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| Graphical user interface, text, application  Description automatically generated | **Clerk to the Council:** Emily Simpson  **Tel:** 07881714526  **e-mail:** [ashurstclerk@outlook.com](mailto:ashurstclerk@outlook.com) |
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**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST PARISH COUNCIL, HELD AT ASHURST VILLAGE HALL ON THURSDAY 24th NOVEMBER 2022 AT 7.30PM**

**Attendance.**

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| **Chairman** | Cllr Fischel |
| **Ashurst Parish Council (APC)** | Cllrs Russell, Nicholson, Knight, Hedley, Jesse, Hammond |
| **Horsham District Council (HDC)** | Cllrs Platt, Lloyd and Lineham (WSCC) |
| **Clerk** | Emily Simpson |
| **Public** | There were three members of the public. |

The Chair opened the meeting by holding a minute’s silence in memory of John Chapman, a much loved and respected member of the local community, who had recently passed away.

**To discuss any questions submitted by the public.**

There were none.

1. **Apologies for Absence**.

All councillors were present.

1. **Declaration of Members’ Interests, notification of changes to Members’ Interests, and consideration of any requests for dispensation.**

Cllr Russell declared an interest in the planning application and subsequently left the room when discussions took place on Agenda item 8.

1. **Approve the Minutes of the Meeting of 21st July 2022.**

The minutes had been circulated to all councillors. It was **RESOLVED** to approve them as a true and accurate record. They were then signed by the Chairman.

1. **Reports from District & County Councillors.**

See Appendix 1.

1. **Outstanding Actions.**

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| **Action** | **Outcome** |
| Cllr Fischel to speak to the Landlord of the Fountain Inn regarding registration as an Asset of Community Value. | Ongoing. |
| Cllrs Fischel and Russell to keep an eye on issues raised by HDC, when carrying out the weekly play equipment inspections. | Ongoing. |
| Invitation to Wilder Sussex representative to talk at a future meeting. | Cllr Fischel had spoken to Richard Black. He would like to come and speak but can’t do Thursdays. So maybe reschedule a later meeting to another day of the week. |
| Cllr Fischel to investigate purchasing a new bench for the Recreation Ground. | It was agreed to go for a 150cm bench, already sourced, rather than 180cm. Defer purchase until Spring 2023. |
| Cllrs Fischel and Russell to investigate options for a refurbished or replacement building at the Recreation Ground. | Ongoing. |
| Help for Ukrainian Families in Ashurst. | Ongoing but no current help seems to be required. |

1. **Recreation Ground Matters** –
2. The bank balance at HSBC as at **20th August 2022 was** **£9,676.04**

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| **Income received 22nd July – 20th August 2022** | | |
| UK Power Networks | Compensation from power cut | £260.00 |
|  |  | **Total income received = £260.00** |
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| **Expenditure authorised 22nd July – 20th August 2022** | | |
| EDF | Electricity | £17.00 |
| Water charges | 14th March to 28th June 2022 | £10.60 |
| Cllr Fischel | Reimbursement for Perry’s Electrical EICR | £186.00 |
| HSBC | Bank charges to 19th July 2022 | £5.00 |
| Sussex Land Services | Grass cutting (July to August 2022) | £484.80 |
| Delia Thornton | Legionella Compliance Training | £183.75 |
| Perry’s Electrical | Remedial works to hut & pavilion | £1010.40 |
|  |  | **Total expenditure = £1,897.55** |

1. The Chair reported that no Legionella had been present in the most recent lab results. Councillors had received Legionella compliance training from water specialist, Delia Thornton. The Chair also advised that the water system was being flushed on a regular, weekly, basis as a precaution.
2. The Chair advised that Perry’s Electrical had completed the remedial works to the John Eaton Hut and Pavilion as per the decision made at the last meeting, and we now had a current EICR in place.
3. The Chair advised the Council that Ashurst United Football Club had played a number of matches already and everything seemed to be going well. The contract needed to be signed and would be finalised shortly.
4. The Chair advised that an architect had been to the Ground to have an initial look at the John Eaton Hut and to advise whether he thought this was a potential refurbishment or rather a rebuild. His preliminary costings had been circulated with the Agenda. (No firm design had been agreed but the new sports building will need, as a minimum, to include a small kitchen and serving area, two changing rooms, an umpire’s room, storage areas, WCs – including a disabled/family room, and, it would seem, showers.)

She confirmed that the John Eaton Hut was the preferred location for a number of reasons, the main one being the existing services.

1. The Chair also informed the Council that the tree from WSCC, as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy, instead of being an oak as requested, was a hornbeam. She was taking steps to correct this.
2. Lastly, the Chair said that the oak tree in the car park had received its substantial cut back but now needed a potassium fix at a cost of £186+VAT. Councillors **AGREED** that this should go ahead.
3. **Broadband in Ashurst**

Cllr Knight reported that money had been allocated to OpenReach to install fibre broadband to 67 houses in the village with an installation cost of £116,000. Over 60 households had signed up already. No money would be payable by residents, however, as a result of the voucher scheme. This was a major achievement. OpenReach required a signed contract before it was prepared to proceed with any installation. The Council had provisionally agreed to sign on behalf of those households involved.

The Chair proposed that legal advice should be sought before the contract was signed to assess whether the Council was signing up to any unforeseen liabilities.

The Councillors all felt that, given the importance of superfast broadband to the 67 households, the Council had little choice but to sign the contract within the 30 day offer period extended by BT, on the basis that there were no financial implications for the Council. Once signed, it was estimated that the installation would take between 12-18 months to complete.

Cllr Linehan suggested that Ashurst was fortunate to have been prioritised as a voucher scheme area. He advised that this opportunity would not be available long-term, and encouraged the Council to proceed asap if it was keen to move forward with this project.

On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked Cllr Mark Knight for his hard work in bringing this initiative to a successful conclusion.

1. **Planning Applications**

DC/22/1766 Gratwicks House Church Lane Ashurst Steyning West Sussex BN44 3AR

Proposal: Installation of 4no additional solar panel arrays.

Councillors **AGREED** not to object but to add a recommendation that the solar panels should have as little adverse effect on surrounding neighbours as possible.

1. **Planning Decisions from HDC.**

None for this meeting.

1. **Payments and bank reconciliations**

The bank balance at Lloyds TSB as at12th August 2022 was £14,672.37.

1. The clerk presented the schedule of payments since the last meeting (21st July 2022) until 23rd November 2022 and the bank reconciliations for July and August (up to 12th August 2022), see Appendix 2, which Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve.

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| **Date** | **Payee** | **Cheque No** | **Cost Centre** | **Amount** |
| 4.8.22 | Parish Online (subscription renewal) | 798 | Subscriptions & Audit | 30.00 |
| 12.9.22 | HALC (membership renewal) | 799 | Subscriptions & Audit | 20.00 |
| 26.9.22 | Emily Simpson (salary and stationary expenses – 13.38) | 800 | Salaries & associated costs | 673.89 |
| 26.9.22 | Emily Simpson (homeworking allowance) | 801 | Salaries & associated costs | 39.90 |
| 26.9.22 | HMRC | 802 | Salaries & associated costs | 165.00 |
| 5.10.22 | E Simpson (expenses – stamps) | 803 | Salaries & associated costs | 10.88 |
| 26.10.22 | Ashurst Arborists | 804 | General, admin & insurance | 50.00 |
| 23.11.22 | E Simpson (salary – October & November) | 805 | Salaries & associated costs | 474.87 |
| 23.11.22 | E Simpson (homeworking allowance Oct-Nov & backdated pay to 1 May ‘22) | 806 | Salaries & associated costs | 26.66 & 110.00 |
| 23.11.22 | HMRC | 807 | Salaries & associated costs | 118.80 |
|  |  |  | **TOTAL** | **1,720.00** |

1. It was reported that the second instalment of the Precept (£6,600) from Horsham District Council had also been received on 29th September 2022.
2. **Budget 2023-24**

To consider the draft Budget for 2023-24

Councillors discussed the budget and the wish to keep any precept increase to an absolute minimum if possible, in light of the cost-of-living crisis. It was **AGREED** that there should be provision within the budget for the upcoming election as well as for architect fees for the proposed new/refurbished building on the Recreation Ground. It was **AGREED**, if possible, to obtain three architects’ quotes for initial scoping for the purpose of the budget. It was further **AGREED** to defer any decision on the final budget until the next meeting.

1. **Policies**
2. **To review and adopt the latest NALC Standing Orders**

Councillors **AGREED** to adopt the latest NALC Standing Orders.

1. **To review and adopt the latest Financial Regulations**

Councillors **AGREED** to adopt the latest Financial Regulations.

1. **To review the Council’s Grant Policy**

After some discussion, Councillors **AGREED** to adopt the revised Policy.

1. **To review the Council’s Risk Assessment**

Councillors **AGREED** to adopt the Council’s Risk Assessment Policy.

1. **WSALC Update**

Councillors were reminded of the current training programmes on offer and were encouraged to attend.

1. Councillors were informed of the NALC Civility & Respect pledge which aimed to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda, with a view to eliminating bullying, harassment and intimidation within the local council sector. Councillors resolved to **APPROVE** signing the online pledge.
2. Councillors were informed that the pay scale award for local council workers had been agreed and all Councils were encouraged to make backdated payments to employees from 1 April 2022 swiftly. It was **AGREED** that the previous Clerk would also receive backdated pay for the period until she left her post.
3. **Winter Maintenance Plan**

An updated Winter Maintenance Plan was required and it was **AGREED** that the main points of contact in the event of an emergency within the parish would be Cllr Russell, with Cllr Jesse also on standby, as well as the Clerk. It was also **AGREED** that Cllr Russell would ensure the rest of the information was complete so the Clerk could return the form to WSCC as soon as possible.

1. **HALC Update**

The Chair advised that the next meeting was scheduled for 30th November at 7pm so she would report back at the next Council meeting on any relevant updates.

1. **Rampion**

Cllr Knight advised that the consultation period ends on 29th November. A public meeting had taken place at the Village Hall 10 days ago which was very well attended. He reported that, in some cases, Rampion had seemed more open to consultation. A change of route to the South of Ashurst, by Spithandle Lane, had been proposed and then another, further north towards Bines’ Green. A local resident expressed discontent felt by various farmers who had cabling going through their properties. Cllr Knight proposed submitting a response to the consultation, stating there was considerable concern among local farmers and the impact it could have on their livelihoods. He would draft a response and circulate to the Chair.

1. **Boundary Commission**

The Chair proposed a response from the Council to say that councillors were pleased they were being listened to regarding Ashurst’s wish to be part of an essentially rural parish.

1. **Flooding on Peppers Lane**

The Chair advised that some residents were most concerned with the very bad flooding on Pepper’s corner, due to a blocked gully, and wanted to know what could be done to remedy this. The Chair promised to report back to the concerned residents.

1. **Grants**

The Chair confirmed that there were no applications to discuss at this meeting.

1. **GDPR**

Councillors were reminded to delete all emails over 6 months old.

1. **Correspondence**

The Clerk reminded Councillors there was a Wilder Horsham District workshop on Thursday 9th February 2023 at Ashington Community Centre. More details would be provided nearer the time.

1. **Reports from Outside Bodies**

There were none.

1. **Information Items.**

Ashurst Flix in the Stix would take place on 3rd December at 7.30pm. Further details could be found in the Ashurst Newsletter or by contacting Bob Harari on bob@flixinthestix.com

1. **Future meeting dates**

Councillors **AGREED** that the next meeting would take place on Monday January 9th 2023 7.30pm at the Village Hall.

Post Meeting Note: It was felt that 9th January was too early to prepare the revised budget and issue the necessary papers. It was therefore proposed that we reverted to Thursday 19th January.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

Signed ……………………………………. Chairman Dated ………………………

**Appendix 1 - Updates from our District and County Councillors**

District Councillor Tim Lloyd reported that the Local Plan would go to Cabinet in mid-December and then to Council in mid-January so the next few weeks would be interesting as there was some opposition to it. He said that Water Neutrality was preventing most planning applications from going ahead. He advised that the HDC building control team had done well in the Local Council Building Excellence Awards Regional Finals 2022; they won Best Partnership with a Storrington based business and they had been entered for the national awards in January. The planning applications team had also been ranked very highly. He reported that their carbon emissions had reduced by 46% of the baseline which was set in 2019. This was mainly due to fuel for the Council’s fleet as well as measures taken inhouse. The ambition was to reduce by a further 25% over the next 3 years.

