



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD VILLAGE COUNCIL held on
Tuesday 1st November 2022, 7.00 pm at the Council's Meeting Room

PRESENT: Cllrs Forbes (Chair), Draper, Haite, Lee, Owen, Phillips, Spoor & Tyrrell

IN ATTENDANCE: Rebecca Roberts (Clerk), Samantha Booker (Assistant Clerk), District Councillor Belsey and **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** 1

ABSENT: Cllr Loveday

1. a. County and District Councillors' Reports
County Cllr Russell sent her apologies

Cllr Belsey reported that the food waste trial was going well since it began over 4 weeks ago. 9 tonnes of food waste is being collected per week across the three trial areas and this hasn't dipped yet.

b. Public Questions – Marc Jones was present to give some background to item 10. Residents wanted to plant a memorial tree for Dave Hughes on land in the Village, either a fruit tree such as Juniper or an Acer. Dave was certainly a tree man. Money has already been raised and the maintenance of the tree would be done by Marc and his wife, who is a gardener. Cllr Forbes said that the siting of the tree would need permission from either the County Council or District Council depending on its location.

- 2. Apologies for absence** – Cllr Loveday; apologies were received and **resolved; the reasons were accepted**
- 3. To receive Declaration of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the Agenda**
Cllr Tyrrell declared a personal interest in item 7c as chair of the management committee
- 4. Chairman's Announcements** – Cllr Forbes congratulated all those involved in the Bonfire Society for such a successful bonfire & fireworks display on 29th October.
- 5. To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Council held on 4th October 2022** – the minutes were **approved** and were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate account of the meetings.
- 6. Clerk's Report** – the Clerk's report was received and noted. Cllr Forbes noted that the gym equipment was up and running and that the introductory session with a representative from Proludic had gone well. There is a small chance that there could be a new site for potential allotments, but no significant details as yet. Cllr Phillips reported that he and the Clerk met with a contractor from West Sussex Highways earlier in the day to discuss obtaining an estimate for getting a plan drawn up for the substandard footpath on the Wall Hill bends. The contractor said that they were about to conduct a land boundary survey in Haywards Heath and that he could get one for the Village Council done at the same time. The Assistant Clerk reported that the solar panels had been serviced the previous week and all had gone well.
- 7. To receive the minutes of Committees and reports from working groups and to consider any matters arising:**
 - a. Planning Committee – the minutes were received and noted from 4th October 2022
 - b. Finance & Administration Committee – the minutes were received and noted from 18th October 2022
 - c. Youth Club – Cllr Tyrrell reported that she had met with the Youth Club staff during the half term holiday when they discussed the planned activities for the next half term. They are also

having a stall at the Christmas Market. There were 4 club members signed in the week before half term.

- d. Highways Working Group
 - i. To receive an update for dealing with overgrown hedges – it was reported that there is a query as to whether or not the Council can use West Sussex County Councils' logo. The Clerk will email a reminder to West Sussex to ensure confirmation one way or the other. Three addresses need to be chosen to send the initial letters to.
 - ii. To receive an update on the application to West Sussex Highways for a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for a 20mph zone in the village – the Clerk submitted the TRO application. Highways have advised that as the implementation cost of the TRO is likely to exceed £3000, an application for a Community Highway Scheme is also required. This needs to be submitted online.

