

Minutes of the **ANNUAL STATUTORY MEETING** of **WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL** held on Thursday 21st May 2020 at 7.00pm remotely via zoom

PRESENT: Councillors A Long (Vice Chairman and acting Chairman), Roy Iremonger, David Powell, Karen Cook, Celia Davis, Richard Reading, Mike Smythe, Chris Wells, Steve Williamson and Pauline Velten

Also present: East Sussex County Councillor Bill Bentley
District Councillor Bob Bowdler (part of the meeting)
District Councillor Susan Stedman
Linda Butcher – Former Locum Clerk
Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk
4 members of the public plus one part way through the meeting

In the absence of the Chairman, due to his resignation from the council, the Vice Chairman chaired the meeting. The Chairman thanked all the volunteers in the local community who have been working non-stop during the pandemic. A special mention was given to Tony and his team who run the Ruslake Green Village shop.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman confirmed with the Clerk that she had not received any more nominations for Chairman. He then asked all members present to come forward if they wished to stand. There were no requests.

The Chairman then explained to all members that he would ask for a proposer and a seconder. He would ask councillors in turn for their comments and votes. He concluded that there were only three options: For, Against or Abstain.

There was one nomination for Chairman which was proposed and seconded without challenge.

00078 Cllr Andrew Long was duly declared Chairman for the Parish Council year 2019/20. Cllr Long addressed Full Council and gave his thanks to all members for their vote.

00079 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN
Cllr Long will collect the Declaration Of Acceptance Of Office Of Chairman from the Clerk's residence and sign in her presence.

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

There was one nomination for Vice Chairman which was duly seconded without challenge.

00080 Cllr Mike Smythe was duly declared as the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council for the year 2020/21

APOLOGIES – None

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS – None

MINUTES

To **resolve** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on Thursday 23rd April 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

00081 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 23rd April 2020.

Matters outstanding from these minutes

Members noted there were no outstanding matters from these minutes

APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

The Chairman informed members that he had received pre-prescribed nominations for the 2020/2021 Committee Memberships. The Chairman confirmed that all Members had received details of the Committee Membership preferences and asked if anyone wished to make any changes. At this point Cllr Pauline Velten said she wished to remove herself from the Planning and Development Committee. The Chairman then read through the list and then suggested Members could vote en bloc. The Clerk confirmed to Cllr Smythe there needs to be a minimum of three members per Committee.

00082 RESOLVED Committee Memberships:

(a) Finance and General Purposes Committee

A.Long
S.Williamson
M.Symthe

(b) Planning and Development Committee

A.Long
C.Davies
R.Iremonger
K.Cook
S.Williamson
M.Symthe
C.Wells
D.Powell
R.Reading

(c) Environment Committee

A.Long
K.Cook
C.Wells

D.Powell
R.Reading

(d) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

A.Long
C.Davies
P.Velten
K.Cook
S.Williamson
M.Symthe
R.Reading

7.16pm The Annual Statutory Meeting was adjourned in order to elect the Chairman and Vice Chairman of each Standing Committee

Minutes of meetings of the **Standing Committees** held on Thursday 21st May 2020 at 7.15pm

ELECTION OF CHAIRMEN AND VICE CHAIRMEN

The Chairman confirmed with the Clerk and Former Locum Clerk that once the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen had been agreed amongst Members, the resolutions could be made en bloc.

00083 **RESOLVED** that the following Members were appointed as Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman for the Council year 2020/21.

(a) Finance and General Purposes Committee

Chairman - S.Williamson

Vice Chairman – A.Long

(b) Planning and Development Committee

Chairman – Roy Iremonger

Vice Chairman – A.Long

(c) Environment Committee

Chairman – C.Wells

Vice Chairman – D.Powell

(d) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Committee

Chairman - C.Davies

Vice Chairman - P.Velten

7.20pm The Annual Statutory Meeting was re-convened**APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Chairman confirmed with the Clerk that the appointment of representatives to Outside Bodies could be resolved en bloc. The Chairman again referred to the preference sheet that had been supplied to all Members and confirmed the preferences for the 2020/2021 year.

