



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 30th SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 19:30
IN THE SCOUT HUT ADJACENT TO ROTHERFIELD VILLAGE HALL TN6 3LX**

PRESENT

Cllr. R. Harris (Chair)
Cllr. L. Henrick (Vice Chair)
Cllr. L. Buck

Cllr. D. Hiles
Cllr. J. Cahan
Cllr. P. Kember
Cllr. J. Kitchenham

Cllr. J. Richardson
Cllr. A. Martin
Cllr. G. Watson-Smith
Cllr. N. Wickenden

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

None.

ALSO PRESENT

Trevor Thorpe, Parish Clerk, and Adam Hardy, Assistant Clerk.
Cllr. K. Obbard (WDC), Cllr. R. Standley (ESCC) and one member of the public.

1. TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING: -

a) Public forum.

The member of the public present addressed the meeting, and the key points were as follows:-

- He had been farming in the parish for many years.
- Various concerns were raised with planning issues connected to properties and businesses that he had interests in within the parish over a period of twenty years.
- He was disappointed with Wealden District Council and is concerned with the planning officers with whom he had dealings.
- It is understood that there is currently a court case in progress regarding one of his properties.
- Statements were made by him regarding both specific and broader planning issues.
- Cllr. Standley raised concerns at the statements made by the Parishioner, and the Chair closed this section of the meeting.

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

Cllr. P. Beach. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr. Beach's reason for absence be **APPROVED**.

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

None declared. 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 for work undertaken on behalf of the Council are reminded to declare a personal and pecuniary interest.

d) District and County Councillor reports.

Cllr. Dixon was not present at the meeting and the Deputy Clerk read the written report that he had submitted. Key points were as follows: -

Enforcement issues.

- **Residential caravan on land by Treblers Road.** Wealden Planning officers have visited the site and met with the owners; they stated that the caravan is on the site in connection with the adjacent smallholding and it will not be used for residential use.
- A post and rail fence will be erected around the site and the access track created will shortly be returned to grass; they were not aware that planning permission was required for it.

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- The occupants claim that they have an easement for access from the driveway that runs alongside their site, and this is a private legal issue. The matter may not be resolved swiftly, Wealden District Council have acted within their powers and premature action could lead to the Courts finding against the Council.
- **Cottage Hill entrance.** This appears to be an upgrade of an existing driveway that has not been used for a long time. Planning Officers are contacting the owner to seek details of their intentions for the land; using or upgrading an existing access would not require planning permission but there could be a breach if it is considered an operational development.
- **Cottage in the Conservation Area.** The owner has been instructed to submit a planning application and has agreed to do so. He has been informed of the difficulties that this development presents both in terms of safety and the impact on the conservation area.
- **Demolished wall in the Conservation Area.** The owner has submitted a retrospective planning application, but it requires more information before registration by WDC.
- **Work to bank in Station Road.** Permission has been refused for this application. The owner will need to consider the steps to be taken before enforcement action can be carried out.

Cllr. Dixon reported that the powers that Councils have in respect of planning applications and breaches are not as strong as many might believe or wish for. Some cases may be of many years' duration taking up staff time and taxpayers' money. Council's must follow procedures to the letter, or they risk prejudicing a successful outcome. Residents can be the "eyes and ears" for the planners and many enforcement actions result from them.

Councillor Dixon will follow up any cases brought to his attention and is in regular contact with the planning team. Many cases arise because landowners are not aware of their planning responsibilities, and these may be swiftly resolved by the planners. There are a small number of cases causing greater concern currently.

Cllr. Obbard (WDC)

His report was circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting. Wealden District Council's housing needs assessment was raised by Cllr. Henrick. Cllr. Obbard reported that this assessment would form part of the neighbourhood plan. It was acknowledged that more smaller houses were required.

e) Minutes of the Parish Council meetings held on 26th August 2021 for approval as a true record.

It was **RESOLVED** that these be confirmed as a true record, adopted, and signed by the Chair.

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

Clerk reported the following: -

- Court Meadow Green bench. Padlock and chain purchased, and bench secured.
- £300 support grant payment to the Mark Cross Youth Club is on the list for authorisation at this meeting.
- CCTV – Clerk still to investigate cost of installing broadband in the Scout Hut to support the CCTV. Deputy Clerk and Cllr. Martin reported that quotes were being sought to centralise control of the cameras covering the recreation ground and the village centre; quotes for upgraded cameras for the village area also being sought.
- Dog signs. R & B Committee to please to confirm number required and style so that Clerk may order.

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

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

Copies of payments to be authorised and a budget report has been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting. **CLERK** to circulate nominal ledger report to Councillors and ensure that this report is updated and circulated in advance of future Council meetings. It was **RESOLVED** that the payments below, with the exception of those relating to the Pre School vegetable garden project, be **APPROVED** and paid. Approval of payments relating to the Pre School vegetable garden project was dealt with at the end of the meeting.

