

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 30th June 2021 at 7.30 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

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

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Rodderick Wrenn & Cllr Caroline Croft

District / County

Councillors present: ESCC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council, Doug Edworthy, Tree Warden & 10 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence
Received from Cllr Caroline Croft & Cllr John Barnes.
2. Disclosures of interest
None.
3. Additional agenda items
There were no further agenda items that had not already been included on the agenda.
4. Adoption of Minutes
The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 12th May 2021 as a true and correct record.

5. Quiet Lanes Initiative

Sylvie Franklin from Willingford Lane explained the background to the Quiet Lanes initiative which aims to try and limit speeding and discourage use of single-track lanes by promoting the fact that they are there to be enjoyed by multiple users. Increased use of satellite navigation systems means that many little lanes are being used as cut-through routes by more and more commercial traffic. The national speed limit is 60mph. Burwash Parish Council has taken up this national initiative and is seeking support from neighbouring parishes (particularly Brightling Parish Council as Willingford Lane runs through both parishes), to exert pressure on County to adopt speed limits or other measures to reduce and slow traffic. Nick Hanna from Greenways, an organisation which aims to improve and increase the number of cycle routes specifically, then spoke to explain that they are trying to improve bridleways and working with horse-riders too who also suffer from certain road users not respecting others. An initiative to link up longer, circular routes to include bridleways and single-track lanes has been taking place around the Peasmarsh/Rye area, but funding is required for re-surfacing and signage. Funding is also required for traffic surveys and engineering surveys to persuade County that these measures are needed. Peter Miles from Darwell Area Conservation Society (DACs) asked about verge protection and mentioned that Matthew Harper from the Rights

of Way team at ESCC is very helpful. Bob Franklin, Chairman of Burwash PC, agreed that more passing places in single-track lanes would protect the verges, and that another possibility is to get Google Maps and other navigation systems to designate a lane as a Quiet Lane and therefore unsuitable for certain vehicles.

Cllr Kirby-Green asked what County's response has been when asked about Quiet Lanes signage etc. and it was reported that their opinion is that "it doesn't work as it is only advisory, but it probably helps". Nick Hanna introduced Sue Burton who spoke about fund-raising in Battle that started as a small effort with coffee mornings etc. and eventually raised £300,000.

Cllr Wedmore thanked all contributors and summarised by proposing that Brightling PC would nominate a councillor to act as a conduit between the two parish councils on developments and what further support is required and could be offered. They all then left the meeting.

6. Open Forum

- 6.1 Alf & Sue Hoad asked on behalf of another resident for guidance on what would be acceptable on a local planning application yet to be submitted. Cllr Wedmore suggested they refer to the High Weald AONB Design Guide (and he offered to send them a link), as it has now been adopted by Rother's planning department. Cllr Mower appreciated the intention not to have outside lights to protect dark skies. Cllr Wedmore thanked them for coming to the Parish Council in advance of making the planning application.
- 6.2 Simon Tayler wanted to take the opportunity to apologise to councillors, particularly Cllr Mower, for making them feel uncomfortable following the last parish council meeting. He then invited Cllrs Mower and Lambert-Gorwyn to speak to him individually to better understand his frustrations and get some detail from his perspective. He noted that Standing Order's are for members of the public to answer questions put to them by council, but not the other way round. Nevertheless, he asked again of Cllr Wedmore, "Is it the case that every street must have a name?" In response, Cllr Wedmore said that having taken some advice, the council's position is not to discuss the matter further in council meetings whilst complaints made by Mr Tayler to Rother's Standards Committee (& Huw Merriman, MP) are under investigation. (This was stated in Mr Tayler's recent email circulated to all councillors as correspondence Item 12.1). Mr Tayler said it was a shame he was having to take that route, and then left the meeting.
- 6.3 Cllr Kirby-Green reported that Rother's planning department is still in a chaotic state, but the recent presentation from Clare Tester on development in the AONB was highly informative and asked if councillors had seen it/attended. The Clerk confirmed that the presentation had been circulated to all councillors. Cllr Kirby-Green also said that in her new role as County councillor, she had been spending time out on the roads with the Highways Steward – a very frustrating experience which until the contractor changes (April 2023) was unlikely to improve. Cllr Petty confirmed that the Parish Council has found it very difficult to get any actions carried out by Highways, despite having a dedicated Customer Service Manager, and will report further in Item 8.

7. Finance and Governance

7.1 RFO Report

- 7.1.1 The Accounting Statement from the AGAR had been previously circulated and was approved. Cllr Petty proposed that the Chairman & RFO sign the statement, and this was seconded by Cllr Oxenford and duly signed.
- 7.1.2 The bank reconciliation to 30th June had been previously circulated and the Chairman confirmed that having checked online, and allowing for the quarterly service charge of £18 that had not yet been debited, the balances were correct.
- 7.1.3 The first quarter's income & expenditure report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The RFO reported that thus far, the fingerpost reserves had been used for a repair to a rotten base, where ESCC match-fund the cost. However, another fingerpost that had been damaged (it appeared after the verge had been cut by a contractor) would cost £188 + VAT to repair. Having checked with Highways, the response was that match-funding was under review for A & B roads, and a decision on its continuation would be made in the autumn. Until then, no applications were being accepted. The Clerk asked if Council would like to go ahead with the repair using reserves. Cllr Wedmore proposed that the repair was carried out, and paid for by the Parish Council, but that the whole invoice was then presented to Highways as the evidence (broken glass at the foot of the post) made it apparent that the damage occurred after the grass-cutting was carried out. Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn seconded this proposal, and the motion was unanimously carried. The Clerk was asked to report this decision to the Highways department and organise the repair.

