



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 THURSDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2021 AT 19:30**

**As permitted by the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392
this meeting was conducted online via "Zoom".**

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr. R. Harris. (Chair)	Cllr. D. Hiles	Cllr. A. Moore
Cllr. L. Henrick (Vice Chair)	Cllr. P. Kember	Cllr. J. Richardson
Cllr. L. Buck	Cllr. J. Kitchenham	Cllr. N. Wickenden
	Cllr. A. Martin	Cllr. G. Watson-Smith

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

None.

ALSO PRESENT

T. Thorpe, Parish Clerk, A. Hardy, Assistant Clerk,
Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC), Cllr. Obbard (WDC) and Cllr. P. Dixon (WDC).
Two members of the public joined during the meeting in respect of item 3i.

1. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING: -

a) Public forum.

None.

b) Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s 85).

Cllr. Glynn had submitted an apology via the Chair.

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

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

d) District and County Councillor reports.

Cllr. Standley (ESCC) reported the following.

- All schools are re-opening to pupils on March 8th. Much work is taking place to ensure that they are safe to reopen.
- Secondary school pupils are to be tested for Covid weekly at school, and in the longer term there will be the option for them to be tested at home. Primary school pupils will not be tested.
- Evidence suggests that teachers are at no greater risk than those of a similar age in other professions.
- The vaccine roll out is progressing well and it is hoped that this will improve the situation for individuals and the economy.
- Support for businesses is important but he believes that there may be an initial reluctance to visit pubs and restaurants.

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- ESCC Full Council have approved the 1.99% budget increase on the main fund, plus 3% over two years to the Adult Social Fund.
- The March 25th Lead Member meeting will consider the petition for safety improvements on the B2100 Rotherfield Hill. Cllr. Standley will attend the meeting and the petitioners have also been invited to attend.

Cllr. Obbard (WDC) reported the following:-

- All the Town and Parish Councils are receiving fortnightly Covid Pandemic updates from David Plank at the WDC Customer Services Centre. The Wealden D C website has details at: <https://www.wealden.gov.uk/press-and-media/coronavirus-covid-19-latest/community-support/> The phone number to call is the usual one; 01323 443322
- The first stage consultation on the Wealden Local Plan, "Direction of Travel Consultation" has now closed. There have been around 1,700 comments from approximately 300 respondents. Some of these are individuals, and some are representing various interest groups. The comments are now available for viewing by the public on the website.
- There is a new survey "Has COVID changed Us?" on the WDC website for people to record the changes that COVID has had to their lifestyles, and the impact on climate change issues. It is now open and runs till 29th March and can be found at www.wealden.gov.uk/lifestyleimpact.
- The ESCC and Police & Crime Commissioner elections are still scheduled for 6th May 2021, and the Wealden Electoral Services are working towards that date. The Elections are being planned to take place under COVID restrictions, with social distancing, masks, and all the restrictions we have come to be familiar with. If anyone is concerned about safety, it is recommended to arrange a postal vote
- It is planned that last minute proxy's will be allowed in the case someone has to self-isolate.
- North Weald Parish Cluster The next meeting will be on Tuesday 16th March and will take place via "Teams" from 14:00 to 15:00.
- If there are any planning issues, especially regarding the new Local Plan, but for any other issues too, then please bring them to the meeting, or email Chris Bending in advance chris.bending@wealden.gov.uk

Cllr. P. Dixon (WDC) reported the following:-

- He advised that the Catts' Hill issue mentioned in the January minutes had been answered at that meeting
- Small electric items may now be collected by the usual kerbside collections.
- Waste collection is performing well despite recent bad weather and Covid.
- Elections are taking place on May 6th for both ESCC members and the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Full Council has approved the budget. Council tax has been frozen for the year.
- Doug Moss will be retiring from Wealden, as will Kelvin Williams the former head of planning.
- Cllr. Martin raised the issue of a caravan in the Parish which appears to be used as accommodation without planning permission, this as evidenced by smoke emerging from its chimney. It was noted that this is in Cllr. Obbard's Ward. **CLERK** to pass details to Cllr. Obbard so that he may raise this with the enforcement team.

e) Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 28th January 2021 for approval as a true record.

