

WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the meeting of Warbleton Parish Council held on Thursday 23 November 2023 at Dunn Village Hall, Rushlake Green

1. **Attendance:** Councillors Andy Long (Chairman), Charlie Saunders (Vice-Chairman), Chris Wells, Beverley Saunders, Buster Ansell, Katy Whymark, Richard Whymark and Jeanne Peterson (Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Councillors Bruce Simpson, Bob Bowdler and Peter Sterling
It was resolved to accept the apologies as given
2. **Declarations of Interest**
 - 2.1. Cllr Long declared a prejudicial interest in item 10 and will leave the room during discussion
3. **Minutes**
 - 3.1. **It was resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 October 2023, were a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.
 - 3.2. There were no matters arising not covered on the agenda.
4. **Public Participation**

Five members of the public attended the meeting, three of whom indicated that they wished to speak. The following points were raised:

 - i. Reference was made to an earlier planning application regarding the proposed build of a new bungalow at the Little Harness site, with retention of the log cabin as a residential dwelling. Concerns raised were around the lack of compliance with building plans originally when the cabin was built. It was felt that the business is not viable to sustain the development or to warrant two residential dwellings on the plot.
It was confirmed that Warbleton Parish Council (WPC) had submitted its response to the application following discussion at its planning meeting held on 23 October 2023. It was suggested that should residents wish to make further representations on this application they should contact District Councillor Cornelia Usborne who is on the Wealden Planning Committee.
 - ii. Frequent loss of power in the parish is a problem and it appears that UK Power Networks are not maintaining their lines adequately. It was noted that WPC intends to look further into infrastructure problems at the next meeting through emergency & resilience planning.
Tree & hedge cutting is another contentious area, with some County initiatives encouraging environmentally friendly growth while road side over-growth can cause hazards to public safety.
 - iii. Information was shared about the Rushlake Green Little Arts Festival planned for August 2024. It will be a low cost high impact event, organised by and for local people. Plans are already advanced for an array of activities such as artists, musicians, crafts, and the event will be extensively publicised.
 - 4.1 The clerk's report made in response to the public queries from the 26 October 2023 meeting had been circulated and there were no questions.

5. Reports

- 5.1. **County Councillor Bob Bowdler** was unable to attend the meeting: A monthly report had been circulated and there were no questions.
- 5.2. **District Councillors Cornelia Osborne & Greg Collins** were unable to attend the meeting: A written report had been circulated. It was noted to ask District Councillors to include in future, a monthly update on the position regarding the derelict Three Cups Public House. It is a listed building, now on the "at risk" register, and trees on the land are in a dangerous state. Estate ownership is yet to be confirmed, and any interest in getting involved to apply pressure to move things along must be via Wealden District Council (WDC).
- 5.3. **PCSO Catherine Gilling** was unable to attend the meeting: There were two minor items to note, one being an injured deer and the other a large pothole at Three Cups on the main road which caused damage to several cars. This has now been dealt with.
- 5.4. **Parish Councillors:**
Cllr Beverley Saunders reported back from her attendance as WPC representative at the Dunn Village Hall Committee Meeting:
 - i. The damp problem in the cellar is ongoing and cannot currently be used.
 - ii. Fundraising ideas had been agreed to boost income in the face of a steep electricity bill and other increased costs.
 - iii. The hall had been a successful congregation point during recent bad weather. The Hall Committee agreed that a change-over switch is a good idea but could not fund that themselves.
 - iv. It was hoped that the grant from WPC deferred from January could soon be paid.
 - v. The Committee AGM will be held on Monday 4 December 2023.**Cllr Chris Wells** requested that his declared interest noted in the 24 October 2023 Planning Committee minutes Item 2 be changed from pecuniary to prejudicial.
- 5.5. **Parish Clerk:** A written report had been circulated and there were no questions.
- 5.6. **Wild about Warbleton:** The verge survey report 2023 had been circulated and noted.

6. Committee matters

- 6.1. The proceedings of the following committee meetings were noted:
 - i. Planning & Development – approved minutes of the 24 October 2023 and draft minutes of 14 November 2023 meetings had been circulated. Corrections to be made to the 14 November document were noted by the clerk
- 6.2. **It was resolved** that a Staffing Committee be appointed to enable the council to deal effectively with employment matters. It was agreed that the committee should consist of four members and the following Councillors were appointed: Andy Long, Chris Wells, Richard Whymark and Katy Whymark. A chair of the committee is yet to be appointed. The draft Terms of Reference had been circulated and were agreed.
- 6.3. It was noted that the Scheme of Delegation and Standing Orders will be updated to reflect the addition of a Staffing Committee and both revised documents will be presented at the January meeting for approval.

