

**Minutes of a Zoom Virtual
Meeting of the Parish Council
held at 7.00pm on
Thursday, 11 February 2021**

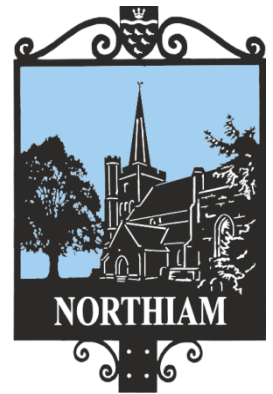
Northiam Parish Council

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Before the meeting commenced, Pete Sargent announced *"I am sorry to report the sad loss of two important villagers; Peter Hayman, a former councillor and once chairman of the parish council, who had been very involved with the village hall and church. He was always willing to lend a helping hand where needed and was very supportive to me when I became Chairman of the PC. He was delighted when I told him the village had purchased his fields. Secondly, Raymond Harrington-Lowe, our Clerk, who moved here from Peasmarsh and after taking up office quickly turned the council office into a social hub, a gossip centre and a second home for dogs, who were always welcomed and offered a biscuit. Peter and Raymond quickly became friends, with Peter often visiting the office, and how any work got done is a mystery. But Raymond always made sure he kept me in line and ensured my work was ready for me. Both gentlemen were extremely well thought of throughout the village and far afield and will be sadly missed, especially by the serving council, who I am sure are proud to have known them."* Members supported Pete's words.

- 1. APOLOGIES** were received and accepted from – CC Ms A Davies. DC Martin Mooney was attending Ewhurst PC.
- 2. ATTENDEES:** Councillors Pete Sargent, Chairman (PS), Tony Biggs (TB), Penny Farmer, Vice-Chair (PF), Jacqueline Harding (JH), Dean Johnson (DJ), Robert Maltby (RM), Debby Pratt (DP), Sue Schlesinger (SS), Anthony Wontner-Smith (AWS) and District Councillor Tony Ganly. Mrs Valerie Ades, Clerk for Beckley PC, took the minutes.
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None declared.
- 4. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS** - To consider such other items as the Chairman decides are urgent and due notice of which has been given to the Clerk by 9:00am on the day of the meeting: PS said he would add the clerk's vacancy, which would become item 11e.
- 5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** - Maximum of 15 mins. None.
- 6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 14th January 2021:** Amendment to last line, page 2 '**See next page for ESCC and RDC councillors reports 'as submitted'**'. The minutes were then agreed and signed.
The Chairman pointed out that the minutes of 14 January 2021 clearly showed that Council had authorised him to make contact with AiRS and that he took exception to insinuations made by the Vice Chair that he was acting behind Council's back. He advised Council that once a new Clerk has been appointed and settled in, he would be stepping down as a Councillor.
- 7. REPORTS BY PARISH, COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS:**
PS reported Peter Hayman's funeral will be on Wednesday, 3 March. The cortege will leave Perigoe's offices at 10.15am and will be walked through the village. PS has been invited to attend to represent the council. Arrangement for Ray's funeral have yet to be made. The zip wire replacement will be installed next week; the branded one will not be available for some time. At the last safety inspection of the play area, it was recommended we have a new safety surface laid. SS has agreed to take over the weekly safety inspections. Both bungalows on SFF have problems with damp; the fence at the bottom of the paddock requires replacing. CIC will give a Zoom presentation on Tuesday 16 February and invitations will be sent out.

DJ drew attention to possible long delays in ambulances attending call outs. **PS** said this is something we will have to expect during the pandemic. Should a resident require an ambulance they can always call Helping Hands to see if they can assist.

SS asked what should she do with the playground check forms. **PS** asked her to email them to the Clerk's address.

PF said she would like more communication with the Chairman.

DP had attended a Zoom meeting with the PCSO's who asked if people would report to them anti-social driving with registration numbers, which will enable them to check on persistent offenders. Dog thefts are increasing. There is £500 in the community fund and applications are almost always successful.

