



MINUTES OF MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD VILLAGE COUNCIL held on Tuesday 4th June 2019, 7.45 pm at the Council Meeting Room.

PRESENT: Cllrs Forbes (Chair), Y Arnott, T Draper, J Haite, J Lee, D Loveday and B Spoor.

IN ATTENDANCE: Caroline Leet (Clerk)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 4

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

38. County and District Councillors Reports

Responsibility of

- a. County Councillor Jacquie Russell introduced herself to the new Council. At West Sussex County Council (WSSC) she was the Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and also Chair of two Working Groups: one developing the electric vehicle strategy; and the other which looked at how to mitigate the cuts in the bus services and providing alternative sustainable transport. She mentioned Facebook and the comments which were often posted referring to roadworks carried out by the statutory undertakers (for example South East Water, British Telecom, National Power). Understandably, people think the jurisdiction for the undertaking of these works is the highways authority responsibility, but it is actually the statutory undertaker who was responsible for how they manage the road. A statutory undertaker can just open up the road if they see there is a need and only have to report it to the highways authority if they think that work will take longer than two hours. They then apply to the highways authority for a permit and then the management of the work is up to them and they can put up multi-way signalling, or have no one on site. She agreed that it was a bone of contention and had sympathy with the frustrations this caused to the public. The responsibility of the highway authority begins and ends with the issuing of the permit. Only if the statutory undertaker exceeded that permit and had not applied for an extension can the County Council fine the statutory undertaker. That said, the fines were too low and of no deterrent. Cllr Russell had been working with permit officers to review this. There was a prosecution policy in force, but it was not enough and she was working to lobby the government to change legislation to give local authorities more powers over the behaviour of statutory undertakers. Referring to a recent joint government grant programme, Access at Stations, a joint application had been made by Network Rail and Disability Access East Grinstead to address the access issues at East Grinstead train station. Unfortunately, the East Grinstead application was not successful and funding went to Crowborough. She was baffled by the reasoning behind this as there were clearly access issues, notably for passengers accessing platform 1. The surrounding population and usage of East Grinstead station was greater than other stations. She had requested some feedback. The new proposed concessionary fares scheme for school pupils was still being discussed and she would follow-up; and also the real time bus stop signs.

District Councillor John Belsey reported he had had a number of residents contact him regarding planning queries. The EDF/Wealden House development application was due to be discussed by the Design Review Panel and he would be attending that meeting. He also mentioned several Facebook

posts complaining about the grass cutting at John Pears Recreation Ground, in particular the children's playground. The Clerk and he had been applying pressure to the officers and this had now been cut. However, the grass cutting was subcontracted out and works can run over.

He had been appointed as a Cabinet Member for Environment and Services. The corporate plan for 2019/20 included increasing recycling rates and introducing food recycling; investment in children's play areas and Ashurst Wood were on the programme to benefit from this; and establishing a cycling network in Mid Sussex.

Finally, he reminded Members, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) Community Fund had £110k for community projects and recommend community groups to apply for grants for projects as they come up.

39. Apologies for absence

Cllrs Phillips and Tyrrell's apologies were received and **resolved; the reasons were accepted.**

40. To receive Declaration of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the Agenda (*Localism Act 2011 s31 (1)*)

None.

41. Chairman's Announcements

Cllr Forbes reported the Clerk had handed in her notice and was leaving to be the Town Clerk at Edenbridge Town Council. On behalf of the Council, she thanked her for all her work over the past seven years and wished her all the best in her new role.

42. To confirm the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Village Council held on 14th May 2019 (*Local Government Act 1972 s12 para 41 (1)*)

The minutes were **approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct account of the meeting.**

43. Public Questions (*Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960*)

Michael Shaw, Chairman of the Board of trustees of Age UK East Grinstead and District made a representation for a grant application towards the costs of a launch and networking event for their new centre at Glen View. He mentioned that Age UK East Grinstead and District was a partner of Age UK and were self-funding. They provided activities and services to the elderly and the new facilities would allow them to expand on what they already provided including looking at providing respite day care for people with dementia.

Cllr Forbes proposed that as a representative for the Age UK East Grinstead and District was in attendance, to bring forward agenda item 22a. Members agreed and **resolved to move agenda item 22a, Grant applications, and to discuss before proceeding with other items on the agenda.**

44. Grants (*Local Government Act 1972, section 137*)

Age UK East Grinstead and District

Cllr Forbes said that the Council had awarded a grant to Age UK East Grinstead and District in 2016 for £250. Members discussed the application and request for a £250 towards a launch event. It was noted that the Council's grants policy said that *applications should be targeted at improving or maintaining the quality of life for the majority of residents of Ashurst Wood, or at least a significant minority of the residents such as young people or the*

elderly; and that, *except in exceptional circumstances, grants will not usually be considered to provide revenue funding, but should be for the purchase of equipment and/or capital projects.* Members were supportive of the organisation and the services it provided for the community, including residents in Ashurst Wood. They **agreed** that they could not support this application, but if a new application was submitted for a specific activity, they agreed it would be more in favour and in principle would support the application.

