

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 12th May 2021 at 7.30 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Caroline Croft, Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn, Judy Petty, Jane Oxenford, Dianne Mower and Andrew Wedmore (Chair)

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Rodderick Wrenn

District / County

Councillors present: RDC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green, ESCC Cllr John Barnes

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council & 1 member of the public

1. Election of Chairman
Cllr Andrew Wedmore was proposed by Cllr Petty and seconded by Cllr Oxenford. There being no other nominations Cllr Wedmore was declared Chairman.
2. Election of Vice Chairman
Cllr Caroline Croft announced that she was stepping down as Vice-Chairman. Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn proposed Cllr Judy Petty and this was seconded by Cllr Croft. There being no other nominations Cllr Petty was declared Vice Chairman.
3. Declarations of Acceptance of Office
Cllrs Wedmore and Petty signed their respective Acceptances of Office. The Clerk also reminded Councillors that any changes in their interests needed to be updated on the Register of Member's Interests, but none were declared.
4. Apologies for absence
Received from Doug Edworthy, Tree Warden.
5. Disclosures of interest
None.
6. Additional agenda items
There were no further agenda items that had not already been included on the agenda.
7. Adoption of Minutes
The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 10th March 2021 as a true and correct record.

8. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The Clerk confirmed that there had been no further changes to the most recent Standing Orders and Financial Regulations that had been adopted in May 2020.

9. Asset Register of Council Property

The updated asset register showing the value of assets as £3,859 had been previously circulated by email and approved. Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn proposed the approval of the asset register, and Cllr Oxenford seconded the proposal and the parish council duly approved it.

10. Appointment of members to serve on external bodies & lead responsibilities.

RALC – Cllr Petty offered to continue to serve as representative of the Parish Council on this association of local councils.

Village Hall – Cllr Jane Oxenford

All councillors were content to retain their current Lead Responsibilities. Cllr Wedmore proposed adding the Parish Council's report for The Messenger magazine. Cllrs Oxenford & Petty agreed to share this role. Additionally, Cllr Wedmore felt that a new responsibility of Climate Change & Bio-Diversity should be added, and offered to take responsibility for Climate Change. Cllr Oxenford offered to work alongside on Bio-Diversity. Cllr Mower offered to be an extra pair of hands wherever they were needed. The Chairman also suggested that Lead Responsibilities could be reconsidered in the future.

11. Dates and times of future meetings

Members adopted the following dates for meetings for the remainder of the council year:

2021: 30th June, 8th September, 10th November.

2022: 12th January, 9th March, 11th May (AGM).

12. Date of the Annual Assembly

Members set the date for 2022 as Wednesday 6th April.

13. Open Forum

13.1 Following the recent elections, Cllr Kirby-Green now sits on both East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council, while Cllr John Barnes continues as the other Rother District Councillor. Cllr Kirby-Green said that the only reports from Rother were concerning the redevelopment of the Town Hall. The emphasis is on increased business use providing more office space. Furthermore, there is a new Town Council in Bexhill following last week's elections.

Cllr Barnes reported that ESALC has set up a working party to consider the new planning consultation. The Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the climate change strategy and whilst progress was good, it is largely due to lockdown, so there is a concern that further measures may be required as restrictions are eased. The Highways department have examined contracts and there will be a new system in place where contracts are not automatically renewed after 7 years.

Cllr Wedmore raised the issue of Electric Vehicle (E.V) charging points. Having researched locally, Kent County Council have a project (with capital funding) *“to support EV charge-point installation on behalf of parish, town and community councils”*. This scheme is already available, and parish councils can apply. By contrast, ESCC’s statement regarding E.V charging points reads:

“The County Council does not currently provide on-street charging points for electric vehicles (EV). We know that EVs are becoming more popular and that access to charging points is key to increasing their use. During 2020/2021 we will continue to develop our support for EVs.”

Cllr Wedmore asked if ESCC are developing a plan and if so when there may be an announcement? Cllrs Kirby-Green & Barnes offered to have some information on this for the next meeting. Cllr Barnes said that battery technology still has some unknowns, and this does make planning for future E.V charging points difficult.

