



Working for the Community
in Rotherfield, Town Row, Mark Cross, Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

**MINUTES OF THE ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL AND PLANNING & BUILDING
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9th AUGUST 2016 AT 19:30
IN THE PARISH COUNCIL ROOM, ROTHERFIELD VILLAGE HALL**

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr. N. Wickenden, Chair, Planning & Building Committee	Cllr. J. Kitchenham
Cllr. D. Hiles, Vice Chairman Planning and Building Committee	Cllr. L. Henrick
Cllr. D. Thomas, Parish Council Chairman	Cllr. A. Hardy
Cllr. R. Harris, Parish Council Vice Chairman	Cllr. G. Watson-Smith

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

None.

ALSO PRESENT

17 members of the public.

Minutes were taken by Cllr. Watson-Smith as The Parish Clerk, was not present.
Draft Minutes were prepared by Council Chairman and Cllr. Watson-Smith.

1. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING:-

i. Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s 85).

These were submitted by Councillors Cahan, Gilbert, Martin, Richardson, Watts and the Parish Clerk.

ii. Declarations of personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests on items on the Agenda, and updates to members' register of interests.

Declarations in respect of agenda item 3b were made by Cllr. Harris (leases a farm from the owner of Highlands Farm) and Cllr. Wickenden (is related to the owner of Highlands Farm). The Council Chairman was challenged by a member of the public for not declaring an interest when Item 3b) was discussed, as reported in these Minutes.

The Council Chairman reminded Councillors that they should declare an interest at any point during the meeting if they become aware of one. He informed the Councillors and the public that the meeting was being recorded.

iii. To resolve that the minutes of the previous Planning and Building Committee Meeting held on 19th July 2016, be taken as read, proposed and adopted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes be approved and signed.

In view of the large number of Parishioners present, the Council Chairman suspended Standing Orders to clarify how the meeting would be managed. He explained it was not a Public Meeting where the public had a right to speak. It was a Parish Council Meeting, with authority granted under the 1972 Local Government Act which provides the public a right to attend the meeting and speak by invitation of the Chairman.

He confirmed by a show of hands that the majority of the Parishioners present were attending to object to the mobile phone tower, Item 3b), and no one was present to support it. He stated they would have an opportunity to speak, and that Parishioners' letters of

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objection would be read out. However, the public must comply with meeting procedures, not speak with each other, and not challenge or interrupt Councillors.

Councillors agreed to change the order of business as follows:-
Planning Agenda items 3b), 3d), 3c), 3a), 3c), and 3e), followed by agenda Items 4, 2 and 5 to 8. The Minutes are in Agenda Item sequence.

Cllr. Wickenden chaired all Planning Applications in Item 3, except 3.b for which he had declared an interest

2. TO CONSIDER URGENT MATTERS ON BEHALF OF THE FULL COUNCIL.

a) To approve a letter of response to a parishioner in relation to a Freedom of Information Request.

A Draft Letter had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. The Council Chairman explained that the meeting needed to decide whether this draft, with or without revision, could be approved. It was suggested that a shorter letter based on paragraphs 1 to 8 would meet requirements. It was RESOLVED by unanimous vote to a) send this to the Parishioner and b) that the Council Chairman would sign and post the letter (as The Council Clerk was on annual holiday). Councillors asked that the Minutes record their thanks to Cllr Cahan for her work in drafting this letter and making enquiries of the Information Commissioner's Office in order to prepare the letter.

3. TO CONSIDER AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS AND OTHER PLANNING MATTERS.

a) WD/2016/0547/F Leech Pit Cottage. Eridge Road. Eridge Green. TN3 9LL. Demolition of existing house and outbuildings. Erection of new house and garage building.

Councillors agreed the existing property had a dated internal layout and proposed plan would reflect modern living needs.

It was RESOLVED to recommend to the Wealden District Council Planning Officer dealing with this application that it be APPROVED for the following reason:

That it would improve the facilities/Good architecture.

