



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

**MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2018 AT 19:30  
IN THE PARISH COUNCIL ROOM, ROTHERFIELD VILLAGE HALL TN6 3LX**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT**

Cllr. R. Harris (Chair)	Cllr. T. Gilbert	Cllr. A. Martin
Cllr. L. Henrick	Cllr. A. Hardy	Cllr. J. Richardson
Cllr. J. Cahan	Cllr. D. Hiles	Cllr. G. Watson-Smith
Cllr. G. Farmer	Cllr. J. Kitchenham	Cllr. N. Wickenden

**COUNCILLORS ABSENT**

None.

**ALSO PRESENT**

Trevor Thorpe, Parish Clerk. Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC), Cllr. P. Dixon (WDC),  
Cllr. F. Whetstone (ESCC) and three members of the public.

**1. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING: -**

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

None. Councillor Glynn had given notice that she would be late arriving at the meeting.

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

Cllr. Gilbert declared an interest in item 3a) as he is currently undertaking work at the Surgery.

**c) District and County Councillor reports.**

Key points of these reports were as follows: -

**Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC).**

- Details of the final Local Government Settlement have yet to be received from Central Government. He is not anticipating any additional funds from this source.
- Council tax increase by 3% in respect of adult social care, and a further 3% in respect of other expenditure will be considered at the 5<sup>th</sup> February Council meeting. £17m will still need to be cut from the budget with a further £28m over the next two years. Providing services, even the statutory ones, will be a challenge.
- School performance figures had been published today, he noted that Rotherfield had received an average/above average report.
- Along with other Sussex Council leaders he had attended a recent meeting with the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner. Concerns at rising crime rates in the whole of the County were raised, also regarding the various "initiatives" which are announced and appear to have little effect.
- Cllr. Martin raised a question regarding the Civil Parking Enforcement Scheme (CPE). An item regarding this had been withdrawn from the agenda of the December Wealden Council meeting.
- Cllr. Standley advised that this falls under both his "hats", as the WDC Leader and as an East Sussex County Councillor. County would be responsible for parking enforcement should such a scheme be introduced in Wealden. It would apply only to "on street" parking - he personally would not like to see "pay and display" introduced to Wealden High Streets. Current parking enforcement in Wealden is undertaken by Council staff and only in respect of Council owned car parks.

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- The business case for the scheme drawn up for WDC by ESCC considered that it would cost £450K p.a. and require 6 Civil Enforcement Officers. Cllr. Standley is mindful that some councils that have followed the CPE route have found that the cost of enforcement far exceeds the income from the fines levied.
- The WDC Cabinet are to discuss and decide the approach to be adopted at their 31<sup>st</sup> January meeting.

#### **Cllr. P. Dixon (WDC).**

- Wealden Local Plan. This is still work in progress, it is hoped to publish in the Spring.
- Planning application WD/2017/2389/F re: Lake Cottage change of use. This had been recommended for refusal by the Parish Council and will now be considered by the Wealden North Planning Committee.

#### **Cllr. F. Whetstone (ESCC)**

- Concerned at repeated cuts in the Local Government budgets by Central Government who appear not to acknowledge impact of these or give direction as to where they should be applied.
- ESCC are trying to do their best with diminishing funding and he considers that there is little scope to cut further. Local examples are proposals that could affect the waste sites at Forest Row and Wadhurst.
- School results. These have recently appeared and concentrate on “Value added”.

#### **d) Minutes of the Parish Council meetings held 21<sup>st</sup> December 2017 for approval as a true record.**

Draft copies had been circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr. Henrick wished it noted that the cheque for £182 issued to her for printing costs was in error and that it would be returned for cancellation. Also noted that there was numbering error under section 3i) of the minutes. After these had been corrected in manuscript it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be confirmed and adopted as a true record, and the Chair signed them.

