

**Ordinary General Meeting of the Parish Council to be held in the Village Hall, Northiam at 7.00pm, Thursday 11 August 2022**

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

**Due to the adoption of new Standing Orders, there will be an opportunity for members of the public to give their opinion or view once in relation to an item on the agenda.**

**MINUTES**

**Date: 11th Aug 2022**

**Present Sue Schlesinger, Tony Biggs, Robert Maltby, Tony Wadie, Penny Farmer, Dean Johnson, Anthony Wontner-Smith, Ben Dallimore, Jon Streatfeild**

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1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

No apologies were received.

1. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Maximum of 15 minutes)**

A member of the pubic said the grass at Beacons field had not been cut. The Clerk read from the contractor’s scheme of works – Beacons field is cut once a year in September and a path should be mown around the field once a month. The member of the public said the path had not been mown either.

Cllr Mooney suggested name labels for the clerk and the chair.

Carolyn Pierce said that the Lime trees at the village green need to have the suckers removed. The Clerk referred to the contract again; the suckers are removed once a year.

Steve Pratt said to Councillor Johnson that when the fence around the playground was removed it didn’t get put back properly and is now in a very precarious state. He added that the area surrounding the slide needs more topsoil. DJ replied that the contractors who installed the slide (Kompan) are due back in September to re seed. This has been postponed due to the dry weather.

Steve Pratt also mentioned that there are a lot of dogs all off the lead at the playing field. Cllr Mooney advised the Clerk to contact RDC to report this to the dog warden

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND INSTANCES OF LOBBYING**

The Clerk asked if all Councillors were confident that they were clear on what an interest was. All Councillors confirmed that they were. There were no declarations of interest.

There were no declarations on lobbying.

1. **MINUTES** **OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

To approve and sign the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 14th July 2022. The minutes were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman

1. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
2. **INSTALLATION OF NEW SLIDE**

To sign off the Practical Completion Certificate received from the contractors to confirm that the works were satisfactory.

It was agreed to ask the Council’s annual playground inspector to give an independent inspection on the new slide.

1. **FINANCES**
2. To receive & approve the payment report for July 2022
3. To receive the most recent bank reconciliation and financial report
4. To approve the time-sheet of the Clerk for the period 11/07/22-05/08/22
5. To approve the time-sheet of the supporting Clerk for the period 05/06/22-05/08/22.

This had not yet been received from the supporting Clerk.

1. To note the expenditure of £100 + VAT for a survey assessing the damp problem in bungalow No 2.
2. To consider a grant request from the village hall towards the refurbishment of a new meeting room.

The Council are due to have a finance meeting before the next PC meeting, the council will look at the parish budget to see if how much surplus there is available.

NPC agreed to support the initiative in principle but need do look at the funds before deciding on a donation.

1. **ITEMS CARRIED FORWARD FROM LAST MEETING**
2. To approve the Asset Register of Council Property. Deferred until a future meeting.
3. To review, approve & adopt Financial Regulations. Deferred until a future meeting.
4. **INSURANCE COVER**

For decision - to increase the fidelity cover and add loss of receivable rent cover.

It was agreed to add the loss of receivable rent cover for a period of 12 months and to increase the fidelity guarantee to £200k.

1. **SEWER QUOTES – THE PADDOCK**

For decision – To consider 3 quotes obtained for a sewer inspection survey. To be funded by the developer.

6 companies have been contacted by the Clerk and only 1 has replied with a quote. As the costs of the survey will be paid for by the developer the quote from Sewer Surveys UK was approved

1. **COUNCILLOR TRAINING**

New Councillor and refresher training has been found by the Clerk.

Cllr Streatfeild opted to complete training that will be funded by the Council in accordance with the budget.

1. **TREE SURVEY**

Councillors are asked to volunteer to complete the annual Tree Survey.

The tree survey is necessary for the insurance cover to be valid. Initially the first tree survey was completed this was for trees that were a high priority and needed urgent attention. This year it is time to complete the works for the trees that, at the time last year, were deemed a medium risk. Another survey to update the findings from last year and obtain costings for the work required this year will need to be under taken. This survey does not include the trees at St Francis Field. Cllr Wadie volunteered to escort 3 contractors to assess the trees and compile 3 quotes for consideration.

1. **WATER SUPPLY FOR BUNGALOWS**

Water supply issues stemming from possible lack of pressure due to the recent dry spell.

It has come to the Council’s attention that when one tenant waters their lawn the shower temperature is affected in the other bungalow. This is because the water is fed by the same supply then ‘tees off’ into two supplies.

TB said that the only thing that can be done it is to branch off and run a separate main. The CIC said that when the hub is refurbished the SFF may be able to look into doing something to rectify this problem then.

1. **SFF COMMITTEE MEETING on 28th July – A report**

No report was given the minutes of the meeting will be published once they have been approved.

