

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 13th January 2021 at 7.30 p.m via Zoom video conference

Parish Councillors present:	Cllrs Caroline Croft, Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn, Judy Petty, Jane Oxenford, Dianne Mower and Andrew Wedmore (Chair)
Parish Councillors absent	Cllr R Wrenn
District/County Councillors:	RDC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green
In attendance:	Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council 2 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllr John Barnes.

2. Disclosures of interest

None

3. Additional agenda items

None

4. Adoption of Minutes

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on Wednesday 11th November 2020 and the special planning meeting of 1st December 2020 as true and correct records.

5. Open Forum

- 5.1 RDC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green reported that the Rother vaccination centre at Etchingham Village Hall would be going live on Friday 15th January. No other information was pertinent to Brightling.

There was no update from ESCC as Cllr John Barnes was absent.

5.2 Members of the Public

Simon Tayler expressed astonishment & frustration at the extended correspondence that had not received a response, although the Chairman pointed out that Correspondence was an agenda item and would be dealt with later on in the meeting. Simon Tayler then posed a question that he wanted answered: "Is it necessary for each street in Brightling to have a street name?". The Chairman thanked him for his question and Simon Tayler then left the meeting.

6. Finance and Governance

6.1 RFO Report

6.1.1 The bank reconciliation to 31st December 2020 was previously circulated and the Chairman confirmed that having checked the bank account online, the balances were correct.

6.2 Receipts and Payments

6.2.1 The RFO had previously circulated the schedule of receipts and payments for November and December 2020. This was also confirmed to be correct.

6.2.2 The following payment was approved after being proposed by Cllr Oxenford and seconded by Cllr Wedmore:

6.2.2.1 Microsoft Office 365 subscription - £59.99

6.3 Budget 2021/'22

6.3.1 The RFO had previously circulated the Income & Expenditure budget to the end of Q3. All entries were correct.

6.3.2 The final draft of the budget for the next financial year 2021/'22 had also been circulated together with the Precept Form. The number of households had been confirmed by Rother as unchanged at 201, and Council approved the precept request form. The Clerk duly signed & dated the form and agreed to submit it before the 31st January deadline.

7. New Planning Applications

7.1 Baldwins, Mountfield

Items 7.1.1 – 7.1.4 were taken together and the Chairman briefly explained the history of the property's previous planning applications. Cllr Wedmore proposed the following statements be submitted by the Clerk online as a response from the Parish Council. Cllr Oxenford seconded this proposal. The Parish Council objected to all 4 applications on the grounds of damage to the High Weald AONB and the individual comments were as follows:

7.1.1 **RR/2020/2191/P – Proposal: Section 73A retrospective planning application for the temporary use of the stables tack room for residential accommodation.**

PC Comments: It is not a replacement dwelling; it is not the conversion of redundant farm building; and it is not for the provision of affordable housing. It is claimed to be for the purposes of business operation, but no evidence has been provided of a viable business operation.

7.1.2 **RR/2020/2192/P – Proposal: Section 73A retrospective planning application for temporary residential occupation of existing/barn office building.**

PC Comments: It is not a replacement dwelling; it is not the conversion of redundant farm building; and it is not for the provision of affordable housing. It is claimed to be for the purposes of business operation, but no evidence has been provided of a viable business operation. The application is similar to RR/2013/311/P which was refused, and the reasons for that refusal still apply today.

7.1.3 RR/2020/2206/P – Proposal: Section 73A retrospective planning application for the erection of garaging to serve Baldwins Farmhouse.

PC Comments: The applicant already has permission to build a four-bay garage at Baldwins. The fact that the existing garage building is being used as groom's accommodation cannot be a justification to build even more garages.

7.1.4 RR/2020/2251/P – Proposal: Retention of the groom's accommodation as residential (Retrospective)

PC Comments: When the temporary permission for the groom's accommodation was first granted in 2008 this was an exception in order to give the applicant time to demonstrate that the rural enterprise would be a viable long-term business. However, no such evidence has been provided.

7.2 Telegraph Point, Coldharbour Farm Estate, Dallington, TN21 9LQ

RR/2020/2255/P Proposal: Retention of existing mobile unit for B1a use, allied to existing B1/B8 premises adjacent – 'Bloompower', to include staff parking.

After discussing this application, the Parish Council agreed to submit the following comments online, a motion proposed by Cllr Wedmore and seconded by Cllr Mower:

Brightling Parish council opposes this application on the grounds that it will be damaging to the High Weald AONB. This has been acknowledged by previous planning appeal inspectors. Since this building has never had more than temporary planning permission, the application to keep it should be treated as if the site was empty and restored to its previous condition, as required by appeal decision APP/U1430/C/19/3222918. The application does not demonstrate any need for additional B1/B8 premises in the area.

7.3 Planning Appeals

The original planning application reference RR/2020/599/P at Fir Tree Cottage, Netherfield Hill, Netherfield was refused, and an appeal has now been made. (Appeal ref: APP/U1430/C/20/3261419/2722 and two associated appeals). The Chairman proposed that the Clerk re-submit the original objections made by the Parish Council to the Planning Inspectorate, and this was seconded by Cllr Mower.

7.4 Decision Notices

7.4.1 Brightling Place, Brightling TN32 5HD RR/2020/1726/P

Planning application for a swimming pool granted with conditions.

7.4.2 Watermill Lane, Land on the east side of Bexhill

Application for change of use and development approved with conditions.

8. Climate Change Survey

The Clerk had previously circulated the link to the climate change survey to all Councillors for any specific comments. The Chairman proposed that the Clerk complete the survey on behalf of the Parish Council. Cllr Mower seconded this proposal and thanked the Clerk.

