

# ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Working for the Community

in Rotherfield, Town Row, Mark Cross, Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

## MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2016 AT 19:30 IN THE ROTHERFIELD SCOUT AND YOUTH COMMUNITY HALL

### COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr. D. Thomas (Chairman)	Cllr. T. Gilbert	Cllr. L. Watts
Cllr. R. Harris (Vice Chairman)	Cllr. J. Kitchenham	Cllr. G. Watson-Smith
Cllr. K. Curtis		Cllr. N. Wickenden

### COUNCILLORS ABSENT

None

### ALSO PRESENT

- The Parish Clerk, Trevor Thorpe, and Cllr. P. Dixon (WDC).

### 1. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING:-

#### a) Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s 85).

- These were tendered by Cllr. C. Clibbens, Cllr. Martin and Cllr. J. Cahan, and accepted.
- Pcs0 Pearce-Martin and Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC) both submitted their apologies for absence.
- Cllr. Thomas apologised for the lack of communications from him since Christmas, this due to health reasons.

#### b) Declarations of personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests on items on the agenda, and updates to members' register of interests.

Cllr. Kitchenham declared a personal interest in item 2h) as he is one of the Hall's trustees.

The Chairman reminded those present that they should declare an interest if at any point during the meeting they became aware of one relating to a matter being discussed.

#### c) District And County Councillor's reports.

Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC) submitted this report in advance of the meeting.

"I have little to report since the December meeting but as you know there is good news on the highways front with proposals to stop long vehicles turning right at the Kings Arms and a speed restriction on the High Cross Road and the A267 at Argos Hill (Mayfield Parish)

Three Counties Devolution (East and West Sussex and Surrey)

We have made our presentation to Govt. and await their response to the proposals, the main themes of which are as follows:-

- |                                 |                  |              |
|---------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| - Housing                       | - Infrastructure | - Skills     |
| - Public Service Transformation | - Fiscal         | - Governance |

The presentation team was the leaders of each of the three Counties, a representative of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and one District or Borough representative from each County. I represented the Districts and Boroughs of East Sussex, concentrating on the housing and double devolution subjects."

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Clerk: Trevor Thorpe, 82, Fermor Way, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 3BJ  
Telephone: 01892 664245

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Cllr. Dixon (WDC) submitted the following report

## **Council Tax**

WDC will be increasing their portion of the Council Tax by 1.9% for 2016/17. This will be the first increase in Wealden's share of the tax since 2011. It has been made necessary by further reductions in Government grants and exacerbated by the required 1% reduction in housing rents. Wealden have been very proactive in managing their budget and future increases will be no greater than inflation.

The Council is benefiting from the New Homes Bonus offered by the government but are only using the money for capital schemes and not to subsidise the revenue budget in keeping with the prudent financial management.

## **Voter Registration**

There is a great push to ensure that new voters register for voting and Wealden is supporting the national campaign, "Bite the Ballot"! They will be the Police and Crime Commissioner election, and there may be a European referendum this year. The deadline for registering for voting for the PCC election is Monday 18th April, and it is important to encourage voters to register, especially younger ones.

## **Steel Cross**

The Steel Cross appeal is taking place now and we are hoping for a favourable outcome although the decision may take weeks or even months to be delivered.

## **Clean for the Queen**

There is an initiative to get volunteers to participate in a national clean-up in time for the Queen's 90th birthday on 21st April. This will happen over the 4th to 6th March and info. packs are being sent out to parishes to assist them in recruiting volunteers.

## **Digital Inclusion**

The district is working on a digital inclusion action plan and a project team will be starting work in February to research costs and initiatives that will increase access to the internet across the district. This will have the benefit of enabling people to better access the Council's services online.

At the request of the Clerk, Cllr. Dixon gave a summary of the implications of "De-criminalising" parking in Wealden; this has been suggested as a means of controlling illegal/obstructive parking, by means other than by a warranted Police Officer. Key points were as follows:-

- Current arrangement is that parking tickets may only be issued by a warranted Police officer. The fines collected do not go to the Police who therefore have to cover the whole of their cost of providing parking enforcement.
- If parking is decriminalised, responsibility may then pass to the local authority. They will bear the cost of "policing" parking, but will also retain all the income generated by way of fines and charges.
- In urban areas, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for example, car parks and restricted parking areas are in large numbers hence there is a good source of finance from parking fees and fines to contribute toward costs and even generate a surplus. It is believed that the more rural parts of

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that Borough, such as Hawkhurst and Cranbrook, do not receive the same level of attention to parking matters, as income-generating opportunities are lower in these rural towns.

