



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD VILLAGE COUNCIL** held on  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022, 7.00 pm at the Council's Meeting Room

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

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

**ABSENT:** Cllrs Loveday & Owen

**1. a. County and District Councillors' Reports**

**County Cllr Russell** sent her apologies and the following report:

I saw Cllr Belseys post regarding the parking by the school along Hammerwood Road. I have said I will raise it with Highways but I do feel there is little that can be done there with respect to a traffic regulation order not to mention the time it would actually take to get one implemented if it were actually to be successful. I have suggested that the resident may wish to apply for an access protection line which she would pay for as a resident £171. This isn't enforceable but is quite effective as a deterrent to drivers who insist in parking over people's driveways and may help.

Phoenix Lane is still awaiting the repainting of its road markings. This has been in train for a while but contractors have a significant backlog so it's a case of waiting for it to have its turn.

Nothing really to report regarding the roadworks for Ashurst Wood other than SGN who are gradually making their way towards Ashurst Wood due to conclude February 2023.

You will know there was a road death on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. I am aware of the investigatory facts but these cannot be divulged until such time as the County Coroner holds an inquest in due course. Meanwhile I have said to the residents that I have requested a safety review of that stretch to see what if anything can be done to encourage drivers to drive more slowly around the bend. This is not likely to take place until Highways have concluded their piece of work with Sussex Police in respect of the recent fatality.

Regarding the Hectors Lane Mast application – from a Highways perspective Vodaphone's latest submission was thrown out and I believe that MSDC have now refused the application altogether.

Richard Speller will be leaving WSCC in the New Year. I understand he is relocating to pastures new. He will be sorely missed.

**Cllr Belsey** reported that residents are currently waiting until June 2023 to get a garden waste bin. However, there are proposals for a new lorry to come online in April 2023 and this has formed part of next year's budget, so this should reduce the waiting period.

Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) have been considering the budget for 2023-24. District Councils are allowed to raise their precept by 3% or £5, but the current thinking is to remain at £5 per Band D household, therefore a raise of 2.5%. Cllr Belsey pointed out that the budget meeting will not take place until early March next year.

Finally, Cllr Belsey reported that there would be a Planning announcement coming soon from the Communities Department which is expected to say that the planning numbers are not set in stone. However, sites that have already been allocated will remain so. There are no details as yet, but it is expected that these will be revealed at a meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December. Cllr Belsey also mentioned that there will be increased use of 'Grampian Conditions' which require infrastructure to be put in place before any new housing development starts.

b. **Public Questions** – Peter Gillies came along to the meeting to talk about his restorations of the Bow Bell Mile Posts. Sussex has the longest reported set of mile posts in the country from Hailsham all the way to East Grinstead. There should be 29 posts in total but one is missing in Ashurst Wood and he feels it would be fantastic to have the full set. He hoped that the Village Council would be interested in helping.

2. **Apologies for absence** – Cllr Owen; 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:**  
None
4. **Chairman’s Announcements** – Cllr Forbes reported that she had attended the MSDC Civic Christmas Service at St Swithins and it was a very pleasant event.
5. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Council held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 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.
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 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022

7.26pm – Cllr Phillips arrived

- b. Finance & Administration Committee – the minutes were received and noted from 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022.  
**To receive and consider the draft budget and precept recommendations for 2023-2024** – Cllr Phillips reported that there would be an energy subsidy, but the Finance & Administration Committee (F&A) is recommending putting £5,000 in the budget. The budget for 2023-24 has not been overly generous and it is very difficult to predict everything.  
There needs to be a budget for elections – the costs for the 2023 election will be split with MSDC, but the Village Council would be solely responsible for the costs of any by-elections. Therefore £1,000 has been included in the election reserves, which will be increased each year up to the 3rd year.  
The income from the PV Feed-in tariff has been lower this financial year, because the meter was accidentally switched off, but the F&A committee are predicting a £2,500 income next year from the tariff.  
The Finance & Administration Committee recommended a precept of £73,000 for 2023-2024. The Tax Base Rate for the year has been lowered to 770.4, which gives a Band D precept of £94.76, therefore the percentage increase from the Village Council is 2.9% - an annual increase of £2.70.  
Since the Village Council will have extra energy and insurance costs relating to its assets such as the office building, meeting room and stores and streetlamps, an increased precept was believed to be necessary. There was no increase last year. The predicted reserves at the end of the year would be around 40% of the precept.  
**Resolved; Members agreed in principle to approve the draft budget and increase the precept to £73,000.**  
The draft budget will be placed on the website and will be finalised and the precept confirmed at the next meeting of the Council in February
- c. Highways Working Group
  - i. To receive an update for dealing with overgrown hedges – Cllr Forbes has been rejigging the hedges leaflet; removing the West Sussex Highways Logo and changing some wording. Members are asked to report any offending hedges to the Clerk with the full address.

