



BUXTED

PARISH COUNCIL

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13th February 2024

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held in Five Ash Down Village Hall on Tuesday 13th February 2024 at 7.25p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Blandford (Chairman), Coxon, Duck, Humphrey, and Marshall.
Also present: ESCC Cllr. Galley, WDC Cllr Shaw and Clerks Beccy Macklen and Claudine Feltham.

Public : A local resident comment that he is continuing to push the issue previously raised regarding potholes. Church Road pot holes are particularly bad. The puddles that form in the pot holes makes it exceedingly difficult to know the depth of the hole and can be dangerous if stepped in. There is also an issue with deterioration of fixed pot holes, particularly in Gordon Road. Photographs have been provided and forwarded to ESCC Cllr Galley showing how fast they are deteriorating after being filled. The economics of refilling cannot be feasible.

He also wished to raise the issue of the flooded football pitch and appealed to the Parish Council to support the Football Club with trying to find a resolution.

The chairman commented that if a pot hole is deeper than 10cm ESCC should come out and fix within a short amount of time, and it is worth reporting pot holes (if you have the time).

Cllr Coxon mentioned that he has not seen a gulley sucker for a long time. The drains from the school into Buxted are blocked so the water remains on the road exacerbating the problem. Cllr Galley advised that all gulleys are supposed to be unblocked once every year.

Cllr Galley shared the council's frustration and would rather there is a programme of works to resurface whole areas of road rather than continual repairs. He confirmed is also still working on Gordon Road given the state of the recent repairs which are already breaking up.

01/02/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs Roberts, Rose, Smith, and Wilson

02/02/24 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 Duck declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the High Hurstwood

Village Hall Committee by virtue of being a member of the committee.

Cllr Humphrey declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Five Ash Down Village Hall Committee by virtue of being the parish council representative on the committee.

03/02/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2023 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

04/02/24 ESCC/WDC REPORT

Cllr Galley reported the pot hole issue in the minute above. His monthly update was received and circulated that morning.

Traffic Lights, Coopers Green – being replaced/renovated. Cllr Galley wished to clarify the background to this issue. The parish council wished to stress that there needed to be joined up thinking between ESCC and WDC given the new development in Durrants Field which will increase the pedestrian use of the crossings. As a one-off, changing one existing traffic light to pedestrianised would be expensive, but surely as the traffic lights are being replaced/renewed this would be the ideal time to add a pedestrianised crossing to each light.

Suspend standing orders to allow Graham Midmer to speak:

Durrants field development will have a pedestrianised pathway at the junction of the traffic lights which will increase the amount of people using the crossing by foot.

Reinstate standing orders.

Cllr Humphrey noticed a fly posting at millpond and reported through the ESCC system with photographs but received a response which was unsatisfactory. Cllr Humphrey will email Cllr Galley the details.

WDC Cllr Shaw reported that he is pleased to be back and sent a monthly report which was circulated. He would endeavour to answer any queries relating to the Local Plan as they arose.

05/02/24 DISPOSAL OF READING ROOM – UPDATE

Following the December meeting the agreed purchaser pulled out of the sale, however a second purchaser came forward with a slightly higher offer. This purchaser had many questions regarding various issues which were resolved but had specific queries relating to drainage. This led to a broken but sealed up manhole being uncovered to discover a cess pit which has been emptied and a new manhole cover being installed. Having a cess pit created an issue for the purchaser who revised their offer to £273,500. Due to time constraints, this information was circulated to all members who agreed via email to accept the revised offer. The agreement to accept this offer and continue with the sale of the building was ratified at this meeting.

06/02/24 OUTSTANDING MATTERS

Mobile Phone Coverage: nothing to report.

Public footpaths: nothing to report.

Trees: nothing to report.

Road Safety:

➤ **VAS – Five Ash Down – update following site meeting with Highway Officers**

Following the previous meeting the clerk attended a site meeting with ESCC Traffic Safety officers with a view to discuss a proposed VAS in Five Ash Down. The data from the 2018 survey was assessed together with potential sites. ESCC Officers advised that based on the data alone they would not install a VAS as there is no significant amount of persistent speeding. Nevertheless, they advised that it is parish council funds that would pay for the VAS so if it wished to spend the money then so be it. The difficulty was finding a suitable site. A VAS must be more than 30m from a junction, so this limited sites due to the junction of Court Lane and the High Street. One verge was located but quite often this could have vehicles parked in front of it who use the village shop/post office, so could hide the VAS. Located any further into the village traffic would already have slowed because of the parked cars.