Clerk

20:34: Mr Shaw left the meeting

45. Recorded meetings: to approve deletion of recording – meeting 5th February 2019

Members **resolved to delete the recording of the meeting held on 5th February 2019.**

46. To receive the minutes of Committees and reports from working groups and to consider any recommendations arising:

a. Planning Committee

The meeting on 4th June was noted.

b. Youth Club

Cllr Forbes reported that the Clerk, who was also the Youth Leader, would be stepping down as Youth Leader at the end of the summer term; the last session was 26th June. The Youth Club Committee would make a recommendation to the July Council meeting. In the meantime, the annual barbeque and Year 6 taster session was on 12th June. She thanked Cllr Loveday and Chris Loveday for their continued support to the Club.

c. Events Working Group

i. To receive an update on the Kids for Tennis scheme (replacing the summer sports day)

Cllr Forbes informed the Council that previously the Council had run a children's sports day in August. This had been quite popular, but the last couple of years the numbers had been lower. It had been agreed to try something new and working with the Ashurst Wood Community Tennis Club (AWCTC), the idea was to run coaching sessions under the Lawn Tennis Club's (LTA) Kids for Tennis scheme. Unfortunately, it was proving difficult to make suitable arrangements with a coach and it was now looking unlikely that this would happen this year.

Clerk

ii. To consider if the Council would like to proceed with Ashstock 2020 and to instruct the Working Group to investigate the viability (Local Government Act 1972 s145(a))

Cllr Forbes reminded Members Ashstock had been the Council's summer event for the past five years, but it had been agreed that 2019 would be a year off. She asked Members if they would like to hold the event in 2020. Members **agreed in principle** to support Ashstock 2020 and asked the Events Working Group (EWG) to consider the viability, a date and to report back to the full Council.

Clerk/EWG

47. Clerk's report

The Clerk's report was received and noted the length which provided a comprehensive handover of various ongoing matters.

a. To approve the expenditure of £90 for the Assistant Clerk to attend the SSALC Clerk's networking training day on 11th July 2019 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Felbridge (Local Government Act 1972 s111(1)/s112)

Members resolved the Assistant Clerk to attend the SSALC Clerk's networking training and the expenditure of £90.

Since the meeting, it had been noted the next networking day was 7th November (not the 11th July) and would be represented if the Clerk/Assistant Clerk considered it suitable.

b. To consider including a link to the Crawley Jobcentre on the Council's website/useful links (this is at the request of a persistent emailer)

Members discussed and agreed that the individual request to display a website address for the jobcentre which was not the official government website was not applicable for its website and the useful links page. If anyone requested details, the Council would supply the official .gov.uk web address.

Clerk

48. Finance

a. Accounts to pay

The accounts paid from 15th May to 3rd June were ratified; the FairFX prepaid debit card accounts payments from 15th May to 3rd June were ratified; and the accounts payable for 4th June were approved by the Council. The file of invoices was available to be viewed. (These had either resolutions under the General Power of Competence or powers now identified in the minutes or powers within Local Government Act 1972 (sections 111, or 137))

Clerk

b. To receive RBS income and expenditure report up to 30th May

The RBS/Alpha income and expenditure report was received; it was noted it was dated up to 4th June. There were no questions.

The Clerk advised that the Community Equipment (4241) had now received and been credited with the shared contributions from the other five parishes; total expenditure and Village Council's contribution was £364. Also, to note the spreadsheet indicated an over spend on Subscriptions (4026). However, the budget for 2019/20 had allocated Training (4010) £2,000 and 4026 £750. This was before a resolution had been made to re-join SSLAC; but an allowance had been allocated to code 4010. Whilst the budgets could not be changed, effectively, the training budget was now £1,450; subscriptions were £1,300.

c. Annual Return (AR): To note the AR has been submitted to the external Auditor and the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of unaudited AR has been published on the notice boards and website (inspection period 3rd June to 12th July)

Noted.

20:45: Cllr Russell left the meeting

49. To consider to resolve Members of the public to leave the meeting for item 11 on the agenda (Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960)

Members agreed there was no reason to exclude members of the public.

50. To receive co-option applications and vote to fill the Councillor vacancies (there are two seats vacant) (Representation of People Act 1985 s21(2a))

Cllr Forbes proposed that the two applicants, Yvonne Arnott and James Lee, both be co-opted on to the Council. Members' unanimously resolved the co-option of Yvonne Arnott and James Lee.