Invoice/payer details	Details	Amount
Xtraspace	Document storage	£91.00
Sports Club	Sports Club Maintenance	£325.00
Phil Ireland	Street sweeping	£360.72
Phil Ireland	Litter picking	£180.36
Teambase	Ink cartridge	£23.99
Teambase	Ink cartridges x 3	£71.97
Teambase	Badges and nameplates	£70.16
Rotherfield Village Hall	August Hall hire x 3	£29.70
	Total payments	£1,152.90
Tollwood - grass cutting and other groundworks	Total payments	£2,211.50
	Lloyds payment card	
	"Zoom" sub	£14.39
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	September card fee	£3.00
	Anti-virus software renewal via Speech Centre	£30.00
	Total payments	£61.78
A.J. Martin	Pre School - Chippings and delivery	£180.00
	Pre School - Soil and delivery	£84.00
	Grass bin emptying	£24.00
	SID maintaining Aug/Sep	£36.00
		£324.00
Rialtas Business Systems	Annual licence renewal fee for accounting software	£148.80
Rialtas Business Systems	Transferring data to new PC base unit	£30.00
Chris Croft	Pre School Forest Garden	£1,500.00
Chris Croft	Replacing rotten wooden edge to slide area, and power wash	£44.00
KPS Contractors	Gravedigging	£589.20
Mark Cross Community Centre	Grant in support of Mark Cross Youth Club	£300.00

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Direct 365	Annual cemetery bin cost 360L	£409.19
Direct 366	Annual Hall bin cost 660L	£553.68
Mark Cross Community Centre	July Hall hire x 3	£90.00
Mark Cross Community Centre	August Hall hire x 1	£30.00
Mark Cross Community Centre	September Hall hire x 2	£60.00
Rotherfield Village Hall	September Hall hire x 4	£61.20
ESALC	Finance training course	£48.00
Unity Bank	Cheques collected x 3 July - Sep	90p
James McDermott	Dealing with cemetery moles	£160.00
PowerBee	Mark Cross Christmas lights	£349.90
SPC	Contribution to Surgery Costs	£583.33
UK Debt Management	Surgery loan half year repayment	£9,390.59
Signs of Style	Posters for Annual Parish Meeting	£268.00
Will Clark	Topping of Lower Cemetery	£72.00
Will Clark	Topping of Rotherfield Hill	£72.00
Total Staff Costs		£2,920.56
		£17,680.45

RECEIPTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2021

Sussex Primary Care Ltd	Surgery Rent	£2,688.33
Tester and Jones	Interment in Cemetery N11 Burial and EROB fees	£350.00
Tester and Jones	Gravedigging costs recovery N11	£419.62
Tester and Jones	Grant for memorial installation J1	£170.00
Wealden DC	2021/22 Precept second instalment	£60,277.00
Co-op Funeral Care	Grant for additional inscription on memorial H19	£50.00
Parishioner	Burial fee Plot E26	£50.00
Parishioner	Interment cost E26	£140.00
		£100.00
		<u>£64,244.95</u>

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

i. Consider changes to current staffing arrangements.

It was **RESOLVED** that Clerk, Deputy Clerk and public be excluded from this section of the meeting as it related to confidential staffing matters.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** that That the council accept the recommendations of the Personnel Committee to reduce the current clerks hours from 33 hours to 20 hours and take steps and actions required to employ a second Clerk who will take on the role of Senior clerk and RFO on 20 hours per week on a salary range of NALC salary scale LC2(22-28) which will be determined by the Personnel committee once a suitable candidate has been chosen to fill the vacancy and their experience and qualifications have been considered.

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ii. Financial regulations page 6, item 4. Review and clarify process for delegated payments.

Deputy Clerk had circulated changes recommended to this section of the document to clarify the process to use in the future. It was **RESOLVED** that these changes be adopted, and the regulations updated and published. **CLERK** to action.

Chair enquired as to the powers of the Clerk to make payments without reference to the Councillors in case of an urgent issue. He was advised that this scenario is covered in the Financial Regulations, section 4.5 on page 6.

iii. VAT. Receive information regarding reclaiming VAT by the Council on behalf of local organisations.

It was agreed that this be deferred until the November Council meeting as the Deputy Clerk is attending a training course on this subject and will feed back information on the subject.

iv. Consider purchase of additional “Tommys” for Remembrance and agree donation to the Royal British Legion for providing Poppy Wreathes.

It was agreed that Cllr. Wickenden and the Clerk will investigate the purchase of two additional “Tommys” for the Parish, and that £250 would be budgeted for these. £100 donation was agreed for the wreathes and this is to be funded from the Chairman’s allowance. Cllrs. Wickenden and Watson Smith will make arrangements for attendance at the Service of Remembrance and laying of Wreathes. Deputy Clerk confirmed that the normal Remembrance Service will be held this year.

v. Arrangements for collection and storage of the “Rotherfield in Bloom” pots.

