

Minutes of a meeting of **WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL** held on Tuesday 11th January 2022 at 7pm at the Bodle Street Green Village Hall

PRESENT: Andy Long (Chairman), Keith Graham, Steve Williamson, Caroline Thompson, Celia Davies, Chris Wells and Roy Iremonger

Also present: ESCC & WDC Bob Bowdler
PCSO Cathy Gilling
2 members of the public
Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Cook – work commitments
Cllr Smythe – Covid related absence
WDC Sue Stedman – health reasons

The Clerk to further investigate the need to resolve apologies.

00441 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Thompson – agenda item 8 – personal interest in WAW and Citizens Advice

MINUTES

To **resolve** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18th November 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

00442 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18th November 2021.

The Clerk to amend Cllr Wells reason for absence to parish council engagement as he was attending a Warbleton Charity meeting on behalf of the Council and to correct one grammatical error.

Matters arising from the minutes not covered on the agenda

The Clerk clarified to ESCC & WDC Bob Bowdler that the Christmas tree erected on Rushlake Green had not been arranged by the Parish Council.

The Chairman assured the Members the drainage problem at “Iwood Dip” would be addressed at the SLR site visit with Ian Johnson from the Traffic & Safety

Department at East Sussex Highways which would take place the following day.

The Chairman clarified to Cllr Wells that the remedial work on the verge of Marklye Lane would be undertaken in January or early February.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the public congratulated the Parish Council on their much-improved financial management and their transparency regarding the documentation published on the excellent website.

However, she expressed concern that the Parish Council was considering funding a proportion of their budget with general reserves; whilst this was admirable for the tax payer she felt this was unsustainable in the long term. She hoped a financial risk assessment and a reserves policy would be in place in the future. She asked Members to note there were only approximately 6 months of the precept in the bank account.

The Chairman thanked the member of public for their comments and assured them their concerns would be discussed fully under agenda 9 and 10. He assured her the Parish Council had been advised by ESALC and their internal auditor that reserve levels should be around 50% of the precept and Warbleton Parish Council's reserves were currently 59%.

ESCC & WDC Bob Bowdler acknowledged the member of public's concerns regarding funding the budget using general reserves. However, he noted the current levels for Warbleton Parish Council were in line with recommended levels. He also acknowledged the dangerous piece of roadway at the "Iwood Dip".

REPORTS

5.1. To receive reports from District and County Councillors

ESCC & WDC Bob Bowdler referred to his previously circulated report. He verbally updated the meeting with Sue Stedman's news items. The WDC Portfolio Holder for Planning had attended a meeting with the Secretary of State RT Hon Michael Gove MP regarding reducing the quota of homes WDC were obligated to build a year which currently stood at 1,250. WDC were currently awaiting a response. The waste collections had remained unaffected by strike action and the outbreak of Omicron.

The Chairman of F&GP expressed disappointment that WDC did not acknowledge the Parish Cluster's letter addressed to the Secretary of State Michael Gove MP at that particular meeting and there was no reference to the letter on WDC's website.

5.2. To receive reports from PCSO Catherine Gilling

PCSO Cathy Gilly stated:

- 4 reports of suspicious activity in the parish in December but no arrests had been made.
- 1 report of theft in January, a parcel had been taken from a parishioner's doorstep.
- Monitoring speeding vehicles in Rushlake Green was temporarily on hold.

One councillor reported the Bodle Street Green village sign had been stolen.

The Chairman reported 2 issues with poaching and also the Parish Council's concern regarding the potential theft of red diesel from local farms and businesses after 1st April when it will no longer be available, unless there is an exemption. The PCSO advised the Parish Council she would link in with the Rural Crime Team.

5.3. To receive reports from Parish Councillors

There were no further Councillor reports to note.

PCSO Cathy Gilling left the meeting at 7.20pm

5.4. To receive reports from the Parish Clerk

The Clerk report was noted. She verbally updated Members with correspondence from ESALC regarding remote meetings. The Government had rejected calls to introduce laws to allow remote meetings despite the outbreak of the Omicron variant. The Clerk asked Members to note she had also sent a link from SLCC to sign an online petition regarding the above.

