

# 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 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2015 AT 19:30 IN MARK CROSS VILLAGE HALL

### COUNCILLORS PRESENT

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

### COUNCILLORS ABSENT

None

### ALSO PRESENT

- The Parish Clerk, Trevor Thorpe.
- Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC), Cllr. F. Whetstone (ESCC) and Cllr. H. Merriman (WDC).
- PcsO Julie Pearce-Martin and PcsO Matt Neve.
- Four members of the public.

### 1. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING:-

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

Apologies were submitted and accepted from Cllr. A. Sharpe and Cllr. F. Whittington. It was noted that Cllr. Dixon had submitted an apology for absence in respect of the February meeting and was erroneously shown as absent in their minutes.

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

- Personal interests were declared in respect of item 2a) by Cllrs. Wickenden (owner of land in question), Thomas (has been granted shooting rights on the land), Harris (farms land adjoining) and Clibbens (resident of Douglas Road).
- Cllr. Gilbert declared a personal interest in respect of item 2e) as he undertakes work for the Surgery.

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

##### Cllr. Standley (ESCC) reported the following:-

##### Heavy Vehicles using B2100 Mark Cross - Rotherfield

Matter raised with Highway officers. A scheme has been included in the 2015/16 capital programme and approved by the Lead member for Highways at a meeting Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Details of the scheme will go to a future Lead member meeting. Cllr. Standley is pressing for a date and will inform the Parish when received.

##### Former Cuckoo Line – Footway Rotherfield – Mayfield

The much-awaited report regarding this has been received from the Assets Team at County Hall in time for the Mayfield Parish Council meeting earlier in the month, with a copy to Rotherfield Parish Council. Costs involved are approximately £200k. This will not be an easy project to deliver although some grant funding may be possible and suggestions are made in the report. Funding from ESCC for a new footway is unlikely to be approved.

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## **Budget monitoring**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr. report was presented to cabinet and discussed at full Council this week.

Whilst there is a shortfall of £5.6m this is within the contingency sum allowed for in the budget. As previously reported the challenge to future budgets is substantial with savings/income of between £60-90m to be found.

## **South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)**

The concern re mobile phone signal was raised again at the SELEP meeting last week. The importance to business and residential users in East Sussex of a good mobile signal and high speed broadband cannot be underestimated and the agenda item below is noted.

The SELEP meeting also approved the Rural Strategy, that is welcomed given that the rural economy is often overlooked by the LEP.

## **Cllr. Whetstone reported the following:-**

- Gatwick airport's plans are still supported by ESCC. Cllr. Whetstone is seeking progress report regarding airport's noise reduction proposals.
- Is pleased to note that East Sussex sends the second lowest amount of waste to landfill.

Cllr. Merriman reported that he had noted on several occasions a car parked in Castle Hill that was difficult to pass safely, particularly at night.

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

### **Incidents for this month:-**

- Broken down van left in the Village Hall car park had eventually been removed after the owner was contacted.
- Parking issues and blocked driveways in Hornshurst Road at school run time. The School are being proactive in addressing this and their caretaker is monitoring; request to be added to their newsletter to encourage considerate parking.
- Other Than Dwelling (OTD) theft from a house being refurbished in Eridge – copper and tools taken from outside property. Theft also attempted from a nearby farmhouse.
- OTD theft of scrap material stored outside house in Douglas Road.
- The message regarding opportunist thefts such as the above is to not make it easy for the criminal and conceal/secure items. Be vigilant and do not hesitate to report suspicious activity and details of vehicles of concern as soon as possible to the Police.
- Regular visits undertaken to the Schools and Pre School and attended recent Church Lunch.
- Has applied for £350 from Police Property Act funds toward St Denys' Church.
- Unfortunately no progress in locating truck belonging to a Rotherfield business and from Crowborough.
- No visitors to the recent Surgeries. Future surgeries are scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> April and 18<sup>th</sup> May, both at the "Courtyard" and starting at 15:30.

## **e) Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015 for approval as a true record, and matters arising from these minutes.**

Copies of the draft minutes had been previously circulated to members. It was RESOLVED that they be confirmed as a true record and they were signed by the Chairman.

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

All items have been dealt with or currently ongoing.

