



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021 AT 19:30**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT**

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

**COUNCILLORS ABSENT**

None.

**ALSO PRESENT**

T. Thorpe (Parish Clerk), A. Hardy (Assistant Clerk) Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC),  
Cllr. F. Whetstone (ESCC), Cllr. P. Dixon (WDC), Cllr. K. Obbard (WDC)  
and two parishioners in respect of item 3i.

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

**a) Public forum**

None.

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

The Chair submitted an apology on behalf of Cllr. Glynn.

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

None. Chair reminded the Councillors present that they should declare an interest at any point of the meeting if they became aware of one in connection with an item being discussed. Councillors who are receiving payment as detailed in section 2ii) for work undertaken on behalf of the Council are reminded to declare a personal and pecuniary interest.

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

Cllr. Robert Standley (ESCC) reported the following.

- The Full Council has held its final meeting prior to the forthcoming local government elections.
- Although the targets set were challenging 85% of them were met by the Council.
- Finances are "stressed" but remain robust.
- Broadband. ESCC should be in a position to provide a "top up" payment toward the Parish broadband project.
- Petition regarding speed limits and safety measures on the B2100 Rotherfield Hill. He had attended the recent ESCC Lead Member for Communities meeting at which the petition supporting a 40mph limit for the length of the B2100 from the end of the Village's 30mph limit to Jarvis Brook was considered. Cllr. Standley has been discussing this with the promoters of the petition and he spoke on their behalf at the meeting; the key outcomes are listed.
  - The request for the lowering of the speed limit and installation of a speed camera was turned down.
  - Replacement of the damaged reflective posts on the corner will be undertaken.
  - The scrub near the roadway may be on ESCC land and, if so, they will cut it back.
  - The owners of the tree on private land near the road will be requested to cut it back as the branches overhang the road.

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- The Coroner's report regarding the fatal accident last year has yet to be published. The Lead Member has agreed that, if the report identifies any road engineering issues that may have contributed to the accident, these will be investigated.
  - Cllr. Standley also suggested that the Parish Council commission a feasibility study from ESCC regarding the suggested speed extension and whether it may be eligible for "Match Funding" from County.
  - Cllr. Kember expressed disappointment at the outcome of this matter and enquired as to the point of a feasibility study if ESCC had already rejected their funding of the speed reduction.
  - Cllr. Kitchenham enquired if the telegraph pole at this location could be relocated. Cllr. Standley will contact "OpenReach" to see if this could be undertaken.
  - Cllr. Henrick explained that the next ESCC "Match Funding" round would be in October of this year. **CLERK** to add agenda item for the next Highways Committee meeting to consider making an application under the scheme for the speed limit reduction.
  - Cllr. Martin raised his concern that, based on previous experience, an ESCC feasibility tended to reflect the ESCC desired outcome rather than supporting the Parish request. Cllr. Standley offered to support a study.
  - Cllr. Buck enquired regarding progress with the application to ESCC for the Parish Council to fund improvements to the parking area in North Street by the Rec. boundary. Clerk reported that Cllr. Dixon had provided useful information regarding the WDC planning aspect of the scheme which suggested that no planning formalities would be required. He had yet to receive a response from East Sussex Highways regarding licencing, other formalities and licence costs, Cllr. Standley offered to follow this up.
- CLERK** to investigate who is dealing with the matter at ESCC and pass details to Cllr. Standley.

Cllr. Keith Obbard (WDC) reported the following.

- All the Town and Parish Councils continue to get a fortnightly Covid Pandemic update from David Plank at the WDC Customer Services, keeping Parish Clerks up to date on the latest situation.
  - 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.
- Consultations Update. The survey "Has COVID changed Us?" is still open 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](http://www.wealden.gov.uk/lifestyleimpact).

