



DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING of Hadlow Down Parish Council
Held in Hadlow Down Village Hall, Hadlow Down
at 7pm on 5th December 2023

Present: Councillors: Michael Lunn (ML) Chair (+WDC), Peter Weston (PW) Vice Chair, Ben Floyd (BF), David Munday (DM) and Damon Wellman (DW).

In attendance: Vicki Rutt (Clerk), Cllr. Bob Standley (ESCC) and 11 members of the public.

ML started the meeting by explaining as this was the last PC meeting before Christmas to wish to all residents of the Parish a very Merry Christmas and safe festive period for December.

198. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A resident stated that there are some trees down in Brick Kiln Lane and Spring Lane. They also explained that there has been a loose pack of dogs that have been spotted in the fields in the area. The same resident has been liaising with Wealden District Council [WDC] about an abandoned touring caravan which has been dumped by a third party, it is subject to a separate investigation and the landowner is trying to get its removal. Another resident asked who to send his petition too on the A272 speeding issues, it was agreed to send to Cllr Standley. A resident thanked the PC for arranging for the drains to be cleared on the A272. She reported a narrow strip on the Toll (A272) that needs some sort of warning signs as it is becoming dangerous. A resident raised the planning application at Broadreed Farm and asked the Council to consider the number of large vehicles and whether the location was appropriate for such vehicles.

199. APOLOGIES AND REASON FOR ABSENCE – None.

200. CO-OPTION OF TWO COUNCILLORS – ML reported that the Council have two Councillor vacancies and they have two candidates. Both candidates introduced themselves of why they would like to become a Parish Councillor and then a vote took place. Both candidates received unanimous votes so both candidates were co-opted.

19:13 Cllr Alan Hobbs and Cllr Stephen Lester joined the meeting.

201. PCSO SUE CHOPPIN TO GIVE UPDATE ON LOCAL POLICING AND CURRENT ISSUES

ML welcomed PCSO Sue Choppin to the meeting and congratulated her on recently winning the 'Emergency Service Person of the Year'. PCSO Choppin introduced herself and explained the areas she covered. Regarding the recent burglaries in the area, they are deemed a well organised gang and should not be approached. If you see anything suspicious, please call 999 or email PCSO Choppin in a non emergency. Please can all residents be aware that there are a lot of scams happening at this time of year so be mindful. The question was asked what can be done about drones flying over your house, PCSO Choppin stated that not a lot can be done. DW stated that he too had seen this loose pack of dogs, and it was frightening, PCSO Choppin confirmed that it would be a Police matter and it is worth contacting the Rural Crime Team who could attend the site and speak to the dog owner as they are known. Speeding in the village was discussed and PCSO Choppin sent an email earlier to ML from an Officer at Sussex Safer Roads who had review the data received from the two SIDs. He stated *'The data shows that out of 35 counts ¼ of that value is over the speed limit using the 85th percentile 23% is above the limit, this would require enforcement, after speaking to the traffic manager, we have opted to put this through our triage board at the next meeting for this to be discussed and action plan formulated to justify enforcement. The next meeting takes place in December and I will feedback to the council what action will be taken.'*

202. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – 205i/b Tulleys Farm, ML declared a pecuniary interest and BF a personal interest. Item 212/5, DM declared a pecuniary interest.

203. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS held on the 7th November 2023 and 14th November 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record (previously circulated).

204. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

i. Action Log 2023 Clerk reported from the action log which is available on the village website.

ii. Clerks report This was noted (previously circulated).

205. PLANNING:

i. PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

a. WD/2023/2127/F for LITTLE BROADREED FARM, DOG KENNEL LANE, HADLOW DOWN, TN22 4EL

Proposed external alterations and change of use to existing commercial building and external car parking area to allow the storage and servicing of executive vehicles.

The PC voted: 5 against and 2 abstained. Objection is due to the traffic impact and traffic movements, traffic impacts the Ashdown Forest, the environmental impact regarding use of cleaning materials and the site being an AONB.

b. WD/2023/7039 for LAND FORMING PART OF TULLEYS FARM, FIVE CHIMNEYS LANE, HADLOW DOWN, TN22 4DX
Agricultural building for the storage of machinery and hay.

ML did not take part in this discussion. BF could join the debate but was unable to vote.

The PC voted: 3 objected and 2 abstained. Reasons are due to the development being potentially harmful to the visual amenities of the AONB contrary to Saved Policy EN6 of Wealden Local Plan 1998 and paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021. The mass and scale are also not appropriate, and the visual impact is excessive.

c. WD/2023/1796/F for WILDERNESS COTTAGE, 1 WILDERNESS LANE, HADLOW DOWN, TN22 4HX

Replacement shed. Change of use from garden storage to dog grooming area.

