12. Annual Parish Meeting

- 12.1.** Councillors **RESOLVED** that catering was not necessary, that Cllrs would provide plates/nibbles, and to increase white wine provisions based on previous consumption. Confirmed timing for 19:30.
- 12.2.** Councillors **RESOLVED** for the Clerk to seek reports from the following organisations/areas:
- 12.2.1.** Brightling Flower Show
 - 12.2.2.** Brightling Village Trust
 - 12.2.3.** East Sussex County Council
 - 12.2.4.** Highways and drains
 - 12.2.5.** Brightling Café
 - 12.2.6.** Messenger Magazine
 - 12.2.7.** Parish Councillor reports
 - 12.2.8.** Rother District Council
 - 12.2.9.** Tree Warden – Received
 - 12.2.10.** Village Hall
 - 12.2.11.** Cricket Club
 - 12.2.12.** Stoolball Club

13. Finance and Governance

- 13.1.** Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt the following documents:
- 13.1.1.** **RESOLVED** to adopt the bank reconciliations to 29/2/24.
Cllr Wedmore confirmed the bank reconciliation to end of Feb 24.
 - 13.1.2.** **RESOLVED** to adopt the schedule of receipts and payments for the months of January and February 2024.
 - 13.1.3.** **RESOLVED** to adopt the bank statements for January and February 2024
 - 13.1.4.** **RESOLVED** to adopt the payment schedule and invoices as at 29/2/24.
- 13.2.** The Clerk confirmed arrangements for Internal Year End Audit 2023/24 taking place on 9/4/24.
- 13.3.** Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the Clerk's recommended continued appointment of Mulberry & Co as internal auditors, fixed until end of 2025/26 financial year audits.

14. Planning Matters

All decision notices and enforcement updates had previously been circulated to Councillors for information.

- 14.1.** New and Updated Planning Applications

14.1.1. RR/2024/244/FN - Green Oak Farm, Brightling Road, Brightling, TN32 5HB

Proposed shipping container to accommodate sale of farm produce not granted under permitted development; full planning permission required. No comment made by Cllrs.

14.1.2. RR/2023/2077/P – Lake Cottage, Manor Farm, Brightling Road TN32 5HB

The Clerk had requested updates from the planning officer, but none were received by the time of the meeting.

14.1.3. RR/2023/2423/P – Bannisters, Deer Park Road, Brightling, TN32 5HL

Planning permission granted with conditions. BPC had supported this application.

14.2. Open Enforcement Cases & Appeals

14.2.1. ENF/73/23/SAL - Wyland Wood/Silver Birches, Willards Hill, Robertsbridge, TN32 5ET

The Clerk had requested updates from the planning officer, but none were received by the time of the meeting.

14.2.2. APP/U1430/C/24/3338892 – 1 Grants Cottage, Battle Road, Brightling, TN32 5HZ

After discussions had taken place, Cllr Wedmore proposed the following be submitted by BPC to the planning appeal, with Cllr Petty seconding:

“BPC fully supports the recommendation of the planning officer in the original decision notice, to refuse planning permission on the grounds that the design, siting, scale and flat roof are damaging to the High Weald AONB landscape. In addition, BPC is concerned that the large area of glass comprising the conservatory is contrary to the commitment to the ‘dark skies’ movement outlined in our Environment Policy and Strategy adopted in 2020.

Councillors **RESOLVED** for the Clerk to submit the above (3 for, 1 opposed).

15. Correspondence

15.1. The Clerk provided an update on recent correspondence regarding:

15.1.1. Rother Voluntary Action

15.1.2. Forestry Commission (Darwell Wood dog waste bin)

15.1.3. British Gypsum – Brightling Mine

16. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

16.1. The Clerk confirmed details of both defibrillators on The Circuit Website are correct. The Clerk provided Councillors with an update on defibrillator maintenance and the inclusion of a spare battery to be added to the asset register.

16.2. Councillors **RESOLVED** for Clerk to purchase replacement pads for one of the defibrillators that have expired.

17. Community and Business Development

17.1. Reports on the following areas by councillors:

- 17.1.1. Broadband.** Cllr Wedmore circulated a report prior to the meeting.
- 17.1.2. Crime, anti-social behaviour, police relationships.** Cllr Croft detailed quadbikes seen in Darwell Woods – number plate captures and shared with 101. Increase in thefts, particularly cars and sheds.
- 17.1.3. Defibrillators.** See item 16.
- 17.1.4. Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity.**
- 17.1.4.1.** Cllr Blench circulated a report prior to the meeting, including data of high CO2 emissions in Brightling. Cllrs discussed what the PC could do to lower CO2 emissions given minimal assets and buildings, and lack of public transport. Broad agreement that education and information is to be most effective. Following discussions, Cllr Blench agreed to communicate with Brightling Environmental Group to explore hosting a public event, with invitation to Dr Lucie Bolton (RDC) to be pursued.
- 17.1.4.2.** Cllr Blench moved the motion:
‘Brightling Parish is committed to joining a new regional dark sky initiative spanning Burwash, Mayfield, Goudhurst, Ticehurst and Wadhurst who are working with High Weald AONB to achieve certification as a 'Dark Sky Community' by 2026. The Parishes will work together to align dark sky policies across the region, and to share resources, experience, costs of community engagement, and to apply best practices and lessons learned in developing a Lighting Plan for Brightling’.
Councillors **RESOLVED** to adopt.
- 17.1.5. Footpaths and Bridleways.** Cllr Blench detailed that the first two ‘Walk Brightling’s Byways’ walks will be on Monday 22 April 2pm starting from Village Hall and Wednesday 26 June 6pm starting from Fern Hill.
- 17.1.6. Highways, Hedges & Potholes.** See Item 9.
- 17.1.7. Messenger magazine.** No update, Cllr Oxenford absent.
- 17.1.8. Phone Box.** No update, Cllr Coleman absent.
- 17.1.9. Trees.** No update, Cllr Garbutt absent.
- 17.1.10. Utilities.** No update.
- 17.1.11. Refuse Collection.** Cllr Petty detailed that Brightling Road residents missed bin collections due to road closure sign not being removed after works completed by South East Water, and has reported it to Highways.
- 17.1.12. Village Hall.** Cllr Petty shared that the quiz night was a success and raised over £700
- 17.1.13. Website.** After discussions, the Clerk was requested to explore accessibility issues with website and contact RDC.
- 17.1.14. Welcome Packs.** Cllr Blench detailed that they have been updated and are out for proof reading.

18. Parish Councillors' Forum

- 18.1.** Cllr Croft is to report carriageway erosion near Darwell Woods.

19. Items for Noting or Including on the Future Agenda

- 19.1.** Emergency plan to be reviewed.

20. Remaining Planned Meetings

- 20.1.** The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year:
10th April (Annual Assembly), 8th May (AGM)
- 20.2.** The next meeting of the parish council will be in Brightling Village Hall at 7.00pm on
8th May 2024.

Meeting Closed 21:02

..... Signed (Vice-Chair)

Date

DRAFT