



**Meeting of the Parish Council to be held
in the Village Hall, Northiam
at 7.00pm, Thursday 13 January 2022**

**Members of the Public and Press are welcome and encouraged to attend.
The first 15 minutes of the meeting are set aside for questions
from members of the public.**

MINUTES

ATTENDEES: Parish Councillors Sue Schlesinger (Chair), Tony Biggs (Vice-Chair), Dean Johnson, Penny Farmer, Jon Streatfeild, Robert Maltby, Tony Wadie & Anthony Wontner-Smith.

District Councillors Martin Mooney & Tony Ganly and County Councillor Paul Redstone.

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: None were received.

2) PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Maximum of 15 minutes)

Anya Pagden started by expressing disappointment that in light of a by-election being called, the matter of poll cards wasn't included in the minutes from the last meeting and felt that despite the cost they shouldn't have been decided against and that she hoped very much a letter to all households would be sent instead informing those who don't see social media or the Parish Magazine. The Chair said that the matter of the election would be covered in item 8.

Mr and Mrs Moon had prepared a statement about the appeal at Fernbank and explained that they had attended previous parish council meetings when the original application was discussed. They have made formal representations to the planning inspectorate stating their objections and the reasons for them. They thanked the Chair for allowing them to make a statement.

Mr Nevill then asked when Rother DC were going to properly look after the open field at the back of Goddens Gill. He said that they should fulfil their obligation to look after it. Cllr Farmer asked if he was the resident who had been cutting the grass using his own mower, and he confirmed that he was. Cllr Mooney said that whilst he agreed that Rother aren't abiding by the rules, at this time of year, he was enjoying the quiet undisturbed nature of it, but by the middle of summer is it much less attractive and navigable with weeds etc. Mr Nevill said that he had written to the Chief Executive of Rother DC and had not received any response. Cllr Mooney said that it was not a high-priority.

Someone asked for an update on the slide and Cllr Johnson said that he did now have all the necessary information and would be reporting an update in Item 10 ii).

The owner of Fernbank stated that there were chicken pens there now and they were looking to bring pigs over from another site. The issue of visibility is why he wants to create a new access on the other side of the road.

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Sue Schlesinger declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 11 b) ii).

4) MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 9 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting of Northiam Parish Council held on 9 December 2021 were confirmed as a true and correct record. Cllr Mooney pointed out that a comment he had made about grievance procedures had not been included, but the Clerk & Chair confirmed that it had (Pg 3). The minutes were duly signed by the Chair.

5) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Cllr Schlesinger reported that together with the Clerk and Cllr Biggs, they had visited Barclays Bank in Tunbridge Wells on Monday and completed the paperwork to open a new bank account. This account would be used to separate the income and payments for the St Francis Fields (SFF) Loan from village matters and would make things much easier to scrutinise.

The Clerk confirmed that the FOI request from Trevor Gilbert had been completed and Mr Gilbert had collected the information earlier in the week.

The Clerk asked which councillors would like to attend an SLR (Strengthening Local Relationships) meeting with Highways as it could only be a virtual meeting currently, not a face-to-face meeting. Cllr Farmer said that she would prefer to wait for a face-to-face meeting, but as the Clerk explained there was no date set yet for a return to physical meetings, and a virtual meeting would at least allow for issues to be raised, Cllr Farmer agreed to a virtual meeting. Cllr Johnson said he would also like to attend.

Action: The Clerk will make the necessary arrangements for a virtual SLR meeting.

6) REPORTS BY PARISH, COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Reports from County & District Councillors had previously been circulated (and are available as supporting papers on the website). There were no questions from members to either county or district councillors.

7) CIC LIAISON COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The drafted Terms of Reference for the newly appointed SFF Committee had been previously circulated to all councillors. These had been drafted at a meeting with 3 board members from the CIC the previous week. Cllr Maltby asked about the £2,000 limit on authorised decision-making by the committee and the Clerk explained that this was to save every costed item that the CIC wanted to progress with having to wait for full council approval. The CIC know that they have to get 3 quotes for items of expenditure over £1,000 and are otherwise governed by the same rules as apply to the Council. The Clerk asked if he would prefer that the amount of £2,000 was reduced, but Cllr Maltby didn't feel that was necessary.

