

## **Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on Monday 14th May 2018 at 7.30 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

- Parish Councillors present:** Cllrs Chris French, David Gasson, Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn, Jane Oxenford, Andrew Wedmore (Chair) and Rodderick Wrenn
- Parish Councillors absent:** Cllr Caroline Croft
- District / County Councillors present:** RDC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green, ESCC Cllr John Barnes
- In attendance:** Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council  
5 members of the public

### **1. Election of Chairman**

Cllr Andrew Wedmore was proposed by Cllr Oxenford and seconded by Cllr Gasson. There being no other nominations Cllr Wedmore was declared Chairman.

### **2. Election of Vice Chairman**

Cllr Chris French was proposed by Cllr Oxenford and seconded by Cllr Gasson. There being no other nominations Cllr French was declared Vice Chairman.

### **3. Declarations of Acceptance of Office**

Cllrs Wedmore and French signed their respective Acceptances of Office.

### **4. Apologies for absence**

Received from Cllr Caroline Croft

### **5. Disclosures of interest**

Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn declared an interest in item 16.1.1 as he is the applicant.

### **6. Additional agenda items**

The Chairman approved the addition of the following agenda items due notice of which has been given to the Clerk on the day before the meeting by 12 noon:  
Item 14.2.3 payments to authorise: Champagne and Caviar £37.50; ESALC £113.58

### **7. Adoption of Minutes**

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 5th March 2018 as a true and correct record.

### **8. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

- 8.1 Standing Orders – last amended November 2017 to allow for late agenda items. Re-adopted without further amendment.
- 8.2 Financial Regulations – last amended July 2016 to require two signatures on hard copy invoices for amounts over £100. Re-adopted without further amendment.

### **9. Asset Register of Council Property**

Members received the asset register and on the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Oxenford approved an amendment to the declared value of the former BT payphone

box. Last year the value was incorrectly shown as the market value and this was corrected to show the purchase cost which was £1. This resulted in a change of the total declared value of assets from £6471 to £3172.

## **10. Appointment of members to serve on external bodies**

- 10.1 Brightling Village Hall committee – on the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn, Cllr Oxenford was reappointed to represent the parish council.
- 10.2 RALC and ESALC – members approved the continuation of the Chairman to represent the parish council on these two associations of local councils.

## **11. Dates and times of future meetings**

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

2018: 30 July, 1 October, 19 November.

2019: 14 January, 11 March, 13 May (AGM).

## **12. Date of the Annual Assembly**

Members set the date for 2019 as Monday 8th April.

## **13. Open Forum**

### **13.1 RDC Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green reported on the following matters:**

13.1.1 RDC is to adopt Civil Parking Enforcement having completed its consultation. It will take two years to implement and start in April 2020 for a one year trial period. In rural areas where no fees are charged, such as Burwash and Etchingam, there will still be enforcement.

13.1.2 The recent planning applications for 46 houses in Shrub Lane, Burwash and for 40 houses in Netherfield have both been appealed following RDC's refusal. ESCC Cllr John Barnes commented that appeals are more likely to succeed where the district council's Local Plan, renewed 5 yearly, does not show a three year housing supply and RDC's does not. Furthermore, new planning guidelines emerging may well see RDC's house building target almost doubled.

RDC Cllr Kirby-Green noted that one key criteria for setting housing targets is the relationship between house prices and the level of wages. This ignores the fact that 80-90% of RDC's area is AONB making it nigh impossible to achieve targets.

### **13.2 ESCC Cllr John Barnes reported on the following matters:**

13.2.1 Consultation is in train regarding the closure of two premises in Eastbourne providing residential adult social care. The unit costs at these establishments are too high and the county council is seeking a more cost effective solution without a cut in service.

13.2.2 The withdrawal of the music instrumental tuition service is being considered as a cost saving measure. He fails to see the logic given that it earns £1.5m in annual revenue and will cost £300k in redundancy payments.

### **13.3 A member of the public, Mrs Jenny Yeo, asked for information about the strength of protection for the AONB given that planning laws allow the conversion of barns into light industrial use. ESCC Cllr Barnes replied that farmers do have wide ranging powers over the use of agricultural buildings. The Chairman added that if an agricultural building is redundant and built before a fairly recent date then it can be used for commercial purposes including as a guest house, without requiring planning permission. This is part of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was brought in under the Cameron coalition government. Prior to its adoption by the government, RDC argued unsuccessfully that it should not apply in the AONB.**

The consensus view from members was that better protection for the AONB is needed especially in this locality where the landscape is historic.

The public forum was then adjourned until item 16.2.1

#### **14. RFO Report and Governance**

##### **14.1 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)**

- 14.1.1 Members reviewed the effectiveness of internal systems of control noting comments of the internal auditor which included a recommendation that evidence of the accuracy of salary payments reported be tabled and that the receipts and payments schedule be minuted as approved rather than noted. Members then approved the internal systems of control.
- 14.1.2 The Annual Governance Statement was read aloud by the Chairman after which on his motion seconded by Cllr Gasson the statement was adopted and signed.
- 14.1.3 The Accounting Statement was tabled, having been previously circulated, and on the motion of Cllr Oxenford seconded by Cllr French the statement was approved.
- 14.1.4 New regulations for 2018/19 exempt parish councils from the need to submit the AGAR to the external auditor, and incur an automatic fee of £200 plus vat, if they meet certain criteria the principal of which is that gross income and expenditure are less than £25k. However, exempt councils must still publish the AGAR locally. The meeting authorised the Chairman to sign the Certificate of Exemption.

