

ROOTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Working for the Community

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

MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF ROTHERFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2011 AT 19:30 IN ROTHERFIELD VILLAGE HALL.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr. L. Pike (Chair)	Cllr. C. Dennison	Cllr. J. Padfield
Cllr. Miss N. Bolton (Vice Chair)	Cllr. R. Harris	Cllr. D. Thomas
Cllr. Mrs P. Halse Adamson	Cllr. R. Jaques	Cllr. Mrs. A. Watson
Cllr. C. Clibbens		Cllr. N. Wickenden

ALSO PRESENT.

- The Parish Clerk, Trevor Thorpe.
- Cllr. R. Tidy (ESCC), and 3 members of the public.

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (LGA 1972 s 85).

Apologies were tendered and accepted on behalf of Cllr. M. Hall, Cllr. C. Prince and PcsO Boyle.

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

None.

3. TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS.

Cllr. Padfield (WDC) reported the following:-

- It is hoped that the WDC Core Strategy and Infrastructure Plan will be approved shortly.
- 195 affordable homes had been built by WDC during 2011/12 and the target is for 110 to be built in 2012/13.
- The single site headquarters for WDC is on track for completion in Summer 2012 and will feature photo cells on the roof to take advantage of the "Feed In" monies available for electricity generated. The single site will save an estimated £377K p.a., this represents 3.5% of Council Tax income.
- No increase in Council Tax is anticipated for 2012/13.
- Kerbside collection of plastic bottles and cartons has now been extended throughout the Wealden District.
- In future Cllr. Merriman will be providing the District Council report and the meeting thanked Cllr. Padfield for providing reports over the past few years.

Cllr. Tidy (ESCC) reported the following:-

- The decision on the Bexhill – Hastings link road has been delayed yet again by Central Government. County are taking steps to deal with the issues blocking progress.
- ESCC Council Tax will not be increased for 2012/13. The Police authority will not be deciding whether their element of the Council Tax bill is to be increased until February but it is understood that they are minded that there should be no increase for 2012/13.
- The Council Tax level for 2013/14 will involve difficult decisions. It is anticipated that the Central Government grant will reflect the fact that the economic situation is worse than was predicted 2 years ago.
- There is £175m allocated in the ESCC budget for capital projects over the next three years with bids for schemes totalling £222m. The Bexhill – Hastings link road project has £24.5m of funding earmarked. £15m is earmarked for broadband improvements, work on these is scheduled to begin in 2012 and finish during 2013.

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The following questions were asked.

- County hope to “soften” future increases in Council Tax that may be needed from 2013/14 – what impact would a high inflation rate have on this? Reserves have been built up of the last 10 years and a further £30m had been freed up from the waste fund, this due to recycling targets being achieved. It was hoped that County would publicise the positive impact that achieving recycling targets was having on finances.

Clerk reported that he was pleased with the way that the new “Highways Steward” scheme was working, it was valuable to have direct feedback (often from “on site”) from our local Steward regarding issues raised and actions taken or proposed.

4. TO RECEIVE POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS REPORT.

Clerk reported the following information provided by the PcsO.

- 16/11 Sports badges taken off Mini car at Groombridge Lane in Eridge
- 17/11 bag stolen from van working on Groombridge Lane in Eridge, contained money, cards and keys
- 23/11 A red Massey Ferguson tractor stolen from North Street possibly at 0200 hours that morning
- 25/11 Tools were stolen from open storage area at property on Steep Road
- 26/11 Damage to fence and finger posts on B2100
- Please be aware of email scams one that is going around at the minute is a friend of yours email is used saying they are on holiday in Spain but their cards and money have been stolen and they have no way to pay the hotel bill and are asking for money.
- Concern was expressed that a vehicle belonging to a local business is abusing the 1-hour limit in the marked parking bays. This has already been mentioned to the owner by a Councillor, CLERK to contact PcsO regarding possible action.
- Cllr Tidy reported that a recent Police operation had taken place over 5 days in the North of the district. This had involved 50 officers and had concentrated on rural crime. As a result, 5 people had been apprehended in vehicles with stolen goods.

5. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 15TH AND MATTERS ARISING.

It was RESOLVED that there were no matters arising and that the minutes be adopted. The Chairman signed the minutes.

6. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS.

a) Update on Mark Cross highways and bus shelter issues.