The Recycling rate was currently 53%. WSCC was looking to increase fines for littering as this remained an issue.

Their budget was set in February 2022 and action had to be taken to prevent a deficit of approximately £1m per year in future years due to the cost-of-living crisis as well as Covid.

Rates had yet to be agreed but it had been proposed to increase the Council Tax rate of approximately £5 per household as well as a small increase in waste services. It was also reported that another £250,000 had been put into the community fund reserve on top of the £300,000 which had already been committed.

Lastly, Cllr Lloyd reported that historic Section 106 funds were available at HDC and suggested Ashurst PC liaise with Melanie Stout to see if the Council could put in an application.

The Chair asked if there was any update regarding Ukrainian families to which Cllr Lloyd reported that there is a centre in Steyning with approximately 100 families who use it.

District Councillor Bob Platt said that he was pleased to see that in the revised Local Plan there was more of a reference to sustainable transport; new developments would need walking and cycle routes as well as bus routes.

Regarding Wilder Horsham, the plans of working with farmers down the Adur Valley seemed to be going well. A two-year grant to develop these plans had been agreed.

County Councillor Paul Linehan spoke about road improvements stating that in the last 6 months £7.4m had been spent across 197 sites, which included resurfacing schemes, and 46 sites had been surface dressed. Since April, 22,000 pot holes had been filled by Highway and. WSCC had trialled new machines to cut and repair the holes and this was working well. On 17th November, a new speed reduction policy went to the Scrutiny Committee and there appeared to be broad agreement for it. A more pragmatic view had been taken and it was expected that a decision would be made in December to adopt the new speed policy, which would mean, that to qualify for the requested speed limit, the average speed would need to be within 6mph of the desired speed limit. He added that properties no longer needed to be at the roadside to qualify. In addition, the annual review of applications would be reviewed on a rolling basis as opposed to annually, so there shouldn’t be such a great delay.

Cllr Linehan also reported that, earlier in the year, a contract was signed with various Districts and Boroughs regarding the connect a kerb programme which related to electric charging for vehicles. 60% of this was funded through council tax funds and 40% was picked up by the company.

Cllr Linehan also reported on Children’s Services and said a new inspection was due in February 2023 which would review progress made since the 2019 review when the Council was rated as inadequate. New leadership, as well as monitoring visits from Ofsted had since taken place, and it was recently confirmed that they would not need to go into a Trust which was excellent news. He said that services had improved and they were hoping for a ‘Good’ rating or at least ‘Requires improvement’. He also reported that several social workers had been recruited and that a fostering initiative had been launched as there were around 850 children in need of foster homes.

A councillor mentioned the state of the roads, in particular the A283 Spithandle Lane and Honeybridge Lane.

Cllr Linehan would speak with Highways to see if they could attend these roads and see what could be done.

**Appendix 2**

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| Bank Reconciliation July 2022 |  |  |
| Balance per bank statement |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Closing balance 31st July 2022** | 15,349.30 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Add: outstanding receipts** | 0.00 |  |
| **Less: outstanding payments** | -676.93 | Cheques 792, 795, 796, 797 |
|  |  |  |
| **Net balances** | 14,672.37 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Cashbook (opening balance 01.04.22)** | 10,612.89 |  |
| Add receipts (total since 01.04.22) | 6,600 |  |
| Less payments (total since 01.04.22) | -2540.52 |  |
| **Net balance** | **14672.37** |  |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Bank Reconciliation August 2022 |  |  |
| Balance per bank statement |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Closing balance 12th August 2022** | 14,672.37 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Add: outstanding receipts** | 0.00 |  |
| **Less: outstanding payments** | -30.00 | Cheque 798 (£30.00) |
|  |  |  |
| **Net balances** | 14,642.37 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Cashbook (opening balance 01.04.22)** | 10,612.89 |  |
| Add receipts (total since 01.04.22) | 6,600 |  |
| Less payments (total since 01.04.22) | -2570.52 |  |
| **Net balance** | **14642.37** |  |