1. **& 15)** The Chairman advised that items 14 & 15 would be moved to the end of the meeting, excluding members of the public, as these items are considered to be of a confidential or sensitive nature.
2. **BURIAL GROUND SURVEY**

Proposal from the CIC for the approval of an initial burial ground survey, to be funded from S106 monies.

3 Quotes have been obtained by the CIC and were circulated to Councillors along with a recommendation prior to the meeting for consideration

The quote from Southern Testing was approved after recommendation from the SFF to carry out both the Tier 1 & 2 surveys.

1. **REPORTS BY COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**
2. District Councillor Martin Mooney said that there was currently a consultation for the Town Hall Renaissance project and that he would like Councillors to respond to find out the views of the Parish Council.
3. District Councillor Tony Ganly.
4. County Councillor Paul Redstone was not present at the meeting
5. **VILLAGE MATTERS**

Correspondence

1. The Clerk reported that there would be road closure along the A28 on the 8th October

between 6pm and 11pm this was a request from the Bonfire Society.

1. There has been a personal injury claim made against the council, this has been ongoing since April 21 and is being dealt with by the insurance company. It is time to disclose council documents to the other party, namely playground inspection reports. No Councillors objected
2. The Clerk has received an email complimenting the Cemetery volunteers on their hard work and remarked on how nice the cemetery now looked.

Councillors’ Reports

DJ said that there are no parking signs outside the playing fields and that these need replacing.

JS has received the old emergency list from Cllr Farmer and is in the process of updating it. East Sussex have asked the Parish where the best location for a bottle stand would be, should the village become short of water. It was decided the best place would be the car park outside the village hall. DJ mentioned that any disabled or vulnerable people should inform the water supplier as this would make them a priority should a water shortage occur. JS offered to put this in the parish magazine.

BD Has spoken with LCN regarding the email transfer and has discovered that there are 4 companies involved. He has found a way to consolidate this to one provider. To arrange with the clerk when to copy the email files

TB Has arranged with DS Chestnut to reinstate the gate at Dixter Lane and Beacons Field.

The Cemetery Volunteers were planning to ask for a petrol strimmer from the donated money. Before they had a chance to do so it was discovered that a brand new petrol strimmer was left by a mysterious anonymous donator, A very big thank you to whoever that may be.

Quotes have been received relating to the condensation problem in bungalow number 2. TB will liaise with Trevor Gilbert to decide the most suitable method for the works and the findings will be forwarded to the full council to approve.

The A team have been putting up new signs on the gates at the SFF. They have installed a new electric fence for field 1 and are using a battery fed power supply that is charged from the mains. This system was donated by Steve Pratt and is now powering additional electric fences. TB reminded everyone that village volunteers save NPC a lot of money.

An elderly lady from Goddens Close called the office and explained that her property was being encroached by overhanging branches from a field behind her house. The clerk sent out a circular to find out who was responsible for maintaining the overgrowing trees. TB commented on the aggravated reply received from Councillor Farmer. It was found that the trees are not the Parish Councils responsibility. After further emails from PF requesting that the developer should be contacted and told to do something about it TB and SS visited the lady and removed the branches as best they could themselves.

Email correspondence had been received from JS suggesting that the Parish Council and the CIC were planning to sell off parts of the SFF to developers. TB wanted to clarify some points that were made at the meeting held on the 12th May that TW, JS and DJ were absent from. At this meeting councillors were asked 3 questions and all councillors present at that meeting agreed.

Please see below

How many houses are the Parish Council planning to build - NONE

Who is the main contractor that would build these houses – NO- ONE

When did PC vote to build houses - NEVER HAVE

The full council then agreed that no houses have been sanctioned to be built on the SFF.

During the course of this correspondence JS again said to TB that he assumes he must have known what the CIC were planning as TB’s wife was a member of the CIC at the time.

TB asked JS to please stop repeating the accusations of a CIC/NPC conspiracy of secretly planning to sell off parts of the SFF.

JS gave his assurance that this would not happen again.

SS- RESIGNATION LETTER

I became a co-opted councillor in October 2021 hoping that I could play a part in the community. I had voted in favour of the Blue Cross being purchased and was looking forward to playing my part in the evolution of the site. The Community Interest Company (CIC) had been formed and would act as the managing agents for the Parish Council who were the Landlords of the Estate. Since I joined the council less than 2 years ago, I am the 3rd chair and we are on our 4th Clerk

However, once I became Chair, last December, I realised that it was impossible to have any reasoned discussion because of the polarised positions on the council. Almost my first ‘job’ was to organise a Village meeting in response to Councillor Streatfield’s social media post. I was consequently vilified by Councillor Streatfeild and others accusing me of not running the meeting properly. He then demanded another meeting so he could give his evidence. The meeting was provided for him but he then left with Councillors Farmer and Johnson before any anyone in the Hall could ask him questions.

Councillor Streatfeild was reported to the monitoring officer by several councillors and Rother out sourced the complaints to an Independent Officer who after trawling through all the documents found Councillor Streatfeild was in breach of the Code of Conduct. This cost Rother £10,000. He still disputes the outcome and has declined to attend a councillor training course as was instructed, until just now earlier in the meeting.