She requested any councillors to contact her if they wished to be the representative for the Parish Council regarding the upcoming meeting with Chief Constable Jo Shiner.

The WDALC meeting was scheduled for that week.

The Clerk updated Members with ESCC & WDC Bob Bowdler's response to agenda item 15.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

- (a) Planning & Development - 23rd November and 14th December 2021 and 6th January 2022
- (b) Environment Committee - 25th November 2021
- (c) F&GP - 2nd December 2021

Noted

FINANCE

7.1. To note bills that have been paid under the delegated authority to the Clerk and/or F&GP Committee

Cheque No/BACS No	Payee	£	VAT	£ Total	Purpose
51	Jackie Cottrell				Clerk Salary – December 2021
53	Jackie Cottrell	9.99		9.99	Printing cost invoice 1036146557 18 th Oct 21-17 th Nov 21
52	Graham Long	40.00		40.00	Mole removal
56	Heathfield & Waldron First Responders	400.00		400.00	Grant for maintenance of defibrillators

54	Wealden District Council	65.00	13.00	78.00	Quarterly dog bin emptying charges 1 st Oct 21-31 st Dec 21
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Noted

7.2. To authorise the bills for payment

Cheque No/BACS No	Payee	£	VAT	£ Total	Purpose
57	Jackie Cottrell				Clerk Salary – January 2022
58	Jackie Cottrell	9.99		9.99	Printing cost invoice 1037708400 18 th Nov 21 – 17 th Dec 21
59	HMRC	351.07		351.07	Payroll costs Oct 21 – Dec 21
60	East Sussex County Council	720.00	144.00	864.00	Two temporary traffic surveys in Rushlake Green and Bodle Street Green
61	Jackie Cottrell	4.99		4.99	100 white envelopes
62	Jackie Cottrell	25.99		25.99	Paper order – 2500 sheets
48	Douglas Andrews	597.00	119.40	716.40	Approved at Nov FC. Final invoice amount lower than quote received (629.08 + VAT)

00443 It was **RESOLVED** to authorise the payments listed.

7.3. To note the Finance Reports, bank reconciliation and budget monitor for November and December 2021

Noted

DISCRETIONARY GRANTS**8.1. To approve the discretionary grants for the accounting year 2022/23 recommended for approval by the F&GP Committee**

The Chairman of F&GP summarised the four grant applications that had been received and the recommendations from the F&GP Committee. The late grant application from the Big Lunch regarding the Queen's Jubilee celebrations would be considered at a later date.

Applicant	Brief description of request	Project Amount	Amount sought	F&GP Recommendation
Bodle Street Green PCC	Maintenance of churchyard	£1464	£732	£350
Wealden CAB	To contribute to the running costs of the service for Warbleton residents, which can be accessed via phone, email, text or appointments (once our offices re-open) at one of our 3 sites - Crowborough, Hailsham or Uckfield.	Not specified	£300	£50 with accompanied note that the PC would like to see an increase in their commitment to a face-to-face service
Wild About Warbleton	To add informative and attractive signage to carefully selected locations in Warbleton Parish, including the Five Routes	£793.16	£396	£300 need to be paid into a designated bank account
Warbleton PCC	Maintenance of Churchyard	£1,550	£625	£350

He asked Members to note a grant of £250 to Heathfield and Waldron First Responders was separately budgeted as part of the agreement for maintenance of the 4 defibrillators. A further £150 was added from an earmarked reserve.

00444 It was **RESOLVED** to authorise the grant awards listed above during the 2022/23 financial year.

BUDGET 2022/23

9.1. To approve the budget for Warbleton Parish Council for the accounting year 2022/23, recommended for approval by the F&GP Committee

The Chairman of F&GP referred Members to his previously circulated report. The proposed budget was £21,615.67. This represented an increase of 8.08% on the 2021/22 budget.

The Chairman of F&GP asked Councillors to note the budget process had begun in September 2021 when each individual committee had been invited to submit any relevant budgetary requirement which had then been taken into account.