Clerk reported the following:-

- Letters of support for slip road closure, improved signage and extension to parking area opposite the Church have been received from School and Church. The Nursery indicates that a letter of support will also be sent.
- ESCC have responded to initial requires from the PC regarding slip road closure and additional signage and indicate that they do not support either proposal.
- ESCC indicate that they will support Council’s proposal to increase parking area opposite the Church subject to a Section 278 Agreement under the Highways Act 1980, cost for this formality will be minimal or nil. CLERK to obtain quote from Coppards for this work so that cost may be considered before budgets are agreed.

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- Sussex Police have provided background details for personal injury accidents for the period August 2008 to end of July 2011 on the B2100 from the A267 junction to Town Row. 2 serious injury accidents recorded, one in October 2009 and the other in June 2011; information is only updated on a quarterly basis therefore the RTC of 17th September does not feature although according to press report at the time this did not involve personal injury. Speeding and other issues on both the A267 and B2100 are on the agenda for discussion at the SLR meeting with ESCC Highways to be held in January. CLERK to advise School and Church of ESCC response and get photographs of the locations in question, also liaise with school regarding possibility of photographing the situation on these roads during school run time.
 - The replacement bus shelter is in the course of installation at Mark Cross. Local sponsor has offered to fund full cost of replacement and has requested that a small wooden plaque be placed in the shelter to record this. Surplus funds arising from the insurance claim are to be earmarked toward installation of a further shelter in the village, location to be determined. CLERK to add item to agenda of next Highways Committee meeting to consider options and arrange letter of thanks to sponsor for Chairman's signature.
- b) Information and further action regarding lay-by on A267 at Argos Hill.**
ESCC are aware of issues here, the owner of an adjacent property has requested that the lay-by be closed off due to fly tipping. ESCC have advised them that a formal request is required before a "stopping up order" can be considered and that this would be subject to local consultation.
- c) Speedwatch update and organisation.**
Cllr. Clibbens reported that Speedwatch had taken place on four occasions over the past week and that several vehicles had been noted as exceeding the speed tolerance limits with their details noted for reporting to Sussex Police for action. Cllr. Bolton has offered to loan a monopod to support the monitoring device. CLERK is to add a page to the Council website publicising the group and recording activity and will liaise with Cllr. Clibbens regarding information to record. A Separate "Google" e-mail address will be created to assist with running of the group and will allow use of "Google documents" feature to ease recording of members' availability.
- d) Report from ESCC regarding proposal for a Jarvis Brook – Rotherfield cycle path/footpath.**
Lisa Simmons at ESCC advises that this scheme is being reviewed alongside nearly 400 other transport projects to identify priorities for support and funding. It is hoped that an update will be available in the New Year. Cllr. Tidy has provided details of a Charitable Fund who may be able to assist with the scheme.
- e) Level of information recorded in minutes.**
Information relating to this from the "Working with your council" training notes was circulated. It was RESOLVED that the current format of minutes and level of information should remain.
- f) Location of the Public Forum on meeting agenda.**
From April to September 2009 the Forum was moved to the start of meetings but reverted to the end thereafter. Chairman noted that at the recent training session he had attended it was suggested that no time limit be specified on the agenda for the public forum. Section 1 d) of the Standing Orders permit members of the public to make representations on agenda items at the discretion of the Chairman, RESOLVED to remove time limit from the public forum at meetings and to invite members of the public to address meetings regarding agenda items of concern to them.

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g) System for marking of ashes plots and plaque spaces in the Cemetery and purchase of plot markers.

Clerk will in future mark plots with numbers prior to ashes interments. Local funeral director has reported several positive comments regarding the new ashes interment plots and the Wall of Remembrance.

h) Review of Clerk's hours.

Clerk has been monitoring his hours over the past year and has been working in the region of 24.5 hours p.w. against the contracted 23 hours. New SLCC model contract has been published which forms part of the criteria for attaining Quality Council status, will be presenting a draft contract based on this for consideration in due course. Advice given that only £3 p.w. of monthly £50.00 "Home as Office" payment is tax free, CLERK to ensure that this is reflected in future calculation of monthly salary and expenses. RESOLVED to increase Clerk's contracted hours to 25 per week and review in 6 months to see if this is adequate, CLERK to draft letter to formalise this.

i) Freedom Leisure active play session in Village Hall 15th February.

