

# Cuckmere Valley Parish Council

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## Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held in Litlington Village Hall on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022, commencing at 7.00pm.

**Present:** Cllr Christine Ayers (Chairman)  
Cllr Richard Brown  
Cllr Ray Ellis

**In attendance:** County Councillor Stephen Shing  
Peter Cousin, Commercial Manager SDNPA.  
One member of the public.  
Parish Clerk

### Public Questions/Observations

Mr Ayers said the junction of Lullington Road and The Street (by the Black Barn) is unsafe and asked the Parish Council to report the matter to Highways.

Councillors also reported;

- i. A dangerous pothole opposite the car park on the way to towards Exceat.
- ii. Grips which need clearing between Black Barn and the Alfriston fingerpost sign. The hope is that once they have been cleared, not only will it help ease flooding but cars will be prevented from pulling over which will preserve the verges.

The Clerk will report all three issues to Highways.

### The Meeting

#### 1604. Chairman's Welcome

Cllr Ayers welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 1605. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Lamb, Nick Giles and Vanessa Rowlands. The reasons for their apologies were accepted by the Full Council.

District Councillor Lunn also sent apologies for his absence.

#### 1606. Declarations of Interest or changes to the Register of Interests

There were no declarations of interest nor were there any changes to the Register of Interests.

#### 1607. Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021

The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were approved by all and signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

#### 1608. Matters arising from the Minutes (if any)

All matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

#### 1609. Update from Peter Cousin, Commercial Manager SDNPA

Mr Cousin said that since the SDNPA took over the ownership of the Seven Sisters Country Park, five

months ago, the experience has generally been a positive one.

### Construction

Phase 1 of the construction work has been slightly delayed, partly due to Covid and partly because of supply chain problems. Completion is now expected to take place on the 18<sup>th</sup> April which is the Easter weekend so he is pushing hard for the car park to be open for then. The new Visitor Centre and offices are expected to be open early in May.

### Project Work

There have been further delays at Foxhole because the wall has started to collapse and it now needs underpinning. As a result, the accommodation at Foxhole will now open in October and the camping side won't be open until next year.

### Grazing Plan

11 Cattle are now grazing on site, with 25 more imminent. PC is to request a further 30 from Plumpton College. There is a no fence system in operation to enable more targeted grazing of undesirable plants. It is recognised that cattle numbers need to be increased further for the 280ha of grazing in the Park. The long term plan is to reduce fencing overall because it makes access easier for the public and it is also cheaper.

### Car Parks

There is now active car park management which has resulted in there being less verge parking, with the exception of New Year's Day where the car park wasn't actively managed and demand was unexpectedly high. Lessons have been learnt for next year.

In answer to Councillor's questions, Mr Cousin confirmed;

- i. The number of parking spaces will increase as they clear more verges and foliage.
- ii. There will be a new walking route, parts of the old habitat trail will be reinstated and a new path added. The aim is to increase footfall which will be measured using special counters.
- iii. The number of birds appears to have increased this year. Three short eared owls have also been spotted.
- iv. The park is now a Quality England Assured Site with 8 full time and 4 part time staff. This could increase seasonally, to a total of 20.
- v. New signage has arrived. It is expected to weather in and be less noticeable in time.
- vi. The reed bed is to be expanded and will be better maintained to improve drainage.
- vii. The flint wall on the border with the C120 is not entirely owned by the park but steps are being taken to clear the foliage.
- viii. He will liaise with Cuckmere Community Buses to see if they can work together to encourage more people to visit the area using public transport.
- ix. 3x footfall-counters installed, so that SDNPA has a better tally of the number of visitors.

## **1610. Report by District Councillor Lunn**

District Councillor Lunn sent a written report which said;

### 'Wealden Local Plan

The publication of the draft Local Plan had been delayed by internal discussion of, and opposition to, the housing numbers that central government required the District to provide for in the Plan. The numbers were felt to be excessive and calculated on a questionable basis. The distribution would impose an unreasonable burden on the Low Weald area which was the only part of the District not subject to special protection, and the local infrastructure could not support the numbers. Eight hundred

of the homes for which planning permission had already been granted had not yet been built, and a number of those which had been built could not be sold. It appeared that developers were holding back further building to maintain high prices. The District Council was lobbying central government to agree that the unsold or unbuilt homes already approved should be counted as part of the future housing provision in the District. The parish council was urged to keep abreast of this debate as the outcome would indirectly affect even those parishes within the South Downs National Park.

#### Management of the Cuckmere Estuary

No major updates since the Environment Agency announced it would continue to take responsibility for managing the Cuckmere River and removing a proportionate excess shingle that was blocking the estuary mouth, but had rejected the proposal to 'de-main' the river and hand management to the local Water Management Board. Debate therefore continued over the trigger point at which clearance should be done, i.e. whether it should be done in response to flooding or pro-actively to prevent flooding. There continues to be concern about the position of South Downs National Park Authority and to clarify what the position actually is. This is something I continue to raise when the opportunity arises.