7.2 Receipts & Payments

- 7.2.1 The schedule of receipts & payments for May & June had been circulated for information.
- 7.2.2 The Meeting Papers previously circulated detailed the following payments which were approved:
- 7.2.2.1 Jon Avery - £360 – Churchyard mowing
- 7.2.2.2 Akismet - £22.50 – Spam protection (retrospectively paid on the credit card)

8. Highways

The recent SLR meeting had taken place on 8th June. Cllr Petty reported that despite high hopes of a new Customer Service Manager, little action had materialised. The site meeting for the bridge on the B2096 which was promised as a matter of urgency has not yet been arranged, and the Clerk had been told that Structures Managers deemed it a Drainage issue, and that a site meeting with Drainage would take place after they had completed their investigations. She had insisted on a site meeting and was waiting to hear about a confirmed site meeting imminently. Cllr Kirby-Green offered to put some pressure on this if provided with a summary. Cllr Petty then explained that the same 4 ongoing issues (the drains at Jack Fuller's, carriageway erosion opposite Mount Farm, flooding opposite the entrance to New House Farm and the sinkhole in Penhurst Lane & now the bridge erosion affecting the same property) were on the agenda at every 6 monthly SLR meeting, where updates and actions were promised and rarely seemed to be carried out. The Clerk offered to send a summary to Cllr Kirby-Green so that she could further investigate the issues.

9. Community and Business Development

9.1 Broadband

Cllr Wedmore reported that on 21st June the formal costing from BT Openreach was received of £721,164.00 for 463 properties – a bit higher than their previous provisional figure. This covers the whole of the Brightling exchange (which includes much of Netherfield as well). Andrew Hoad from Ashburnham and Penhurst Parish council, who is leading the joint project on behalf of both parishes, wrote back and accepted it. It should be stressed that this does not create a contract involving Brightling Parish Council (BPC) nor a commitment to spend any money. The figure of £721,164 represents £1,567 per property if all 463 take it up – which is unlikely. If approximately 60% take it up, this figure rises to £2,611 per property. The grants from central government (DCMS) are £1,500 per residential property or £3,500 per business property (the definition of a business is quite wide). In addition, there is a top-up from East Sussex County Council of £1,000, applicable to all types of property. We are now waiting for DCMS to formally issue the RGV vouchers. They are not yet ready to do this, because the details of the new scheme have yet to be finalised. We have been told by BT/Openreach to expect our RGV vouchers to be allocated by the end of July. Once this has happened, we will have 3 months to persuade enough people to sign up. There will be a web site (provided by BT/Openreach) where people can pledge their vouchers and also a promise of help with publicity materials.

9.2 Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships - nothing to report in Cllr Croft's absence.

9.3 Defibrillators - nothing to report.

9.4 Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity

Cllr Wedmore had previously circulated a series of questions asking how the parish council is doing in relation to its recently adopted 17-point Environment Policy. He felt that successes so far were in wildflower verge trials, black poplar planting, supporting local businesses (fingerpost repair, churchyard mowing), the rural superfast internet access programme (see item 9.1), pressing for repairs to local bridleways and footpaths and planning comments particularly about 'dark skies'. A response is awaited from ESCC about electric vehicle charging points. He also suggested that the policy be reviewed in 2023 having only been adopted last year. Cllr Oxenford had nothing to add on bio-diversity.

9.5 Footpaths & Bridleways – Cllr Oxenford offered to walk in Rounden Wood with Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn to point out the signposts that are in the wrong place so they can be reported to the Rights of Way team.

9.6 Highways, hedges & potholes

See item 8, Cllr Petty's report from the recent SLR meeting.

9.7 Messenger Magazine

Cllr Petty's report on speeding was accidentally missed from the last edition of The Messenger but will be re-edited for inclusion in the next issue.

9.8 Phone Box

Cllr Oxenford reported that there had been no progress on the inside of the phone box.

9.9 Trees

Doug Edworthy reported that he has managed to get hold of the felling licences issues for Little Hoath's Wood and Rounden Wood and so there is now detailed information about the permitted activity and the attached conditions. Apart from thinning, each activity must be followed by replanting with native broadleaved species within 10 years. The end of the Felling Approval date is 29th August 2022. The Brightling Tree Group held its inaugural meeting at the end of June and has 9 members who are now locating and collecting data on significant and notable trees in the locality. There was a plea for landowners to grant access for this survey. Additionally, a local arboriculture consultant, Clive Mayhew is proposing to re-visit a census that was carried out in Dallington Forest after the Second World War (1947) to compare data from the two censuses. He will be doing a talk about this in Dallington Village Hall on Friday 6th August (further details in next month's parish magazine & online). Again, a plea for help or an introduction to current landowners to allow the census to take place on their land. Finally, the parish needs more Tree Wardens and enthusiasm is the only requirement – tree expertise can follow!

