

Minutes of a meeting of **WARBLETON PARISH COUNCIL** held on Thursday 16th January 2020 at 7.00am in The Dunn Village Hall, Rushlake Green

PRESENT: Councillors Bryan Whitton (Chairman) Andy Long (Vice Chairman), Karen Cook, Celia Davies, Roy Iremonger, Richard Reading, Mike Smythe, Chris Wells and Steve Williamson

Wealden District Councillor Bob Bowdler
East Sussex County Councillor Bill Bentley
6 members of the public
Locum Clerk – Linda Butcher

00014 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Cllr Pauline Velten
Wealden District Councillor Susan Stedman

00015 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Long declared a Prejudicial Interest in Warbleton Bonfire Society grant application and Warbleton and District Horticultural and Poultry Society grant application. In view of his Personal Interest in most of the other applications he confirmed he would again not participate in the debate or in any recommendations for grants.

Cllr Whitton declared a Prejudicial Interest in the Luncheon Club grant application and a Personal Interest in the Warbleton Bonfire Society grant application.

Cllr Reading declared a Prejudicial Interest in the Warbleton Bonfire Society grant

Cllr Smythe declared a Personal Interest in The Village Leaf grant application.

Cllr Mrs Cook declared a Personal Interest in The Village Leaf grant application.

Wealden District Cllr Bob Bowdler explained that he had to attend another meeting and asked Council if it was possible for him to speak earlier in the meeting. This was **AGREED** by all Members present. In order to allow members of the public present to also ask questions the item brought forward was

To **receive** reports from District Councillors with Public Participation

Cllr Bowdler went on to talk about the recent decision by the Planning Inspector concerning Wealden District Council's Local Plan and several members of the public and Councillors asked questions. Cllr Bowdler confirmed that now is a good time to put in planning applications and it was feared that developers would be doing so across the District. There was concern about traffic generation and there was a call for vehicles powered by other means, e.g. electric, gas.. It is acknowledged that planning in Wealden has been developer-led for some considerable time and suggested that officers and port folio holders should be held to account. However, Cllr Bowdley said it was too early to answer this question but felt the message has been received. Cllr Bowdler spoke from a prepared FAQs paper and a copy of this is on file with the Locum Clerk.

7,15pm Cllr Bowdler left to attend another meeting.

These are draft minutes and will be adopted at the next Council meeting

MINUTES

To **resolve** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17th October 2019 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

To **resolve** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21st November 2019 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillors advised the Locum Clerk that they had not received copies of amended minutes prior to this meeting so were unable to consider them at this time. The Locum Clerk apologised for this oversight and it was **AGREED** these outstanding minutes would be considered at the February Council meeting.

In the meantime, in answer to a question the Locum Clerk advised that the Draft minutes could be posted on the website clearing showing that they are draft minutes only.

00016 RESOLVED to post the draft minutes should be publicised as soon as possible.

The meeting then reverted to the original order

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was suggested that the Lund Fund could be approached to see if there is a grant available for finger post and footpath refurbishment. The closing date is 1st March and the Locum Clerk will look into this matter.

There was a query about why planning comments had not been submitted to Wealden District Council since the May election but the Locum Clerk was able to confirm that having spoken to Roger Bates, Planning and Environment who confirmed that only one comment had not been received. The Chairman of the Planning Committee explained that previously Cllr Jonathan Glass had undertaken to submit comments to WDC but since he had not rejoined the Council it had been considered that this might have been overlooked.

Julia Desch then advised that the Warbleton Wild flower group would not be an adjunct to the Council working group but would remain an informal group. She advised that there will be an event on 28th March at 2.15pm in the Bodle Street Green Village Hall.

Julia Desch then asked how the Council felt about her letter regarding Southern Water and Members confirmed that they were in agreement that the verges in several of the local lanes had been destroyed by the movement of not only Southern Water vehicles but also as a result of the diversions posted. It was suggested that contact should be made with Barry.Woodham@southernwater 07788356969. The question was asked as to whether the Council could invite the manager to come to a meeting and invite the public to attend. It was established that the County Council is

responsible for the diversion routes and that the County Councillors should be approached to see what it going to be done about all the damage.

