

ETCHINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Etchingham Parish Council
held on Thursday 18th July 2024 at 7.30pm The Parker Hall, Parsonage Croft, Etchingham

Members Present: Cllrs: John Barnes, Mary Barnes, Sid Barrow, Rob Beeney, Colin Boylett, and Trevor McGregor.
Also present: County Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green and P Barton – Clerk to the Council. And Benjamin Sutch, candidate for co-option.

2846. Apologies for Absence: There were no apologies for absence.

2847. Minutes of the previous meeting: The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th June 2024, were unavailable due to an internet outage but will be reviewed and signed, if approved, at the next meeting on 15th August 2024.

2848. 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.

2849. Etchingham Parish Council – Dispensations:

The Clerk confirmed that no written requests for dispensations had been received.

2850. Chairman’s Announcements:

The Chairman announced that he would be instigating ‘surgeries’ which he would lead to begin with and likely to be held in the Bistro possibly alternating between Coffee & Cake mornings and some evening sessions when the Bistro is open. He is also keen to explore ways of working more co-operatively with the CIC, two very different organisations because of their governance but both with the mission of improving the lives and facilities for the community of Etchingham.

2851. Clerk’s Report:

There were no items to report that were not to be covered under the agenda.

2852. Casual Vacancy:

Mr Benjamin Sutch, being the only applicant present, was invited to make his presentation to the Council which was already in possession of his completed application form. Following a succinct, enthusiastic presentation he invited questions from the Council which were answered fully. The applicant withdrew while the Council discussed his application, the Clerk reconfirmed that the Council did not have to accept this candidate if it were minded not to do so however, ***it was Resolved unanimously to co-opt Mr Benjamin Sutch to be a member of Etchingham Parish Council.*** Mr Sutch returned, the resolution announced and after signing the Declaration of Acceptance to the Office of Councillor duly witnessed by the Proper Officer took his seat on the Council.

2853. Public Time:

- a) County Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green was pleased to report that ESCC has been granted £1M for ‘patching’ in addition to the £2M already allocated.
- b) Cllr John Barnes explained that £2M of necessary savings had been built into the Budget meaning that savings have been allocated against specific departments and not as an over-all aim across all RDC. Not quite on track yet but progress is being made. ‘Green’ vehicles are being bought for the refuse sub-contractor to be leased back by them, food waste support from the Government is still not clear after year 1. Homelessness is still a major issue. The newly recruited top management team are making progress but are still working through the ‘history’ to enable proper forward planning to be put in place. The wage bill continues to climb due to temporary staff and contract workers being necessary to fill the skill gaps.
- c) There were no members of the public present.
- d) As no members were to be excluded this right was not exercised.

2854. Parish Matters:

a) Village Amenities

i. **The Old Etchingam Stores** - Cllr McGregor summarised the situation to date; there are EA forms to be completed to confirm which permit will be issued; river diversion to facilitate the work may be possible by the use of pumps rather than physical creation of a diversion; a structural engineer will need to be retained, a suitable one to be found; the wall will probably need to be rebuilt with appropriate backfilling and tie-bars in place (actual method to be confirmed). At this time the interested purchasers remain positive to proceed once the works are completed and fully signed off.

ii. **Queen's Gardens & Viper:** The inspection reports were unavailable due to the internet outage.

iii. There no other matters to discuss.

b. Children and Young People:

i. In future there will be Quarterly reports on ERGT fundraising.

ii. There were no other matters to discuss.

c. Highways, Footpaths and Community Safety

i. The resident's hedge between the PO and the school on the High Street which was causing concern has been cut back. Highways are trying to contact the owner of the land on the corner of Church Lane and High Street as this boundary hedge is severely impacting the pedestrian footpath. Visibility at the Burgh Hill/A265 junction in Etchingam impacted by the tree growth on the verge between that junction and the level crossing continues to give concern. County Cllr Kirby-Green to progress with Highways.

ii. The monthly Speedwatch reports was accepted and is on file.

iii. There was no report from the PCSO.

