



**Meeting of the Parish Council to be held  
in the Village Hall, Northiam  
at 7.00pm, Thursday 10 March 2022**

**Members of the Public and Press are welcome and encouraged to attend.**

**The first 15 minutes of the meeting are set aside for questions from members of the public.**

## MINUTES

**ATTENDEES: CLLRS JOHNSON, FARMER, DALLIMORE, BIGGS (VICE-CHAIR), MALTBY, STREATFEILD, WADIE and WONTNER-SMITH**

**DISTRICT CLLRS GANLY & MOONEY; COUNTY CLLR REDSTONE**

**Approx. 30 members of the public, Graham Maunders from AiRS and the Clerk**

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- 1) Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sue Schlesinger. Vice-Chair Cllr Biggs (TB) therefore chaired the meeting. Cllr Farmer expressed concern that she had not been informed sooner, having attended a meeting with Cllr Schlesinger on Tuesday. Unfortunately, the timing of the result was such that no announcement could have been made very much earlier than the previous evening.
- 2) TB welcomed the newly elected councillor, Ben Dallimore. There had been a 21% turnout at the recent by-election, and there was a clear result of 280 votes for Ben Dallimore and 106 votes for Debbie Edwards.
- 3) **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Maximum of 15 minutes)**

Jacky Broad proposed a vote of thanks to councillors who delivered letters by hand to ensure that everyone knew about the election.

Debbie Edwards asked the council if they had a contingency plan in place to deal with an event such as Storm Eunice. Many trees came down, many residents were without power and some without water. She also wanted to thank those who helped with clearance work, provision of a food wagon, water supplies etc. TB echoed his thanks to all the volunteers who helped with clearing the storm damage.

Carol Biggs (CB) asked the following question of Cllr Farmer (PF): at the previous meeting, the issue of IT was raised and PF stated that she never received payment for the work she carried out. However, having checked the previous meetings' minutes, CB found that in December 2018 the council agreed to pay a fee of £250 per year for all her hard work, backdated to December 2017. She asked Cllr Farmer therefore to clarify that she received a payment of £500 for IT services? Cllr Farmer confirmed that she had received a single gratuity for all her hard work building, maintaining and updating the website etc. for the preceding 13 years. CB thanked her for this confirmation.
- 4) **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.
- 5) **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Members all agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Northiam Parish Council held on 17 February 2022 were a true & correct record and they were duly signed.

## 6) HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

TB introduced Graham Maunders (GM) from Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) who gave a summary presentation (attached as an appendix to the minutes) of the results of the housing needs survey carried out in Northiam last year. AiRS is a charity working with communities across East & West Sussex, looking at numerous issues including the need for affordable housing and community-led housing. The survey was delivered to 1084 households and asked questions about needs, affordability, incomes and the local market to establish the need for affordable housing locally. There was a 31% response rate.

In 2021 the Office of National Statistics stated that the average income in the Rother area was £29,951. To buy a 1 bed property, assuming a deposit of 10%, an income of £56,000 and savings of £21,800 would be required. To rent a 1 bed property, income of £33,000 is required. The demand for rented properties in the Rother area is therefore clear.

From the survey there was a mix in the number of bedrooms required, and those who would prefer shared ownership or to rent from a housing association or the Local Authority (LA).

Consistently the results from a survey do not match the numbers on a LA housing list.

PF asked why the list doesn't reflect the true number - do people assume it's not worth it?

How can residents be encouraged to apply and get on a list? GM confirmed that it is important as it identifies the **real** need. Best methods to encourage registration are publicity and persuasion. Cllr Maltby (RM) asked if the results of the survey showed that Northiam met the criteria for government funding? Why was the survey carried out? PF stated that the first requirement in order to get planning permission on an exception site (on SFF) is to prove a local need for affordable housing, and the results have proved that need.

There were some comments from members of the public and the district councillor about the cost of shared ownership – service charges and high rents especially - GM clarified that in Northiam itself there were no residents who could afford shared ownership and only 6 who could afford private rent/shared ownership.

Cllr Mooney (MM) said that he was staggered by the discrepancy between the number on the LA list and the reality of need and urged people to register. Cllr Wadie (TW) asked how long the survey results were valid for, and GM answered that good practice is to review the survey every 5 years. The survey provides a snapshot of current need - 23 households is the requirement, so clearly 100 would be too many, but 2 would be too few. Cllr Streatfeild (JS) said that he thought a local register would be a good idea, so that local people are offered local houses. PF confirmed that an exception site is for local people.

## 7) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

### a) No 1 St Francis Fields bungalow

The Clerk provided an update following a conversation with Moloney's who stated that the money owing for the oven that the tenant had purchased was approximately the same, if not less, than the money owed by the tenant for oil and water. The utility bill forms part of the research currently being carried out by the CIC into all utilities for SFF, so this is in the process of being resolved. They further stated that the clothes that the previous tenant claims were damaged by damp conditions, had been stored in a vacuum sealed bag under the bed and therefore could not have been damaged by the environment, and that the tenant failed to air the property as required (not opening windows etc.)