Mrs Monica Adams-Acton referred to two items of correspondence and asked if the Chairman had received her letter of the 7th January in which she asked for a copies to be made available to all Councillors and asked if this had been done. She also suggested that the Council's communications were not good and needed improvement and that it should have a Publication Scheme. The Chairman replied that he had passed the letter to the Locum Clerk that evening. It was **AGREED** that correspondence should be on the next Council agenda.

Nigel McKeenan highlighted that The Village Leaf website referred to the Local Plan and the need to mitigate/improve environmental impact and that this is a live, very important subject.

7.45pm this item was then closed.

REPORTS

To **receive** reports from County Councillor

Cllr Bill Bentley reported that he had looked at Tilley Lane and others earlier in the day and advised that there is damage universally because of weather anyway but that this area is more significant because of the Southern Water extended timescale. He further advised that there is a project for re-instatement with Southern Water making a contribution. He reported that some local people do not use (and Satnavs take people away from) the official diversions using smaller but quicker routes and these have also been destroyed. The Asset Team are developing a scheme re. environmentally working with Herstmonceux Parish Council. There are policy differences between Herstmonceux and Warbleton as they cut more locally and do a wild flower meadow. Roads need cleaning as priority (WDC) with weekly inspections. It is County Council who will do reinstatement work. It was **AGREED** that it is not just Tilley Lane, but Prinkle Lane and Chilsham Lane too and that we need better liaison with other councils.

Cllr Bentley was happy to report that we do have a new Highway Steward and he would pass the details to the Locum Clerk.

It was **AGREED** the Locum Clerk would send a letter to Barry Woodham with a copy to our County Councillor.

Cllr Bentley was thanked for the new white linings and signage on the local roads.

Cllr Bentley then spoke about the Government's lateness in sending out details of the grants available to principle authorities. All financial planning is being made on assumptions with the view that there will be a draft budget available on 28th January.

He then reported on some road improvement schemes that have been completed but these are not within the Warbleton area, e.g. Hammer Lane, Colliers Green and A26 Eridge, the latter following a landslide.

With regard to the damage to roads in Warbleton, Karl Taylor is leading on this and is reviewing erosion on Chapmans Town and Marklye Road.

To **receive** reports from Parish Councillors

Cllr Iremonger advised that he had attended a WDALC meeting the previous evening and would serve as the Council's representative for a year.

Cllr Karen Cook said it had been too muddy and dangerous to inspect the footpaths but she confirmed that there are some trees down.

Cllr Celia Davies had attended the Dunn Village Hall monthly committee meeting and was pleased to report that £700 had been raised at the Christmas event. However, it is necessary for the committee to raise the hiring fees with effect from February. There is another fundraising event, a Sunday breakfast.

Cllr Davies also confirmed that the CIL meeting had been deferred until prior to the February meeting.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Planning and General Purposes – 29th October 2019

00017 RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Planning and General Purposes Committee meeting on 29th October 2019

Finance – 10th December 2019

00018 RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Finance meeting on 10th December 2019

Finance – 7th January 2020

00019 RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Finance meeting on 7th January 2020

To **agree** the make-up of the Recruitment Panel

The Locum Clerk advised that the following Councillors had emailed their expressions of interest together with their experience and/or qualifications:

Cllr Celia Davies, Cllr Steve Williamson, Cllr Mike Smythe and Cllr Chris Wells

NOTED

These are draft minutes and will be adopted at the next Council meeting

In answer to a question the Locum Clerk advised that expressions of interest could still be advised to her.

FINANCE and PRECEPT

To **receive** recommendations from Finance Committee concerning grants to local organisations

Cllr Williamson, Chairman of the Finance Committee explained the grants process and the powers used but that the Council may exceed its budget. Although Bodle Street Green Village Hall application was received four days late it was considered by the committee. With regard to The Village Leaf, although recognising the benefit of this website, no accounts had been received but the Committee hoped to find other ways of supporting the organisation.

