

Minutes of a meeting of **WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL** held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 7.00pm remotely via zoom

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

Also present: Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk  
District Councillor Bob Bowdler  
Linda Butcher – Former Locum Clerk  
Four members of the public

**00102 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Chris Wells – Personal reasons

The Clerk advised all members that an amended agenda had very recently been distributed. The reasons for this were: a spelling mistake on 8.1, the invoice payable to WDC should show £62.5 in the first column (the amount before VAT). The payments to the village halls should be classed as grants.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Long declared a preudicial interest in one of the candidates for co-option due to an existing personal and business relationship. He advised the Council; the Vice-Chairman would chair agenda item 5 as a result.

Cllr Williamson declared a personal interest regarding the member of public who requested an investigation into the missing phone box at Bodle Street Green.

**MINUTES**

To **resolve** that the minutes of the ASM meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

**00103 RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the ASM meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

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

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Julia Desch spoke on behalf of the Warbleton Wildflower Group. She requested the Parish Council hold a 3-month consultative exhibition at the beginning of September in each village hall simultaneously, which the Wildflower Group would run. She highlighted legal obligations including the 206 Act which state that bio diversity has to be enhanced as part of policy or decision making. She does not feel the Parish Council has acted to halt the decline in bio diversity or have informed the wider community of changes

that need to take place. In order for this exhibition to run, a quick decision would need to be made. The Parish Council would need time to create a strategy to be put forward to East Sussex County Council in time to affect their cutting policies and route designation. The deadline for this is November. The village halls would also need to be booked.

Julia confirmed to the Chairman she has already submitted a draft plan to Cllr Wells, Chairman of the Environment Committee.

The Chairman explained this request would be an agended item at the Environment Committee's next meeting. This committee will report and inform Full Council. The Chairman confirmed he will speak to Cllr Wells to arrange a meeting shortly in order to meet the tight deadline, hopefully in July. He does have concerns regarding Covid-19 and the halls current closure and how that will tie in with Julia's timeframe.

Julia also requested a site meeting regarding the deuteriation of Rushlake Green's green which the Chairman advised will be another item on the Environment Committee agenda.

The second member of the public did not wish to speak.

### **TO RECEIVE WRITTEN APPLICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF PARISH COUNCILLOR AND TO CO-OPT A CANDIDATE TO FILL THE EXISTING VACANCY**

Cllr Symthe thanked the two applicants for their interest in joining the Parish Council and he noted how encouraging it was the vacancy had attracted interest from two very well qualified people.

Cllr Symthe explained how the process would work to all attendees. Both applicants spoke to the Members elaborating on their application forms and the reasons why they would like to become a councillor.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions directly to the candidates. Cllr Symthe confirmed to Cllr Cook the predicial interest the Chairman had is a minor business interest and the family were direct neighbours who he knew well. It was noted that all Members felt both applicants were excellent candidates and were disappointed both could not be appointed. A vote for the new Councillor was taken

**000104 Resolved** Keith Graham as the new Councillor for Warbleton Parish Council.

Cllr Graham confirmed he will return The Declaration of Acceptance of Office, the Code of Conduct and Interest Forms within 28 days to the Clerk.

### **REPORTS**

#### To receive reports from District and County Councillors

All members had received a written report from Wealden District Councillor Bob Bowdler.

Wealden District Councillor Bowdler added to the report by saying the restrictions on Officers are now being lifted so they will be able to do site visits for planning applications.

Cllr Williamson requested help with a contact name for someone at Wealden regarding a software issue with the Parish Council's website. Wealden District Councillor Bob Bowdler will investigate.

#### To receive reports from Parish Councillors

Cllr Williamson had previously provided a Finance & GP Committee written report. He had nothing to add.

Cllr Smythe emphasised the importance of sharing the new website details with Parishioners to encourage more people to start visiting it.

Cllr Davies had also provided a written report on the Dunn Village Hall. She added she is looking forward to a new era for CIL and the Committee will be trying to get a process in place for making decisions on CIL spend in the future.

Cllr Velten reported on Bodle Street Green Village Hall. Maintenance work is still being done. Cooked meals being prepared in the village hall have decreased from weekly to bi-weekly. The new Union Jack flag which was erected for VE Day has vanished. Cllr Velten has been unable to contact the possible people who might have taken it down. The Pilates classes are re-commencing at the beginning of July.

Cllr Reading had nothing to report. He asked Members if they had any crime to report. The Chairman confirmed there had been an alcohol theft at the village store. But there was a satisfactory outcome reached. East and West Sussex Police have now started a combined approach to rural crime. There are now dedicated officers to tackle to this.

#### To receive reports from the Parish Clerk

**6.3.1. Zoom Policy.** The Clerk confirmed she had simplified the initial report sent to Members for discussion at the ASM. She had taken advice from other Clerks and looked at other parish websites. She invited comments from members on the report.

The Chairman requested the Clerk make the necessary allowances for Members who do not have available technology to check emails etc.

Cllr Williamson asked for the removal of the Members Standing paragraph as this does not apply to Warbleton Parish Council's Standing Orders.

