



NUTHURST PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 19th July 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, Cllr S Catterall, Cllr K McGovern, & Cllr M Oswell-Penton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Richards (Locum Clerk) and 32 members of the public.

241-23/24 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **noted** there were no absences.

242-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

243-23/24 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

- Cllr Kenny referred to item 236-23/24 relating to the commissioning of an interim internal audit. The Clerk was asked to comment and advised that this matter should be raised at item 247-23/24; and
- Cllr McGovern advised on multiple typographical errors contained within the draft. The Clerk was asked to comment and advised that, due to the large number of amendments that were required, Members could defer approval of the draft minutes until the next meeting when a 'clean' set of minutes would be produced. This was **AGREED**;

244-23/24 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 asked why a letter he had sent to the Clerk for distribution to Councillors had not been circulated. The Chairman advised that this matter was not on the agenda but allowed to resident to ask his question;
- A resident questioned why an invoice he had sent had not been paid. The Clerk was asked to advise the resident that the invoice is due for approval at item 227-23/24;
- A resident reported that communications relating to the playground in Mannings Heath from many residents had not been circulated to the councillors;
- A resident questioned why he could not comment further on the playground during the debate on item 251-23/24. The Clerk was asked to comment and advised that, as per Standing Orders, a parish council meeting is a meeting held in public and is not a public meeting. Once the public session had concluded, the public were not permitted to participate or comment further. Another resident questioned this advice. The Clerk further advised the Standing Orders adopted by the parish council are used by over 9,000 parish and town council across the country and that the parish council had not, unilaterally, imposed this Standing Order;
- A resident congratulated the parish council on the recent installation of the new playground and thought it would be a shame if the roof was removed from one part of the equipment;

- A resident questioned how the parish council could discuss the playground issue without having received the views from the community sent previously;
- A resident supported the playground installation but recognised and sympathised that not all residents were in favour of it. The resident thought the installation was taller than expected. The Chairman advised that, during the public consultation and exhibition, no adverse comments were received regarding the plans. A resident disagreed and stated that an artist impression of the new facility, displayed at the exhibition, was different from the actual installation;
- A resident was concerned that those residents who were either for or against the playground should better understand the views of others;
- A resident considered the new playground to be an asset to the community but understood the point of view of others. He suggested that a simple solution to reduce the height of the structure be examined;
- A resident thanked the parish council for the installation of the new playground but also understood the views of those opposed to the height of the structure. The resident suggested that the functionality of the equipment be reviewed with a decision made on how best to move forward; and
- A resident questioned the public liability implications for the new playground. The Chairman advised that had been in contact with the contractor, RoSPA & the parish council's insurance company and that an appropriate level of public liability insurance is held by the parish council, but may not be covered if altered in some way.

245-23/24 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS, REDACTED

246-23/24 DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

Cllr Nigel Jupp (WSCC Councillor) provided an update for councillors and residents:

- The QE2 SEND school in Horsham had received a successful OFSTED "outstanding" result. WSCC had set aside additional sums to increase capacity at the school;
- The County Council had received payments from the Home Office to house refugees from Afghanistan in hotel accommodation in the north of the County. These arrangements are due to cease on 31st August 2023. WSCC had made provision to relocate these refugees into new accommodation (not hotels); and
- WSCC has committed over £4.5m to repair potholes.

Cllr Dennis Livingstone (Ward Councillor for Nuthurst & Lower Beeding) provided an update for councillors and residents:

- The review of the draft new Local Plan continues. He had visited all the suggested Strategic Development Sites as part of this review. Not included in the list of Sites is the development at Buck Barn. He stressed, however, the Government requirement for HDC to build over 900 new dwellings per year;
- HDC's commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030 had been supplemented by a new Climate Action Strategy initiative. Public consultation via the HDC website and a survey are now available for residents to comment upon;
- The Wilder Horsham project has announced a 5 year plan with an objective to protect the wildlife across the District, e.g. wildlife corridors;
- The planning issue of water neutrality continues to cause concern but he is keen that any resolution does not have a detrimental impact on Neighbourhood Plans such as the 'made' plan for Nuthurst; and
- The new Horsham Fire Station and Training Centre is due to open providing a state of the art facility for the district.

