



**Meeting of the Parish Council to be held in
the Village Hall, Northiam
at 7.00pm, Thursday 17 February 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 Maltby, Biggs, Schlesinger (Chair), Wadie, Farmer & Streatfeild and District Cllrs Mooney and Ganly.

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE received from Cllrs Johnson & Wontner-Smith and County Cllr Paul Redstone

2) PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Maximum of 15 minutes)

Sarah Giles, Chair of Conservation Society reported that the last heritage trees were being planted in the orchard and then it will be opened as a community space. She requested permission for the information boards & picnic benches to go into the orchard and council agreed to this.

Anya Pagden (AP) then asked the following questions: regarding finances, further to the January meeting, has the outstanding debt discussed now been invoiced and settled? Why does the payments record still show the rates for the stables being paid by NPC, not the current tenant? She also asked for clarification regarding the potential shortfall in income to the PC if some of the rent paid includes a contribution to legal fees, as mentioned by Mr Sargent at the meeting on 3rd February. The Clerk confirmed that the rates have been refunded in full to the PC and offered to send a written response to the other questions. AP then asked why she had received such a brief response to her complaint about how the meeting on 3rd February was chaired and the Chair offered to send a detailed response by email.

Judith O'Connor from the CIC pointed out that an item in one of the candidate's manifestos about a dog walking area at St Francis Fields (SFF) is on the CIC's list of things to achieve. The difficulty is funding - approximately £4,000 to enclose one acre plus insurance costs and someone to run it.

Jacqui Harding wanted to point out that she found one of the candidate's mentions on social media very negative and asked for more positive postings on social media - this was greeted with applause.

Steve Pratt asked for an update on the playground insurance claim. The Clerk confirmed that all 3 quotes had been submitted to the insurance company and they were awaiting approval of the chosen contractor.

Trevor Gilbert asked why his questions hadn't been added as an appendix to the minutes from the meeting on 3rd February on the website, and the progress of responses to those questions. The Clerk apologised for an oversight in forgetting to include his questions with the other appendices, but that had now been rectified; she further confirmed that 3 of the councillors had provided responses and she had chased remaining councillors for their replies.

Monica Gilbert-Manning asked why the appendices had not been made available on the noticeboards when they were important documents. The Clerk said that there wasn't enough room for the many pages, but suggested that she could put a notice up to say that copies of the appendices would be made available to residents who requested them from the Parish Office.

3) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4) MINUTES OF THE MEETING

The minutes of the ordinary meeting of Northiam Parish Council held on 13 January 2022 and the Parish Meeting held on 3 February 2022 were approved as true & correct records and duly signed by Cllr Schlesinger (SS) as Chair.

5) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- a) 1200 copies of the letter to residents informing them of the by-election had been delivered by councillors. The Notice of Poll had also been released by Rother's electoral department and confirmed the location and hours of polling as The Village Hall, Frewen Close from 7am – 10pm. This was also posted on the website, on noticeboards and in the office window.
- b) Amy McFaite had been contacted by the Clerk about her Riding for the Disabled enquiry to arrange an initial visit to the stables, but no reply had been received to date.
- c) Rother DC's planning department have confirmed a formal application for the change of use is required (letter previously circulated to members). Cllr Wadie (TW) had asked the case officer how long it would take and was told a minimum of 3 months from receipt of the application. SS said that an informal meeting with TW, Cllr Biggs (TB) and herself and the CIC directors had taken place to understand the process. The matter of monies owed had been discussed again, and TW suggested a compromise on the electricity bill, the CIC was looking into the water bill and proof is required regarding waste water, but that should sort out the complexities of the utility bills. The suggestion was that the current tenant be offered an extension of her lease, and then once the change of use was granted, the lease would be re-negotiated to reflect the market rental rate. A further informal chat with the current tenant confirmed that she would like to stay and was also willing to help with the application. SS confirmed that some legal advice would be sought, information shared with members, and then a new lease would be brought to the March meeting for council approval. Cllr Maltby said this seemed a positive step forward and would maintain revenue for the parish council - a good compromise.

6) REPORTS BY PARISH, COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Supporting papers published on the website prior to the meeting include the reports from District and County councillors. District Cllr Ganly further reported that he recently attended an interesting meeting with two officers from Rother's Housing Department - Joe Powell and Graham Cornell about affordable housing. They all felt it would be useful for the PC to meet with these officers and he would ask Joe Powell to send the Clerk an email to arrange a meeting. SS thanked him.

7) COUNCILLOR VACANCY

SS then invited the two candidates for hustings, setting a time limit of 5 minutes each. Ben Dallimore dealt with some issues that had been raised during campaigning, and confirmed that he was ready to hold people to account through scrutiny, due diligence and objectivity which together with collaborative ways of working would help the council change and progress. Debbie Edwards touched on the three themes of her campaign: 1. Listening - especially to the youth and families as they are the future of the village. 2. Communication - to develop things in the village e.g fund-raising groups talking to each other could achieve fund raising on a large scale. 3. Team working - to help the CIC with the list of ideas for SFF. She finished by saying that the PC have had tough challenges, and overcome hurdles and receive no thanks for all their hard work. In order to heal the divisions in the PC they need to get together as a team and respect each other and then good results will be achieved.

8) COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The standard NALC template had been amended for Northiam PC's use and a draft had previously been circulated to all members. Cllr Maltby proposed it be adopted and this was seconded by Cllr Wadie and the motion was carried.

9) COMPLAINT MADE BY A MEMBER

The Clerk informed the council that as the complaint made was about fellow councillors, the member had been referred to the Monitoring Officer at Rother and this item was now for information only.

10) HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

The Clerk informed members that AiRS (Action in Rural Sussex) had confirmed their attendance at the March meeting in order to report on the survey, and wanted confirmation that the draft report was approved. Questions could be asked in March, or submitted beforehand.

11) DOMAIN NAME & WEBSITE DISCUSSION

Cllr Farmer (PF) said that 17 years ago there were few websites for parish councils and members were using personal email addresses. She did the website for 13 years, not being paid for it, and all councillors then had 'northiam village' email addresses. It costs £1.95 p/m per member. She confirmed that she had nothing to do with administration or maintenance, but it was up to council if they wanted to change the provider. SS said that at a recent Chair's training session there is an initiative for even the smallest parish council to have a gov.uk website so that they are recognised as a tier of local government. The Clerk further reported that the website provider includes up to 9 free email addresses which would save some expenditure in the future. She confirmed that she was still looking into the matter. The Clerk requested approval for a subscription to Office 365 in order to get free upgrades, and for up to 5 users it would also include up to 1TB of Cloud storage, useful for sharing information. Amanda Deacon in the audience offered her services and gave the Clerk a business card. The Clerk will make further enquiries.

12) FINANCES

- a) The payment report for February 2022 was approved and cheques were duly signed.
- b) The most recent bank reconciliation and financial report prepared by the Interim Clerk had been previously circulated and published on the website.
- c) The Clerk's time-sheet for the period 10/01/22-4/02/22 was approved.
- d) The Interim Clerk had not submitted a time-sheet for January '22 (item carried over).
- e) Members confirmed that the Royal Mail Response Service was no longer required and asked the Clerk to cancel the service.

13) VILLAGE MATTERS

- i. EV Charging Points

This matter had been raised by a resident, and council discussed possible locations (village hall car park, the doctor's car park) and asked district councillors if there was any funding available from Rother? PF said that there are companies that install EVCP's and it can provide a small revenue stream, but there is a cost for installation. Cllr Mooney said he would make further enquiries about available grants.
- ii. PF attended a meeting at Westfield PC where there is a huge development of shared affordable housing under the 106 agreement which Optivo took over and made 100% affordable i.e purely social housing. Westfield PC are unhappy and held a recent meeting with MP's Huw Merriman and Sally Ann-Hart. There are 13 sites within Rother that have been highlighted as potential sites for future similar development, and The Paddock in Northiam is on the list. There is a follow-up meeting on 24th February (TBC*) which will share legal advice to unify all the PC's. PF will keep the council updated.

This follow up meeting has now been confirmed for Tuesday 8th March

iii. **Highways Matters**

An SLR meeting with East Sussex Highways has been arranged for Tuesday 22nd March at 2.30pm with Cllrs Farmer & Johnson. PF mentioned the recent bad accident at Carmen Bridge, Whitbread Lane. She wanted to alert ESCC to it being a bad accident spot.

iv. **No 1 St Francis Fields**

The previous tenant of this bungalow who lived there from 2020-November '21 has written to complain about the damp living conditions and mould damage to her clothing. She also provided an oven at a cost of £400 and there was an agreement to reimburse her £150, but she is yet to receive this. SS brought it before council in order to decide what to do about her claim for compensation of approximately £2,500 in total. She asked if NPC have landlord insurance for an instance such as this? RM said that as landlords, they have a duty of care, but it seems rather late in the day as she should have complained at the time. SS said that the tenant states she had contacted Moloney's (managing agents) about the matter, but they had been slow to fix the boiler and had not replied to her complaint. The new tenant of No 1 said there is now no sign of damp at all but there are similar issues in No.2 that need attention.

Cllr Mooney knows the claimant personally and said that she is not 'trying it on'. She was very upset. He suggested meeting her half-way in terms of compensation. RM suggested that NPC sort out the problem in No 2 before it becomes any worse. TB said that if Moloney's are managing agents and hadn't acted quickly enough, does that mean they are responsible? He also suggested that in the future perhaps the CIC could become the managing agents saving 7.5% management fees. He also suggested the Clerk look in to Landlord's Insurance to cover these eventualities in the future.

