

ETCHINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Etchingam Parish Council
held on Thursday 20th July 2023 at 7.30pm The Parker Hall, Parsonage Croft, Etchingam

Members Present: Cllrs: John Barnes (in the Chair), Mary Barnes, Sid Barrow, Colin Boylett, and Roma Turner.

Also present: County Cllr Eleanor Kirby- Green, P Barton – Clerk to the Council. There was one member of the public.

- 2667. Apologies for Absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rob Beeney and Trevor McGregor, which were accepted.
- 2668. Minutes of the previous meeting:**
The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th June 2023, having been previously circulated, were agreed and then signed as true and accurate records of those meeting.
- 2669. Declarations of Interest:**
Cllr. M. Barnes reminded Council that she is a member of the RDC Planning Committee.
Cllr. J Barnes declared that he is the substitute Conservative member of RDC Planning Committee.
- 2670. Etchingam Parish Council – Dispensations:**
The Clerk confirmed that no written requests for dispensations had been received.
- 2671. Chairman’s Announcements:**
The Chairman had no announcements but wished to welcome the success of the new playground in Queen’s Gardens.
- 2672. Clerk’s Report:**
The Clerk’s report having been previously circulated was taken as read; since its circulation the work to the gate between the churchyard and Queen’s Gardens has been completed, resident’s correspondence regarding gritting will be dealt with under 8c I, arranging the visit to Bohemia Road allotments to be deferred to the August meeting (possible unit for QG).
- 2673. Public Time:**
- a) County Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green reported briefly on the new initiative being launched by Rother Volunteer Action in partnership with the 1066 Line Committee to create Community Platforms (hubs) in suitable locations along the Hastings to Tonbridge line. Etchingam Bistro/station will be the launch/pilot location. Dr Sarah Hughes from RVA to be invited to present to EPC and residents prior to the next Parish Council meeting. There has been a welcome increase in the Highways budget from central government source and Balfour Beatty has confirmed that it has the capacity to deliver additional work. Children’s services are revitalising outreach facilities and Heathfield will be one such to benefit. Flexibus remains under used and it was agreed that EPC would do all it can to advertise this valuable service.
- b) Cllr John Barnes reported that the Rother District Council Reserves were not as depleted as once feared they would be, £1.7M had to be utilised. While this is of itself is ‘good news’ this situation cannot be repeated year on year. There is bad news however, the Blackfriars development infrastructure will cost twice as much as originally thought and cannot be made up through the use of virements. The houses themselves will not be available until 2026.
- There are interim arrangement in place for both Chief Executive and Finance Officer but permanent appointments will need to be made.
- There were no questions.

- c) The issue of the Environment Agency demand of Council that it repair/replace the river wall to the rear of the shop premises having been made public as soon as it arose (full details and update in 8a i) the Member of the Public present said that if the Council had not procrastinated over its decision to sell the shop (The initial unanimous decision to sell the shop was minuted in April 2022 then it would have completed the sale before this happened and not be faced with the current situation. While acknowledging that there had been delays in reaching the final decision to sell rather than re-let, Council believed that this was due to following proper process as a Parish Council and not because of any procrastination.
- d) As no members were to be excluded this right was not exercised.

2674. Parish Matters:

a) Village Amenities:

- i) Village Shop/The Old Stores: The Clerk confirmed that Zurich (the insurers) had checked the cover taken out on the premises and there is no recourse through them. An experienced surveyor/contractor for river works inspected the wall and agreed that substantial work should be done. While able to provide a preliminary report after that initial visit with ballpark figures for the project cost he suggested that the full survey/quotation should wait until there is a definitive list of surveys (geomorphic, biodiversity, aquatic life etc). The 'Ballpark' figures range from £50k to £100k plus depending precisely on what the EA requires to grant a permit and how prescriptive it will be regarding the spec for the necessary work to be done. The Clerk is referring back to EA as to which surveys will be required to support the application to proceed with the necessary works.

Meanwhile, the sale of the shop is on hold so this will mean that there will be additional payments to be made to PWLB. Partially accounted for within the budget, as the time required to complete the sale of the shop was an unknown at the beginning of the process. Additional payments will however equate to a similar reduction in the monies due to PWLB for early redemption of the loan.

It was resolved that Cllrs McGregor and Turner are to hold delegated power to work with the clerk to facilitate any urgent business which will be ratified at the next available full Council meeting.

- ii) The Monthly Inspection Reports for the playgrounds were accepted. The board behind the basketball hoop in QG has to be repaired/replaced. Cllr Barrow to expedite. No current issues in VIPER.
- iii) There were no other matters to consider.

b) Children and Young People

- i) Cllr Turner reported that the pupils and staff are looking forward not to just the long school holiday but also to the next school year. The Outdoor School is proving extremely popular and both the Leavers' Church Service and the School Play were enjoyable and memorable occasions.
- ii) Cllr Boylett had submitted his report on ERGT fundraising which was approved and is available on file. He was thanked for his ongoing efforts.
- iii) There were no other matters to consider.

c) Highway, Footpaths and Community Safety

- i) Online reporting of problems to ESCC Highways is now up and running again.
- ii) TESAG continues its correspondence with ESCC Highways.
- iii) Cllr Boylett had submitted his Speedwatch report which is on file. The difficulty in attracting more volunteers to be able to increase sessions was acknowledged and thanks given to the whole team for the work that they do.