TB said he had something he wished to say, which was not his report and asked if he could do this at the end of the meeting. He reported he has been in touch with the Safety Officer at Highways who said some signs we have requested will be upgraded, some road markings laid and signs will go up at the Horns Cross crossroads. These will say 'welcome to Northiam. Please drive safely'. If residents have any problems, they should let the PCSO's know.

RM reported some drains in the village are blocked. **PS** asked him to report them on line to Highways. He said he was sorry to hear **PS** intended to resign and praised him for his work and commitment to the PC, which was hugely commendable. His comments were supported by **SS** and other members.

TG said he felt **PS** was one of the best PC chairmen the PC had had and he would be a huge loss to Northiam.

PS said there had been a number of emails from RDC regarding problems in the planning department, mainly due to shortages of staff and staff illness. This had resulted in the planning office being unable to offer planning advice at the moment. **TG** agreed and said the problems were being looked into.

8. PLANNING:

RR/2020/1299/P – The Spar, Station Road, Northiam, TN31 6LQ. Propose new two bedroom single storey dwelling with pitched roof. Amendments to plans. **PS** said this application appeared to be almost identical to a previous application which the PC recommended refusal. The original highway issues remain unchanged. Access to the road presents the same problems and with the addition of a turntable there appears insufficient space for a vehicle to be turned. **Members voted unanimously 9:0 against the application.**

RR/2020/2543/P – The Workshop, Stonecourt Mews, Northiam, TH31 6AF. Variation of condition 4 imposed on RR/2008/1767/P to allow delivery hours to be changed from 8.00am to 6.00pm Mon – Fri and 9.00am – 1.00pm on Saturdays to 7.30am to 6.00pm Mon- Fri and 8.00am – 1.00pm on Saturdays.

Comments: Since 2008 (RR2008/1767/P) when the original conditions were imposed, prior to the re-development that replaced the attended-service petrol station, Northiam PC has strongly supported the adjacent, neighbouring properties to ensure that they were not subjected to much disturbance. Since then, the Saturday trading hours have been increased and Bank Holidays added for trading with the proviso that only Jempsons' own vehicles deliver to the store on public and bank holidays to minimise the noise and disturbance for residents. Therefore, the new request to extend the deliveries hours from 7.30am Mon/Fri and from 8.00am on Saturday is not acceptable. Members are concerned that the planning application is named 'The Workshop' and not 'Jempsons' and there is also a distinct lack of pink notices in the vicinity. Given the history of this site we also feel that it would be appropriate for this application to be 'called in'. **Members recommended refusal of the application 8:1.**

RR/2020/2552/P – Littlewoods, Dixter Lane, Northiam, TN31 6PP. Removal of existing conservatory and erection of replacement single storey extension. New bi-fold doors to rear elevation. Addition of bay window and removal of front porch. Replacement windows. **Members unanimously supported the application 9:0.**

9. ALL PLANNING DECISIONS HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED TO COUNCILLORS:

10. OTHER PLANNING MATTERS: None.

11. VILLAGE MATTERS

- a. Recycling at Surgery Car Park. It is being looked into at RDC, but no date has been set.

- b. Risk Assessment Update. PS drew attention to there being no backup system to passwords and a system should be implemented. He asked members to look at the details in readiness for the March meeting.
- c. Offer to buy land. Mr & Mrs Bishop of Jessamine, Main Street have offered to pay £1000 plus meet any legal costs for the sale of the strip of land to the back of their property on SFF. The land is roughly 3m wide and the length of their garden. **Members voted 6:3 in favour of the sale – carried.**
- d. Tree Survey. PS and SS had met with the tree surgeon, Straight Up Trees Ltd, to obtain a second quote. A third quote would be required. For insurance purposes the person or company must be qualified to carry out tree inspections and he asked if a member knew of a qualified person to let him know.
- e. Recruitment of a clerk. PS had spoken with Trevor Leggo at SALC. PS will put together a job description, which he will circulate to members for comments. Once agreed it will be sent to SALC who will circulate it to clerks. PS will circulate it to whatever village sites there are, consider other advertising methods and whether the vacancy can be advertised in Kent.