00084 RESOLVED as follows:

- (a) Wealden District Association of Local Councils – R.Iremonger**
- (b) Dunn Village Hall – C.Davies**
- (c) Bodle Street Green Village Hall – P.Velton**
- (d) Warbleton Charity – C.Wells**

FINANCE

To authorise the payment of invoices as listed

Cheque No	Payee	£	VAT	£ Total	Purpose
101373	Jackie Cottrell		Stationary net VAT 4.16	74.35	Zoom 14.39 Stamps 24.99 White env 4.99 A4 env 9.99 Paper 19.99
101374	Jackie Cottrell			666.46	Plus 21.5 extra hours
101375	Linda A Butcher			597.01	Locum Clerk duties

00085 RESOLVED to authorise the signing of the cheques as listed above.

To review the appointment of the Internal Independent Auditor and to resolve to appoint for the 2020/2021 financial year

Members noted the Clerk's resume on Keith Robertson. The Clerk informed members that she works with him already for Horam Parish Council. The Former Locum Clerk also confirmed he was recommended by SSALC.

00086 RESOLVED to appoint Keith Robertson as Warbleton Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the 2020/2021 financial year.

To accept and resolve the Audit Report from Linda Butcher as part of the Health Check undertaken

The Chairman asked the Clerk to explain why we did not appoint Mark Mulberry & CO even though the Parish Council resolved to do this in November 2019. This was to help with preparing financial documents relating to the financial year 2018/19 and the late submission of the AGAR. The Former Locum Clerk informed the Chairman, as per her report, that PKF Littlejohn have confirmed in writing that they will not go back to that year. The main failing of the council was to not advertise the public's right to inspect the accounts. The Former Locum Clerk discussed her findings with Councillors and confirmed that it was in fact not now needed. The Chairman questioned the Parish Councils need to publish the AGAR for last year and the year before that. The Former Locum Clerk clarified that was not necessary. The Chairman asked for clarification on the risk to the Parish Council of not providing this information. The Former Locum Clerk confirmed the Parish Council could be reported to the External Auditor although no further action would be taken by them. The Parish Council would not be able to exempt themselves this year. The Internal Audit report is predicted to be not particularly good as positive changes were not made until January 2020. Councillor Williamson confirmed he has been working closely with the Former Locum Clerk and endorsed everything in her report. He believes the Parish Council are now on the right track. He also referred to all the recent work on the updating of procedures and policies. The Chairman thanked Cllr Williamson and the Former Locum Clerk for all their hard work. The Chairman confirmed with the Former Locum Clerk that the correspondence between the Parish Council and PKF Littlejohn could be added to the website to promote the Parish Council's wish to be transparent.

00087 **RESOLVED** the Audit report from Linda Butcher as part of the Health Check undertaken

To accept and resolve the end of year accounts 2019/2020

The Chairman asked for clarification regarding the end of year accounts.

7.30pm The Clerk informed the Chairman that Wealden District Councillor Bob Bowdler had entered the meeting as well as one other member of the public.

As Chairman of the Finance Committee Cllr Williamson spoke on behalf of the Former Locum Clerk who had prepared the figures. He advised Members it was not easy to see the accounts clearly on the email they had all received and he is endeavouring to rectify this for the website. Members noted the extra costs incurred for the Locum Clerk and the Health Check were partially offset by the early departure of the former Clerk. Included in the accounts was cheque number 101366. The Inland Revenue payment was authorised in April but the cheque was dated March so it was agreed that it would be included in the 2019/2020 accounts. Cllr Williamson has now made the appropriate adjustment. It was noted that the former Clerk was accounting for VAT incorrectly. The Chairman asked for clarity regarding an unrepresented BACS payment. The Former Locum Clerk could

not provide this and confirmed that as it was such an old outstanding payment it needed to be written back into the accounts. Cllr Williamson confirmed it was agreed at Full Council in October 2019 but cannot explain why it was listed as a BACS payment.

- 00088** **RESOLVED** the end of year accounts 2019/2020 and noted these were prior to the Internal Audit.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the following minutes of committees and to approve and confirm recommendations contained therein and as far as requisite, the action taken by them.

Planning – 12th May 2020 – meeting cancelled. NOTED

PLANNING APPLICATION

WD/2020/0511/F Bramble Cottage, Chapmans Town Road, Warbleton TN21 9PS – Construction of stable block and access track

- 00089** The Parish Council feel the size and design of the stable block are not adversely affecting the AONB. The Council is happy to support the application on condition that the stables are tied to the residence so it is not used commercially, thereby limiting the traffic generation along Chapmans Town Road. Also permitted development rights should be removed so as not to allow external lighting in the future.

