

Minutes of a meeting of **WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL** held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 7.00pm remotely via zoom

**PRESENT:** Councillors A Long (Chairman), Mike Smythe (Vice-Chairman), Roy Iremonger, Karen Cook, Celia Davis, Richard Reading, Steve Williamson, Pauline Velton, Chris Wells and Keith Graham

Also present: Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk  
Wealden District Councillor Bob Bowdler  
East Sussex County Councillor – Bill Bentley (19.08)  
Wealden District Councillor Susan Stedman (19.16 – 19.22)  
Linda Butcher – Former Locum Clerk  
Four members of the public (one arriving at 7.12)

**00125 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Dave Powell – work commitments

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - None

## **MINUTES**

To **resolve** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

**00126 RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

There were no matters arising from the minutes not covered on the agenda.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

A member of the public spoke on behalf of the Warbleton Wildflower Group. She requested to know if the Parish Council are intending to put on the exhibition that the Wildflower Group suggested at the last Full Council meeting in June. They would be happy to provide the content. Also are the Parish Council intending to propose the new cutting routes, that the Wildflower Group have suggested to them, to East Sussex County Council. Lastly, they requested to know the best way to communicate with the Parish Council and what the protocols are.

The Chairman noted their comments and confirmed he is working hard to find a new Chairman for the Environment Committee. He clarified this is the most appropriate Committee for these items to be discussed. In the meantime, he would take a look at their concerns.

No other members of the public wished to speak.

## **REPORTS**

**6.1. To receive reports from District and County Councillor**

Wealden District Councillor Bob Bowdler had nothing to report as there were few meetings taking place at the present time.

East Sussex County Councillor Bill Bentley reported he is struggling to get Rights of Way to display the relevant signage regarding the large tree that has fallen across a footpath in the Parish. He is chasing this daily; they had assured him a visit would take place this week. Five libraries have now re-opened, the nearest one being Crowborough. It had been particularly challenging to make the buildings safe. It is now possible to order books online or to order over the phone. The home library service had been resumed but run by staff not volunteers for safety reasons. Weddings and ceremonies have also resumed with a long list of people waiting to book.

Cllr Reading requested more information regarding the increase in planning applications. WDC Bob Bowdler stated there are approximately 1000 applications for Horam with a lot more in the pipeline. Of those, 24 are in Punnetts Town which will go to Committee in August or September. There will be 300 new homes in Hellingly. He finished by saying Wealden District Council are in a difficult position regarding refusing applications.

Cllr Williamson requested information on Covid infection rates in the county and also thoughts on the commencement of face-to-face meetings. WDC Bob Bowdler replied they have no authority to hold face-to-face meetings until the end of September at the earliest. Hybrid meetings are not permitted. There are only approximately 170 cases of Covid in East Sussex. ESCC Bill Bentley confirmed Covid is reasonably contained. Hastings have only had 9 deaths and East Sussex is in the lower percentile of the country. For anyone vulnerable or being shielded 17.7.2020 was the deadline for registering for deliveries of food. He requested all attendees to pass this message on. ESCC will also continue with virtual meetings.

WDC Sue Stedman apologised for her late arrival. There will be up to 205 new homes being built in East Hoathly. The District Council are following government direction. AONB offers protection although there are pockets of development. She will now be taking on Planning in Heathfield North and South, but she will endeavour to continue to participate in Parish Council Meetings. If anyone had any queries please email her.

The Chairman referred back to item 4 as the Clerk had missed someone's hand being raised.

The member of the public wishing to speak confirmed that for the record they totally supported the member of the public who spoke earlier on behalf of Warbleton Wildflower Group.

## **6.2. To receive reports from the Parish Councillors**

The Chairman started by saying it had been a busy month for the Parish Council. The Three Cups pub had been vandalised and there were a number of issues. The Chairman contacted WDC Bob Bowdler who contacted the land agents. It is now a lot more secure with padlocks, gates and hoardings. Although the problem of anti-social drinking still remains. The Chairman also spoke to a resident who was unhappy with the

procedure of the Parish Council regarding a recent planning application. He stated a personal visit by himself was much appreciated and he thoroughly explained Parish Council procedures.

A fallen tree over the public footpath had been reported in Hammer Lane. It had entirely blocked the path and destroyed outside sheds and a greenhouse. The tree will have to be removed. The Chairman has printed a sign to make the public fully aware. Tape has been put across the footpath to deter members of the public from using it.

There is a bench in a bad state of disrepair near to the Dunn Village Hall. The Chairman will monitor this item.

A woman was found dead in the back of her car in Three Cups. There were no suspicious circumstances, unfortunately it was suicide and the car was located on her property.

The well cover at Spring Hill had a large cone over the hole to protect members of the public until the appropriate repairs can take place. The Chairman confirmed the whole well cover was in a very bad state of disrepair and it was unlikely it had been deliberately vandalised in order for the hose pipes to be inserted.

Cllr Davies confirmed she was in email communication with the Chairman of Dunn Village Hall. They were currently considering how to open. They had received the ACRE advice for village halls which is a 22-page document. The Chairman requested the District or County Councillors pass on any more useful information to the Clerk and she can forward this to John Gunn and include Cllr Davies.

