



# BUXTED

## PARISH COUNCIL

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9<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### MINUTES

**Minutes of the meeting of the Council held in Five Ash Down Village Hall on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 7.09p.m.**

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

**Public :** None

01/04/24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Apologies received and accepted from Cllr Marshall.

#### 02/04/24 **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 Smith declared a personal interest in any matters related to allotments due to being an allotment holder.

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.

03/04/24 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

#### 04/04/24 **ESCC/WDC REPORT**

##### **Coopers Green Traffic Lights**

Cllr Galley reported on the new traffic lights at Coopers Green and that there has been some feedback regarding the timing of the signals. He also commented that the lights cost a total of £126K.

In answer to a question Cllr Galley advised the contractor would have been subcontracted by ESCC to Balfour Beatty who would have again sub contracted the work subject to a competitive tender process.

Cllr Humphrey wished to thank the contractors who completed the work ahead of

schedule, were tidy and have made a good job of the new lights and associated works.

### **School Crossing at Buxted Primary School**

Cllr Galley is of the opinion that Highways will not allow a permanent crossing on the brow of the hill and that a lollipop person will be the best solution. There was some comment that it is not safe enough to have a pelican crossing but safe enough for a lollipop person.

The chairman also commented that we currently have road works at this every location which require traffic lights which have worked perfectly and can be seen when approaching from both sides. If these are deemed to be safe, why is it not safe to have a permanent crossing?

Members have noted the pathway has been improved eastwards which is an improvement but is the pathway going to be improved the other side towards Buxted village to allow safer walking to school?

The clerk has emphasised all this to ESCC and is awaiting an official response from the Road Safety Team.

### **Footpath 24 High Hurstwood**

The issues have been largely resolved so works should start in June with a possible completion in September.

### **Local Plan – Ashdown Business Park**

Cllr Galley attended a Fletching Parish Council meeting the previous evening at which a presentation was provided by a local resident. There will inevitably be an impact on surrounding towns and villages if the extension to the Ashdown Business Park goes ahead in the Local Plan, together with a possible further housing development site the west side of Uckfield/A26. The Parish Council confirmed it would be referring to this matter in its response to the Local Plan consultation.

Cllr Duck wanted to comment that the ditching work carried out in High Hurstwood has been very effective. Cllr Humphrey also commented that the works have also worked in Five Ash Down.

05/04/24

### **EMERGENCY REVENUE EXPENDITURE**

On the receipt of the findings of the 2023/24 external audit the only advice received was to review and increase the emergency expenditure from £500 to £1000. Proposed by Cllr Rose, seconded by Cllr Duck – **approved**.

06/04/24

### **REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Prior to the meeting, all councillors were requested to review the current Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. With the addition of the amendment at minute 05/04/24 to the Financial Regulations, it was **resolved** no further changes are required to the documents and a review was noted. Proposed by Cllr Humphrey and seconded by Cllr Coxon – **approved**.

07/04/24

### **REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENT**

The purpose of the independent internal audit is to review and report to Buxted Parish Council whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective. The internal audit's function is to test and report on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports are made available to all members of Buxted Parish Council to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) at the financial year end.

Buxted Parish Council have engaged Mulberry & Co for internal audit. Both the interim and year end audit are being conducted by Michelle Webber on behalf of Mulberry & Co. Mulberry & Co are independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of the council and neither the internal auditor or the firm have any conflicts of interest with the parish council. Michelle Webber has over 27 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 12 years specialising in local government. Michelle Webber is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of Buxted Parish Council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client, nor do they provide any management or financial assistance to the client.

**08/04/24 PROPOSED LONE WORKING POLICY FOR CLERKS**

In the process of completing the CiLCA clerks' qualification, Claudine has recommended the Parish Council adopt a lone working policy for clerks. A draft policy was circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Rose it was **resolved** to adopt the Lone Working Policy.

**09/04/24 DISPOSAL OF READING ROOM – UPDATE**

No further update, the solicitors are continuing to work on the sale of the property.

**10/04/24 PLANS FOR ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY – UPDATE**

The local plan working group met the previous week and discussed various matters relating to the plan (see minute 11/04/24 below) and how best to present the local plan at the Annual Assembly. It was agreed to have an informal style gathering at Buxted Primary School, presenting each of the allocated development sites asking for feedback on these and any other aspects of the Local Plan which parishioners wish to comment on. WDC Cllrs Shaw and Manvell and ESCC Cllr Galley have also been invited to attend.

Claudes and Beccy to arrange refreshments. Clerk will ask if an officer from WDC could be present to answer any questions.

The Annual Assembly is to be held in **Buxted Primary School at 7.00pm on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April.**

**11/04/24 OUTSTANDING MATTERS**

**Mobile Phone Coverage:** Nothing to report.

**Public footpaths:** Nothing to report.

**Trees:** Noting to report.

**Road Safety:** Through various media platforms, the issue of safe access to Buxted Primary School is back in the headlines. The Parish Council has received a grant application request from Buxted Cricket Club to provide further parking spaces for parents which is discussed in minute 14/04/24 below, however it is very aware that the footpath from the village to the school is unsuitable and there are daily hold ups on the A272 due to cars trying to drop off and pick up at the school. Over the years, the school has worked tirelessly to try and resolve this issue to the best of its ability feeling that the current system works well. The clerk to the Parish Council has again written to ESCC to try and assist with resolving the situation further. Previous correspondence with ESCC in 2014 explain the site did not meet the criteria for a pelican crossing and it was considered that one would not be appropriate in this location due to it being located on the brow of a hill. Attempts to find a new lollipop person have been unsuccessful. Therefore, the clerk has written again to ESCC to ask if the site can be reassessed for a crossing, and/or, another round of

advertising is undertaken to try to find a new lollipop person. The issue of safe walking to school along the footpath from the village will also be raised. The clerk will be meeting with the Head Teacher after the easter holiday break.

