

WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Meeting of Warbleton Parish Council held on Thursday 25 January 2024 7pm 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, Peter Sterling and Jeanne Peterson (Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Councillors Bruce Simpson and Bob Bowdler
It was resolved to accept the apologies as given

Other attendees: Mike Smythe - Speed Watch organiser, Steve O'Connell - Community Speed Watch Officer. PCSO Catherine Gilling and District Councillor Greg Collins

A moments silence was held in respect of the recent passing of Bryan Whitton.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1. Cllr Long declared a prejudicial interest in items 10.1 and 12 and will leave the room during those discussions.

3. **Minutes**

- 3.1. **It was resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 November 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**

Fifteen members of the public attended the meeting and the following points were raised:

- i. There was concern for the safety of elderly Osborne House (OH) residents who need to cross two roads and a link road to access the shop or when taking a walk in the village. There is no definition between the road and the car parking area, road users do not know where the road ends and drivers tend to speed up just at the OH point if they see the road is clear. Cars are often parked on either side of the link road and residents of OH have to negotiate traffic both ways.
- ii. Cars speed through the village (Rushlake Green) from North and South, and it was questioned why at the council meeting held on 26 September 2023 it was decided not to proceed with speed roundels when it had previously been agreed.
- iii. The draft East Sussex Local Transport Plan consultation is currently open and the council were urged to look at it and respond, also to encourage people to view it via the ESCC website. There has been a 40% population growth in Wealden but there has been nothing suggested for the area other than improved bus services between Tunbridge Wells and Hailsham. It is stated that Rushlake Green is almost inaccessible by public transport.
- iv. The Warbleton Parish Council (WPC) draft Planning Processing Policy, is unlikely to be useful as Wealden District Council (WDC) doesn't take notice. WPC objected to the Little Harness application and WDC went ahead to approve part of it. There appears to be a contravention of the District Council's own constitution which says that they should take account of local views and representations.
- v. The council was thanked for their advice to take the Little Harness planning concerns to the attention of the District Councillors, unfortunately no reply was received
- vi. A representative from the Little Arts Festival was available for any questions during the grant funding item.

The Chair acknowledged the common theme that people are concerned about traffic speed and safety implications. The council takes these issues seriously for the parish, and had funded the purchase of the speed gun to support the set-up of speed watch.

In considering the installation of Roundels at Rushlake Green the ESCC Team Manager for Road Safety listened to the councils concerns and put in a bid to ESCC for funding. A traffic survey was then undertaken by ESCC but it took time to get the results before two more meetings were arranged to interpret the data. The Team Manager subsequently informed the council that had the data results been known before, the funding application would not have been made. Priorities in other areas were much higher. Traffic speed measures were completed in Bodle Street. For Rushlake Green the matter was further discussed at a Planning Committee meeting then at Full Council (26 September 2023). It was not a unanimous decision but it was agreed not to install roundels in the village.

The points raised about the Little Harness planning application would be addressed during Item 6.2

5. Speed Watch

5.1 Mike Smyth, parish Speed Watch Organiser and Steve O'Connell, Community Speedwatch Officer were welcomed to the meeting. Each made a presentation and the notes are attached to these minutes as Appendix 1 and 2.

The PCSO added that when drivers are caught speeding, the data is picked up by Steve O'Connell's team and a letter is sent to the motorist. If three letters are sent to the same person then they get a visit by the PCSO and shown an educational video.

Councillors were invited to ask questions. The following points were noted:

- i. ESCC and National Highways attend monthly board meetings with the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) and share the partnership's data. Highways must ratify any traffic management initiatives.
- ii. Highways control the positioning of all signage, taking into account the distances and junctions between signs.
- iii. Speed Watch is noted by SSRP as the most effective tool as a deterrent to speeding and other traffic issues.
- iv. A strong objection was raised about the positioning of speed watch activity to a single spot in Rushlake Green and not parish wide to make it more effective.
- v. Controlling car parking outside the shop and pubs could deny local businesses their custom (village shop & public house).
- vi. No acknowledgement or respect is shown to farm traffic with tractors and trailers
- vii. A question was raised as to why OH residents are not chaperoned during outings
- viii. There is a data portal for Clerk's to review traffic activity and issues within their parish as a useful tool for council's in considering action.
- ix. Information on road condition and traffic issues can be reported directly to SSRP via the following email address roads.communication@sussex.police.uk
- x. When the council owned car park was resurfaced WPC approached ESCC about road markings but was told that roadside delineation would confuse drivers. WPC will look again at what could be done from its part on the car park land it owns.
- xi. There is a SLR meeting scheduled in February where WPC members will meet with ESCC representatives to discuss various concerns and issues which have been taken on board

Following the objection regarding the limited approach to existing speed watch activity Mike Smythe presented his resignation as Speed Watch Organiser. Arrangements will be made to return the WPC equipment.

The Chair thanked the attendees for their time and effort, and stated that the council will endeavor to progress in a positive way.

5.2 **It was resolved** that Warbleton Parish Council, in principle, strongly supports Speed Watch as the best way to manage traffic issues in the parish.