The PC voted: 4 against and 3 abstained. Objection is due to parking issues, access and over commercialism of a small garden.

ii. APPROVED APPLICATIONS

a. WD/2023/2184/LBR for CLAYLANDS, STONEHURST LANE, HADLOW DOWN, TN22 4ED.

Additional works associated with the full re-roofing of this listed property (granted listed building consent wd/2021/2063/lb) comprising structural repairs to the existing roof structure, chimney repointing, replacement casement windows within existing dormers, insulation to lofts, copper pipe lagging along with consent sought retrospectively for the installation of 2no.velux rooflight windows and their proposed replacement with more sympathetic conservation style rooflight windows.

b. WD/2023/2173/F for COLES FARM, WILDERNESS LANE, HADLOW DOWN, TN22 5HS

Conversion of the existing barn to create a dwelling, curtilage, parking and wider landscaping and ecological enhancements.

iii. Enforcement updates

ML stated that the PC has received a number of updates. It was agreed that the Clerk would keep an enforcement log to be referred to when needed. **Action 1.** ML updated that as earlier stated in public questions, the caravan at Wander Down, Stonehurst Lane is being investigated and it was not placed there with permission from the landowner and its removal is being actioned. PW updated that the body of water at Fishpond wood was looked into, but the matter has now been closed as no further action. The enforcement appeal at Drakes Den has stalled and they are awaiting a visit from an Inspector. It was agreed that this will be responded to stating how concerned HDPC are on this matter and the delay in any action. **Action 2.**

206. REPORTS FROM CLLR.BOB STANDLEY, ESCC & CLLR MICHAEL LUNN, WDC - written reports had been submitted and are published on the village website.

Cllr Standley reported that it is unlikely that the A272 speed signage petition will be ready for the February ESCC meeting but to get it to him ASAP. He confirmed that ESH did come out to look at the concrete in the drain at School Lane but the wrong drain was looked at. BF raised this drain and asked who owns it and is responsible as it can't be the landowner. Cllr Standley will look into this. **Action 3.**

The dangerous pothole on the main road near the Mayfield Flat was discussed, Clerk to report again. **Action 4.**

Cllr Lunn as WDC District Councillor reported that the recycling bins at Wilderness Wood have been removed despite opposition and no consultation with PC or residents. *Standing Orders dropped.*

Resident asked if the land is being reinstated, ML will ask about this. **Action 5.** He explained that the Local Plan is developing, and he is receiving regular briefings. It is proposed to be presented to Full Council on 8th February. *Standing orders reinstated.*

207. HIGHWAYS:

i. Blocked drains update – this is an ongoing issue and will remain on agenda so can be monitored.

ii. Response from ESH re SLR village report – Councillors had received the comments from ESH following a lengthy report sent with numerous issues around the village. Some has been repaired, some have not, and some have been deemed as satisfactory but the repair has been incredibly poor. The Clerk will chase these items. **Action 6.**

iii. Response from East Sussex re speed issues – No response yet from ESCC. *Carry forward.*

iv. Discussion regarding SID licence contract – PW explained the change of warranty for one SID and the maintenance contract for the SID is now a 3 year contract at £234.53. All Cllrs agreed for the 3-year Silver contract.

208. COMMUNITY CENTRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

i. Note draft minutes from the Committee held on the 21st November 2023 – the minutes were noted.

ii. Ratify decision to add Mr Brian Mills onto Committee membership – approved.

iii. Ratify agreement via email to arrange a stakeholder meeting in December – approved.

iv. Approve Mr Mike Barber [project architect] being invited as guest speaker for the next Advisory Committee – approved.

209. TREE SURVEY QUOTES – The Clerk had circulated the quotes prior to the meeting. Two quotes were received, and all Councillors agreed to proceed with contactor B at £380 + VAT. Clerk to commission the tree survey. **Action 7.**

210. MAINTENANCE CONTRACT TENDERS

The Clerk had circulated the tender returns prior to the meeting. Despite going out to tender to several companies, only two companies responded.

i. Play area contract – It was agreed to go with contractor C at £840 + VAT per annum.

ii. Burial ground contract – It was agreed to go with contractor C at £916 + VAT per annum.

As it is the same contractor for both the burial ground and play area, there will be 5% off the combined total.

iii. Verge contract – It was agreed to go with contractor A at £800 + VAT per annum.

Clerk to make the necessary notifications and finalise the paperwork. **Action 8.**

211. ANNUAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

i. Standing Orders – this was reviewed and approved by all Councillors.

ii. Burial Ground regulations – this was reviewed and approved by all Councillors.

iii. Freedom of Information publication scheme – this was reviewed and approved by all Councillors.

iv. Risk Management policy – this was reviewed and approved by all Councillors.

212. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

i. WDC Christmas Collection Dates for Rubbish and Recycling – the dates have been published on social media.

ii. Village Hall grant success – the hall has been successful in securing a grant which they will use for the heating in the committee room, fire alarm system, potholes and improving ramps and railings in the hall.

iii. School Lane drainage works – this was undertaken the evening of Monday 4th December 2023.

iv. WGD reply to Councillor Partridge on WDC strategy – This working group was discussed and it was agreed that HDPC should be involved and DW will make contact with them to ensure we receive updates.

v. Letter from HDCC and PFC re extant permission – Clerk confirmed that letters had been received from the Hadlow Down Community Centre and Hadlow Down Playing Field Committee requesting permission for the works to be undertaken in order to obtain extant planning permission. The Clerk recommended that due to this being linked to a report regarding the need for obtaining legal advice that Cllrs had received before the meeting, both the letters and report should be discussed in a closed confidential session at the end of the meeting. The PC agreed to defer this item to the end of the meeting and discuss in closed session.

213. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS (COUNCIL MATTERS AND OUTSIDE BODIES):

PW has circulated his speed report in advance. DW updated that he attended the eSALC conference, there was an interesting planning consultant who presented and caravans came up. Highways were the main item and DW made contact with the Contract Director of Balfour Beatty. Cllrs gave permission for DW to arrange a site visit with her so she can see the issues first hand.

214. BURIAL GROUND:

i. Update on clearing the extension to the burial ground. This is ongoing, awaiting response from the Diocese.

215. CLERKS MATTERS:

i. Clerks hours November 2023 – The hours were agreed.

ii. Locum hours November 2023 – The hours were agreed and this was the final session. Words of thanks to be sent to Samantha on behalf of all Councillors for stepping in at short notice as Locum and assisting the Council.

iii. Ratify approval of the NALC pay agreement and 2 months back date payment – This was agreed.

iv. Discuss and agree 2024 meeting dates – These were agreed and will be published. **Action 9.**

v. Confirm sight and approval of Interim Internal Audit 2023/24 – This was noted and agreed. The Chair thanked the Clerk for her efforts with regard to completing this and was a useful exercise to conduct various checks on governance of finances and administration.

BF left the meeting at 20:44.

216. BANK RECONCILIATION – 25TH NOVEMBER 2023 TO BE SIGNED. PW and DM approved and signed.

217. OTHER FINANCE MATTERS:

i. Payments for ratification: DD payment to BT on 16th November for £351.74. Payment on 17th November to HMRC for tax and NI for £226.54. These were noted and approved.

ii. Duplicate payment to WDC for election fee £551.43, refunded on 27th Nov after bank rec. Clerk explained that an invoice was paid via DD and also BACS. WDC refunded one amount but after the bank reconciliation date so just to ensure Cllrs are aware of this amendment.

iii. Credit received for £30 on 3rd Nov for burial transfer. This was noted.

BF rejoined meeting 20:50

iv. Discussion re precept budget for 2023/24 – The Clerk explained that following the finance meeting on the 14th November, nothing has changed but the need for the tender contract figures were needed to finalise. The Clerk will update the figures and then send to Cllrs so they can review and see if any savings can be made elsewhere. The Clerk stated that any increases have been made due to inflation and does not think any other savings can be made except with the grants, if required. It was agreed that Cllrs would discuss any changes via email so the budget and precept can be agreed at the January 2024 meeting. **Action 10.**

- 218. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT (UT ref = Unity Trust Bank reference number) - DM and PW will authorise.**
- i Samantha Weatherill consultancy fees - £128.19 (UT ref: 962589919)
 - ii Vicki Rutt salary end December - £920 paid by SO
 - iii Vicki Rutt salary, backpay and expenses - £737.03 (UT ref: 98563400)
 - iv Lucy McConachie Play area inspection Nov - £40 (UT ref: 31896314)
 - v Village Hall for hall hire - £40 (UT ref: 455708195)
 - vi Reimbursement to Cllr Lunn for bus shelter annual weather proofing- £29.96 (UT ref: 462101546)
 - vii Village Hall hire for one extra meeting - £9.60 (UT ref: 824348360)
 - viii Mulberry and Co – Interim internal audit - £150.30 + VAT £30.06 (UT ref: 116166333)
 - ix Public Works Loan Board - £567.07 paid by DD
- 219. CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 Section 17** – nothing raised.
- 220. DEFIBRILLATOR BATTERY** – this had been checked on 5th December 2023.
- 221. ITEMS TO GO ON NEXT AGENDA:**
- Notice has been received regarding Presentation of pre-commencement conditions application to discharge conditions to enable extant permission in a closed confidential session.

**The meeting closed at 21:00 and moved to closed confidential session to discuss two items
Probation of Clerk and item 212 v.**