

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Brightling Parish Council held on
Wednesday 9th March 2022 at 7.30 p.m. at Brightling Village Hall**

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

Parish Councillors absent: Cllr Dianne Mower

District / County

Councillors present: Cllr John Barnes and Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green

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

1. Apologies for absence
Received from Cllr Mower and Doug Edworthy, Tree Warden
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 Wednesday 12th January 2022 as a true and correct record.
5. Open Forum
 - 5.1 The Chairman invited Chris Wing to speak as the only member of the public. Chris wanted to provide the background to a new initiative being launched in conjunction with Robertsbridge residents, the Repair Café. Expert volunteers will help to repair small electrical items, sew & darn, carry out general DIY on items and sharpen knives and garden tools. The two aims are to reduce the number of items going to waste and reduce consumerism. It will initially be held every other month but respond to demand and is a community event, with repairs made 'while you wait' and refreshments are available to purchase while waiting. A small contribution will be requested for the repairs, and the sale of refreshments will aim to make the initiative self-funding. However, Chris requested a donation from the Parish Council to purchase a few spare parts and tools. All councillors were very complimentary about the idea, and Cllr Wedmore proposed a donation of £50. Cllr Oxenford suggested £100, and asked the Clerk if finances allowed for the higher amount. The Clerk confirmed that there was a surplus of approximately £500 as the year end approached, and members unanimously voted to donate £100 to the Repair Café initiative. Chris Wing thanked the parish council and left the meeting.
 - 5.2 Cllr Kirby-Green had previously submitted a report to the Clerk with an update from ESCC. This is attached as a separate document.

Cllr Barnes reported that the financial position is currently fine, but reserves will be used over the next couple of years, so savings will be required. There are some obvious ones where consultant services have been required as a one-off. Planning services are improving and the backlog from the pandemic is diminishing. Cllr Barnes touched on the delegated planning proposal that had created ferocious correspondence and the decision looks like being deferred at the Planning Committee's meeting the following night. (*This did in fact occur – the item was removed from the Planning Committee agenda and will be deferred to a later meeting.*) Cllr Wedmore said that he hoped given the deferral, the proposals will be revised.

6. Consultations

6.1 Cllr Wedmore stated that having asked some questions of the WSRE concerning the consultation for the future, there was very little that was directly relevant to Brightling and that this consultation was not one that the parish council needed to respond to. Other members agreed.

6.2 The consultation on Green Lanes – Cllr Mower had prepared some suggested responses which had previously been circulated. Cllr Petty propose an additional comment that "equal weight should be given to sustainable farming as food production". Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn seconded the proposal, and all members were in favour of submitting the prepared responses on behalf of the parish council. The clerk was asked to respond to the consultation online before the deadline of 9th April, and all councillors thanked Cllr Mower for her work.

7. The proposal to delegate authority to the Clerk had previously been circulated to all councillors. This would be used on the occasions when decisions need to be made between meetings. Adoption of the scheme of delegation was proposed by Cllr Wedmore and seconded by Cllr Coleman, and the motion was unanimously carried. The Chairman signed and dated the scheme which will be reviewed in May '23.

8. Two members of Burwash parish council's environmental working group had approached Brightling parish council to meet up and share information and find common ground. This had led to a suggestion by the Chairman that a councillor should take lead responsibility for liaison with Neighbouring Parishes. This would involve perusal of minutes and a reporting back of any subjects that may be of interest in the locality. Cllr Croft said that she could potentially look at this but that it was quite a lot of work. Cllr Coleman asked if that was the role of RALC, but Cllr Wedmore felt that this was on a more local level, literally with adjoining parishes. The Clerk offered to keep in touch with the clerks from the neighbouring parishes and feedback any relevant information. Cllr Coleman offered to get in touch with the Burwash parish councillor as she knows her personally, and the item was deferred to a later meeting.

9. Queen's Jubilee & Tree planting

The Clerk reported that the walnut tree had been safely delivered and was ready for planting, as part of the NACO initiative, on Friday morning, at the grassy triangle by The Mount. She further confirmed that photos and articles would be submitted to The Messenger, The Rother Members' Bulletin and the Battle Observer after the event.

10. Annual litter pick

Cllr Oxenford who normally takes lead responsibility for this event will be away throughout April, so Cllr Petty offered to co-ordinate the activity instead. An article will be published on the website & in The Messenger reminding volunteers that equipment is available, and the date was confirmed as Saturday 9th April. The meeting point would be the village hall and the Clerk was asked to purchase some hi-vis vests for the busier stretches of road.

11. Ultrafast broadband project

Cllr Wedmore confirmed that having just launched the publicity for this event after a lot of hard work together with Ashburnham parish council, pledges had reached 33%. He planned to make a weekly update on the website, and potentially door-knock to talk to people in person and answer any questions. Cllr Croft said that some residents she had spoken to were concerned about increased costs, or that it was a scam. Cllr Wedmore confirmed that costs for the full fibre service will be for suppliers to decide, but it is a competitive market, and the costs won't necessarily be any higher than for the existing much slower service, and might even be lower.

A report is attached to these minutes with further details.

12. Finance and Governance

12.1 RFO Report

12.1.1 The bank reconciliation to 28th February 2022 had previously been circulated and the Chairman confirmed that having checked online, the balances were correct as stated.