9.10 Utilities – nothing to report.

9.11 Refuse Collection – nothing to report.

9.12 Village Hall – nothing to report.

9.13 Website

Cllr Wedmore re-capped that the agreed plan is to transfer hosting of the Brightling parish website to Rother District Council, who are already providing this service for a few other parish councils. There was a commitment from the Rother team to complete the process by 30th June. In fact, we are hoping for the switch-over to happen in the week commencing 5th July. The domain name brightling.org.uk, which we used to own but lost by failing to renew in a timely manner, was renewed by its existing mystery owner on 20th March, so they now own it until April 2026. It was agreed at the last meeting to pay up to £150 to purchase it from the current owner. The Clerk has approached the owner to say that we are interested in buying it but there has been no reply so far. If the present owner continues to be unresponsive or is not willing to sell at this price, then we have the option of using the free non-binding dispute resolution process run by Nominet (the official registry for UK domain names).

9.14 Welcome Packs

Cllr Oxenford had delivered welcome packs to the newcomers in Doctor's Cottage and some tenants in Riverhouses. She made a plea for more copies of The Messenger, and Cllr Wedmore confirmed that the print run was being increased for the next issue.

10. Planning Matters

10.1 RR/2021/698/P (and associated listed building consent RR/2021/699/L) located at Baldwins Farm, Mountfield Lane, Mountfield TN32 5LB.

Proposal: Section 73A retrospective planning consent to vary the details for refurbishment of the existing dwelling.

Cllr Wedmore proposed the following comments be made online on behalf of the Parish Council in opposition to this application:

1. *Brightling PC opposes this application.*
2. *Repairs to listed buildings should be on a "like-for-like" basis. "Honest repair" does not mean that you can replace old stone with block work. It means that you must use new stone where necessary but don't try and make it look like old stone. Ditto for other materials.*
3. *The "experts" relied on by the applicant do not appear to have any specialism in repairs to listed buildings, so their "advice" should carry no weight.*

Cllr Oxenford seconded this proposal, and the motion was carried unanimously. The Clerk was asked to submit the comments online.

10.2 Enforcement ENF/22/20/BAT The Musings

The Enforcement Officer reported that he had visited the site recently and inspected the lighting on the stables and the additional Barn. He also looked inside both buildings and confirmed that their use was in accordance with the approved planning permissions. The house and its grounds have a number of outside light columns and spotlights installed. These are connected to the house itself and the house does not have any specific planning conditions about outside lighting that enable Planning Enforcement to intervene. However, the owners have agreed to seek to install timers on the house outside lighting system that will also have PIR/ timer system to reduce further issues going forward.

In view of these findings this enforcement case will be closed at this time. Cllr Petty confirmed that at present the lights are not staying on all night as they were previously.

10.3 Decision Notices

10.3.1 RR/2020/566/P Socknersh Manor, Fontridge Lane, TN19 7DE

Installation of 7 CCTV columns.

Planning permission granted with conditions.

10.3.2 RR/2021/241/P The Old Stores, Kent Lane TN32 5HU

Proposed dormer window.

Planning permission granted with conditions.

10.3.3 RR/2021/139/P Green Oak Farm, Brightling Road TN32 5HB

Two storey extension to east elevation and extension to existing rear conservatory and front porch.

Planning permission granted with conditions.

10.4 Rother's Consultation on public input into the planning process had previously been circulated for discussion. Cllr Petty felt that it was more akin to a statement of intent than a consultation and that it was a waste of resources by an already over-stretched planning department. Cllr Wedmore proposed that no response be given on behalf of the Parish Council, but that individual councillors could make their own submissions online if they so wished. This proposal was duly agreed by the other councillors.

11. Training

The Clerk confirmed that ESALC had offered some planning training which when asked, was not going to be particularly relevant to AONB & rural parishes. However, they have offered to organise

a pertinent training session and asked for an idea of number of attendees. Almost all councillors were keen, depending on cost. The Clerk will relay further information.

12. Correspondence

12.1 Simon Tayler's email – this had been circulated to all councillors in advance of the meeting. Cllr Wedmore reiterated that acting on advice from the Monitoring Officer, Brightling Parish Council would not discuss the matter further whilst Mr Tayler's complaints were under investigation by Rother's Standards Committee and the local MP.

12.2 Letter from Huw Merriman, MP – The local MP has made a request to meet Parish Councillors informally over the summer and the Clerk was asked to obtain some dates for a coffee morning or afternoon tea which Cllr Petty kindly offered to host in her garden.

13. Parish Councillors' Forum

Cllr Mower offered to be the councillor who could liaise with Burwash Quiet Lanes group and Burwash PC to be a point of contact and provide updates.

14. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

An update on Quiet Lanes from Cllr Mower

15. Future Meetings

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

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

2021: 8th September, 10th November.

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

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date