

ETCHINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Etchingham Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 17th June 2021 at 7.30pm The Social Club, Etchingham

Members Present: Cllrs: J Barnes (in the Chair), Mrs M Barnes, Mr S Barrow, Mr R Beeney, Mr C Boylett and Ms Roma Turner.

Also present: Ms P Barton – Clerk to the Council and four members of the public.

The Chairman explained that the Parish Council meeting was a meeting held in public but not a Public Meeting. Any person present wishing to speak about any item on the agenda should do so under agenda item 6 'Public Time'. There would not be any other opportunity for the public to speak at the meeting.

2280. Apologies for Absence:

There were apologies for absence from Mr Paul Stott, ETSR.

2281. Declarations of Interest:

Cllr. J Barnes declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 12, Village Community Halls as a Trustee of ETSR and that he is now appointed as substitute should a Conservative member of RDC Planning Committee be absent.

Cllr. M. Barnes declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 12, Village Community Halls as a member of the Parochial Church Council and reminded Council that she is a member of the RDC Planning Committee.

2282. Etchingham Parish Council – Dispensations:

The Clerk confirmed that no written requests for dispensations had been received.

2283. Chairman's Announcements:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Clara Batten invited to attend in order to receive The Emma Beeney Award for Outstanding Service to Etchingham 2020 on behalf of herself and her team of Covid-19 support Volunteers. He went on to explain the extemporary breadth of assistance given to the vulnerable, those self-isolating, with mobility issues or transport arrangements right from the beginning of the emergency and their plans to continue to do so as restrictions are lifted but many of the issues highlighted during the height of the pandemic remain. Clara thanked the Parish Council and said what an amazing group of volunteers had stepped forward, while many have had to stand down as they return to work, a steadfast group remains determined to build on the good work started from the darkest of beginnings. Forty members remain on the WhatsApp group and the Facebook page is followed by 200 interested people.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that in future this Annual Award would be determined by public nomination.

2284. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The Minutes of the Meeting (Annual General – Statutory – Meeting) held on Thursday 20th May 2021 having been previously circulated, were agreed and signed as an accurate record of that meeting.

2285. Public Time:

- a) County Councillor Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green reported on her steep learning curve on taking on this role. Her time 'shadowing' the Highways Steward, whose hands were so often tied by the tight restrictions within the current contract, had highlighted the absolute necessity of addressing this in the writing of the next tender and subsequent contract.
- b) District Cllr. Barnes reported on the difficulties faced by the Planning Department and the efforts being made to address both the backlog of Applications and creating a system fit for purpose going forward.
- c) In his absence the Chairman of ETSR, Mr Paul Stott, reported that the NHS contract is due to end in mid-August when, Covid restrictions allowing, plans will be put in place to reopen the facilities as near to 'normal' as possible. The date of 21st August (subsequently changed to 7th August) was noted as the ETSR Garden Party in aid of funds and to celebrate the gradual return to normality to be held at the Barn, Burgham.
- d) Cllr Barrow arrived at this point with apologies for being late which were accepted.
 - i) A member of the public, also a Governor at Etchingham Primary School, brought the concerns of the school as a whole regarding public safety in respect of road traffic. To be discussed under Agenda point 7ci.
 - ii) A member of the public, also Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Etchingham Neighbourhood Plan, expressed the deep concern of his committee and other Etchingham residents that the Parish Council was not fully behind the Plan and not facilitating its onward trajectory to Regulation 14 and beyond to completion. To be discussed under Agenda point 10.
- e) As no members were to be excluded this right was not exercised.

2286. Parish Matters:

a) Village Amenities:

- i) Cllr Barrow has passed the spec to repair the roof onto the third contractor and is waiting to receive a quote as an interest in the job has been expressed.
The tenant and clerk have been in discussion and rent of £100 per month will be paid (1st payment has been made) on restrictions being lifted further a schedule of increases will be instigated to bring the annual rent payable back up to the pre-Covid level.
- ii) The Monthly Inspection Reports for the playgrounds were accepted.
The purchase of the supplies needed to complete the schedule of works was approved.
The Clerk will obtain a quote from the Tree Inspector for an updated and revised thorough survey of the Parish Council sites.
- iii) Coffee & Cake Club – evolved from an original suggestion by RDC that a format for getting isolated parishioners together in a social setting would benefit the community. Originally a subsidised lunch club at The Bistro once a month, having been closed during the pandemic and changes in the personnel likely to attend, in discussion with the management team at the Bistro is has been decided to try a once a month late morning coffee and cake group. With a marked rise in people working from home encouraging a wider cross-section of ages might be considered as might a home delivery of coffee and cake to the totally housebound.
- iv) Detailed discussion and resolution for action regarding the planting of commemorative trees in the autumn to be deferred.
- v) There were no other matters to consider.

