



**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting
Thursday 12th September 2024, 7pm
Northiam Village Hall**

Present: Cllr Fairbrass (Chair), Cllr Schlesinger, Cllr C Biggs, Cllr Fenton, Cllr Harding, Cllr Lockett, Cllr Russell, Cllr Sargent, and Cllr Wadie.

Also Present: Mary Philo and Ian Philo Locum Clerks and eighteen members of the Public.

Governance

FC24/472 Apologies - None.

FC24/473 Declarations of Interest - None.

FC24/474 Minutes

Following minor amendment, it was unanimously resolved to agree the minutes of the 11th July as a true record.

It was unanimously resolved to agree the minutes of the 24th July as a true record.

Meeting was adjourned for Public Session at 7.32pm

It was advised that there had been no appropriately qualified applicants for the position of Clerk and/or Responsible Financial Officer since the council started advertising in January.

A resident brought in some examples of the plants that had been dug up and left in a heap in Harlot's Wood. The bulbs/corms were plants known to be found growing in ancient woodland, thus indicating the Harlot's wood is ancient woodland.

The Clerk advised that the financial spread sheet of earmarked funds and available funds showed that at the end of the year, after the loan payments and all budgeted expenditure, that the funds held for St Francis Field could be as low as £8,500 and the council funds that cover everything else might be around £13,500. These levels are too low to cover emergency expenditure and put the council financially at risk. Cutting out unnecessary expenditure would help to boost the council reserves and increasing the income streams for St Francis Field would help. It was too early to say how much the precept might increase next year.

County Councillor Report

In addition to the report circulated, Councillor Redstone mentioned that the Flexibus area map had become just one zone. A journey up to 14 miles could now be requested as long as it was not on a regular bus route. The road works on the A21 going into Hastings by the Queensway Gate which are causing some delays, are expected to finish at the end of January. The reinforcement works, including works underneath, to Newenden Bridge in Kent, has been deferred till the spring. These works are expected to last 3 – 5 months.

District Councillors Report

In the last month, the Police had dealt with people on the Rother Valley Steam Train line; a burglary at a Rye Business; Beckley Road bank fraud and a broken-down tractor. The loss-making number 2 bus route has been cancelled with most of the route being covered by the 329 bus with a reduced service for the next year.

Meeting was reconvened at 7.50pm**FC24/475 Risk Assessment**

It was unanimously resolved to agree the main and additional property risk assessments.

Personnel

Ian and Mary Philo left the room at 7.56pm

FC24/476 Resignation of Nicola Ideson

It was unanimously agreed to accept the resignation and the Chair signed the letter.

FC24/477 Position of Clerk

It was unanimously resolved to offer the position of Clerk to Mary Philo for a fixed term to the end of July 2025. The Chair signed the job offer letter including written terms (rate: £23per hour, hours around 10 a week).

FC24/478 Position of Responsible Financial Officer

It was unanimously resolved to offer the position of Responsible Financial Officer to Ian Philo for a fixed term to the end of July 2025. The Chair signed the job offer letter including written terms (rate: £23per hour, hours around 10 a week).

Ian and Mary Philo returned to the room at 8.00pm

FC24/479 Personnel Handbook

It was unanimously resolved to agree the following:
Equality and Diversity Policy

Following minor clarification, Expenses Policy
Grievance Policy
Disciplinary Policy

Planning

FC24/480 RR/2024/1083/T

RR/2024/1083/ T Works to ash tree on boundary of cemetery overhanging neighbouring garden has been approved but the work may only be carried out by the parish council after leaf fall.

FC24/481 Yew Tree Cottage

RR/2024/1073/L and RR/2024/1082/P Yew Tree Cottage, Mill Corner: The replacement of the windows on the north facade and east elevation. The introduction of a small side extension. Unanimously supported.

FC24/482 Cloudcroft

RR/2024/1158/T Cloudcroft, Dixter Lane: T1 Oak - To crown lift by 1-2m over garage and front of house, remove dead wood and inspect canopy. T2 Oak - To crown lift by 1-2m over rear of house and neighbours property, remove dead wood and inspect canopy. T3 - Oak - To remove dead wood and inspect canopy. Unanimously supported.

FC24/483 13 Northbridge

RR/2024/1263/T 13 Northridge: T1 Oak - To crown lift by 1-2m over garage and front of house, remove dead wood and inspect canopy. T2 Oak - To crown lift by 1-2m over rear of house and neighbours property, remove dead wood and inspect canopy. T3 - Oak - To remove dead wood and inspect canopy. Unanimously supported.