#### Council Business

- At the meeting of the Full Council of the WDC on 24th February the Financial Statements and Accounts for last year were confirmed and accepted.
- Budget and Medium Term Financial statements for the forthcoming year were presented and approved.
- As agreed by the Cabinet earlier, the Council Tax rates for the coming year and the Budget were accepted by the full council.
- It was agreed not to raise the WDC share of the Council tax, and also not to increase the salaries for Council employees or the Member's allowances.
- The total cost of running the Council will be about £20m for 2021-22.
- The WDC share of the Council Tax amounts to about £13m.
- There will also be about £4.5m of income from the East Sussex Business Rates Pool, about £2m from various Government grants, and the Council will also draw just under £4m from its earmarked reserves.
- The Council expects to spend approximately £8m on various capital items, including the Hailsham Aspires Project, a new Health Centre in Mayfield, disabled facilities grants and other Infrastructure investments.
- The Housing Revenue Account (Council Housing) was expected to generate a small loss of £250,000 on its approximately £16m turnover.
- About £7m has been allocated to the new build programme, and routine maintenance of the properties will amount to around £4.6m in the coming year.

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Cllr. Francis Whetstone (ESCC) reported the following.

- “Kings Arms” vehicle strikes. He enquired regarding the enhanced/additional signage promised at Mark Cross in his area of the Parish. Cllr. Kitchenham reported that he was not aware of any signage improvements or changes, Cllr. Standley advised that further signage had been discussed. **CLERK** to investigate progress.
- It was believed that there had been no recent vehicle strikes on the property.

Cllr. Phil Dixon (WDC)

- The Local plan “direction of travel” document may be viewed on the WDC website. Over 300 comments had been submitted by individuals and groups.
- A further “Parish Cluster” meeting has been held and Cllr. Dixon encouraged attendance by Rotherfield Parish Council representatives, most other parishes in our area are attending as it represents an opportunity to raise issues and discuss with WDC Officers.
- Kingsbury Lodge. This is on the agenda of the 30<sup>th</sup> of April Parish Council Planning Committee meeting to discuss the Parish Council’s reconsideration of its Planning Committees recommendation regarding this application.
- Cllr. Dixon encouraged reporting of any planning issues noted in the Parish.
- Rotherfield Conversation Area appraisal. The draft document may be viewed on the WDC website. Assistant Clerk reported that an item was on the agenda of the forthcoming planning and building committee.
- Over £11m in Covid related grants and other support has been paid by WDC.
- Cllr. Obbard confirmed that he was aware of the enforcement issue in his area of the Parish as raised by Cllr. Martin but he had not yet had the opportunity to investigate it further.
- Cllr. Henrick raised the matter of two potentially significant planning applications for “green space” on the village borders that have not yet reached consultation stage. Cllr. Dixon reminded that anyone is at liberty to submit a planning application and that it would be considered in the light of local policy as to whether or not it would be approved. Although it was assumed that pre application advice would have been sought this advice would be commercially confidential.

**e) Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021 for approval as a true record.**

Draft minutes have been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be adopted as a true record and they will be signed by the Chair when circumstances allow.

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

- Wooded area by lower football pitch. Clearance has taken place by our contractor and arrangements for fencing have been agreed.
- Additional/replacement play equipment. Final details are to be considered and agreed at the forthcoming recreation and burial committee meeting; authorisation of expenditure will be considered at the April Council meeting.

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

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

- Financial reports had been made available to the Councillors prior to the meeting and details of expenditure may be viewed in the summary below. Clerk reported that the bill for street lighting and maintenance was around £440 less than last year.
- Cllr. Henrick has some queries regarding the budget figures in comparison with the figures agreed at the Finance and General Purpose Committee meeting. Internal auditor advice is that funds allocated for projects occurring authorised in one year but for which the work was completed in the following year could be transferred to an earmarked reserve and the

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payment taken from that if the underspend had not been accounted for in setting the precept.

It was **RESOLVED** that these be approved.

**ii. Approval of payments.**

It was **RESOLVED** that the expenditure detailed below may be authorised and paid. Separate reports have been produced relating to staff costs and these have been reviewed and agreed by Chair, Vice Chair, and the Personnel Committee.

