

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 27TH FEBRUARY 2014 AT 19:30 IN THE ROTHERFIELD MEMORIAL INSTITUTE

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr. L. Pike (Chairman)	Cllr. T. Gilbert	Cllr. J. Kitchenham
Cllr. Miss. N. Bolton	Cllr. Mrs. P. Halse-Adamson	Cllr. D. Thomas
Cllr. C. Clibbens	Cllr. R. Harris	Cllr. N. Wickenden
	Cllr. D. Hiles	

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT.

- The Parish Clerk, Trevor Thorpe.
- Cllr.F.Whetstone (ESCC), Cllr. H. Merriman (WDC) and two members of the public.

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

Apologies received and accepted on behalf of Cllr. R. Jaques, Cllr Mrs. A. Sharpe, Pcs0 Boyle and Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC).

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER INTERESTS.

None declared. The Chairman reminded the councillors that they should declare an interest if they became aware of one at any point in the meeting.

3. TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS.

The key points of Cllr. Merriman's (WDC) report was as follows:-

- All of the four grounds of challenge to Wealden District Council's Core Strategy Local Plan by a group of local landowners were dismissed in the High Court.
- WD/2013/2436/F Churchsettle, Church Road, Rotherfield, TN6 3LE. The Parish Council have recently recommended for refusal of this application to extend the property. This may go to the Wealden North Planning Committee for consideration; it is noted that a similar application for the property, now lapsed, was approved in 2007 and that the Parish Council had made a recommendation for refusal at that time.
- WD/2013/2502/F Land opposite Doggets/Little Inchreed, Hadlow Down Road, Crowborough, TN6 3SA. This has been refused by Wealden District Council due to concerns about the proposed size of the building, Cllr. Merriman concurred with this decision. Application had been recommended for approval by the Parish Council.
- Wealden District Council element of the Council Tax will not be increasing for 2014/2015.
- There are plans for a local event to be held later in the year involving the Energy Minister which will focus on "Future Energy Needs for Wealden".

The key points of Cllr. Whetstone's (ESCC) report was as follows:-

- The ESCC element of the Council Tax is to increase for the first time in four years. The increase will be 1.95%, just below the "trigger" level after which a local referendum must be held. It is estimated that if a referendum were held that it would cost in the region of £1m. Details of the increase in money terms for "band D" property are to be provided to the Clerk for circulation.
- £1m has been allocated for repairs to unclassified roads; a map is to be provided of these for reference.
- Changes are to be made to funding arrangements for school travel costs. In future only one school option will be offered for this.

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4. TO RECEIVE POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS REPORT

The Clerk delivered this on behalf of PcsO Boyle:-

- Car keyed on North Street on the evening of 07/02.
- Industrial jet wash stolen from building site on the 09/02.
- There have been burglaries in Mayfield and Wadhurst over the last two weeks, please ensure your property is as secure as possible and to report any suspicious activity to us on 101.
- Still checking the parking outside the General Store.

A Councillor reported that there had been a suspicious caller, and a subsequent 5.00am break-into a van at the same property in Spout Hill. Two cars noted as acting suspiciously in Spout Hill, and a van by the Cemetery, have been reported to the Police.

5. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 30TH JANUARY 2014 FOR APPROVAL AS A TRUE RECORD AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES.

It was agreed that an amendment be made to the ESCC report in these minutes to clarify that, whilst the ESCC Forest Row, Seaford and Wadhurst Household Recycling Sites will now only open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the opening times on these days will remain unchanged. A manuscript amendment was made to the minutes and CLERK will annotate the "on line" version accordingly.

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th January 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, be confirmed as a true record. The Chairman signed them.

6. UPDATE FROM CLERK REGARDING MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING.

Numbers reference the agenda of the 30th January 2014 meeting.

7 a) Annual Parish Meeting. Good response from Village Groups, the Sussex PCC has accepted our invitation as have ESCC Roger Williams Head of Highways. Item will be added to March agenda to agree final arrangements.

7 d) Design for sign for "A" board awaited before ordering.

7 j) Owner of adjacent property has kindly confirmed that the current light is to be replaced next week with a "bulkhead" pattern light to illuminate the area by the kissing gate end of the Church Path.

7. TO CONSIDER INFORMATION AND MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING ACTION FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:-

a) Response to formal written complaint received in respect of letter sent by the Council in the aftermath of the diesel spill incident in the Recreation Ground and Hall car park in July 2013. Progress report regarding claim relating to this incident.