Cllr Catterall asked if the new Local Plan would incorporate the Nuthurst Neighbourhood Plan. HDC Cllr Livingstone advised, as the parish has a 'made' plan, there would be little impact on it.

Cllr Bayley asked when the draft Local Plan would be produced and what defences HDC had against speculative development. HDC Cllr Livingstone reported that HDC does not have a 5 year land supply as required. New developments are currently being held back the water neutrality issues. The draft Local Plan should be ready for the section 19 public consultation by September 2023.

247-23/24

FINANCES

- a) **To note the Income/Expenditure Income Schedule @ 14/07/2023** – The Chairman advised that the papers had not been made available to the public prior to the meeting and that the Clerk was not available to answer any question on the reports – the Schedule was noted.
- b) **To approve the schedule of invoices for payment in July 2023** – Cllr McGovern queried who had authorised the payment related to the interim audit. The Clerk was asked to comment and advised that the Clerk's delegated authority would allow for such services to be procured. The Schedule was approved.
- c) **To review and approve the Internal Audit Interim Report for 2023/2024 dated 10/07/2023** – the Chairman reported that the report had only been circulated a few days before the meeting. Report was approved.
- d) **To approve page 15 of the Internal Audit Report – Council's Comments** – it was **AGREED** that Members need to respond to each of the points raised at a later date.
- e) **To approve the 2022/2023 Annual Governance Statement to be duly signed by the Chair & the Clerk** – Members approved the Statement and asked that the Chairman and Clerk sign it.
- f) **To approve the 2022/2023 AGAR to be duly signed by the Chair & the Clerk** - Members approved the Statement and asked that the Chairman and Clerk sign it.

248-23/24

REVIEW NUTHURST PARISH COUNCIL POLICIES

The Chairman advised that the papers had not been made available to the public prior to the meeting.

- a) **To review and approve the Nuthurst Parish Council Policies** – after review and discussion, it was **AGREED**, by majority, to approve all the unamended policies (including the Financial Regulations). The amended policies are to be commented upon by the Members
- b) **To review and confirm Councillor membership of the Staffing Committee** – Cllrs McGovern, Bryant, Court, Bayley and Kenny were nominated.
- c) **To review and confirm Councillor membership of the Finance Committee** – Cllrs Catterall, Court, Bayley and Kenny.
- d) **To nominate a member of the Finance Committee to be another bank signatory** – this item was deferred and passed to the next Finance Sub-Committee.

249-23/24

PLANNING MATTERS

DC/23/1175 - Horsham Golf Park Denne Park Horsham

Members noted the circa 500 letters of objection to this proposal. After review and discussion, Member voted, unanimously, to **OBJECT** to the application on the following material considerations:

- **Overdevelopment** - the proposal will result in the loss of open green spaces with resultant damage to the ecosystem. The site is outside the recognised built-up area boundary;

- **Access** - the proposal lists just one access route for emergency services. This is inadequate and any additional access points will cause significant issues and congestion in our parish;
- **Loss of amenities** - Loss of a unique landscape; this complex biodiversity could never be replaced;
- **Infrastructure** - the plans lack sufficient proposals to address the infrastructure needs of the development including education, transport, and healthcare; and
- **Water neutrality** - The proposals for water extraction and water neutrality are unclear. There is no firm evidence to support the claims made by the developer.

250-23/24

CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/DECISIONS (for noting only)

- The Parish Clerk to confirm pending training sessions and note any further requests for training – the Locum Clerk reminded Members of the training scheduled for Thursday 27th July 2023.
- The Parish Clerk asks for pre-approval to purchase a voice recorder as a Parish Council asset (estimated cost £40) – Members did not approve the request and advised that the recently purchased parish mobile phone be used instead.

