



MINUTES OF THE MEETING of Hadlow Down Parish Council
Held in Hadlow Down Village Hall, Hadlow Down
at 7pm on Tuesday 6th December 2022

Present: Councillors: Michael Lunn (ML) Chair, Ben Floyd (BF), Rachel Lewis (RL), David Munday (DM), Damon Wellman (DW)

In attendance: Cllr. Bob Standley (ESCC), Samantha Weatherill (Clerk) and thirteen members of the public.

The Chairman read out the following rules which would apply to Item 227: "You will be allowed a maximum of 10 minutes to address the Parish Council on the matters which were contained in the invitation letter; The Chairman will thank you for your response and invite Parish Councillors to direct any clarifying questions (not statements) in regard to your response, this will last for 5 minutes; The public will be invited by the Chairman to ask questions (not statements) to the Chair of the Parish Council to whom you will be invited to respond but not obliged to respond; Any forms of abuse, derogatory comments/statements will be stopped by the Chair. These will not be recorded and Members of the Public would be asked to leave."

224. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

One member of the public (MOP) asked for clarification of two road repair signs on the A272 and Steve Phillips (SP) from ES Highways said that both signs were correct as there were going to be road repairs on 15th and 16th December including an overnight road closure on 15th. Another MOP reported that fundraising for an additional SID pole had been met with an amazing response and had secured enough money for an additional post. They requested that the PC takes the next steps in order to get a new post in place by no later than Easter. The PC passed on their gratitude to those residents who had already donated and to the MOP who had undertaken the fundraising which would continue with the aim of potentially purchasing another SID.

225. APOLOGIES AND REASON FOR ABSENCE – were accepted from Cllrs. Dixon (Wealden DC), Blyfield and Weston.

226. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – RL declared a personal interest in Item 236; BF declared a pecuniary interest in item 227.

227. WILDERNESS WOOD – presentation to the Parish Council regarding recent concerns.

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders in order for representatives from Wilderness Wood (WW) to address the PC on the matters contained in the invitation letter.

The WW representatives summarised some background to WW since they had taken over the site in 2014 and said that they had focused on building up membership of the wood and reducing the number of casual visitors.

Noise: They had received three direct complaints and been notified by Wealden DC of six complaints so they understood that they needed to work on this issue. When cross referencing the complaints with the bookings, three had been group bookings taking place at the bottom of the wood where there were two campsites.

They had come up with some suggestions to help manage the issue of noise. The first was to take no more group bookings at the bottom of the wood, 'stream side' and 'hazel grove'. Three more complaints were when there had been no scheduled events and transpired to be teenagers making a noise in the woods and historically this has happened and was difficult to manage. One of those was not an event taking place at WW, it was a party. As WW was the only visible venue people sometimes mistakenly blamed them. The last two complaints referred to events/parties. One of the events had organised a silent disco and at 9:30pm it was obvious that the noise was out of control and they did go into the party to ask them to try to tone it down.

However, WW were licensed to hold six events per year in an uncontained outdoor venue which would inherently involve some noise. The next project at WW was the replacement of the work shop next spring about which they would be advising Wealden DC and this would create an opportunity to re-designate this to a craft/teaching space only. On the six events a year they could re-configure the central teaching space, put a roof on it and use it as an occasional indoor place to contain outdoor parties within that. Another offer was to continue to re-lay and re-thicken the hedges to try to improve its density. The final offer was to continue with an understanding of open, free and direct communication between WW and the villagers so that everyone's views can be heard and they would be publishing WW's contact details in the Parish Magazine in order to facilitate the offer of open dialogue.

Number of events: gatherings of about 100 people when they have closed the woods to other visitors count as events and these were usually weddings. WW manage a hard copy diary and at the beginning of year the events are published on their website.

Residents: there were two families living in the main house which had been re-configured with the addition of a granny annex. They need to regularise the fact that this family now lives in that half of the house but Wealden DC know about it and they will be registering for a second Council Tax. WW are registered on a website 'WWOOF' and host up to five volunteers who stay initially for two weeks but can be up to eleven months helping around the woods. They also have two cabins which will allow two families to stay in the wood, at the moment the limit is for 28 days but they are applying to Wealden DC for that to be amended to be up to 11 months so that all the accommodation is on the same time frame. WW manage this through a diary and keep a book that everyone who comes to help out or stay writes in.

Burials: in 2017 one member of the family living in the main house died and WW granted permission for them to be buried in the woods. The death was registered and the Environment Agency were contacted to check the location of the burial met all the relevant criteria. Since then a friend has been buried in the wood but there were no plans to bury any more people there. If there were to be any more burials they would apply. A supplementary note has been written that has been added to the property deeds and Sussex police had been notified.

The PC asked some questions: WW had promised before that the bottom of the woods would not be used but a camp and bar-b-q were still there. WW responded that this area now gets used as a circle for meditation purposes during the day but there was no camping. The other two sites have had campers this summer and this is what WW were offering to stop. WW were asked whether they had considered security at the site, particularly since they have had problems with children setting light to things and have admitted that they cannot secure the site. WW did not believe that 65 acres could or should be secured.

WW were asked what they were going to do to stop amplified music. WW said that on the contract they give to customers it states that amplified music is not allowed, however, when the event happens, inevitably they bring equipment that won't work without amplification and this was very difficult to manage. DM suggested that maybe they should re-write their noise management plan and re-propose it.

A MOP suggested that WW took a large deposit, at least from those six events, whose return was dependent upon keeping within the noise rules and this could be a deterrent and asked whether they would consider bringing in security to control these events. WW would think about these suggestions.

Another MOP raised the issue of the tarzan swing which was extremely noisy at the weekends. WW responded that fundamentally this was an outdoor venue and the public come to the wood so there will be some noise. WW would erect more signs and would consider moving the swing. The Chair thanked WW for attending and addressing the PC and wished them well for Christmas.

The Chairman brought forward item 232 and suspended Standing Orders in order for Steve Phillips (SP) to speak on behalf of East Sussex Highways.

232. HIGHWAYS:

SP referred to the recent dialogue with the PC and in particular to the many complaints, mainly about drainage, where they had gone out and said that as there was no flooding they were ok when what they should have done was gone and dug them out to see whether they were working so he apologised for that and the fact that the PC had repeatedly been told that the drains were ok when they were not. They had got a bit more work to do, including visiting Five Chimneys Lane and added that there had been some more money made available for some larger patching, some of which would be happening in Hadlow Down. Whilst they would not be able to do everything they hope to give a clear answer if they are not doing stuff and they will make sure to go back and look at the assets.

DW said these issues were not new and the current problems are part of a very long list; he regularly sends photos to several people in ES Highways and gets told the issues have been dealt with. The problem with drainage creates bad roads; he referred to the list of issues in a report from the Burwash Common and Weald Residents Association which is relevant to all areas not just them. Cllr Standley added that there would never be a situation where all roads and drainage are perfect due to lack of funding; areas had to be prioritised.

DM questioned the strategy for both the layout of speed limit signs and for road crossings and added that the PC had spent a lot of money on a SID in order to get the issue of speeding reviewed. Cllr Standley said that one way of getting this looked at was to get a petition and the other was to gather more evidence of speeding which the PC were doing with the introduction of the SID.

One MOP asked who manages quality control in ES Highways to which SP responded that the people doing the work have to take photos and submit them onto a system to be audited; not all photos would be viewed but they could be. Defects that have been fixed have a two year warranty. Re the auditing of work, they audit it and also there are separate auditors, a couple of which are employed by the County Council, who will go out and inspect the work. The vast majority of the fixes would last for two years but sometimes the rest of the road is well past its life and the deficit is over £350m just in category red roads. The MOP responded that the issue was with quality control of both repairs done by ES Highways and Utilities and gave the example of a fix that was meant to be done by South East water on the main A272 which several people had reported as not having been done correctly and each time someone in ES said it seemed alright and within two years there was a big pot hole - South East water should be picking up this cost. Another MOP asked what their control over utilities was to which SP replied that

they do inspections of the traffic management and dip samples and coring and there is a two year warranty and there are penalties if they do not deliver correctly.

Another MOP questioned what qualifications the person going out to assess the issues had since it seemed as though the reasons why a pot hole appears are not identified, any pot holes are just repeatedly filled, which meant it didn't necessarily last which was a waste of money. SP responded that it varied but the assessors were often engineers with many years worth of experience. The Chairman thanked SP for attending and responding to all the MOP questions and expressed that there remains deep concern among the community regarding highway issues, so it is good to maintain dialogue going forward.

