



NUTHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 16th August 2023, at Mannings Heath Village Hall, commencing at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Cllr N Bryant (Chair), Cllr C Kenny (Vice Chair), Cllr W Bayley, Cllr V Court and Cllr S Catterall.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Ms Z Savill (Locum Clerk) and 22 members of the public.

254-23/24 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman reported that Cllr Kenny had apologised that he would be arriving a little later. It was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies for absence from Cllr McGovern and Cllr Oswell-Penton.

255-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest, as defined under the Localism Act 2011 and the Parish Council's Code of Conduct, were made.

Cllr Kenny joined the meeting. He made no declarations of interest.

256-23/24 TO APPOINT A LOCUM CLERK FOR THIS MEETING AND AGREE TERMS

The Council discussed and **RESOLVED** to appoint the Locum Clerk for the meeting and Agree terms of engagement.

257/23/24 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

- **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2023**

It was **RESOLVED** to defer approval of the minutes of the meeting as not all Councillors had received a 'clean' copy of the typographical corrections.

- **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th JULY 2023**

The Locum Clerk advised to defer adoption of the minutes to seek legal advice on publication of the Chairman's announcements regarding a potentially confidential staffing matter. Cllr Bayley commented that in his view, there were issues about the comments which perhaps would have been wiser to avoid making, but they were made and the minutes needed to reflect accurately what was said. Clearly there were problems to be addressed but the Council would not be able to make any progress in solving those problems if the minutes were deferred. The Chairman reported that his comments related to an agenda item of the meeting. He declined to make a Chairman's amendment on the accuracy of the minutes. Cllr Bayley moved to adopt the minutes without redaction and this was seconded by Cllr Catterall.

Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 19th July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record. The Chairman and Cllr Kenny requested that their votes against the motion be recorded.

258-23/24

COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

Draft Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting on 3rd August 2023

It was **RESOLVED** to defer adoption of the minutes pending their publication on the Council's website; and to correct an error in the Chairman's submission of the Committee's objection to planning application DC/23/1325 (Limekiln Farm) which incorrectly stated a strong objection. Chairman to action.

259-23/24

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deferred to item Agenda item 262- 23/24.

260-23/24

PUBLIC SESSION

The Chairman invited questions from the public, reminding those in attendance that each question is limited to 2 minutes in accordance with Standing Order 3(g).

- A resident reported that the Parish community Group will be pushing again for a safer crossing proposal on the A281 at Mannings Heath.
- A resident reported that he was still waiting for the Council's response to his email querying the Council's comments on a planning application and his suggestion that members undertake planning training. A discussion took place and Cllr Catterall raised a point of order that debates should not take place in a public session. The Chairman advised that he had not received all correspondence in the Clerk's absence but he would look into it after the meeting.
- Several residents asked why the Council had not included a discussion about the playground issues which had been agreed at the last meeting. The Chairman advised that the matter was not on the agenda because the Council was still making enquiries and there was nothing further to report.
- A member of the Press asked when feedback would be available from the Council on its enquiries into the playground issues raised. The Chairman reported that he hoped to provide this soon. Several residents expressed serious disappointment at the delays.
- A resident asked about progress on the 20mph limit for the School Safety Zone outside St Andrew's School and if it would include orange flashing school signs similar to those around the country. The same resident reported on nuisance from 3 street lights belonging to the Parish Council in Nuthurst which remained on until 1.30am. She reported that a number of residents had supported the idea of the lights being turned off much earlier. She questioned whether the lights were needed at all given the effect on peoples' health and wildlife. The Chairman advised that the matters were on the agenda for discussion later in the meeting.

261-23/24

DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

In the absence of Cllr Nigel Jupp (Southwater and Nuthurst), there was no report from West Sussex County Council.