6. Reports

- 6.1. **County Councillor Bob Bowdler** was unable to attend the meeting: A monthly report had been circulated and there were no questions.
- 6.2. **District Councillor Greg Collins** Informed the meeting that the Local Plan had been published and there will be a consultation.
Regarding Three Cups Public House, fencing had now gone up around the site and urgent repairs are underway, and the tree has been felled.
Concern was expressed by the council in regard to the handling of the planning application for Little Harness as neither District Councillors (DCs) had consulted with residents or parish council when clear objections to the application had been raised. Clarification on responsibility from the Wealden District Council's Scheme of Delegation/ Constitution on the process between the two DCs regarding how planning issues are handled was asked for.
DC Cornelie Usborne had provided a written report which had been circulated.
- 6.3. **PCSO Catherine Gilling** attended the meeting and her report had been circulated. Other issues included break-ins at Vines Cross for copper piping and at the recycling plant
- 6.4. **Parish Councillors:**
Cllr Beverley Saunders had provided a written report and added that there have been some window problems at Dunn Village Hall which required work and replacement blinds needed. It was noted that Nick Morgan, Jill Levick and Inyca Humphreys have now retired from their committee roles. The council acknowledged their contribution to the management of the Hall and agreed that letters of thanks will be sent.
- 6.5. **Parish Clerk:** A written report had been circulated. Items for discussion at the SLR meeting will include asking what ESCC can do to help with traffic and speed issues for the parish. The clerk had already circulated details to council members of the ESCC consultation on its Local Transport Plan.

7. Committee matters

- 7.1. The proceedings of the following committee meetings were noted:
 - i. Planning & Development – approved minutes of the 5 December 2023 and draft minutes of 9 January 2024 meetings had been circulated.

8. Policy updates

The clerk informed the meeting that Agenda Item 8.3 Standing Orders does not require updating as they include details on how committees should function but do not list individual committees.

It was resolved to adopt the draft documents and policies noted as follows:

- 8.1 Staffing Committee Structure and T&Cs
- 8.2 Scheme of Delegation
- 8.4 Online Banking Policy
- 8.5 Processing Planning Applications Policy – subject to the inclusion of WDC Scheme of Delegation/Constitution statement to clarify the role of District Councillor as public representative in communicating on planning issues between residents, parish council and the planning authority.

9. Grant awards

9.1 **It was resolved** to make the following grant awards after 1 April 2024 to:

Dunn Village Hall £470

Rushlake Green Little Arts Festival £400

Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex £300

The Bodle Street Green Short Mat Bowls Club was unsuccessful on this occasion.

A number of other applications had been received after the deadline for this round and those will be considered at a future meeting.

9.2 **It was resolved** to increase the council's contribution toward the use and running costs of the village halls by 20% to Bodle Street Village Hall and 30% to Dunn Village Hall as it is an older building.

10. Parish maintenance

10.1 **Rushlake Green Notice Board** - Cllr Long left the room for this item and Vice-Chair Cllr Saunders took the chair.

- i. The council agreed that a monthly cost to display notices in the village shop was not a long-term solution
- ii. **It was resolved** to accept the quote which would provide a new notice board for the village. Council members will remove the old board and prepare the area for installation.

Cllr Long re-joined the meeting.

10.2 **Finger posts:** A quote had been received for the repair of the two posts most in need of attention. The council can submit a further match funding application to ESCC after the 1 April 2024 as it had already received funds during the current financial year. **It was resolved** to accept the quote subject to match funding, the clerk to make the necessary application and arrangements in the new financial year.

10.2 **Rural Grass Cutting Options** - **It was resolved** to accept Option 1 which will Provide two cuts per annum of a 1-metre-wide swathe along the verge plus visibility areas cut for visibility at junctions and for safety on the inside of bends where sight lines between road users may be obscured by vegetation.

11. Finance

11.1 **It was resolved** to authorise the payment of December and January bills (payment list as circulated).

11.2 The bank reconciliations for November and December were received and noted, also the budget monitor & reserve movements to date.

11.3 **It was resolved** to nominate Cllr Richard Whymark as an additional signatory to the council's bank account.

11.4 The updated Asset Check was noted.

11.5 **It was resolved** to accept final updates to the draft budget taking into account the following agreed considerations:

- Increased costs incurred by Dunn Village Hall and Bodle Street Village Hall – implement a 20% increase on the annual hall hire contribution to Bodle Street and a 30% increase to Dunn Village Hall as agreed in Item 9.2
- Discretionary grants – to increase total available funds to 3170 (1170 already allocated in Item 9).
- IT costs i.e. annual computer maintenance and website subscription, and includes 150 toward earmarked fund for new equipment – increase budget to 350
- Subscriptions – increase budget to 500
- Maintenance/Infrastructure – increase budget to 2000
- **The final budget figure was agreed at 27,747**

11.6 **It was resolved** that the budget will be wholly funded by the precept and the clerk was authorised to submit the council's precept request to Wealden District Council.

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

The clerk confirmed that the necessary paperwork had been received to complete the applications to register the following public houses as Assets of Community Value:

- 12.1 The **White Horse Public House** in Bodle Street has an existing ACV license but it is due to run out shortly
- 12.2 The ACV license for the **Horse and Groom Public House** has already expired.
- 12.3 **It was resolved** to authorise the clerk to complete the applications and liaise with Cllr Charlie Saunders to fact check the content.

Cllr Long rejoined the meeting.

13. Emergency & Resilience Planning

The papers as circulated were noted and the council agreed that they formed an acceptable basis of a draft emergency plan document

- 13.1 **It was resolved** to accept the draft document as the starting point for building a local Plan and the process to move this forward will be discussed at a future meeting.

14. Urgent matters at the discretion of the Chairman for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda - None

15. Date of next meeting – Thursday 22 February 2024 at Dunn Village Hall, Rushlake Green 7pm

- 15.1 Potential dates for the Annual Parish Assembly meeting will be circulated by email.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm