



**Meeting of the Parish Council to be held
in the Village Hall, Northiam at 7.00pm,
Thursday 9th March 2023**

MINUTES

Present: Carolyn Pierce, Bob Russell, Penny Farmer, Dean Johnson, Jon Streatfeild, Ben Dallimore

Georgina Jackson, Locum Clerk, Cllr Redstone, Cllr Mooney, Cllr Ganly and 38 Members of the Public

Date: 13th March 2023

Cllr Dallimore declared that he would be recording the meeting.

1) To elect a Chairman for the Parish Council and receive declaration of acceptance of Office for Chairman.

A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Streatfeild be appointed as Chairman.

2) Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Cllr Woner-Smith (Holiday) with reasons for absence. It was **RESOLVED** that the apologies be accepted.

The meeting closed at 19.04

3) Public Questions (Maximum of 15 minutes)

A member of the public spoke about the upcoming elections.

A member of the public spoke about using St Francis Field for an event.

A member of the public asked for the council's support regarding anti social behaviour.

The meeting reopened at 19.16

4) Declarations of Interests and Lobbying

Cllr Dallimore declared an interest in item 9ix.

5) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

To approve and sign the minutes and confidential report of the Full Council meeting held on 9th February 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 9th February 2023 be approved and the Minutes were duly signed.

6) Motions from Councillors

(a) Cllr Dallimore; To enact and promote the ideas presented in the Northiam Biodiversity Action Plan for Hedgehogs.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item to after the May elections.

(b) Cllr Russell; To consider the investigation from Rother District Council.

Cllr Steatfeild admitted that his previous behaviour was inappropriate and apologised for this.

Cllr Streatfeild left the meeting at 19.22

Cllr Russell asked for a recorded vote on this item.

The investigation was discussed and it was reported that Cllr Streatfeild had attending training as suggested, and had stepped down previously from a committee before the investigation took place.

A vote was taken on whether the council felt this was sufficient.

In favour

Cllrs Dallimore, Farmer, Johnson, Pierce

Against

Cllr Russell

Cllr Streatfeild re-entered the meeting at 19.29

7) To agree meeting on the Lost England Project for Wednesday 12th April at 18.30.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item to after the May elections.

8) Events

a) To consider request from The Bonfire Society to use the playing fields on 23rd and 24th June 2023 to hold a midsummer festival.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the request to hold the midsummer festival.

b) To consider request from The Village Hall Committee to use the playing fields on 25th June 2023 to hold a boot fair.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the request to hold the boot fair.

c) To consider request from the Bonfire Society to renew the permission to erect an advertising sign on the village green prior to the following events – 2 craft fairs (11/03/23 and 02/12/23), Midsummer Festival (24/06/23) and Garden Safari (21.05.23).

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the request for the advertising signs as long as the correct due diligence has been undertaken with Rother District Council.

9) Finances

- i) To receive & approve the accounts for payment for February 2023.
The payments of £6,707.89 for January 2023 were circulated and **AGREED** minus the payment to Rother District Council as a request has been made to change the payee on the invoice.
- ii) Verification of bank reconciliation – January and February 2023
The chairman and RFO will review bank statement and reconciliation statement for Signature.
It was reported that the Scribe accounting system was not up to date and that an reconciling exercise was taken place with the accounts dating back to the beginning of the financial year. Once this has been completed a full reconciliation can take place.
- iii) To receive draft financial reports within the budget structure and monitor each lines performance against budget and report significant variances to full council with recommendations for appropriate action – to date 2023. 91% YTD Variations of expenditure in excess of 15%
- Administration Misc.
 - Website.
 - Lollypop lady contribution.
 - Misc income.
 - Library
 - Playground.
 - SFF Stables.
 - Bungalow.
 - SFF Utilities

The above variances in excess of 15% were discussed and it was explained that on some budget lines expenditure had not been budgeted for, some lines income had not shown on the system and some budget lines were underbudgeted.

- iv) To approve the time-sheet of the Locum Clerk for the period 04/02/2023 – 03/03/2023
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the time sheet.
- v) To approve the travel expenses for the Locum Clerk.
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the travel expenses.
- vi) To approve the time sheet of Responsible Finance Officer.
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the time sheet of the Responsible Finance Officer.
- vii) To consider a higher fidelity guarantee on the parish insurance policy as recommended by the internal auditor.
It was **RESOLVED** to increase the fidelity guarantee to £300,000.
- viii) To agree the disposal of the Mary Shipstone slide.
The disposal of the slide was **AGREED**.