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

##### **December 2017 PCM**

##### **i. Consider approval and completion of application to open a bank account with Unity Trust Bank, with signatories as per existing Santander accounts, and to utilise on line payment methods.**

Paperwork has been submitted to Unity, follow up queries dealt with and they are now proceeding with the opening of the account, and set up of “on line” banking and payments. Existing signatories to the Santander account had all received information regarding their “on line” passwords and usernames so that they can set themselves up on the Unity system. Cllrs. Gilbert and Wickenden advised the meeting that they did not wish to be involved in the use of the “on line” systems and would stand down as signatories to the account. **CLERK** to add item to February agenda to formally note this, also seek additional signatories to be appointed.

#### **2. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE BANK RECONCILIATION AS AT END OF DECEMBER 2017. REVIEW EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET TO DATE AND APPROVE PAYMENTS.**

##### **i. Budget, other financial reports and actions arising.**

Reports circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. Overall expenditure for the various budget headings are within their limits, Clerk to investigate and report details of Highways account to Chair of Highways Committee as it is believed that some items may have been mis-posted here. It was **RESOLVED** that the reconciliation reports and budgets be approved.

Cllr. Glynn joined the meeting at 20:00.

**ii. Approval of payments.**

It was **RESOLVED** that the payments in the schedule below be authorised and the associated cheques signed.

<b>Payee Name</b>	<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Transaction Detail</b>	<b>Amount</b>
HM Land Registry fees DD	DD	Search fees Surgery & Highways	£9.00
HM Land Registry fees DD	DD	HMLR Search Fees	£12.00
Swarco Traffic Ltd	802453	Additional SID fixings	£180.00
Rotherfield Village Hall	802454	Hall hire December 2017	£50.40
T.C. Woodgate	802455	Mole catching in play area	£48.00
Unity Trust Bank	802456	Initial deposit	£500.00
Trevor Thorpe	802457	Expenses & Reimbursements	£143.87
Trevor Thorpe	802458	January salary	£1,546.68
H M R C	802459	January Tax & NI	£494.11
Phil Ireland	802460	Street sweeping/litter picking	£333.90
Information Commissioner	DD	Annual Data Protection reg.	£35.00
<b>Total Payments</b>			<b>£3,352.96</b>

**Credits received**

<b>Cash Received from</b>	<b>Receipt Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project donation	£130.00
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project Donation	£20.00
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project Donation	£20.00
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project Donation	£1,000.00
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project Donation	£250.00
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project donation	£335.00
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project donation	£640.00
Parishioner Donation	War Memorial Project donation	£310.00
Rotherfield Millennium Green	Dog bin contribution	£30.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>£2,735.00</b>

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

**i. Rotherfield Surgery.**

**a) Receive recommendations from the Parish Council Surgery Working Group regarding purchase of the Surgery freehold.**

The Group reported that, since the 21<sup>st</sup> December Parish Council meeting they had held a meeting and discussed and proposed the following: -

- The Rotherfield Trust have been approached for financial support. They have kindly earmarked £100K in support of the project to assist with purchase or operation should the Surgery be purchased by the Council.
- Valuation undertaken on behalf of the Surgery had produced a figure of £500K.
- A surveyor experienced in valuing specialist properties, such as the surgery, is being sought to undertake a valuation on behalf of the Council.
- The Parish Council's 2018/19 budget will need provision for professional costs associated with the purchase, and servicing of loan repayments in the order of £20-25K per annum. Details of the Council's Precept requirement must be with Wealden in time for them to set the Council Tax on 21<sup>st</sup> February. Precept requirement must be approved by the Full Council; this will require rescheduling of the February Council meeting to a date earlier

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than the current 22<sup>nd</sup> February. It is hoped to have an outline feasibility study for the purchase available prior to this meeting.

