

Minutes of the **Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council**
held on **Wednesday 11th September 2024** at 7.30 p.m. in Brightling Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: K. Blench, P. Garbutt, J. Petty, and J. Oxenford

District and County Councillors: Cllr J. Barnes (RDC) and Cllr E. Kirby-Green (ESCC)

Also Present: Sam Dugan, Parish Clerk, and 1 member of the public.

1. Public Forum

None.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Wedmore, Cllr Colman, and Cllr Croft.

3. Disclosures of Interest

None

4. Additional Agenda Items

Cllr Petty advised Councillors of two agenda changes to include: resolution to pay monies owed for legal fees (Item 18) and to move Southern Water Solar Array Update to Item 19.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Councillors received and **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 10th July 2024 as true and correct records.

6. Reports from District and County Councillors

6.1. Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green (ESCC) reported that the Flexibus service has undergone changes. It is no longer zone-based but now operates within a 14-mile radius from the start of the journey. Additionally, there have been changes in the Highways department, with a new Stakeholder Liaison Office (SLO), Sam Crowhurst, being appointed. Brightling has a new Highways Steward, Stefan Rumary. The ongoing roadworks on the A21 in Hastings are causing significant difficulties, with a ripple effect impacting the surrounding areas.

6.2. Cllr John Barnes (RDC) gave details on the RDC consultation on the Council Plan. The Draft Housing Strategy is to be published in November. RDC has a new interim Head of Planning whilst permanent appointment is made. Budget savings are largely, but not entirely, on track.

7. Finance and Governance – RFO Update

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

7.1.1. **RESOLVED** to adopt the bank reconciliations to 31/8/24. Cllr Croft had confirmed via email that the accounts reconciled as detailed.

7.1.2. **RESOLVED** to adopt the schedule of receipts and payments for the months of July and August 2024.

7.1.3. **RESOLVED** to adopt the bank statements for July and August 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 August 2024.

7.3. The Clerk confirmed receipt of the second precept payment of financial year 2024/25.

7.4. Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the payment of, verify and sign the following invoices:

7.4.1. RDC – Dog Waste Bin Emptying Aug24-Mar25: Invoice 86804168 (£110.40)

7.4.2. Geosphere – Parish Online Mapping: Invoice 21UG0060010 (£42)

7.5. The Clerk recommended that an Interim Internal Audit is not required. Councillors **RESOLVED** to maintain a single Annual Internal Audit.

8. Emergency Plan

8.1. Cllr Petty provided a progress update on the review of the Emergency Plan and confirmed that she has completed the updates required of her.

Action - Clerk: The Clerk is to confirm remaining updates with Cllr Croft and then circulate with the Council for approval at the next meeting.

9. Darwell Wood Dog Waste Bin

9.1. The Clerk confirmed installation of bin and commencement of emptying contract with RDC.

9.2. The Clerk informed Councillors that he received clarification that multiple empties can take place per week within the existing fee, so no further resolution is required.

9.3. After discussion, Councillors **RESOLVED** to purchase signage to accompany the dog waste bin to detail ownership and information for reporting issues to BPC. Councillors **RESOLVED** to authorise the Clerk £100 maximum spend.

Action - Clerk.

10. Grass and verge cutting

10.1. Councillors discussed whether to pursue any wildlife/meadow verge applications within the Parish. Cllr Blench informed Councillors that residents of Brickyard Lane wish it to be designated as either a meadow verge or wildlife verge, but it is likely there is not yet enough evidence of species. No further applications were sought by Councillors at this time.

10.2. Councillors **RESOLVED** to delegate to the Clerk authority to confirm urban grass cutting option for 2025 season (decision due October 2024). Based on last year's options, Councillors expressed a desire to continue with Option 1 (2 cuts per year). After discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk contacts ES Highways, pointing out the anomaly of differing verge designations within the village and request that fewer verges are classed as 'urban'. The Council expressed that, unless where necessary for visibility, preference is for as few cuts as possible.

11. Draft NPPF Consultation

11.1. Councillors discussed views of proposed changes to the NPPF. Cllrs Petty and Blench had shared their initial analyses of the NPPF prior to the meeting. It was discussed that there were some areas of disagreement, but it was challenging to compare thoughts on specific questions during the meeting. Cllr Barnes shared that he felt there was no definition of what constitutes 'major development' and little to distinguish between greenbelt and National Landscape. The Clerk suggested that he highlight differences between Cllr Petty and Cllr Blench's responses and circulate to all Councillors by 18.9.24 for response by 24.9.24. Councillors unanimously agreed.

Action – Clerk.

11.2. Councillors **RESOLVED** to delegate to the Clerk authority to respond to the NPPF Consultation by 23rd September 2024.

12. Planning and Enforcement Matters – *All decision notices and enforcement updates had previously been circulated to Councillors for information*

12.1. Planning

12.1.1. RR/2024/1121/P Bannisters, Deer Park Road, Brightling TN32 5HL - *Timber orangery to replace existing frames and roof on conservatory*

The Clerk recorded the comments previously submitted under delegated authority:

Brightling Parish Council notes that whilst the proposed plans are to replace an existing conservatory, this application should be assessed on its own merit. On this basis, Brightling Parish Council objects for the following reasons: - The proposal is contrary to Rother's Draft Local Plan Chapter 10, LAN3 - Dark Skies, para 10.18. If Rother is minded to approve, this should be conditional on the use of SmartGlass or similar and that exterior lighting is restricted. -The proposal is not in keeping with local vernacular. -The size of the orangery is too large in proportion to the main dwelling.