Cllr Davies suggested we need to consider the possibility that when meetings return to the normal format i.e. face-to-face in the village halls, not every Councillor or members of the public might feel comfortable returning due to health reasons etc. She would like the Council to research if the zoom option could still be available for these people going forward. The Chairman agreed and suggested further investigation will be necessary. The item will be deferred for resolution at the next Full Council meeting in July.

**6.3.2. Internet Banking.** The Clerk referred to the report she had previously circulated to all Members. She added she had recently moved Horam Parish Council over to internet banking which took just over a month. As a result, she is confident with the process and what's involved. The Clerk is happy to train Councillors for payment authorisation. She also mentioned the current problems the Parish Council are having with trying to change the signatories on the bank mandate. If the bank rejects any cheques the Parish Council will incur charges. This cannot happen with online banking; the payments are instant and the process is quicker and smoother.

Cllr Reading was concerned about the security of the process. The Clerk confirmed that any signatories would receive a card and card reader and so would the Clerk. Once the Clerk has entered the payment nothing can happen until a signatory goes into the account and authorises the payment with their card on a separate machine. The Chairman asked for confirmation on the number of signatories required to process a payment online. The Clerk confirmed the bank only required one signatory to authorise the payments but all payments are authorised at Full Council. There was concern amongst Members that changes would be needed to policies as the signatories were being decreased from 2 to 1. The Former Locum Clerk confirmed the Parish Council will still be complying with its Financial regulations and Standing Orders as the payments will be authorised by two Councillors at Full Council before any payments will be released. The Chairman of Finance stated there needed to be controls in place that will be regularly monitored. The Clerk also confirmed the card that everyone would receive is not a payment card. It can only be used for checking the bank balance and either keying or authorising payments.

**000105** The Council **resolved** to begin the switch to internet banking

**6.3.3. Barclays Bank Mandate.** The Clerk confirmed that after further communication with Barclays they will no longer accept Cllr Well's signature as they feel it has changed over time. She advised that Cllr Well's will have to personally ring Barclays to confirm his own signature. Cllr Well's will also have to confirm the Clerk's address to them. He will also have to sign a further mandate form. When this is done, all the documents can be posted back to Barclays. Once they are in receipt of this information, it should only take a couple of days to get the account up and running. Whilst this process is ongoing, they have stopped all bank statements being sent out. There is also a chance the cheques signed last month will bounce as they were signed by Councillor Wells. The Clerk also confirmed Cllr Symthe's details have been processed by Barclays without a problem.

**6.3.4 Punnetts Town Bench.** The Clerk spoke to Highways on the 15.6.2020 and they confirmed all the necessary documentation had reached their enforcement team on the 9.6.2020. Highways now have to visit the site and decide if the location of the bench is appropriate. Covid-19 will cause a delay to this process and officers have only just received permission

to visit sites. They would update the Clerk in a few weeks. The Clerk stated she has a case reference number for the bench and will chase weekly.

**6.3.5. Asset Register.** The Clerk confirmed the Former Locum Clerk had started the Asset Register and it remains a work in progress. The Clerk will send a copy of the Asset Register as it stands to all Members and will welcome any information, they have on what is already listed and any assets that are owned by the Parish Council but are not on the list so far.

**6.3.6. Noticeboards and Bodle Street Green gates.** The Clerk has spoken to Highways after an initial email. The Highways Officer who visited Cllr Velten to discuss the position of the gates has since left. His computer has been wiped. As a result, the Parish Council will have to start again. The Clerk has updated Cllr Velten, who was very disappointed as the project has been ongoing for 3.5 years already. She will pass on any information she has on file. Once this information is received the Clerk can start the process. The Chairman requested that East Sussex County Councillor Bill Bentley be copied in on any emails sent and emphasis put on the urgency of the situation as the project will be funded from CIL.

Cllr Iremonger made reference to the fact the resolution for the gates was made some time ago and perhaps this project should be re-evaluated. Cllr Williamson added there is a time limit for CIL funds to be used by and suggested this could be discussed at the CIL Committee meeting on the 23.6.2020.

**6.3.7. Spring Hill Well.** Orchard Landscapes have a contract with the Parish Council to mow the Rushlake Green Village Green and to maintain the land at Spring Hill, Punnetts Town. Whilst working at Spring Hill they discovered that a resident had punctured a hole through the metal well cover to siphon water for their garden through two hose pipes. The Chairman has removed the water pipes and taken photos. There is now a hole in the metal cover which protects the Well Head. The Chairman stated it will be an item on the next Full Council agenda. In the meantime, he will investigate the costs associated with fixing the Well Head and he has already blocked the hole temporarily with a cone in order to make safe to the public. It is not a danger to life but injury could occur if a foot gets stuck.

Cllr Cook suggested the resident who damaged the Well cover should be contacted and asked to cover the cost of the repairs. The Chairman stated the well cover was corroded and would have needed replacing shortly. The Chairman did not feel it was a police matter. Cllr Powell suggested the Clerk should write a letter informing the resident the Parish Council are aware of what has taken place and will pursue the matter if any further damage is made to the existing cover or any new cover the Parish Council invests in.