District Cllr Dennis Livingstone (Nuthurst & Lower Beeding) provided an update on District Council business including the following:

- No applications were considered by HDC for the Nuthurst Parish this month.
- An application for 75 houses off the Shipley Road in Southwater was approved because the developer could demonstrate water neutrality by offsetting with an area of housing in Crawley. Technically it had already been previously approved by the planning

inspectorate but HDC's difficulty in demonstrating a 5-year land supply for housing makes it a big problem to successfully challenge speculative applications.

- The district had to build 900 homes each year and HDC was working hard to finalise the Local Plan so that everyone knows where these will be allocated.
- He raised concerns that the Parish Council's Planning Committee did not object to a 4-bedroom house at Coombe Cottage, Mannings Heath at its recent meeting instead of the previously approved application for two 2-bedroom dwellings. He pointed out that it seemed to be against the main objective of the parish's neighbourhood plan for smaller houses for younger families and starter homes in this area.
- He raised concerns about the same committee's agreed comments on the application at Limekiln Farm. He had strong concerns about the viability of the proposal and the risks of leaving the buildings on site, and the need to protect the countryside. He would be meeting with the Case Officer to understand the points raised including the business plan. If officers were considering approval and for Coombe Cottage, he had requested that the applications are determined by HDC Planning Committee.
- He would study carefully the planning application at Springfield Farm, and if necessary he would raise any concerns in the same way with officers.
- He had received numerous complaints from residents who were unable to access the countryside or exercise their horses because of bridleway closures. He referred in particular to the two main routes through the southern end of the parish which had been closed through the summer months for repairs. This meant horses could not be exercised or face the dangers of riding on the narrow lanes. He had raised the matter on numerous occasions with the WSCC Rights Of Way Officer. The long closures were due mainly because repair work was the responsibility of the landowners. He asked if the Parish Council could consider in the future how the parties can get together and talk to landowners to resolve these problems as it was a public service owed to residents.
- He expressed concerns of reports that WSCC contractors had twice mown down the staked out area of wildflowers and spring bulbs near the church in Mannings Heath. He had written to WSCC, the County Councillor and to Wilder Horsham at HDC about the importance of these grass verges for movements of wildlife. Wilder Horsham were actively looking into this and is seeking involvement of the whole district, including the Parish Councils. He asked the Parish Council to consider identifying all the verges in its area that could be left during the spring to late summer to allow the wildflowers and spring bulbs to flourish.
- He suggested thanks to WSCC should be recorded for the superb provision of the new Horsham Fire Station. The facility had benefits to this parish as it should expect to be getting far better and shorter responses time to any fires or other emergencies.
- A resident raised points about the application at Coombe Cottage. Cllr Livingstone agreed to speak to him after their meeting.

Questions from Councillors:

Cllr Kenny commented that the protection of verges should be sensibly thought through and not a blanket approach. Careful consideration was needed to ensure that 'wilding' did not risk highways safety for traffic and other users.

Cllr Livingstone responded that there were areas which did not need to be so immaculately clipped and that engagement with Wilder Horsham was necessary to get the best outcome. Cllr Kenny pointed out concerns that the protection of verges was already being ignored by contractors and was likely to continue despite the 'wilder' initiative.

Cllr Court reported that the Parish Council was already doing what Cllr Livingstone had requested. As the Lead for Grass Cutting/Nature Friendly Verges, she had contacted WSCC for a review of grass cutting in the parish's open spaces. She had also confirmed with

Cllr Livingstone that she would be the Parish Council's representative to feedback on any meetings she attends about the grass verges with WSCC and HDC.

Cllr Livingstone thanked Councillors and that hopefully things could get moving once people return after the August holiday.

Cllr Bayley commented that fears about the district housing requirement was mostly because there did not appear to be a co-ordinated approach to all the accompanying ancillary facilities on developments. He asked that if the Parish Council could find out from HDC on what is proposed for doctors surgeries, schools, dentists and other supporting facilities, then people could be a lot happier. But the reality was that developers were going ahead without these being integrated.

