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Website <http://www.ninfieldpc.co.uk/community/ninfield-parish-council-15069/home>

Ninfield Full Council Minutes 17th March 2022

Cllrs Present:

Chair K Williamson (KW); J Cheshire (JC); S Collins (SC), P Holland (PH), S Guard (SG), J Langley (JL)

In attendance: J Scarff Clerk, 2 members of the public.

2519 KW welcomed everyone to the meeting.

To receive reports from the County and District Cllrs and any questions on these reports.

BB County Council report but had given apologies for the meeting.

PD & RC submitted a written district council but had given apologies for the meeting.

Reports will be attached to the minutes.

To receive reports from:

Schools

Ninfield C o E Primary School

The chair of Governors reported about the annual bikability

The school had undertaken a litter pick, 5 groups went out for 1 hour and each group filled a black bag full of litter. The children were very enthusiastic and keen to do it again. IM thanked the PC for the loan of the equipment. The children have enjoyed the use of the woods. Covid infections have affected the school.

Head Start School

The representative had sent apologies and the latest newsletter.

Church

Paul Frostick had sent an update that the new boiler fitted.

Public Questions

Ten minutes are available for the Public to express a view or ask a question on **relevant matters on the following agenda.**

A member of the Village Society highlighted that they are planning a village litter pick 30th April 2022 from 10-12, meeting at Sparkes Pavilion.

2520 **Apologies** and reasons for absence in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 S 85 (3).

K Crittall (KC); G Pharo (GP) for personal reasons.

Apologies received from P Frostick, District Cllr P Doodes (PD) & R Cade (RC)

KW explained that RC would no longer be attending PC meetings and had suggested meeting with the clerk and Chair at a different time.

2421 **Disclosure of Interests**

To receive any disclosure by Members of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of the interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Revised Code of Members Conduct.

PH & SG disclosed their interests for any discussions about the jubilee fundraising.

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- 2522 **Exclusion of the Public**
To exclude the public for a particular agenda item the following resolution must be passed. 'Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.'
There was no requirement to pass this resolution.
- 2523 **Minutes of previous meeting** to be agreed and signed as a true record
JC Proposed, SC seconded. All agreed.
Resolved The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council 17th February 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the chairman.
- 2524 **Matters for discussion**
- a) **To hear an update on the neighbourhood plan and agree any actions required.**
To consider proposed recommendations for approval
JC updated the meeting on the feedback on our draft plan that had been received from WDC. It was proposed that the plan period should be updated to accord with the WDC ending in 2039. JC and KM have redrafted the Ninfield plan to take the feedback into account and thanked IM, KC & PC. JC discussed a proposed change to the wording of the vision. The clerk suggested that it could be changed to ...'support appropriate development...' which can be read in the Hellingly plan which has been through and passed examination.
All agreed.
There is a planned meeting with WDC 31st March to discuss the feedback.
The cllrs thanked JC for all the time and work that he and his team have put into the Neighbourhood Plan.
- b) **To receive reports from Parish Councillors including those requiring actions.**
SG reported on plans for the Jubilee and highlighted the next meeting 7th April Sparkes Pavilion. The clerk had received a request for funding for the event.
JC proposed that the PC support the event with a donation of £500. Seconded by JL. SG and PH had previously declared an interest in this subject and did not participate in the vote. The remaining cllrs agreed.
Resolved that the PC would donate £500 towards the Jubilee events.
SG discussed the telephone box project. SG confirmed that the grounds maintenance contractors have agreed to bring it into the village. BT should supply the paint for the renovation. The company GP works for have agreed to donate £500 to the project. PH organise the concrete base for the box to sit on. If the electricity needs to be cut off the clerk will look for a grant that can be applied for through the History Society who are now the custodians of the telephone box.
- KW reported that she had attended the police meeting on 'Big Data' via zoom with the Chief and Assistant Chief Constables. The project aims to bring together all the Sussex Police systems with an interrogation tool.
The Chief Constable is committed to local policing and the big data project will help identify problem areas.