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## 2. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:-

### a) Land off Douglas Road. Information regarding issues raised by residents regarding use of land by trail bikes.

Clerk had circulated in advance a copy of a letter from the Council to a Parishioner (present at the meeting) resident in Douglas Road regarding issues arising from trial bike activity. This is being undertaken with the permission of Cllr. Wickenden on land owned by him adjacent to Douglas Road. Clerk reported that these issues had been raised at intervals since at least Easter 2009 to his knowledge. It was again noted that Cllrs. Wickenden (owner of land in question), Thomas (has been granted shooting rights on the land), Harris (farms land adjoining) and Clibbens (resident of Douglas Road) have personal interests in this item as declared by them at the start of the meeting. It was RESOLVED that Cllr. Thomas temporarily vacate the Chair and that Cllr. Pike chair the meeting for the duration of this item. Standing Orders were suspended to allow the Parishioner to summarise the issues as follows:-

- The Parish Council and Cllr. Merriman were thanked for their time and effort in attempting to resolve this matter.
- It was acknowledged that the activities were being held within the planning regulations relating to frequency of events. View was expressed that the activity may be within the law but was it right to continue to carry it out within the High Weald AONB?
- Parishioner has contacted the Environment Agency (EA) who have informed that action could be taken if the bike activities caused the following:-
  - Disturbance of stream banks.
  - Silt and pollution
  - Disturbance of stream bed
  - Disturbance of watercourses
  - Tyre dust and oil pollution.
  - Disturbance to wildlife in the vicinity.
- The EA are prepared to visit the site to establish if any of the above is occurring.
- Concerns also raised regarding mud left on road after events, it was considered that this should be cleared by the participants.

Cllr. Pike restated that the Parish Council have no jurisdiction over the private activities of Councillors, and uses of their property. It was acknowledged that the activities were causing distress to the Parishioner. It was further suggested that independent mediation between the parties and outside of the Parish Council might assist in finding a satisfactory resolution and this was agreed by Cllr. Wickenden and the Parishioner. Cllr. Pike offered to be involved with this as he is shortly standing down as a Councillor. Cllr. Kitchenham also offered to be involved as he is not involved with the site.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council suggest that independent arbitration between the parties be explored to broker a solution to the issues. It was recommended that future events be notified in advance to those nearby as a matter of courtesy.

### b) Decision regarding Parish Council management and financing of Scout Hut refurbishment project

#### and recommendations of the Scout Hut Renovations Project Working Party.

Minutes of the Working Party's meetings were circulated prior to the meeting. A representative of the Scout Group joined the meeting at this point.

Current situation is summarised as follows:-

- Scout hut building is owned by the Parish Council and used under licence of 1997 by the Scouts who pay £1 per annum licence fee and are responsible for maintenance.
- Due to the condition of the structure, major refurbishment is required; the building is considered unusable in the present state and the Scouts will be arranging alternative temporary premises for their activities after July.
- Scouts have expended an estimated 200 hours in preparing detailed plans, survey and costings to refurbish the building so that it is fit for purpose and will have a similar external