12.1.2 The summary of receipts & payments for January & February 2022 had been circulated for information.

12.1.3 The following payments were approved:

12.1.3.1 ESALC Councillor Training (Cllr Coleman) - £48 paid retrospectively by BACS on 7th February

12.1.3.2 Potash Farm (walnut tree purchase) - £44

13. Planning Matters

13.1 Update on Rother's Planning Enforcement

Cllr Petty reported that she had attended a seminar earlier in the day. Rother councillors and planning department officers consider that good progress is being made to clear the backlog of enforcement cases. The recently revised Planning Enforcement Code incorporates more robust means of dealing with enforcement matters. However, there is considerable feeling amongst other rural parishes that tougher measures still should be taken. Cllr Barnes expressed concern that a culture of 'delay' has evolved and compared Rother's performance with Wealden's. Cllr Kirby-Green said that it is a question of resources - Wealden have more funding and can move to injunctions more quickly. Cllr Petty also reported that a digital planning portal is being developed which will enable tracking of all planning applications. She then asked if there was any news on the enforcement notice at Brightling Park Oast and Cllr Barnes confirmed that 2 planning officers are involved, and he would be meeting with them.

Items 13.2-13.4 below are for information only

13.2 New Planning Application

13.2.1 RR/2022/31/P – 2, Park View, Rectory Hill, Brightling TN32 5HE

Proposal: A single/two storey infill extension including internal alterations.

The Clerk had previously submitted comments online.

13.3 Decision Notices

13.3.1 RR/2021/1955/P – The Oast, Brickyard Lane, Brightling TN32 5HD

Permission granted (retrospectively) for installation of below ground domestic sewage treatment plant.

13.3.2 RR/2021/2199/P – Giffords Farmhouse, Battle Road, Dallington TN21 9LH

Permission refused for a garden building to provide home office/studio ancillary to dwelling.

13.3.3 RR/2021/2200/P – Giffords Farmhouse, Battle Road, Dallington TN21 9LH

Permission granted for a single storey extension to enlarge the kitchen and dining area.

13.3.4 RR/2021/2011/P – Browns Oak Cottage, Brickyard Lane Brightling TN19 7DL

Permission granted for a riding arena for private equestrian use and adjustment to existing residential driveway alignment (including change of use).

13.4 Appeals/Enforcement

ENF/7/21/BRI - Shed in field, Rectory Hill – Following a site visit, the enforcement officer confirmed the object was moveable and no further action is required.

14. Annual Assembly

The Clerk confirmed that the signs had been ordered, the refreshments arranged and that Tom Miles from UKPN would be attending. However, the police inspector was unable to attend, and the Clerk was asked to invite the PCSO's instead.

15. Community and Business Development

15.1 Broadband

See Item 11.

15.2 Crime, anti-social behaviour & police relationships

Cllr Croft stated that there hadn't been any crime in Brightling but there had been some burglaries in Bodiam and Battle. The next PCSO Teams meeting will be on 28th March.

15.3 Defibrillators - nothing to report.

15.4 Environment Policy & Bio-Diversity

Cllr Oxenford reported that Brightling had been invited to take part in a second rural verge trial. Last year's summer had not been typical and East Sussex are extending the trial to collate more data. All members were in favour of a second trial year, and the Clerk was asked to inform Highways.

15.5 Footpaths & Bridleways

Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn suggested asking again about improvements to Battle 1 bridleway. Cllr Wedmore said that he had written privately and had been told it is not a high priority. The Clerk reported that she had reported a hole opening again in Brightling 16 which was repaired a year ago, and the Rights of Way team had repaired it almost immediately. However, Footpath 23 where the bridge has been closed with fencing, is still in the same state and having followed this up, it is the responsibility of the Forestry Commission (FC). Cllr Wedmore proposed writing to the FC, and this was unanimously supported. The Clerk will write to the FC on behalf of the parish council.

15.6 Highways, Hedges & Potholes

Cllr Petty reported that work had just begun to improve drainage near the bridge on the B2096 and hopefully this will improve the situation in Doctor's Farm. Quite a few potholes have been reported and mended. The Sussex Safer Roads project was re-starting after some resource issues, and the sign "We are watching you" should soon be installed on the Battle Road to deter speeding motorbikes. Finally, a resident had brought to Cllr Petty's attention some wooden posts that had appeared in the verge opposite the observatory. No one seemed to know how or why after initial inquiries and the clerk was asked to report the matter to Highways.

15.7 Messenger Magazine

Cllr Coleman to write an article about foraging in the local area, and also mention the village lunch.

15.8 Phone Box

The Clerk confirmed that the disconnection order had been cancelled and Cllr Coleman reported that after further inspection with a local resident, they felt that it could be 'righted' with a tractor. Then the damage can be re-painted, and the project will move on.

15.9 Trees

Cllr Oxenford asked if there were any developments on the eucalypts which have been chopped down but are now re-sprouting. The Clerk confirmed that she had written to the FC in November and had no further news since their reply of 1st December. Cllr Wedmore asked her to write again and press for a site visit.

15.10 Utilities – nothing to report, barring the Storm Eunice outage.

15.11 Refuse Collection – nothing to report.

15.12 Village Hall

Cllr Oxenford reported that bookings were good, broadband is to be installed and the snooker room cleared in order to inspect the extent of the rotten floor.

15.13 Website - Cllr Wedmore provided a report that is attached as a separate document.

15.14 Welcome Packs

Cllr Mower had informed Cllr Wedmore that she has updated the welcome pack.

16. Correspondence

16.1 A letter from the Newt Conservation Society asking for potential sites had been previously circulated. The parish council does not own any suitable land, but members would mention the initiative to any private individuals who may be interested.

17. Parish Councillors' Forum – no matters were raised.

18. Information for Councillors / Future Agenda Items

15th March - Planning Training (Cllr Coleman to attend)

19. Future Meetings

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

19.2 The following are the remaining dates for council meetings in the current council year:
2022: 6th April Annual Assembly, 11th May (AGM)

..... Signed (Chairman)

Date