**Wealden Local Development Framework:** The working party met the previous week and discussed the allocated development sites for the parish together with sites outside of the parish (White House Farm/Ashdown Business Park) that would inevitably have an impact on the parish. The size and amount of information in the WLP was also discussed and it was agreed to focus on site specific responses together with any comments related to other aspects of the plan that members have a particular knowledge of. It is almost impossible to respond to all elements of the plan. Some feedback has been received from residents directly to the clerk and the working group looks forward to more views at the Annual Assembly before collating a formal response.

**Members resolved** that following the Annual Assembly a formal response would be collated, circulated, and published prior to the formal submission to Wealden District Council. If any vastly different views come forward at the Annual Assembly an emergency parish council meeting could be held to discuss changes.

**Property issues:**

- **CONSIDERATION OF COUNTRYMAN QUOTE TO CUT HIGH HURSTWOOD RECREATION GROUND AS PREVIOUS CONTRACTOR HAS PROVIDED NOTICE**  
The Parish Council recently approved Countryman to carry out the grass cutting in the children's play area and around the field at High Hurstwood. Countryman has now provided a quote to cut the entire field 10 times per year alongside the other cutting. The quote is for £220.00 per cut. **Members resolved to approve the quote.**
- **BONFIRE SOCIETY – UPDATE FOLLOWING REQUEST TO WDC REGARDING PERMISSION FOR A STORAGE CONTAINER**  
Following the previous parish council meeting, the clerk contacted WDC planning department and was advised that as the container would not be for the use by the parish council, it would require planning permission. The Bonfire Society have been advised and therefore no longer wish to have a container on site.

**Communications Matters:** No update

12/04/24 **CORRESPONDENCE**  
No priority correspondence.

13/04/24 **COMMITTEE MEETINGS**  
None

14/04/24 **FINANCE**

- i) **Payments:** On the proposal of Cllr. Roberts seconded by Cllr. Rose, payments for April totalling £12,426.90 paid by BACS and Direct Debit were approved. **Members also approved the updated March financial payments list.**
- ii) **Noted:** RBS reports: Ear marked reserves, Trial Balance, Receipts and Payments, Cash, and Investment Reconciliation

Cllr Roberts commented that we are largely on track with regards expenditure for the financial year 2023/24.

iii) **Grant Request – Buxted Cricket club to create parking spaces for Buxted Primary School drop-off and pick-up.**

A grant request has been received from Buxted Cricket Club to lay a permeable surface on their car park for parents of Buxted Primary School to park to avoid the inevitable hold ups during drop off and pick up time. Although the Parish Council can appreciate the cricket club trying to assist with the issue, it cannot support the encouragement of crossing the already busy A272 without some assistance from either a lollipop person or a pelican crossing. Therefore, at this time it cannot approve the grant request but would continue to work with ESCC to try and resolve this issue. If a permanent crossing can be established the parish council would be able to reconsider the grant application.

Although not on the agenda, we have received a grant request from FAD Village Hall for a Community Day. The request is for a grant of £680 to pay for a music for the event. This will be on the agenda for next month for a decision, but member's initial response was favourable.

**15/04/24 OTHER MEETINGS**  
No other meetings

**16/04/24 MEMBERS QUESTIONS**  
Cllr Smith commented at the amount of fly posting in relation to events at High Hurstwood Village Hall. We request they take them down following the event. Cllr Duck will mention this to the organiser at the village hall.

**17/04/24 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The new Beacon will soon be in situ. The clerk will request an update for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day arrangements on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 from the Bonfire Society, so it stays in the forefront of people's minds.

**Change date of May meeting to Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May.**

The meeting closed at 8.04p.m.

**1. Apologies – Cllr Marshall**

**2. Declarations of Interest**

**3. Quote to install underground electricity cable and replace existing pole with new one on boundary of the site.**

While the works to build a new Scout Hut were taking place it was considered sensible to obtain a quote to replace the existing old electricity pole inside the site with a new underground cable which would service both the new Scout Hut and a new village hall (were it to be built). A quote was received totalling £23,591.47. Members discussed the pros and cons of moving the pole and fitting a new underground cable and **resolved** that if a trench is dug for the new Scout Hut to join the mains sewerage it could be considered. However, this would depend on a build of a new village hall in this location or alternatively if the Scouts wish to contribute towards the works.

**4. Car Park Barrier**

The parking enforcement in the Ionides car park appears to be working very well, but we still have a broken barrier which we are unable to secure down if needed. Previous quotes have been around the £3,000 mark. It was **agreed** to wait until all works have been completed at the Scout Hut prior to fitting a new barrier. Alternatively, Cllr Rose has suggested we look at replacing the D Shape fitting by a welder. Cllr Rose to investigate options.

The clerk would also ask the parking enforcement company if any fines have been issued.

**5. Buxted Scouts:**

**Scout Hut – update**

No update. Planning permission has not yet been issued for the design amendments so the build cannot go ahead yet.

Clerk to ask for a monthly written update to keep the Trust up to date rather than regular site meetings and now that Ian Anderson is on board as health and safety consultant.

Meeting ended 8.30pm