

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
10th July 2024 at 7.30 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

Parish Councillors Present: K. Blench, C. Croft, P. Garbutt, J. Oxenford, J. Petty and A. Wedmore.

Rother District Councillor: Cllr J. Barnes.

Also Present: Sam Dugan, Parish Clerk.

1. Public Forum.

No members of the public were present.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Coleman and Cllr Kirby-Green.

3. Disclosures of Interest

None.

4. Additional Agenda Items

None.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Councillors received and **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 10th May 2024 and the Extraordinary Planning Meeting held on Wednesday 5th June 2024 as true and correct records.

6. Reports from District and County Councillors

6.1. Cllr Barnes provided the Council with the following updates from RDC:

6.2. Although planned budgetary savings through resilience plan were not met, £1m of extra revenue through interest gained through shrewd investment of levelling up money. There was a £2m budget deficit, drawing reserves down to £7m. Another year of similar deficit would lead to reserves being near or below £5m, which is not a sustainable prospect. CEO has built in accountability for each budget holder with regular reporting to Audit & Scrutiny Committee on projections – this has increased accountability.

6.3. RDC considering merging urban and rural CIL funds; currently these are distinct. No decision has been made. Currently £900,000 unspent rural CIL.

6.4. RDC draft local plan consultation ongoing. Cllr Barnes highlighted the importance of the evidence base documents, as well as the actual consultation document. Cllr Barnes advised Councillors to consider the Infrastructure Projects elements of any additional evidence and how this relates to HELAA.

7. Finance and Governance – RFO Update

7.1. Councillors received and **RESOLVED** to adopt the following documents:

7.1.1. **RESOLVED** to adopt the bank reconciliations to 30/6/24. Cllr Petty confirmed that they were accurate.

7.1.2. **RESOLVED** to adopt the schedule of receipts and payments for the months of May and June 2024.

7.1.3. **RESOLVED** to adopt the bank statements for May and June 2024

7.2. The Clerk provided an update on income and expenditure against budget 2024/25. Councillors **RESOLVED** to receive and adopt the I&E document as of June 2024.

7.3. The Clerk confirmed receipt of the 2023/24 VAT reclaim from HMRC.

7.4. Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the payment of invoices:

7.4.1. John Avery – Churchyard Maintenance: Invoice SI-732 (£372)

7.4.1.1. Councillors discussed whether there is need for more frequent grass cuttings for the churchyard but there was agreement that twice a year is sufficient. If weddings or events require additional cuts, then they should make own arrangements at their own costs.

7.4.2. RALC Subscription: Invoice 2402 (£26)

7.5. Cllrs Croft and Petty received, verified and signed the following invoices (payment previously authorised on 05/06/2024):

7.5.1. WelMedical – Defibrillator Pads: Invoice I277790

7.5.2. Glasdon UK – Dog Waste Bin: Invoice SI889668

7.6. Councillors **RESOLVED** to authorise the Clerk spend of up to £40 for fastenings to secure the newly purchased dog waste bin.

ACTION: Clerk to finalise installation of dog waste bin.

7.7. Unity Trust Banking

7.7.1. The Clerk provided an update on current access/permissions for internet banking. Councillors **RESOLVED** to maintain current permissions.

ACTION: Clerk to ensure Cllr Petty has ‘view’ access in addition to ‘authorise’, and remove legacy users.

7.7.2. Councillors **RESOLVED** to allow the Clerk authority to move money between the deposit and current accounts without secondary verification to maximise interest payments received.

ACTION: Clerk to contact Unity Trust Bank.

8. Highways and Drainage

8.1. Minutes from the Highways and Drainage Operational Meeting held on Friday 31st May 2024 had been previously circulated to Councillors. Cllr Petty circulated a report and provided an update on future stakeholder engagement.

8.2. The Clerk had previously circulated a further response from Ruby Brittle (East Sussex Highways) to BPC's request for quality assurance data and KPIs. Cllr Petty moved that no further engagement was necessary until November 2024 meeting; this was unanimously agreed by Councillors.

9. Emergency Plan

9.1. Councillors **RESOLVED** to review the Emergency Plan.

ACTION: Cllrs Petty and Croft to ring all current named people in the plan to confirm continued engagement before the next meeting. The Clerk is to confirm PCSO details.