7. Finance

- 7.1. **It was resolved** to authorise the payment of November bills (payment list as circulated).
- 7.2. The bank reconciliations for September and October were received and noted, also the budget monitor & reserve movements to date.
The question of risk was raised regarding consequences should signatories or clerk not be available to manage the online payment process - are existing arrangements robust enough? The clerk will draft an Online Banking Policy to be discussed at the January meeting.
- 7.3. **It was resolved** to nominate Cllr Katy Whymark as a signatory to the council's bank account. An additional signatory is still required and discussion on that will be deferred to the January meeting

- 7.4 **It was resolved to** accept the draft budget subject to the following considerations:
- Increased costs incurred by Dunn Village Hall and Bodle Street Village Hall – suggested 25% increase in hiring of halls contribution from council. Potential to be discussed with Hall Committees to look into solar panels funded by CIL funds & external grants to reduce heating costs.
 - Asset maintenance – to be updated once annual check has taken place
 - Discretionary grants – to be estimated at around £3000 but subject to and agreed once applications are assessed at the January meeting
 - Increase in estimated clerk overtime hours from 15 to 50 over the year to take into account peak periods of work e.g. end of year accounts.
 - Election expenses – advised provision £2000 to be built up over four years
 - Replacement council computer – suggested earmarked reserve built up over next two years
 - Addition of current IT costs i.e. annual computer maintenance and website subscription

The clerk will revise the draft budget for presentation at the January meeting.

- 7.5 It was noted that an asset check will take place before the January meeting of the council to inform the budget of any likely repairs due in the following year. Date to be agreed via email.

8. Grant awards

- 8.1 **It was resolved** to now go ahead and make the grant payments agreed at the January meeting which had been deferred due to potential election costs.
- 8.2 **It was resolved** to re-open the WPC grant scheme and extend the application window until 15 January 2024. Applications are welcome and will be considered at the council meeting on 25 January 2024.

9. Parish maintenance

- 9.1 **It was resolved** that reduced costs for advertising in the village shop be sought, also that a quote for a replacement board be arranged. Comparisons for costing and benefits of each will be reviewed at the January meeting.
- 9.2 Finger posts update: A full assessment and “mapping” exercise had been carried out of all 23 finger posts in the parish. While some need rubbing down and repainting, two need more urgent attention Nos: 23 (priority) and 7. The clerk was asked to obtain repair quotes and investigate whether further match funding could be applied for via ESCC.
- 9.3 **It was resolved** to accept the quote to supply and fit a single but larger gate to replace the existing kissing gate. The single gate will improve accessibility and it was agreed that CIL funds could be used to finance the project.

10. Assets of Community Value (ACV) Applications – Cllr Andy Long left the meeting and Vice-Chair Charlie Saunders took the Chair

ACV applications, if granted, offer a degree of protection to parish buildings and land if they come up for sale. It allows a longer length of time before a sale can be agreed to enable local community groups/or individual, should they decide, to assemble a bid to purchase the asset and can help to prevent change of use. It can be a safeguard to maintain local facilities.

- 10.1 The **White Horse Public House** in Bodle Street has an existing ACV license but it is due to run out shortly. **It was resolved** to re-register this facility as an ACV and the clerk was asked to investigate the process of renewal.
- 10.2 The ACV license for the **Horse and Groom Public House** has already expired. **It was resolved** to make a new application and the clerk was asked to obtain necessary paperwork.

Councillor Long rejoined the meeting and re-took position as Chair to the meeting

11. Urgent matters at the discretion of the Chairman for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda

- i. WPC WhatsApp Group – It was noted that this is an effective medium of communication between councillors at times of emergency and/or immediacy. However, all messages are available for public scrutiny if requested as a record of council communications in response to a Freedom of Information request. The clerk was asked to prepare a draft policy on social media use for consideration at the January meeting.
- ii. Emergency & Resilience Planning – There have been serious issues regarding communications with Highways around trees and hedging during recent bad weather. Also problems around water supply to villages. WPC is looking to develop an Emergency & Resilience plan to look at practical solutions within its own parish resources. Cllr Bruce Simpson will update the January meeting as to work carried out so far by the WPC, and the council also hopes to invite the Chairman of ESALC to a meeting as soon as he is free to attend to discuss potential collective regional solutions, Cllr Bob Boulder is liaising on that link.

12. Date of next meeting – Thursday 25 January 2024 at Dunn Village Hall, Rushlake Green 7pm

12.1 The decision on potential date for the parish assembly meeting was deferred for discussion in January.