iv. A drain cover opposite Dudwell St Mary is loose and subsiding, County Cllr Kirby-Green to progress. There were no other matters to consider.

d. Environment and other

Drainage of surface water seems to be improved at the lower end of the village but there are still fears when the weather deteriorates with the winter storms. There were no matters to consider.

e. Communications

Cllr Boylett reported back on the grant offer available via Netwise (our internet provider) to adopt a gov.uk domain. Reiterating the benefits, including the advantages when all councillors are using a gov.uk EPC email address (including the clerk), he outlined the costs which – due to the grant – were minimal including the on-cost for a much-upgraded service. ***It was Resolved that Cllr Boylett should respond in the affirmative to Netwise to proceed with the grant application and, if successful, proceeding with the upgrade.***

2855. 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. There were no applications to consider.

b. Following discussion ***it was Resolved that Cllr John Barnes should prepare and send the response to the RDC Draft Local Plan based on the Northern Parishes document but include a memo of Etchingam specific comments including refuting the ruling out of the Lambing Shed site for housing development and, with strict conditions, the reinstatement of the land opposite Rotherview for future development.***

Also to support a 'green wedge' between Etchingham and Burwash to the West and Etchingham and Hurst Green to the East. Finally to add to the list of desirable infrastructure improvements, works to facilitate ingress/egress at the junction in Hurst Green of the A265 and the A21.

c. There were no other matters to consider.

2856. Finance:

a) The YTD Accounts (Qtr1) having been presented, were approved and are now on file duly signed.

b) The schedule for Receipts and Payments for July was presented and approved.

| Etchingham Parish Council - Statement of Payments for July 2024 | | |
|--|---|----------------|
| Paulette Barton | Salary & Expenses for July 2024 | 2199.47 |
| Olga Bilai | Salary & Expenses for July 2024 | 568.40 |
| Laurence Worton | Salary & Expenses for June 2024 | 41.99 |
| Bistro @ the Station | Coffee & Cake Club for 23 people | 68.15 |
| HMRC | Q1 PAYE & NI payment | 2157.31 |
| RALC | Membership 2024-2025 | 32.00 |
| Sussex Rural Community | Subscription 2024-2025 | 144.00 |
| Satswana | DPO Service 11.07.24 – 10.07.25 | 270.00 |
| The Co-Operative Bank | Auto chg fee sweep | 30.00 |
| B Online Ltd | Monthly payment due to broadband supplier (July 2024) | 45.25 |
| EDF | Electricity for Shop (not notified in time) | |
| | Total Payments | 5552.27 |

c) There were no other matters to consider.

2857. Review of Etchingham Parish Council Policies

a. **Etchingham Parish Council Financial Regulations**

It was Resolved to approve the draft Financial Regulations as presented with review in a year's time

b. **Etchingham Parish Council Employee Handbook**

The outstanding policies requiring consideration will be deferred for resolution until the August meeting.

c. No additional policies have been identified at this time except as applies to the upgraded web/email system.

2858. To receive reports from Members and Representatives passing such resolutions as may be necessary

a. **ESALC** – No recent meetings.

b) **RALC** - Cllr Jonathan Vine-Hall raised the issue of Rural and Urban CIL being amalgamated. The objections from RALC will be taken to Full Council.

- c) **Northern Parishes Group** – RDC attended an informative and productive meeting to discuss the Draft Local Plan. An evidence document will be submitted to RDC.
Regarding the planning issue surround Bewl Water it is apparent that the two District Councils involved should have proper policies in place regarding this important site. A document to be submitted.
- d) **Dark Skies Group** - No recent meetings.
- e) No other meetings or conferences had been attended by either members or the Clerk.

2859. Correspondence

All correspondence received had previously been circulated.

2860. Etchingam Parish Council – Notification to members of Council decisions:

There were no notifications.

2861. No fresh agenda items were suggested.

Signed By the Chairman – original held on file

Date..... 15th August 2024

The minutes of the closed session will be presented and approved In Confidence by EPC in closed session at the end of meeting on 15th August 2024.