This has been booked, and it was RESOLVED that the Council in accordance with its powers under sections 137 and 139 of the 1972 LGA should incur expenditure of £64 for this which, in the opinion of the Council, is in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with expenditure

j) Internal Auditor report from November inspection.

Report circulated, this recommends clarification of the Standing Orders for tendering limit and Clerk's discretionary spending allowance. CLERK to update Standing Orders and Financial Regulations so that they are consistent on these matters and add to agenda of monthly meeting so that adoption may be considered.

k) Response to Wealden District Council consultation regarding Housing Allocations Policy.

Draft response circulated. Amended rating and supporting wording was agreed. RESOLVED that CLERK submit Council's response with these amendments.

l) Information regarding the "Power of Well Being" and the "General Power of Competence which is intended to supersede it.

Clerk reported the following:-

- A "Statement of intent as to community engagement" is required as the final item for eligibility although it is believed that this may not be a requirement for the "General Power of Competence".
- Clerk has a number of actual examples provided by other Councils with the intent of producing a draft to be considered for adoption. This will be of benefit in connection with applying for "Quality Council" status. Cllr. Bolton offered to produce this, CLERK to forward details of examples.
- Latest information on the "General Power of Competence" is that it is believed a new module will be introduced for Councillor training similar to that for the Power of Well Being one, this would possibly be "on line".
- Clerk has requested that all Councillor's who have undertaken the Power of Well Being training let him have their certificates of attendance so that they may be scanned for the records.

m) Information from NatWest bank regarding banking facilities and interest rates.

To be carried forward to next month's agenda.

n) New location for Boar's Head Parish noticeboard.

The building on which the board is currently located is to be demolished shortly. Clerk has identified various sites on the "old" A26 verges on which a board could be located subject to a licence from Highways and the feasibility of converting the

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existing board to free standing rather than wall mounted. CLERK to investigate options and report at future meeting.

o) Information and quote for repair of damage to Clackham's Lane fingerpost and other fingerpost issues.

This was damaged by vandalism recently with one of the fingers snapped off. Whilst a Parishioner nearby retrieved the broken off finger it was damaged and replacement of the whole through finger will be needed at a cost of £323. Clerk is investigating cost of insuring our 16 fingerposts as we no longer receive a 50% contribution toward repair/replacement cost from ESCC; this would require transfer of ownership from ESCC to Parish and has been added to agenda for January SLR meeting with ESCC. Insurers quote £1.45/£100 for all risks and 59p/£100 for impact only cover. RESOLVED to arrange for repair at figure quoted and to enquire if ESCC would be willing to transfer ownership with an annual contribution toward insurance premium, CLERK to investigate.

7. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS & MATTERS ARISING.

- Recreation and Burial Committee 6th December 2011.
- Planning and Building Committee 22nd November and 15th December.

It was RESOLVED that these minutes be adopted and that there were no matters arising.

8. TO RECEIVE REPORTS

• **Other committees and sub-committees.**

Cllr. Dennison reported that progress is being made by the group investigating the feasibility of the building tennis courts in the Recreation Ground. It is hoped to have more news next month.

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

- Several Councillors have recently attended training courses organised by SALC at Leeford Place and a report will be produced summarising the key points. The Chairman was pleased to report that, compared to what he had learned from the course and also from others who attended, the functioning of the Parish Council compares favourably with that of other Councils.
- Cllr. Watson attended the Rotherfield St Martin AGM and expressed disappointment that no other Councillor's attended. This was considered to be because the meeting is held during the day as this is the best time for those who use the Project's services.

• **Clerk's report and issues.**

Recently attended the Clerk's networking day at Heathfield. This focused on the new Localism Act and the impact on Councils. Many areas of the Act still require clarification as to how they are to work, it is intended that all will be in place by April 2012. Information was also provided regarding the new role of "Police and Crime Commissioners" who will be chosen by the electorate in November 2012. Clerk is to obtain copies of handouts from the day and circulate to the Councillors.

9. TO RECEIVE FINANCE INFORMATION

- Bank Reconciliation at end of November 2011. The RFO presented the figures, which were agreed and signed by the Chairman.
- Review of Expenditure against Budget to end of November 2011. The RFO provided the summary figures to Councillors and relevant detailed figures to the Committee Chairmen.