- iv) Cllr Boylett reported that there is now a new District Inspector, Kara Tombling and, as minuted last month, we also have a new PCSO, Chloe.
- v) There has been a minor vandalism event at the school, it has been reported to the police and it is hoped that police patrols will occasionally 'visit' the school carpark during 'out of school hours' to indicate awareness.

d) Environmental and Other issues

There were no issues to report.

e) Communications

After a brief discussion regarding appointing another representative to the Northern Rother Parish Councils Group – due to his joint roles on both District and Parish Councils it is not always appropriate for Cllr John Barnes to represent the Parish if, for example, there is a planning issue to be explored with RDC. No decision was reached, to be deferred to the August meeting. There were other no issues to report.

2675. Planning:

Cllr Mary Barnes reminded Council that she is a member of Rother District Council Planning Committee, Cllr John Barnes is also a substitute member of the Rother District Council Planning Committee.

a) To consider and make recommendations on local planning applications as follows:

RR/2023/1214/P & RR/2023/1215/L : Little Hutchings, Fontridge Lane. External alterations including replacement bay windows, new/replacement windows, replace external store with small extension, minor roof alteration and replacement dormer windows. Replacement timber framed garage, remodelled entrance and associated landscaping. ***It was Resolved that EPC would make no objection to this application.***

It was reported that the application to enlarge a small unit into a much larger barn at the top of the vineyard (corner of Church Hill and Fysie Lane), which EPC most strongly opposed, has been advised to withdraw the application.

b) Any other planning matters:

RR/2023/1314/P : Horsebrooks Farm, Ludpit Lane, Burwash. Retention and conversion of curtilage listed cowshed, retention, rebuilding and repair of curtilage listed farmyard walls, demolition of modern agricultural buildings and erection of a two-storey detached dwelling, with garage, associated hard and soft landscaping and car parking. ***It was Resolved that EPC would continue to support this revised application, as it had previous applications.***

2676. Finance:

- a) The YTD Accounts (Qtr1) having been presented, were approved and are now on file duly signed.
- b) Details of the 3-year contract on offer from Mulberry & Co having been previously circulated and after a brief discussion ***It was Resolved to accept the offer at £65 per hour for the three-year term for providing internal audit services.***
- c) The schedule for Receipts and Payments for July was presented and approved.

Paulette Barton	Salary & Expenses for July 2023	2555.15
Olga Bilai	Salary & Expenses for July 2023	396.30
Laurence Worton	Salary & Expenses for June 2023	72.33
SLCC	Annual membership fee	222.00
Sussex Rural Community Council	Annual subscription 25.07.2023-24.07.2024	144.00
Co-Operative Bank	Auto Chg Fee Sweep D/D 05/07/2023	30.00
B Online Ltd	Monthly payment due to broadband supplier	
EDF	Electricity for Shop	23.00
	Total Payments	3442.78

2677. Review of Etchingham Parish Council Policies and Latest Consultations

- a) **Risk Management Policy.** The latest draft, having been circulated, was approved and will be posted on the website and hard copy filed accordingly. To be reviewed annually or sooner if necessary.

Advice to be taken on maintaining similar policies for the two Trusts for which EPC is Sole Trustee.

- b) **Health and Safety Policy Statement.** The latest draft, having been circulated, was approved and will be posted on the website and hard copy filed accordingly. To be reviewed bi-annually or sooner if necessary.
- c) **RDC Consultation on Dog Control Policy.** This consultation has been, and will continue to be, widely publicised in Etchingham prior to the deadline. It was unanimously agreed that some of the general wording – as opposed to specific sites – was ambiguous and *might* include green spaces such as Queen’s Gardens. ***It was Resolved that the response from EPC should be a robust defence of the rural Parish Councils being allowed to retain control over their own green spaces and make appropriate arrangements on a site by site basis.***
- d) **RDC Consultation on Housing Allocation Policy.** A matter requiring detailed discussion and as the date of the August meeting precedes the deadline it was unanimously agreed that this should be deferred to the August meeting and will be treated as a matter of urgency.

2678. To receive reports from Members and Representatives passing such resolutions as may be necessary

- a) **ESALC** – a useful Board Meeting has been held
- b) **RALC** - the meeting ranged across a number of areas, in particular traffic issues and quiet lanes – it was felt that ESCC Highways should take quiet lanes far more seriously.
- c) The Clerk reported on a meeting held at the Bistro with Paul Collins, Dr Sarah Jacques from RVA and Andy Pope from 1066 Line regarding the setting up of Community Platforms (Hubs) along the 1066 Line utilising appropriate space at the participating stations. Briefly outlining the plans the Clerk said that Dr Jacques would be happy to present in more detail prior to the next council meeting and to engage in understanding feedback from this village. It was agreed that the Clerk should proceed with a formal invitation. No other meetings or conferences had been attended by Members or the Clerk.

2679. Correspondence

The correspondence between Mr David Halliday and ESCC Highways regarding a section of Church Lane which is not gritted in winter was reviewed but, while EPC had every sympathy with him, it has already exhausted all its own avenues of influence to change the ESCC decision, unsuccessfully. EPC thanked him for his efforts, not just in trying to remedy the situation but for his voluntary work using the material from the ESCC salt bins to manually grit the section himself in the severe weather last winter. He was also congratulated in securing a second salt bin for the area.

2680. Etchingam Parish Council – Notification to members of Council decisions:

There were no notifications.

2681. Agenda items for the next meeting to be held on Thursday 17th August 2023 in The Parker Hall at 7.30pm not mentioned in the minutes above.

There were none other than those listed throughout the minutes.

Signed By the Chairman original held on file

Date..... 17th August 2023