He stated a 3–5-year strategic plan was still in the process of being discussed. If agreed this would have an impact on financial planning.

The Chairman of F&GP clarified each line of the budget to Members and highlighted the projected spend for the current financial year, 2021/22, was approximately £19,000. The main reasons for the slight underspend were due to the Clerk undertaking lower voluntary overtime hours than budgeted and the fact that the Council had not been required to complete an external audit.

There would be a “virement” to resolve at a later date to move the budgeted election expenses to the earmarked reserve.

The national pay award for the Clerk had yet to be settled but had been factored into the budget calculations.

He asked Members to note there had been unforeseen delays with scheduling Environment Committee meetings during the current year. There were ongoing projects that had not yet been completed and quotes were still being received. This might mean any outstanding budget moved to an earmarked reserve. The infrastructure budget would

be reviewed annually; it was proposed to increase the budget by £500 to £2000 for 2022/23, in recognition of the amount of remedial work anticipated. It was likely that a lower requirement would be needed in future years.

There would also be a one-off budget to support the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, whilst the Parish Council would be required to complete an external audit for 2021/22 due to the level of income and expenditure.

The Chairman of F&GP summarised the reserves and said that the F&GP Committee were happy that they remained at the current level of 60% of the budget. This gave some flexibility in meeting the short-term costs of the Jubilee support and Infrastructure budget. Members were asked to note that CIL funds had increased significantly due to a payment received in October. The CIL Committee would meet in February to consider the programme of planned spending in 2022/23.

The increases in budget lines had arisen after careful consideration by the F&GP Committee and were considered to be a prudent measure.

The Chairman of CIL requested the tree planting application be considered at a future CIL meeting.

The Chairman of the Parish Council advised the Council to proceed with caution when considering items for CIL expenditure as it was not a sustainable source for funding in the long term.

The Chairman of F&GP clarified the clerk's home allowance had been incorporated in the Clerks salary budget line for 2021/22 as it was paid with her salary. The items of expenditure referred to the payments for zoom when the Parish Clerk had to organise Council meetings from home during lockdowns.

00445 It was **RESOLVED** to set Warbleton Parish Council's budget at £21,615.67 for the accounting year 2022/23.

PRECEPT 2022/23

10.1. To agree the precept for Warbleton Parish Council for the accounting year 2022/23, recommended for approval by the F&GP Committee

The Chairman of F&GP referred Members to his previously circulated report and reiterated the following:

- Expenditure for the current year was slightly less than expected.
- The infrastructure budget would be closely monitored.
- The Parish Council's reserves were at the acceptable level.
- Expected VAT returns had not been included in the budget or precept calculations.

The Chairman of F&GP clarified why the F&GP Committee had recommended to fund a small proportion of the budget to be funded with general reserves. He stated the tax base information had not been available at the F&GP meeting in November.

Wealden DC had now confirmed the provisional tax base for Warbleton Parish Council was expected to increase from 719.3 in 2021/22 to 728.6 in 2022/23. This meant that by maintaining existing levels of Council tax a further £270 in precept would be generated.

The recommendation of the F&GP Committee had been that the 2022/23 budget should be funded by:

- £1,000.67 from General Reserves
- £20,615 from the precept

This would result in an increase in the precept of 1.69%. For a Band D property, this would represent an increase from £27.82 to £28.29 (i.e., £0.47).

The Chairman of F&GP referred Members to the previously circulated comparison table which demonstrated the impact of setting the precept at different levels.

There were no further questions.

- 00446** It was **RESOLVED** to set Warbleton Parish Council's precept at £20,615.00 for the accounting year 2022/23.

TREE PLANTING ON RUSHLAKE GREEN TO COMMEMORATE THE QUEENS PLATINUM JUBILEE

11.1. To consider whether to agree that a tree(s) may be planted on land owned by the Parish Council to support the Queens Platinum Jubilee

The item was discussed by Members. Although the Bylaws of Rushlake Green Village Green appeared to NOT stop any tree planting, a Councillor with previous past experience of planting on The Green asked Members to note Wealden District Council had previously advised this would not be possible.