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- Approval of Payments. After explanation it was RESOLVED that the following payments be made:-

PAYMENTS			
801350	Trevor Thorpe	Clerk's salary for December	£980.02
801351	H.M.R.C.	Tax and N.I. for December	£251.23
801352	Trevor Thorpe	Clerk's expenses for December	£66.26
801353	Jim Gander	Street sweeping for December	£105.00
801354	Tollwood Garden Services	Hedge cutting in December	£1,446.00
801355	Suffolk Acres	Additional insurance premium for new bus shelter	£12.13
801356	Konica Minolta	Photocopying fees	£18.95
801357	Rotherfield Village Hall	Hall hire fees for October and November	£64.00
801358	Gwen Pritchitt	November audit visit fee	£194.50
801359	S.L.C.C.	2012 Subscription	£140.00
Total			£3,278.09

CREDITS			
PAYMENT FROM	DETAILS	AMOUNT	
Santander	Bank interest - December	£58.65	
E.S.C.C.	Pre School ground rent January and July	£750.00	
Rotherfield Millennium Green Trust	July and October contributions to dog bin in Green	£60.46	
Dignity Funeral Services	Ashes interments	£100.00	
Tester and Jones	Ashes plot fee, memorial plaque fee and ashes interment fees	£240.00	
Total			£1,209.11

10. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE GENERAL

- **Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee** – Letter advising that ESCC will be publishing an Uckfield Town Centre Action Plan in 2012, which may affect the track bed of the Uckfield – Lewes Route.
- **South East Water** – update regarding water resources, Clerk has added posters to noticeboards regarding situation.
- **High Weald Bridleways Group** – e-mail seeking a nominated Parish Contact. Councillor Wickenden offered to be the contact.
- **CPRE** – Further copy of the “Planning Explained” leaflet.

CIRCULARS AND MAGAZINES

- **Sussex Area Ramblers** – December 2012 magazine.

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- St Chéron en Bref – No 280
- Local Council Review – Winter 2011.
- 11. **TO RECEIVE INSPECTION BOOK & REPORTS.**
 - An inspection report for Highways and Roadside assets was signed by the Chairman.
- 12. **TO RECEIVE DATES FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.**
 - Tuesday 3rd January 2012 – Planning and Building Committee.
 - Tuesday 10th January 2012 – Finance and General Purposes Committee.
 - Wednesday 11th January – Strengthening Local Relationships Meeting with ESCC Highways officers.
 - Tuesday 17th January 2012 – Highways Lighting and Transport Committee.
 - Tuesday 24th January 2012 – Planning and Building Committee.
 - Thursday 26th January 2012 – Monthly Parish Council meeting.

The above meetings will be held in the Parish Council Room, Rotherfield Village Hall, starting at 19:30 with the exception of the SLR meeting that will be held at 13:30.
- 13. **TO RECEIVE URGENT ISSUES FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA.**
 - Highways Steward has reported the following to Clerk:-
 - Broken fence rail at Castle Hill Triangle now fixed and jetting requested for drains approaching this junction from the Village.
 - Sheriff's Lane drains checked and ESCC Contractors requested to make another visit.
 - WDC have provided a supply of "Clear up after your dog" signs. Cllr. Harris has offered to place one in Rochester Lane, Clerk will liaise with Millennium Green Trust to see if they would like some to install.
 - Payphones at top of Hornshurst Road and by Post Office have been repaired and BT confirm that the latter kiosk (a listed structure) has been put on the list for a repaint, possibly in the Spring. Cllr. Wickenden is to request owner of nearby hedge to cut back from around the kiosk.
 - Cllr. Wickenden has inspected various trees in the Village accompanied by the WDC Arboriculturalist who advised that a Chestnut Tree in the Recreation Ground is affected by Honey Fungus. Reduction in stages is suggested with eventual removal and replacement by a tree that is not susceptible to this fungus. CLERK to add to January agenda to discuss action. Trees in the Churchyard alongside the public footpath were also inspected; although fungus is present, it is not Honey Fungus.
 - It is suggested that the Council review any possible capital projects or land purchase in view of the recent Localism Act, SALC are able to offer training and advisory sessions to enable Council's to produce business plans for this.

The Chairman declared the formal business of the meeting closed at 21:30.

14. **PUBLIC FORUM.**
 - It was reported that a bridge on the Catt's Hill – Spout Hill footpath FP 43 had potentially hazardous planking and that some stiles on the route required repair. CLERK to report to ESCC Rights of Way team for inspection/action.

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

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