It was **RESOLVED** that these be approved as a true record and that they be signed when circumstances allow.

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

- Eridge Station – Item on this Agenda.
- Surgery – Item on this Agenda.
- Parish Survey – Clerk has collected remaining completed surveys – around 40 – and delivered to Adam for collating; It is considered that these will make little or no difference to the overall picture. Businesses who hosted collecting boxes have been thanked.

2. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE BANK RECONCILIATION AS AT END OF JANUARY 2021, REVIEW EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET TO DATE AND NOTE OR AUTHORISE PAYMENTS.

Budget, other financial reports, and actions arising.

Clerk reported that, with the support of the software provider RBS, the reconciliations now balanced. Cllr. Henrick will review the reports as there had been insufficient time to inspect them prior to the meeting. Clerk will update the budget reports and entries in line with the comments made by Councillors and circulate by end of next week.

i Approval of payments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following payments be confirmed, authorised, and paid.

Payments summary		
Payee Name	Amount	Transaction Detail
Xtraspace	£84.50	Storage fees
Lloyds Bank Card Services	£41.98	January debit card statement
Lawson Queay	£1,500.00	Memorial Institute survey
Wicksteed Leisure Ltd	£199.04	Spare parts for play equipment
T.C. Woodgate	£324.00	Mole catching in the Rec.
David Peacock	£1,500.00	Eridge Station mural
Phil Ireland	£340.68	Street sweeping/litter picking
Tollwood Garden Service	£1,043.00	Various groundworks
SSALC Ltd	£72.00	Training courses x 2
H M R C	£1,031.02	Jan. & Feb. Tax and NI
Employment Costs	£2,349.67	Employment Costs
Total Gas and Power	£321.19	Surgery gas bill
Smartest Energy	£197.29	Surgery electricity bill
Rotherfield Surgery	£61.01	Other bill reimbursements
K. Martin Electrical	£72.00	Surgery cable tidying
Insulation Services	£7,817.00	Replacing surgery windows
Total Payments	£16,954.38	

Receipts summary		
Rotherfield Surgery	£2,673.33	Rent
H M Revenue & Customs	£7,881.21	VAT reclaimed
Rotherfield Sports Club	£1,331.64	Fungicide costs
Tester and Jones	£700.00	Burial & gravedigging fees
	£12,586.18	

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

i. Redgate Mill Broadband project. Progress update and decision regarding the Council fulfilling the project's "Legal Entity" role.

The two Parishioners leading this project were present and reported the following progress.

- Original application had been submitted for a Community Fibre Partnership with BT at the end of December 2020.
- Original cost estimate of £75K was recently received; this covered 29 properties; 17 more than originally applied for.
- They had recently held a very productive meeting with the BT Rural Engagement Manager.
- Subsequent changes mean that the project will now be eligible for a new funding scheme starting this April.
- There is now a further quote of £105K to cover 112 properties; these are the original properties plus around 100 further properties within the Parish. Assuming the future funding scheme is of a similar level to the current one only a further 42 properties would need to "sign up" to fund the total installation.
- Next step is to finalise the list of potential properties with BT Openreach and speak with the residents involved.
- It is understood that it will take BT Openreach around 2 months to respond with a final cost once the number of properties that are to be included is finalised.
- Cllr. Standley will liaise with the ESCC Councillor dealing with Broadband matters to establish details of support available from County.
- **CLERK** to add item to March agenda to receive an update. It is hoped that final details of costs will be available for consideration at the June meeting, together with consideration of the Parish Council fulfilling the "Legal Entity" role required by BT.

ii. Rotherfield Surgery. Lease renewal progress report.

New windows have been installed at the Surgery.

Under The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Sec 1 (2) the public were excluded from this item due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

iii. Memorial Institute: Receive meeting and survey reports.