10. VE Day 80th Anniversary

10.1. Councillors discussed different options for marking the anniversary, including bellringing. Cllr Oxenford expressed concern that there may be insufficient bellringers if several local churches decide to mark the occasion in the same way. Cllr Wedmore suggested reinstating the dancing activity that was held remotely due to Covid, with a bell ringing as an additional feature, rather than a main event. All Councillors agreed and requested the Clerk communicate with Jane Beard. Cllr Barnes noted that VJ is also worth marking, given that this represented the end of the Second World War.

ACTION: Clerk.

11. Affordable Housing

11.1. Cllr Petty asked Councillors to consider whether affordable housing is considered an issue in Brightling. Cllr Croft said that she felt it was an issue in the past but less so at present. Cllr Blench agreed but raised that any action on such initiatives takes time, so it might be worth considering before it is an issue. Cllr Oxenford raised that the topic of affordable housing was contentious in the past, and feels that unless raised by residents currently, it may be worth reviewing again in 5 years' time. Cllr Garbutt agreed. Cllr Wedmore expressed that villages are mixed communities (young/old, rich/poor etc) but Brightling has evolved into a village of the more well off; BPC should be looking 10 years into the future and start exploring options now. Cllr Wedmore raised that he felt it would require someone to really drive it and lead on it. Cllr Croft expressed that she doesn't feel there is anyone in the village currently to lead it based on the friction the previous time it was visited. Cllr Blench asked Cllr Barnes whether there was precedent or scope for several rural parishes working together. Cllr Barnes expressed that he felt multi-parish working could be effective given the limited resources of small parishes. Cllr Petty shared that she had had conversations with other Councillors at the recent Parish Council Conference who had expressed possible interest in multi-parish working. Councillors discussed potential challenges around long-term administration of Community Land Trusts (CLTs). Cllrs Croft and Oxenford shared that a main concern in the past was that housing would be allocated to those outside the village, and that the village character would alter as a result. Cllr Wedmore expressed that sufficient time has passed since the topic was last visited, and that attitudes within the village may have changed.

- 11.2.** Councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to request that the Clerk contact neighbouring parish clerks to ascertain initial interest in longer-term multi-parish working around affordable housing / CLTs.

ACTION: Clerk.

- 11.3.** Councillors **RESOLVED** not to establish a sub-committee of BPC to further explore opportunities for affordable housing and/or community land trust development within the parish.

12. Coronation Tree Grant

- 12.1.** Following clarification of application criteria from the Clerk and discussions around the practicalities of the scheme, Councillors **RESOLVED** not to pursue the grant further.

13. Adopt a finger post

- 13.1.** Cllr Wedmore detailed when this project has previously been successful in the past. Councillors expressed broad enthusiasm and **RESOLVED** to reinstate the project. Cllr Wedmore proposed a well worded article to go in the Messenger. Cllr Croft offered to do this.

Action: Cllr Croft.

14. Forestry

- 14.1.** The Clerk provided updates on engagement with Forestry England (FE) regarding felling licenses and had previously shared details of an online portal. Tree Warden, Doug Edworthy, had also provided Councillors information via email.
- 14.2.** Cllr Blench spoke about contacting the spruce beetle helpline. She was informed that there was no monitoring of replanting schedules; the only requirement is to replant with something that is not susceptible to the pest. Cllr Petty and the Clerk detailed discussions with FE, and that it was not possible for BPC to be routinely informed of felling activity in the parish, nor was it possible to obtain details of planting schedules. Advice from FE is to contact them if any forestry activity causes concern.
- 14.3.** Councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to seek attendance from the Forestry England at a future meeting.

Action: Clerk.

15. Rother Draft Local Plan Consultation

- 15.1.** The Clerk confirmed that BPC's formal response to the consultation has been submitted under authority previously minuted on 05/06/2024. Councillors **RESOLVED** to delegate to the Clerk to submit additional comment to protect visual intrusion of river valleys.

- 15.2.** Councillors to **RESOLVED** to formally support the submission from the Northern Parishes Group to the Draft Local Plan. The Clerk was requested to write to RDC to express this support.

Action: Clerk.