8. Finance

- a. **Accounts to pay**

The accounts payable from 1st to 31st October 2022 totalling £27,454.09 (this includes the gym installation and 50% deposit for the MUGA wall levelling) were **ratified and approved by the Council.**
- b. To receive the RBS income and expenditure report up to 31st October 2022 – the report was received and noted.
- c. To receive the bank reconciliations for October 2022 – the reconciliations were received and noted
- d. To consider the first draft of the budget for 2023/24 – Cllr Phillips noted that staffing would go up once the new NJC pay scales have been agreed – these will be back-paid to April. Cllr Phillips ran through the predicted year-end figures (to end of March 2022) and some of the initial estimates for 2023-2024.
 - Office costs – a large part of this is heating and is paid to the Village Centre. £5,000 has been estimated up to the end of year, although with government grants, the costs should be reduced to approximately £4,000. There is a big question mark as to what will happen regarding electricity bills after the cap is lifted at the end of April 2023.
 - PV Feed-in tariff – approximately £300 was lost due to the fuse being tripped in early August, so the year-end figure has been reduced. The village hall caretaker has agreed to check the meter to ensure this doesn't happen again.
 - Reserves – it is assumed that nothing further will be spent from the reserves in the current year, which means that the Council will end up with 53% of the precept which is about right.
 - Election Reserves – it is estimated by MSDC that the cost of an election will be approximately £1,700 - this assumes that we have a contested election in May 2023. If the election is not contested, the spend will be zero.
 - Road Safety - £2,000 has been allocated under road safety for the substandard footpath at the Wall Hill bends.
 - Summer Event - £3,000 has been allocated for a possible event, such as His Majesty's Coronation, but it is highly unlikely that this much will be spent.
 - Cllr Phillips stated that if everything, including the allocated reserves is spent to budget next year (2023-24), this will leave only 11% of the precept, which is too low. This will be looked at in more detail in the November Finance & Administration (F&A) meeting and cuts will be made.
 - Precept for 2023-24 – currently the cost to a band D house in Ashurst Wood is £92.06 per annum. If the precept for next year is increased from £70,000 to £75,000, using the same calculations, a band D property will increase to £98.63 per annum. Cllr Belsey commented that East Grinstead Town Council is also having difficult discussions about the budget, with increases to some costs.
- e. To approve the fee quote from Wellers Law for £950 for renewing the permissive footpath agreement – Cllr Forbes reported that the land is currently being transferred to the daughter of Mr Gentles. As this was a personal agreement, it needs to be re-done in the new owner's name. Cllr Draper asked if the Clerk could obtain another quote; it was agreed that this was a sensible suggestion and the Clerk will approach Surrey Hills Solicitors; **resolved** - Members agreed that the Clerk would accept the cheapest quote.
- f. To agree to use Mulberry & Co as the Councils internal auditors from 2024 at the approximate cost of £65 per hour; **resolved, members agreed to use Mulberry & Co.**

- g. To approve a donation of £150 to the Royal British Legion for the Council's wreath and lamp post re-usable poppies - resolved – **members agreed to the donation of £150.**
9. To consider reapplying for the Three Crowns and Maypole Inn to be listed as Assets of Community Value (the current listing expired September 2022) – **Resolved, members agreed to reapply** for both pubs to be listed as Assets of Community Value. Cllr Belsey said that he would discuss this with MSDC and see if they can find the original paperwork.
10. To consider a request to plant a memorial tree in the village for Dave Hughes; **resolved – members agreed in principle to support a proposal for a tree being planted in memory of Dave Hughes. More details will be required from the family and friends**
11. **To consider Grant Applications – None**
12. **Events**
- a. Remembrance Sunday – 13th November 2022 – Cllr Spoor agreed to do a reading on behalf of the Council during the Church service at St. Dunstan's and also to lay the Council's wreath. Road Closure notices will be going up in advance of Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday.
- b. Christmas Market – 25th November 2022 – there have been 10 stall holder applications returned to the office so far. Cllr Lee kindly donated a bag of new toys for a children's raffle. A volunteer is needed to present these nicely ready for the raffle. It was agreed that there would be no entrance fee charged. Food will be hotdogs as these sold well last year.
13. **Consultations - None**
14. **To receive reports from Councillors who have attended outside bodies** – Cllr Phillips attended the Ashdown Forest Conservators meeting. The carpark charges needed planning permission, so the launch was delayed. Only 2 car-parking machines will be placed on the forest, the rest of the fees payable are expected to be done by the public over the telephone. The conservators are estimating to make £77,000 in the first year from parking fees, with 25% of this going to the car parking company. It was also reported that the forest had no significant fires this year, which, although it sounds odd, is a cause of concern for next year as the undergrowth will be more significant. There is also a battle to recognise the importance of the Ashdown Forest and Winnie the Pooh and it is hoped that there will be celebrations on the forest next year for the 100th birthday of Pooh Bear and friends. Finally, the forest receives an estimated 1.5 million visitors per year and they are thinking of installing some composting loos. The next meeting will be held on 7th December and Cllr Phillips hopes to attend.
15. **Items of correspondence** - Previously circulated.
16. **Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda:**
17. **Date of next meeting** – 6th December 2022

Meeting closed: 8.02pm

Chairman.....

Date.....