Payee Name	Amount	Transaction Details
Xtraspace	£84.50	February Storage Costs
Action in Rural Sussex	£144.00	Advisory Service Subscription
Lloyds Bank Card Services	£148.24	February Debit Card Statement
Wealden District Council	£172.16	Rates for Old Burial Ground
Tester & Jones	£150.00	Plot1278 Fee Overcharge
East Sussex County Council	£5,127.50	Streetlight Energy & Maintenance
Trevor Thorpe	£90.54	2x Union Flags
Coppard Plant Hire Ltd	£9.60	Spray Line Marking Paint
ESALC	£901.27	Subscription for 2021/2022
NALC	£196.63	Subscription for 2021/2022
Wealden District Council	£525.00	Dog Bin Emptying
Phil Ireland	£374.08	Street Sweeping
William J Clark	£360.00	Highways Hedge and Grass Cuts
T. C. Woodgate	£1,200.00	Forest Garden Work
Tollwood Garden Service	£731.50	Parish Land Maintenance
Employment Costs	£2,832.68	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£13,047.70</b>	

**iii. Review funds for agreed projects which will not complete before the end of this financial year; move funds to earmarked reserve if required.**

Cllr. Buck and Cllr. Henrick will review the R & B budget to identify sums to transfer in respect of these and advise the Clerk so that entries can be made to update prior to the year end. Cllr Henrick will review other budgets for similar instances (eg the pending newsletter).

**iv. Budgets: review allocations and corrections required to posted entries.**

- Clerk reported that he had passed all adjusting journal entries that had been advised to him by Councillors.
- Cllr. Martin raised his concerns regarding a payment of £8.9K that had featured on the payments list for the November 2020 meeting. It was minuted that the payment be withheld until the service for which it related was operating correctly. The concerns were noted and will be considered at the forthcoming Personnel Committee meeting.

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

**i. Broadband project update.**

Representatives of the project were present at the meeting and reported the following.

- There had been further discussions with BT Openreach and their proposal now extends to 800 plus properties connected to Rotherfield exchange (01892 85 numbers).

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- Openreach have been asked to provide an indicative cost based on the greatly increased number of eligible properties. It is still likely that it would not require all of the properties to participate in the scheme to fund it.
- The Community Fibre Partnership would install the infrastructure only for participating properties and the end user would be responsible for the final link to their property. Details of the roads and properties covered are available to view if wished. It was acknowledged that some residents are satisfied with their existing coverage.
- The Government Funding level remains unchanged at £1.5K for residential property and £3K for businesses.
- Cllr. Standley was thanked for confirming that “top up” funding was currently still available whilst funds last.
- Cllr. Buck commented on the insert proposed to accompany the mailing of the Parish Newsletter. OpenReach have reviewed the content and are happy with the wording. She also summarised the benefits of the faster broadband.
- It was **RESOLVED** that the £94.20 cost of a double sided colour flyer to be included with the Parish Newsletter mailing would be met by the Parish Council. Assistant Clerk advised that the document required a GDPR statement to be included and this was noted.
- A generic email address has been set up for the project.
- Cllr. Henrick requested that the Clerk contact Mayfield Parish Council, who are currently involved with a similar Fibre Partnership project, to discuss their experiences of the scheme. **CLERK** to note.
- She also commented that, at 800 properties it would be preferable for ESCC to fill the "Legal Entity" role for signing contracts in view of the potential cost involved. A representative of the project considered that there was no risk as the scheme could not proceed until sufficient residents had confirmed that they wished to join the scheme.

**ii. Memorial Institute. Receive report from recent meeting and agree further action. Minutes/report awaited.**

- The Institute management now wish to proceed without involvement of the Parish Council.
- Assistant Clerk has undertaken much research in conjunction with Action In Rural Sussex (AiRS) regarding the current situation.
- The working party is currently in abeyance.
- The Parish Council would need to be formally invited by the Trustees should they wish them to become involved in the management of the property. The Council would then consider accepting their invitation.
- The Institute management are seeking new Trustees and would like an insert to accompany the forthcoming Parish newsletter; this would invite applications to the Trustee role. It was **RESOLVED** that the £15.95 cost of the insert would be met by the Parish Council.
- At Cllr. Martin's suggestion it was **RESOLVED** that, in the event of the Institute being no longer available for use, the Parish Council would support Rotherfield St. Martin in finding alternative premises for its operations.
- Cllr. Kember expressed disappointment that the building had deteriorated to the point where significant funds were required to undertake the repairs required. He hoped that the management will attract new Trustees to come forward and lead the repair of the Institute.
- Cllr. Buck hoped that external funds could be found to achieve the work required.