FC24/484 Oaklands

RR/2024/1420/P Oaklands, Rye Road: Two storey extension at side to create garage with bedroom over. Unanimously supported.

FC24/485 Ghylside

RR/2024/1234/P Ghylside - Land adjacent to, Station Road: Demolition of existing dilapidated residential garage to provide 1x two-bedroom, 1.5 storey dwelling with associated parking and landscaping. It was unanimously resolved to comment - Northiam Parish Council voted to neither support nor object preferring to leave this to the planning officer.

Finances

FC24/486 Asset Register

Following review, it was unanimously resolved to agree the proposed asset register and confirm that in response to query that the Victorian funeral carriage previously stored in the Chapel was donated to the Weald and Downland Living Museum, Chichester in 2008.

FC24/487 Earmarked Funds – Community Infrastructure Levy

It was resolved that the level of funds held as at the 31st March 2024 were £54,775.61 and the 2023-2024 CIL declaration is completed accordingly. Note at the end of the first quarter 30th June 2024 CIL funds stood at £64,952.92.

FC24/488 Earmarked Funds – Cemetery Extension S106 Funds

It was unanimously resolved that the cemetery extension S106 funds, as at 31st March 2024 stood at £49,213.00.

FC24/489 Earmarked Funds – Sewer Funds

It was unanimously resolved that the Sewer restricted funds, as at 31st March **2023** stood at £ 82,165.65. Hodge Bank is refusing to communicate since the parish council email change. The bank reconciliation will have to be based on this figure till an update is achieved.

FC24/490 St Francis Field Funds

As per the minutes of 14 October 2021 it was agreed to make an additional sum, from the SFF earmarked funds, of £17,000 available to the CIC for capital works. It was suggested in April 2022 that this sum stood at £13,920, following electrical works, hedge cutting and aggregate materials. However, by 22nd May 2022, the then Clerk ascertained that this had been further reduced by £1,170 for work by FSG. In the 2022-2023 it appears that no expenditure was allocated out of this money. 2023-2024 year appears to be the same. This fund stands at £12,750. This appears to be what is being currently called the Kick Start Fund. It should be noted that there has been a further reduction for the skip hire and at a future date planning application for a poly-tunnel for the community garden.

With regard to the funds held for St Francis Field, these are stated as currently being £51,232.99. **It was unanimously resolved to confirm that this is the figure to work from as of the 1st April 2024.**

However, the original amount held, in March 2020, does not appear to be the sum expected. The difference between the loan taken out and the sum paid for the acquisition of the land was only £40,600. Although income received has been higher than expected the shortfall means that these funds are almost exhausted. A projection of income and expenditure for the coming year from the end of the first quarter suggests the funds in various bank accounts should be moved into more easily accessible bank accounts.

FC24/491 Banks – Co-op

It was unanimously resolved to authorise Ian Philo, RFO, as Key Contact and administrator in order to be able to set up payments and view/print online statements, set up new accounts and make telephone enquiries.

FC24/492 Banks – Barclays Bank

Barclays Bank requires the Chair to be an authorised signatory on the account. It was resolved that the Chair is automatically appointed as signatory to the Barclay Bank Account(s). Once done this will allow the changes to signatories already agreed. Note the current chair is Michelle Fairbrass.

FC24/493 Banks – Unity Bank

Following on from the review of funds available, it was resolved to withdraw funds leaving £1 to keep the account open for future use and request £18,477.43 to be transferred to Northiam Parish Council Barclays account and £8,668.09 to be transferred to Northiam Parish Council Co-op Account.

FC24/494 Banks – Nationwide Building Society

Following on from the review of funds available, it was resolved to withdraw funds leaving £1, to keep the account open for future use and request £ 32,755.56 to be transferred to Northiam Parish Council Barclays Account and £21,561.93 to be transferred to Northiam Parish Council Co-op account.

FC24/495 Banks – Hodge Bank

As the bank has requested to close the account, it was resolved to request Hodge bank to transfer all funds to Northiam Parish Council Nationwide account and then to close the Hodge account. Councillor J. Harding to sign as the only approved signatory. Note these funds are ringfenced for sewer works in Northiam.

FC24/496 Bank Reconciliation

August Bank (including July) for the main current accounts stood at 31st August 2024 : Co-op £144,532.87 and Barclays Bank £58,249.13 No change to Unity £27,146.52 Nationwide £54,318.49 and Hodge £82,165.65.