All of this has come about because the stables are being let to a tenant, whereas Councillors Streatfeild and Farmer believe that if it was a DIY livery the council would make much more money. They have not come up with any sensible business plan to back up their idea and I have received information from someone who has run such a business that it was a bad idea.

I am fed up with the harassing and bullying emails from Councillors Streatfeild and Dallimore - the latter who at least admits that I am well-meaning and hardworking – rather patronising. So, Ben I am no longer going to put up with your bullying and harassing emails – Trevor Leggo’s interpretation of them – and as I suggested in my last email that meetings are the place for discussion not by email. It would also be helpful if you took note of what the Clerk tells us – she is the professional.

Similarly, Jon your emails are fairly unpleasant and bullying although I realise that you think you are never wrong. I can safely say that the last 7 months have been among the most unpleasant in my life. Your answer to anything has been to post on social media or contact either the police or a solicitor. You have now decided to employ a solicitor to take NPC to task, you have even given us the name of this solicitor in one of your emails which you sent from yourself, Councillors Farmer and Johnson. You are asking for confidential minutes that you are not entitled to and demanding a copy of the contract with the Government Loans dept as it is your opinion that NPC are not keeping to the terms of the loan. It would be more usual for your solicitor to request these documents but then perhaps you have not yet retained him. I can only assume if he agrees to work for you that he has only heard your rather distorted view of things

And Penny I do not understand why your emails are always so aggressive. Perhaps you could have gone round to speak to the lady in Goddens Close rather than just sounding off about Persimmon. That doesn’t help an elderly villager. She was only too pleased to see Tony and I when we went round to see if we could help in any way.

Since December I have tried to act in the best interests of the community so I signed the new lease in good faith and believed it would be in the best interest of the community to preserve public funds. There were 2 options, allow the lease to lapse or, in accordance with the advice received from the council's solicitors, sign the lease with the addition of a side letter and an amendment to the fields. So, it is on the agenda in the confidential part of this meeting for retrospective approval which I believe is legal.

I have no idea what any of you can think would be my personal gain in signing the side letter, and the new lease is the same as the one we approved in the April meeting except for the change of Field 9 to Field 1, which in fact marginally increases the rent and the Tenant will not have to cross the prospective burial ground to access Field 9

If the lease is not approved tonight, in the confidential part of this meeting, and the tenant leaves you will not be able to let the stables to anyone else till the change of use is sorted so the Parish Council will be £12,000pa short for the loan repayment. The unoccupied land would be even more vulnerable to misuse, as there is currently no CCTV. Hardly in the best interests of the village or as you keep saying providing ‘best value’ for the village.

I am fed up with spending the hours that I do firefighting emails and attending meetings that are horrible and antagonistic. I have done a great many things as Chair whereas most of you are happy to become keyboard warriors and are continuously negative.

I believe that Councillors Farmer, Streatfeild and Johnson are only interested in using this community as a platform for their own agenda.

So, you will probably all be pleased to know that after the confidential part this meeting I am resigning as Chair. So Good luck and I hope you achieve whatever it is that you want to achieve.

1. **PLANNING:**

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

1. RR/2022/1704/P NORTHIAM

Grain Store Building, Rye Road, Northiam TN31 6NJ

Conversion of warehouse (former grain store) to self-contained dwelling.

There were concerns about the aesthetics.

It was resolved to recommend refusal to RDC.

1. RR/2022/350/P).RR/2022/1778/P NORTHIAM

Valencia, Station Road, Northiam TN31 6QL

Erection of two detached dwellings with detached garages served by an existing access road.

TW said that he had seen no objections from neighbours and only supportive comments on the RDC website.

It was resolved to recommend approval to RDC

1. RR/2022/1633/P

Three Candles, Station Road, Northiam TN31 6QL

Demolish existing single storey dwelling and erect two single storey dwellings served by existing and proposed access (revised proposal to that permitted by

It was mentioned that there weren’t many comments on the RDC website and were only from parish councils.TW abstained as he felt there was not enough information available on the RDC website.

It was resolved to recommend approval to RDC

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

**In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 Sec1 para 2, members of the public were asked to leave due to the commercially sensitive and confidential nature of items 14 &15.**

**14) CCTV SFF**

**To consider 3 quotes for CCTV to be installed at SFF.**

The options for the CCTV were discussed at length and it was agreed to defer this item to a future meeting.

During the previous item Cllr Maltby left the meeting.

**15) STABLES LEASE**

For decision – proposal to approve the amended Stables Lease and Side Letter.

After some discussion the Council voted as follows

AW - For

BD - Against

TW - Against

TB- For

SS - For

RM – Had left the meeting

JS - Against

DJ – Against

PF – Against

It was not agreed to retrospectively approve the lease. It was agreed that the Council will proceed to seek legal advice.

The meeting ended at 9.20.

Chairman’s Signature……………………………………………………………………………….

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