Cllr Blench expressed that she was unconvinced that the comments were required, given the application was to improve an existing conservatory. Cllr Blench also expressed concern that SmartGlass is not a practical application given its high energy use, strange tint and often prohibitive cost. Cllr Blench recommended that we hold off recommending this until further knowledge of the product. Councillors expressed unanimous agreement. Cllr Kirby-Green gave additional context on SmartGlass, sharing that RDC has lost an appeal including its use and whereas previously recommending it, are now not routinely including SmartGlass in planning conditions.

12.1.2. RR/2024/911/P Old Park Pale Mountfield Lane Mountfield TN32 5LD – *Revisions to RR/2023/1408/P*

The Clerk recorded the comments previously submitted under delegated authority:

BPC welcomes revisions to RR/2023/1408/P but reiterates comments made previously in relation to the proposed flat-roof extension. The flat roof design and degree of glazing far from 'preserving the legibility of the historic form of the building' as asserted in the May 2024 Heritage Report are out of sympathy with a Grade II listed building of characteristic local vernacular within the AONB.

These proposals remain contrary to: Rother Core Strategy EN2, EN3 Rother DaSA DHG9, DHG10, DEN1, DEN2 Significantly, they are also against the Rother Proposed Local Plan policies LAN1 & 3 and HER 1 If Rother is minded to grant permission we request it is conditional on no, or limited, external lighting in order to support the Dark Skies Policy (LAN 1).

- 12.1.3. RR/2024/1151/P** Scalands Farm, Brightling Road, Robertsbridge TN32 5EU - *Erection of agricultural and equestrian building, exercise circle and turn out pen. (Alternative to previously approved application RR/2016/2050/P)*

After discussions regarding the merits and concerns of the application, Councillors **RESOLVED** to object to the application on the grounds that it appears too large without further detail of use. Councillors expressed strong feeling that if permitted, there should be conditions attached to state that it should not be separated and sold off from the farm in future; its use should be limited to private agriculture; there should be no floodlighting; manure should be stored at regulation distance from water courses.

Action – Clerk.

- 12.1.4. RR/2024/1104/FN** Long Reach Farm, The Street, Brightling TN32 5HJ – *Prior approval application for replacement agricultural storage shed.*

Councillors noted application and that no comment was required.

12.2. Enforcement

- 12.2.1. ENF/73/23/SAL** Land/Field next to Wyland Wood/Silver Birches (Column Wood), Willards Hill, Robertsbridge TN32 5ET. *Enforcement Notice Appeal.*

Cllr Petty moved that BPC support the comments made by RDC to the Planning Inspectorate. Councillors unanimously **RESOLVED** to submit to the Planning Inspectorate comments in support of RDC's enforcement actions.

- 12.2.2.** Councillors **RESOLVED** to delegate to the Clerk to establish a policy regarding site visits related to planning applications.

Action – Clerk.

13. RDC Enforcement Survey

- 13.1.** After discussion, Councillors **RESOLVED** to submit the comments circulated by Cllr Petty for submission to the survey. Cllr Blench expressed that clarity on Enforcement priorities is required. Cllrs were unanimous in the view that slow action from Enforcement can cause additional escalation of tensions between neighbours and landowners.

Action – Clerk.

14. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

- 14.1.** The Clerk explained that no further update regarding revised costings to repair the phone box have been received. Cllr Petty requested that the Clerk contact Cllr Coleman.

Action – Clerk.

15. Clerk Correspondence

- 15.1. The Clerk detailed that correspondence with Forestry England regarding a future visit to talk to BPC was underway and ongoing.

16. Community and Business Development

- 16.1. Reports on the following areas by councillors:

- 16.1.1. Broadband (AW) – *no report.*
- 16.1.2. Crime, anti-social behaviour, police relationships (CC) – *no report.*
- 16.1.3. Defibrillators (CC) – *no report.*
- 16.1.4. Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity (KB and AW). *Cllr Blench shared a report.*
- 16.1.5. Footpaths and Bridleways (KB). *Cllr Blench shared a report.*
- 16.1.6. Highways, Hedges & Potholes (JP). *Cllr Petty shared a report.*
- 16.1.7. Messenger magazine (JO). *Cllr Oxenford shared that the Editor of the Brightling pages is unable to secure additional space, so submissions need to be succinct and of interest.*
- 16.1.8. Phone Box (JC) – *no update.*
- 16.1.9. Trees - Tree warden (PG) – *no update.*
- 16.1.10. Utilities (CC) – *no update.*
- 16.1.11. Refuse Collection (CC) – *no update.*
- 16.1.12. Village Hall (PG/JO) – *Cllr Garbutt shared a report.*
- 16.1.13. Website (AW) – *no update.*
- 16.1.14. Welcome Packs (KB) – *Cllr Blench shared a report.*

17. Parish Councillors' Forum

None.

18. Judicial Review Confirmation of Pledge.

- 18.1. Councillors **RESOLVED** to agree to pay the requested sum towards the judicial review as originally pledged by resolution of BPC at the Ordinary Meeting held 11/01/23 under Item 12.1.

Action – Clerk.

19. Southern Water Solar Array – Darwell Reservoir

- 19.1. Cllr Petty provided Councillors with an update on the progress of the Lawful Development Notice issued to Southern Water (SW), noting that whilst the Tree Preservation Order request to RDC had been rejected, the site design plans for the solar array continue to show the trees in place. Cllr Petty explained that SW had circulated a landscape masterplan which included increased screening by further tree and hedgerow planting; substituting security fencing and gate panels with deer fencing; an undertaking that no further panels would be placed in the adjacent fields; a review of the placing of security cameras. The request for a permissive round-reservoir footpath has been sent to SW Capital Projects Team for assessment.

20. Items for Noting or Including on the Future Agenda

20.1. ESALC Planning Training (25/9/24 – 6.30-9pm, Zoom). Clerk to attend.

21. Remaining Planned Meetings

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

Meeting closed 21:08

DRAFT