- Wealden District Council's policy is that Council owned car parks in the District should remain free, this to support businesses in their towns and villages. Even if parking were to be decriminalised, it is considered that fines would not cover the cost of "policing" and the service would need to be subsidised by the Wealden Council taxpayer.

## d) Police Community Support Officer's report.

Clerk presented the following report on behalf of PcsO Pearce-Martin.

"First of all please may I wish you all a very Happy New Year.

### **PARKING**

As you are all aware, parking is no longer part of my remit. However, until my role is made redundant (currently this is likely to be July 2016) I will attend parking issues if they are serious. Consequently, I have made a number of visits to Mark Cross about inconsiderate parking. I have recommended to the residents that they organise a Residents Meeting to discuss parking. Some residents are unaware that the way they park is blocking visibility for their neighbours.

### **CRIME**

A quad bike was stolen from Eridge. This was an opportunistic theft while the owner had gone into the house for a cup of tea. It is a salutary lesson to never leave valuables or vehicles insecure.

A large amount of tools were stolen from a vehicle parked outside a property in Douglas Road. This happened overnight and no-one saw or heard anything. Please make sure your vehicles are securely locked at night and please do not leave expensive items in them overnight. Consider security lights and dummy CCTV for the front of your property.

### **COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

I attended a very jolly Christmas lunch with the Rotherfield Lunch Club. I have also given a talk to the Beavers in the very smart new scout hut.

### **POLICE PROPERTY ACT FUND**

I am happy to report that I have secured a grant for £200 for the Rotherfield Friendship Club."

Clerk has sent a note of congratulation to her on behalf of the Council in respect of her success in securing the above grant.

## e) Minutes of the Parish Council meetings held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 for approval as a true record, and matters arising from these minutes.

The draft minutes of this meeting had been circulated in advance to the Councillor's. With regard to item 1c) of the minutes. Cllr. Whetstone (ESCC) has contacted the Clerk, as there is an error. It was his suggestion, not Karl Taylor's of ESCC, that the junction with the B2100 be configured to discourage its use by large vehicles to pass through Rotherfield.

IT was RESOLVED that the item in the minutes as detailed mentioned above be amended to reflect this so that they now were a true record of the meeting, and that the Chairman sign the minutes. The Chairman initialled the amendment and signed by the Chairman.

## f) Update regarding matters arising & action items from previous meetings.

2c) Communications and Media Committee is to hold its inaugural meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February.

Clerk reported that there had been no response to the request for candidates for co-option to fill the vacancy on the Council.

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## 2. TO CONSIDER INFORMATION AND MAKE DECISIONS ON ACTIONS AND EXPENDITURE AS REQUIRED REGARDING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS.

### a) To approve the Parish Council's Budget and Precept for 2016 - 2017 and authorise signature of the Precept document for submission to Wealden District Council.

Details circulated to Councillor's prior to meeting. It was RESOLVED that the sum recommended by the Finance and General Purpose Committee to cover the Council's plans for 2016 – 2017 be accepted. This figure is £89985, which after deduction of the Council Tax Support Grant of £1036, results in a precept figure of £88949. The calculation is summarised below, and the 2016-17 budget is attached to these minutes as a supplement:

Financial Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Precept agreed (A)	£72,168.00	£75,236.00	£89,985.00
Precept support grant (B)	£1,602.00	£1,319.00	£1,036.00
(A)-(B)	£70,566.00	£73,917.00	£88,949.00
£ increase on previous year	£10,134.50	£3,351.00	£15,032.00
% increase on previous year	16.77%	4.75%	20.34%
WDC Council tax base figure	£1,508.70	£1,523.50	£1,552.10
Band "D" equivalent	£46.77	£48.52	£57.31
£ increase on previous year	£6.81	£1.75	£8.79
% increase on previous year	17.05%	3.73%	18.12%
£ per week equivalent	£0.90	£0.93	£1.10
£ per week equivalent for increase	£0.13	£0.03	£0.17

The Chairman and Clerk signed the Precept form for submission to Wealden District Council.