Cllr Streatfeild asked if in terms of approving expenditure, was the kickstart fund the only finance available to the CIC in light of the finance report and draft budget for 2022/23. Cllr Biggs answered that he had informed the CIC at the recent meeting, that there was no on-going maintenance budget in the Parish Council's funds, and that the kickstart funds may have to be used for maintenance, and not just capital expenditure. Cllr Streatfeild then asked how much of the kickstart fund had been spent already, and the Clerk said that she had not had time to look through records and work this out yet. Cllr Streatfeild asked the Clerk to

minute that fact that at the time of the meeting, Councillors haven't had time to consider the amount left in the kickstart fund.

Cllr Farmer then asked about the timing of the meetings of the SFF Committee, and why if they were public meetings, were they taking place at 10am on a weekday when people were at work and would be unable to attend. The Chair responded that this had been arranged to fall within the Clerk's working hours and not necessitate a further journey for an evening meeting. The Clerk added that as a public meeting, the agenda and the minutes would be published in the same way as for a parish council meeting, and members of the public would have sight of discussions and could submit questions, or ask questions at the next Parish Council meeting as the timing had been calculated to allow for perusal of minutes from the SFF Committee meeting before the next parish council meeting.

There were no further questions, and Cllr Wontner-Smith proposed the Terms of Reference be adopted and Cllr Farmer seconded the proposal. All members were in favour.

8) COUNCILLOR VACANCY - an update

The Clerk updated the meeting on the election timetable, which is still not 100% confirmed until the notice of election is published on Thursday 20th January. However, the likely period for nominations would then run from Friday 21st January until 4pm on 28th January. The Clerk explained again that candidates needed to deliver their completed papers in person to Bexhill and due to current restrictions, Rother had requested that they make an appointment beforehand, to ensure that someone was available to receive the papers.

Cllr Farmer said that she thought a letter should be sent to all households to inform them of the election as a decision against producing official poll cards had been made due to costs. Cllr Schlesinger stated that only 7 households had requested an election. Cllr Farmer said that she was the only elected councillor and a by-election had never been requested before. Whilst she understands the cost implications, especially of poll cards, and less so of postage, she felt strongly that every resident should be informed including those who may not read the parish magazine or see the website or noticeboards. Cllr Wontner-Smith asked if delivering the letters by hand, as had happened previously, might be a compromise. Cllr Biggs pointed out that in the past a 30% turnout had resulted from 1000 hand-delivered letters.

Cllr Schlesinger proposed hand-delivery of letters and this was seconded by Cllr Farmer. Members then voted 5 to 4 in favour and the motion was duly carried. Cllr Wontner-Smith offered to deliver by hand (in his car) to those residents lying further afield.

The Clerk then strongly advised members to submit any proposed text for the letter to Rother's electoral department for absolute confirmation that it didn't contain any misleading information for the electorate.

9) FINANCES

a) Budget setting.

- i) The final draft of the budget had previously been circulated to councillors with a recommendation for the associated precept request. Cllr Farmer asked if the income from the cemetery/burial grounds once newly located to SFF would still be income for the Parish Council. The Clerk replied that she had not had time to verify this yet, and Cllr Maltby said that it probably wouldn't affect the financial year 2022/'23 anyway. No other questions or comments arose from the budget proposal.

- ii) Following on, Cllr Schlesinger proposed raising the precept from £95,000 to £100,000 – a 50:50 split of money for the loan repayment and for village matters. There was some discussion, where Cllrs Farmer, Wadie and Johnson felt that this increase was too high. The Clerk, referring to a report by Mulberry & Co., pointed out that the precept used to be £50,000 in the years since 2018/19 and had been reduced to £45,000 only in the previous financial year. Ordinarily a small inflationary rise is applied to allow for increasing costs and if that had been the case, Northiam's precept, excluding the loan repayment element, should be at over £60,425.
- Cllr Schlesinger again proposed raising the precept from £95,000 to £100,000 and this was seconded by Cllr Maltby. All members were in favour, apart from Cllr Wadie who voted against the increase. However, the motion was carried by a majority vote and the clerk duly signed the precept request form and will submit it to Rother before the deadline.