- The Group recommends that the Parish Council purchase the Surgery freehold with a formal agreement with the current practice to continue provision of a GP services in the village for a period allowing arrangements to be put in place to secure the long-term future of the facility; Also, it needs to establish how much of the Surgery they will need to provide a GP service and future uses for the surplus space which will be available.
- Initial non - chargeable meeting has been held with Council's solicitors to advise them of this project.
- Application to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The Group have reviewed the information required for this which will be submitted via the Sussex and Surrey Association of Local Councils (SSALC). Clerk has sought advice from SSALC regarding the process and it appears straightforward. Key elements of the application are evidence that repayment costs have been considered in the Council's budget and that the Community have been consulted on the matters. Clerk reported that from the discussion he had held with SSALC that there is sufficient evidence of consultation via meetings, TV and radio, local press and social media, also that there had been no comments received against the proposal.
- Other possible sources of funding are being investigated and the Surgery League of Friends have offered their support with this.
- Both the Surgery and the NHS High Weald Lewes Havens Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are keen for a swift resolution of the matter. The Parish Council also wish this so that the Parish may be reassured that the GP presence may continue.
- A meeting has been arranged with the Wealden District Council Planning team to see if there would be any issues with other medical care and community groups using the premises.
- The practice has requested that no decision be made by the CCG re: the surgery closure proposal at their meeting scheduled for February 6<sup>th</sup>.
- A press release had been produced to update the Community.
- Cllr. Kitchenham had been contacted by the BBC's Health Correspondent regarding a proposed 8/10-minute feature during the 26<sup>th</sup> February edition of "Inside Out". This will relate to broad issues affecting rural communities, including provision of GP services, and they will be visiting and filming in Rotherfield for this feature.
- A meeting has also been held with the Doctors to discuss practical aspects of the space usage in the Surgery and the responsibilities that the Council will take on should they take ownership of the property.
- CCG currently pay rent to the Practice for their use of the premises. It will need establishing as to how this sum may change if the Surgery use less of the floor space.

It was **RESOLVED** that Standing Orders be suspended so that the public present could raise their comments along with the Councillors.

- Recent article in the "Courier" implied that the Surgery had already been "saved" by the Council who had purchased it. This was unfortunate: Meridian, Radio Sussex and Crowborough Life all had the story correct.
- Access to the Surgery for vehicles. How will this be preserved? The access is believed to be unrestricted in the deeds but this would be checked during purchase.
- Has there been a firm commitment from the Practice as to the level of service that they will provide should the surgery premises be purchased? Many in the Village considered that this was a "done deal" and that the current arrangements of surgeries on five mornings per week would continue.
- Current thinking was that Surgery arrangements would continue for a minimum of two years and that this would allow for new doctors to be attracted to the Surgery to prevent the undesirable prospect of no GP service

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- in the Village. Skeleton “heads of terms” are being drawn up for an agreement regarding service levels.
- Concerns that the community may end up with a “white elephant” with ownership of a Surgery building but no GP service. It was pointed out that in this “worst case scenario” the building would still be a realisable asset.
- Loan duration. This is suggested as 50 years to make repayments an affordable prospect.
- Additional usage at the premises – could there be planning issues? This will be discussed at the previously mentioned meeting with Wealden Planners.
- Cllr. Wickenden declared an interest in the matter as a relative of his owns much of the land near the Surgery. He considered that the premises were over priced at £500K. Specialist valuers have been identified to provide a valuation for the Council and a building survey is also intended.
- It is feared that, if we fail to purchase the building, even at the doctor’s valuation price of £500K, we will never get another GP surgery in the Parish again.
- The Parish Council are already the owners of the land behind the surgery, Court Meadow Green.
- Doctors wish for a “certain sum” – valuation is largely irrelevant and consider that it would be difficult for planners to turn down an application to use the site for residential purposes. The advantage with the Surgery, if purchased, is that young doctors would not need to “buy in” to the practice, although it was also observed that there are wider difficulties in attracting salaried doctors to surgeries.
- Has an approach been made to see if the village pharmacy may wish to relocate to the Surgery premises?
- Strong sense of feeling in the Village that they wish the Council’s proposals to succeed. Consider that the Surgery could be an excellent way of providing “joined up” health and other associated medical and social services in the heart of this rural community. The Parish Council are ideally placed to initiate this. Obtaining the surgery would put the parish in a stronger negotiating position to retain GP services with the CCG. If the surgery is providing services that the community value then the community will back it.
- Will the precept be able to carry the burden? Do we have any idea how much could be raised from the Community? If the burden goes on the precept then it is borne by everyone in the Parish. But we would not wish to discourage people from contributing to reduce the burden. Regarding contributions from Parishioners it is hoped that these could be directed to the Surgery League of Friends.