A second site for a VAS was also looked for but there is nowhere to put it on the west facing side of the road in the village as there are no verges and it was not recommended to have two signs on the east side.

Therefore, it was concluded that a combination of siting issues and speeding evidence does not justify the parish council spending more than £5,000 for a VAS camera that legally can only be used for 3 months at a time.

Local FAD member, Cllr Humphrey suggested that if residents believe there is a local speeding issue, it could be a suitable location for community Speedwatch. It is believed community Speedwatch would have a wider impact as you receive a letter from the Police if you speed rather than no repercussions from a VAS.

➤ **Replacement Traffic lights at Coopers Green**

At the end of January, the parish council received notification from ESCC that the repair/replacement works would be taking place on the Coopers Green Traffic lights for a month from 26th February. Following questions from councillors, the clerk ascertained the following information:

- all equipment will be replaced, nothing of the old site will remain.
- The signals staging is being altered completely to make it safer for all traffic, this is due to the increased right turns that will be generated by the new developments. The current method of staging allows for right turns against oncoming traffic; the new staging will be four separate movements where each direction has a green light while all other approaches are on red.
- Coopers Green crossroads has been built with just traffic management in mind, it was never considered to be a pedestrian crossing. We are just replacing equipment in this instance. The decision to convert to a crossing would come from the Traffic and Safety team, should you wish to contact them please use the following link: Enquiry form - contact the road safety team.

Members are extremely disappointed at the lack of joined up thinking between the maintenance and safety teams and WDC given the number of new dwellings given or allocated for planning permission around the Coopers Green traffic lights (on all sides).

Wealden Local Development Framework - Local Plan – initial thoughts on documents

At the end of January WDC published its new Local Plan which provided a vast amount of information on development proposals for the next 15-20 years. This will inevitably have an impact on the parish, specifically the area around Coopers Green/Five Ash Down. The plan is not yet out for public consultation, this is due in the first part of March for eight weeks.

WDC Cllr Shaw suggested looking at the detail of each SHEELA site. All sites that

were put forward have been fully assessed with some being disregarded and others being carried forward. Each site gives information which can be assessed, can be agreed/disagreed with, and challenged.

Cllr Marshall asked Cllr Shaw if there would be standards put on housing builds? Yes, it is not just about sites, there are sections referring to climate impact and what our expectations should be including size scale and quality of housing. However, they must work within the realms of Government requirements and standards. The plan also includes employment which is vital to the economy.

It was proposed by the chairman that a working group be formed to look at the plan and its impact on the parish in more detail. Members who wished to be on the working party are Cllrs. Blandford, Coxon, Humphrey, Marshall, and Smith. Residents' groups are also being formed which the parish council can consult with together with WDC Cllr Shaw.

Property issues:

➤ **Parish Council grass cutting – change of contractor.**

Sadly, our longstanding grass cutting contractor Jon Avery has decided to scale back his business and no longer will be cutting our various verges and part of High Hurstwood Recreation Ground and play area. The clerk has asked Countryman for a quote to take over these pieces of land. A quote has been circulated to all councillors and **agreed.**

➤ **Football Club - request for financial help towards a review and remedial recommendations for the waterlogged football pitch.**

The chairman of the football club has contacted the parish council to provide a Club update as we enter the new year. Due to the wet weather, they have managed only one junior game on a Sunday morning, with no football at home in Buxted for the Seniors or Juniors from the first week of November through to today almost February - no football which equals a huge loss of income. They are researching the best way to remedy this and have asked the parish council for financial help to pay for an agronomist & specialist who would be able to assess and make recommendations for the football pitch.

Alternatively, the Football Club could request a company provide a quote for draining the pitch which would then have to provide a specification of what is needed. Cllr Humphrey could recommend a few companies that could provide quotes which would be forwarded to the Football Club.

Communications Matters: nothing to report.

