



Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council to be held in the Village Hall, Northiam at 7.00pm, Thursday 12 May 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:

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE had been received from Cllrs Johnson, Wadie and Streatfeild.

2) ELECTIONS: appointment and allocations

- a. Cllr Biggs (TB) proposed that Cllr Schlesinger (SS) be re-elected as Chairman and Cllr Wontner-Smith seconded the proposal. This was unanimously supported and SS duly signed the acceptance of office of chairman.
- b. SS proposed that Cllr Biggs be re-elected as Vice-Chairman and Cllr Maltby (RM) seconded the proposal. This was unanimously supported and TB duly signed the acceptance of office of vice-chairman.
- c. SS stated that she was happy to remain as the Council representative for the Village Hall, and as there were no other suggestions, she was so declared.
- d. The Clerk had previously suggested that Cllr Farmer (PF) would be the best Council representative for RALC (Rother Association of Local Councils). PF agreed and as there were no other suggestions, she was so declared.
- e. The current allocation of sub committees the Financial Advisory Group (FAG) and the SFF Liaison Committee was briefly discussed. All members were content to remain in post, and there being no other suggestions, these allocations remain the same. They are: Cllrs Schlesinger, Biggs, Farmer & Maltby on the FAG and Cllrs Schlesinger, Biggs & Wadie on the SFF Liaison Committee.
- f. Councillors' Lead Responsibilities were discussed, and in the absence of 3 members were stated as:
Cllr Johnson & Cllr Farmer – playground
Cllr Biggs – cemetery & police (PCSO) liaison
Cllr Maltby – the updating of the Asset Register & Emergency Plan
Cllr Dallimore – IT advisory
Cllr Wontner-Smith – Allotments
The Clerk suggested re-visiting lead responsibilities at a future meeting with a full complement of members present.

**3) The dates of parish council meetings for the ensuing year were confirmed to be the second Thursday of the month at 7pm. Therefore, the dates of future meetings are as follows:
2022: 9th June, 14th July, 11th August, 8th September, 13th October, 10th November and 8th December
2023: 12th January, 9th February, 9th March, 13th April and 11th May (AGM)**

The Clerk was asked to make the necessary arrangements to book the village hall for meetings.

- 4) To approve the Asset Register of Council Property. This item was carried forward to the next meeting as RM had completed the majority of updating the Asset Register pre-Covid, but the remainder needs completion.

5) **STANDING ORDERS**

The proposal to note the date of the most recent review & confirm re-adoption of Standing Orders, Members Code of Conduct and approve and adopt Financial Regulations was discussed. Cllr Dallimore (BD) doesn't feel that the current SO's reflect all of the council's capabilities. With some amendments, it would be easier to understand processes and contribute more collaboratively. BD proposed members consider amendments that he will present after further deliberation of the standard NALC model and this was seconded by SS, and carried unanimously. SS asked how long it would take him? BD confirmed that he would prioritise it over the coming months.

6) **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Maximum of 15 minutes)**

Alan Dickinson, surveyor & planning agent wanted to explain a couple of recent changes regarding the planning application being discussed (Item 15 v) at The Hayes. Recent changes are to make the parking less intrusive, re-instate a chimney and an adjustment to access to the site. Members thanked him for his explanations.

Francesca Thorn (FT) said she had 3 questions: firstly, the recent road re-surfacing was good, but the road marking with speed notices had not been re-instated. The Clerk & PF offered to chase Highways. Secondly, she asked if the council were going to decide what to do with the S106 monies from the Donsmead estate? With inflation & construction costs rising, she urged that they shouldn't delay any further. SS said that the money must be spent on recreational activities, and TB added that there have been some previous suggestions of a new football pavilion – the current one is in a terrible state. Two people from the football team are looking at lottery funding and then hopefully the S106 can be used to try and match fund. He hopes that it will move forward in the summer.

Finally, she raised the point that at the parish meeting on 28th April, she felt that the councillors who walked out having called the meeting was appalling, and asked therefore who was going to pay for the hire of the village hall and the clerk's time? There was an exchange between PF and FT about the reason for calling the meeting, and BD further added that it was a public meeting, properly called, and therefore the parish council would be paying any associated costs.