##### **14.2 RFO Report**

- 14.2.1 The RFO tabled a schedule of receipts and payments for March 2018, the final month of the fiscal year and members approved it.
- 14.2.2 The RFO tabled the bank reconciliation to the end of March 2018 and the Chairman advised that he has been on line to the bank and can verify the balances as correct.
- 14.2.3 On the motion of the chair seconded by Cllr French the following payments were approved:
  - 14.2.3.1 Annual Assembly refreshments – Champagne & Caviar - £37.50
  - 14.2.3.2 Annual subscriptions to NALC and SSAL – ESALC Ltd - £113.58;
- 14.2.4 The RFO tabled the end of year statement of income and expenditure against budget. On the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr French the annual accounts were adopted.
- 14.2.5 The RFO reported on the national pay award for parish clerks which, on the motion of the Chairman, members resolved to adopt. With effect from 1st April 2018 the National Pay Award set the salary of clerks on salary point 18 in the scale LC1 (the Brightling clerk's contract of employment pay scale) as £18,870 pa, £9,808 per hour. The clerk's contract is for 30 hours per month making the monthly gross pay £294.24.

##### **14.3 Governance**

- 14.3.1 Members reviewed the Annual Assembly on 9th April 2018 and expressed themselves as satisfied. No change to next year's format was proposed.
- 14.3.2 Data Protection – the clerk informed members that parish councils are to be exempted from the mandatory requirement of the General Data Protection Regulations to appoint a Data Protection Officer. The GDPR comes into force on 25th May 2018.

#### **15. Community and Business Development**

By virtue of Standing Order 10. a) viii) the Chairman moved the business directly to item 16.2.1

#### **16. Planning Matters**

16.1 Existing applications – held over until next meeting.

16.2 New applications – to determine the council's response to the following.

- 16.2.1 RR/2018/480/P - Coldharbour Farm Estate, Battle Road, Brightling TN21 9LQ - Proposed replacement of redundant farm buildings with B1/B8 units.

Before considering its position the Public Forum was resumed and members of the public present were invited to speak about the application. The agent for the applicant put forward various supporting arguments and neighbours, Mr & Mrs Walton, outlined a number of objections. Parish councillors asked a number of questions and RDC Cllr Kirby-Green added information from her discussion with the planning officer.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public and ended the Public Forum.

Parish Councillors discussed the relative merits of the scheme and the need for safeguards after which members supported the Chairman's proposal that the council approve of the application in principle but support strict controls on noise levels and hours of operation so as to protect residents from nuisance. "Rural employment and the AONB have to co-exist".

**16.3 Breaches and enforcement – to note the status of the status of the following:**

16.3.1 Telegraph point – RDC planning site allocations document shows 17 Jul 2018 as the deadline for the end of lawful occupation of the caravan.

**16.4 Countryside**

16.4.1 The unlawful Eucalyptus planting in Brickyard Lane continues. The clerk was instructed to write to Bruderhof and ask them what their intentions are.

**17. Highways Matters**

17.1 Finger posts – the clerk reported that he has conducted a visual survey of each post, will update the ledger and pass a copy to Cllr Gasson. The only post needing attention is number 8 at the T-junction at the top of Rectory Hill.

On the motion of the Chairman members authorised the clerk to initiate repairs up to the value of £500. Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn suggested that prices be tested with an alternative supplier, namely Douglas Andrews, wheelwright, who maintains fingerposts in Wealden.

17.2 Strengthening Local Relationships – the second SLR meeting is scheduled for 12th June. The agenda items will be follow ups from issues raised at the inaugural meeting to which will be added the matter of street names. RDC's Street Naming Officer will be invited to attend.

**18. Training - No matters.**

**19. Correspondence received**

19.1 The chairman said he had received an email from Nicole Livingstone-Smith, a parishioner, about the possible impact on traffic in Brightling of the proposed development of the Rother Valley Railway (RVR) in Robertsbridge. A copy of the email, and the chairman's reply, were circulated and discussed by councillors.

**20. Parish Councillors' Forum**

20.1 Cllr Gasson wished to record thanks to all those who participated in the litter clear up.

20.2 Cllr Oxenford reported that the abandoned car by the telephone box has not yet been moved.

**21. Circulation Folder**

Local Councils Direct; CPRE newsletter.

**22. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items**

22.1 Financial Regulations will be reviewed and any amendments thought necessary will be tabled at the next meeting.

**23. Next meetings**

23.1 Meetings of the parish council will be in Brightling Village Hall at 7.30pm.

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

2018: 30 July, 1 October, 19 November.

2019: 14 January, 11 March, (8 April Annual Assembly), 13 May (AGM)

..... Signed (Chairman) Date .....