

WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Warbleton Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 17 October 2019 in the Village Hall , Bodle Street Green.

Present: Councillors – B. Whitton , A Long, Mrs C Davies, , M Smythe, R Iremonger, R Reading, S Williamson,

Wealden District Councillor – Councillor Bowdler

East Sussex County Councillor – none

Clerk – Mrs M Smith

Members of the Public - Five members of the public present.

19/082 Apologies for Absence - Councillor Mrs K Cook, Mrs P Velten, C Wells.
ESCC Councillor Bentley.

19/083 Declarations of interest – None

19/084 Minutes -

That the amended Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th July 2019 be agreed and signed proposed Councillor Iremonger seconded Councillor Reading carried unanimously and signed. That the minutes from Parish Council meeting held on 19 September 2019 having been previously circulated were proposed by Councillor Davies and seconded by Councillor Smythe agreed unanimously and signed.

19/085 Matters Arising – none

19/086 Public Adjournment – Mr Bysouth addressed the meeting regarding positioning of a new bench that he had built. He would like to position it in Blackdown Lane /Forest Lane. Punnetts Town within Warbleton Parish. The chairman thanked Mr Bysouth on behalf of the Parish Council and advised him to contact Wealden District Council Councillor Bowdler regarding positioning of bench and any permissions that may be required.

Revd Manning reported a broken manhole cover opposite her property on the Cowbeech Road. Councillor Bowdler to report this to ESCC.

Julia Desch raised further concerns regarding the conservation area verges – only moderate cuts should be done. She had contacted James Newmark regarding this. It was agreed that Julia and James attend a Full Parish Council Meeting in the New Year for an informed decision to be made by Parish Council. It was suggested that the new highway steward contact Julia regarding cutting required. It was also suggested that Julia contact Nigel Mckeeman of The Village Leaf to publish details to ensure more people are aware of the wildlife conservation projects. Councillor Long suggested forming an Advisory Committee to which Julia Desch would be invited to join.

The Chairman thanked Julia for attending this meeting and hoped that this matter could be moved forward in the near future.

Julia then left the meeting.

Due to Councillor Davies having to leave the meeting at 8.20 the agenda item 7 was discussed:

19/087 Clerks Report: to report and act upon correspondence received
Correspondence received regarding Standing Orders and Governance

Councillor Williamson responded to correspondence received and issues raised about governance and finance matters. He welcomed the opportunity to discuss governance of financial matters but it was also important to appreciate that a new Council had formed in May and that many issues preceded this date; he did not want to second guess what discussions or debates had been held at that time or why certain conclusions had been reached. He accepted that there appeared to be some inconsistencies and that the minutes did not clarify the reasons.

Cllr Williamson said he had no issues about the budget for 2019/20. The budget for 2019/20 had been proposed by the Finance Committee in December 2018 and formally discussed and approved by a Parish Council in January 2019. He accepted that the Council minutes only reflected the agreement about the precept.

Cllr Williamson set out the basis for the accounts/records presented to the Council. He said a Finance Statement was prepared each month and that all payments are approved by the Council. The Finance Statement contains the bank balances and these are checked and reconciled by the Chairman of the Finance Committee at least quarterly. Bank statements are available at each Parish Council meeting for inspection by councillors.

Cllr Williamson said he had already proposed and the Council had accepted minor changes to the Finance Statements and that he would be conducting a full review at a Finance Committee prior to submitting to the Council for adoption for 2020/21.

Cllr Williamson said that it had been the practice in recent years to hold a Finance Committee once each year; the last one was in December 2018. The next would be in November or December 2019 and he expected the minutes to be shared with the Full Parish Council and published.

Cllr Williamson said that he had raised at an earlier Council meeting that there were parts of the website that were not up to date and apologised for not following this through. He said that transparency and communication were essential. He had looked at other Councils' websites and felt there was scope for improvement.

Cllr Williamson referred to questions about the 2018/19 Finance Statements published on the website. The budget was published but some items had been omitted. He said that the Finance Statement presented to Councillors each month was the key document. He also noted that there were things that changed in the year – for example, the Council did not know when or how much the CIL payments would be received from Wealden and this would mean changes during the year.