Cllr Dallimore left the meeting at 19.42

- ix) To receive quotation of £750 for tree works at St Francis Field and agree actions. A discussion took place on the quotation for a crown reduction and balance, it was **RESOLVED** to proceed with the quotation.

Cllr Dallimore re-entered the meeting at 19.45

10) Grant Funding

- (a) To consider request from the Village Hall Committee regarding a contribution to the Kings Coronation event.
It was **RESOLVED** to donate £500 to the Village Hall Committee for the Kings Coronation event.

11) To agree to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 20th March at 19.45.

It was **RESOLVED** to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 20th March at 19.45 in the usual format.

12) Audit 2021-2022

- (a) To note Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2021/22.
The external auditor made the following comments:

The smaller authority has disclosed that it made proper provision during the year 2020/21 for the exercise of public rights, by answering 'Yes' to Section 1, Assertion 4. However, as was reported last year, we are aware that it failed to do this and therefore should have answered 'No' to this assertion. It has also disclosed that it took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit, by answering 'Yes' to Section 1, Assertion 7, which, on the basis of the above, is not correct.

It was **noted** that further education on the AGAR assertions were needed.

The date for Section 2 has been incorrectly recorded on the AGAR. The minutes of the meeting at which the AGAR was approved have been reviewed and demonstrate that Sections 1 and 2 have been approved in the correct order. The smaller authority should ensure that the correct dates are recorded on the AGAR in future.

This was **noted**.

The smaller authority has not provided:

- an adequate explanation for the variance between the prior and current year values in Box 3 of Section 2
- information to allow us to determine whether certain costs have incorrectly been included in Section 2, Box 4 instead of Box 6, in error.

This was **noted**.

- (b) To note the late publication of conclusion.
The late publication of conclusion was **noted**.
- (c) To consider interim internal audit.

The interim audit was considered and the following was **noted**.

- The audit report and the Notice of Conclusion form were added to the council's website on 3 October 2022, which is beyond the statutory date for publication.

The council are not aware of receiving any further correspondence from the External Auditor since September, and the Locum Clerk is encouraged to contact the External Auditor to clarify if any matters remain outstanding, and if not to obtain the certificate of completion and publish this on the council website.

- The auditor recommends the council ensures that the councillor details are consistent across both websites, and that the link to the District Council website showing the Register of Members Interests' is made more prominent by placing on the councillor page.
- There is a meeting diary on the District Council website, although I recommend this is added to the Parish Council website for greater transparency.
- The auditor reminds the council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office.
- The auditor recommends the Financial Regulations are reviewed for appropriateness and detail confirmed within the square bracket sections.
- The auditor has no doubt that invoices are presented to council for review and approval, the retained audit trail in terms of signing of payment lists and/or invoices has lapsed, and he recommends these practices are re-introduced to confirm beyond doubt that payments are being properly authorised.
- The auditor recommends the financial risk assessment is reviewed against the planned internal controls to ensure consistency.
- Previous internal audits have included the recommendation to increase the level of Fidelity Guarantee to cover the balances held by the council, and the auditor would like to see confirmation this has been considered and actioned by reviewing the policy schedule at the final audit.
- The auditor recommends, at least quarterly, the council is presented with a detailed budget report confirming actual spend to date against budget, with variances discussed and considered and appropriate action being taken and recorded in the minutes.
- The auditor recommends at the financial year end, a thorough review of the balances held by the council, is conducted to ensure everyone understands which amounts are held for which specific purpose, and the ensure the difference between earmarked and general reserves is understood.

- The auditor reminds council that monthly reconciliations must take place of all accounts to provide assurance that the accounting records match the bank statements, and a quarterly independent review must take place in accordance with FR 2.2, the reconciliation and bank statement must be signed, and this must be reported to council and noted in the minutes.
- The council has several bank accounts with different financial institutions, although there appears to be some confusion as to the purpose of each account and the proposed use of funds on each. This will need to be resolved by the financial year-end, so that all councillors are clear on the account balances, the purpose of each and how these relate to the council's overall financial position.

13) Governance

- a) To consider and adopt the Financial Regulations.
It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Financial Regulations.
- b) To consider Terms of Reference for St Francis Field Committee.
It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Terms of Reference for the St Francis Field Committee.
- c) To agree a substitution for the St Francis Field Committee.
A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Johnson would be the substitution for the St Francis Field Committee.
- d) To consider reporting to the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities perceived breaches to the terms of the loan agreement.
After discussion it was **RESOLVED** to report perceived breaches of the loan agreement to the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

14) To consider grazing application for St Francis Field.

A discussion took place regarding due diligence, it was **RESOLVED** to defer this item until further information is received.