ACTION: Clerk to contact Moloney's & make further enquiries and to look into Landlord's Insurance.

v. **Permission to use the playing by the Bonfire Society fields for the 10k run in September and the Midsummer Fayre in July was unanimously granted.**

vi. **Councillors' Reports**

Cllr Biggs (TB) had heard several comments on how nice the cemetery is looking now that the team of volunteers have finished work around the individual gravestones. There was a request to purchase some trellis panels in order to grow climbing plants. This expenditure of £29.99 was approved by all members. He further reported that Section 106 monies pertaining to the cemetery are still being held by Rother as the person who was dealing with it has now left. TB said this is a poor show from Rother. Cllr Mooney confirmed that there is a problem at Rother of a lack of hand-over when someone takes on a new role, and he offered to follow it up.

TB had also arranged to meet PCSO's at the regular coffee morning. If residents want to raise an issue with the police, this is a good opportunity to do so. It has also been confirmed that a request has been made for £1000 (or failing that £500) from the Proceeds of Crime Fund, which can go toward the insurance excess payment that had to be made.

Tree Surgery work: DS Chestnut had asked if the two lime trees included on the survey as high priority work should be felled completely or reduced in height to 4m. Members voted to reduce in height.

ACTION: The Clerk to contact the tree surgeon.

Finally, TB said that the CIC urgently need to do the maintenance works of weed-spraying and hedge-cutting as these are seasonal, and also the work to the roadway within SFF. TB asked members if paying for this work can come from the reserve fund? Cllr Farmer said no, the reserve fund was only to make up for any shortfall in income to repay the loan. She suggested using the recently refunded rates from Rother DC. This was approved by members, and the CIC thanked the parish council. SS asked the CIC to provide the quotes/invoices for the work.

Cllr Schlesinger reported that the bowling club lease is apparently 2 years out of date and the Clerk said that she understood a new lease had been re-issued because the postcode was incorrect, but that the lease was in the name of the former Chairman Cllr Harding, and so a further amendment was now required before it could be signed.

ACTION: The Clerk will ensure the amendment to the lease is made, and then signed.

Visitors to the office on Wednesday between 12 & 2pm included Brian Banks, an ecologist, who offered to put together a proposal for bio-diversity in the village; Carolyn Pearse who states that one

of the sand schools at the Blue Cross was paid for by an officer of the Blues & Royals and that there was never a horse show there. PF said there was and she had taken part in it. Finally, SS had paid £49 for the printing of the election letters (cheapest of 3 quotes) and now needed reimbursing. Cllr Farmer (PF) said that the Jubilee Committee met and there is plenty planned to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee on 4th June in the Village Hall involving the school children. She made another appeal for volunteers to help. Further information would be published in the Parish Magazine. Cllr Maltby reminded members of the public that the cinema club was up and running again starting with two showings of "The Last Bus" with Timothy Spall on Saturday 26th February in the village hall. Refreshments available.

14) CLERK VACANCY

Members agreed to use ESALC's recruitment service to employ a new clerk at a price of approximately £300. They agreed to an increased salary suggestion of up to £23.32 p/hr. Cllr Farmer offered to join the interview panel, together with SS, TB and Trevor Leggo, CEO of ESALC. She also flagged up the pension provision for the role, as this has been a sticking point in the past.

15) PLANNING: New Applications/Amendments to current applications

- i) RR/2021/2232/P – Rother Valley Caravan & Camping Park, Station Road, Northiam TN31 6QT
Proposal: Amended site plan for location of warden/staff static caravan.
After a brief discussion about the new location and its proximity to a neighbouring property, the condition of no external lighting to protect 'dark skies' was the only comment. Members were divided in their support for this application.
- ii) RR/2021/1586/P - Northiam Dental Practice, Main Street, Northiam TN31 6NA
Proposal: Erection of a wooden shed
Members had no objections to this application.
- iii) RR/2022/35/P – Ghyllside, land adj. to Station Road, Northiam TN31 6QD
Proposal: Demolition of dilapidated garage to provide new 2-bedroom, 1.5 storey detached residential dwelling and associated parking & landscaping.
All members objected to this application for several reasons (see submission online for detail).
- iv) RR/2022/21/P - 9, High Meadow, Northiam TN31 6GA
Proposal: Single storey extension to provide new entrance lobby, cloakroom and additional space to ground floor study.
Members had no objections to this application.
- v) RR/2022/209/T – 9, North Ridge, Northiam, TN31 6PG
Proposal: Oak Tree - 2m overall reduction
Members had no objections provided the Tree Officer is in agreement.

All appeals, enforcements and decision notices have been passed on to Councillors.

As the meeting ended, PF asked Cllr Mooney why the recent amendments at The Paddock development hadn't been called in to committee as he said it would be. Cllr Mooney said that he has the last say on calling it in, and as it was an amendment on an application that was already approved, there was no point. PF said that even if it was for an amendment, it would have been nice to know about it. Some documents were only available for 6 days on the planning website.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed