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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST PARISH COUNCIL, REMOTELY VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 7th JANUARY 2021 AT 6.30PM

Attendance

Chairman	Cllr Fischel
Ashurst Parish Council (APC)	Cllrs Hammond, Hedley, Jesse, Knight, Nicholson and Russell
Horsham District Council (HDC)	Cllrs Lloyd & Platt
West Sussex County Council (WSCC)	Cllr Barling
Clerk	Elizabeth Leggo

Further to the Coronavirus Act 2020, this meeting was held remotely via Zoom. Members of the public were given the opportunity to email or telephone the Clerk in advance with any questions or statements and were invited to ask for a link to observe the meeting remotely.

To discuss any questions submitted by the public.

No members of the public were present for the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence.

None for this meeting.

2. Declaration of Members' Interests.

None for this meeting.

3. Approve the Minutes of the Meetings of 1st and 8th October 2020

The minutes were circulated to all councillors and taken as read. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes are a true record of both meetings and were signed by the Chairman. The Chairman would post these to the Clerk.

4. Update on Covid-19

It was noted that, given government guidelines on social distancing, along with guidance from SSALC and NALC, meetings for the coming months would continue to be held remotely via Zoom.

The John Eaton Hut has remained closed, except for the toilet, which Partridge Green Football Club can use at its own risk when play recommences when we re-enter tier 3.

Partridge Green Football Club has set up its own QR code for test and trace and the Clerk has forwarded the Club's risk assessment to the Council's insurer.

5. Reports from District & County Councillors

Cllr Platt updated the meeting as follows:

- The Capital Theatre had been awarded a £185,000 grant, but obviously cannot operate at present due to lockdown.
- HDC has lost a lot of revenue this last year so is having an organisational restructuring with the aim of saving around £2 million per year.
- At a recent meeting, HDC had passed a motion which was critical of the Government's proposal for a new method of calculating housing numbers.
- Cllrs Mike Croker and Platt had put forward a motion supporting the Black Lives Matter Campaign.
- An update on the financial position showed an overspend of £5.4 million.

- A local walking and cycling scheme was approved for Horsham Town, as part of a national scheme.
- The HDC nature recovery programme, 'Wilder Horsham District' is now underway. This initiative sees HDC working closely with Sussex Wildlife Trust to promote the protection and enhancement of wildlife and wildlife corridors throughout the district.

Cllr Lloyd said that he had little to add Cllr Platt's comprehensive update, except to say that a lot of ward members will be affected by HDC's Strategic Plan. A number of lively debates on this topic are likely to ensue. He also updated the meeting on the issue of parking in strategic sites. Finally, HDC is hoping to trial food waste collections from the end of February.

Cllr Fischel asked whether Cllrs Lloyd and Platt might be able to speak to someone at HDC on behalf of APC to ensure that APC is not moved from an unclassified settlement to a secondary settlement in the Local Plan. Cllr Lloyd asked Cllr Fischel to forward a copy of previous correspondence with HDC.

Cllr Barling apologised for not attending the last meeting due to Broadband problems. He updated the Council on vaccine distribution. It is anticipated that Steyning residents will have to go to Storrington.

He advised that WSCC amenity tips are still open, although people should not go there unless the trip is absolutely necessary. Libraries are closed, although you can click and collect or return books.

Regarding finance at WSCC, the Government has paid all the Council's Covid costs. WSCC has a balanced budget for the next year, with a 2% increase in Council tax and 3% for adult social care.

Regarding the Local Plan, Cllr Barling informed the meeting that Mayfield is likely to be excluded from this.

Action: Cllr Fischel to send Cllrs Lloyd & Platt APC correspondence regarding the proposed reclassification.

6. Outstanding Actions

Action	Outcome
Cllr Fischel to speak to the Landlord of the Fountain Inn regarding its registration as an Asset of Community Value.	To carry over until Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed.
Cllr Fischel to find out more about the VAS and what Planning permission is required.	To carry over until after Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed.
Cllr Fischel to continue dialogue with Chair of the Governors at Ashurst Primary School re payment for use of Ground.	A new invoice has been sent to WSCC along with a revised agreement showing WSCC as the signing party. Awaiting payment. Clerk to follow up as necessary.
Cllr Fischel to send the Clerk the meter reading.	Done.
Clerk to contact Utility Aid to ask them to proceed with search for cheaper water and electricity for the Ground, as a charity.	In progress – see Item 7 below.
Cllrs Russell and Hammond to review Wicksteed results and make repairs as necessary at the playground.	See Item 7 below.
Local Plan - Cllrs Fischel and Knight to discuss how to follow up on Ashurst's concerns regarding the suggested reclassification for Ashurst from an unclassified settlement to a secondary.	Ongoing but see 5 above.
Clerk to send councillors some dates to meet at the Recreation Ground.	Wait until Covid restrictions are removed. Perhaps this Autumn!
Clerk to inform Mulberry & Co that the Council does not require an interim audit.	Complete.
Clerk to inform Lloyds Bank that the Council will accept the offer of £300.	£300 now paid.
Residents of Ashurst to be contacted via the Village Newsletter and possibly in addition via the Village e-mail about the extent of interest in the Gigabit Scheme.	Included in the Newsletter. Done.

Cllr Nicholson to continue his dialogue with Greg Merrett and WSCC regarding Broadband and the Universal Service Obligation.	Ongoing – see item 12 below.
Cllr Nicholson and the Community Speedwatch Group to continue with their live training.	Ongoing – see Item 13 below.
Cllr Nicholson to continue his online research regarding a possible grant for the equipment.	Ongoing – see item 13 below.
Clerk to email WSCC again to find out more about using s106 funds for this & if any funds are left over after the allocation for PROW works of which APC was unaware.	Clerk advised that funds are available. Cllr Barling has provided a letter of support. Clerk to follow up re payment.
Cllr Fischel would contact a couple of tree surgeons, including Cllr Hedley’s recommendation, to obtain quotes for the required tree surgery on the Recreation Ground.	Done - See Section 14 below.
Cllr Fischel agreed that she would inform everyone when the trees have been delivered.	Completed.
Cllr Fischel will speak to a member of the public about his concerns for an old oak tree on the Ground.	Completed.
Clerk to draw up a cheque for Age UK.	Completed.
Cllr Knight to ask at Steyning Leisure Centre who the Swimming pool donation was payable to and where to send it.	Completed.

7. Recreation Ground Matters.

The bank balance at HSBC as at 20th December 2020 was **£7,835.62**

Income received 1st Oct 2020 – 7th Jan 2021		
Slinfold Concert Band	Use of Ground – donation	£60
Partridge Green Football Club	Rent	£300
Expenditure authorised 1st Oct 2020 – 7th Jan 2021		
Sussex Land Services Ltd	Grass cutting Sept & Oct	£459
EDF Energy	Electricity Oct, Nov & Dec	£84

HDC’s playground inspection came back as low risk, saying chain links worn, loose eye bolts on the flat swings and rust on the slide. As there were fewer inspections in 2020 due to Covid-19, HDC would be sending the invoice for these inspections in the first quarter of the next financial year as it totals just £28.80.

Cllrs Russell and Hammond would make good those items highlighted in the Wicksteed inspection before the next meeting.

Under Tier 5, outdoor play equipment is still allowed to stay open. The signage reminding people that the equipment cannot be sanitised and that it is used at people’s own risk is still in place. Regarding the play equipment, and in line with Government Guidance, the Trust agreed to put the following into action:

- Have a sign encouraging social distancing.
- Have a suggested maximum number of users of one family unit on one piece of equipment at any time.
- Have signage encouraging people to sanitise their hands and the equipment.
- Since it was impractical for the Trust to clean the equipment, even a couple of times a week, a notice to the effect that the equipment was used at people’s own risk needs to be displayed prominently.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk would design signage and Cllr Fischel would review and put this up. Partridge Green Football Club had played 3 games before all games were suspended due to Tier 5. Most of the rubbish at the Ground has gone, but the sink remains blocked and the JE Hut is far from tidy!

Cllr Hammond to send the Clerk a copy of the receipt for the cost of the replacement glass. There was no claim to be made on the insurance since our excess is £250 and the cost of the glass was less.