16. Planning

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

- 16.1.1.** RR/2024/280/P Hollingrove Farm, Hollingrove Lane, Brightling, TN32 5HT – *Notification that Planning permission and listed buildings consent refused.*
- 16.1.2.** RR/2024/874/P Little Perrymans, Perrymans Lane, Brightling TN19 7DW – *installation of air source heat pump. – no comment submitted.*
- 16.1.3.** RR/2023/2467/O MOUNTFIELD Park Pale House - Land South of, Mountfield Lane, Mountfield TN32 5LD – *Due to the nature of the business being disclosed, Councillors **RESOLVED** to continue in closed session and exclude members of the public and press for this item under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.*
- 16.1.4.** RR/2022/840/P Beech Farm, Hawkhurst Road, Sedlescombe TN33 0QS – *Due to the nature of the business being disclosed, Councillors **RESOLVED** to continue in closed session and exclude members of the public and press for this item under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.*

17. Correspondence

- 17.1.** Brickyard Lane. The Clerk detailed correspondence with Bernard Hibbs of Darvell Community regarding Forestry works off Brickyard Lane, and residents' concerns around verge damage from lorry transport. The Clerk has requested that Darvell Community kindly keeps BPC informed of future works.
- 17.2.** Brightling Mine Visits. Cllr Coleman attended a mine tour and wished to share her praise and thanks to Eoin Wallace for his attentiveness and detail as a host. Further mine visits for Councillors can be arranged via the Clerk later in the year.
- 17.3.** Dog waste bin at Darwell Woods. The Clerk confirmed receipt of the new dog waste bin and is awaiting post installation from Forestry England prior to commencing the waste emptying contract with RDC.

18. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

- 18.1.** The Clerk confirmed that replacement defibrillator pads have been installed. The battery has been replaced on the Village Hall defibrillator, using the battery previously purchased. The Circuit website has been updated.
- 18.2.** Cllr Coleman was not present to confirm whether revised costings for the phone box repair were obtained and finalised.

ACTION: Clerk to liaise with Cllr Coleman via email.

19. Community and Business Development

19.1. Reports on the following areas by councillors:

- 19.1.1. Broadband (AW) – report shared. Almost full cover! Cllr Wedmore to seek input to the parish about the digital voice switch.
- 19.1.2. Crime, anti-social behaviour, police relationships (CC) – local crime reports have been circulated. Cllr Croft and the Clerk gave feedback from a recent meeting with the PCSO who provided overview of force structure and force priorities.
- 19.1.3. Defibrillators (CC) – see 18.1 above.
- 19.1.4. Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity (KB and AW). Cllr Blench gave update on OSMap project that shows loss of habitat in upper Rother. Cllr Blench to liaise with Brightling Environmental Group to see if this information could be applied to greater areas of Brightling Parish.
- 19.1.5. Footpaths and Bridleways (KB) – successful local walk with 13 people attending. Walkers appreciated local landowners' involvement.
- 19.1.6. Highways, Hedges & Potholes (JP) – see 8.1 above.
- 19.1.7. Messenger magazine (JO) – all going well with current village editors in place.
- 19.1.8. Phone Box (JC) – not present.
- 19.1.9. Trees - Tree warden (PG) – see 14 and 17.1 above.
- 19.1.10. Utilities (CC) – no update.
- 19.1.11. Refuse Collection (CC) – Cllr Petty reported that bin lorries were not able to get through due to road closures. **ACTION: Clerk to email to confirm that they are given notice.**
- 19.1.12. Village Hall (JO) – no update since last meeting.
- 19.1.13. Website (AW) – report shared.
- 19.1.14. Welcome Packs (KB) – finished and proofread. Cllr Wedmore to update on the website.

20. Parish Councillors' Forum

None.

21. Items for Noting or Including on the Future Agenda

- 21.1. Water pressure and impact on fire hydrants.
- 21.2. Dumping of gulley waste.

ACTION: Clerk.

22. Remaining Planned Meetings

11/9/24, 13/11/24, 8/1/25, 12/3/25, 9/4/25 (Annual Parish Assembly), 14/5/25 (Annual Meeting of the Parish Council).

Meeting Closed 21.28

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date

DRAFT