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- appearance to the adjacent Pre School. Planning Permission has been granted for this proposed work at an estimated cost of £120K, which will be subject to VAT of £24K.
- Prior to involvement of the Parish Council, The Rotherfield Trust offered the Scout Group £100,000 for refurbishment, subject to a new lease allowing hire to youth groups. This conditional on 100% of costs plus VAT being in place before work begins; this offer expires in September 2016.
  - A new draft lease has been drawn up by Solicitor acting for the Council, this to be between Council and Scout Group with clauses to permit sub-letting to other Village children and youth organisations.
  - Scouts have raised £5K toward project, £5k has been committed by the Pre School as “forward rent” for daytime use of hut by them for activities; sub leasing will need to be accommodated within the new lease. They have detailed specifications and three contractors to whom they are ready to submit invitations to tender for the project. The refurbished hut would have a lifespan of 50 years.
  - Parish Council wish to formally commit to filling the funding gap, subject to acceptable resolution of issues. Sources for this funding could be from unallocated reserves, reallocation or deferral of other capital projects, or by way of a loan from the Public Works Loans Board. The Chairman has prepared a number of financial frameworks to cover the VAT reclaimable or VAT not reclaimable cases. These will be used to illustrate how the 2015 actual costs and VAT in the quotations for refurbishment and rebuild could be underwritten by the Parish Council.
  - The Working Party considers that this is a one-time only chance to save and refurbish the Scout Hut to create a Scout and Youth Community Hall. To do nothing would risk the loss of the Scout Group to the community and the loss of a community asset, which would require removal at an estimated cost of £9 - £12K.
  - Cllr. Wickenden, a member of the Working Party, is concerned at the cost and considers that a “value for money” alternative of removal of existing structure and a new building to replace would cost less than £100K. His research and estimates are that demolition and rebuild could be achieved for just under £56K – internal work and fitting out not included in this.
  - Clerk reported that, acting on external advice, an application has been submitted to HMRC for “opting to tax” on the building and for the Council to register for Vat. If agreed, and the project is undertaken solely by the Council, Vat would be reclaimed. Currently the Council can only reclaim Vat up to £7.5K per annum without needing to register.
  - Scouts have approached Rotherfield Trust with regard to their grant funding for a new build alternative. The Trust advises that this would require a new project application to them. They would judge this on its own merit and as such would wish to see the full specification and break down of costs before they could offer a conditional grant. The Council should not make any assumptions about their funding towards a new build option (positive or negative) until the Trust has had the opportunity to evaluate the new application.
  - RESOLVED that Scouts submit their tender requests to the contractors for return of quotes within 21 days, this to enable them to be considered at the April Council meeting.
  - RESOLVED Cllr. Wickenden to complete his proposals and costings for demolition and new build option, this to be scrutinised by Cllr. Hiles in his professional capacity.
  - CLERK to add agenda item for April meeting for decision on costed options for refurbish or demolish/rebuild.

Although not present at the meeting Cllr. Whittington submitted the following comments for noting:-

*“Please can I express my sincere support for maintaining premises for the Scout Group on the current sight and press on the council the importance such a building brings to the local youth community.*

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*I would whole-heartedly support the renovation of the current building unless a 'viable' new build option could be found. Either option must make use of the current grant of £100k that is on the table. To miss this opportunity of funding would be unforgivable. Ensuring premises for today's youth is protecting tomorrow's future."*

**c) Information regarding design of footpath signs honouring St Chéron.**

Description of design circulated prior to the meeting. RESOLVED to proceed with production of two signs to the design displayed at a total cost of £265 plus Vat. Post to be provided at the King's arms end of the path to avoid attaching to listed building or wall. Existing post at New Road end to be used, this will require use of metal spike at foot to strengthen, signs to be at eye height. CLERK to arrange installation with Tony Moaby.

**d) Decision on contents of agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting.**

Draft circulated prior to meeting, RESOLVED CLERK to publish as publicity notice for event and use as basis for large posters. Two static and two mobile microphones are to be provided by courtesy of Rotherfield St Martin.

**e) Decision re: grant support of £75 to Friends of Rotherfield Surgery to cover expense of Public Liability insurance for fund raising event.**

Information from Charity Commission website circulated giving details of the valuable support given by the Friends to our local Surgeries. RESOLVED grant of £75 to be paid to the Trust.

**f) Decision re: funding entry fee of £95 for local building for the Sussex Heritage Trust Awards 2015.**

Support agreed in principle at recent Planning and Building Committee meeting, matter has been discussed with the owners of the property who are pleased to be put forward for the Award. RESOLVED to pay entry fee of £90. Input is required from the property owners with photos and information regarding the project, entry deadline is April 10<sup>th</sup>. CLERK/CHAIRMAN liaise with them and submit entry.

**g) Decision regarding purchase and provision of a plaque to indicate heritage of the former George Inn.**

Cost is £150 with £15 carriage plus Vat. RESOLVED to pay this sum and fund installation by Tony Moaby, CLERK to order.

**h) Internal Auditor's report from November 2014 visit, information & action on matters arising from the report.**

Report circulated prior to meeting. CLERK to note and take action regarding the minor issues raised; Scheme of delegation and Code of Practice for complaints to be reviewed/updated. Clerk advised that Vat is reclaimed for the Council where relevant on small items purchased and reimbursed via monthly expenses. Councillors expressed the view that the report indicated that, with the exception of these minor points, the Parish Council was working as a cohesive and effective team and that the Parish Clerk provided excellent support to the Councillors as an administrator and responsible financial officer.