- b) The payment report for January 2022 (appendix 6) had been previously circulated and led to some questions, specifically regarding a cheque to Pete Sargeant for £1,480. Cllr Streatfeild said that the work had been specifically for the Pop-Up Pub (PuP), and was carried out before the CIC was a legal entity and they had wanted to prove that it could be financially independent.
- Cllr Maltby said that he wasn't disagreeing with Cllr Streatfeild but he pointed out that the Directors had each contributed personally in order to have some initial funds which had been used to buy furniture and supplies; then some electrical problems had come to light and Pete Sargeant had paid the invoice. Cllr Streatfeild agreed that the CIC had showed initiative, but asks who owns the furniture now?
- Jacky Broad, a member of the CIC Board asked the Chair if she could speak. The Chair confirmed that she could, and Jacky Broad pointed out that the electrical works were for a new water heater in the WC, and whilst this was for use by customers of the PuP, it was also for whoever is the tenant in the stables who also has use of the WC. Cllr Biggs said that in order to achieve match-funding the CIC have to show profits made from events such as the PuP, and this was a reason why they wanted the NPC to reimburse Pete Sargeant, to maximise the amount that could be match-funded and that perhaps a compromise was to allocate it from the kickstart fund.
- Cllr Farmer asked when the accounts would be made available to the Council, and Jacky Broad, as Treasurer of the CIC, confirmed that the financial year end was in May and at that point a detailed report would be submitted to NPC.
- Cllr Schlesinger then proposed that Pete Sargeant be paid but that it was an amount allocated from the kick-start fund. Cllr Biggs seconded this proposal and all members agreed that was the best compromise. All cheques were then duly signed.
- c) The interim clerk had prepared the most recent bank reconciliation and financial report, including a forecast to the year end (these are available on the website as supporting documents). She had made recommendations advising that all non-essential spending be stopped for the remainder of the current financial year, the CIC be informed that no further spending should take place until the new financial year and that £10,000 be moved from a reserve account. Members noted her recommendations.
- d) The time-sheet of the Clerk for the period 13/12/21-07/01/22 was approved and signed.

10) VILLAGE MATTERS:

- i) Cllr Biggs confirmed that having received quotes from three tree surgeons for the High priority tree work, he felt that D S Chestnut's quote was the best and he proposed that they be engaged to carry out the work. Cllr Farmer seconded this proposal and all members were in favour. Cllr Farmer said she was surprised that the oak trees on the village green hadn't been flagged. Cllr Biggs asked the Clerk to instruct D S Chestnut to schedule the works and to thank the other suppliers for submitting their quotes.

Action: The Clerk will instruct D S Chestnut and thank the other two suppliers for submitting their quotes.

- ii) Cllr Johnson then gave an update on the playground insurance claim. He too had received all three quotes now for the slide replacement and the best quote was from Playsafe Playground. He proposed that they be instructed to do the work and asked the Clerk to inform the insurance company that a satisfactory quote had been received and to arrange for next steps. Cllr Biggs also asked Cllr Johnson if he could ask for a Risk Assessment & Method Statement from the supplier.

Actions: The Clerk will contact the insurance company about organising the work to replace the slide.

Cllr Johnson will arrange for a risk assessment and Method Statement.

Cllr Johnson then mentioned the worn away NO PARKING sign in front of the gates and the need to re-paint the lettering. The Clerk said that she had been informed by John O'Conner's that it was the wrong time of year for road painting, and it needed to be warmer for the paint to adhere properly. The Clerk was asked to re-visit alternative suppliers or to see if there was another method available that wasn't weather dependent.