9. Grit Bin Request

The Clerk had received a further request from the owner of Becket House for the Parish Council to purchase a grit bin to help protect the newly re-built wall in icy conditions. The previous decision of the Council was against purchasing a bright yellow, fixed plastic container to sit in full view in the curtilage of the church. The Clerk had investigated some alternative options and after further discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council would purchase a Rollastor grit bin at a cost of £260.88 + VAT. It is similar to a wheelie bin and can be kept out of sight for the many months when not in use. This was proposed by Cllr Wedmore and seconded by Cllr Oxenford. To minimise expense and avoid the need for a Highways licence, the bin would need to be kept on private land when in use, and the Clerk was asked to further discuss this option with the resident.

10. Wildflower Verges

Cllr Oxenford reported on the virtual RALC meeting about biodiversity and wildflower verges which was well-presented and informative. A particular item of interest was that ESCC are planning to trial only one cut per year in a dozen locations throughout the county. Cllr Oxenford explained that areas where more cuts were needed for road safety reasons would be excluded from the trial. A resolution was proposed by Jane Oxenford, seconded by Andrew Wedmore, and unanimously approved, that Brightling wanted to take part in the trial if a vacancy became available.

11. Community and Business Development**11.1 Broadband**

The situation is basically unchanged since the last meeting, but Cllr Wedmore reported that he had co-signed a letter from Ashburnham & Penhurst Parish Council to the CEO of Openreach asking if local telephone exchanges could be included in the "demand led Community Fibre Partnerships" scheme (DLCP). Any response will be duly reported.

11.2 Crime, Anti-Social behaviour & Police relationships

Cllr Croft reported that there had been a spate of catalytic converters thefts, and that the PCSO was hoping to arrange a video conference call soon.

11.3 Defibrillators

Nothing to report.

11.4 Footpaths & Bridleways

The Clerk had reported to Matthew Harper at ESCC, that a deep gully had opened near the stile of footpath 'Brightling 16'. The maintenance team had already inspected the site and barriers erected, in readiness for repairs to be made.

11.5 Highways, Hedges & Potholes

Cllr Petty reported that some work had recently been carried out on the sinkhole in Penhurst Lane but that it did not appear to be very stable. The 6 monthly SLR meeting was imminent and she would be raising the matter then. There are currently no other major problems.

11.6 Phone Box

Nothing to report.

11.7 Trees

The Tree Warden reported that the eucalyptus and Norway Maple plantings in the woodland off Brickyard Lane were still growing strongly. Forestry England (the Forestry Commission) had agreed that this was in breach of the felling licence but seemed very slow and reluctant to take enforcement action. The Tree Warden said that it appeared that organizations displaying the FSC logo were required to manage all their woodlands responsibly, and in his opinion, planting ancient woodland with these non-native species was in breach of this requirement. The Parish council agreed to ask the tree warden to draft a letter to be sent on behalf of the parish council to the FSC drawing their attention to this apparent breach.

11.8 Utilities

The Clerk had previously circulated a response from UK Power Networks about the frequency of power outages, which despite being momentary, still cause a great deal of inconvenience. Councillors felt that more information was required, and a schedule of planned works would be useful. The Chairman suggested that the Clerk invite UK Power Networks to join the annual village meeting in April having submitted some questions beforehand to gain further insight. The Clerk agreed to organise this.

11.9 Refuse Collection

Nothing to report.

11.10 Village Hall

Nothing to report.

11.11 Website

Cllr Wedmore reported that following the request to migrate the village website to Rother, there had not been a great deal of progress due to the working conditions caused by the pandemic. He also asked the Clerk to contact a previous Clerk for transferal of the domain name of the village website which he believes should be the property of the Parish Council and is due for renewal soon.

11.12 Welcome Packs

Nothing to report.

12. Training

No current proposals.

13. Parish Councillors' Forum

Cllr Croft mentioned that a local resident had complained about a large number of logs and wood that was being used to prevent drivers using the verge in Willingford Lane. Cllr Croft had reported the issue online, having inspected the area and agreeing that it was potentially hazardous. Cllr Petty requested that all councillors share information when reporting issues online etc to avoid duplication and to ensure that everyone is informed. She also confirmed that she had updated the latest news about the planning proposals for the parish magazine and would send the information to Cllr Wedmore in order to update the website.

14. Correspondence

Various items of correspondence had been previously circulated and were commented upon as follows:

14.1 & 14.2 were treated together as they were on the same subject matter. Cllr Wedmore said that Simon Tayler was correct about the lack of coordination between Royal Mail and Rother District Council. A full report had been prepared by Cllr Wedmore to further explain the anomalies and that due to Mr Tayler's persistence in raising the issue, it had finally come to light and led to a resolution. The Parish Council agreed that no further action was required and agreed with the chairman's suggestion to defer further discussion and review the situation in 12 months. The chairman said that he intended to put the provision of physical road signs on the agenda for the March 2021 meeting. Cllr Oxenford thanked the Chairman for his excellent report.

14.3 Thankyou letters from various organisations in receipt of their Section 137 grants had previously been circulated by the Clerk.

15. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

Following a brief discussion about bringing forward the start time of future meetings, there was no strong consensus for change.

The Clerk drew attention to the fact that the 2021 Census would be taking place on March 21st '21 and various measures are in place to publicise it, and to try to encourage participation.

16. Future meetings

16.1 Meetings of the parish council will be in Brightling Village Hall at 7.30pm or via Zoom dependent on government advice. The decision was made to hold the annual assembly in April by video conference call, and to invite UK Power Networks to increase attendance by the public.

16.2 The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year:

2021: 10th March, (14th April Annual Assembly), 12th May (AGM)

.....
Signed (Chairman)

Date