Ninfield Parish Council Minutes

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c)

Finance Matters

- i. To receive the financial reports to 28th February 2022 for noting.
The reports were noted
- ii. To receive a report detailing the bank balances to 28th February for noting.
Noted
- iii. To receive the schedule payment of invoices agreed at the Finance Committee Meeting
It was noted that these payments had been authorised.
- iv. To receive the minutes from the finance committee meeting for adoption.
Minutes noted
- v. To receive any recommendations from the finance meeting for agreement.
The clerk highlighted that the committee would like the full council to agree the recommended increased amount to be held in general reserves at £50,000 and the other EMR movements as presented in the minutes.

Proposed KW, Seconded SG all agreed.

Resolved that the general reserves be held at £50,000 and all proposed EMR movements be made.

2525

Date of next meeting.

To note the date of the next meeting is Thursday 21st April 2022 at 7pm

2526

Correspondence – to note for possible inclusion on next agenda

KW declared the meeting closed at 19:43

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District Councillor Report to Ninfield Parish Council 17th March 2022

Refugees

On 24/2/22, Cllr Cade attended a webinar organised by the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme led by Eddie Hughes MP & Victoria Atkins MP together with the Home Office Management team. Its purpose was to review the development and progress of the scheme and discuss information and experiences of those taking part, in order to make any necessary changes.

Seventeen thousand Afghan refugees were accepted by the UK, many of which left their homeland in urgent circumstances. After five months, twelve thousand are still in hotels scattered around the Country, as there have been difficulties finding appropriate accommodation in the Private Rented Sector. The Government's Housing portal is set up to invite applications from landlords and, due to the generally large number of members of Afghan families, the request is for substantial properties.

The situation in Wealden mirrors the experiences of most of the other Local Authorities. The families are quick to settle into their surroundings, but offers of suitable housing is a problem. Many of the refugees have professional backgrounds including doctors and lawyers so the prospect for employment is encouraging. Every child in the scheme has been found a school place.

The Wealden Housing team has been working with two families in Crowborough and Uckfield with the possibility of obtaining another property. The husband in the Crowborough household is now in employment.

We are waiting the details of the Government's response to the Ukrainian refugee situation. The regulations of the initiatives are changing by the hour as they are gradually being developed. The most recent response to the emergency is the sponsorship of refugees by UK individuals, families, community groups, businesses and other organisations. It seems certain this will include the involvement of Local Authorities.

The Government is setting up a portal for people to register their interest in sponsoring a family, but we will be surprised if Wealden, with our experience of looking after Syrian refugees for the last five years and recently dealing with the Afghan emergency, is not involved in providing local support to people, groups and organisations sponsoring Ukrainian families.

Benefits

Test & Trace Standard & Discretionary

From 24 February 2022 the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive Covid test ended. Therefore as at that point so have self-isolation payments.

There is a 42 day claim window for positive cases and therefore we are still accepting claims for those that tested positive before the 24th and where the first date of their isolation period was in the last 42 days.

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Individuals who stay at home if they test positive for COVID-19 or are displaying COVID 19 symptoms from 24 February 2022 may be eligible for other government support, such as Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance.

Total Paid Out 552 - £276,000

Discretionary 159 - £79,500

Standard 393 - £196,500

Total applications received to date 1,226

Month Cases Paid

Oct-20 12

Nov-20 21

Dec-20 22

Jan-21 73

Feb-21 21

Mar-21 4

Apr-21 3

May-21 0

Jun-21 9

Jul-21 55

Aug-21 26

Sep-21 30

Oct-21 20

Nov-21 30

Dec-21 47

Jan-22 106

Feb-22 73

Total 540

Business Grants

Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant

Grant for businesses with a rateable value in the Hospitality, Leisure or Accommodation sectors.

Applications Received 270

Applications Approved / Paid 238

Total Amount paid £800,046.00

Waiting review 18

ARG Discretionary Fund

We had an overall fund of have a discretionary grant amount of approx. £1.79m to spend by 31st March 2022.

For this final phase we have so far run four schemes;

- **Omicron Top-up for Hospitality and Leisure - CLOSED**
- **Personal Care - CLOSED**
- **Gyms, Leisure Centres and Indoor Exercise Facilities - CLOSED**
- **Travel Industry - CLOSED**

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Applications Received 284
Applications Approved / Paid 267
Applications Declined 10
Total Amount paid £1,371,800.00
Waiting review 7

Wealden is in the process of finalising two more schemes for other business sectors and these will be published on our Grants web pages shortly.