Items b and c below are subject to exclusion of press and public by resolution under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960 CHAPTER 67 para. 2 as they relate to named individuals and have been excluded from the Public agenda.

### b) Information from Cllr. Kitchenham and approval of his temporary absence from Council meetings.

RESOLVED that his possible absences from future Council and Committee meetings be approved together with his temporary relinquishing of the post of Vice Chair of this Committee. It was RESOLVED that the role of Committee Vice Chair be shared by Cllrs. Watson-Smith and Curtis during this period.

### c) Diesel spill incident in Recreation Ground Car Park 24<sup>th</sup> July 2015. Consider appropriate form for letter to release indemnifier from current and future liability.

RESOLVED that letter as suggested by Solicitors acting for the Council in respect of this matter be sent.

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**d) Consider recommendation to changes in meeting frequencies to ease Clerk's workload.**

**Proposals suggested by Cllr. Curtis**

Cllr. Curtis' report from December was discussed and the following points covered:-

- Cllr. Thomas apologised for his lack of input to the matter.
- Cllr. Dixon (WDC) reminded the meeting that the Planning Committee should not be reluctant to pass applications on to the WDC Planning Committee if thought appropriate.
- Councillors should ensure that they view plans and papers connected with applications and more reliance should be placed on the importance of site visits. Cllrs. Wickenden and Thomas visit the site of every planning application and make a recommendation at the Planning Committee meeting based on their site observations, and those of any neighbours spoken with.
- Written reports from those who represent the Council on outside bodies to be circulated in advance of Council meetings.
- If possible, Clerk should not need to attend Planning Committee meetings.

Cllr. Curtis was thanked for his work on this matter and it was RESOLVED that he provide final recommendations for the February Parish Council Meeting. CLERK to add to agenda and circulate the original report, and the statistics compiled regarding planning application volumes.

**e) Review and consider changing the Council's existing banking arrangements and account signatories.**

Council are currently with Santander who offer a satisfactory service, and have a branch in Crowborough.

It was RESOLVED as follows:-

- i. To retain bank accounts with Santander.
- ii. CLERK to explore possibility of utilising their on line payments to reduce paperwork, and opportunities for earning a better interest rate on deposits.
- iii. To use Direct Debit payments where appropriate. Annual subscription to Information Commissioners Office and monthly payments for tax and NI to HMRC are recommended for this method of settlement.

**Changes to signatories.**

To add Cllr. Lucinda Watts as a signatory and remove the following Councillors from the list as they have all stood down from the Council.

- Christopher Prince
- Peggy Halse Adamson
- Leslie Pike
- Nicola Bolton

CLERK to deal with completion of documents relating to the above.

**f) Policing issues. Consider information and response to changes proposed to PcsO duties.**

Cllr. Curtis has attended various meeting concerning this matter and key points are as follows:-

- i. Sussex and Surrey Association of Local Councils are promoting the idea of "Community Wardens" which are to be funded by individual Councils, or a "cluster" thereof, who would share the cost and resource.

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- ii. Concerns were expressed by the meeting that this would be a costly arrangement, and that Wardens would not have powers to address the key concerns of many in the Parish, which are anti-social/illegal parking and speeding.
- iii. It would appear that Sussex Police no longer wish to be involved in parking enforcement and would prefer that this be “de criminalised”, with District or Borough Councils taking over the cost and duty.
- iv. “Speedwatch” will be replaced by a new Safer Wealden Partnership initiative – “We’re Keeping an Eye on You”. Details are to be shared at a forthcoming presentation.
- v. Nearest Parish who in the process of considering engaging a Parish Warden option are Ticehurst, they have also secured sponsorship for a vehicle for the Warden to use. Although their neighbouring Parishes were invited to form a “cluster” support has dwindled with only the small Parish of Stonegate currently involved. CLERK is to establish what Crowborough Town Council propose to put in place to cover the effective removal of Pcsos, as they could be a possible partner.

RESOLVED that the Communications and Media Committee arrange a Public Consultation session to seek Parishioners expectations regarding future “policing” in the Parish. Details to be made available in time for publicising in the March Parish Magazine, press date for which is Mid-February.