**iii. Rotherfield Surgery. Progress report regarding the lease between the Parish Council and Sussex Primary Care Ltd. Resolution to sign the lease.**

- The meeting was informed that the negotiations with the new tenants, Sussex Primary Care (SPC), had been extensive.

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- A 20 year lease, with a 10 year break point and 3 yearly rent reviews, had been negotiated and confirmed. The lease is backed by the Sussex Health Foundation Trust and it was considered that this was the best option the Council could gain.
- The prime objective of the negotiations was to retain a Surgery in the Village.
- A great deal of work had been undertaken by the Chair, Vice Chair and Cllr. Kitchenham on the project, with support from the Clerk and Assistant Clerk.
- The most effort had been undertaken by the Chair of the Friends of the Surgery, Andrew Fermor; his invaluable legal knowledge and experience has assisted greatly when dealing with complex and challenging issues.
- SPC, the new tenants, will be responsible for maintaining the Surgery interior and the Council as landlord will be responsible for the building, external items, and the grounds. The Council will pay a £7K annual contribution to SPC toward the surgery's utility and other running costs. This will be index linked in line with RPI.
- The final rent figure to be paid to the Council will be determined by the District Valuer but this is being delayed due to their workload.
- £28K has been invested by the Council in repairs and improvements to the building over the past two years.
- It is anticipated that there will be a £5K p.a. surplus in favour of the Council. This will support maintenance requirements.
- It is a condition of the lease that a GP and another medical professional are available on a minimum of five half days per week.

It was **RESOLVED** that the lease be signed on behalf of the Council and that the final legal fees figure of £8,114.40 (figure inclusive of VAT) be paid to the Council's solicitor. This will be taken from the Unity bank account and charged to the professional services cost code.

A short "tenant at will" arrangement has been agreed between the Solicitors to formalise the "gap" created by the current lease ending on March 28<sup>th</sup> and the new lease starting on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April.

#### iv. Arrangements for the Annual Council meeting and Annual Parish Meeting.

- Clerk and Assistant Clerk recommend that, as with last year, the Annual Council Meeting at which Chair and Vice Chair are elected for the Council and its Committees, is held on a virtual basis.
- Annual Parish Council Meeting. The emergency regulations regarding "virtual" council meetings expires on the May 7th and there is no sign from HMG regarding any details of an extension. Councils are generally carrying on with virtual meetings until such times that it considered safe to revert to "face to face" meetings with public attendance.
- The subject is a "hot topic" on the Clerk's forum and the general consensus is that the Annual Parish Meeting should either be held remotely or deferred until later in the year when public assembly of greater size is permitted. It has been noted that that the HMG "roadmap" does not provide for removal of all limits of social contact until June 21<sup>st</sup> at the earliest. It has been noticed from their website that the Village Hall is currently only hiring the main hall with hirers being responsible for ensuring that masks are worn, and thorough cleaning undertaken after use.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Council Meeting be conducted on an "remote" basis and that the Annual Parish Meeting be held in the Autumn on a date to be arranged.

#### v. Confirm arrangements and budget for the "Rotherfield Parish In Bloom" project.

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- Cllr. Richardson summarised the project's aims. A local garden centre and a plant nursery have been approached to provide flowers for this.
- Some small planters and hanging baskets will be purchased.
- Rotherfield St Martin will host a planting session in the Village Hall.
- An insert will be included in the forthcoming Newsletter mailing inviting assistance with the planting. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council will cover the £52.45 cost of the insert.
- Cllr. Kitchenham offered his assistance with the transporting and storage of the items involved.
- A meeting is to be arranged between those interested in the project, including the Parish schools, with the end of May being the target date for installing the baskets and planters.

