



BUXTED

PARISH COUNCIL

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7th February 2023

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held in St Mary's Church Hall, Church Road, Buxted on Tuesday 7th February 2023 at 7.13p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Blandford (Chairman), Coxon, Humphrey, McQuarrie, and Rose.
Also present: ESCC Cllr. Galley and Clerks Beccy Macklen and Claudine Feltham.

Public: 3.

A representative from the High Hurstwood Village Hall Committee addressed the parish council commenting that the noticeboard outside the village hall is lovely but sadly blocks the CCTV view from the hall to the play area; makes installing the Christmas tree difficult and can cause some issues when equipment is delivered to the hall for events. She asked if the parish council would consider moving the board. The clerk commented that the board has already been moved once to accommodate the Christmas tree location and the new site was agreed at the time with the caretaker. It has also been in situ since March 2022, with no previous issues. The clerk would arrange a site meeting with the HHVH representative to discuss.

Secondly, the representative requested to know what has happened to the Section 106 monies for the new Buxted village hall following the winding up of the Buxted Community Hall Trust. It was explained that the Section 106 money is separate to the Community Hall Trust money has all been spent on the new hall development (which according to the Section 106 Planning Agreement was "solely for the establishment of a new Buxted Community Hall"), whereas the money raised by the Buxted Community Hall Trust was transferred to the Ionides Trust and ringfenced for a new hall should the project be restarted.

Mr G Midmer asked for the parish councils continued support whilst he pursues ESCC and South East Water to address the drainage issues at Coopers Green crossroads. Cllr Galley and Mr Midmer have been dealing with ESCC and South East Water for some years now, but the issues remain. The water continues to flow across the crossroads, so much so the verge on the southwest corner is under water. It therefore remains an ongoing issue and Mr Midmer will continue to keep the parish council informed.

Members also commented on the amount of water across the road outside Oast Farm. This could be because the drain is blocked as well as water run off from the field. Either way, when this water freezes it is hazardous with more than one car skidding off the road during the recent cold weather.

01/02/23 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs Illingworth, Marshall, Roberts, and Wilson

02/02/23 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

All councillors declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Ionides Trust by virtue of the parish council being managing agents of the site.

Cllr. Rose declared a prejudicial interest in any matters relating to the land west of Church Road (Beechbook Park) due to having owned part of the application site.

03/02/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2023 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

04/02/23 ESCC/WDC REPORT

Cllr Galley confirmed the County Council had met that morning and agreed to a 4.99% increase in council tax which will allow them to maintain current services. Two percent of this amount is allocated for adult social care.

Highways – He commented that after many short-term repairs, the A272 leading to Budletts roundabout needs completely resurfacing. He will continue to work on the roads at Cobdown and Etchingwood. Cllr Humphrey mentioned that Millwood Lane is currently closed although people are ignoring this which is dangerous as the bridge is unstable. It was suggested Highways maybe strengthen the signage.

In answer to a question, Cllr Galley advised that approx. 10% of highways works are checked. It was also asked if when a ‘quick fix’ is carried out, who monitors this to make sure a ‘long term’ fix is completed? Cllr Galley could not answer this question.

Planning Issues – Cllr Galley wished to draw members attention to an application to extend the Maresfield Business Park by up to 70 acres with 60,000 m² of business space. This has created a great deal of concern in Maresfield and Fletching with opposition being generated traffic; proximity to housing; and damage to environmental features and ancient woodland. The opposing view is that it would create jobs and help save villages. An action group is going to be formed and members agreed that the parish council should have representation at such a group as although the development is not directly in Buxted, it would inevitably have a knock-on effect in traffic movements through the Buxted and Five Ash Down villages should it go ahead. The clerk would express an interest to both Maresfield and Fletching that members and non members of the parish of Buxted would be interested in forming a focus group.

The chairman also wished to mention that we wish James all the best for a speedy recovery.