13.2 Simon Tayler had previously requested that advance notice was circulated to all councillors with two questions concerning the continuing frustrations he is experiencing regarding the street re-naming and subsequent postcode change. He drew attention to the fact that he has attended previous meetings on this matter and is often the only member of the public bringing the frustrations to the fore. He had recently received his polling card and council tax bill which were both incorrectly and differently addressed and knows of neighbours who had conflicting information with online databases (for example DVLA). He maintains that the issue has not been resolved and he wanted answers to his questions. The Chairman reminded him that procedurally the Open Forum was the opportunity to raise questions, but it was not the time to engage in debate or discussion. After Mr Tayler had spoken for 5 minutes, the Chairman announced that the Public Forum was at an end and that he would bring forward, and move straight onto, agenda item 21.3, Correspondence from Mr Tayler. He reminded everyone that the discussion was now limited to councillors. The Chairman proposed the following responses to Mr Tayler’s two questions:

1. *Is the PC really content that the “implementation” of address streamlining it boldly initiated in 2018/2019 has been coherent ...?*

What Brightling Parish Council set out to do was to correct the names of certain roads in the National Street Gazetteer (NSG), which is maintained by Rother. The Parish Council is content that this has been done in accordance with our request (except in the case of Coombe Hill Road, where Rother decided to keep the previous NSG name of Perrymans Lane, because this change was not supported by their public consultation). The addresses on the electoral roll have been seriously inconsistent with the NSG for many years and this anomaly was not one that the Parish Council set out to correct.

2. *Has the Chair been mistaken to assert again and again in public and in dialogue outside council meeting that there are no historic discrepant anomalies, no unforeseen or unresolved consequences, no outstanding questions the council has yet to engage with honestly and transparently before the issue can be left behind?*

The chair has never claimed that there are no remaining anomalies etc (see answer to question 1). The alteration of some postcodes was a regrettable consequence, but it is not something that the Parish Council has the power to change.

Cllr Wedmore’s proposal was seconded by Cllr Croft and five Councillors voted in favour of the motion with one councillor abstaining. Mr Tayler requested a written copy of the

responses and was informed that they would be in the minutes and made available to the public in the usual manner. Mr Tayler made further comments and then left the meeting.

A brief discussion then took place. Cllr Mower wanted it on record that the suggestion of councillors being bullied by the Chairman was completely ridiculous and totally wrong. She felt quite strongly that Mr Tayler's comments should be refuted on record. Other councillors present supported her comments.

Cllr Barnes offered to speak to Rother's Chief Executive to try and align Mr Tayler's council tax bill and poll card addresses. The Chairman thanked Cllr Barnes in advance for any help he could offer with the district council's address information.

14. RFO Report and Governance

14.1 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

14.1.1 & 14.1.2 Taken together, having reviewed internal systems of control, and read aloud the Annual Governance Statement, it was approved by members, adopted and signed.

14.1.3 The approval of the Accounting Statement will be considered at the next meeting.

14.1.4 The Clerk confirmed that the Council is still exempt from the need to submit the AGAR to the external auditor, as gross income and expenditure are less than £25k. The meeting authorised the Chairman to sign the Certificate of Exemption.

14.2 RFO Report

14.2.1 Following the internal audit which had taken place on 7th May, the RFO had circulated the internal auditor's report. He had drawn attention to General Reserves being low, so a brief discussion took place regarding raising the amount via increases in the precept in future. Councillors agreed that Brightling's reserves were still sufficient and if ever something large and unexpected arose requiring finance, the village would find other methods of fund-raising rather than expecting the Parish Council to wholly contribute.

14.2.2 The RFO had previously circulated the schedule of receipts & payments for April 2021. The auditor had also suggested that Meeting Papers should be produced in the future where a table of payments for approval is included and published on the website. The RFO confirmed that this would commence for this current financial year.

14.2.3 The Chairman confirmed that he had verified the balances as correct and in accordance with the previously circulated bank reconciliation to the end of April 2021.

14.2.4 The following payments were approved:

14.2.4.1 Fingerpost Repair, Doug Andrews - £629.42 (paid retrospectively & 50% contribution of £314.71 from ESCC received).

14.2.4.2 ESALC subscription - £124.29 (paid retrospectively)

14.2.4.3 Litter Picking equipment, Janitorial Supplies - £142.04 (paid by credit card)

14.2.4.4 Chairman's Expenses – £119.00

14.2.4.5 Clerk's Expenses - £22.27

14.2.4.6 Go Daddy renewal – £31.25

14.2.4.7 Zurich Insurance renewal - £257.60

14.2.5 The RFO had previously circulated the end of year statement of income and expenditure against the forecast and the statement of reserves. The statement was approved.

14.2.6 The RFO reported that there had not been any circulation regarding pay levels by NALC, and the Clerk's salary of £313.20 per month (approximately £10.44p/hr) was therefore unchanged. Cllr Wedmore proposed the approval of the Clerk's salary & this was seconded by Cllr Croft. The Councillors took the opportunity to thank the Clerk for all her work.