More interestingly the Water Level Management Board has been conducting a modelling exercise on the Pevensey Levels catchment as to the over impact of existing and planned development (under the emerging local plan) and how this in turn will impact on flooding 50 year and 100 year events. The model is not finalised yet but it is hoped it will be able to be used to educate the impact of developments on water catchments.

#### Exeat Bridge

The South Downs National Park Authority had not yet granted planning permission for the new bridge due to concerns that the pedestrian crossing point at the Seven Sisters Country Park a short distance away (round a blind bend) could be made unsafe if traffic moved faster with no extra provision made to protect pedestrians. The problem was under discussion with East Sussex County Council'.

#### **1611. Report by County Cllr Stephen Shing**

County Councillor Shing said;

- East Sussex County Council Cabinet is going to consider its precept for 2022-2023 on the 25<sup>th</sup> January. A rise of 4.9% is expected. The grant figure from Central Government was better than anticipated so there will not be any cuts to any services. Central Government is to also level out parking income lost by Covid by awarding a grant to help recuperate 80% of those losses.
- Changes are being made to the Exeat Bridge planning application.

#### **1612. Report from the South Downs National Park Representative.**

There was no report from the South Downs National Park Representative on this occasion.

#### **1613. Reports by Parish Councillors a) Cuckmere River and Estuary**

Councillor Brown said;

- The Environment Agency (EA) has promised to cut a channel in the river mouth through the shingle when needed.
- The brooks are draining and the ditches are being cleaned by the Water Levels Management Board (WLMB).
- So far it has not been a challenging winter and everything is working reasonably well. The WLMB will remain on the case.
- He is to meet the new Catchment Co-ordinator at the Water Levels Management Board (WLMB) and hopes she will carry on the good work of her predecessor.
- The restoration of the channel at Alfriston is still on the agenda which WLMB (supported by CVPC) continues to push for.
- The EA has committed money to carry out low key clearances over five years not five occasions. The first clearance took place in September 2020.

- He has applied for a grant from the Farming in Protective Landscapes Scheme so that he can clear bushes off some of the riverbank footpaths on Clapham and Frog Firle Farms. Mr Cousin said he will also see if he can get funding to clear the SDNPA-owned part of the riverbank closer to the A259.

### **b) Highways**

This was covered in the public session. It was also noted that a man has been arrested on suspicion of arson following the barn and hay bale fires last November, in the Ouse and Cuckmere valleys, respectively.

### **c) Countryside and Rights of Way**

There was nothing new to report on this occasion.

### **d) Public Transport**

Mr Ayers said;

- Cuckmere Community Buses has no service changes planned. The shopping service has not recovered from the pandemic and is currently running at 50% of pre-pandemic levels. Other services are running at 70%.
- The Rambler Bus is to return on the 26<sup>th</sup> March. The last service will not be running anymore because there is no demand for it.
- A new Diesel Euro 6 bus is arriving in March.
- A demo of the 'Electric Sprinter' has been requested. If bought it will need an electric charging point place.
- Hydrogen buses are also being considered.
- Talks are taking place with a production company with the aim of getting more people back on the buses.
- Bus drivers will be happy to report verge parking, via him, to the SDNPA.

### **e) Planning**

1. There were no planning applications for commenting on at this meeting.
2. Councillors resolved unanimously to support Chiddingly Parish Council in its effort to convince Central Government to modify its planning policies.

It was also noted that The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is proposing a local connection test for those wanting to record their interest in building their own home by applying to be included on the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register.

Consultation on the proposed local connection test is being carried out for eight weeks between Tuesday 11 January 2022 and Tuesday 08 March 2022. All responses to the consultation must be received before midnight on Tuesday 08 March 2022.

**f) Police Safety Action Group Meeting** – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.

**g) Any other report** – There were no other reports.

### **1614. Finance Report –**

- i. Councillors resolved to accept and approve the Finance Report dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.
- ii. Councillors resolved to accept and approve the invoices for payment to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.
- iii. Councillors resolved the precept for 2022-2023 will be £8584. This will help keep expenditure in line with income and represents an increase of approximately 50p per week per Council Tax Band D property.

Councillors also discussed ways to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and agreed;

- 1: To facilitate in the offer of commemorate mugs. Orders and money will be taken in advance.

2: Councillor Brown will ask the Village Hall Committee if they have any plans for a party on Sunday June 4th. He will also organise another Village Walk: Beating the Bounds, planned for Thursday June 2<sup>nd</sup>, which is a Bank Holiday.

**1615. Date of next future Meetings of CVPC** – The next meeting will be the Parish Meeting and it will held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in Litlington Village Hall. It will be followed by refreshments.

Dr Raj Chandarana from Old Surgery Seaford has confirmed he will attend and residents will also have the opportunity to ask questions about the updated Parish Plan. Hard copies of the Plan will be sent out in March.

The agenda will be displayed on the noticeboards and on the website. It will also be sent out via the village email distribution list where it will be made clear that the Parish Meeting is for only for Cuckmere Valley residents.

*The Meeting closed at 8.10pm*