The members of the public present were requested to leave the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

- A "Time Line " consisting of 3 pages of 25 summarised events and communications covering the period 9/4/2013 to 22/2/2014, together with copies of 15 documents including Parish Council and its Solicitor correspondence with the complainant, were provided to Councillors prior to the meeting for their consideration. Cllr. Thomas, who was involved in several site visits in the immediate aftermath of the event and to whom the incident was initially reported, summarised events.
- Two complaints have been received in connection with the event and actions by the Parish Council. One (dated 14th February 2014) is from the signatory of the indemnity form and the other (dated 11th February 2014) from a parishioner who was present at the event. The first complaint related to the manner of the Councils communication to the complainant in the aftermath of the incident and considers that this was in breach of the Code of Conduct; the second raises similar concerns but additionally seeks clarification regarding the decision process authorising the correspondence.
- The matter was discussed by the Councillors and the following points were raised:
- Did the organiser hold separate public liability insurance?

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- In response to a question about the possibility of the cost of repair being reduced, or work delayed, the Chairman explained that expected life of this tarmac area had been significantly reduced due to chemical damage caused by diesel ingress.
- Cllr. Hiles stated that his wife was the witness to the signature of the indemnity form.
- The complainant was not present at this meeting nor had they been present at the Recreation and Burial Committee meeting of 11th February.
- Concerns were expressed that none of those present at the event had taken responsibility to ensure that the incident was reported. This had delayed the clear up efforts and may have led to damage being more extensive than it could have been.
- The Council's second letter to the complainant states the initial letter was not intended to offend but to draw attention to the facts of the incident as seen by the Council.
- The letters were based on fact.
- It was unfortunate that a "face to face" meeting had not been held with the complainant to discuss the issues.
- Council were aware of Solicitors letters to the complainant, and owners of the vehicle involved; they defer to the Solicitor's advice as to content of these communications.
- Ultimately, the Council need to protect and maintain community owned assets such as the car park; uninsured repair costs would come from community funds.

It was RESOLVED that the Council make the following statement in relation to both the complaint letters received and, after the public had returned to the meeting, it was read to all those present:-

1. We regret any distress that you may have experienced when construing the contents of our letter.
2. We have considered your complaint and believe we have acted appropriately in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Councillors as adopted by the Parish Council in 30th August 2012.
3. The matter is now in the hands of the Legal Expense Insurers provided under the Council's insurance policy and we are guided by the advice of their solicitors regarding appropriate action.
4. A time line of events is provided in relation to the incident covering the period 9th April 2013 to 14th February 2014. This shows how and when the manner of communication was agreed.

CLERK to send statement and accompanying time line to both complainants.

With regard to progress with the claim, Clerk reported that a site visit with a representative of the van owner's insurers is scheduled for Monday March 3rd.

b) Publication of a Village Guide by Local Authority Publishing at no cost to the Council.

Details circulated prior to meeting of a proposal from Local Authority Publishing for this, together with a map showing the TN6 3** postcode area which is the proposed target for the "direct mailed" element. Samples of similar publication produced by this publisher were distributed to the Councillors for information. Council can provide photos and editorial content or this can be provided for us. It was suggested that a photo competition be organised to gather photographs for the publication. CLERK to carry forward to agenda of 11th March Planning and Building Committee meeting to give time for consideration of terms and conditions of agreement for publication.

c) Candidate projects for funds from the Wealden Community Dividend Scheme.

Details circulated prior to the meeting. The sum that Rotherfield District Council Ward is to be allocated is £1989; there may be further funds due as Mark Cross and Eridge fall within the Mark Cross and Eridge Ward One suggestion has been received via Twitter for the money be used to fund repairs to the Scout Hut roof. Suggestions made at the meeting as to project(s) for these funds were Sports Club, further work in the play area or Church projects. CLERK to carry forward to agenda of March meeting for a final decision so that the application form may be completed for allocation of the funds.