00020 RESOLVED to accept the grants as listed on the attached sheet.

To **receive** recommendations from Finance Committee and **adopt** the budget and **resolve** precept requirement for 2020/2021

The Chairman of the Finance Committee explained the committee's decision to produce a balanced budget that involved increasing the precept by 6.1%. In 2019/20 Band D properties paid £24 per annum and this increase would equate to an increase of £1.46 per annum for a Band D Property

00021 RESOLVED to support the Finance committee and accept a budget of £18,366 and a precept of the same amount.

It was **AGREED** there would be a full and frank discussion regarding financial matters at the next Council meeting.

To **discuss** payments for the period and to authorise cheques

In answer to a question the Chairman of the Council, Cllr Bryan Whitton, advised that he had authorised the work undertaken by Mr S Pope and the payment to be made to him. The Locum Clerk advised all Councillors that individually they do not have the power to commission any work or authorise any payments. It was recognised that the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations need to be reviewed.

00022 RESOLVED to authorise the signing of the cheques as per the attached list.

To **note** Finance Reports and agree any actions

Cllr Williamson said that the November Finance Statement had been restated after the Council had agreed the reconciliation of the CIL account. Cllr Williamson expressed concern about the December Finance statement although the former Clerk had produced a financial statement there were errors and the bank statements had only just been received. He was not, therefore prepared to submit the December

statement to the Council but this would be available for the February Council meeting. He also advised Council that in future the VAT refund could not be included as income. In future a standard template for reporting would be adopted for the Council's financial records and to comply with regulations all small councils must publish a list of all payments over £100

To **consider** the appointment of an Internal Auditor

SALC had provided the Council with a list of known Internal Auditors and Members had been given a copy of this list identifying experience with local councils. A c.v. from another person who was a Councillor on another small council had been circulated to all Councillors and it was

00023 RESOLVED to appoint Neil A Whines as its Internal Auditor on a one year contract.

THE WAY FORWARD

To **consider** training requirements for Clerk and Councillors

Officer's Report – The appointment of a new Clerk following the resignation of the long-standing Clerk is a good time to consider any training needs required for both the Clerk and Members of the Council. The Council has accepted the proposal submitted by SSALC to undertake the recruitment process and this includes the basic training event for the new Clerk. However, as several Councillors have only been in office since May 2019 there is a need for Members to receive some basic training too.

It was AGREED that the Locum Clerk would investigate some bespoke training for Councillors.

To look at ways to implement better communications with residents, including improvements to the Council's website

Officer's Report – it is obvious that the current website is not up to date and in order to ensure that this is rectified as a matter of urgency it is suggested that a banner to the effect that "this website is currently undergoing improvements and is not available at present. We hope to reinstate it by the end of January. The Council apologises for any inconvenience caused."

00024 RESOLVED to instruct the Locum Clerk to obtain three quotations for providing a new website for the Parish Council.

In the meantime, the Locum Clerk would provide a communications strategy for the Council.

To **review** appropriate documents and policies for the Council

Officer's Report – The Council's current Standing Orders are very out of date and it is suggested a complete review is carried out as a matter of urgency. The NALC model Standing Orders should be used as the starting point.

The Council's Financial Regulations need to be reviewed and it is suggested that the Finance Committee should meet more regularly, at least quarterly and not just during the Autumn period. This will enable the accounts to be monitored by a Committee and not just one councillor throughout the year, the year-end figures to be confirmed prior to audit the budget to be formulated and the precept agreed in a timely manner.

It is important that policies relating to staff issues need to be in place – before there is a problem, e.g. Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure, Appraisal Scheme in order to set realistic targets for the Clerk.

Other documents include a Complaints Procedure, Terms of Reference and Delegation arrangements for Officers and Committee.

Noted

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

In future there would be a Crime Report item on the Council agenda.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm