



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD VILLAGE COUNCIL held remotely on
Tuesday 1st December 2020, 7.00 pm using Zoom

PRESENT: Cllrs Forbes (Chair), Phillips (Vice-Chair), Haite, Lee, Loveday, Spoor and Tyrrell

IN ATTENDANCE: Rebecca Roberts (Clerk), Sam Booker (Assistant Clerk/RFO) Mid Sussex District Cllr John Belsey, **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** 1

ABSENT: Cllrs Arnott and Draper and County Councillor Russell

The chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

1. a. County and District Councillors' Reports

County Cllr Russell sent the following report:

Local Matters

Pathway along Wall Hill Bends

I spoke to Richard Speller last week who has confirmed that he has spoken to both the owners of No.1 and No.2 Quarry Cottages and they are in agreement with what needs to be done outside of their cottages. He also outlined the situation re extending the pathway back past the Forge as per Brian's notes issued yesterday. It's very good news to see some progress here at last.

Pop Up Cycle Lane in East Grinstead

is now being removed. Works were due to start yesterday but I noted at the weekend that only a small section of delineators were in place at the Imberhorne Lane end of the stretch of cycle lane. Road markings are still in situ although I was informed that these would also be removed – we shall see. Tranche 2 funding from the government has been awarded but yet to be allocated across the county and will only be released upon the submission of an approved scheme.

Roadworks

Nothing directly in Ashurst Wood that is showing as planned works. There are works on the Lewes Rd at the junction of College Lane on 2nd December. Looking at the permit its only showing the one date so I am hoping this is a one day only job.

You may have heard about Railway Approach in East Grinstead being cancelled by the contractor due to 'too much traffic'. Just to advise that this has been rescheduled for 2nd February to 4th February 2021.

Strategic Matters

Covid-19

On Thursday, 26 November, the Government announced which areas are in which tier. West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove will be in Tier 2 (High Alert). Over the period 11 November to 17 November, Mid Sussex had the highest rate in the County at 166.2 per 100,000 population. The County rate was 122.7, the Regional rate 180.7 and the England rate 251.5 per 100,000 population.

On Monday 23 November, the Local Tracing Partnership launched across East Sussex and West Sussex to support the national NHS Test and Trace system. Working from West Sussex County Council's COVID-19 Community Hub, the service will take on responsibility for contacting individuals across East Sussex and West Sussex who have received a positive COVID-19 test result, but were unable to be contacted by the national NHS Test and Trace team within 48 hours.

Children's Services – the Ofsted report from their focussed visit in October will be published 4th December. I will send on to the Council once it is published for those that may be interested to read

the findings. There is no grading as this wasn't a full inspection but a focussed visit looking at the performance and impact on Children's Services through the lens of Covid-19. Our next monitoring visit is due to be carried out in February 2021, no date set as yet.

Budget

The council has an overall £43.6m budget gap due to the pressures and impact of Covid-19. Various efficiency savings have been proposed (circa £20m) although this still leaves the Council with a gap of £23m to plug. Proposed savings that require member decisions cannot be finalised until the authority is in receipt of its financial settlement in December.

District Cllr Belsey reported that the covid and micro business grants closed on 30th November.

The Tennis project has been signed off and will hopefully proceed quite quickly. Cllr Phillips asked if the £1,000 contribution from the Village Council would be required in this financial year or the next. Cllr Belsey responded that it was likely to be this year.

Cllr Belsey also reported that a traffic survey had been conducted for the telecommunication mast which was to be sited on the junction of Hectors Lane. The results showed that for the 85 percentile, vehicles travelled at 37.9 miles per hour (mph) when it should be closer to 32mph within a 30mph limit. This means that potentially another site will be sought.

b. **Public Questions** – The Chair of the Ashurst Wood Community Tennis Club, Karen Lindsay reported that the tennis courts will reopen on 2nd December and that during the recent closure of the courts they were moss cleaned and jet washed, with the job hopefully being finished today (1st). Stuart Brown from Mid Sussex District signed off the report to release the S106 money to move forward with the new gates and booking system as soon as possible.

Karen also reported on Youth Club and said that currently Youth Clubs can operate on an orange alert which means no more than 15 youths in a session, whilst socially distancing. The club would have to operate using the same year group bubbles as the schools. The Pavilion at John Pears is still closed and so the only alternative, other than to use the field once the evenings are lighter would be to use the Village Centre which is currently available on Thursday evenings.

2. **Apologies for absence** - Cllr Draper and County Councillor Russell; 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 Loveday declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 9
4. **Chairman's Announcements** – Cllr Forbes thanked everyone for their help with the Remembrance Sunday Service, particularly Cllr Phillips, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk. Cllr Forbes also thanked Cllr Loveday for arranging the Village Christmas tree. The Clerk will send a message to thank Graham Keenor for so generously donating the tree to the Village.
5. **To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Village Council held on 3rd November 2020** – the minutes were **approved** and signed by the Chair as a true and correct account of the meeting.
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 from the meeting of 16th November 2020.
 - b. Finance & Administration Committee – the minutes were received from the meeting of 17th November 2020.
To receive and consider the draft budget and precept recommendations for 2021/22 – Cllr Phillips reported that at the recent Finance and Administration meeting (F&A), the budget was discussed in detail and the recommendations were as follows:
 - Staffing (4000) – although the Chancellor has said that civil servants won't receive a pay rise, staff will still receive the living wage increase, so the budget is suggested at £38,000.