12. CORRESPONDENCE OTHER THAN THAT ALREADY CIRCULATED: None.

13. FINANCE:

14. FINANCE, OTHER MATTERS: The legal process involved in setting up the CIC is proving more complicated than first thought and will involve considerably more costs and legal fees will reflect this. We do have funds in hand from our purchase loan, which will cover any increased costs. PS has asked for a revised estimate with a full breakdown of costs. Due to the purchase of SFF last year our turnover has quadrupled and has had the unfortunate result of moving our external audit from low to intermediate level, which will incur more accountancy fees. PS has received a list of questions relating to last year's accounts, which has presented difficulties because our clerk, who drew up the accounts, is no longer with us. The auditors are now scrutinizing the accounts and this will probably incur additional costs.

January salary and accrued holiday pay for the last year are owed to Ray Harrington-Lowe. Valerie (Clerk) has checked with SALC who inform us a cheque can be paid to Ray's daughter, who is an executor to Ray's will. PS asked for agreement for a cheque to be raised, payable to the daughter. **Agreed 9:0.**

15. CHEQUES FOR SIGNATURE: Details of payment had been circulated and in his acting capacity as RFO PS will not sign the cheques and will ask for two signatures.

TB Asked the Chairman to reconsider his decision to step down and this was supported by the majority of Councillors.

Date of the next meeting – Tuesday, 11 March 2020

The meeting closed at 7.55pm

See next page for ESCC and RDC councillors reports as submitted

ESCC Report for Parish Councils - February 2021

We are all wondering when residents in our area will get the jab! It seems so quiet around Battle and Rye and all our rural villages! We just aren't hearing anything!!

The Vaccination Programme in Sussex started on 8th December, being led by West Sussex. More than 300 Care Home settings have now been vaccinated (as from January 22nd). This includes 6,368 residents and 8,075 staff. It is expected that all care homes with residents over 65 will receive vaccine by 24th January, and all Care Homes in Sussex by mid-February.

Various sites are being used: Hospital hubs at EDGH and the Conquest, plus 6 other hospital hubs across Sussex, concentrating on health and care staff. GP led centres in East Sussex set up so far include Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Seaford, Bexhill, Crowborough, Uckfield, and Etchingham- for rural Rother. Further centres will start soon in Hailsham, and there is to be a walk in centre in Brighton I understand.

Staff in Mind is a confidential NHS service for staff experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties due to the pandemic. It has been developed by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust on behalf of Sussex health and care partnership-an alliance that brings together all NHS organisations and councils across the county. This service offers priority access to treatment.

Nationally and locally the number of **new cases of Covid19**: 7/day rolling rates per 100,000 population are: England 520, East Sussex 594, Rother 432, Hastings(583), Eastbourne (892) and Wealden(564) are still above the national figure. The 7 day rolling rate for the 65+ year group per 100,000 population: England 827, East Sussex 1024, Rother 690, Hastings 1083, Eastbourne 1454, Lewes 930. This reflects the county's demographics in that East Sussex has 25% of its population over 65 years.

There has been a steep rise in **death rates** from 25/12/20 to 8/1/21.

The Sussex Resilience Forum declared a Major Incident on 6th January. This brings all agencies in Sussex together in a rehearsed escalation to tackle the virus. This response makes more use of volunteer help, prepares for extra capacity and considers extra support from national government.