## g) Agree review process for the Council’s Policies, Committee Terms of Reference and Governance documents.

It was RESOLVED that the arrangements for the review would be as follows:-

- The Chair and Vice Chair of each Committee are to review their Committee’s Terms of Reference.
- Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are to be reviewed by Cllrs. Thomas and Hiles.
- The Community Engagement Strategy and Press and Media Policies are to be reviewed by Cllr. Watts.
- CLERK to circulate documents and “Model Documents” from NALC or SLCC as appropriate for reference purposes and to assist the review.
- Reviewed documents are to be available for consideration by the Council at the 31st March meeting. CLERK is compile list of policies and other governing documents to simplify future review process and add item to agenda,

## h) Mark Cross Village Hall – update with development progress.

In his role as a Trustee of the Hall Cllr, Kitchenham reported the following:-

- Trustees have had Hall valued by Wood and Pilcher who have marketed the property on a “sealed bid” basis without benefit of Planning Permission. Thomson, Snell and Passmore solicitors act for the Trustee’s.
- Bid of £96K was accepted, being the highest; it is hoped to complete the transaction shortly.
- Funds from the transaction will be formally “ring fenced” for the benefit of the Mark Cross Community.
- A Public Meeting will be held at Mark Cross to share information regarding future use for funds from the purchase. Proposal is that funds from the sale, plus possible grant from local Charity, be used to convert Mark Cross Church to a Community Hall with a side Chapel retained. Total estimated cost of project is £213K.

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Concerns were expressed that the proposals had not been publicised more widely. The meeting welcomed the update and the fact that proper safeguards would be put in place to protect the funds for the Community at Mark Cross.

### 3. TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT COMMITTEE MEETINGS MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING.

- 12th January 2016 - Planning and Building Committee.
- 19th January 2016 – Highways Lighting and Transport Committee.

Draft minutes of the above meetings had been circulated to Councillors in advance and it was RESOLVED that the minutes and actions therein be adopted by the Full Council.

### 4. TO RECEIVE OTHER REPORTS

#### • Other committees and sub-committees.

Strengthening Local Relationships meeting held with ESCC Highways Officers on 20<sup>th</sup> January. Minutes will be circulated.

#### • Emergency Planning Group.

Cllr. Wickenden reported that he doubted that the Short Wave radio provided to the Group would receive a signal at Town Row and would best be held by someone in the Village centre. No other progress made with review of Group's structure and aims, a report and update to be provided at the February Council meeting. CLERK to add to agenda and investigate timing of weekly test transmissions, which may be used to check the effectiveness of the radios.

#### • Meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council.

Cllr. Gilbert had recently represented the Council at the Village Hall Committee meeting. The Hall has agreed to contribute 50% toward the cost of installing bollards to protect the heating vents in the rear wall of the Hall. The Hall have also been instructed that the cupboard containing fuse boxes and other electric equipment must be kept locked for safety reasons, as it had recently been noticed as open.

#### • Clerk's updates and issues.

Social Media Training course – Had recently attended this excellent event and encourages Cllrs. to join up and follow the Council on Facebook and Twitter.

#### • Items for next Parish Magazine column.

Following items suggested:-

- Share info re: large vehicle proposals and speed limit changes on B2101.
- Update regarding Conservation Area review.
- Publicise the proposed Public Consultation regarding future policing arrangements.

### 5. TO RECEIVE FINANCE INFORMATION

- Bank Reconciliation as at end of December 2015, and review of expenditure against Budget to date. These were circulated in advance to the Councillors and it was RESOLVE that they be accepted.
- Approval of Payments, signature of Direct Debit for annual ICO fee and transfer of surplus funds to interest bearing account. Clerk reported that Bank credit balances as at the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were as follows

Current account £52,362.41 Deposit account £36,624.54

These sums include the credit items shown below but have not been adjusted to take into account the cheques issued.