51. To receive the co-opted Councillor(s) Declaration of Acceptance of Office Received. (Local Government Act 1972 s83 (4))

New Councillors Arnott and Lee were invited to join the Council meeting.

52. To elect a Vice-Chairman for the Council

Cllr Forbes proposed Cllr Brian Phillips. Cllr Haite seconded. **Cllr Phillips was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman to the Village Council.**

53. To review the Councillors Allowances (these were last updated February 2013) (*The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 reg 25*)

Cllr Forbes mentioned that the Councillors in the past had not claimed an allowance. Councillor allowances were reviewed by an independent remuneration committee at MSDC. The last report, dated December 2018 had only covered District Councillors. The last report for Parish Councillors allowances was dated December 2012 and reviewed by Ashurst Wood Village Council (AWVC) in February 2013. AWVC had always paid mileage expenses, occasionally ink cartridges and supplied paper if needed. It would also pay a carers or childcare allowance if needed to allow councillors to attend meetings. Members agreed not to claim an allowance, but **resolved the following expenses could be claimed:**

- **Travelling and Subsistence Allowances: Car Mileage 45p per mile with 3p per mile for 1 passenger, and 5p pm for two passengers**
- **Childcare Allowance: To be payable at the National Minimum Wage**
- **Dependent Carer's Allowance: To be payable at the actual amount charged, with the maximum rate (currently £15 per hour) to rise in line with inflation.**
- **Ink cartridge: Costs could be reclaimed**
- **Paper: To be supplied by the office if needed**

Clerk

54. To consider councillors having their own personal ashurstwood-vc.gov.uk email address. This would be compliant with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Members **resolved for all councillors to use an individual ashurstwood-vc.gov.uk email address.** The Clerk was asked to set these up.

Clerk

55. To consider what Councillor contact details should be published. There is no legal requirement to publish personal contact details and therefore it is up to the individual Councillor what details they have published, but they must be contactable

Cllr Forbes said that there was no legal requirement for councillors to have their personal contact details published on the website, but they must have their Register of Interests (ROI) displayed on the website. The Clerk had redacted personal details on the ROIs, and the Monitoring Officer at MSDC had confirmed this was acceptable. However, a member of the public could ask to see a master copy of the ROI at the Council office. It was good practice for Councillors to publish contact details. Members discussed and **agreed** it should be enough to publish the individual Councillor email addresses on the website and that home phone numbers were not necessary; the Council's number was displayed and there was an answer phone.

Clerk

56. To consider setting-up the following Working Groups (*Local Government Act 1972 s101(1&2)*):

a. An Allotment Group to investigate the viability, demand and costs for allotments on a proposed site (*Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908, ss 23*)

Cllrs Draper, Forbes and Phillips were appointed to the Allotment Working Group (AWG). Cllr Draper said a resident, Sue Masey, had mentioned at the Annual Village Meeting (AVM) she would like to join the AWG.

Clerk/JD,JF,BP

b. A Community Speed Watch Group to consider the viability, potential

sites and recruitment of volunteers for the scheme (*powers would be granted by the Police*)

Cllrs Lee and Loveday were appointed to the Community Speed Watch Working Group (CSWWG). It was noted that no members of the public had volunteered following a presentation at the AVM. It was agreed to promote the scheme in the next newsletter.

Clerk/JL, DL

57. Deferred from the Annual Meeting of the Village Council – To elect representatives to the following organisations:

Mid Sussex District Council Emergency Planning Local Group (EPLG)

Cllr Lee was nominated as representative for the Mid Sussex District Council Emergency Planning Local Group (EPLG)

Parish, Town and District Communications Group (PTDComms)

Cllr Lee was nominated as Parish, Town and District Communications Group (PTDComms)

Clerk/JL

Clerk/JL

58. To consider a visioning event for the Council (and the possibility of organising this through SSALC with the expenditure of £400) (*Local Government Act 1972 s111(1)*)

Cllr Forbes said that Trevor Leggo from Surrey and Sussex Association of Local Councils (SSALC) had run a session for Councillors in 2015, which had been interesting, but at that time the Council had already committed to a number of projects. She said that she thought a visioning exercise would be beneficial to the new Council. Since preparing the agenda, the Clerk had found another provider, Chris Rolley who was a resident, but very experienced in local council matters as the ex-Town Clerk to East Grinstead, who now ran his own consultancy business. He would bring in David Carden, former Town Clerk of Burgess Hill. Together, they would provide a visioning programme which would include a follow-up and be tailored to AWVC. Members discussed and **resolved to have a Visioning Exercise with Chris Rolley Associates and the expenditure of up to £400.**

Clerk/ALL

21:11 The Chair suspended Standing Orders to allow Cllr Belsey to speak.

21:13 The Chair resumed the meeting.