Cllr Livingstone shared his disappointment as it was important that the infrastructure need to be in place. He had seen signs of this starting to happen, with developers wanting to propose new schools and doctors' surgeries. He gave an example in north Horsham where the Bohunt school was being built in advance of a housing development. He recognized the need to ensure service facilities and accompanying infrastructure is in place, and that the forthcoming Regulation 19 of the Local Plan next month will help to address the points raised.

The Chairman raised concerns about the selection process of the Bohunt school and the potential for local children to lose out on places to children in Crawley. Cllr Livingston responded that he was unable to comment on behalf of WSCC and that this would likely be a matter to raise with the Cabinet member with a responsibility for education.

The Chairman informed Cllr Livingstone that only 3 members voted on the Coombe Cottage application at the Parish Council's recent Planning Committee meeting, with 2 votes carried in favour of the proposed 4-bedroom house. The neighbourhood plan was a 44-page document and he was not aware that all members had read this and understood its implications for the proposal.

Standing Orders Suspended

262-23/24

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman moved to report on this item as he had mislaid his papers earlier in the meeting.

The Chairman announced that the meeting would focus strongly on projects in the Parish Plan and what can be done to make the parish a better place to live.

He explained that enormous effort had been invested by the previous Parish Council to get the Mannings Heath playground built and that it was an amazing example of public service. He acknowledged that not everyone was pleased with the playground but the majority were. The Council had pursued some modifications but he was advised by the insurers that any changes to the equipment would not be covered by Public Liability. He reported that the Council had a duty to act responsibly to have this in place so that the playground could remain open to residents.

Cllr Catterall raised a point of order that the report presented the Chairman's personal views as those of The Council's. The Chairman reported that it was fact.

There were several interruptions from the public and the Chairman reminded them that the public session had ended.

Cllr Bayley queried why the playground matter was being raised under the Chairman's announcements and not tabled on the agenda for discussion. He proposed an extraordinary meeting to address the issues. The motion was considered under item 270-23/24 for matters to be raised at the next meeting.

Standing Orders reinstated

263-23/24

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

The Chairman reported on an email from a resident about some of the decisions of the Planning Committee at its last meeting. The item was noted.

264-23/24

PLANNING MATTERS

1) DC/23/1491 – The Rectory, Nuthurst Street, Nuthurst RH13 6LH

Works to tree in a conversation area.

The Chairman reported that one of the Tree Wardens had raised no issues to proposed surgery to the cherry tree. Cllr Catterall raised a point of order to ask why the application was not being discussed at a Planning Committee Meeting. The Chairman explained that it would normally be tabled on the committee agenda if it was within the consultation period. It was **RESOLVED** to make **NO OBJECTION** to application.

2) Planning updates

The following updates were reported by the Chairman and noted:

- the Mannings Heath Golf Club has withdrawn its application for the barn

The following longstanding planning applications had not yet been determined by Horsham District Council:

- The winery and restaurant at Mill Farm by Mannings Heath Golf Club (2019)
- The roadway to the Vineyard and Barn at Mannings Heath Golf Club (2022)
- An eco house at Holm Farm Orchard, Mannings Heath in 2022

3) Consideration of Membership of the Planning Committee

The Chairman reported that the Planning Committee would benefit from more members. Cllr Catterall expressed an interest in joining once he had undergone planning training. The Chairman thanked Cllr Catterall and that he was waiting to find out if Cllr Oswell-Penton wanted to join too. The Locum Clerk advised of online planning training for Councillors offered by Mulberry & Co from around £60 per candidate. Cllr Court reported that a session was coming up on 14th September. It was **RESOLVED** to defer co-option of new members to the next Council meeting and to make arrangements for Cllr Catterall to attend a planning course within the agreed budget.

4) Local Planning

Cllr Livingstone confirmed his willingness to give a short talk on local planning policies to the Councillors. He suggested the Council invites the former Chairman Owen Hydes to assist. Cllr Court suggested that a qualified HDC planning officer should also attend.

Cllr Livingstone advised that it was unlikely they could help as they were extremely busy with the Local Plan. Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to make arrangements with invitees for a training session to be held at the Copsale hall on a date to be confirmed.