**i) Broadband & Mobile Phone Signal services. Decision regarding allocation of responsibility to a Committee.**

This to be carried forward to the Annual Council meeting in May to allocate responsibility to a Councillor, CLERK to note.

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**j) Receive and consider adoption of the Wealden Parish Remuneration Panel's report on Town and Parish Councillor Allowances for 2015/2016.**

Details circulated prior to meeting, in previous years these have been adopted but noted that no Councillors at Rotherfield claim their member's allowance. The recommended figure for Chairman's Allowance of £263 is included in the budget but not always utilised. Rotherfield is a "Level 1" parish for the purposes of this report. RESOLVED that recommendations of the report be adopted, as in previous years the Councillors of Rotherfield will not be claiming the allowance to which they are entitled. It was noted that the Chairman's estimated fuel expenditure in undertaking planning application visits is £200, this is not claimed for as a travelling expense.

**k) Decision on provision of an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) at Mark Cross.**

Although substantial part of the cost of the device was borne by the British Heart Foundation the Council contributed £400 toward it and funded purchase of enclosure (£430.80) and installation (£288).

RESOLVED CLERK to investigate schemes that may provide a higher level of funding for purchase and installation, Cllr. Kitchenham to investigate permissions required and suitability of installation outside Mark Cross Church with access to a power supply, and report progress at next meeting.

**l) Redemption monies from Consols holding – decision regarding use of funds received of £1487.40.**

Previously suggested that this be added to the earmarked reserve already held to fund additional leisure/exercise equipment in the Rec. RESOLVED to defer decision on use to future meeting as this may be utilised toward the Scout Hut project.

**m) To consider concerns and decide on further action re: litter deposited near local businesses.**

Street sweeper has raised this issue on several occasions RESOLVED that this was not considered to be a major issue but situation to be kept under review.

**n) Request from Bonfire Society to hold the annual Easter Egg hunt on the Recreation Ground.**

Cllr. Pike declared a personal interest in this item as Chair of the Society. RESOLVED to approve event subject to documentation being provided by organisers.

**o) Request from Scouts to hold a sponsored walk/run/ride on the Recreation Ground.**

RESOLVED to approve event subject to documentation being provided by organisers.

**p) Information and decision regarding arrangements during Clerk's forthcoming leave period.**

CLERK to provide background notes to Chair/Vice Chair of recreation and burial committee for which a meeting is scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> April. Email and Phone will messages will advise that urgent matters should be referred to the Chairman during Clerk's absence.

**3. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS & MATTERS ARISING.**

- 10<sup>th</sup> March Planning and Building Committee.  
Draft minutes have been circulated, RESOLVED that the minutes be adopted by Full Council.
- 24<sup>th</sup> March Highways Lighting and Transport Committee – minutes not yet circulated, to be carried forward to April Council meeting.

**4. TO RECEIVE REPORTS**

- **Other committees and sub-committees.**  
Scout Hut Renovations Project Working Party – see previous item on this agenda.

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- **Councillor “Have Your Say” session and arrangements for the next session.**  
Format of these and other means of engaging with the community are to be reviewed by the new Council.
- **Meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council.**
  - Cllr. Gilbert summarised issues raised at recent meeting of the Village Hall committee, none of which involve action from the Council.
  - Cllr. Kitchenham gave an interesting account of his recent visit to Jameah to attend an event to honour the support given to them by Charles Hendry MP who is standing down. He was told that the building was being surveyed, including use of drones to examine the roofs, and that consideration is being given to using the building as a school for the religious education of Muslim girls.
- **Clerk’s report and issues.**  
None.
- **Items for next Parish Magazine column.**  
Suggestions were as follows:-
  - Annual Parish Meeting publicity
  - St Chéron visit and signs
  - Update on efforts to resolve HGV issues in village
  - Blue Plaque for the former “George.
  - Broadband and Mobile phone issues.
  - Landowner responsibility for hedges and trees by roads and other rights of way.

## 5. TO RECEIVE FINANCE INFORMATION

- **Bank Reconciliation as at end of February 2015 and review of expenditure against Budget to date.**  
These had been circulated in advance of the meeting. There were no matters to draw to the Council’s attention and it was RESOLVED that these documents be approved and they were signed by the Chairman.
- **Approval of Payments.**  
Details were circulated prior to the meeting and it was RESOLVED that the payments below be approved.

