



## Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Thursday 21st September 2023 held at Northiam Village Hall

**Present:** Cllr C Biggs, Cllr Harding, Cllr Lockett, Cllr Russell, Cllr Sargent, Cllr Wadie (Vice-Chair)

**Also Present:** Gilly Lowe, Locum Clerk, Cllr Ganly (RDC), Cllr T Biggs (RDC) and 14 Members of the Public

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023**

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### **FC23/170. To receive and accept Apologies for Absence**

Apologies received from Cllr Michelle Fairbrass, Cllr John Fenton & Cllr Sue Schlesinger. In the absence of the chair, Cllr Wadie acted as Chair for the meeting.

### **FC23/171. Chairman's Announcements**

Nothing to report.

*The meeting was closed at 19.04.*

### **FC23/172. To adjourn the meeting to enable members of the public and Councillors to address the meeting. This is a 'for information' session only and no action can be taken upon those items raised.**

A member of the public asked where the rent money from the stables tenant goes.  
TW – to NPC

A representative of the CIC referred to item 12.2 on the agenda to say that it should not be referred to as a 'grant' as grants are discretionary. The Management Agreement quoted the parish council transfer of sums on signing of the agreement. The same amount of £1,500 on 1/4/22 & 1/4/23 are outstanding. The parish council needs to bear in mind its obligations as the CIC has been keeping its obligations. That money should come from parish funds.

A member of the public disagreed with this statement, saying that in his opinion it is very much a grant unless presented with a list of administrative costs.

A member of the public asked about the progress of the office lease, and the clerk confirmed that it had been returned to the parish council's solicitor.

Another resident asked about item 7.5 and why the transfer of funds was necessary. Rother DC had been instructed to pay the precept into the two separate bank accounts. The clerk confirmed that those were the arrangements, and she would look into it.

A member of the public commented on the hay-making waste – the parish council should have got it correctly mowed but it was done at the wrong time. No one has bought it which is a missed revenue opportunity. Another member of the public said that the hay cut was to control thistles, and spraying would have harmed the wild flower meadow. The CIC representative said that the CIC have dealt with it, but it has been a wasted resource.

A member of the public said that he was now confused about whether its status is as a wild flower meadow or not.

*The meeting was re-opened at 19.13*

**FC23/173. To receive Declarations of Interest**

*To receive any declaration by members of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of the interest and whether the member regards the interest as personal, pecuniary or prejudicial under the Code of Members Conduct.*

None were declared.

**FC23/174. Minutes** – It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 17th July 2023 be approved and the minutes were duly signed.

**FC23/175. To receive report from County Councillor**

Cllr Redstone reported on the following:-

- Following the meeting with the Operations Director of SE Water to discuss the provision of bottled water, a full report will be following soon. In brief, a site has been identified for bottled water which has to be staffed by a SE Water operative and they are in the process of sourcing them. CB asked if this will happen fast enough when it's needed? PR said yes, within 24 hrs. The 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider has been slow, and that's been the problem. CB also suggested a sign alerting people to the 'water station' would be a good idea. JL asked if they have raised their capacity for future development? PR confirmed that that was the reason for a hosepipe ban earlier in the summer, even though reservoirs were full as they couldn't supply enough water when additional demands were made. PR has asked for figures for excess capacity for surrounding areas, but hasn't received them yet.

**FC23/176. To receive report from District Councillors**

Cllr T Biggs reported on the following:

- He has been in contact with both PCSO's and there have been some incidents of vehicle break-ins and stolen van. He also raised the consultation about PDR's in the AONB and feels that NPC should respond but the deadline is imminent. This led to a discussion about how best the NPC can respond and the clerk suggested using her delegated authority. JL will circulate proposed responses for consensus approval and the clerk will submit them online before midnight on Monday.

## Finance

- FC23/177.** The payments for September 2023 were circulated and **AGREED**.
- FC23/178.** To confirm the Co-op have received the change of signatory forms and have them actioned in the next 2 weeks.
- FC23/179.** The time-sheet for support services from Gilly Lowe was approved.
- FC23/180.** The clerk confirmed that the St Mary's Church cheque for £500 has been cashed.
- FC23/181.** The transfer of £25,000 from Co-op to Barclays was approved.
- FC23/182.** To confirm continued engagement with Mulberry & Co. and confirmation of the date of the internal audit on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

## Expenditure in line with 4.1 of the Financial Regulations

No expenditure was made.

- FC23/183.** PS reported on the recent meeting with the football club which was a very positive meeting. The FC purchased the pavilion in the 1970's and although some maintenance has been carried out, it is now in a bad state of repair. It is meant to be a community asset and all concerned want it to work for Northiam. JL said that the agreement for the S106 money was to fulfil Rother's policies to improve recreation facilities in the whole area. In 2015 the budget for a 2-team pavilion was £255k. There is £157k of S106 funds so there is match funding at least, but the FC had previously agreed that they would investigate other sports funding (e.g the FA, Sports England). It was agreed that a working party from the parish council would work with the FC to progress a new pavilion building.

PS, JL & JH volunteered to be in the Working Party and will report further at the next meeting.

## Governance

- FC23/184.** The clerk suggested that councillors could employ a communications policy as suggested by the Hoey Associates report. She proposed either or both a Whatsapp group & an informal meeting 2 weeks before a full council meeting to set agenda items could be useful. All members agreed that both would be useful and the clerk will make the necessary arrangements.