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- d) **Parish Council Response to Healthwatch East Sussex “Better Beginnings” consultation re: Maternity services.**
Details of consultation circulated prior to meeting. RESOLVE that the Council submit the following comments to the Consultation:-
“The Parish Council supports the options that retain a fully staffed Birthing Unit at Crowborough Hospital. This is the only unit serving the North of the County and closure would force expectant mothers to travel to Hastings or Eastbourne Hospital. Considerable amounts of Community raised funding has been used to support this facility over the years”.
- e) **Recommendations of the Parish Independent Remuneration Panel review and recommendations regarding allowances for Parish Councils in the Wealden Area for 2014/15.**
Details circulated prior to meeting. It was noted that over £150 is spent for fuel in connection with Planning site visits; this is not reclaimed by the Councillors involved. It was RESOLVED to adopt the recommendations of the Panel; as in previous years Councillors do not intend to draw the basic allowance that they are eligible for, the Chairman may utilise his £250 limit allowed in support of Community events.
- f) **Request to hold Easter Egg hunt on Good Friday in the Recreation Ground.**
The Chairman declared a personal interest at this point, as he is also Chair of the Bonfire Society who organise this community event. It was RESOLVED that this event be permitted subject to conditions regarding insurance and risk assessment, CLERK to liaise with the Society regarding this.
- g) **Request to use Court Meadow Green for a Church fund raising event in June.**
Date of event is 19th July. Church Picnic proposed as part of a fund raising event puppet show in the Church. RESOLVED that this event be approved, CLERK to liaise with organisers to ensure that insurance and risk assessment requirements are met. Consideration may be given for a grant from the Council toward the cost of any additional insurance requirements once the sum, if any, is known.
- h) **Purchase of additional street illuminations for Christmas 2014.**
£2K in budget for 2014/15 in respect of this. £920 spent in 2013/14 against budget of £1250. RESOLVED, CHAIRMAN to draw up costed list of suggested additions to the illuminations and approach owners of village buildings that could possibly provide fixing points for additional lighting. To report to a future meeting for final decision.
- i) **Action re dog fouling in New Road.**
Complaints received of fouling in vicinity of the footpath from the King’s Arms. The Wealden Dog Order came into force from the start of the year. This empowers the levying of fines by Police/Pcso or Council employees (not Councillors) for whom special training is required to make the fines legally enforceable. There is also the issue of actually catching the culprit in the first place. WDC are in the process of producing signs reflecting the new Order. Each of the Council’s 4 dog bins (2 in Millennium Green, 1 in Hornshurst Road near school and 1 at Mark Cross) costs around £217 pa for emptying, the cost of one of them is shared 50/50 with the Millennium Green. RESOLVED CLERK to produce article for the Parish magazine and liaise with Millennium Green Trust regarding possible joint statement/press release.
- j) **Grant support for 2014 to the Allotment Association.**
RESOLVED that a grant of £150 be paid to the Association to assist with capital expenditure such as fence repairs. CLERK to note for payment at the April meeting and advise the association.
8. **TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS & MATTERS ARISING.**
The minutes of the following meetings have been circulated to all the Councillors:-
– 21st January 2014 – Highways Lighting and Transport Committee
– 28th January 2014 – Planning and Building Committee.
– 11th February 2014 – Recreation and Burial Committee.
– 18th February 2014 – Planning and Building Committee.
It was RESOLVED that all the above minutes be adopted by the Council.
9. **TO RECEIVE REPORTS**
- **Other committees and sub-committees**
The land acquisition advisory group met on 28th January. An article regarding the aims of the group has been submitted for publication in the March Parish Magazine.

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- **Councillor “Have Your Say” session.** Cllr. Kitchenham was unable to access the Institute to host the January session, CLERK to ensure that Councillors hosting sessions in the Institute are briefed regarding access arrangements. Next session is on March 8th in the Institute with Cllrs. Harris and Thomas hosting.
- **Meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council.**
 - **Site meeting held at Town Row outflow with Southern Water Officer for the area.**
Issues relating to this outlet were discussed and the water company are due to respond by March 20th regarding size of outflow and screening arrangements.
 - **Planning Training at Hailsham.** Cllrs. Wickenden and Thomas, together with the Clerk, attended this worthwhile session to receive updates on local and national topics and policy. Copies of the presentations have been circulated by the Clerk.
 - **Wealden Clerks meeting at Heathfield.** Clerk attended this. Presentation and information given regarding the new ESCC Community Self-Serve Scheme. Haywards Heath Town Clerk presented information regarding the West Sussex initiative to devolve some minor highways work such as pot hole repairs to larger councils; in term they provide a service to surrounding Parishes.
 - **Mark Cross Hall.** Cllr. Kitchenham reported that work continued to try to establish possessory title for the Hall and possible development of the Church for further community use.
- **Clerk’s report and issues.** None.

10. TO RECEIVE FINANCE INFORMATION

- Bank Reconciliation and review of expenditure against Budget to end of January 2014. It was RESOLVED that these be accepted and the Chairman signed them.
- Approval of Payments. It was RESOLVED that the following payments be made:-

PAYMENTS

Payments are made using the General Power of Competence as contained in the Localism Act 2011. The Power was adopted by Rotherfield Parish Council at their monthly meeting held on 29th December 2012