Ake Nilson asked to speak from the floor. He is representing Ms Gilham, and insisted that the main reason for a rent rebate (compensation) was due to the damp and mouldy living conditions - the bedroom was so bad that she could not sleep in there and moved into the living room instead. The previous tenant has been in touch with Moloney's on numerous occasions but feels that they are ignoring her claims. In Nov '20 when the damp was first reported, it took 11 weeks to be sorted out; it took 6 weeks to repair the hot water tap in the kitchen. He felt that there was a pattern of total disregard. TB asked if

contact with Moloney's had been via email, and when this was confirmed, he asked for the evidence to be sent to the Clerk and the PC would then speak to their managing agents again.

b) Playground insurance claim

Cllr Johnson (DJ) confirmed that the insurance company have given the go-ahead for Kompan to carry out the necessary repairs, and they in turn have requested a purchase order for their records. They asked for payment to submit a risk assessment, which TB thought was not appropriate.

**Action: The Clerk will issue a PO and confirm the request for a risk and method statement.**

c) Section 106 cemetery monies

Cllr Mooney confirmed that he would chase this. The Clerk also sent a reminder email.

d) Bowls club lease – deferred to the April meeting.

e) Tree work – DS Chestnut were due to start the high priority work but was delayed by urgent clearance works following Storm Eunice. The work is now due to start next week.

## 8) REPORTS BY PARISH, COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

*Previously submitted reports from both district and county are published on the website as supporting papers.*

(a) District Councillor Mooney mentioned the item removed from the agenda for the Planning C'ttee meeting at very short notice.

(b) District Councillor Ganly further added that the removed item was briefly mentioned and there was an admittance that it had been poorly written. Officers will re-write the proposal taking comments made into consideration.

RM asked if the report about EVCP using car parks in Rother could please include the doctors' surgery car park as it was not currently on the list. Cllr Ganly agreed to follow this up.

(c) County Councillor Redstone highlighted 2 points: firstly, regarding the earlier comment about the requirement of parish councils to have an Emergency Plan, he said there is a limit to what can be done, and if a plan is not kept up to date then the information is not reliable. He confirmed that the issue of South East Water not having enough generators & why water bottles were only delivered to certain locations and UKPN's update information being unreliable and difficult to access via a mobile were being raised at county level and by Huw Merriman, MP. Secondly, he reported that road safety funding was running a significant surplus of £750m and it is therefore a good time to apply for road safety items. PF asked if the flashing signs that hadn't worked properly for years could be replaced, and offered to raise this at the meeting with Highways taking place on 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

## 9) COUNCILLOR LEAD RESPONSIBILITIES, MEMBERS INTERESTS & TRAINING

The Clerk informed members that ESALC had a number of imminent training opportunities for new and existing councillors. BD as a new councillor had signed up to some training courses, and the clerk urged other members to consider joining him for a refresher.

Councillors seemed unsure of their areas of lead responsibility and committee memberships and this will be re-visited at the April meeting.

**Action: The Clerk will find the list for updating.**

## 10) POST STORM EUNICE – DAMAGE REPORT & UPDATE

TB had received a call about storm damage at SFF and the volunteers had mostly cleared the footpath. TW & TB looked at the rest of the area and had taken photos to catalogue the other issues. The CIC are also collating information & will pass photos and quotes to the Clerk for the insurance claim. TB thanked Trevor Gilbert for liaising with Power Networks and Graham Smith in High Meadows who helped TB cut down the tree blocking the

footpath. GS has offered to maintain the footpath at the back of their property. The tree surgeon has quoted for trees that came down and this will also form part of the insurance quote. RM said that a tree immediately behind the pump house has partially come down and the part that is still standing ought to be looked at. TB offered to liaise with the tree surgeon. The Clerk mentioned that a resident has brought to the council's attention that a tree behind the parish office and adjoining houses is in need of attention (height reduction probably). The landlord of the property will be contacted by Tony Bishop at the snooker club.

## 11) FINANCES

- a) The payment report for February 2022 was approved and the cheques duly signed. PF commented on the amount of the Castle Water bill; the Clerk confirmed that the CIC are looking into the water bill and sewage treatment from Business Stream, and the costs will be allocated to the various tenants when it has all been researched, and the council reimbursed by said tenants.
- b) The most recent bank reconciliation and financial report had been prepared by the Interim Clerk and had previously been circulated and published on the website. Members agreed to adopt the recommendations.
- c) The time-sheet of the Clerk for the period 07/02/22-04/03/22 was approved.
- d) The date of the loan repayment being debited on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 was noted.
- e) The time-sheet of the Interim Clerk to end of February '22 was approved.

