

ETCHINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual General (Statutory) Meeting of Etchingham Parish Council
held on Thursday 16th May 2024 at 7.00pm The Parker Hall, Parsonage Croft, Etchingham

Members Present: Cllrs: John Barnes, Mary Barnes, Sid Barrow, Colin Boylett, and Trevor McGregor.

Also present: County Cllr Eleanor Kirby- Green, P Barton – Clerk to the Council. There were 3 members of the public.

- 2812. Election of the Chairman.** There being a single nomination for Cllr Trevor McGregor, he was unanimously elected to the office of Chairman.
- 2813. Declaration of Acceptance in respect of the Chairman.**
Was duly completed, signed and confirmed in the presence of the Proper Officer.
- 2814. Apologies for Absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rob Beeney and from Nicky Menzies, which were accepted.
- 2815. Election of the Vice-Chairman.** There being a single nomination for Cllr John Barnes, he was unanimously elected to the office of Vice-Chairman.
- 2816. Declaration of Acceptance in respect of the Vice-Chairman.**
Was duly completed, signed and confirmed in the presence of the Proper Officer.
- 2817. Declarations of Interest:**
Cllr. M. Barnes reminded Council that she is a member of the RDC Planning Committee.
Cllr. J Barnes declared that he is the substitute Conservative member of RDC Planning Committee.
- 2818. Etchingham Parish Council – Dispensations:**
The Clerk confirmed that no written requests for dispensations had been received.
- 2819.** The Clerk informed Council that confirmation has been received from RDC to authorise the advertising of a Casual Vacancy, no By-Election need to be called, in order to fill the seat recently vacated. This will be actioned as soon as possible.
- 2820. Review of Portfolio and appointment of Portfolio Holders.**
The previous list remains unchanged as no portfolio is without a holder, in spite of the casual vacancy. It was ***Resolved that Cllr John Barnes steps down from the HR role and is replaced by Cllr McGregor and that the new portfolio of Dark Skies Sub-Committee will be taken on by the current members of the Planning Committee.*** When the Casual Vacancy is filled the Portfolio and Sub-Committee list will be re-visited to include the new member.
- 2821. Election of Representatives to Outside Bodies.**
a) East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC) – Cllrs J and M Barnes
b) Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC) – Cllr J Barnes, one vacancy
- 2822. Schedule of Meeting dates for 2024/2025.** Were circulated and agreed. To be published on the website.
- 2823. Minutes of the previous meeting:**
The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th April 2024, having been previously circulated, were agreed after correcting the date of the previous meeting (minute 2797) and inserting of the word ‘government’ (2802) – both highlighted in red text - and were then signed as a true and accurate records of that meeting.

2824. Chairman's Announcements:

The Chairman took the opportunity to formally thank outgoing Chairman Cllr John Barnes for his years of service to the Council as its Chairman and his gratitude that Cllr John Barnes remains a Councillor and, indeed Vice-chairman, so his experience can be readily called upon.

Cllr McGregor was then pleased to announce the winner of this year's Emma Beeney Award for Outstanding Service to Etchingam as Nicky Menzies for her sterling work in maintaining the Etchingam E-Bulletin single-handedly to such a high standard of both content and frequency. Due to her unavoidable absence the presentation of the trophy will be made at a later date.

2825. Public Time:

- a) County Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green was still absent at this point so was unable to make any report. She arrived shortly afterwards.
- b) Cllr John Barnes had no report to make at this time except to remind everyone about the consultation of the new draft Local Plan.
- c) No MOP wished to comment but Cllr McGregor raised the issue of the 'false news' on local social media claiming that EPC had supported the planning application for the development of 7 houses at the Hurst Green end of Burgh Hill. This was taken down very quickly but not before being noted by at least one other councillor.
- d) As no members were to be excluded this right was not exercised.

2826. Finance:

- a) **The Bank Reconciliation at 31st March 2024 (4th Quarter) was received and approved.** The two bank Statements supporting these figures were also received, approved and signed.
- b) **The Report of the Internal Auditor** on the accounts for 2023-2024 were presented and approved. The absence of a proper Fixed Asset Register was noted and will be treated as a matter of extreme urgency.
- c) **Consideration to the Annual Report 2024** was made, it was approved and the presiding chairman and Clerk/RFO authorised to sign Section 1.
- d) **Consideration to the Annual Accounts for 2023-2024** was made, they were approved and the presiding chairman and Clerk/RFO authorised to sign appropriately.
- e) **Consideration was given to the Insurance renewal** documents received and ***it was Resolved to accept the 3-year term being offered by Zurich Insurance.***
- f) The schedule for Receipts and Payments for May was presented and approved.