CHEQUE NO	PAYEE	DETAILS	AMOUNT
801720	Trevor Thorpe	Clerk's salary for February	£1,412.97
801721	H.M.R.C.	Tax and N.I. for February	£469.70
801722	Trevor Thorpe	Clerk's expenses for February	£93.47
801723	Rotherfield Village Hall	Hall hire for meetings - January	£35.75
801724	PJI Contract Packaging Ltd	Street sweeping and litter picking	£315.00
801725	Teambase	Stationery	£20.06
801726	Konica Minolta	Photocopier/printer usage	£19.40
801727	JRB Enterprises Ltd	Dog bag dispenser and fittings - donation to Millennium Green Trust	£161.82
801728	Rotherfield Memorial Institute	Grant toward replacement porch cost	£1,000.00
801729	Tollwood Garden Services	Hedge cutting in Rec. and Cemetery	£220.00
801730	A C Moaby	Ground, hedge and tree work in Court Meadow Green and Cemetery	£3,174.00
801731	A C Moaby	Fixing plaque to Memorial Wall in Cemetery	£25.00
Total			£6,947.17

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PAYMENT FROM	DETAILS	AMOUNT
Santander Bank	Interest on 4711394 for January	£50.91
HM Treasury	Interest on 4% Consol holding	£29.74
Millennium Green Trust	Contribution toward dog bin emptying	£27.23
Burslem	Memorial fee	£80.00
A.Cowley	Reimbursement of cost of fixing plaque to Wall of Remembrance	£25.00
	Total	£212.88

TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

- **Argos Hill Windmill Trust** – Invitation to Chairman to attend visit to Mill on Friday March 28th. CLERK to advise Trust that the Chairman will be pleased to attend this event.
- **Withyham Parish Council** – Invitation to Chairman to attend open day and Annual Assembly on Saturday 26th April. CLERK to advise Withyham Parish Council that he and Cllr. Thomas will be please to attend.
- **Wealden CAB** – Letter thanking for Grant and offering to attend a meeting to update on services, in particular Skype outreach service to RSM.
- **WDC** – Wealden Volunteer awards scheme, nomination to be made by April 30th.
- **WDC** – Release regarding rejection by High Court of challenge to Local Plan.
- **Parishioner** – Letter raising concerns, and including Freedom of Information Request, relating to Diesel Spill incident as featured under agenda item 7 a). Clerk is dealing with this matter with reference to Council Chair and Vice Chair, Chair and Vice Chair of the Recreation and Burial Committee, and Surrey and Sussex Association of Local Councils.

11. CIRCULARS AND MAGAZINES

- **Sussex Area Ramblers** – February edition of “Now Open”.
- **Sussex Heritage Trust** – Awards 2014.
- **Saint-Chéron en Bref** – No. 304.

12. TO RECEIVE INSPECTION BOOK & REPORTS

These were signed by the Chairman, no health and safety issues had been identified by the reports.

13. TO RECEIVE DATES FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

- 11th March 2014 – Planning and Building Committee
- 18th March 2014 – Highways, Lighting and Transport Committee
- 27th March 2014 – March Council Meeting. This will include co-option of a candidate to fill the current vacancy on the Council.

All of these meetings will be held in the Parish Council Room, Rotherfield Village Hall, starting at 19:30

14. TO RECEIVE URGENT ISSUES FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA

- Clerk confirmed that an item to discuss surface improvements to Chant Lane is included on the agenda of the 18th March Highways Lighting and Transport Committee meeting.
- Concerns raised that, if yellow lines are marked at the foot of Spout Hill, vehicles will park further up the hill and cause obstruction elsewhere. CLERK to add to agenda of forthcoming Highways meeting to discuss.
- Cllr. Wickenden is to provide and fit plastic trunk protection to the two “Jubilee Oak” trees; metal protectors are too large for the trees at present.
- CLERK to investigate areas of hedge cutting missed at the Cemetery and raise this with Contractors.
- CLERK to investigate and raise issues regarding blocked gullies in village centre.

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- Cllrs. Wickenden and Halse – Adamson have raised concerns at the challenges facing rural businesses, particularly in the village; CLERK to add item to agenda of March meeting to consider way in which the Parish Council can encourage use of local shops and businesses.
- Clerk reported that Column 5 by Johnson’s Pond is not working and reported to ESCC for action. It was suggested that this may be because of the recent “power surge” in this area and that this should be mentioned to ESCC. Quotes are awaited from ESCC for two other lights that require work not covered by our maintenance agreement; 7 in village centre and 92 in Cottage Hill. The latter has been queried with ESCC as it seems to be working normally. A new LED type light has been installed in High Cross to replace the lantern unit on column 17 which was life expired.
- CLERK to investigate and report information regarding a “sensor operated” street light that has been noticed in Faircrouch Lane in Wadhurst.

15. PUBLIC FORUM.

Parishioner present noted that, although the power “spike” near Brecon Cottages had been an inconvenience and damaged equipment, EDF had acted swiftly to address the problem. It was considered that a feature regarding the cause of this incident and resolution be included in the Parish Magazine.

Confirmed as a true record at the 27th March 2014 meeting of the Council

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