14.3 Governance

14.3.1 Members reviewed the Annual Assembly on 14th April 2021 which had taken place via Zoom video conference. Cllr Wedmore felt that it had been disappointing and something not to be repeated. Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn felt that it was as good as it could have been given the circumstances, and Cllr Oxenford said that it was a shame more people hadn't attended. It was agreed that Tom Miles' contribution from UK Power Networks had been highly informative. Cllr Wedmore said that there should be a determination to make next year's Annual Assembly excellent and very sociable. Cllr Kirby-Green reported that most other parishes had cancelled or delayed their meetings.

15. Speeding & Traffic Calming

Following Linda Lewis' request at the previous meeting about traffic calming methods through the village, Cllr Petty reported that a traffic count had been carried out in 2017 by some residents and that any possible schemes to reduce speed were all quite complicated to enact and expensive. The real problem is the unrestricted speed limit on Brightling's roads. There are other national campaigns such as 20 is Plenty and the Quiet Lanes initiative which are free and involve raising awareness with signs and posters, but they are not enforceable. Cllrs Petty & Croft attended the recent Community Police meeting attended by Steve O'Connell from Sussex Safer Roads. Cllr Petty raised the issue of speeding and noisy motorbikes on the B2096 and Mr O'Connell's advised that the public could report incidents on the Operation Crackdown website. However, Cllr Petty pointed out that it required number plates and data that was not safe for people to collect. He also suggested using the Sussex Police website and recording it as Anti-Social Activity. He offered to try and send a road policing team to the area, but resources are scarce. Cllr Petty offered to write an article for The Messenger and suggested that residents could email her if they found reporting online difficult. Cllr Petty could then collate the reports. Cllr Barnes asked if anyone had checked the number of house frontages within 5/8th of a mile as County are obliged to take measures if a certain number is reached. The Chairman suggested that the issue be revisited at the next meeting when the Burwash Quiet Lanes group are hoping to attend.

16. Public Spaces Protection Order

This order is due to expire in November and the Council had been asked if it wanted it to be renewed. Cllr Wedmore proposed that it could be allowed to lapse for Brightling, but not necessarily the whole of Rother as it concerns rough sleeping and drinking in public places. Cllr Petty seconded the proposal, and the Clerk was asked to submit the response online before the deadline of 2nd July.

17. NALC consultation on 5G masts

Cllr Wedmore proposed the following response from the Parish Council:

1. Within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), full planning permission should be required for all new masts and alterations to existing masts.
2. There should be rules within the planning system that have the effect of strongly encouraging operators to share masts with each other.

Cllr Oxenford seconded the comments proposed and the proposal was passed. The Clerk was asked to submit the comments to NALC before the 21st May deadline.

18. Community and Business Development

18.1 Broadband

Following the joint application submitted by Brightling and Ashburnham & Penhurst Parish Council for a CFP scheme, the initial costing was received from Openreach estimated at £627,129 for 381 properties (approximately £1646 per property). This is a provisional figure and Openreach will be providing a contractual figure in late July. The Rural Gigabit Voucher (RGV) scheme makes available £1500 per residential property (& £3500 for businesses), so there will need to be a high take up of people committing their vouchers to the scheme. ESCC has also confirmed that they are offering an additional top-up of £1000 per property, and by using this as well it should be achievable. Once the final cost is known, the next stage will be to start a campaign to encourage people to pledge their RGV's to the scheme. The Chairman is hopeful that it can be done as it has been in other communities, as the vouchers have no cash value and in practice can only be used by clubbing together.

18.2 Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships

Cllr Croft reported that 2 of the 3 dogs stolen from Ox Lodge have now been returned following a police operation. Whilst there haven't been any thefts in Brightling itself, there have been quite a few in the surrounding area from outbuildings etc.

18.3 Defibrillators - nothing to report.

18.4 Footpaths & Bridleways

The Clerk had reminded Matthew Harper about the repairs to the bridleway Battle 1 and was awaiting any news.

18.5 Highways, hedges & potholes

Cllr Petty reported that quite a few potholes had been repaired recently and that fly-tipping reported online appears to be dealt with quickly at present.

18.6 Phone Box

Cllr Oxenford reported that the next stage of painting the inside of the phone box and fitting the glass would be happening soon.