REPORTS

To receive reports from District and County Councillors

Members noted East Sussex County Councillor Bentley's report. He added that the Sussex Police Chief Constable is due to retire. A selection process is underway and four strong candidates have been identified. The final recommendation will take place on 26th June 2020 after Cllr Bentley strongly advised the role should not be filled by an interim appointment. Cllr Davies enquired how the care homes were managing and were the schools due to open on the 1st June. Cllr Bentley confirmed the biggest challenges facing the care homes were PPE provisions and maintaining staff levels and confirmed that fortunately cases of COVID-19 are fairly low in East Sussex. There has been a 10% increase in care home fees at the beginning of Lockdown which provided them with an early start in adapting their working environment during the pandemic. The care homes are often situated in older buildings which makes it more difficult to make the necessary changes. Regarding the schools they are awaiting further direction from the government but is currently talking to the Heads and Unions. Most schools have remained open so it is more of an additional step up rather than a re-

opening. Wealden District Councillor Susan Stedman confirmed Wealden have re-commenced meetings using Microsoft Teams although experiencing a few teething problems which they are working on. The Council is waiting on new advice from Planning and House Building which has recently been published by the government. Wealden is focusing on announcing planning applications on My Alerts and widening the parameters rather than using the postal system. The Council is working successfully with 3VA helping the vulnerable. Over 30 million pounds has been forwarded locally in grants in addition to business rate relief although again there have been teething problems. There is a revised housing allocation policy and a rise in savings allowed for those wishing to downsize to sheltered accommodation. The environmental team has been busy making sure all the food outlets offering takeaway food are compliant regarding food safety. The tips are open and the public are behaving respectfully. Cllr Bowdler reported two planning meetings have taken place and went better than expected. There have been numerous reports of planning laws being flouted. Incidents are being recorded, to be followed up at a later date although planning officers have now been granted permission to visit sites. Residents are being asked to take photos and notes to send in to the enforcement officers. Although enforcement officers are working remotely, they are easily contactable via email. Cllr Bowdler and Cllr Stedman are both available on the phone if they are needed.

To receive reports from the Parish Councillors (including crime report from Cllr Reading

Cllr Reading reported the police are carrying on as normal. From the 20-26th April the police concentrated on rural lanes and villages due to the increase in burglaries in these locations. Residents need to stay alert. Cllr Velten reported she knew of several burglaries, loss of horse tack and animals stolen in the area.

Cllr Wells reported that no meetings are taking place for the Warbleton Charity but things are moving forward.

Cllr Davies reported that Dunn Village Hall Committee is not having any meetings at the moment but members are in touch with each other. In addition to her published report, she has passed on some advice from Action in Rural Sussex on how to manage change. Further to Cllr Velten's report, the Bodle Street Green Village Hall has been spring cleaned, the terrace and seats have all been power washed and the fencing will be cleaned too. There will be a meeting shortly. The kitchen is now being used to prepare meals on a Friday evening for a takeaway service providing a small income for the hall.

Cllr Iremonger has nothing to report from the WDALC, the next meeting is scheduled for June. Cllr Velten reported the proposed contractor, who is making the Bodle Street Green Gates and noticeboard, was meant to be taking a second course which has now been delayed until the 1st – 3rd June. In the meantime, he is going to start making both items. When the course has finished, stakes will be positioned where the posts will go up. The Parish Council has not been advised on the cost of the licence fees; the Clerk has agreed to chase up.

To receive report from the Parish Clerk

To Consider the adoption of a policy for Council meetings held remotely by electronic means

The Clerk advised as this is only the second zoom meeting held by the Council, this policy should be a future item on the next Full Council agenda as some parts might too detailed.

00090 RESOLVED to add the item to the next Full Council Agenda where the policy can be fully discussed.

Co-option of a new councillor

The Clerk confirmed that two members of the public have expressed an interest in the position. They have both received the relevant forms which need to be returned by the 8th June for the next Full Council meeting on the 18th June. On this date the candidates will be able to introduce themselves. Once a short interview process has taken place Members will vote.

Barclays Bank Mandate

The Chairman confirmed the bank mandate is in the process of being changed. The Chairman confirmed with the Clerk her details have been added. Cllr Symthe reported his form has been sent to Barclays and the Clerk will chase the Barclays Bank mandate team to confirm how the new signatory will be advised he has been added.