07/02/24 **CORRESPONDENCE**
No priority correspondence

08/02/24 **COMMITTEE MEETINGS**
None

09/02/24 **FINANCE**

- i) **Payments:** On the proposal of Cllr. Marshall seconded by Cllr. Coxon, payments totalling £5473.72 (BACS and Direct Debits) for January and £5499.13 (BACS and Direct Debits) for February were approved.
- ii) **Bank reconciliations:** The clerk had circulated completed reconciliations for December 2023 and January 2024 which were signed.
- iii) **Noted:** RBS reports: Ear marked reserves, Trial Balance, Receipts and Payments, Cash, and Investment Reconciliation
- iv) The RFO commented the Buxted Unity Trust account is now open and money has been transferred. We have also opened an account with the Cambridge

- Building Society with an opening balance of £1,000. The RFO requested approval to transfer a further £84,000 into this account. **Agreed**
- v) Proposed three-year engagement term with Mulberry & Co and fixed hourly rate until end 2025/26 fiscal year – **agreed**.

10/02/24 OTHER MEETINGS

Cllr Blandford attended the Wealden Against Over Development (WGOD) meeting regarding the new local plan. Minutes have been circulated.

Mockbeggars Farm planning application hearing was interesting. It clearly made the point of how important it is to really assess and have all information for each site proposed for development.

11/02/24 MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Cllr Coxon asked why the A272 closed between Coopers Green and Budletts roundabout was closed for five days - some tree cutting took place.

12/02/24 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

The meeting closed at 8.50p.m.

1. Apologies – Val Wilson, James Roberts, John Rose, and Peter Smith
2. Declarations of Interest - none
3. **Buxted Scouts:**

- **Scout Hut – License to alter and Landscaping information.**

Following the December meeting, all points were forwarded to the Scouts representative. Further information was received which was circulated which did resolve some issues but raised further questions. As a responsible landowner, the Trust wish to ensure site safety and therefore asked a Health and Safety/Risk expert to visit the site and provide a professional view of the information provided by the architect. A report was formulated and passed to the Scouts in preparation for a meeting which took place the previous Friday. At that meeting, the Scouts representatives provided answers to all the queries and suggested that as they require an independent Health and Safety Consultant for the project, they asked if they could approach our consultant to ascertain whether he could take on this position. This would mean that he no longer works directly for the Trust but is very aware of the Trust's concerns so would be an idea person to take on this responsibility. We have been advised this appointment is now in place.

The Scouts are very keen for the Trust to sign the Licence to Alter to enable the funds to be released from the Youth Investment Fund so they could then appoint a principal contractor. However, the licence needs to be brought up to date and:

Prior to signing the Licence, the Trust has requested its solicitor provide a view from a legal perspective and to advise what weight the licence carries. A response was forwarded from the solicitor, late on the 13th of February suggesting some extra clauses and some alterations to existing clauses. Trust would like to add an additional clause to the licence to require the Scouts to rectify any drainage issues (to our specification) should the planned foul and surface water drainage found to be inadequate.

A meeting is to be arranged with the Scouts and architect to discuss final points on drainage, cut and fill, and levels with Cllr Rose and Humphrey and a landscape architect. Once this has taken place and the solicitor suggestions have been included, the Ionides Trust **agreed** to sign the licence.

4. **Electricity Supply to Land** – as part of the new Scout Hut development the Scouts would like to run the cable from the existing pole on the edge of the new hall site under ground to the new hut. Given that the pole is old, and an overhead cable would prevent the hall from being built it is proposed that the Trust investigate the costs for the pole to be moved to the boundary of the site (Framfield Road) and run the supply underground from there. This would allow for both the Scouts and new hall to have separate metered supplies in a nearby cabinet.
5. **Parking Enforcement in car park** – the new parking enforcement scheme took effect in January and has an immediate impact. When visiting the site, the previous week the clerk noted just one car in the car park which has now released these spaces for genuine users. Sadly, the regular illegal users have moved to the Reading Room, but this issue will soon be resolved due to the sale of the site.
6. **Will gift** – Due to the sad passing of a local Buxted resident, the Trust was contacted to advise that the resident had left a gift to the Buxted Community Hall Trust in his will. As the beneficiary of the remaining funds of the BCHT the Trust has been contacted to ask if it would accept the will gift. The Trust would thankfully accept the gift but will have strict conditions regarding its safekeeping and review in several years if he village hall has not been built.
7. **Set date for Ionides AGM** – 12th March 2024

Meeting Closed 9.45pm