ACTION: CLERK to communicate the Committee's comments to Wealden District Council Planning Department.

b) WD/2016/1276/F Highfields Farm, New Road, Rotherfield TN6 3JS Installation of 1no 15.0m high Lattice Tower, 3 antennas, 2 dishes, 2 equipment cabinets with close boarded fenced compound.

Cllrs. Harris and Wickenden, having declared an interest, left the room and took no part in discussions or voting. The Council Chairman took the Chair. Of the five Councillors present the Council Chairman and 3 Councillors were members of the Planning and Building Committee. The Council Chairman was challenged by a member of the public for not declaring an interest in this Agenda Item. The Council Chairman explained he had "Permission to Shoot Rifles" on the farms owned by the owner of Highland Farm, which he did not pay for it but it did have a monetary value. Permission was not used on a regular basis, and he did not consider it would influence his judgement in Item 3b).

He asked the public to confirm by a show of hands whether they considered he should leave the Chair and leave the room. Every member of the public except the Parishioner who raised the issue voted that the Council Chairman should remain in the Chair.

In order not to influence this vote, Council Chairman did not explain that if he had left, the 3 remaining Councillors on the Committee would have been 1 short of the necessary

quorum, limiting them to listening to the public but NOT making a RECOMMENDATION to Wealden District Council Planning Dept.

Council Chairman suspended Standing Orders to allow time for full public participation by the objectors. He gave them the choice of speaking or having letters read. 5 members of the 17 Parishioners spoke for 2 minutes each and he invited any others to speak before reading some of the 6 letters of objection he had received (addressed to The Clerk). This was followed by the Councillors discussion, and together this amounted to 45 minutes on this Application. The public showed a vigorous participation in the discussion - objections very strongly expressed. There was only a single instance when Council Chairman had to caution one speaker for his abusive language to the Chair.

A summary of the public objections considered by the Councillors included:

1. There is no information about the areas over which improved mobile signal strength from these service providers can be expected. Mobile reception in Rotherfield village and surrounding area is very poor.
2. Improved signal would potentially benefit many hundreds of people.
The application for the proposed mast fails to show benefit to any local people.
3. The mast structure would be of a considerable height and in the proposed location would adversely impact this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
4. The Parish Council had tried to protect our beautiful local landscape over many years and it must do so again by rejecting this plan. Concerns were expressed about impact of a mast at this location on birds and a local bat colony.
5. No information was provided about the alternative sites that had been considered, their associated technical data of signal improvement and areas covered. Why had they been rejected? How many sites would be better than the proposed one?
6. Why was the proposed design an open structure and not disguised as a tree as shown in one objector's letter?
7. Why had the Parish Council not considered Castle Hill or the Recreation Ground (income for Council) or A267 at Mark Cross?

It was RESOLVED to recommend to the Wealden District Council Planning Officer dealing with this application that it be DECLINED for the following reason.

Insufficient technical data as to signal strength improvement and areas benefiting, and adverse visual impact.

ACTION: CLERK to communicate the Committee's comments to Wealden District Council Planning Department.

Council Chairman suspended Standing Orders to explain to the public what the resolution meant. He asked the public to indicate by a show of hands whether they felt the Council had listened to them before reaching a decision. Everyone present confirmed this was the case. He reminded the public they had a right to send their views to Wealden District Planning Department and to Rotherfield District Councillor Phil Dixon. He announced that this agenda Item was now complete and that could remain or leave. Most of the public left the meeting at this point and several approached Council Chairman to say this had been the best Council meeting they had attended as it demonstrated Rotherfield Parish Council listened to the views of Parishioners.

It was 8:30p.m., and Cllrs. Harris and Wickenden re-joined the meeting

- c) **WD/2016/1462/FR** Hollybridge, Forge Road, Eridge, TN3 9LH.
Retrospective change of use from agricultural land to a mixed use together with proposed chicken coop
It was RESOLVED to recommend to the Wealden District Council Planning Officer dealing with this application that it be APPROVED for the following reason:
Regularise situation.
The Council Chairman requested that the Minutes record the names of the four Councillors who voted in favour (Cllrs. Wickenden, Hiles, Watson Smith and Henrick) and the two who voted against (Cllr. Harris and Cllr. Thomas).