<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/press-and-media/corona-virus-covid-19-latest/advice-support-and-information-for-businesses/>

Council Tax Energy Rebate

Following the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak's, announcement on 3rd February of a Council Tax rebate on the guidelines have now been published and we are working as quickly as possible to provide details on how the scheme will work. An explanatory leaflet has been mailed out with the Council Tax annual demand notices for the 2022/23 tax year.

Wealden has approximately 72,268 banded dwellings in the District. Just under 45,000 of those dwellings are in Bands A – D, with approximately 29% of those not currently paying by Direct Debit.

Eligibility: Only occupied dwellings banded A – D will be eligible for the rebate. The dwelling must be a sole or main residence. Empty and second homes will not be eligible. Other criteria will apply. If the criteria are met there will be a one off payment of £150. There will only be a one payment per household regardless of the number of occupants. Payments can only be made between April 2022 and up to September 2022.

For those residents currently paying by Direct Debit, we will still need to verify their bank details and therefore the April DD must be collected and cleared before we can pay the rebate.

Those residents not currently paying by Direct Debit may set up a direct debit for the 2022/23 Council Tax bill, however payment of the rebate will not be made until the Direct Debit details have been verified and the April Council Tax payment has been collected and cleared. Those that do not set up a DD will need to make an application for the rebate, confirming their bank details for payment and allowing ID checks to be taken.

Any rebate correctly claimed will not need to be repaid and payments are disregarded (not included) when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

Discretionary Rebate - There will be a discretionary scheme for some households in Bands E – H, however we are currently working on the eligibility requirements for this scheme. We have a scheme fund allocation of £327,000, equating to 2,180 payments. There are currently just over 27,000 dwellings in Bands E – H, of which 14% are not on Direct Debit.

Fraud and Error - We will be required to reconcile with BEIS on this scheme and expect to be

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audited. Incorrect payment is the authority's responsibility to recover. We will be adopting best practice and reviewing our learning from business grants to ensure that we continue to minimise fraud and error.

REPORTING - There is a requirement to provide monthly reporting confirming payment volumes and also constituency level reporting as the scheme progresses.

Benefits Performance: It is important to highlight the fantastic performance of our Benefits team, processing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction. Despite Covid and the huge increased workload in the administration of the Test & Trace self isolation payment and the Household Support Fund the team have improved on their processing times. The National average to process new claims for Housing benefit is 20 days and we are processing in 17 days. This is an excellent achievement.

Housing Numbers

Since Christmas, there has been considerable publicity about Wealden's efforts to lobby Government housing ministers in respect of reducing the housing numbers which have been allocated to Wealden. Cllr Bob Standley, Leader, and Cllr Ann Newton, Planning Portfolio Holder, have had meetings with both Michael Gove M.P and Rishi Sunak M.P. and have put forward a strong case. Wealden is awaiting their response.

Manchester Road development

We both visit the Manchester Road development site regularly, either together or separately, and often are able to have a conversation with the site manager, Jake. We discuss the ongoing problem of heavy traffic movement and emphasis the need to conform to the transport/construction plan. We were disappointed not to be able to attend the recent site visit arranged by the Parish Council and so would appreciate feedback on that meeting.

Apparently the site works are ahead of schedule. We note that the site is kept tidy and clean and generally well managed. Having spoken to residents the concerns are, apart from not wanting the development at all, are all around traffic movement and road safety.

We will both continue to visit the site regularly and keep up the useful working relationship we have built with the site manager

A government planning inspector has endorsed Wealden District Council's intention to refuse permission for 40 new homes in Ninfield

This is an extract from a Press Release regarding a site in Ninfield. We are delighted with this result

'The council said it would turn down outline planning permission for the development on land south of Catsfield Road, Hurst Wood Green, Ninfield.

The application was submitted to the council in February 2020 and the authority intended to refuse outline planning permission for the 1.86 hectare site on the grounds it lies outside the development boundary for Ninfield, within open countryside.

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Council planners also said the proposed development would be detrimental to the visual and rural setting of the village of Ninfield and character of Catsfield Road, and is contrary to planning policies.