Other locations were discussed. Behind the bench next to the Dunn Village Hall was agreed as a possible location.

Another councillor suggested a plaque for the tree and a time capsule for the Queen's Jubilee.

It was agreed the different locations and the different types of trees available for planting would need to be investigated by the Clerk and a Councillor with the necessary experience and agreed at the February Full Council meeting.

It was reported the Bodle Street Green Village Hall Committee were still in the process of arranging their Queen's Jubilee celebrations.

- 00447** It was **RESOLVED** to agree in principle that a tree would be planted on land owned by the Parish Council located next to the Dunn Village Hall to support the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

TEMPORARY AMENDMENT TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS – DELEGATED AUTHORITY FOR BILL PAYMENTS

12.1. To agree that the Parish Clerk/RFO should have emergency delegated powers authority to make bill payments in accordance with the agreed budget, in the event that the Council or the F&GP Committee cannot meet due to UK Government restrictions.

The Clerk referred to the previously circulated report written by the Chairman of the F&GP Committee. She added that although the Omicron variant had been milder than anticipated and there was no longer a requirement for a PCR test there was still the possibility in a greater number of people having to self-isolate with a positive lateral flow test resulting in future council meetings potentially not being quorate. A risk assessment had been completed on each individual committee not being quorate. The main issues were being unable to agree to pay invoices in line with the Financial Regulations. The Clerk reiterated this would be a temporary measure which would expire on the 30th April 2022 and a similar amendment had been adopted by a number of other parish councils. It was **AGREED** this item would be considered as a permanent amendment when the financial regulations were re-adopted at the ASM in May 2022.

- 00448** It was **RESOLVED** to increase the Clerk's delegated authority to £500. The increased delegated authority would only apply in the event that a Parish Council or Committee meeting was cancelled due to CoVid-19 and no further meeting to authorise the payment could take place within two weeks. The temporary amendment would expire on 30th April 2022. Any proposal to extend further will form part of the annual review of the Financial Regulations and must be agreed by the Parish Council.

NEW COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION

13.1. To resolve dates for the two councillor co-option vacancies

The Clerk referred to her previously circulated report and recommended dates. A brief discussion ensued.

It was **AGREED** the Clerk would ensure the vacancy was advertised equally within the parish. The co-option of a new councillor would be an item on the February Full Council agenda.

- 00449** It was **RESOLVED** that the co-option vacancy would be advertised from Wednesday 12th January until Thursday 10th February.

TO CONSIDER ADOPTING THE NALC MODEL LETTERS SUPPORTING A RETURN TO VIRTUAL MEETINGS

14.1. To resolve Warbleton Parish Council use the NALC model letter to highlight their support for legislation enabling the use of virtual and hybrid council meetings to the local MP

14.2. To resolve Warbleton Parish Council use the NALC model letter to highlight their support for legalizing of virtual and hybrid council meetings to the relevant Government minister

The Chairman summarised the current position of parish councils on the use of virtual and hybrid meetings. All Members unanimously supported both motions.

- 00450** It was **RESOLVED** that Warbleton Parish Council would use both of the NALC model letters to support legislation enabling the use of virtual and hybrid meetings which would be sent to the local MP and to the relevant Government minister.

TO SUPPORT THE “20s PLENTY FOR US” PROPOSALS TO REDUCE TRAFFIC SPEED

15.1. To resolve to support 20s Plenty for Us suggested motion for ESCC to set 20mph as the normal speed limit, and 30mph as the exception, in residential streets and in town and village centres

15.2. To resolve to support 20s Plenty for Us suggested motion and request East Sussex County Council allocate a ring-fenced amount from public health, sustainability and transport budgets to enable 20mph to be implemented country-wide within 5 years

The Clerk clarified the campaign had been forwarded from ESALC from the above lobbying group. Both items were discussed at great length.

- 00451** It was **RESOLVED** that the Parish Council would not support either motion suggested by the 20s Plenty for Us campaign.

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

None

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 17th February 2022 at the Dunn Village Hall at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.14pm