Cllr Fischel thanked Cllrs Hammond and Russell and Rob Russell for purchasing and fitting the glass.

The Clerk asked Cllr Russell when the last legionella water safety test had been carried out since it should be done on a regular basis, even though the buildings are not currently in use. It was AGREED by the Trustees that safety testing would be undertaken once we came out of lockdown.

Cllr Fischel advised that there were more deer than usual on the Recreation Ground, as an adjoining fence has come down. This could result in an increased risk of Lyme disease. It was AGREED therefore to monitor this and a temporary fence may need to be erected.

Actions: *Cllrs Russell and Hammond to review the Wicksteed inspection report and make good as needed.
Cllr Hammond to send the Clerk the invoice for the new glass for the Cricket Pavilion.
Clerk to design appropriate signage for the play equipment. Cllr Fischel to review and put up.
Cllr Russell to organise legionella testing after lockdown is lifted.
Cllrs Fischel to monitor the deer situation at the Recreation Ground.*

8. Planning Matters.

None for this meeting.

9. Planning Decisions from HDC

Parish: Ashurst PC Application Number: DC/19/1307

Site: Batts School Lane Ashurst Steyning West Sussex BN44 3AP

Description: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of a two storey detached dwelling with associated landscaping, parking and access.

Decision: Application Permitted

Date of Decision: 25/09/2020

Parish: Ashurst PC Application Number: DC/20/1402

Site: Sixberries Golden Lane Ashurst Steyning West Sussex BN44 3AU

Description: Erection of a first floor extension above existing garage to create habitable living space.

Decision: Application Permitted

Date of Decision: 24/11/2020

Parish: Ashurst PC Application Number: DC/20/1769

Site: Merrion Farm Bines Green Partridge Green West Sussex RH13 8EH

Description: Installation of a 36m x 50m clay-lined earth walled slurry lagoon with associated surrounding engineering works.

Decision: Application Permitted

Date of Decision: 15/12/2020

Parish: Ashurst PC Application Number: DC/20/2106

Site: Kings Barn Farm Peppers Lane Ashurst Steyning West Sussex BN44 3AX

Description: Overhead Lines.

Decision: NO OBJECTION Overhead Line

Date of Decision: 07/12/2020

It was noted that a complaint had been received regarding the erection of a marquee outside the Fountain Inn. Ashurst Parish Council had previously informed the owner that as a parish council, Ashurst cannot comment on this and that it needed to go to HDC. It was agreed that no comments were needed on this.

Compliance Cases:

Complaint. EN/20/0603 15/12/2020

The Fountain Inn The Village Ashurst Steyning West Sussex BN44 3AP

Alleged: erection of marquee at front of Listed Building.

10. Rampion 2 Windfarm

Cllr Russell advised that a scoping exercise for Rampion 2 currently shows that their cabling will pass through Ashurst. This project is in its early stages, but should be left as a standing agenda item so APC keeps up to date with developments.

11. Financial Matters

The bank balance at Lloyds TSB as at 1^{7th} December 2020 was **£10,229.85**

Income received 1 st Oct 2020 – 7 th Jan 2021		
Horsham District Council	Half Precept	£6,150
Lloyds Bank	Refund for safe custody charge	£300
Expenditure authorised 1 st Oct 2020 – 7 th Jan 2021		
Age UK West Sussex	Grant – Bags of Support Scheme	£100
Places Leisure	Grant- Steyning Swimming Pool	£150
Landbuild Ltd	Operation Watershed works - drainage improvement at Godsmark Farm entrance	£10,051.20 (includes reclaimable VAT of £1,675.20)
E Leggo	Salary Oct – Dec	£713.92
E Leggo	Office Allowance Oct - Dec	£40
HMRC	E Leggo tax for Oct – Dec	£178.40

It was noted that the £300 refund has been received from Lloyds Bank for the safe custody charge.

The draft precept had been circulated to all councillors and had been discussed in detail at the last meeting. This proposed precept of £13,050, represented a 6% increase on last year's precept of £12,300. This is mainly down to APC's increased grant to the Recreation Ground, as reduced hire income is anticipated. The Council AGREED the precept and asked the Clerk to submit this to HDC for payment in 2021.22.