**6.3.8. Warbleton Wildflower Group.** The Clerk is still researching how to co-opt a non-Member onto a Committee. The Clerk has had a conversation with the Chairman of the Environment Committee regarding Julia's possible

co-option. However, the first Environment Committee meeting is unlikely to take place until the end of July, beginning of August.

**6.3.9. Missing BT Phone Box** – The Clerk had an enquiry from a member of the public regarding the disappearance of the BT phone box outside the White Horse pub at Bodle Street Green in early 2020. The Clerk made the relevant enquiries to Wealden and it wasn't on any of their lists. They gave her a contact email at BT and after further enquiries it was established that the telephone service was discontinued in December 2018 when the kiosk was adopted and ownership was transferred to the White Horse Pub. Wealden were not consulted as the kiosk was on private land and ownership of the telephone box was passed to the owners of land. Once a kiosk is adopted, the adopting body is required to place a notice in the box, to inform the public that the kiosk is no longer owned by BT and asking that the new owner be contacted in the event of any problems. The member of the public had not seen any such notice. BT confirmed although the notice is a condition of adoption it is not something BT would be in a position to police. They were unaware of any action the Parish Council could take.

Cllr Williamson added if the phone box had been on a public highway then the District Council would have been informed. There then would have been a consultation process with the Parish Council with the opportunity for possible adoption.

The Chairman requested that a full explanation should be included in the minutes so members of the public can view the findings of the Parish Council's investigation.

## **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

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

(a) Planning and Development – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020

(b) Finance and General Purposes – 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Members noted the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee meeting on the 26.5.2020. The Clerk advised the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes 11.6.2020 were not yet finished.

## **FINANCE**

### **8.1. To inspect in detail the End of Year Accounts and AGAR**

The Chairman explained to Council that at the previous F& GP meeting he had concerns over the suite of documents for the End of Year Accounts not matching the figures reported on the AGAR. Cllr Williamson had explained these differences during the meeting although there was still some work to be done. The Chairman informed the Councillors he had asked the Clerk to remove the Notice of Public Rights as there was a disparity with the dates. He confirmed with the Clerk that the deadline for the AGAR is the 31<sup>st</sup> July. The AGAR needs to be signed off at Full Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> July. The

Internal Auditor will complete the Audit during the first week of July. The Clerk confirmed to the Chairman that the Parish Council need the Auditors input and guidance when filling in the Annual Governance Statement. The Former Locum Clerk advised the Chairman that the government has now recommended that the public inspection doesn't start until the 1.9.2020. The delay is due to the restrictions in place due to Covid-19. At this point the Former Locum Clerk stated that the AGAR figures and the figures produced by the Finance Chairman for Year End now agree.

- 000106 RESOLVED** to defer acceptance of the End of Year Accounts and AGAR until the next Full Council meeting. The public inspection dates will commence from 1.9.2020

To authorise the bills for payment and sign the cheques

Cheque No.	Payee	£	VAT	£ Total	Purpose
101376	Grant BSG Village Hall rent	450		450	Hall Hire
101377	Grant Dunn Village Hall rent	450	-	450	Hall Hire
Direct Debit	Wealden District Council	62.50	12.50	75.00	Quarterly dog bin emptying charges
101378	Jackie Cottrell	676.63	-	676.63	Salary
101379	HMRC	511.31	-	511.31	Payroll – Apr-June 20
101380	Paul Huntley	85.00	-	85	Flower beds inv 0813
101381	Jackie Cottrell	14.39	-	14.39	Zoom
101382	Linda Butcher	400.00		400.00	<del>Locum Clerk duties</del> End of Year Accounts and mentoring

- 000107 RESOLVED** to authorise the cheques as listed and amended above.

To note the Finance Reports to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Councillors noted the Finance Reports to the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

- 000108 RESOLVED** to add Cllr Cook to the F&GP Committee and Cllr Iremonger onto the Environment Committee.

The Chairman instructed the Clerk to send the new Councillor the Parish Council's policies, Standing Orders and Terms of Reference for all the

Committees. He also stated he wanted Committee Membership as an item on the next Full Council Agenda.

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

The Chairman confirmed this item will be on every agenda going forward. The Parish Council would like a return to face-to-face meetings as soon as possible. Currently both village halls remain closed.

### **TO CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT OF JACKIE COTTRELL AS THE NEW PARISH CLERK AS THE NEW PARISH CLERK AND RFO**

Cllr Williamson stated all Members had been asked for their feedback regarding the new Clerk and the responses received had all been positive. Cllr Davies requested confirmation that the Parish Council have the necessary tools to mentor, guide and support the new Clerk. Cllr Williamson advised the Clerk will have an appraisal in a few weeks to set objectives and agree a training plan.

**000109 RESOLVED** to appoint Jackie Cottrell as the new Parish Clerk and RFO.

The Parish Clerk stated she was very pleased to be appointed and was really enjoying her new role.

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

There were no urgent matters.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July via zoom at 7pm

The meeting closed at 8.50pm