

ETCHINGHAM

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Etchingham Annual Parish Meeting

held on Thursday 15th May 2024

at 8.00pm in the Parker Hall, Etchingham

Members Present: Cllrs: Trevor McGregor (in the Chair), John Barnes, Mary Barnes, Sid Barrow, Colin Boylett and Roma Turner.

Also present: County Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green and eleven members of the public. P Barton – Clerk to the Council.

01/24 Apologies for Absence: There were apologies for absence from Cllr Rob Beeney which were accepted.

02/24 Minutes of the previous meeting: The minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 18th May 2023 were approved as an accurate record of that meeting and so were signed by the Chairman presiding.

03/24 Chairman's Annual Report 2023 - 24:

The Chairman welcomed everyone and as copies of the outgoing Chairman's report were available within the Parish Annual Report did not propose to present it verbally. There were no questions and the meeting unanimously adopted the Chairman's Report.

04/24. Etchingham Annual Report 2024:

The Clerk thanked all the contributors to the Annual Report for their hard work and interesting reports and confirmed that copies of the Annual Report would be available from the Parish Office for those unable to attend the meeting and be sent to County Archive for their files. There were no questions and the adoption of the Parish Annual Report was carried unanimously.

05/24. Report and/or Notices from the Parish Clerk:

The Clerk had no further reports or notices at this time.

06/24. Public Time:

There were no comments or questions from the members of the public.

07/24. A Presentation by Rother District Council on its draft new Rother Local Plan (Regulation 18 version)

Craig Steenoff from the RDC Planning department opened the presentation with an overview of the District explaining the visuals shown on screen as each appeared. He explained the process of the Public Consultation and that the new Local Plan would combine two previous documents – the Core Strategy and the Development and Site Allocations Plan (DASA). He stressed that while some sites would carry over from previous work no definitive site allocations have yet been made and confirmed going forward. As 83% of the District lies within the High Weald National Landscape this brings its own set of challenges regarding suitable sites for development. For example, 5-7k new dwellings would be feasible not the 14k previously required by the national algorithm.

This is a 20-year plan (2020 – 2024, four years have already been spent getting to this stage) and follows a new approach - Green to the Core and Live Well Locally – i.e. all new building will be to the highest standard of sustainability and as high a percentage of the population as possible will be within walking distance of its local facilities.

Etchingam falls within the Northern Area of the District, only able to consider small and sensitive development. Although there is a mainline station the village cannot be considered a 'hub' and any future changes to the A21 that might be considered by Transport England could change that but there would be no guarantees.

Apart from such presentations at meetings such as ours there will also be 13 exhibitions across RDC including both Heathfield and Wadhurst Libraries.

Responses to the Public Consultation are not only welcomed but essential if the planners are to get this right.

The Pre-Submission plan will be published in Spring 2025.

The Plan will be submitted to Government in the Summer of 2025.

The adoption of the right and proper plan will be in the Summer of 2026.

A lively Q&A session followed including questions from residents of Hurst Green and from the Northern Parishes Group (which later secured a separate presentation to that specific group). A query on a Homelessness policy was answered by using the affordable housing section – as this is a land use strategic plan – however this does mean that both derelict and vacant commercial buildings/sites are all included. A brief discussion on the term 'affordable' always an item of interest. The definition of 'major' development and the difficulties of using this term too loosely was also aired. Questions were also raised as to whether sufficient emphasis has been placed on the green gaps between villages; proper emphasis on sight lines in unspoilt areas; proper emphasis on heritage landscape as well as buildings; finally, how enforcement and control of the dumping of development waste on sites not connected to the development can be properly controlled to safeguard against the creation of new topography.

The Chairman thanked Craig for the presentation and for answering the varied questions asked of him in the Q&A session.

08/24 Date of next Meeting:

To be advised but expected to be 3rd Thursday in April 2025.

09/24.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting thanking all for their attendance and inviting them to enjoy some light refreshments and social time.

Signed by the Chairman original held on file

Date..... 17th April 2025