To consider online banking and the option of making BACS payments

The Clerk recommended the Parish Council move to internet banking. She added to her report by saying she has recently set up Horam Parish Council and it was not a difficult process. She has watched signatories authorise payments online and as long as the Councillors are happy using a computer the process is straightforward. The Chairman was supportive of the move and he sought the opinion of Cllr Williamson, Chairman of Finance. Cllr Williamsom agreed in principle; however, he was unable to locate the Clerks report and could not make a decision under the circumstances. The Clerk will re-send the report.

00091 RESOLVED the item will be added to the next agenda due to missing documentation.

Website Update

The Chairman congratulated Cllr Williamson for all his hard work in getting the website up and running. Cllr Williamson confirmed he had worked closely with the Clerk. There is no running cost, apart from a very small initial payment for

a new website address which is www.warbletonparishcouncil.co.uk. The website is live and it is much easier to edit and add items. Core documents have been uploaded, minutes and finance statements are a work in progress. The website needs to be developed further to make it more interesting and informative to the public. Protocols will need to be agreed over what is allowed to be published. Hugo Fox are working on resolving planning tracker problems. Cllr Williamson would appreciate any feedback from Members. The old website will be closed down on the 31st May and no new items will be added.

Asset Register

The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council's insurance company BHIB do not have a copy of the Asset Register. They have emailed the Clerk a copy of the existing policy and the Asset Register continues to be a work in progress.

Update on the bench donated by David Bysouth

The Clerk has made an arrangement to visit the proposed location of the bench next week. She will then meet Mr Bysouth at his property which is a short distance away and take pictures and detailed measurements of the bench. The licence will be completed and sent to Highways.

Update on Bodle Street Green Gates

The Clerk and Cllr Velten are working together to move this item forward. Cllr Velten clarified that ESCC was meant to be in contact to verify the cost of the licences but this has not taken place. The Clerk has the contact details to chase this matter up. The Chairman recommended the Clerk seek advice and support from Cllr Bentley at ESCC if needed.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Julia Desch spoke on behalf of Warbleton Wildflower Group, she was pleased to see the Parish Council has a healthy Environment Committee and she is hopeful that this will improve the progress of important environmental issues. She drew attention to items that are available to the Parish Council which they might not be aware of. These were The Wealden Draft Environment Strategy and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution. This would lead on to a bio-diversity audit, plant life verges scheme and a carbon audit. The County Council has to produce figures for its carbon levels by the end 2030/50. Julia feels every square metre is critical in mitigating the effect of the loss of environment, hundreds of acres of concrete between the High Weald and the South Downs is going to create a "hot island". She advises the Parish Council to become familiar with the Five Year High Weald Management Plan. Some Parishes in Rother have declared a climate emergency which puts them in a good position. The Warbleton Wildflower Group would like an acknowledgement that this matter is of first line importance to help make vital changes. She would like to see discussions taking place which also involve the

public. Julia requested confirmation from Wealden as to where they are with their Strategic Environmental Draft. The Chairman stated that the Parish Council have taken her comments on board and that the Planning and Environment Committees will be the ones who can take any matters further.

Monica Adams-Acton was pleased that Councillors have taken a number of measures to improve matters since August last year and then acknowledged the incredible amount of hard work the Councillors and Officers have been doing. However, she said there are still a number of concerns she would like addressed. Firstly, the Council resolved in November to complete a Health Check and to undertake the appointment of Mulberry & Co who would work alongside the Parish Council prior to the audit for the financial year 2018/19. Monica would like clarification as to why it appears the Council has had a change of heart but not rescinded its resolution. She was disappointed this has happened especially as there are still outstanding financial irregularities. She complained that the Health Check has not been published. Monica was also concerned by the Council's continued failure to meet its legal obligations in respect of publishing Annual Governance Statements for 2018/19 and previous years. It is a legal requirement that the Parish Council should publish financial documents. Monica had a copy of the exemption certificate that was submitted to the external auditors. That should be published along with the uncompleted AGAR. There still appears to be financial discrepancies in the Parish Council's financial reports. The Clerks report has a net balance at Year End of £24,936.92. The financial statement for Year End states a balance of £25,085.82, a difference of £148.90 which was not explained. The value of the unrepresented cheques has been deducted twice from the bank balances. This is cause for concern as financial mistakes are still being made. She would like clarity on the bank balance figure at Year End. The Chairman noted all of Monica's comments and requested Monica forward her report and these issues can be addressed by the Clerk.

URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

00092 The Chairman requested noticeboards to feature on the next agenda. The space available to put notices on and the condition of those noticeboards.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Full Council meeting will take place on the 18th June 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