**RESOLVED** That Standing Orders be reinstated so that the formal business of the meeting may continue.

**b) Resolve to apply to the Department of Communities and Local Government for borrowing approval for a loan from the Public Works Loans Board to fund the purchase.**

**RESOLVED** that the Parish Council instruct the Working Group to proceed with production of the documents and policies needed to submit an application to the PWLB via SSALC for purchase of the Rotherfield Surgery building freehold.

**c) Agree further actions and expenditure required regarding this project.**

**RESOLVED** to agree expenditure of up to £5K to cover professional fees relating to the Surgery purchase.

**ii. Consider letters from Rotherfield School Year 6 requesting additional equipment for the Recreation Ground Play Area.**

Key suggestions within were for a “zip wire” and a basket swing. **RESOLVED** that an item be added to the agenda of the forthcoming Communications and Social

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Media Committee to agree action to engage with the school, either by post or a visit, to discuss the matter further. Reserves of approximately £6.8K are held which are designated for Recreation Ground Facilities

**iii. Update regarding damp in the Pre-School undercroft and recommended further actions.**

A surveyor has been instructed to inspect the area affected and provide a report, Pre-School have been informed. Cost will be £875 and falls within the delegated spending limit contained in the Financial Regulations, **CLERK** to sign and return confirmation to the surveyor.

**iv. Arrangements for a “workshop” to improve Councillor familiarisation with OneDrive and associated software.**

Various concerns and issues were raised and discussed by the Councillors and Clerk regarding this.

**RESOLVED** the following actions for Cllr. Hardy: -

- Liaise with the supplier of the software to run a “Surgery” at their hourly cost quoted of £60 and agree time and date.
- Liaise with Clerk regarding booking of the Village Hall meeting room so that those experiencing issues can visit and resolve them - anticipated that a session of 2 hours should suffice.
- Obtain quotes from Computer Studio in Crowborough for provision of additional “tablets” for Councillor use.

**v. Mark Cross Community Centre. To consider accepting offer from a nearby business to boost their WiFi to serve the Centre with cost of work required to be funded by the Parish Council.**

Cllr. Cahan reported that a quote of £545 plus VAT had been provided by Computer Studio to install a WiFi “booster” enabling sharing of the facility at the nearby Pennies Nursery on a secure basis with the Community Centre.

**RESOLVED** to agree this expenditure when the lease agreement between the Church and the Community Centre has been signed.

**4. RECEIVE AND ADOPT COMMITTEE MEETINGS MINUTES.**

See 5a) below.

**5. TO RECEIVE OTHER REPORTS AND CONSIDER ACTIONS ARISING FROM THEM.**

**a) Note the acts and proceedings at their recent meetings of Council committees and sub-committees.**

- 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018 – Highways Lighting and Transport Committee.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018 – Planning and Building Committee.

Draft minutes of the above have been circulated to Councillors and it was **RESOLVED** that the Council notes the acts and proceedings of these meetings. Clerk has already been advised that Cllr. Watson-Smith was present at the 9<sup>th</sup> January Highways Committee meeting and has noted to raise this at the next meeting of that Committee so that the minutes may be corrected.

**b) Meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council.**

- Cllr. Gilbert had attended the recent meeting of the Village Hall Committee. He reported that they are currently investigating their charges to try and attract additional hiring and income. Also passed on the Hall’s request that they be allowed to install a noticeboard adjacent to the

approach path, **CLERK** to add to agenda of forthcoming Recreation and Burial Committee meeting for consideration.