Regarding the CIL Committee meeting which took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June. The committee had agreed a process and raised a number of ideas which had been circulated to all Members. Any other Members with ideas needed to pass those onto the Clerk before the 21<sup>st</sup> July. The Committee would prioritise them and agree a selection and then share these ideas with the community. The final decision would be made by the Parish Council. There were two options available to reach the community with these ideas. The first was to publish CIL ideas on the website, noticeboards and village shop and the second was a flyer that could be delivered to all residents in the Parish. Costs for this were estimated to be in the region of £200 and unfortunately couldn't be covered by CIL monies but this would be discussed at the next CIL meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> July.

Cllr Velten confirmed that the Bodle Street Green Village Hall used part of their £10,000 grant to pay the final instalment of a £5,000 building loan. They also used the grant for the relaying of the patio paving outside the hall. The kitchen was used last week to feed 50 people on the green. There wasn't a fixed date for the re-opening although they were hoping to offer Pilates classes again at some point in August.

Cllr Reading had nothing to report.

Cllr Williamson asked Members to note the missing financial report is due to non-availability of bank statements. These statements should be on their way shortly and a reconciliation will be produced as soon as possible.

### **6.3. To receive reports from the Parish Clerk**

**6.3.1. To accept and resolve a policy for Council meetings held remotely by electronic means**

The Clerk read through all the amendments that had been recommended by Councillors at the last Full Council meeting. She then invited comments from Members. Cllr Smythe confirmed that earlier it was mentioned by the County Councillor that Hybrid meetings were illegal at the present time.

**00127** It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the policy for Council meetings held remotely by electronic means on the condition the Clerk removes the paragraph relating to Hybrid meetings.

**6.3.2. Barclays Bank Mandate**

After several conversations with Barclays, all the mandate requests had now been accepted and the Clerk will receive confirmation of this within 3-5 working days. Bank statements will now be sent to the Clerk and when the letter arrives the Clerk can begin the process of setting the Parish Council up with internet banking. As a result of a request from Chairman the Clerk confirmed the internet banking process and how the payment authorising would work.

**6.3.3. Update on the bench donated by David Bysouth**

Highways were due to inspect the site for the bench and the Clerk would be informed via email within the next three weeks with the result. The Clerk had updated David Bysouth and updated WDC Bob Bowdler with the progress made. Cllr Bowdler will continue to chase from his end.

**6.3.4. Update on the Asset Register**

The Clerk had received emails from Members with the details of items they thought should be on the asset register. The Clerk had spoken to Cllr Wells and together they had gone through all the items. A resolution would be passed, item 11 on the agenda, to agree which two Councillors would be responsible for checking the items on the asset register. It was **AGREED** the Clerk would accompany these Councillors along with the new Member of the Council as a pertinent measure during the month of August. The insurance policy was due for renewal in September and could be updated accordingly.

**6.3.5 Update on the noticeboards and Bodle Street Green Gates**

An email was sent to Highways on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July and all the relevant Councillors were copied in. The Clerk did not receive a response. ESCC Bill Bentley is now involved and the Parish Council now had a case reference. All the relevant information had been passed onto several different officers at Highways. The Clerk had been assured she would hear back by next week but it was looking promising that progress would be made shortly.

**6.3.6 Environment Committee Update**

Cllr Wells had resigned from the Environment Committee due to work commitments. The Clerk had emailed all Members but no interest had been shown in the role currently. The Chairman offered to chair a meeting towards the end of July in an attempt to address the enquiries made by the Warbleton Wildflower Group.

#### **6.3.7. Headed Paper Research**

The Clerk suggested it might be pertinent for the Parish Council to acquire some headed paper. It was **AGREED** that Cllr Smythe's suggestion of assisting the Clerk in investigating the process of producing some in-house headed paper would be a good idea.

#### **6.3.8. To consider repair works to the turning circle outside the Grantees opposite the Dunn Village Hall, owned by the Parish Council**

The Clerk informed Members she had received correspondence from a resident regarding the large pothole measuring 9 inches deep in the turning circle outside the Grantees. The turning circle was previously repaired in 1997 and the cost was shared between the Parish Council, the resident and Dunn Village Hall. The Clerk invited comments regarding how the Council wished to proceed on the matter. The Chairman advised the best way forward would be for the copy of the deed which clearly stated the Parish Council own this particular piece of land would be made available to the Clerk as soon as possible and will be an item on the next Full Council agenda in September. Cllr Smythe had a map which showed the parcels of land the Parish Council own. The Clerk confirmed the cost of repairs in 1997 was £860 plus £150.50 VAT. Cllr Williamson supported the Chairman's comments but asked Members to note were no funds in the budget for these repairs and he had concerns as the Parish were already using their reserves. Cllr Cook stated that what Parish think they own and what is actually registered at the Land Registry Office might be different.