## 12) VILLAGE MATTERS:

### i) No 2 St Francis Fields

TB reported that the current tenant says there is condensation in the house and it smells musty. He visited the property with Cllr Schlesinger and despite previous remedial works to install vents the issues haven't been resolved. TB asked if Steve Pratt could visit with a damp meter and confirm if the DPC has broken down.

### ii) Litter picking

Tim Wood is currently the only resident who litter picks in the whole village and a request was made for more volunteers. They were asked to contact the Clerk for details of designated areas and equipment.

### iii) Sponsorship of the playground

This was raised by a resident who stated that Beckley have successfully organised sponsorship for playground items. TB said that this hadn't been considered before but was a good idea as playground equipment is expensive. DJ suggested Bourne's and offered to contact them and make enquiries.

### iv) Councillors' Reports

DJ nothing further to report.

PF reported that the Jubilee Committee met and celebrations, which will take place on 4<sup>th</sup> June in and around the village hall, are taking shape. Sahib's are providing food and the WI, tea & cakes. There will be a live band, coconut shy and other traditional games, a photo display of Northiam from the past and the school is lending their inflatables. Volunteers are needed to help with parking. A dog agility display is to be confirmed and the beacon lighting will be the final event. The next meeting of the Jubilee Committee is on 5<sup>th</sup> April at 6pm. BD had received a request from a councillor at Beckley to borrow tables from the village hall for their Farmers' Market.

RM provided an update on the school crossing (Lolly). He spoke to Glyn at Moloney's and agreed the page for advertising. They will provide artwork for the banner to go on the school

railings and a sign for Lolly. A date for a formal announcement will be confirmed. RM added that he felt money spent on the election resulting in only 2 candidates was not well spent. JS – Nothing to report.

TW reported that he had researched the cost of sheds for the bungalows which NPC had agreed to provide for the bungalow tenants. Prices vary between £330 and £400. He will arrange for a formal quote.

AWS – said that he agreed with RM about a disappointingly low turnout for the election. TB reported that the new bank account for SFF was open and will be used from 1<sup>st</sup> April to separate the income & expenditure accounts relating to SFF. The recent PCSO's report stated that the only criminal activity was some anti-social behaviour and they have increased patrols to combat this. However, one PCSO has left, and until a new one is recruited, they are even more stretched over the 20 parishes they serve.

### 13) SFF COMMITTEE MEETING

The previous evening, the SFF C'ttee had met and the following matters were discussed: the garden sheds for the bungalows; when the membership of the CIC will open; legal advice about a new lease for the stables. The CIC quarterly report included proposals for the hub, one of which is as a storage facility for the Rye Foodbank. An account at Jewsons will be opened with Jacky Broad and David Cooper the named members of the CIC allowed to use it. It was also agreed that payment for maintenance work will come out of the kick-start fund, and the VAT will be reimbursed. The Pop-Up Pub (PuP) will hold 10 sessions throughout the summer months. A volunteer has offered to take regular meter readings and the utility bills are being looked into and progress made. The next meeting is scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> March – time TBC. Cllr Mooney commented that notices on the footpath state that dogs should be on the lead, but it is not adhered to. TB referred the matter to the CIC.

### 14) PLANNING:

#### **New Applications/Amendments to current applications**

- i) RR/2022/153/P – Dial Cottage, Main Street, Northiam TN31 6LP  
*Proposal: Replacement of windows*  
All members were in favour of this application.
- ii) RR/2021/3055/P – Valencia, Station Road, Northiam TN31 6QL  
*Proposal: Erection of two detached dwellings with garages.*  
The council were divided in their support for this application, and the acting vice-chair used his casting vote to support the application. The Clerk was asked to submit general comments regarding the access track, the impact on neighbouring properties and the design and scale of the proposed houses.
- iii) RR/2022/159/P – Mulberry House, Station Road, Northiam TN31  
*Proposal: 2 storey rear extension to replace existing single storey rear extension, including garden roof terrace at first floor level. Replacement of a number of rear windows and resizing of window openings. Addition of exterior painted timber weather boarding to rear walls. Addition of Photovoltaic panels on the Southern and Eastern roof pitches. Enlargement of rear garden patio area.*  
Cllr Wadie realised that he should have declared a personal interest as he lives in a neighbouring property. He therefore did not comment on this application.  
All other members were in favour of this application.
- iv) RR/2022/207/P - Pretious Field, Hastings Road, Northiam TN31 6NH  
*Proposal: Variation of condition 2 imposed on RR/2020/193/P to allow revised roof design of link extension.*  
All members were in favour of this application.

**All appeals, enforcements and decision notices have been previously circulated to Councillors.**