Action: The Clerk will re-visit sign painting on the road in front of the gates.

- iii) The Clerk had received an email enquiry from Amy McFaite's about a Riding for the Disabled centre at the stables at SFF. The Clerk read from the email where Ms McFaite is asking to assess the site, and said that ESCC have provisionally confirmed that they would be willing to fund it. The local centre had closed and demand would be high in the area. She also said that she would be looking for a minimum 10-year lease. Councillors asked the Clerk to respond to Ms McFaite and invite her to inspect the site as a first step.

Action: The Clerk will reply to Amy McFaite and make an appointment for her to view the stables.

- iv) Councillors' Reports

Cllr Wontner-Smith and Cllr Wadie had nothing to report.

Cllr Maltby said that he was trying to re-invigorate the school crossing patrol scheme. He had spoken to the Headmistress at the school who has no objections or criteria about size regarding a banner. He will now speak to Glynn at Moloney's to get things moving along.

Cllr Schlesinger re-stated that she is in the parish office every Wednesday from 12-2pm for any resident who wishes to raise any matters in person. Someone had taken this opportunity to ask about the whereabouts of the village's Victorian Hearse, which Cllr Schlesinger confirmed is at the Wealden Museum. She also noted that the bench in Ewhurst Lane is broken and Cllr Maltby added that of the village's 10 benches in total, 3 are in bad state of repair. The suggestion was to get rid of those which are broken and save the expense of repairs as they were in places where they were not required.

Cllr Biggs re-iterated the information about the fact that the police were holding the cannister found in the playground after the fire that damaged the slide to use for forensic examination if further evidence came to light. The PCSO meeting in December highlighted the two main concerns being a lack of police presence in the village and speeding. Operation Dragonfly over Christmas for drug & drink driving had been a success, and the only crime for the Northiam area in the quarterly crime report had been a damaged fence in Northiam. Cllr Biggs went on to thank members of the Bonfire Society for their help with the removal of the Christmas Tree. He also then stated that he had been surprised to learn that he had been reported to the Monitoring Officer at Rother by Cllr Streatfeild. The complaint had been dismissed but Cllr Biggs wanted to take the opportunity to say in public that he felt if councillors had grievances, they should talk them through face to face around the table. Cllr Streatfeild responded to say that the reason he had gone to the Monitoring Officer was following the meeting with the CIC which he hadn't been allowed to attend and where he felt questions weren't put to the CIC regarding matters such as payment to Pete Sargeant. He also said that he had been subject to defamatory social media and rumour that he & Cllr Farmer want to run DIY livery. Cllr Biggs replied that when asked by the Clerk to remove his posting as it hadn't been approved by the Council, but was written as if it was the opinion of the Council and using his Parish Council email address for replies, Cllr Streatfeild had refused to take down the post. Cllr Streatfeild replied that he had been asked to conduct research on behalf of the parish council and this is why he had made the posting.

Cllr Maltby then said he would like to reiterate what Cllr Biggs had said about airing grievances. He had also been reported by Cllr Streatfeild and the Monitoring Officer had asked Cllr Maltby to apologise. He is refusing to do so. The Chair then called the meeting to order and continued with individual councillor's reports.

Cllr Farmer said that having inherited the Chairmanship of the Jubilee C'ttee, she would like to arrange a meeting at the end of January for all the clubs and society to discuss who will organize which stands etc. She then asked Cllr Mooney about the rats at Goddens Close and he confirmed that the contractor had visited the site. Cllr Farmer also reminded him about the gate on the field, still without a padlock. Cllr Mooney confirmed that he had reported it and can't do much more. Cllr Farmer said she hoped that if it causes a problem in the future, Rother DC will help Northiam PC to deal with it.

Cllr Johnson – nothing further to report.