05/02/23 NEW HALL/READING ROOM – UPDATE AND CONSIDERATION OF QUOTE FROM AIRS

New Hall – following the previous meeting at which AiRS made a presentation to the council a quote was received and circulated outlining the service AiRS could offer in relation to providing professional support to co-ordinate community engagement on a new hall including setting up a new charity.

The quote is split into five phases with costings for each. The total cost for the consultation stage would be £8,421 followed by £3,486 to help to set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation to manage and run the new hall.

Following the receipt of this quote, the clerk did investigate any other alternative

organisations that might provide the same service, but ESALC are not aware of any.

Members feel very cautious about committing to spending this amount of money on an exercise to garner public views when this was done some years ago. The benefit of asking AiRS to carry out this work is that they are independent. It was therefore **agreed** that a separate meeting should be held to discuss the quote in more depth.

Reading Room – After waiting for over two years WDC Planning Department has finally sent a draft Section 106 Planning Agreement to the parish council which releases the Reading Room site from the New Hall planning permission which stopped any development of the Reading Room site. The chairman signed the Planning Agreement on behalf of the Parish Council. A decision notice will now be issued.

It was noticed that cars continue to park in front of the now closed Reading Room. The clerk was asked to check with the council insurers that the PC has no liability for this.

06/02/23 **EMERGENCY PLAN TEMPLATE – DOES THE PC WISH TO PURCHASE?**

In October 2022 the council agreed to engage with a consultant (as did many other parishes) to create a taylor made parish council emergency and resilience plan at an estimated cost of £250. As part of the plan parish councils were asked to provide various pieces of information such as a list of skills within the community that could be called upon in an emergency. Sadly, despite asking, no one has come forward at this stage and therefore the plan could not be completed by the consultant. Therefore, a plan template is being offered to parish councils at a cost of £120 which can then be completed by the parish council over time and when volunteers come forward. **Resolved** to purchase the template.

07/02/23 **REQUEST TO AMEND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS TO INCREASE CLERKS ONE OFF EXPENDITURE AMOUNT**

Following a review of the financial regulations the clerks wish to draw members attention to the 'authority to spend' which is currently set for the clerk in conjunction with the chairman at £500. The clerks believe this amount is outdated, and in line with other councils would wish for the amount to be raised to £2500. This would allow the clerk and chairman to agree expenditure up to this amount without the requirement of three quotes which are often difficult and timely to achieve.

It was also suggested that quotes for contract be amended from between £100-£3000 to 'clerks should strive to obtain quotes between £2500 and £5000 but **MUST** obtain three quotes for any expenditure over £5000'. Proposed by Cllr. Coxon and seconded by Cllr. McQuarrie unanimously **resolved** to increase the amounts.

08/02/23 **OUTSTANDING MATTERS**

Mobile Phone Coverage: Nothing to report.

Public footpaths: Nothing to report.

Trees: The clerk is currently still awaiting quotes following the receipt of the tree reports.

Road Safety:

- **Water run of outside Oast Farm** – see minute Public minute above. Cllr Galley requested to ask Highways to investigate if it is a blocked drain or water run off.

- **A272 Grass Cutting Contract 2023 – Countryman quote** – after a successful first full year working with Countrymans who cut the grass verges between Buxted and Coopers Green crossroads a quote for 2023 has been received. There has been an increase on prices for all clients based on the increase in fuel prices, equipment, and wage increase. Cost have been raised from £301 to £395 per cut. **Agreed** to continue with the contract.

Wealden Local Development Framework: Nothing to report.

Property issues:

- **The Dene, Uckfield – update** – Following the previous parish council meeting, the clerk to Uckfield TC referred the council’s resolution to its members who agreed to an overage clause but have asked that Buxted Parish Council pay 50% of legal fees (or Buxted pays for its own legal fees). Clerk to ascertain the parish councils’ legal fees prior to making a final decision.
- **Buxted Recreation Ground** – Despite trying to obtain three quotes, Buxted Football Club have only been able to obtain two quotes for the replacement fencing outside the pavilion. The quotes totalled £1,740 and £1,244 plus VAT. Members agreed to go with the quote totalling £1,244 and as this item was not listed on the agenda it would be ratified at the March PC meeting. **Resolved** to opt for the £1,244 costing.