18.7 Refuse Collection – nothing to report.

18.8 Signposts – nothing to report.

18.9 Trees

In the absence of the Tree Warden, the Clerk reported on his behalf. The recent webinar had attracted the most participants so far and was deemed a great success by Rother's Environmental Officer. As a result, there is now liaison with the Bexhill Environmental Partnership and a Guides group about walks in Dallington Forest. It also prompted the resurrection of the Brightling Tree Group to survey and log all Notable, Veteran and Ancient trees in the parish. Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn asked if the webinar had been recorded and the Clerk offered to find out. Cllr Oxenford also raised a concern by a resident about regrowth after tree-felling. The Clerk was asked to contact the Tree Warden to investigate further.

18.10 Utilities

Cllr Croft reported that there had been two consecutive power cuts recently and the Clerk confirmed that Tom Miles from UKPN had immediately sent an email to explain the cause. They had been caused by two different issues – one very localised following a particularly windy night, and one at the Battle sub-station.

18.11 Village Hall

Cllr Oxenford reported that the village hall committee would be meeting next Wednesday and intend to open from May 17th according to regulations. Bookings for the hall are looking healthy.

18.12 Website

Cllr Wedmore reported that there had been rather slow progress in migrating the website to Rother, but hopefully it should be done by the end of June. He confirmed that the domain name brightling.org.uk had been renewed by the existing owner on 20th March. However, there is still no website at that address, so he proposed an offer of £100 to try and buy the domain name. Cllr Mower suggested that the amount should be over and above any renewal costs, and this was agreed upon by all Councillors. The Clerk was asked to take the necessary steps to negotiate regaining the domain name before taking the matter to a resolution process.

18.13 Welcome Packs

Cllr Oxenford had delivered welcome packs to two newcomers to Brightling.

19. Planning Matters

19.1 There were no new planning applications to discuss.

19.2 Enforcement / Appeals

19.2.1 Fern Hill – No further action is deemed necessary.

19.2.2 The Musings – The Enforcement Team reported on 15th April that they are arranging to visit the site & review the issue of lighting.

19.2.3 The Oast at Brightling Place – Retrospective planning permission is being sought by the owners. The situation is being monitored and appropriate time has been granted to cease use of the outbuilding as a separate dwelling.

19.3 Decision Notices

19.3.1 Bank Cottage, Cackle Street, Brightling - RR/2021/28/P

Planning Permission was recently sought for an amendment to a condition and the decision is as follows: Condition 4 - If on completion of the extension hereby permitted, the owners consider that the brickwork should be painted white to match the main dwelling, this would be acceptable.

19.3.2 Socknersh Manor, Fontridge Lane, Brightling - RR/2020/1701/P

Planning permission and the associated listed buildings consent (RR/2020/1702/L) was granted with various conditions regarding the bricks, pointing and the preservation of the historic fabric of the building.

20. Future Training Events

The Clerk reported that she was checking on the details of a Mulberry Planning Training being offered to find out how relevant it would be to Brightling regarding rural and AONB planning issues. Cllr Mower asked about a recent "Development in the AONB" presentation that she had seen circulated and asked that details be re-sent. Cllr Petty offered to do this as she had the details to hand.

21. Correspondence

21.1 Forestry Commission's (FC) reply to Formal Complaint

This email had been previously circulated. The FC had responded to a Formal Complaint sent following the last meeting asking about the enforcement action that was meant to have been taken regarding the replanting of non-native species. Their reply said that no felling could take place during the nesting season but that they would visit the site in the autumn to check that the necessary works had been carried out. Cllr Wedmore proposed that the Clerk sent a reply to verify that Norway Maple as well as eucalypts were included in any works and that there would be a site visit to confirm that the work had been carried out correctly. He also then suggested revisiting the item in the November meeting, after the October 31st deadline.

21.2 Andrew & Yasmin Rich has sent a request for any land that may be available to rent for organic farming and community provision. Cllr Wedmore replied that there is not a great deal of arable land around Brightling. Cllr Mower said that she had been in touch directly to offer the produce from their orchard as there was too much for them to manage. The Clerk said that she would reply to the Rich's request.

21.3 Simon Tayler's email – see item 13.2 in the minutes.

22. Parish Councillors' Forum

23. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

24. Future Meetings

24.1 The next meeting of the parish council will be in Brightling Village Hall at 7.30pm.

24.2 The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year
(subject to confirmation of agenda items 11. and 12. above):

2021: 30th June, 8th September, 10th November.

2022: 12th January, 9th March, (6th April Annual Assembly), 11th May (AGM)

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date