

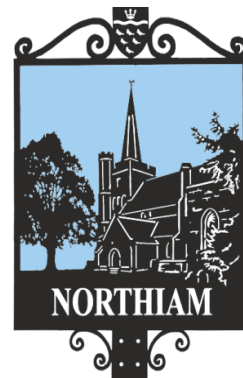
Northiam Parish Council

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Meeting of the SFF Committee to be held in the Jenkins Room, Northiam at 5.30pm, Thursday 31 March 2022

**Members of the Public and Press are welcome and encouraged to attend.
There will be an opportunity for questions from members of the public.**

MINUTES

**ATTENDEES: From the CIC: Jonathan Strong (JVS), Jacky Broad (JB) and Sarah Giles (SG)
From NPC: Sue Schlesinger (SS), Cllr Tony Biggs (TB) and Cllr Tony Wadie (TW)
Also in attendance: the Clerk and 5 members of the public**

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: None

2) PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Maximum of 15 minutes)

Jon Streatfeild (JS) asked how membership of the CIC was going. JVS answered that until a new management agreement was in place, there was not a lot to gain by becoming a member because the CIC is the Management Agent, so members could vote on the appointment of Directors but control remains with NPC. Therefore, residents have a better pathway via the PC. JS stated that it is a legal obligation & that there is a time scale. JVS confirmed that the CIC definitely wants members.

Post Meeting Note: JVS has checked the CIC's Articles and membership is at the discretion of the Directors and there is no provision for a time scale for members to join.

Ben Dallimore (BD) asked what the headline request was for the new management agreement? JVS answered that the main aim would be to see if there is a way that a certain amount of control can be passed to CIC to run commercial activities – currently the PC is only permitted to get involved in leisure activities, and the CIC is bound by the same rules as the PC. The other issue which has to be addressed is that the PC has an obligation under the Management Agreement to meet the cost of repairs and maintenance at SFF but says that it has no funds with which to do so.

JS asked how the fund-raising was going? And grant applications? SG answered that the CIC know who to approach, and have applications ready to go, but they need PC approval of the hub proposals before they can progress these further.

JS also asked what the plans are for the other fields not yet rented out? JVS said that initially it would be grazing as this is easy & quick to arrange. It would be separate from the stables.

Rupert Spencer (RS) asked if it was possible to do some preliminary work to the kennels before planning permission is in place? He gave an example of knocking down the dividing walls.

SS said that the PC have generally approved hub proposals, but would write to confirm this after full council approval at the 14th April meeting.

Lastly someone asked if the massive trench in the orchard could be filled in, as wildlife fall in and are unable to get out? SG said that it was part of the wildflower trial where the topsoil

had been removed. An ecologist had been consulted and was happy that it is safe for wildlife. She was further asked if all of the village are welcome to the Conservation Society's picnic on 5th June as the article in the parish magazine didn't make that clear. SG confirmed that everyone would be welcome, and it would form part of the Jubilee celebrations. She also explained that the gates are locked at the moment as the last of the trees are being planted, but once that is completed, there will be benches and an information board and it will be open for all residents to enjoy.

3) APPROVAL OF NOTES FROM SFF COMMITTEE MEETING ON 9.3.22

No comments.

4) PLANNING - CHANGE OF USE, AN UPDATE

JVS explained to the SFF Committee that until the PC approves the lease extension, they are not in a position to progress the planning application. The current operation will be used, and provides the best chance of gaining approval with established use. If PC approval is granted on 14th April, they can start on the application although they will need some professional advice relating to surveys etc.

5) HUB PROPOSALS PLANS – LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM PARISH COUNCIL

SS said she thought the proposals look great. TB confirmed that SFF committee members all agree that the proposals should go forward and full council approval for that motion will be on the agenda for the April meeting.

6) STABLES LEASE – LEGAL ADVICE

JVS asked if there were any points that anyone wanted to raise, having previously circulated proposals for a lease extension? The clerk confirmed that after taking legal advice, it was the best way forward given the circumstances and the SFF committee members all agreed. This motion will also be on the agenda at the April meeting for full council approval.

7) BUSINESS RATES

TW was concerned that the current tenant has proof that NPC are liable for a percentage of the rates. TB said that at the last meeting someone from CIC offered to help the current tenant with small business relief claim. SG confirmed that they are waiting until RDC make contact with a demand. JVS stated that the new interim lease makes it clear that the tenant is liable for business rates and suggested that it can be further clarified that any historic agreements aren't carried over. TW asked if that needs to be done before signing a new lease? SG said that the tenant will be able to claim Small Business Relief, but the CIC can't get involved with what was agreed in the past. JB reiterated that if the current tenant can prove she wasn't liable to pay rates, when she gets the rate demand, she can fill in the forms as required. JVS confirmed again that the new lease will make it crystal clear and that all parties are making their best endeavours to agree on past terms. The Clerk said it should be prioritised.

8) SHEDS FOR BUNGALOWS

TW is organising a quote from Jewsons for the sheds. It will be £832.66 incl VAT for 2 sheds and paving. He would try to organise delivery for a Tuesday and made a special request to the A Team to erect the sheds. JB asked where the money is coming from? SS confirmed that it would be from the kick-start fund, but the VAT would be credited back to the fund. The bank accounts are being separated from 1st April so that all income & expenditure relating to SFF will be detailed from the Barclays account, and the village spending will be from the Co-op account.

9) FINANCE MATTERS – AN UPDATE

METERS & METER READINGS – TB said that a volunteer is now reading the meters monthly. It is a difficult situation that needs to be resolved – the bungalows have individual electricity & water meters, and this can be deducted from the total usage. However, the usage by the stables, the PuP and the hub is harder to separate. He suggested mini-meters on the individual drinking troughs. The Clerk confirmed that invoices have now been calculated for the bungalows' usage. The annual maintenance bill for SFF of roughly £10k needs to be found as there is no current budget allowance.

SEWAGE CHARGES

JB reported that she has explained to both Castle Water and Business Stream and hopes that it will be sorted out soon. Once it is, she proposed drafting a procedure to deal with utility bills in the future as a form of succession planning. SG said that there is a calculation that can be used of how much cattle and horses drink etc. JB said that she had used that information.

TB said that the Financial Advisory Group (FAG) are meeting on 11th April to confirm separation of I & E accounts, and in the future all finances will be separated and made available to the public. JVS returned to the requirement for a new management agreement - the CIC has no money and the NPC hasn't much money and £10k is required per annum. SG asked if it was possible to put a mini-meter on the PuP to separate that usage as an initial solution? TB also said that the S106 money from the cemetery could be re-invested and was hopefully going to be released at the end of April.

10) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was confirmed as Thursday 28th April at 5.30pm

Members of the public were then asked to leave the meeting for discussions of a commercially sensitive nature.