**vi. Parish Newsletter. Agree arrangements, expenditure, and details of "fliers" to be included.**

Inserts from "Rotherfield in Bloom", St. Denys' Church, the Rotherfield broadband project and the Institute will be included. A meeting is to be organised shortly to agree the text. Total cost will be £1084.11 which includes the postage and is included in the Communications and Social Media Committee budget.

**vii. Signature of agreement with ESCC to provide a contribution toward the "Urban Cut".**

Clerk has reminded the local contractor involved that some of the paperwork required by ESCC remains outstanding, this has now been received and the items required will be sent so that the contribution can be released.

**viii. Report from Assistant Clerk regarding H & S considerations for Councillors and volunteers undertaking work on behalf of the Council.**

Assistant Clerk reported the following.

- There is no requirement for a policy to cover Councillors undertaking work on behalf of the Council as they are governed by the code of conduct and must act responsibly. If working as a contractor, they must hold their own insurance.
- If a Councillor is receiving payment for services as a contractor, or for expenses incurred, this must be declared at the meeting at which the payment is authorised and recorded in the minutes.
- Work undertaken for the Council by volunteers must, as a minimum, be "risk assessed".

The meeting noted this information.

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

- March 2nd - Highways. Lighting & Transport Committee
- March 9th - Planning & Building Committee

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

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

- Cllrs. Martin, Henrick, Kitchenham and the Clerk had attended various meetings relating to the Surgery lease renewal.
- Cllr. Martin. Meetings regarding the Institute and Rotherfield St Martin together with a site meeting relating to the Village Hall and car park CCTV installation, CCTV on the Pre School, and the Forest Garden.
- Cllr. Richardson has attended a Twinning Association meeting.
- Cllr. Buck has attended a meeting with the Pre School regarding the plans for the Rec. play area.

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- Cllr. Buck hosted an “Online” Community Engagement meeting and visited the site of an issue raised at the meeting. Clerk has attempted to set up a meeting with our PCSO regarding the issue but has yet to be contacted by the parishioners involved to agree arrangements.

**b) Clerk’s updates and issues.**

Holiday requested for 1st and 6th of April, also 1st - 4th June.

**c) Items for the next Parish Magazine column.**

- Summary of issues surrounding requests for road safety works and provision of pavements.
- Press release regarding speed on B2101 petition.

**6. Update regarding the Surgery. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.**  
None received requiring action.

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

No issues identified requiring urgent attention.

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

- March 30<sup>th</sup> - Planning & Building Committee
- April 6<sup>th</sup> - Communications & Social Media Committee
- April 13<sup>th</sup> - Recreation & Burial Committee
- April 15<sup>th</sup> - Finance & General Purpose
- April 20<sup>th</sup> - Planning & Building Committee
- April 30<sup>th</sup> - Monthly Council Meeting

All of these meeting will be held via “Zoom” and will start at 19:30.

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

- Cllr. Henrick will make enquiries of a resident regarding accidents claimed to have taken place but not recorded and a potential route for a new footpath on Cottage Hill.
- School reported that the car park barrier was damaged by a vehicle strike today, Cllr. Martin has visited and made repairs. He suggests that it is taken down and straightened, cost estimated at £100. Cllr. Buck confirmed that he could proceed with the work.
- Chair and Vice Chair are to arrange payment to the photographer who took photos of the Surgery interior in connection with the lease arrangements.
- An email of thanks has been received from a Town Row resident in response to the Council requesting East Sussex Highways repair the surface of a public layby. This has been dealt with by them.
- Cllr. Buck advised that the bowls club extension will be of 1m rather than the 2m originally planned.
- Facebook comments have been noted regarding an anticipated planning application in the Village. Assistant Clerk advised that no responses should be made, and that the formal application should be awaited.
- Southern Rail have published photos of the refurbished waiting room at Eridge Station on social media.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at **21:55**.

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