## Outside Spaces

- FC23/185.** The Annual Inspection of the playground took place on Tuesday and the zip wire seat repaired at the same time. The certification and report will be circulated once received. TW had inspected the playground and one of the tables has suffered fire damage likely from a BBQ. TB offered to mention it to PCSO's as there have been other similar incidents in the area.

**FC23/186. Beacon Field**

TW had spoken with O'Connors to discuss the state of Beacon Field following several complaints from residents. Brian Banks had also attended to advise on the best way forward without undoing the bio-diversity gains. There should be twice yearly cuts, which need to take place in March & August before the brambles root. O'Connors agreed to cut the field and also clear up & mulch the cuttings which will be added to the compost heap keeping it neat & tidy.

TW also discussed the issue with the gate into playground and fences being removed for access and O'Connors agreed to pay for necessary repairs.

The main gate post at Beacon Field is also rotten. JL said he would like to see the grass cutting schedule/current contract as it is due to be renewed next year. The clerk confirmed that there is a file in the office with all the details.

**FC23/187. To agree whether to continue with the pest control contract at St Francis Field.**

Councillors felt that this is a continuing problem, and that it ought to be reported to RDC Environmental Health. PS suggested that they should survey the whole site.

The clerk will arrange this and the pest control contract will be revisited post-survey.

**FC23/188. Members agreed to the cemetery volunteers storing their equipment in the Chapel. PS confirmed that there was sufficient space. A volunteer has offered to be the key-holder. The clerk will check the key-safe when next in the office for a spare key.****FC23/189. There had been a report of a white painted tree stump on the verges by the allotments and also of grass cuttings being deposited in the ditch. The verges are owned by ES Highways so the tree stump can be reported as an obstacle. CB will report it online and monitor any further dumping of grass cuttings.****FC23/190. Repairs to the noticeboard – this is in hand.****FC23/191. The proposal of regular playground checks by a rota of councillors who will undertake appropriate training was approved. TW, MF, PS, SS & JH have agreed to do the online training and the clerk will arrange individual or a group session.****St Francis Field****FC23/192. To consider the request to put a gate exiting onto St Francis Field from a private property.**

The CIC suggested a simple licence for access into the orchard with some conditions and offered to draft a licence agreement. The council thanked them and asked that a draft be sent to the clerk.

**FC23/193. To discuss the grant from the parish council to the CIC and agree actions.**

After some discussions about the legality of the management agreement, and CB stating that money should not be paid from the village precept to fund the CIC, councillors approved the payment of £1500 per year, backdated for the previous year also. The clerk confirmed that it would be allocated from the correct budget, after a full financial review of both the Barclays and Co-op accounts needed to take place as the previous RFO had left.

### Planning applications – to consider and agree responses

**FC23/194.** RR/2023/1653/P - 2, Perrymans Cottage,

After a brief discussion, the clerk was asked to submit the following comments online: *Northiam Parish Council does not object to this application provided the annex is for the sole use of the occupant. Additionally, to protect dark skies, there should be no, or limited, external lighting.*

**FC23/195. To report any external meetings with representatives of Northiam Parish Council – to allow members to ask any questions and to receive the minutes.**

The clerk asked if any councillor was the RALC representative as the next quarterly meeting is taking place on 11<sup>th</sup> October. JH said that she had attended in the past. The clerk will forward the agenda to JH.

### To report correspondence

**FC23/196.** Email of 11/08 from a resident about the conifer growing over the bus shelter. SS had cut back some of the growth so that the timetable could be read, and the clerk had contacted the estate agents currently selling the property where the conifer is growing and will contact the owner about cutting it back.

**FC23/197.** Email of 27/08 complaining about the grass not being cut at 37- 41 Goddens Gill. The clerk had spoken to O'Connors who sometimes are unable to cut all the grass due to parked vehicles. It is also the responsibility of Southern Housing, formerly Optivo, and the clerk will write to them also.

**FC23/198.** Email of 24/08 notifying of the removal of the Coppards Lane sign – the clerk has reported it to Highways.

**FC23/199.** Email of 23/08 reporting damage to the war memorial. JF had repaired the broken tail of the dragon, but then discovered the slate engraved plaque has been chiselled out of the concrete. JL has asked for a quote from the stone mason and asked if the parish council could claim on insurance? SS has reported it to the police.

**FC23/200. Questions from Councillors**

TW asked BR for an update on the bollards outside Jempsons. BR confirmed that he had progressed this significantly until there had been a change of contractor at East Sussex Highways who increased the prices of individual elements and stated that an approved contractor had to carry out the work. The June & July meeting agendas were too full to re-visit this but BR needs to take the info back to Jempsons and see if they are still willing to pay. PR said he was not aware of any of this and he will raise it at County Hall. BR to send info to PR. PR did confirm that any contractor must be licenced to carry out work on the Highways.

PS reported that the tree at Highfields has been dealt with.

CB mentioned the cemetery pathway that was replaced in the summer without any weed membrane and the cracks not properly repaired. This needs looking into as a matter of urgency as it cost £14k and is not up to standard. The clerk will follow up.

**FC23/201.** Second session for public questions

A Member of the public asked if the council can respond to the aforementioned consultation. The clerk confirmed arrangements for using her delegated authority to respond on behalf of the council.

A representative of the CIC expressed concern about the reference to the locum RFO, and accounts being merged. The clerk confirmed that she will bring financial records up to date as soon as possible using the financial software which allows reports for separate accounts to be produced.

**FC23/202.** To agree the public's exclusion from the confidential part of the meeting.  
It was **RESOLVED** to move into public session at 21.02.

The meeting then closed at 21.40

Signed.....

Date.....