265-23/24

SCHEME OF DELEGATION: TO REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR URGENT MATTERS

The Council reviewed its Scheme of Delegation and proposals to delegate the Clerk's function in her absence, including action of approved payments.

A copy of the following schedule with invoices totalling **£7,184.90** was circulated before the meeting by Cllr Court, prepared by the Clerk for approval:

PAYMENTS 20/07/2023 - 16/08/2023

Invoice date	Invoice No	Chq No/Ref	Payee	Details	Gross
31/03/2023	20988	2270	Mulberry & Co	Locum Clerk March 2023 meeting	307.20
07/07/2023	51236	2270	Mulberry & Co	Training	96.00
21/06/2023	Z2300577	2271	Information Commissioner's Office	GDPR reg fee	40.00
20/07/2023	1110	2272	Paul Richards	Locum Clerk Fees July 2023 meeting	292.60
03/08/2023	23.097	2273	Mannings Heath Community Council	Hall hire 19/07/2023	25.00
01/08/2023	23993	2274	NetCom IT Solutions	IT Support August 2023	39.60
29/06/2023	8001693516	2275	West Sussex County Council	Clerks Salary June 2023	2,926.00
25/07/2023	8001698854	2275	West Sussex County Council	Clerks Salary July 2023	2,926.00
19/07/2023	36775	2276	Mills & Sons Ltd (Horsham Fencing)	Playground fence repairs	384.00
16/08/2023	Various	2277	Viking Office (UK) Ltd	Outstanding invoices & late payment fee	148.50
TOTAL					7,184.90

The Council considered the following proposals:

- To engage a Locum Clerk for the interim during the Clerk's absence. Terms to be agreed via email with the Council, within the adopted budget and to be ratified at the next meeting;
- To delegate authority to the Chairman in consultation with the Vice-Chairman and Cllr Bayley, in the interim to act in the Clerk's absence on day-to-day administration and routine correspondence. This is excepting matters expressly reserved to the Council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or Financial Regulations. All members to be kept informed by email.
- To **Approve** the July schedule of invoices totalling **£7,184.90** for payment as per the Council's contractual obligations and agreed within budget. To be ratified at the next meeting and reported in the minutes.
- To move to vary the Council's payment controls on this one-time basis, in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, to allow payments of the July schedule of invoices to be authorised by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman who are the Council's signatories and most senior members.
- To Agree that no new payments are to be made without agreement by the Council.
- The addition of further banking signatories to be tabled as an agenda item for consideration at the Council's next Finance meeting.
- All delegated decisions will be reported at the next available Full Council Meeting.
- The Scheme of Delegation to be reviewed as and when required. Delegated powers to cease at the next meeting in agreement of the Council.

Following a discussion and the Locum Clerk's advice, the Chairman moved acceptance of the proposals. Seconded by Cllr Catterall. It was **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** the motion.

and chairs

The Chairman referred members to the adopted grants policy on the Council's website and application from Copsale Hall for £1,500. Councillors reported that they had not received the application from the Chairman. It was **RESOLVED** by the Council to defer this item to the next Finance Committee meeting. Application to be emailed to all.

Standing Orders suspended

2) To Consider the Clerk's expenses claim

The Chairman moved to change the order of business of this item to the end of the Meeting; and to exclude the Press and Public from this item of business in accordance with Standing Orders 3d due to staffing matters which may involve disclosure of personal or privileged information which would be inappropriate to put in the public domain. Seconded by Cllr Kenny. It was **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** both motions.

Standing Orders reinstated.

267-23/24

LOCAL ASSOCIATION, OTHER BODIES AND TRAINING REPORTS

Cllr Court reported on the Horsham Association of Local Council's (HALC) AGM followed by its annual face to face meeting with Horsham District Council on 26th July 2023 including the following:

- HALC had full membership with all parishes in the Horsham district, giving more force to joint representations on important local issues.
- HDC was asked to come back to the parishes once it is ready to present the proposed Local Plan, anticipated in September.
- Several HALC Parish members raised concerns about the interpretation of neighbourhood plans by developers and officers in supporting development proposals.
- HDC's new Leader Cllr Martin Boffey introduced himself and set out their main objectives including the Local Plan and fighting Climate Change.
- Helen Peacock, HDC's Environmental Co-ordinator, gave a presentation on the Wilder Horsham project and other environmental initiatives.

Cllr Court reported that it had been a good meeting and that she would circulate the minutes on request when they are available. The Chairman thanked Cllr Court for her report.

268-23/24

To plan for progressing the Parish Plan and to allocate Councillors to take forward the following important projects

The Chairman invited Councillors to take forward a project. Each item was discussed and it was **RESOLVED to AGREE** the following Councillors:

- 1) To make further progress with a pedestrian crossing on the A281 to enable Mannings Heath residents to safely cross the A281 to get to the only shop and post office in the village at Elite Garage – *Cllr Bayley*
- 2) To make further progress on improving the visibility for pedestrians crossing the A281 at Monks Gate from the bus stop – *Cllr Bayley*.
- 3) To make further progress with the School Safety Zone outside St Andrew's School – *The Chairman*

- 4) To progress the original application for 30mph limit on Copsale Lane/Bar Lane -
The Chairman and Cllr Kenny
- 5) To include a new item – to reduce the Parish Council’s electricity costs and help mitigate climate change by reducing the hours that the Parish Council’s street-lights are in operation – *Cllr Catterall*.

269-23/24

OPEN SPACES: To note the monthly playground inspection report

The Chairman reported no issues in his recent visual inspection of the Mannings Heath playground. He confirmed that minor repairs for issues raised at the last meeting had been satisfactorily completed. He had not found any ‘splintering’ of the new timber and would monitor as required in the recent RoSPA Inspection Report.

Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** to note the Chairman’s inspection report and to **AGREE** the following:

- a copy of the RoSPA inspection is shared with Wicksteed as high priority so that issues can be addressed within the equipment’s warranty period;
- to check the Council’s insurance policy on the requirement for frequency of inspections;
- to consider HDC’s play inspection training on 14th November and nominations of further volunteers to conduct the inspections. This item to be tabled on the agenda of the next appropriate Committee meeting.

270-23/24

Matters raised by Councillors to be referred to on the next agenda

Standing Orders suspended

Cllr Bayley moved that an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council is held on Monday 21st August 2023, seconded by Cllr Catterall for the following urgent matters:

- To respond to each of the points raised in the internal audit report
- To discuss possible solutions and consider action on concerns raised about the Mannings Heath Playground. It was noted that the Council was in the process of seeking input from the contractor, RoSPA and the insurance company as agreed at the last Full Council meeting.
- To discuss the dangers of the Champions Gate Crossing and consider action.

The Chairman agreed to call the meeting and proposed to amend the motion for it to be held on **Thursday 24 August 2023, 4.30pm at Copsale Village Hall**.

It was **RESOLVED to AGREE** the motion as amended. Cllr Bayley would consult the Chairman on a draft agenda. Advice on the agenda would be sought from a Locum/interim Clerk.

Standing Orders reinstated

271-23/24

Date of next Full Council Meeting

It was **RESOLVED to NOTE** that the next Ordinary Council Meeting will be held at Mannings Heath Village Hall on **Wednesday 20 September 2023 commencing at 7.30pm**.

The Press and Public were excluded from the following confidential session as agreed under Minute Item 266-23/24 . None present.

272-23/24

Staff Expenses Claim

A claim for staff expenses totally **£175.51** for the period 12 May to 19 July 2023 was discussed. It was **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** the expenses totalling of £169.66; and to consider agreement of a £5.85 mileage claim for 14 July pending additional information from the Clerk.

The meeting closed at 10.10pm.

.....

.....

Chairman of the Parish Council

Date