30 th June 2024 balance	£315,298.81
July and August receipts	£ 59,630.74 (not including bank transfers of £35,177.31)
July and August payments	<u>£ 8,516.89</u> (not including bank transfers of £35,177.31)
31 st August 2024 balance	£366,412.66

FC24/497 July and August Payments and Receipts

See end of minutes

FC24/498 Authorisation of Payments

See end of minutes.

FC24/499 Parish Online Mapping Service – Deferred

Parish Matters

FC24/500 Playground Report

Only minor repairs were outstanding and parts were in hand for these. A general risk assessment to be organised. In the light of finances, the only new expenditure would be for emergency works or high risk issues highlighted in the independent safety inspection reports.

FC24/501 Playground New Equipment to be funded by CIL funds held

Following review of the letter, it was advised that once the responses from play providers had been received then these suggestions would be presented to the public and possibly Northiam school children for comments. The best equipment proposal would then go out to tender. The letter, amended to reflect it is not a tender, along with the specification, would be sent out to as many play providers as possible.

FC24/502 Playing Field and Pavilion Working Group (Donsmead S106 funds)

In light of contact being made with Rother District Council and the option to discuss in detail how these funds held by Rother District Council would be released to Northiam, the item was deferred.

Online enquiries had been made by councillors regarding the Biodiversity Net Gain Credits that developers buy when they cannot provide enough gain on their development site. They cost developers from around £45,000. It was suggested that the council might look into this as a source of income.

Councillor Fairbrass left the room 8.00pm and returned 8.02pm.

FC24/503 Local Nature Recovery Working Group

The group had met and in addition to proposing meeting the resident to discuss Harlot's Wood, they suggested registering the parish council owned part of Harlot's Wood as a Local Nature Reserve. The woods met many of the criteria including the council owning the land. Local Nature Reserves are required to allow public access and permit management such as coppicing, creation of leaky dams and the removal of non-native species. The newt ponds on St Francis Fields could be included if desired. The process may take up to a year.

Following discussion, councillors wished to visit Harlot's Wood and discuss the issues with the resident and then the Nature Recovery Working Party.

FC24/504 Cemetery and Cemetery Extension Working Group

The group would be meeting soon. The requirement for biodiversity net gain from 1st April 2024, for any incursion into ground (rather than on an already tarmacked area) also applied to the change of use application for field 7 to a burial ground. The cost of a biodiversity report was in relation to the size of the prospective built area. The biodiversity gain required for the cemetery may leave no space to sell for biodiversity credits. The council was keen to progress the cemetery creation as it would provide a small income though unreliable.

FC24/505 St Francis Field (SFF) Working Group

It was unanimously agreed to refund the SFF CIC the cost repairing the leaking roof of the SFF rest room £146.44. there would be a further £100 on the Jewsons' account.

Following trial ponds, the Newt Conservation Partnership wished to establish two new newt ponds in Field 14 for a 10-year contract wherein they would dig and create the two ponds and then pay £250 a pond per year plus £500 per hectare per year for the surrounding 3.5 ha of land – a total of £2,250 per year or £22,500 over the 10-year period of the agreement, towards the cost of managing the ponds. Initially the management would be very little but ponds need greater maintenance and de silting over time and the funds should be saved to cover these costs. The newt ponds would not prevent sheep grazing of the land nor would they need to be fenced off. After some debate, it was unanimously resolved that if the project goes ahead the contract would be signed by Northiam Parish Council and 'wet ink' signed by the Chair and Vice-Chair. This was not an agreement to the contract but would allow the Newt Conservation Partnership to provide a contract to be considered.

FC24/506 School Crossing Patrol

East Sussex County Council officer had advised that someone had applied for the job and before they interviewed, they wished the sponsor to confirm their continued support. The Clerk to ask Moloney who is the sponsor.

FC24/507 Information for or from Councillors

A councillor had assisted the clerk to chase up the grass contractor regarding the grass cutting at the cemetery, which should be cut fortnightly.

FC24/508 Items for the ordinary meeting agenda

Northiam Conservation society had expressed an interest in making more of the Telephone Box to include historical information and possible move it. As it is located in a conservation area, planning would be required. It was suggested that the group take some time to find out the costs for the whole project they have in mind and then present this to the parish council in the next few months.

Councillor Wadie left the room 9.25pm and returned at 9.27pm

Grass Cutting contract – the clerk advised that finding a map showing the locations was proving difficult. Councillors would check the information they held.