ACTION: CLERK to communicate the Committee's comments to Wealden District Council Planning Department.

- d) **WD/2016/1608/MAJ.** Land at Court Farm, Rotherfield Road, Rotherfield.
Erection of a new farmstead (dwelling, farm office, storage barn and covered cattle barn) in substitution of the extant permissions WD/1989/3225/0. WD.2004/1001/RM, WD/2014/1568/FA and WD/2014/2240/OA.

The owner was given 2 minutes to speak in support of his application. He stated the proposed house was based on a design of his late father, with farm office underneath to reduce costs of separate building. It was same size as that previously given approval. Current building was unsuitable. Plan includes a cattle yard and storage. The farm has 115 acres. Land in poor condition, needs restorative plan so that it could be farmed again. It was RESOLVED to recommend to the Wealden District Council Planning Officer dealing with this application that it be APPROVED for the following reason.
Enhance the facilities of farm house and buildings to make this a working farm again. Council welcomes the prospect of an additional successful farm in the Parish.
ACTION: CLERK to communicate the Committee's comments to Wealden District Council Planning Department.

- e) **WD/2016/1779/F 4** The Forstal, Eridge Green.TN3 9JX.
New Garage
Councillors appreciated the low profile design, with its base below house ground level. It was RESOLVED to recommend to the Wealden District Council Planning Officer dealing with this application that it be APPROVED for the following reason.
Enhance and improve the facilities.
ACTION: CLERK to communicate the Committee's comments to Wealden District Council Planning Department.

4. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING FROM WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

- i. **Decision notices**
- a) **WD/2016/1099/F** 2 Hamsell Manor Cottage, Sham Farm Road, Eridge Green TN3 9JB
Replace an existing cabin with a single storey timber outbuilding for use as a garden room.
 - b) **WD/2016/1325/F** Land Adjacent To The Lodge, Argos Hill Lane, TN6 3QE
Proposed farm gate entrance.
 - c) **WD/2016/1407/LDE** Allan Down, Dewlands Hill, Rotherfield, TN6 3RT
Use of cottage in garden as residential holiday let.
 - d) **WD/2016/1411/F** Haywards Grange, Steep Road, Crowborough, TN6 3RX
Proposed new triple bay oak framed garage with tractor store.

The above applications had all been recommended for approval by this Committee and have been approved by Wealden District Council.

ii. Planning correspondence.

None

iii. Any Enforcement, Conservation or appeal matters.

None.

5. TO MAKE DECISIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO OTHER COMMITTEES

None

6. TO RECEIVE NOTICE OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE.

25th August 2016 at 19:30 in the Parish Council Room, Rotherfield Village Hall.

7. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF ANY URGENT ISSUES FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA.

- Council Chairman had called a meeting of War Memorial Working Group on 1 August 2016 to re-energise the project, followed by a meeting with Cllr. Hardy on 4 August 2016 to prepare a Project Summary "War Memorial Centenary Project". Unveiling 11 November 2018 to mark 100th Anniversary of Armistice Day Ending WW1. Item to go on August Parish Council Agenda. Council Chairman and Cllr. Wickenden will visit potential site Court Meadow Green.
- Cllr. Kitchenham expressed concerns regarding the new Drop Box facility introduced by The Clerk for distributing files to Councillors; this was difficult to access and had excessive emails which wasted Councillor's time. Cllr. Henrick argued the merit of using this method. A training course for Councillors would be helpful to justify why this was a better way of working.
ACTION for CLERK and CLLR HARDY TO INVESTIGATE IF THIS IS AVAILABLE.
- Cllr. Wickenden wanted it recorded again that he was not satisfied with The Clerk being absent at Planning and Building Committee Meetings, in particular when the applicant or objectors are attending. Council Chairman considers this decision has got to be reviewed.

The Chairman declared the formal business of the meeting closed 09:30 p.m.

8. PUBLIC FORUM.

None

..... Date.....
Council Chairman

..... Date.....
Planning and Building Committee Chairman