- The report from the structural survey of the building had been circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting.
- This quotes a figure of £300K to make the property watertight, safe, and compliant with current legislation.
- Cllr. Martin is of the view that, without these works taking place, the property could become unusable in the near future. If the Council are to be involved the Charity Commission would need to be consulted to confirm the legal position for the Council providing assistance.
- The view was expressed that the current occupiers and the Institute trustees need to work together, possibly with Council involvement, to research external funding by way of grants. The next meeting regarding the property is scheduled for March 10th. **CLERK** to add item to the March agenda to receive an update on the matter.

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iv. Annual review and adoption of the Council's policies and other governance documents.

Assistant Clerk has reviewed and updated the following documents to ensure that they are up to date and compliant with the "model" versions published by the National Association of Local Councils.

- Clerk's Delegated Powers
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Scheme
- Press and Media Policy
- Risk Assessment & Management Policy
- Roadside Advertising Policy
- Rotherfield Parish Council Health and Safety Policy
- Rotherfield Parish Council Safeguarding Policy
- Rotherfield Parish Council Privacy Notice
- Social Media, Website and Email Policy
- Standing Orders

It was **RESOLVED** that these be adopted and published on the Council's website with reminders set up to ensure that these are reviewed on a regular basis. Cllr. Richardson offered to fulfil the role of the "Safeguarding Lead" for the Safeguarding Policy and her offer was accepted.

v. Consider replies to the "invitations to tender" for improving the parking area by the Recreation Ground bank by Eridge Lane/North St.

One response received from the three invitations to tender issued. This response featured two options of £40000 or £48000 dependant on the specification chosen. Neither quote allows for any Local Authority licence or planning fees, or for diverting any underground services.

It was agreed that the **CLERK** is to contact Wealden and East Sussex Highways to establish what planning and licencing formalities, and associated costs, may be involved and liaise with Cllrs. Martin and Harris prior to reissuing the tenders.

Cllr. Hiles suggested that costs could be reduced if a source of recycled surfacing material could be identified.

vi. Consider quotes for fencing work in the wooded area in the lower Recreation Ground.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the quote of £2390 from Jon Dulieu be accepted, **CLERK** to contact him and confirm length of fence involved.

Clerk advised that the verge area between the Village Hall and Scout Hut required clearing of both foliage and scrap timber. It was confirmed by the Recreation and Burial Chair that these minor works be authorised under delegated powers. **CLERK** to advise Tollwood to deal with this.

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vii. Consider quotes and information for additional equipment in the Rotherfield play area.

- Suggested designs and quotes have been provided by Playdale (£32K) and Proludic (£28K); a third equipment provider, HAGS, was approached but did not respond.
- Pre School and School have been consulted regarding the equipment proposed so that new items would be provided for both age groups. The old roundabout would be replaced by one suitable for children with varying abilities.
- It was suggested that the old roundabout could be placed in the proposed “Forest Garden” area as a static item to climb on.
- It was agreed that a plan of where the equipment would be placed within the existing play area was required to enable a final decision to be reached; **CLLR BUCK** to arrange.

viii. Eridge Station area feasibility study update.

Report has been commissioned but until it is possible to hold an “in person” site meeting ESCC have been instructed to put the matter on “hold”.

Other station issues:-

- Mural is complete and currently stored securely in the booking office pending installation. For our accounting purposes the £1500 cost will be allocated to the C & S M budget, but the actual funds will be taken from the Community Infrastructure Levy reserve.
- Sharon has advised that Network Rail/Southern hope that an August event can be arranged to celebrate the station’s refurbishment.
- Restoration/repainting of the mainline waiting room continues.
- Signs to raise awareness of the Car Park as raised at the previous PCM. Sharon has reminded that there were no suitable sites on railway land other than on the Station front which would be of little benefit as it would be parallel with the road. It was suggested that a sign could be placed on the Forge Lane triangle or verge nearby.
- Sharon has been advised that the Parish Council will discuss “low bridge” signage concerns, bridge strike issues on the Tunbridge Wells approach and their possible detrimental effect to the Spa Valley Railway.