Etchingham Parish Council - Statement of Payments for May 2024		
Paulette Barton	Salary & Expenses for May 2024	2042.98
Olga Bilai	Salary & Expenses for May 2024	454.72
Laurence Worton	Salary & Expenses for April 2024	106.11
Bistro @ the Station	Coffee & Cake Club for 13 people	30.40
Safety Accreditation Solutions Ltd	Old stores-Maintenance	252.00
Richard Pelham	Queen's Gardens - Maintenance	65.00
HMRC	Q4 PAYE & NI payment	2141.51.
ESCC	Weekday pedestrian video studies	522.00
CPRE	Membership	60.00
Mulberry Local Authority	Internal audit for the 2023-24 council year	234.00
B Online Ltd	Monthly payment due to broadband supplier (May 2024)	45.55
EDF	Electricity for Shop	45.00
	Total Payments	5999.27

- g) **Consideration was given to the Etchingham Music Festival application for a Grant towards costs of staging the supper concert during the Festival. *It was Resolved that a grant of £500 be made in line with that given in previous years.***

2827. Planning:

Cllr Mary Barnes reminded Council that she is a member of Rother District Council Planning Committee, Cllr John Barnes is also a substitute member of the Rother District Council Planning Committee.

- a) **RR/2024/601/P** : Upland House, Fysie Lane : Extensions and alterations to existing detached garage : ***It was Resolved that there was no objection to this application so long as Conditions tied this building firmly to the main house and not allow it to become a separate dwelling.***

RR/2024/687/P: Wild Haven Farm (formerly Barn to the South of Shortridge Farm), Sheepstreet Lane : Variation of condition 12 of RR/2023/1124/P to amend the residential curtilage. : ***It was Resolved that there was no objection to this application so long as attention be drawn to the possibility that there could be a conflict between the internal boundaries between buildings created on separate occasions.***
Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green was asked to raise this caveat with the Planning Officer.

RR/2024/608/P: Barden, Sheepstreet Lane : Erection of ground mounted low-level photovoltaic panels with associated plant. : ***It was Resolved to ask Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green to find out more detail about the 'associated plant'.***

- b) **Any other planning matters: *It was Resolved that EPC would object to the Appeal being made regarding development at Bewl Water. Letter of objection attached – Appendix 1***

2828. Review of Etchingham Parish Council Policies and Latest Consultations

- a) ***Etchingham Parish Council Standing Orders – reviewed and approved without amendment***
- b) ***Etchingham Parish Council Financial Regulations – defer for detailed amendment***
- c) ***Etchingham Parish Council Employee Handbook – defer to give councillors more time to review***
- d) ***Any additional required – defer to next meeting***

2829. Correspondence

A letter of thanks for the donation made to Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance was read out. All other correspondence received had previously been circulated.

2830. Etchingham Parish Council – Notification to members of Council decisions:

There were no notifications.

Signed..... By the Chairman

Date..... 20th June 2024

Reference the Appeal APP/C1435/W/24/3336886 acting under delegated authority and because action has to be taken before 16 May, the following objection was made on behalf of the Parish Council.

Submitted 15th May 2024 at 16.19hrs

It is unfortunate that the planning regime for Bewl Water is shared between Wealden and Rother District Councils, with more than five sixths of the lake in the latter, but what were once recreational facilities to be found in the much smaller proportion of the total site falling within Wealden. Bewl Water is undoubtedly the most sizeable and probably the most important stretch of inland water in southern England, a vital sanctuary for wildlife, which more than qualifies for SSSI status should application be made. As it is its designation, which has not been reviewed since its inception is that of a LWS and part of the lake bordering the recreational facilities is designated a nature reserve. Hence there has always been a ban on motor powered craft (apart from some fishing boats with outboard engines) and on water ski-ing. Physical recreation, including rowing and sailing, has always been regarded as compatible with its importance as a bird reserve, and it is to be regretted that since the Water Company leased the site, there appears to have been active discouragement of those activities, something is contrary to the emphasis on health and well being that is one of the main themes of the draft Rother Local Plan.

Etchingham not only wishes to support the Wealden District Council in its refusal of the application to convert the boat house into eleven holiday flats, but considers that specific reference should have been made in its grounds for objection to the increased risk of disruption to what is the largest inland gull roost in southern England, crucial in times of bad weather, and arguably of even more importance when the seabird population is recovering from the ravages of avian flu. Prior to this period counts have been made of up to 120,000 gulls and the site is of international importance for common and black-headed gull. We ask that the Inspector carefully considers the Phelps report (2023). It will not be possible to avoid light and unexpected noise by night, nor indeed the movement of motor vehicles after dark, and any conditions imposed to that end are likely to prove unenforceable.

In addition, the lake is used by migrating birds, notably Osprey, and is on the edge of what is likely to be designated a bird 'superhighway' by UNESCO.

In all more than 230 species of bird have been identified on and around the lake.

Rather than facilitate overnight tourism, particularly given the dangers from unlit water, the emphasis should be on physical recreation during the day and the maintenance of complete tranquillity at night. Parish Councils in the area lay great emphasis on the need for caution to maintain and enhance dark skies and see this as a step in the wrong direction.

Bewl was carefully landscaped by Dame Sybil Crowe and its contribution to biodiversity is considerable. The proposal cannot be thought to conserve and enhance the AONB, now National Landscape, which is enjoined on local planning authorities by the NPPF. The appeal should be refused.