Developers appealed and a decision announced last month by a government inspector concurred with the council's views and said the proposal would constitute a cramped form of development outside of the established built form of the village, which would transform the rural character of the eastern approach to the village from Catsfield Road.

The inspector also said the development would be unsympathetic and harmful to its rural setting and cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The appeal was dismissed.

There have been a number of other appeals recently dismissed by planning inspectors after permission was originally turned down by Wealden District Council.'

Wealden Website

As usual we suggest that from time to time you take a look at the Wealden website as it contains a wealth of useful information. The Press Releases are topical and interesting.

Local Issues, concerns, questions

Your District Councillors are very active in Ninfield and always willing to help with any issues and concerns, to sign post residents to people who can help with a particular problem if we do not know the answer ourselves. We are at the end of the phone or email.

Cllrs Ray Cade and Pam Doodes
March 2022

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Members' Update - East Sussex County Council February 2022

Cllr Bob Bowdler

Adult Social Care

Accessible online safety video launched

A new video has been created to help adults with learning disabilities stay safe online, as part of a competition commissioned by East Sussex County Council and managed by Lewes-based arts charity Culture Shift to develop an adult-appropriate online safety resource.

The winning film, titled 'Safety Net', was designed by Rhiannon Barton, a graduate student from the University of Brighton. It is specifically aimed at people who have autism and/or a learning disability and can be used as part of conversations and training about internet safety.

The film is available to [watch on YouTube](#) and tackles issues such as not sharing or watching things which are inappropriate or unpleasant, keeping personal information private, and how to ask for help. It was created in collaboration with learning disabled adults and the soundtrack was provided by local band Delta 7.

Funding to support domestic abuse victims announced

East Sussex is set to receive additional funding to deliver their Domestic Abuse Act duties in 2022/23.

A further £125million will be allocated to local authorities, with East Sussex County Council receiving £1,072,232.

This funding is to ensure safe accommodation spaces, such as refuges and shelters, can provide victims with support services such as health care, social workers, and benefits – meaning anyone who flees their home gets the help they need to recover and rebuild their lives.

More than £4million to support care providers

Over £4million of funding is being shared among East Sussex care providers to ensure support remains available for those in need.

East Sussex County Council was awarded £4.982million from the Government Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund (WRRF) to support providers who are facing unprecedented challenges in retaining their workforce. The funding will be used to provide support in people's own homes and care homes, help to prevent hospital admissions, and boost providers' capacity to deliver more hours of care.

Plans for distribution of the funds were approved last month, following discussions between independent care providers and East Sussex's Lead Members for Adult Social Care and Health.

The grant is the second instalment from a pot of £162.5m distributed to councils.

Communities, Economy and Transport

Economy-boosting access road opens to traffic

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The Newhaven Port Access Road, an integral part of the Newhaven Enterprise Zone, has officially opened to traffic and will provide a crucial boost to the town's economy.

The new road creates direct access to East Quay and allocated development land, opening up 80,000 square metres of business space and allowing the creation of new jobs.

The road was funded by a £10 million grant from the Department for Transport and £13.2 million from East Sussex County Council's capital programme – money set aside for one-off projects.

In July 2021, the new cycle path and footway that runs alongside the road opened, providing pedestrian access to Tide Mills and the beach. The new path also links with existing footpaths north and south of Mill Creek to create new circular walking and cycling routes.

Funding agreed for 'community' road works

Plans to make more money available for road safety works in East Sussex have been approved by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

Around £750,000 of unused money from the council's Community Match programme will instead be spent on a wide range of road improvement projects which would not usually meet funding criteria, such as traffic islands or dropped kerbs.

Chosen works will address safety concerns, cost no more than £40,000 and be identified by considering a range of issues and specific site characteristics. Funding for these works will be made available in the coming months.

Plans to extend local wine estate are approved

Plans to expand the Ridgeview Wine Estate, near Ditchling Common, have been approved by East Sussex County Council's planning committee.

The proposals include a new building to provide al fresco dining experiences and an extension to the existing winery building. This extension would accommodate a tasting room, a small café, a retail area, and a meeting space.

The proposals were brought to the council's planning committee as the site falls within the boundaries of both Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority.

Cllr Bob Bowlder
Wealden East Division
7 March 2022