Janet Burns (JB) then spoke about Speedwatch. The volunteers feel a bit on their own, and help from our local police would be appreciated. Following the annual parish meeting, they have recruited 2 more volunteers but ideally would like a detection van – can the police help with that? TB offered to get in touch with the PCSO & put them in touch. RM asked how they plan when they go out? JB said there 8 volunteers, and they try to do it 3 times a week, but where they stand has to have police approval. They are regularly thanked by several people. Finally, she said that a cyclist had reported the dreadful state of the road from Frewen College towards Beckley which has many deep potholes. PF and the Clerk will pass this on to the Highways Steward.

7) **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Maltby declared a personal interest regarding item 15 v).

8) MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members approved the minutes of the meeting of Northiam Parish Council held on 14 April 2022 and the Parish Meeting held on 28th April 2022 and SS duly signed them.

9) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

a) No 1 & No 2 St Francis Fields bungalows

SS reported that a 3-way meeting had taken place in order to reach a compromise agreement regarding the compensation claim from the former tenant in No.1. After some tough negotiating, an amount equal to 2.5 months rent was agreed upon. A mutual release agreement had been drawn up for both parties to sign, and council authorised SS to sign on behalf of the parish council. The clerk would arrange for the payment to be made. RM stated that members have learnt from the experience. TB clarified that it would be paid from the Barclays account.

No 2 has a bad condensation problem. Trevor Gilbert (TG) had helped to source 4 companies who will carry out surveys, including one who will make a charge of approximately £95 for the survey. TG suggested using the one who charges, as surveyors don't work for free, and this will provide an accurate report which can be compared with two others. Council agreed with that suggestion and TB offered to arrange the surveys.

b) S106 monies

The Indemnity Deed has now been signed by all parties and sealed and the clerk is waiting to confirm that monies have been received. This will be paid into the Barclays account ready to use for surveys etc. to assess the site earmarked for the new burial ground.

c) Storm Eunice insurance claim

The clerk confirmed that all the required information had been sent to the insurers, and she is waiting to hear if they will send out a loss adjuster. TB thanked Jacky Broad and the A Team for all their work.

10) REPORTS BY COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

A report from Rother had previously been submitted by District Councillors Mooney and Ganly (published on the website as a supporting paper). County Councillor Redstone was back after a period of absence due to ill health, and had also submitted a report. He further added that he was pleased to be back, and wanted to know of any nominations to receive an invitation to the Queen's Tea hosted by the Chairman of ESCC at their headquarters in Lewes. TB suggested the school crossing patrol, Pat Raven, who has been in the role for 30-40 years. PR thought this was an excellent suggestion and PF offered to send him contact details.

11) ANNUAL PARISH MEETING on 5th MAY – A report

SS reported that there had been a good turnout for an enjoyable evening. She had met residents she hadn't spoken to before, and gained a new volunteer litter-picker. TB said that the individual village organisations had received new enquiries and Judith O'Conner (JOC) congratulated the Chairman on a successful meeting.

12) SFF COMMITTEE MEETING on 28th APRIL – A report

The main item from the recent liaison meeting included a request to authorise the pre-application advice fee of £465 + VAT to progress the change of use application. TB confirmed that this was a necessary expenditure, to be paid from the Barclays account, as the advice from Highways is critical, but it should have been carried out before. Cllr Mooney made a point of order that planning permission was refused due to access, so it wouldn't have been done before. JOC said that the CIC are putting forward the principal activities, and once plans are known about, enforcement action which can take a long time, will be withdrawn.

SS then reported that alongside the lease, a Letter of Intent had been written and signed by both parties. SS read from a CIC email stating that in the future, parish councillors should leave all contact and management of the stables tenant to the CIC.

The clerk confirmed that the sheds for the bungalows have been ordered. The clerk will endeavour to finalise the utility bills before 1st June.

13) FINANCES

- a) The payment report for May 2022 had been circulated previously and was approved. One cheque was signed, and the clerk will arrange online payments for authorisation.
- b) The financial report had been circulated to all members, and the clerk confirmed that the bank account was reconciled to date.
- c) The time-sheet of the Clerk for the period 11/04/22-06/05/22 was approved.