In terms of the uncommitted reserves, he had previously reported that he felt the figure needed reviewing. At this meeting he had provided a reconciliation to councillors and recommended a change in the stated reserves.

In concluding, Cllr Williamson said that good governance was very important and there was a need for all councillors to re-read, understand and follow the Standing Orders. Minutes needed to be produced more timely and he had a personal expectation that a draft would be available for review within a week of a meeting. He noted that the Parish Clerk had said that an audit had been done, but councillors needed to see the report as this had not been shared. He also noted that the AGAR return had not been shared with Council and it was essential that councillors have clarity on what had been done.

Councillor Long reported that the CIL meeting had been held prior to this meeting but as the agenda had not been published, it had taken the form of a working group rather than a committee meeting. These issues needed to be avoided in the future.

Councillor Long suggested that a meeting be held to address governance and accountability and proposed the setting up of a working group with all Councillors to set a way forward, this was seconded by Councillor Smythe and agreed and carried unanimously

Councillor Smythe suggested that the meeting should not be attended by the Parish Clerk or Chairman, as they are too close to the issues to be discussed.

It was proposed by Councillor Long and seconded by Councillor Smythe that both the Chairman Bryan Whitton and the Parish Clerk not attend this meeting.

19/088 Reports –

(a) East Sussex County Council – No report available.

(b) Wealden District Council – Councillor Bowlder updated the meeting. Wealden DC are committed in reducing carbon footprint. No response received from Planning Inspectorate on Local Plan. Update on Three Cups pub – pub is closed; officers sympathetic to applicants planning application, no further details.

(c) The Dunn Village Hall – Councillor Davies reported she was unable to attend recent meeting. The Christmas Fair is on 30 November 2019.

(d) Bodle Street Green Village Hall - Councillor Whitton updated with the report sent by Councillor Velten as follows:

On 28th September a Murder Mystery evening was held with a two course supper included. It was a sell out and a great success, much enjoyed by all.

On Sunday 6th October there was a rally for steam engines and old tractors, in aid of charity for Prostate Cancer. Great fun, with trailer rides for all the family and dogs around the village.

The Film Club will be showing Molly's Game on Friday 25th October and rehearsals for our Christmas Pantomime are well on their way.

(e) Rights of Way - Councillor Reading nothing to report.

f) Planning and General Purpose Committee - Councillor Iremonger reported no applications received recently.

g) Hedgerow Committee – None

h) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – Councillor Iremonger agreed to give consideration to attend these meetings as Warbleton Parish Council representative.

(i) Emergency Planning – None

(j) Community Infrastructure Fund Committee - Councillor Davies reported that the first CIL meeting had been held although it had to be a working group and all details of expenditure are being looked at with a view to reconciling the account. Committee moving forward to discuss spending. Awaiting Licence for the Village Gates and Notice board at Bodle Street Green. The next meeting will be prior to the Parish Council meeting in November.

19/089 Clerks report and Correspondence

Correspondence received had been previously circulated to all Councillors.
Correspondence received regarding Standing Orders and Governance
See item 19/087 above.

19/090 Finance

The De Fib agreement to be entered into with Heathfield and Waldron First Responders is to be published within the parish for any comments and will be on the agenda for November 2019 Full Parish Council meeting.

Councillor Williamson, outlined the Finance Statement payment details dated 17 October 2019, as circulated. Cllr Williamson proposed restating the reserves as £16427.04 . All items budgeted were on track.

The following payments were proposed by Councillor Williamson and seconded by Councillor Long agreed and carried unanimously.

Approved Payments for 17 October 2019

Clerks Salary and Expenses –	513.05	Finger Post – Arm Mel Taylor	27.00
J Austin RAF memorial	19.50	Insurance BHIB	582.97
Word press website BACS	27.59	WDC Elections from May	1009.04
St Marys Churchyard Maintenance	600.00	St Johns PCC Churchyard maintenance	325.00

19/090 Items Considered Urgent by the Chairman –

Councillor Reading requested that the Heathfield and Waldron First Responders attend a Parish Council Meeting to keep the parish up to date with details.

19/091 Date of Next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Thursday 21 November 2019 in The Dunn Village Hall, Rushlake Green.

The Meeting Closed at 9.10pm

Signed Chairman

Date