Communications Matters: Nothing to report.

09/02/23 CORRESPONDENCE

P1 – ESCC - Rural Verges as Wildlife Corridors – Trial of Early Season Reduction in Rural Grass Cutting 2023
Members unanimously **agreed** that the parish council would not accept the idea of reduced cutting for the purpose of wildlife corridors when they do not exist on any of the verges currently cut by ESCC.

10/02/23 COMMITTEE MEETINGS
None

11/02/23 FINANCE

- i) **Payments:** On the proposal of Cllr. McQuarrie seconded by Cllr. Coxon, payments totalling £18,986.84 covered by cheque numbers 4970 and 4981 and direct debits were approved.
- ii) **Bank reconciliations:** The clerk had circulated completed reconciliations for January which were signed.
- iii) **Noted:** RBS reports: Ear marked reserves, Trial Balance, Receipts and Payments, Cash, and Investment Reconciliation

12/02/23 OTHER MEETINGS

The clerk reported back on the attended online clerk’s forum which focused on elections, levelling up, issues with South East Water and the Emergency Plan.

13/02/23 MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Cllr Coxon wished to ask if there is anything that can be done about the traffic outside of Buxted Primary School. Cllr Galley commented he has had many meetings regarding this issue which has included looking at various options. The school crossing person has made an improvement but there doesn’t seem to be any long-term solution. The clerk was asked to write to the Primary School to comment that the issue seems have become worse with traffic queuing both ways and anything can be done to keep the traffic moving.

Cllr Coxon also wished to mention that there seems to be a lot of councillors who do not turn up to meetings. It was confirmed that in the last year, the parish council has had one councillor resign, and two that had to stand down due to not attending meetings for six consecutive months. It is very much hoped that the upcoming elections may bring new councillors to the parish council.

14/02/23 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The chairman commented that the elections are in May, and she hoped that councillors would re-stand. There are 15 seats on the council, but we now only have 9 councillors with one due to stand down at the end of this term.

15/02/23 CONFIDENTIAL SESSION – THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED AS THE AGENDA ITEM RELATES TO THE CONSIDERATION OF SENSITIVES MATTERS RELATING TO AN ASSET OF THE COUNCIL

The meeting closed at 8.38p.m.

DATE RAISED	CASE NO	DESCRIPTION	OPEN/CLOSED RESOLUTION
21/01/2021 ONGOING	00539076	Blocked drain outside St Mary’s Church, Church Road, Buxted	25/1 – passed to officer to investigate
17/02/2022 ONGOING		A272/Budletts Lane is deteriorating again and needs resurfacing. It is now becoming dangerous when vehicles are trying to avoid potholes are going onto the wrong side of the carriageway. Etchingwood Lane is absolutely dreadful. Millwood Lane is getting terrible towards the timber yard.	Roy Galley visited each site with Highway Steward
28/03/22 CLOSED	00673252	Licence application to install a dog waste bin on highway verge in Five Ash Down	28/3 – application for licence submitted to ESCC – confirmation received and passed to Licencing department 28/6 – No response received from Licencing so a chasing email sent. August 2022 – site meeting with ESCC to agree location of new bin. September 2022 – Location agreed with WDC. Clerk completing licencing forms for ESCC. November 2022 – Costing being agreed at PC meeting and payment for licence being made. 8/11 – costing agreed, and cheques sent to ESCC for licences. 30/1 – Licence received
15/12/2022 CLOSED	00757234	Reported broken grit bin in FAD (nr junction with A26)	21/12 – email received from Highways advising the area does not meet the criteria for improvements! Slightly confusing as it is a grit bin not an area. Clerk will respond and ask for more details. Highways responded advising the grit bin does not belong to them. If it needs replacing the PC would have to apply for a licence and pay all costs.