4. TO NOTE MINUTES OF COMMITTEES PUBLISHED SINCE THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING.

- 26th Jan. - Planning & Building Committee
- 9th Feb. - Communications & Social Media Committee
- 16th Feb. - Planning & Building Committee

The Draft minutes of these meetings have been circulated and published. It was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of these meetings, to approve and confirm recommendations therein and as far as is requisite, the actions taken by them.

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

a) Meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council.

- Cllr. Buck has attended meetings with representatives of the “Broadband” project, also with the “Lund Fund” to seek funds for the “Forest Garden”. It is thought unlikely that the Fund would wish to support the latter as it does not fulfil its objectives. Meetings have also been held with School and Pre School regarding play equipment.

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- Clerk has attended a “Zoom” meeting with fellow Wealden Clerks. An item has been placed on the agenda of the forthcoming Highways Committee meeting regarding streetlighting scheme requirements. Other parishes’ plans for their Annual Parish and Annual Council meetings were discussed.
- Cllr. Richardson outlined the work of the Personnel Committee; Four meetings have been held since September to set and review objectives for the Clerk and update the Job Description. It will also be updating the Clerk’s contract of employment.
- She has also spoken to RSM regarding the funding and installation of planters in the Parish and outside Parish businesses. Target date for this work is June. Cllr. Kitchenham commented that large planters were required by the entry points to the Parish to maximise the impact on those entering it. This can be dealt with under delegated spending powers and will be agreed at the forthcoming Highways Committee meeting.

▪ **Clerk’s updates and issues.**

- An item will be on the March agenda to agree arrangements for the 12th May Annual Parish Meeting and the 27th May Meeting/Annual Council meeting.
- The broken fence at Castle Hill Triangle has again been flattened – reported to ESCC.
- Staffing resources at local Parish Councils are being investigated by the Clerk.
- New Union Flags are being ordered as the current ones are worn.
- Assistant Clerk advised that the legislation allowing remote meetings expires at the end of May and that future arrangements are as yet unknown. It is believed that some form of “hybrid” arrangement may be allowed.

b) Items for next Parish Magazine column

Recent “SID” stats and Surgery News were suggested for the next edition.

6. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.

None requiring a response.

7. TO RECEIVE INSPECTION BOOK & REPORTS

No items requiring urgent attention were identified.

8. TO RECEIVE DATES FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

- 2nd - Highways. Lighting & Transport Committee
- 9th - Planning & Building Committee
- 25th - Monthly Council Meeting
- 30th - Planning & Building Committee

All meetings start at 19:30 and will be conducted remotely via “Zoom”

• **REPORT DETAILS OF ITEMS AND ISSUES NOTIFIED TO CLERK IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING FOR INVESTIGATION, FURTHER ACTION OR FOR FUTURE AGENDA.**

- Cllr. Henrick had been approached by a resident concerned that the pavements had not been treated during the recent snow and ice. Assistant Clerk will research and produce a briefing for use during future bad weather. **CLERK** to advise him of grit bin locations.
- Potholes at the end of the Surgery drive. These constitute a trip hazard to those visiting the Surgery and the **CLERK** is to report to Highways stressing that the area needs urgent attention.

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- **CLERK** to ask Insulation Services to visit and repair fillet of concrete which has become dislodged from the Surgery main doors.
- Cllr. Buck raised issues regarding quotes for tree work in the Rec. car park. **CLLR. BUCK** to please circulate quotes received for this work that may be possible to agree under delegated spending powers.
- Cllr. Martin has dealt with the CCTV signage for the phone box “exchanges”, also with issues regarding the doors.
- It is hoped that the CCTV covering the Village Hall and car park area will have the internet issues resolved shortly to allow remote access to images.
- Community Engagement “Zoom” meeting has been deferred until March 16th.

Chair declared the meeting closed at 22:10

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

Draft minutes subject to confirmation as a true record

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