Payee Name	Cheque No.	Amount	
		Paid	Transaction Detail
Trevor Thorpe	801901	£1,402.45	March salary
H M R C	801902	£509.86	March tax and NI
Trevor Thorpe	801903	£21.59	Expenses non Vat
Trevor Thorpe	801903	£50.99	Mileage claim
PJI Contract Packers Ltd	801904	£295.20	Street sweeping & litter pick
A.C. Moaby	801905	£810.00	Various jobs
Tollwood Garden Service	801906	£560.00	Rec and Burial Ground work
Greenbarnes Ltd	801907	£1,497.50	Mark X Noticeboard church
East Sussex County Council	801908	£5,420.62	Street lighting costs 2014/15
James and Liz Sweeney	801909	£500.00	March rent for allotments
Teambase	801910	£17.94	Paper
Burns Guthrie & Partners	801911	£234.00	Drawings for Bowls Club path
Rotherfield Village Hall	801912	£34.20	Hall Hire February
Konica Minolta Ltd	801913	£41.08	Photocopier Lease

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Nth Wealden Community Transport	801914	£1,000.00	Grant support for Parish buses
Sussex Heritage Trust	801915	£90.00	Entry for Heritage Award
East Sussex ALC Ltd	801916	£873.97	ESALC and NALC Subs 2015/16
<b>Total Payments</b>		<b>£13,359.40</b>	

Clerk reported that non – domestic rates bills totalling £352.80 had been received from WDC in respect of the Cemetery and Burial Ground. However, as in previous recent years, these have been subject to full Small Business Rate Relief, therefore no payment is due. Clerk also reported that payments of £30 (removal of hanging gutter to Scout Hut), £80 (cutting back of hedge by hall entrance) and £40 (removal of fallen tree in Rec.) which are included in cheque 801905 above had been authorised by him under his delegated powers.

## 6. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.

### Letters

- PCC St Denys' Church – Letter regarding Parish Council's suggestion for provision of an Outdoor War Memorial in the Parish. Matter to be on agenda for discussion at 7<sup>th</sup> April meeting of the Recreation and Burial Committee – CLERK to acknowledge.
- Santander Signatory list for accounts – To be reviewed after Election as information from Santander is inaccurate – details differ from those previously provided.

### Magazines and Circulars

- Saint-Chéron en Bref – No 316.
- Spa Valley Starter – Issue 53.
- Clerk Magazine – March 2015.
- Clerk and Councils Direct – March 2015.
- Local Council Review – Spring 2015

## 7. TO RECEIVE INSPECTION BOOK & REPORTS

No issues noted causing safety concerns and no issues raised by members of the Public. Cllr. Pike raised concerns regarding a large number of sunken graves in the St Denys' Old Burial Ground.

## 8. TO RECEIVE DATES FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

- 7<sup>th</sup> April – Recreation and Burial Committee
- 14<sup>th</sup> April – Finance and General Purpose Committee – Clerk recommends that this be deferred until after end of year accounts have been compiled in conjunction with our software provider, RBS, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. This will be the first occasion this process has been used – 28<sup>th</sup> April suggested, CLERK to enquire of Hall if room is available and advise Councillors.
- 21<sup>st</sup> April – Planning and Building Committee
- 30<sup>th</sup> April – Monthly Council Meeting

All of the above meetings are to be held in the Parish Council Room, Rotherfield Village Hall, starting at 19:30.

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

- Clerk reported that a successful grant application had been made to the Wealden District Council "Streets Ahead" project for £500 toward cost of additional lighting for the Christmas Illuminations. Funds will be placed in earmarked reserve pending purchase.
- Cllr. Kitchenham requested that number of attachments to emails from Clerk be kept to a minimum as there were difficulties arising in opening them all.

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- Cllr. Clibbens has suggested that electronic payments again be investigated for use by the Council. CLERK to research and report at April finance meeting.
- Hedges on twitten side of New Road reported by Cllr. Wickenden as requiring cutting back as they were overhanging the pavement. CLERK to issue notices to owners as agreed at recent Highways Committee meeting.

## 10. PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE CLERK IN THE MONTH AHEAD.

- Organise Annual Parish Meeting publicity.

The Chairman declared the formal business of the meeting closed at 21:55.

## 11. PUBLIC FORUM. None.

**Confirmed as a true record at the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015 meeting of the Council**

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