Remembrance Sunday Wreath

Christmas trees – The parish council buys two trees, one for the village and one on behalf of the church who refunds the cost.

Chapel – consider if there could be an income from this.

Cemetery Footpath – a way forward as the contractor is not communicating.

FC24/509 Date of next meeting

10th October 7pm village hall. There would be an extraordinary meeting to agree the minutes so that the bank letters could be sent off and to agree to contract the internal auditor.

See below for financial information.

Payments and Receipts July 2024						
Payments						
Made in						
July	Bank	Payee	Description	Gross Amount	VAT	
BACS	Coop	Northiam Club	Office Rent	£ 780.00	£	-
BACS	Coop	HMRC	HMRC	£ 48.21	£	-
BACS	Coop	NVHT	Hall Hire	£ 52.00	£	-
BACS	Coop	NVHT	Library Rent	£ 100.00	£	-
BACS	Coop	M Philo	Locum	£ 552.00	£	-
BACS	Coop	I Philo	Locum	£ 494.50	£	-
BACS	Coop	Staff	Salary	£ 639.37	£	-
BACS	Coop	J Oconner	Ground Maintenance	£ 1,125.79	£	-
BACS	Coop	Global 4	Broadband	£ 26.88	£	4.48
DDEBIT	Coop	SSE	Parish Office Electricity	£ 1,482.06	£	70.58
DDEBIT	Coop	BT	Parish Office Telephone	£ 207.14	£	34.52
Transfer	Coop	Barc	PWL funds	£ 25,000.00		
Subtotal				£ 30,507.95	£	109.58
D Debit	Barc	Scottish Water	Water	£ 64.94	£	-
D Debit	Barc	RDC	Rates	£ 384.00	£	-
D Debit	Barc	EDF	SFF Elec	£ 103.00	£	4.46
Transfer	Barc	Coop	To correct funds deposited in wrong bank	£ 10,177.31	£	-
Subtotal				£ 10,729.25	£	4.46
				£ 41,237.20		
Reciepts						
July	Bank	From	Description	Gross Amount	VAT	
	Coop	West & Co		£ 120.00	£	-
	Coop	Barc		£ 10,177.31	£	-
Subtotal				£ 10,297.31		
	Barc	M Rees		£ 16.98	£	-
	Barc	R Amy		£ 165.70	£	-
	Barc	Transfer from Coop		£ 25,000.00	£	-
	Barc	Moloney	Bungalow Rent	£ 550.54	£	-
	Barc	Moloney	Bungalow Rent	£ 750.74	£	-
Subtotal				£ 26,483.96		
				£ 36,781.27		
Receipts Versus Payments				-£ 4,455.93		

Payments and Receipts August 2024						
Payments						
Made in August	Bank	Payee	Description	Gross Amount	VAT	
Cheque	Coop	NVHT	Hall Hire	£ 46.00	£ -	
Cheque	Coop	Staff	Salaries	£ 848.97	£ -	
Cheque	Coop	J Cooke	Gate Post	£ 560.00	£ 93.33	
Cheque	Coop	ICCM	ICCM Membership	£ 100.00	£ -	
DDEBIT	Coop	Global 4	Broadband	£ 25.03	£ 4.17	
Cheque	Coop	I Philo	Skip Hire SFF	£ 390.00	£ 65.00	
Subtotal				£ 1,970.00	£ 162.50	
DDEBIT	Barc	RDC	Rates SFF	£ 384.00	£ -	
DDEBIT	Barc	EDF	Electricity SFF	£ 103.00	£ 4.46	
				£ -	£ -	
				£ -	£ -	
Subtotal				£ 487.00	£ 4.46	
				£ 2,457.00		
Reciepts						
August	Bank	From	Description	Gross Amount	VAT	
	Coop	Northiam Bowls Club	Rent	£ 80.00	£ -	
	Coop	RDC	Precept	£ 56,500.00	£ -	
Subtotal				£ 56,580.00	£ -	
	Barc	Moloney	Bungalow Rent	£ 550.54	£ -	
	Barc	Moloney	Bungalow Rent	£ 750.74	£ -	
	Barc	T Lucke Agri	Sheep Grazing	£ 145.50	£ -	
				£ -	£ -	
Subtotal				£ 1,446.78		
				£ 58,026.78		
Receipts Versus Payments				£ 55,569.78		

There is an additional £146.44 payment to SFF CIC refund for material to repair leaking rest room roof as agreed at the meeting.