A correction to my previous report: the new Sussex Police Rother District Inspector is Christopher Varrall , Battle Police Station, North Trade Road, Battle, Christopher.varrall@sussex.pnn.police.uk

In the first week of this third lockdown more than 400 vulnerable people asked for help from victim support agencies across Sussex. **Domestic abuse referrals** have begun to decrease recently which is worrying. The government has made it clear that people can leave their homes if escaping from domestic abuse or violence. **Safe Space Sussex** is an online directory of local services which has a new search tool so that victims of any crime can find immediate help. Sussex Police have a method for a call handler to identify a victim in danger. The "55" technology is for those too scared to speak. They dial 999, followed by 55. **Ask for ANI** is a scheme in pharmacies whereby someone can discretely ask for help. Pharmacists are being asked to sign up to this scheme so they can provide another safe space.

ESCC budget is being discussed at Cabinet on January 26th and, if agreed, at Full Council on February 9th. There are no new savings proposed beyond those agreed last year, an increase in council tax of 1.99% is recommended, and a further 3% increase for social care will occur over 2 years. This will be a balanced budget. Council tax rises are needed to protect vital services including ever increasing demand, but taking into account the Core Offer.

Small and medium sized enterprises across the county will be able to access support for apprenticeship training using a £600,000 fund from the European Social Fund with match funding of £300,000 from ESCC. The **Transform project** aims to increase apprenticeships, traineeships, and skills training .Working with Sussex Council of Training providers (SCTP) the council will engage with 150 SMEs from priority sectors where there is employment growth and skill shortages. Please contact transform@sctp.org.uk

More than 700 Covid-related calls have been made to the county's **trading standards team** since March 2020. The team's Covid-19 work follows a year of success in which residents were prevented from losing an estimated quarter of a million pounds, 300 scam victims were helped, around 10,000 counterfeit products with a street value of £100,000 were removed from the market, 144 businesses were found in breach of animal welfare legislation, 99

businesses were found selling food that was mislabelled, contaminated, illegal or fraudulent, £20,000 worth of tobacco was seized, and fraudulent traders were ordered to pay back £114,000 through the Proceeds of Crime Act.

The **Covid Winter Grant Scheme** has provided £1.5m to help people struggling with food, energy and water bills, and other costs, due to the pandemic. At least 80% of the funding is ring fenced to help households with children. The scheme runs till 31st March 2021. Around £900,000 will be used directly to fund food vouchers during the Christmas holidays and February half term, for vulnerable children in Early Years settings and pupils eligible for Free school meals. Small grants will be available within the Troubled Families and Rethinking Families programmes and support can be provided for vulnerable families known to Children's Services.

For support

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/emergencyplanningandcommunitysafety/coronavirus/coronaviruscommunity-support/>

For Free School Meals

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/school-life/meals/free/>

Angharad Davies East Sussex County Councillor Northern Rother

Northern Rother District Councillors' Report February 2021.

The establishment of a **Rother Community Lottery** will be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 8 February. This would enable voluntary and community groups to access funding by contributing to the success of the Lottery. Funds raised could support the Community Grants Scheme instead of using "earmarked reserves" for that purpose.

Cabinet will also consider installing the necessary technology in the Council Chamber to enable a **highbred meeting system** so that all Council meetings can continue to be webcast and hybrid meeting be enabled should legislation permit. A three-year contract with an external provider is proposed in the first instance and will require a budget of £70,000 to meet equipment and licensing costs for this period. This cost would be met through earmarked reserves. This would ensure residents of Rother could continue to access Council meetings without having to travel to the Town Hall once meetings in the Council Chamber resume.

We have become aware that a **review of the Planning Department and Service** is being undertaken by an external provider. We do not know how much this review will cost nor under whose authority it is being undertaken. Invitations will shortly be issued to Town and Parish Councils to nominate/send Councillors to a focus group to express their views on the current service and to advise their views on changes they would like to see.

Cabinet will also consider proposals to **redevelop the Town Hall** site in Bexhill. It is proposed to include this scheme in the Council's Capital Programme and to agree a budget of £460,000 to progress detailed designs for the future of the site. The main aim is to support the Council's carbon neutral pledge, among others.

Rother District Councillors Tony Ganley and Martin Mooney