14) VILLAGE MATTERS

- i) Correspondence

The parish council had received a letter about oak trees planted in Ghyllside. PF said that residents can't plant on Highways and County Councillor Paul Redstone (PR) confirmed that they would need to apply for a licence. PR offered to look into the matter. SS had also received a letter from a previous chairman of the parish council about the fact that the village was looking untidy with overgrown grass etc. However, she also received a 'phone call from a resident who wanted to leave the wildflowers to grow. PR asked for details to make contact on behalf of Highways. The matter of the verge outside Jempson's was raised again. Highways don't allow posts of any sort to prevent parking on the verge as they are an obstruction.

Finally, a letter had been received from Kent Air Ambulance requesting a donation. Members agreed that annual donation of £500 be made, and asked the clerk to arrange this.
- ii) Clerk recruitment – an update

SS stated that a new clerk has been appointed. Her name is Nicola Ideson (Nicky) and she is starting on Monday 16th May. There will be two weeks of handover. SS suggested giving the new clerk time to settle in & not to bombard her with emails.
- iii) Councillors' Reports

AWS – Nothing to report.

PF said that she was trying to establish if the fallen tree at Workhouse Pond is the parish council's responsibility or if it is on the boundary and therefore owned by Optivo. The clerk is looking into it. Also, residents are still complaining about overgrown hedges on pathways. BD offered to have another look and cut it back.

BD said that at the APM the previous week, he had been told by some residents about the activities that go on near the scout hut. PF confirmed that it is not very acceptable behaviour but it's a police issue. BD suggested putting in a gate with a padlock, but again Optivo own the land and should carry that out. TB offered to forward the information to the PCSO.

RM – Nothing to report.

TB said that the library volunteers had asked if the council would approve the sale of books that are no longer needed? They hope to sell them at the Village Fete & Jubilee event and any money made would be re-invested. The Council agreed that this was a good idea.

The cemetery volunteers were very disappointed that grass wasn't cut (it had been done on the day of the meeting). The graves need constant weeding and they would like to put weed suppressant down and stones to help reduce the number of weeds coming through, and it would look more presentable. One large bag of stones is £175 and TB suggested this could be paid for from the S106 money. The council approved this expenditure.

The Victim of Crime fund had paid out £1000 – this has now been received. Finally, he had spoken to Rother about splitting the precept payment into the two bank accounts – one for SFF and one for the village. The clerk confirmed that this has now been arranged. Similarly, the loan repayments will be taken directly from the new Barclays account and all income & expenditure will be clear. The clerk had just produced the first separated financial reports.

Jacky Broad added that for clarity the new Barclays account is nothing to do with the CIC – only the parish council can authorise payments from it, or access it online.

15) PLANNING

After a brief discussion about each application, all members were unanimously in support of all the following cases, and deferred to Rother's Tree Officer for item iv). The clerk was asked to submit the necessary comments online.

New Applications/Amendments to current applications:

- i) RR/2022/839/P – Weights Wood Cottage, Dixter Lane, Northiam TN31 6PR
Proposed detached garage and log store
- ii) RR/2022/594/P – Great Dixter, Dixter Lane, Northiam TN31 6PH
Proposal: New access to existing underground reservoir for maintenance and repairs.
- iii) RR/2022/1016/P - Hollowfield, Ewhurst Lane, Northiam TN31 6PA
Proposal: Erection of single storey front extension.
- iv) RR/2022/101/T – Glebe Stables, Hastings Road, Northiam TN31 6NH
T1 – Horse chestnut to be felled to ground level
- v) RR/2022/658/P (and associated listed building consent application RR/2022/660/L) – The Hayes, Church Lane, Northiam TN31 6NN
Proposal: Subdivision to form two dwellings to include insertion of rooflights, windows & doors, re-slating & re-tiling roof slopes, relocation of shed & additional parking spaces.

TB then raised the fact that a lot of rumours continue to circulate about a housing project taking place on SFF. He asked if any councillors present could say who is the contractor, how many houses are being built and when did NPC agree to it? He proposed that a notice was put in the noticeboards and office window to quash all rumours. Other members agreed. The Clerk was asked to write an appropriate notice. PF added that the only thing in discussion is an exception site, and the housing needs survey was the first requirement carried out to establish a need for this. BD asked if it is correct that only Rother can make the judgement about what is an exception site? District Councillor Ganry confirmed that this was the case.

All appeals, enforcements and decision notices have been previously circulated to Councillors.

Meeting closed 8.31pm