### **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**To receive the acts and proceedings of the following committee meetings:**

- (a) Planning and Development – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 and 7<sup>th</sup> July**
- (b) CIL – 23<sup>rd</sup> June**

**Noted**

### **FINANCE**

#### **8.1. Resolve to adopt the Internal Audit Report – Financial Year 2019/20**

The Chairman requested Cllr Williamson to briefly summarise. He stated all the relevant documents had been sent to Members ahead of the meeting and briefly outlined the recent accounting history of the Parish Council. He confirmed the F&GP Committee reviewed the Internal Audit report in detail on the 14<sup>th</sup> July. Cllr Williamson sent a document to all Members which highlighted all the points raised in the audit with a proposed course of action

and relevant timescales. He invited Members comments. The Councillors all acknowledged the hard work that had been completed but had no further comments to add.

**000128** It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Internal Audit Report – Financial Year 2019/20

**8.2. The exercise of Public Rights will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 and finish on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

The Chairman confirmed the dates that had been agreed at the F&GP Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> July. The Chairman confirmed that a Councillor will make themselves available to escort any member of the public who made an appointment to review the accounts.

The dates for the exercise of the Public Rights were **AGREED** by Members

**8.3. Resolve section 1 of the AGAR: The Annual Governance Statement**

The Chairman requested Cllr Williamson to briefly summarise. Cllr Williamson confirmed all the relevant documentation had been sent to all Members ahead of the meeting. In order to complete the Annual Governance Statement, it had been necessary to take into account the comments of the Internal Auditor. The Practitioners Guide was another useful tool which had also been circulated to all Members. The answers to each question had been discussed in great detail at the F&GP Meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> July. He clarified that for each box that had a NO answer an explanation on a separate sheet had to be provided to the External Auditor. As a result of the discussions at the F&GP Meeting Cllr Williamson had provided a detailed explanation to each NO. The Chairman read through each assertion and Cllr Williamson invited comments on the explanations he had provided for each NO answer. The Chairman requested clarification for the Parish Council's YES answer to box 3 which was regarding whether the Parish Council had taken reasonable steps to ensure that there had been no significant financial effect on the ability of the Authority to conduct its business or manage its finances. The Former Locum Clerk reassured the Chairman the right processes had been in place throughout the year and no fraudulent payments could be made whatsoever. The Chairman of Finance agreed with the Former Locum Clerk

**000129** It was **RESOLVED** to approve Section 1 of the AGAR: The Annual Governance Statement

**8.4. Resolve section 2 of the AGAR: The accounting statements for 2019/20**

The Chairman requested Cllr Williamson to briefly summarise. Cllr Williamson confirmed all the relevant documentation had been sent to all Members ahead of the meeting. He explained what each document displayed and went through the individual boxes on Section 2 of the AGAR

and explained any variances. The Clerk confirmed she was confident with the numbers added to section 2 of the AGAR. She stated these figures were scrutinized in the F&GP Meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> July. She also explained the Former Locum Clerk had broken down each individual box of section 2 and clearly listed how each total had been formed.

**000130** It was **RESOLVED** to approve Section 2 of the AGAR: The accounting statements for 2019/20

#### **8.5. To authorise the bills for payment and sign the cheques**

Members noted the Clerk will get paid in August and this would be ratified at the Full Council meeting in September. Although there would be no Full Council meeting in August, the Parish Council's financial regulations allow for that.

Cheque No.	Payee	£	VAT	£ Total	Purpose
101383	Jackie Cottrell	701		701	Salary
101384	Linda Butcher	200	-	200	Mentoring and Audit Preparation. Mentoring

**000131** **RESOLVED** to authorise the cheques as listed above.

#### **8.6. To note the Finance Reports to the 30<sup>th</sup> June**

The Clerk asked Members to note she would be in communication with the Chairman of the F&GP Committee to check payments made whilst waiting for the bank statements to arrive.

#### **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

##### **9.1. To resolve committee membership**

**000132** It was **RESOLVED** Cllr Keith Graham will become a member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee

#### **UPDATE ON THE USE OF ZOOM FOR PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The Clerk repeated the comments of Wealden District Councillor Bob Bowdler and East Sussex County Councillor Bill Bentley that there were no plans to re-commence face-to-face meetings at the present time. The NALC guidelines also re-iterated this. The Chairman confirmed the Clerk had emailed all Members asking for their opinion. The vast majority were happy to continue with virtual meetings until the guidelines recommended otherwise.

**000133** **RECOMMEND** this item would feature on the Full Council Agenda in September

**TO RESOLVE TWO MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING THE ASSET REGISTER ON A YEARLY BASIS**

It was agreed at the Clerks request that she would accompany the two Members. Cllr Graham will also accompany the party as a new Member of the Parish Council.

- 000134** It was **RESOLVED** Cllr Long and Cllr Wells would become the two Members to take responsibility of checking the condition of the assets on the Asset Register on a yearly basis. Date and time to be confirmed for August.

**URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING and/or INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

The Chairman requested Members note the Annual Parish Assembly was not a requirement this year due to the Pandemic. He confirmed with the Clerk that she would update him on this matter if anything changed.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, The Chairman of the F&GP Committee and the Clerk personally thanked the Former Locum Clerk for all her hard work.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Full Council meeting would be Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September.

The meeting closed at 9.04pm