15) Reports by County and District Councillors

- i) District Councillor Mooney
The following was reported:
 - Electric car charging points.
 - The village hall energy project.
- ii) Cllr Ganly had nothing further to add.
- iii) County Councillor Paul Redstone
Cllr Redstone reported on the following:-
 - Potholes, members of the public are encouraged to report any potholes.
 - Contractor parking at the Paddocks development.
 - Road safety.

16) VILLAGE MATTERS

- i) Correspondence

27/01/2023 – Email from Member of the Public regarding Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Noted.

09/02/2023 – Email from Member of the Public regarding planning applications. **Noted.**

ii) Councillors' Reports

Cllr Dallimore asked for an update on his question from the last meeting regarding the relationship between the CIC and the parish council, it was reiterated that this would be discussed at the next CIC meeting.

Cllr Johnson reported his communications with the contractor chosen for the cemetery path and play area fencing.

17) To consider the letter from Hadlow Down Parish Council regarding East Sussex Highways and agree actions.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item to after the May elections.

18) To note the appeal to the Secretary of State in relation to the planning application at The Cedars, Station Road, Northiam - RR/2021/1084/P.

This was **noted**.

19) To consider Rother Parking Review 2022-2023.

Cllr Farmer reported on the impact of the parking review on Northiam. It was **RESOLVED** to respond in favour of the yellow lines by the school.

20) Planning

New Applications/Amendments to current applications:

- i) RR/2023/191/FN
Cooks Yard Farm, New Road, Northiam TN31 6HS

Application to determine if prior approval is required for an extension to the barn on the south facing side of the building

<https://planweb01.rother.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningDetails?reference=RR/2023/191/FN&from=planningSearch>

RDC have required the applicant to submit a full application at the point NPC will submit a comment.

- ii) RR/2023/321/P
Rosebud Cottage, Main Street, Northiam TN31 6LP

Proposed development for two houses with new vehicular access.

<https://planweb01.rother.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningDetails?reference=RR/2023/321/P>

It was **RESOLVED** that Northiam Parish Council objects to this application on the following grounds:-

- The development is overbearing in nature and design and presents an unattractive street scene and presents an unattractive street scene which is wholly out of character within a conservation area.
- The proposal fails to represent good architectural quality and design and would detract from the character and appearance of adjoining properties contrary to Policy OSS4 and EN3 of the Rother District Local Plan Core Strategy which is not appropriate in the Northiam Conservation Area.
- The entrance/ access to the properties is located along a section of the A28 which is habitually a single track due to parked vehicles of local residents and visitors to the Village snooker club. There are two junction on either side of the carriageway one of which has very limited visibility to oncoming vehicles.
- The proposed development has not demonstrated that the parking provision can be safely accessed/ egressed to and from the public highway, resulting in unacceptable interference with the free flow of traffic along the A28 and would therefore be contrary to Policy TR3 of the Rother District Local Plan Core Strategy.
- Northiam Parish Council request that Highways look at this application.

iii) RR/2023/326/P
Windmill Cottage, Beacon Lane, Northiam TN31 6PJ

The erection of 1No. New Dwelling house adjacent to the building known as Windmill Cottage, together with the associated new landscaping.

<https://planweb01.rother.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningDetails?reference=RR/2023/326/P>

It was **RESOLVED** to comment that NPC would like the following statement loaded as a 'Comment' as RDC have already approved a previous application RR/2022/2355/P for two dwellings.

Windmill Cottage already have an approved application RR/2022/2355/P for two dwellings on the same site. It appears that they now want to alter dwelling 1. However the plot will now accommodate two dwellings where previously there had only been one and therefore does not appear to comply with EN3 and OSS4 (iii).

iv) RR/2023/2938/P
Morley Cottage - Land adjacent to, Beckley Road, Northiam TN31 6JB

Erection of an agricultural building to be used for the safe and secure storage of agricultural equipment, machinery and coppiced timber.

<https://planweb01.rother.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningDetails?reference=RR/2022/2938/P&from=planningSearch>

Noted.

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

21) To agree the public’s exclusion from the confidential part of the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting and move into confidential session.

The meeting moved into confidential session at 20.34

That in view of the confidential nature of the business (employment/legal issues) about to be transacted it was resolved under the provisions of Public Bodies admissions to meetings Act 1960 s.1 that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw.

22) Contractual

To discuss the Pest Control Contract and agree actions.

A discussion took place and it was **RESOLVED** to obtain further contract details.

23) Legal

To receive the legal opinion and to regularise the stables lease as per the lease dated 1st June 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** to instruct the solicitors to regularise the stables lease.

The meeting ended at 20.54

Chairman