Action: Clerk to submit the 2021-2 precept to HDC.

12. Broadband in Ashurst

Cllrs Nicholson and Knight had produced a letter to residents explaining the existence of various community broadband voucher schemes. This had been included with the Parish Newsletter.

Cllr Nicholson advised that Ashurst is on WSCC's Broadband agenda (although not formally). If the Parish Council is able to get sufficient supporters together via a Community Partnership Scheme, then WSCC may be able to fund the difference. Fifty people in Ashurst have signed up, expressing interest in the Scheme. Cllrs Knight and Nicholson agreed that they would do some door-to-door canvassing in Ashurst explaining that signing up does not cost anything, but that their voucher could go towards the Community Scheme.

Cllr Knight noted that this is very much a public initiative and that there is another group in the community working with the Parish Council on this.

It was AGREED that the residents would be asked if they were prepared to have their email addresses added not only to the broadband database but also to the Parish Council database, so that APC could start circulating information which was felt to be of a general interest to Ashurst residents.

Action: Cllrs Knight and Nicholson to arrange door to door canvassing when circumstances permit and to provide the Clerk with e-mail addresses for those who would like to be added to the Council database.

13. Community Speedwatch

Cllr Nicholson informed the Council that all members of the Group have undertaken the online training and that face-to-face training with the Police is due this month. He has asked the Police whether socially distanced training is possible as community speedwatch schemes can take place during lockdown. The Council is awaiting the section 106 funds to pay for the equipment, but Cllr Nicholson advised that there is an equipment shortage. It was agreed that Cllr Nicholson should purchase the kit and the Council would reimburse him. Meanwhile, the Clerk would, once again, chase WSCC for the funds.

*Actions: Cllr Nicholson to order the community speedwatch kit.
Clerk to chase WSCC for the s106 funds.*

14. Trees and Footpaths

A delivery of 420 trees took place in November, courtesy of the Woodland Trust. Planting has not yet taken place due to poor weather and flooding in the planting area. As previously discussed and agreed, a soak away is going to be put in around the play equipment in order to alleviate localised flooding.

A couple of quotes have been received for trimming dead wood on three sides of the Recreation Ground. It was AGREED that the Trust should proceed with getting these trees cut back. Cllr Fischel would instruct the tree surgeon to undertake the work. She would try to recover these costs from the respective landowners.

The condition of the diseased oak tree at the Ground has been reviewed by experts who suggest that, rather than cutting it down straight away, at a cost of approximately £3,000, a scoping report using a sonic tomography test should be done as this would provide us with more detailed information regarding the extent and location of the disease. Further, it would enable us to cut back the tree in an orderly and on a 'needs must' basis. This test would cost around £650 + VAT. It was AGREED that the Council would proceed with the sonic tomography. It was noted that the Tree warden is in agreement with this course of action.

*Actions: Cllr Fischel to book the tree surgeon for work on the dead wood on trees at the Ground.
Cllr Fischel to book the sonic tomography test on the oak tree.*

15. Operation Watershed

Cllr Knight pointed out that the improved areas would need to have an ongoing maintenance programme after the operation watershed work had been completed.

16. SSALC Update

APC had sent a letter to the West SALC Board in support of SSALC. This is included as Appendix 1.

17. HALC Update

Cllr Knight's update on the recent zoom meeting he had attended is included as Appendix 2.

18. Grants

None for this meeting.

19. GDPR

All councillors were reminded to delete any emails over 6 months old.

20. Correspondence.

The Council has been asked if it would like to have representation at a Zoom meeting on 13th January regarding the Adur Restoration Corridor. It was AGREED that Cllr Fischel would attend the meeting. This exercise ties in with the Wilder Horsham initiative to improve and protect wildlife along the Adur and Downslink. Cllr Fischel would like the Sussex Wildlife Trust representative in this initiative to come and talk to Ashurst when circumstances allow, since Zoom is not the best format! This was AGREED.