251-23/24

OPEN SPACES IN THE PARISH

- a) To note an update regarding the repairs to Mannings Heath Playground – it was noted that the repairs had been completed.
- b) To discuss the RoSPA Playground Report received 14/07/2023 – the Chairman advised that a satisfactory report had been received with just a few minor issues that were being addressed. Cllr Catterall suggested that the parish record & track inspections & issues with the playground. The Chairman advised that he performs the required visual checks. It was **AGREED** that the weekly, monthly and annual report inspections & issues be tracked on a schedule to be prepared by the Clerk.
- c) To discuss any outstanding concerns raised by residents regarding the Playground installation with the view to approving any decision as to reaching a resolution or agreement as to any next steps of.
 - Members noted the strong feelings of those residents who supported the installation of the new playground and those that objected (mainly due to the height of the installation). It was recognised that in attempting to resolve the concerns of each group, some residents may be disappointed in any eventual outcome;
 - The Chairman repeated earlier comments that no adverse comments had been received during public consultation or the exhibition regarding the installation. He added that over 30 emails of support had been received;
 - During the debate, members of the public continually interrupted the proceedings. The Clerk was asked to advise those attending that the parish council was not a public meeting and the Chairman would suspend proceedings should further interruptions be made; and
 - After further review and discussion it was **AGREED** to consult with residents about possible solutions that would not diminish or compromise the benefits of the new installation. Input from the contractor, RoSPA and the insurance company would also be sought to allow for their recommendations.
- d) To note the design of the new playground signage will be scheduled for discussion at the August 2023 Parish Council meeting to allow any new councillors to review and contribute – noted and decision deferred to the August meeting.
- e) To note the need to review the Parish Council's grass cutting arrangements for 2024. Councillors to discuss the offer to review grass cutting arrangements for all open spaces to work with Steve Hill from Active Communities, WSCC Highways Partnership and to

nominate a Lead Councillor for Grass Cutting/Nature Friendly Verges to contact Steve Hill and report back to the Full Council for the August 2023 meeting – it was **AGREED** that Cllr Court would assume responsibility for this role and contact the WSCC officer.

252-23/24

PENSION SCHEME FOR THE CLERK

1. To approve the recommendation from the Staffing Committee, for the Parish Council to provide a Pension Scheme for the Parish Council employee, the Parish Clerk/RFO. To note. It was **AGREED** to pass this matter to the next Staffing Committee meeting.
2. To pass the resolution, below, if the Parish Council approves providing the Local Government Pension Scheme for the Clerk/RFO

RESOLUTION – *“Nuthurst Parish Council approves a resolution giving permission for the Parish Clerk/FRO, Rebecca Anderson, to join the Local Government Pension Scheme”.*

- Cllr Court understood that the first contract did refer to the LGPS scheme. The Chairman said that it did not, but he was not aware of the employer contribution rates or joining fee. The initial offer was a contribution of 8% via the NEST scheme. Cllr Oswell-Penton suggested that the email confirming the use of the LGPS scheme was a binding legal arrangement, that the misunderstanding regarding contribution levels should be acknowledged and that the Clerk join the LGPS scheme. The Chairman repeated that the contract signed by the Clerk had the pension provision page 6 missing;
- Members continued to discuss the implications of any contractual or legal arrangements and the Clerk was asked to advise on the Resolution process; and
- The formal resolution (at 2 above) was proposed by Cllr Bayley and seconded by Cllr Catterall. An amendment to this resolution was proposed by the Chairman. The amendment was that *“The parish council seek the appropriate advice in relation to the Clerk’s contract and the amendment made to it to include a LGPS pension provision”*. This amended resolution was seconded by Cllr Oswell-Penton. Members voted on the amended resolution. It was supported by four Members and therefore approved by majority.

253-23/24

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the next meeting will be the Full Council Meeting to be held on 16th August 2023 at Mannings Heath Village Hall commencing at 7.30pm. Cllr McGovern gave her advance apologies for not attending.

The meeting closed at 9:56pm.

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Chairman of the Parish Council

Date