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## Payments

Date Paid	Payee	Cheque Number	Amount	Transaction Detail
28/01/2016	Trevor Thorpe	802063	£1,516.20	January salary
28/01/2016	H M R C	802064	£496.99	January NI and Tax
28/01/2016	Trevor Thorpe*	802065	£324.87	January expenses/reimbursements
28/01/2016	Wicksteed Leisure Ltd*	802066	£72.00	Annual Inspection - playground
28/01/2016	Gwen Pritchitt	802067	£307.00	Audit first inspection
28/01/2016	KPS Contractors Ltd*	802068	£499.20	Gravedigging P19
28/01/2016	Teambase*	802069	£17.94	Stationery paper
28/01/2016	Nordis Signs*	802070	£20.83	Sign Mark X Mill. Green
28/01/2016	3VA	802071	£35.00	Social media training course
28/01/2016	Rotherfield Village Hall	802072	£23.20	Hall hire for January
28/01/2016	Tollwood Garden Service	802073	£530.00	Hedge and grass cutting
28/01/2016	Wealden District Council	802074	£842.20	2015 Election costs recharged
28/01/2016	Jemma Cahan	802075	£21.30	Reimbursement printing costs
28/01/2016	A.C. Moaby	802076	£320.00	Rec. and Cemetery work
<b>Total Payments</b>			<b>£5,026.73</b>	

Amounts shown for payments marked\* include VAT, which is recoverable by the Council.

## Receipts (current account)

Date banked	Payer	Amount	Transaction Detail
22/01/2016	Dignity Funerals Ltd	£736.00	Plot 19 fees and costs
15/01/2016	East Sussex County Council	£632.50	Fingerpost repair contribution
04/01/2016	H M Revenue & Customs	£2,666.35	Vat reclaimed 1/10 to 30/11/15
<b>Total receipts</b>		<b>£4,034.85</b>	

## Receipts (deposit account)

22/12/2015	The Rotherfield Trust	£14,500.00	Last tranche Scout Hut grant
08/01/2016	Santander Bank	£5.88	December interest
08/01/2016	Lyons Davidson Solicitors	£9,515.00	Claim settlement
<b>Total receipts</b>		<b>£24,020.88</b>	

## 6. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.

- Gatwick Area Conservation Group – invitation to join, item added to agenda of February meeting to consider.

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- Rotherfield Friendship Club – Note of thanks for recent grant from the Council.
- Twinning Association – Invitation to AGM
- Rotherfield Scout Group – Invitation to Grand Opening of the refurbished Rotherfield Scout and Youth Community Hall.
- Spa Valley Railway – Spa Valley Starter magazine for Winter 2015/16
- St-Chéron en Bref – December 2015 and January 2016 editions
- Clerks and Councils Direct – January 2016
- The Clerk magazine of the SLCC – January 2016 edition
- LCR magazine of NALC – Winter 2015.
- Tunbridge Wells & District Samaritans – information about their work in the Community.

## 7. TO RECEIVE INSPECTION BOOK & REPORTS

- No issues or concerns are noted nor have any been raised by the public and the reports were signed by the Chairman.

## 8. TO RECEIVE DATES FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

- Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016 - Planning and Building Committee.
- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2016 – Recreation and Burial Committee.
- Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016 - Planning and Building Committee.
- Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016 – Monthly Council meeting.

All of these meetings will be held in the Parish Council Room at Rotherfield Village Hall and start at 19:30.

## 9. REPORT DETAILS OF ITEMS AND ISSUES NOTIFIED TO CLERK IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING FOR INVESTIGATION, FURTHER ACTION OR FOR FUTURE AGENDA.

- Clerk reported that vehicle previously parked and obstructing pavement at front of the King's Arms has been relocated within the frontage so that it no longer blocks pedestrians.
- Issue raised with Clerk regarding vehicles parked at school run time obstructing steps from Highgate Flats, and damaging the grass verge. School asked to feature this in their weekly newsletter, Clerk has contacted ESCC to enquire as to suitability of installing bollard(s) at this location.
- Clerk has chased ESCC Officer concerned for a progress report regarding adding an "access protection line" to the top of New Road to discourage inconsiderate parking.
- Cllr. Harris is to arrange a meeting to form a working group in connection with the proposal for a War Memorial in the Village. Local British Legion branch are to be invited to participate.
- Clerk to investigate reports of vehicles obstructing sight lines by parking in the bus lay by at Brickyard Lane, Mark Cross.

The Chairman declared the formal business of the meeting closed at 22:05

## 10. PUBLIC FORUM.

None

**Confirmed as a true record at the 25<sup>th</sup> February meeting of the Council**

.....Chairman.....Date