Age UK has thanked the Council in writing for its donation for the Bags of Support Scheme.

Action: Cllr Fischel to attend the Adur Restoration Corridor Meeting.

21. Reports from Outside Bodies.

None for this meeting.

22. Information Items.

None for this meeting.

23. Future meetings

The Council agreed to continue with approximately quarterly meetings until they can meet in person. As an Annual meeting of the Council must be held in May, it was agreed that there would be an ordinary meeting of the Council in March. Further dates would be agreed later in the year.

Dates agreed (to be held via Zoom at 6.30pm):

Thursday 4th March

Thursday 13th May

Action: The Clerk would circulate these dates and put on the website.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.10pm

Signed Chairman Dated

Appendix 1: Letter to WSALC outlining support from Ashurst Parish Council for SSALC sent on 12th December 2020.

Please see the response below from Ashurst Parish Council regarding the WSALC Value for Money Report.

We would be grateful if you could pass this email on to all members of the WSALC Board.

"Ashurst Parish Council feels that SSALC provides an invaluable source of expertise which is easily accessible to all Councils. When we have had to look to SSALC for specific information, it has proved to be a useful and informative resource.

With regard to SSALC's training courses and conferences, Ashurst councillors are regular participants. All forms of training that we have attended have been of a high quality, well-run and informative.

Further, given the current circumstances, we feel it is poor timing to be thinking about what seems like an unnecessary and extensive change. Not only does the existing system seem to work well, it also achieves economies of scale. There must be concerns about the sustainability of a separate WSALC service. To date, we have seen no budget or staffing plans. Have the supporters of a separate body got sufficient experience to deliver the services that SSALC currently offers?

Ashurst Council agrees with the four points listed by Westhampnett Council. In the case of point four, while it may not have been intentional, holding a meeting during working hours does effectively exclude all those working and should in future be avoided if at all possible.

We also support the requests of Felpham and Haywards Heath Councils that no further work is done or expenditure incurred on the 'Value for money project' until the postponed WSALC AGM has been held and the Special Resolutions voted on."

Appendix 2: HALC Update from Cllr Knight

I attended the annual HALC and HDC meeting via video last night. There were some interesting updates on the Planning White Paper, HDC's finances and the proposal to split the West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) from SSALC.

Barbara Childs, Director of Place at HDC, highlighted some of the areas which HDC were in dispute with the government concerning the Planning White Paper which include a requirement for Horsham district to increase its annual allocation of new homes from 920 to 1715. This was seen as unsustainable. Other areas which they were seeking clarification on were national and local design guides, neighbourhood plans, digitisation of the planning process (HDC had highlighted the lack of efficient broadband in large swathes of West Sussex) and the need for District Councils to borrow money to forward fund infrastructure requirements for new conurbations. Homes England is being given a more important role in expanding the housing supply. Peter Freeman, the founder and major shareholder of the Mayfield development project, is its new chairman.

Adam Chalmers, Director of Community Services, spoke about environmental issues. Emissions from roads in the district are rising. Grants are available for environmental projects in parishes to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Jane Eaton, Director of Community Services, spoke about HDC's finances following the impact of Covid-19. They are currently facing a reduction in income of £5.9m from a total income target of £11.2m. Seventy five per cent of HDC's income comes from parking charges and leisure facilities. As a result, they are having to draw on reserves which is unsustainable in the medium and long term. Also, HDC now faces bank charges for holding council taxes on account due to low interest rates.

The decision to keep WSALC in or out of SSALC will be decided by a ballot supervised by NALC in 2021. In preparation for this they will carry out the following activities:

1. Two briefing letters have already been sent to Parish Councils. Have we all seen these? See latest one attached.
2. WSALC will send all parish councils a survey in the next few days for completion.
3. Colin Copus, a professor in local government research at De Montfort University and former parish & district councillor, to conduct an independent review of WSALC's relationship with SSALC in the next 4-6 weeks.
4. A meeting for all parish councils in West Sussex will be held to discuss the proposed split.
5. An EGM supervised by NALC will be held in 2021 to finalise the decision to stay or go.

Lots of questions were asked about the reasons for the move but little information was forthcoming.