- ii. To receive an update on the application to West Sussex Highways for a Community Highway Scheme application for a 20mph zone in the Village – The Clerk has submitted the application on-line and has had confirmation from Richard Speller that it has been received.

## 8. Finance

### a. **Accounts to pay**

The accounts payable from 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 totalling £5,762.83 were **ratified and approved by the Council.**

- b. To receive the Finance Pack for November 2022 (which includes the RBS income & expenditure report, statutory balance sheet & bank reconciliations) – **the Finance Pack was received and noted**
- c. To receive the report from the internal interim audit of 8<sup>th</sup> November – the report was received and noted.
- d. To consider the quotations from Proludic and the two quotes from the Sign Company for the new gym equipment sign and installation – members looked through the quotes and **resolved to use The Sign Company and agreed to the cost of £400 to include fitting.**
- e. To approve 7 hours overtime each for the Clerk & Assistant Clerk for the Christmas Market (actual hours worked were 11) – Cllr Tyrrell recommended that the staff were paid for the 11 hours worked, seconded by Cllr Lee – **resolved, members agreed to pay both the Clerk & Assistant Clerk 11 hours overtime each.**

9. To consider passing a resolution to sign up to the Civility & Respect Pledge – some members felt that they already had the Code of Conduct and therefore didn't need to sign up to this pledge as people should be respectful anyway. However, there may be a time in the future with a change of Councillors where these guidelines may become necessary. **Members voted 4 to 3 in favour of signing up to the Civility & Respect Pledge.** Cllr Forbes then read out the 8 statements which were agreed to. It was noted that the Council will have to produce and adopt a Dignity at Work policy.

10. **To consider Grant Applications** – (amount spent so far this year is £1,850 and the budget was £1,500)

- a. Ashurst Wood Primary School is requesting £1,562 to pay for two scooter pods – members felt that this was a very expensive project and that there were much cheaper alternatives available. Members agreed not to support this application.
- b. 4Sight Vision request £250 to support 5 people for one year – members noted that 4Sight Vision currently support 2 residents of Ashurst Wood and since the Council has already over-spent the grants budget, it was agreed to support the 2 residents and give a donation of £125.
- c. A request by Peter Gillies who is restoring local Bow Bell Mileposts for a contribution of £500-£600. (note that this cannot be a grant, but could be a donation) – Members agreed that this was a worthwhile historical project and very interesting. It was noted that East Grinstead and Forest Row had also helped to restore their mileposts. **Resolved; members agreed to work with Peter and support his efforts. Any financial contribution would come from the street furniture budget and the milepost would become an asset of the Council.**

## 11. Events

- a. Remembrance Sunday – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – it was noted that the event went well.
- b. Christmas Market – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – Cllr Forbes thanked the Clerk & Assistant Clerk for all their hard work with organising the market. It was noted that the market was quieter than previous years and also that Father Christmas preferred the new Grotto area in the foyer of the office.

12. **Consultations** – the Boundary Commission for England – the deadline for commenting on the consultation ended before the meeting and therefore the Council is unable to officially respond – this was noted.

13. **To receive reports from Councillors who have attended outside bodies** – Cllr Forbes attended the Village Centre Trustees meeting – they are still considering erecting a flagpole on the tower of the village centre, especially as MSDC have advised that planning won't be necessary if flying the Union

Jack, Sussex flag or St George's flag. She also reported a leak in the roof and hence scaffolding will be going up so the roof can be looked at and repaired.

Cllr Forbes also attended the Mid Sussex parishes Cluster meeting at the Highways depot near Hickstead where they have all the gritting vehicles. Eleanor Harris is now the new senior Highways Officer for West Sussex and Christine Ellison has replaced Nick de Souza.

The Cluster group discussed who would host next year's meetings and Cllr Forbes volunteered Ashurst Wood. The Clerks will discuss if there are any items for the February agenda and then agree whether to hold a meeting or not.

14. **Items of correspondence** - Previously circulated.
15. **Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda:** None
16. **Date of next meeting** – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Meeting closed: 8.20pm

Chairman.....

Date.....