Chair is to speak with a parishioner who may have space to store these. Councillor volunteers are sought to help collect these over the weekend of 9-10th of this month. Deputy Clerk reported that the Boar’s Head “In Bloom” group had replanted their pots for the winter with seasonal plants.

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

- 31st August - Extraordinary Planning and Building Committee.
- 14th September - Planning and Building Committee.
- 21st September - Highways, Lighting and Transport Committee
- 29th September - Annual Parish Meeting

The contents and actions arising from these meetings have been noted, and draft minutes published and circulated.

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

a) Meetings attended on behalf of the Parish Council.

- Cllr. Buck had held meetings with the Pre School.
- Clerk had attended a “Zoom” meeting with Wealden clerks.
- Vice Chair will be attending the Village Hall annual meeting on the 21st of October.

b) Clerk’s updates and issues.

- Crowborough First Responders have installed a Defibrillator in Court Meadow Close. Clerk has thanked them and raised awareness via Social Media. He suggested that training sessions be arranged for Rotherfield and Mark Cross. It was agreed that Clerk will liaise with the group and the halls to arrange this. **CLERK** to action.

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- Clerk had been approached by Sharon Gray at Eridge Station seeking advice and help with the planters there. Clerk has spoken with the Boar's Head "In Bloom" group and they have offered to help her.
- Deputy Clerk advised the meeting that he has now completed all his New Clerk's and Finance training, and the meeting congratulated him with this success.
- The Casual Vacancy on the Council will be advertised tomorrow and candidates for co-option will be considered at the October meeting.
- Chair requested volunteers to assist with some cutting back of greenery behind the War Memorial prior to Remembrance Sunday.

c) Items for next Parish Magazine column.

- SID statistics.
- Christmas Lights.
- Pre School garden.
- Casual Vacancy on the Council.

6. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.

- Request received from a Parishioner to view correspondence from Sigma, in connection with the Court Farm proposed development. Deputy Clerk has provided this to them.
- Chair has also received correspondence regarding proposed building developments in the Parish.

7. TO RECEIVE INSPECTION BOOK & REPORTS

- Cllr. Buck reported that the annual inspection by Wicksteed is scheduled for October.
- Cllr. Buck has witnessed some unsocial activity in the Forest Garden area during daylight hours; Chair suggested that our Pcsos be made aware.

8. TO RECEIVE DATES FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

- 5th October - Planning and Building Committee. Rotherfield Village Hall.
- 12th October - Recreation and Burial Committee – meeting will also agree precept and budget for 2022-23. Mark Cross Community Centre.
- 19th October - Communication and Social Media Committee – meeting to agree precept and budget for 2022-23. Rotherfield Village Hall.
- 26th October - Planning and Building Committee. To be confirmed.
- 28th October - Monthly Council meeting. Rotherfield Village Hall

All meetings above start at 19:30.

Approval of payments regarding the Pre School Vegetable Garden were dealt with at this point.

- Cllr. Henrick summarised the various issues relating to the project, particularly the cost overrun of £700 on a £1500 quote.
- Council had committed to the project, not solely to the provision of a grant.
- The project was rushed so that it could be undertaken during the summer holidays.
- Cllr. Henrick had no problem in agreeing the expenditure.
- She was opposed to the production of two invoices for the project, one for the Council and the other to the Pre School representing the "over run" costs.
- It is not the function of the Council or Councillors to create stress to those representing Community organisations.
- She recommended that the expenditure be approved and was pleased that a donor had been found to cover the shortfall in the project funds.

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- Cllr. Buck addressed the meeting. She raised concerns regarding comments received, and shared with Chair and Vice Chair, regarding her actions in dealing with the Pre School, and financial management of the project and other actions; she refuted these.
- She agreed that the project had been run to a tight deadline to enable completion in the school holidays.
- Labour costs had been underestimated by the Pre School and additional costs had been incurred by provision and installation of “kick boards” to surround the area.
- Cllr. Buck believed that Council should be proud of the project and what had been achieved despite it being done “in haste”, and in the light of the Covid pandemic.
- Cllr Buck proposed that the Council pay the full cost of the project, including the cost overrun of £1934.00.
- Cllr. Henrick had received comments from the preschool praising both Cllrs. Buck and Cllr. Martin for their work with the project.

Cllr. Martin addressed the meeting and stated the following :-

- Financial regulations are intended to protect the Councillors and Council funds.
- Chair advised that he had circulated Cllr. Martin’s email of 24th September raising concerns regarding the project and its costs.
- He agreed with the amendments to the Financial Regulations made at this meeting as they give greater clarity to the processes to be followed when agreeing payments under delegated powers.
- Chair stated that, in future any projects, undertaken or involving the Council, will be conducted with strict observance of Financial Regulations.
- Contractors working for the Council will be expected to follow these rules.
- All matters relating to projects must pass through the Clerk or Deputy Clerk.
- Any correspondence sent to the Chair/Vice Chair referring to other Councillor’s actions will be shared with that Councillor, Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council should pay the sum of £1500.00 to the contractor.

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

None.

Meeting was declared closed at 21:35

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

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