11) PLANNING:**a) New Applications**

- i) RR/2021/2866/P – Crockers Lane, agricultural storage building at Northiam TN31 6PY
Proposal: Conversion of the agricultural storage barn from agricultural use to C3 residential annex use.
Response: Cllr Farmer asked the Clerk to verify if this application is for the same agricultural building that submitted an application that the Council previously objected to.
- ii) RR/2021/2862/P – Glebe Stables, Hastings Road, Northiam TN31 6NH
Proposal: Demolition of existing garage and building of new annexe with accommodation.
Response: Members had no objection to this application conditional to enforcement of a Section 32 agreement that the building never be sold off separately.
- iii) RR/2021/3061/P – Pinchgate Cottage, Horns Cross, Rye TN31 6JH
Proposal: Detached garage/store with family room/home office over and extension of the driveway within the site.
Response: Members had no objections to this application.
- iv) RR/2021/3038/T – 4, High Meadow, Northiam TN31 6GA
Oak (T1) – reduce by 7m to previous pruning points. Oak (T2) - reduce by 7m to previous pruning points.
Response: Members had no objections to this application, provided that Rother's Tree Officer had no objections.
- v) RR/2021/3088/T – 13, Northridge, Northiam TN31 6PG
Silver birch (T1) - 30% crown reduction to include crown life and prune, Cherry (T2) - formative prune and thin.
Response: Members had no objections to this application, provided that Rother's Tree Officer had no objections.
- vi) RR/2021/3061/P – Pinchgate Cottage, Horns Cross, Rye TN31 6JH
Duplication of item (iii)

b) Appeals

- i) APP/U1430/W/21/3279247/2768 located at Fernbank – land adjacent to, Rye Road, Northiam (original planning application ref: RR/2021/599/P)
Description: Relocation of vehicular access to the land and stop up existing vehicular access to the land (retrospective).
 Cllr Farmer said that as the Council had objected to the application previously, it could only re-submit the same comments again. Mr Fairbrass explained that a planning adviser had advised him to move the entrance on safety grounds. Mrs

Moon mentioned the Highways report that objected to the new access because of reduced visibility.

Cllr Mooney then informed the Clerk that whilst an appeal is with the Planning Inspectorate, it should not be open to public debate as this is *sub judiciary*. The agenda can include the information that an appeal is in motion, but no public discourse should take place. The Clerk apologised and said that she wasn't aware of this. The Chair immediately brought discussions to a close and the following item was also not discussed.

- ii) APP/U1430/W/21/3279250/2767 located at Coombe Cottage, Ewhurst Lane, Northiam (original planning application ref: RR/2019/2641/P)
Description: Demolition of existing bungalow and construction of four residential units. Provision of new driveway and eco-sewer system.

c) Enforcement Notices/Updates – For information only

- i) Land adj to Ilex Close, Northiam TN31 6DW – caravan moved onto site very close to houses in Ilex Close.
No further action after enforcement officer spoke to planning agent on 14th December to ask if screening can be carried out to provide some privacy to neighbouring properties.
- ii) Land at Adams Lane, Northiam – unauthorized use of the land/buildings land. New complaint received 4th Jan 2022

d) Decision Notices – For information only

- i) Wellington Cottage, Ewhurst Lane, Northiam - Permission granted to replace aluminium roller doors to garage with new window and brickwork to match existing.
- ii) 1, Cedar Close, Northiam – Permission granted to remove existing canopy and replace with oak framed porch to the front of the dwelling.
- iii) Torphin, Station Road, Northiam – permission refused for new outbuilding to provide ancillary accommodation/annexe for disabled relative (retrospective).
- iv) 3, Ghyllside Road, Northiam – Permission granted for a loft conversion, including new front and rear dormers and front porch modification.
- v) Bekenfield, Dixter Lane, Northiam – Permission granted for formation of habitable bedrooms and shower room in part of attic space of existing roof.

Cllr Mooney mentioned that he has received a complaint from the tenant at No 1 St Francis Fields stating that the bungalow is not in a habitable state for reasons of dampness. Cllr Schlesinger said that the tenant could call in to the office to see her on a Wednesday between 12 and 2pm, but that the Council would look into the matter anyway.

Meeting closed at 8.47pm