- b) **Children and Young People:**
- i) Cllr Turner reported that Yr 5 continue working towards the 11+ and as it becomes clear which pupils have fared least well with home schooling during the lockdowns unfortunately volunteer helpers are still not being allowed onto school premises.
 - ii) Cllr Boylett reported that donations continue to come through on Give as You Live. An ERGT AGM will be held shortly.
 - iii) There were no other matters to consider.
- c) **Highways, Footpaths and Community Safety:**
- i) The issues surrounding road safety particularly in the vicinity of the school raised under Public Time were fully discussed. **It was Resolved that a Working Party be set up to report back to EPC on an action plan. The WP to be made up of existing village pressure groups; Village Petition, Speedwatch, 20 is Plenty, School Governor, Friends of Etchingham School to receive the initial invitation and Cllr J Barnes, Cllr R Beeney, Cllr R Turner, other councillors likely to be involved representing village groups in which they play a role.** The next SLR meeting is due to be scheduled for September 2021.
 - ii) The Speedwatch sessions recommenced at the beginning of June but there is a real shortage of volunteers restricting the number of sessions actually possible. Active recruitment efforts continue.
 - iii) Cllr Boylett presented the monthly report from PCSO Emma Phillips showing the continuing pattern of criminal activity seen in previous months.
 - iv) The report from the informal PCSO meeting held on 26th May having been previously circulated was approved. The full report is at Appendix A.
Asked if there was any update on Dean Walker, the PCSOs reported that there was no new information that they could reveal at this time but that matters were in hand with the relevant authorities.
 - v) It was reported that the fence along the north side of the A265 between the entrance to the main station car park and Burgh Hill is falling into disrepair again. To be investigated as to whether land owner or ESCC Highways responsibility.
 - vi) The ditch behind the northern houses on the High Street above the Post Office has been checked with possibility of improvement work being undertaken later this year.
There were no other matters to consider.
- d) **Environment and Other issues:**
There were no other matters to consider.

2287. Communications:

Cllr Boylett confirmed that he would be writing his 'page' for the Parish Magazine explaining the breadth of his portfolio.

2288. Planning:

Cllr Mary Barnes reminded Council that she is a member of Rother District Council Planning Committee and Cllr John Barnes reminded Council that he is now listed as a substitute Conservative member of Rother District Council Planning Committee should there be an absentee

- a) RR/2021/415/P – Grain Store, Sheepstreet Lane. **It was Resolved that the Council had no objection to this application although it seemed to be in violation of an earlier permission – Condition 6.**
- b) There were no other planning matters to discuss.

2289. Finance

- a) The Report of the Internal Auditor on the Accounts 2020/2021 was received and approved. Action will be taken on the points raised requiring investigation and possible amendment/correction.
- b) Having been agreed, the Chairman and Clerk/RFO were authorised to sign Section 1 – Annual governance Statement of the Annual Return.
- c) Having considered the Annual Accounting Statements 2020/2021, the Chairman and Clerk/RFO were authorised to sign Section 2.
- d) Authorisation of payments – the Clerk presented the accounts for payment to the Council.

Payments June		TOTAL PAID
P Barton	Salary & Expenses June 2021	1231.05
L Worton	Salary & Expenses May 2021	70.77
Air Ambulance	Donation towards 2 specialist ventilators	150.00
Invicta Law	Legal Fees for post-completion Land Registry issues – various and complex.	1,454.41
Mulberry & Co	Fee for Annual Internal Audit	30.00
Crane Designs Ltd	NP Mthly charge for hosting site DD 04/06/2021	15.00
Crane Designs Ltd	EPC Mthly charge for hosting site DD 04/06/2021	15.00
Focus Group	Office Phone - No calls DD 28/06/2021	28.16
Total Payments		£3,180.39

It was Resolved that the payments for June 2021 be approved and that proof of the BACs payments together with copies of the relevant invoices be signed by two councillors to comply with Financial Regulations and best practice as soon as possible.