It was **agreed** Cllr Belsey would be invited to join the visioning session

Clerk

59. To receive an update on the new court access system to the tennis courts in partnership with the Ashurst Wood Community Tennis Club and Mid Sussex District Council

The Clerk read an email that had been forwarded to her from Cllr Belsey. MSDC confirmed that the project was still progressing, but due to internal staff changes there had been some delay. They were also still investigating the best way to provide electricity for the electronic gates; solar power was looking too expensive and it was likely they would revert back to digging a trench from the Pavilion for cabling. It was hoped that the funding would be signed off over the next week or so and this would mean that the work could then be scheduled in.

60. To receive an update on the memorial bench in memory of Jean Lewin at John Pears and the licence from MSDC (*resolution Public Services Committee 187c*)

Cllr Forbes noted that this had been agreed by the Public Services Committee in 2017 and taken a long time for MSDC to produce an Agreement. Having

looked through the MSDC Bench Agreement, she noticed that it said the lease period would be for 12 months. She suggested the Clerk ask for an amendment to add, this would be automatically renewed unless there was a need to change. Members **resolved the Clerk to sign the Agreement for the memorial bench in memory of Jean Lewin at John Pears Recreation Ground.**

21:21 The Chair suspended Standing Orders to allow Cllr Belsey to speak.

21:23 The Chair resumed the meeting.

61. Grants (*Local Government Act 1972 s137*)

b. Lifecentre

Members considered the application to Lifecentre. Whilst they felt it was a very good cause, and one which due to its nature could not reveal how many residents in Ashurst Wood it had helped, they **agreed** that the request was for general funding and therefore did not meet the Council's criteria.

Clerk

62. To note and to formally receive the Clerk's resignation

Following on from the Chair's announcement, Cllr Forbes said the Clerk's resignation had been received and her last working day would be 19th June.

Clerk

63. Consultations

None.

Clerk

64. To receive reports from Councillors who have attended outside bodies

None.

65. Items of correspondence

a. List on Clerk's report, correspondence previously circulated

Received.

66. Any Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda

Cllr Haite proposed the Council consider holding a pre meeting discussion so that all Councillors could be briefed and clarify any agenda items before going in to meetings.

Clerk

Cllr Loveday requested the Council consider increasing dog bins; and to consider re-establishing the Public Services Committee now that the Council was fully quorate.

Cllr Draper asked for the Wild Meadow at John Pears Recreation Ground to be discussed.

67. To resolve Members of the public to leave the meeting for item 29, 30, 31 and 32 *Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960*

The following resolution was proposed by Cllr Forbes and **resolved by the Council: any members of the public or Press to be excluded for this part of the meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted pursuant to s.1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960.**

21:32 Cllr Belsey left the meeting.

Members discussed at length the Clerk vacancy and considered the job



descriptions and specifications for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk. The office staff hours were also discussed and a contingency whilst the Council considered its options and the recruitment process.

It was noted that the ACAS advice for advertising job vacancies said: *An employer can fill a job vacancy without advertising a post if they have identified a suitable candidate, although they should ensure they comply with their own recruitment policy, if they have one, as well as ensure there is no discrimination in any selection process or decision on who will be offered the role.* However, some Members felt that for transparency all vacancies should be advertised.

68. To consider the recruitment options for a new Clerk and pay scale range (recommended LC2 substantive benchmark range 24-28). (Local Government Act 1972 s112)

Members resolved to ask the Assistant Clerk, Rebecca Roberts, to be Acting Clerk whilst the Council reviewed the job roles and considered its options. The Acting Clerk would be remunerated under the LC2 substantive benchmark range 24-28. A letter of appointment would be prepared by the Chair.

JF, JH, DL, BP

69. To give delegated authority to two or three nominated Councillors to:
i. **Review the office staff job descriptions and consider splitting the Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer role (RFO Local Government Act 1972 s151)**

ii. **To manage the appointment and/or recruitment process, negotiated salary and confirm the necessary appointment(s).**
Members resolved to give delegated authority to four Councillors (Cllrs Forbes, Haite, Loveday and Phillips) to review the Clerk and Assistant Clerk's job roles and to manage the recruitment process, negotiate salaries and appointment(s).

JF, JH, DL, BP

70. To consider a budget for additional staff hours to allow for a suitable handover period/training

Members resolved an additional 20 hours for a handover between the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk.

Clerk

71. To consider the arrangements for the Cleaner vacancy and to give delegated authority to the Assistant Clerk and nominated Councillor to manage the recruitment process and to make the appointment (Local Government Act 1972 s112)

Members resolved delegated authority to the Acting Clerk and Cllr Forbes to manage the recruitment process and to make an appointment for the Cleaner vacancy.

Clerk/JF

72. Date of next meeting – 2nd July

Meeting closed: 22:01

Chairman.....

Date.....