- i. ES Highways – update on discussion with other PC's. DW had enquired of other PC's whether they were experiencing the same problems and whether there was an appetite for further dialogue and the response was so far very positive.
- ii. Speed Indicator Signs:
 - a. Update on progress re new SID location - the PC thanked the MOP for their efforts to fundraise for an additional pole and the purchase of this would be pursued. **Action: PW**
 - b. Warranty options – Carry Forward.

228. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS held on 1st November were agreed and signed as a true record (previously circulated).

229. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

- i. **Cllr Standley** would continue to investigate whether the Waste Wood bridleway could be scheduled for urgent repair work as this was a major strategic bridleway. *This had not yet been inspected so the outcome will not be known until March.* **Carry Forward.**
- ii. **Cllr Standley** would investigate what had happened to the direction sign at the top of Five Chimneys Lane and when it would be replaced. *This had been replaced on 18th November.* **Done**
- iii. **Cllr Dixon** would investigate the planning application for agricultural driveway on Stonehurst Lane WD/2021/7059/AD and report back to the PC. **Carry Forward**
- iv. **RL** would get in touch with the TN22 Club to organise a session with the PCSO. **Done**
- v. **Clerks report:** *update passed to councillors prior to the meeting and posted on the village website.*
 - a. The Clerk had been updated by the 'Wings to fly' representative that they would no longer be pursuing the project for St Mark's school children to grow plants to be used to dye fabric for a school project.
 - b. The Clerk had emailed the Hadlow Down representative on the Mayfield Trust to offer the services of Rachel Lewis to help with funding streams and also to offer The Clerk's help with advertising their services. The letter had been acknowledged with thanks and was being forwarded to their Treasurer.
 - c. The Clerk had drafted a letter for the residents of Stonehurst Lane re fly tipping which had been dispatched.
 - d. The Clerk had drafted an email to be sent to other Wealden Clerks re gathering support to have a discussion about ESCC Highways poor performance.
 - e. The Clerk had emailed Stacey Robins to ask for an update on the situation with regard to the old village hall planning application.
 - f. The Clerk had commissioned the work to be done to repair the fence at the entrance to the play area which was a hazard and this had been done and inspected.
 - g. The Clerk had informed the contractors who tendered for the maintenance contracts at the Hadlow Down burial ground, play area and for verge cutting the outcome of their bids.
 - h. The Clerk had emailed Wealden DC Enforcement to update that the field gate that was built with access onto the A272 that we had been told was fixed shut was being used again but the Enforcement Officer had inspected this and said it was still fixed shut so no further action was required.

230. PLANNING:

i. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS:**

- a. **WD/2022/2825/F – CHESTNUTS, WILDERNESS LANE, HADLOW DOWN, TN22 4HT** – erection of an oak frame car port to south side of property and an oak frame porch to the front entrance; single-storey rear side extensions on both sides with veranda infill between; associated internal alterations.

The PC voted 5/0 to support the application as there is very little change to the footprint, it was visually appropriate using local materials.

ii. **APPROVED PLANNING APPLICATIONS:**

- a. **WD/2022/198/F – WOODREED FARMHOUSE, STONEHURST LANE, FIVE ASHES, MAYFIELD, TN20 6LJ** – proposal to build an in-ground swimming pool.

231. REPORTS FROM CLLR.BOB STANDLEY, ESCC & CLLR PHIL DIXON – *written reports had been submitted and had been published on the village website.*

Cllr. Standley added that the demand for children's services was growing which was a strain on the budget. Wealden DC had not been informed about the use of the Boship Hotel for housing Manston Immigration Processing Centre's overspill before it had occurred.

233. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS (COUNCIL MATTERS AND OUTSIDE BODIES) – *written reports had been submitted and had been published on the village website.*

DW had attended a focus group about ES Highways and the group were interested in further dialogue; they also agreed that SLR meetings were not useful. He had put up and taken down the Remembrance Day poppies. The issue of the access gate opposite Civers being used again had been reported to Wealden DC Enforcement but as the gate was fixed shut no further action would be taken by them. He had also requested from Wealden DC a definition of what "temporary" means when caravans are sited whilst houses are being built.

ML reported that there had been an incident at Grange Cottages and communications re the outstanding planning application which had now been formally refused.

BF reported that the broken fence at the play area had been replaced and that about half the pallets on the playing field which were to be used for the bonfire event had been removed and the rest should be cleared by next weekend.

- 234. BOUNDARY AND DRAINAGE ISSUES AT BOTTOM OF PLAYING FIELD – Carry Forward.**
- 235. HOW TO ATTRACT VOLUNTEERS TO VILLAGE COMMITTEES –** the 'Together We Can' Project. The clerk updated that there were still expenses incurred that had not been reimbursed due to incomplete information. The National Lottery had now officially approved an extension to the deadline for the project until 21st July 2023 but they had warned that this was a hard deadline and if the correct paperwork was not submitted on time the funding would have to be returned.
- 236. BURIAL GROUND –** request for memorial & additional inscription. Both applications were approved.
- 237. FUTURE OF TRANSPORT IN EAST SUSSEX CONSULTATION –** DW updated that he had completed this on the PC's behalf and summarised that there were six quite basic questions asked.
- 238. DOCUMENT RETENTION & DISPOSAL POLICY –** the policy was reviewed and approved.
- 239. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT –** this was reviewed and agreed.
- 240. STANDING ORDERS –** were reviewed and approved.
- 241. REVISED DATE OF ANNUAL MEETING MAY 2023 –** due to the extra bank holiday awarded following the coronation next year, legally the PC were not allowed to hold the Annual Meeting until Tuesday 16th May so this new date was agreed.
- 242. REQUEST FROM WEALDEN DC TO USE PHOTOS OF CIL FUNDED PROJECTS –** the Clerk had received a request from Wealden DC to use photos from projects that we had completed using CIL funds in promotional material. **Action:** This request was approved and **the Clerk** would supply some photos.
- 243. RISK ASSESSMENTS**
- i. Fingerpost Survey – update on work – this was still being worked on.
 - ii. Previous Quarterly Risk Assessment – update on fingerpost in burial ground. **Carry forward.**
 - iii. Quarterly Risk Assessment – latest to be commissioned. **Action: BF** would do this.
 - iv. ROSPA Play area inspection – update on zip wire. **Carry Forward**
 - v. Update on Zip Wire Resistograph – **Carry Forward**
- 244. CLERKS MATTERS:**
- i. Clerks hours for November were agreed.
 - ii. NALC annual national salary award wef 1st April 2022 – this had now been agreed.
- 245. BANK RECONCILIATIONS:** - November were agreed and signed.
- 246. OTHER FINANCE MATTERS:**
- i. Review Precept. The PC agreed to remove the movement to the IT reserve from the precept proposal in order to reduce it and voted in agreement that the Clerk would calculate and budget the amount needed to be transferred from Unallocated Reserves, up to a maximum of £1,600, in order to reduce the rise in precept to 0%, as soon as the council tax base figure had been issued by Wealden DC.
 - ii. The following payment was ratified: BT for telephone and broadband quarterly £89.10 +£17.82 VAT.
- 247. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT –** were agreed and ML & PW would authorise.
- i. Viking/Office Dept for stationery - £53.95 + £10.79 VAT (UT ref: 561550221)
 - ii. Lucy McConachie Play area inspection November - £40 (UT ref: 265531185)
 - iii. ES Pension Fund - £308.99 (UT ref: 609840380)
 - iv. Samantha Weatherill - £920 salary paid by SO
 - v. Samantha Weatherill - £188.26 salary & expenses (UT ref: 918455249)
 - vi. Costain Ltd – ESCC for works relating to installation of SID - £1544.83 + £308.97 VAT (UT ref: 42547127)
 - vii. C.C.Thompson for Together We Can project 'Walks on Wildside' expenses - £72.34 (UT ref: 529777233)
 - viii. Miss F Shafer for Together We Can project 'Walks on Wildside' expenses - £61.84 (UT ref: 4712562010)
 - ix. The Computer Studio for Office 365 annual subscription - £102.40 + £20.00 VAT (UT ref: 854892647)
 - x. Greencare Plus for emergency replacement fence at play area - £850 (UT ref: 770819402)
 - xi. PWLB for loan repayment- £567.07 (to be paid by DD on 16th Dec)
 - xii. UT Bank quarterly bank charges - £18 (to be paid by DD on 30th Dec)
- 248. CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 Section 17 –** nothing raised.
- 249. DEFIBRILLATOR BATTERY –** this had been checked on 6th December.
- 250. ITEMS TO GO ON NEXT AGENDA:** no additional items.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8:55 pm.