2290. Etchingham Neighbourhood Plan

The issues surrounding delays in submitting the Neighbourhood Plan for Regulation 14 as raised under Public Time were fully discussed. **It was Resolved that the Clerk take 4-days of the Council schedule to complete the work as quickly as possible.**

2291. The Emma Beeney Award for Outstanding Service to the Parish of Etchingham

The award will be presented to Clara Batten and the Covid-19 Volunteer Team as minuted at 2283

2292. Village Community Halls

Cllrs J & M Barnes reminded the meeting of their personal interest in ETSR.

It was reported that the NHS have extended the booking as a Vaccination Centre until the end of August.

2293. To receive Reports from Members and Representatives and pass such resolutions as may be necessary:-

- a) ESALC – Cllr J Barnes reported that East Sussex ALC has commenced its programme of training sessions for Clerks and for Councillors.
- b) RALC – no meeting held.
- c) Two councillors (also being District Councillors) and the Clerk attended the feedback session on the outcome of the workshops on the RDC Planning Department. The need for change and improvement has been established and work commences to achieve this outcome.

2294. Correspondence

All correspondence having been distributed by e-mail upon receipt there were no further items to discuss.

2295. Etchingam Parish Council – Notification to members of Council decisions:

There were no notifications.

2296. Agenda items for the next meeting to be held on Thursday 22nd July 2021 in The Social Club at 7.30pm

As noted through the above minutes.

Signed.....

Date.....

DRAFT

APPENDIX A

Report from the PCSO meeting held on 26th May 2021

MEETING NOTES FROM 26th MAY 2021

Both PCSOs and the Public Engagement Officer, Alex H (sorry missed her surname) were in attendance.

Parish Councils attending were Brightling, Burwash, Etchingham, Robertsbridge & Salehurst and Ticehurst. There were apologies from Cllr Boylett and Cllr Sue Prochak.

Sheds and outbuildings continue to be targeted with tools and machinery being stolen. Suspicious vehicles and people loitering for no apparent reason close to secluded houses have been reported and been investigated.

There is urgent and particular concern over the rapid increase in the theft of cast-iron manhole covers, in Ticehurst alone 13 were taken over one night in Church Street between Old Wardsbrook and the old primary school. Many of these are on the edges of highways and often over growing grass from the verge can disguise the theft creating a real danger to pedestrians and any vehicle pulling over to allow another to pass. There have been reports of these thefts in Stonegate and Burwash. This has been going on for some time in Wealden and Kent but has now moved to our area.

The welfare of Dean Walker remains a concern for a number of the parishes. Apologising for being able to say so little at the last meeting PCSO Emma was able to confirm that he is now to appear in Court on 10th June. A condition of his bail is that he is not to be in Robertsbridge (he will face arrest if he does so) and that he is only to use the trains for essential journeys. An issue for the police has been the unwillingness of the public to make statements to enable them to act appropriately. We were assured that he is properly assessed every time he is apprehended and the appropriate authorities contacted. There are other incidents awaiting processing at this time. The overwhelming feeling of the participants, including the PCSO's, is trying to find a way to get him the help he needs in a way that he will accept and adopt.

Other issues of concern, there is an incident of 'cuckooing' in Robertsbridge, not known to the PCSOs so likely in the hands of the Safeguarding team. The PCSOs are regularly checking the veranda of the Cricket Pavilion – a popular meeting spot for youths after school and into the evening (there seems to be a rota of which year group has which evening) – a relationship is growing with the PCSOs and, within Covid rules, if their behaviour is good all is well but if there is any damage or broken glass left around for instance this will not be tolerated.

The PCSOs reported that there are area changes in the pipeline for them. Fortunately for us this will not impact on Etchingham but will 'tidy up' which villages – including Battle – fall within their remit and which do not. All the parishes will be kept informed as these changes progress.

With thanks to everyone the meeting closed. Date of the next meeting to be confirmed.