- Cllr. Hardy reported that the War Memorial Working Party are to hold a meeting with the Rotherfield Trust next week to discuss a grant from them toward the project.
- Cllr. Henrick had attended a meeting of the Millennium Green trust.
- Strengthening Local Relationships meeting with East Sussex Highways. **CLERK** to investigate minutes and clarify regarding speed limit on the A267 near Argos Hill, specifically calls for a reduction in the speed limit at Trull's Hatch. Item to be added to agenda of next Highways Committee meeting regarding this, also add item for traffic management and diversions during the resurfacing of the B2100 between the Village and Jarvis Brook.
- Cllr. Harris and wife had assisted at the annual Christmas Lunch who organise and fund the event for the elderly in the Village. Was very impressed by the event, **CLERK** to send letter to the Bonfire Society thanking them for this event and the other community ~~activities~~activities that they run in the Village during the year.

**c) Clerk's updates and issues.**

- Recent computer problems, although causing some disruption, had been swiftly resolved by Computer Studio. They were found to have been caused by a conflict between Rapport software which is provided by many banks as additional protection for their on-line services. Some non-malicious malware was also discovered and dealt with.
- General Data Protection Regulations. Still unclear as to what effect this will have, although much information is being received on the subject some of it appears contradictory and even the professional bodies have differing views on the matter. Cllr. Farmer has offered to assist with this. The Regulations are due to take effect toward the end of May.
- War Memorial Project donations. As at today have received 19 donations totalling £2200. Clerk requested that Cllr. Hardy provide details of the Working Party membership and that details of those attending its meetings be recorded in their minutes.

**d) Items for next Parish Magazine column.**

None suggested.

**6. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.**

- St Chéron en Bref – Edition 337.
- Clerks and Councils Direct – Edition 115.
- Local Council Review – Winter 2017.
- The Clerk – January 2018.
- Wealden Parish Remuneration Panel Report on Town and Parish Councillor Allowances for 2018/19.

**7. TO RECEIVE INSPECTION BOOK & REPORTS**

No items causing concern or requiring urgent action were identified in these.

**8. TO RECEIVE DATES FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.**

February meetings – all to be held in the Parish Council Room, Rotherfield Village Hall, North Street, TN6 3LX and starting at 19:30.

**6<sup>th</sup>** - Communications and Social Media Committee

**13<sup>th</sup>** - Planning and Building Committee

**22<sup>nd</sup>** - Monthly Council Meeting – **To be changed** – see item 3i) a above

**27<sup>th</sup>** - Recreation and Burial Committee

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- **REPORT DETAILS OF ITEMS AND ISSUES NOTIFIED TO CLERK IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING FOR INVESTIGATION, FURTHER ACTION OR FOR FUTURE AGENDA.**
- Cllr. Farmer is to seek an update regarding progress being made by the Mark Cross Community Centre regarding their lease from the Church. Clerk to add item to agenda of the forthcoming Recreation and Burial Committee meeting for a report.
- Cllr. Martin has been installing “considerate parking” notices in the village centre, unfortunately some appear to have been vandalised. Our SID has been relocated by him to monitor vehicles at the Mayfield Turn junction; details of deficiencies in signage identified by Cllr. Martin at this location are to be passed to the Clerk for reporting to East Sussex Highways.
- Clerk has reported that the post supporting the tap at the Parish Cemetery has rotted through, Cllr. Watson Smith has offered to repair this.
- The potholes in Chant Lane will be dealt with by Councillors once condition is drier.
- Cllr. Hardy has requested use of Court Meadow Green on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March for the celebration of Palm Sunday, including a donkey. Details of the event to be passed to the Clerk so that formal approval may be given.
- **CLERK** to request our street sweeper to sweep leaves from the pavement between Longhedges and Biddenden Farm in Station Road. The path between Station Road and Chant Lane also requires sweeping but it is suggested that this is delayed until after the hedge has been cut, this is due to take place shortly.

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

**9. PUBLIC FORUM.**

None.

**Adopted as a true record and signed at the  
13<sup>th</sup> February 2018 meeting of the Parish Council**

..... Chair.....Date