- Building Maintenance (4024) – the budget has been increased to £1,500 to allow for re-pointing of the Council office building.
- Youth Club Wages (4040) – this has been increased by £100 to allow for living wage increase.
- Community Transport (4064) – although nothing was spent this year due to the pandemic, it was decided to set the budget at £3,200 in the hope that the Community Transport will be running in 2021.
- Community equipment/Road Safety (4241) – this has been increased to £7,000 to allow for a matching contribution for the creation of a footpath on the Wall Hill Bends leading to John Pears Field.
- Summer Event (3000 expenditure, 1040 income)– although Ashstock will not be taking place in 2021, it is hoped that a small event could take place, for example, a quiz and therefore £500 has been allocated to the Summer Event income and expenditure.
- Christmas Market (3020 expenditure and 1046 income) – We hope to be able to hold this event in 2021, therefore £450 has also been allocated to income and expenditure.
- Allotments (5000) – currently the budget for allotments has £2,000 which is unlikely to be spent this financial year. The budget for 2021/22 has therefore been allocated a further £4,000 to make the final allocated budget £6,000.
- Election Reserve (5004) – every year, £500 is added to the election reserves in case the Council should require a standalone election which can be very expensive – therefore the reserve has been increased from £1,500 to £2,000.

At the end of this financial year, we should have reserves of £54,000 (83% of the precept). If we spend on the Wall Hill footpath and allotments within this financial year, we will still have 53% of the precept.

Discussions were held at the F&A meeting as to whether the precept should increase next year by £500 to £70,000. Working on a Band D property, this increase equates to 0.7%. As the tax base for next year is not yet known, it was agreed to provisionally set the precept at £70,000.

8. Finance

a. Accounts to pay

The accounts payable from 1st November 2020 to 30th November 2020 totalling £4,689.00 were **ratified and approved by the Council. The RBS income and expenditure report up to 30th November** were received and noted.

b. To consider purchasing the latest edition of Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration for £119.99 (a saving of 20% as members of NALC) – **resolved**; members agreed the expenditure

c. To receive the External Auditors report and comments for the Annual Return year end March 2020 – the report was received and noted.

Cllr Loveday was put into the virtual meeting room before discussing item 9

9. **To receive a report from Youth Club focusing on the effective re-opening of the club in 2021** – the report from Youth Club was received and noted. Cllrs were asked to consider what the prospects were of the Youth Club re-opening, when it would happen and how it would happen. Members were reminded that the Youth Workers had been on full pay since the first lockdown. The pavilion currently remains closed and Mid Sussex District Council has given no indication of when it will open. Youth Clubs can meet with up to 15 people, socially distanced. Members agreed that meeting outside was not good enough and there is the possibility of hiring the Village Centre hall. It was agreed to try to re-open Youth Club in January 2021 at the Village Hall on a Thursday evening on a trial basis. This will be reviewed at the February half term.

7.51pm – Cllr Loveday was admitted back into the meeting

10. **To receive an update on the proposed footpath at Wall Hill to John Pears Field** – the proposal is currently for a footpath to be created in front of 1 & 2 Quarry Cottages. Both homeowners had been approached by the Village Council, but only the owner of 2 Quarry Cottages had responded.

Cllr Russell had taken this request for a footpath up with West Sussex Highways and Cllr Phillips met on 20th November with Richard Speller to look at the area. It was agreed that the hedge in front of both cottages would need to be taken back and an old wooden fence in the hedge outside 1 Quarry Cottages would be removed. Richard Speller informed Cllr Phillips that Highways have the right to take up to 1 metre of land for safety purposes, but they do not buy it and the land is still owned by the homeowner. After Highways wrote to the owners of 1 Quarry Cottages, they responded and Richard and Cllr Phillips met with them on 27th November and they agreed to cut their hedge by the end of January 2021. It was also discussed taking a new footpath all the way up to the bus stop. This could be done as Highways already own the grass bank and so there will be no issue with levelling it and Highways will put a request in to reserve a 1 metre stretch of land in front of the Forge for a pathway. Cllr Phillips reminded members that there is £7,000 in the budget to help with the project.

11. **To receive an update on the Three Crowns** – Star Pubs informed the Clerk that a scheme has been signed off internally so funds should be available in the New Year. They have a very good applicant that submitted their business plan to the brewery and Ms Tobin has now requested the investment manager give a date so they can meet the applicant again and move forward. It was agreed that the Clerk would continue to ask for updates.

12. **Consultations** – None

13. **To receive reports from Councillors who have attended outside bodies**

- a. Chairs Network Meeting – 6th November 2020 – Cllr Forbes reported that she had attended the Chairs Networking meeting with SALC. Officers from the Sussex Roads Policing Unit were in attendance and most of the discussion was about how they are dealing with complaints about traffic noise, especially from souped up cars and motorbikes.
- b. Cluster Meeting - 12th November 2020 – Cllrs Forbes and Phillips attended this meeting; also present was Richard Speller from West Sussex Highways and other local Parish Councils. Members discussed WSALC who are reviewing their set up. East Grinstead Town Council also advised that they are having a meeting about setting up a Covid-19 vaccination centre at East Court.

14. **Items of correspondence** - Previously circulated.

15. **Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda** – Summer Event 2021 and the Queens Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

16. **Date of next meeting** - 2nd February 2021

Meeting closed: 8.28pm

Chairman.....

Date.....