

# Cuckmere Valley Parish Council

Alison Stevens  
Parish Clerk  
31 Banner Way  
Stone Cross  
Pevensey  
East Sussex  
BN24 5FE  
Telephone 01323 460007  
Email [cuckmerepc@googlemail.com](mailto:cuckmerepc@googlemail.com)

## Minutes of the Thirty Second Assembly of the Parish Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday 13th April 2022 at 7.00pm.

**Present:** Cllr Christine Ayers (Chairman of Cuckmere Valley Parish Council)  
Cllr Richard Brown  
Cllr Ray Ellis  
Cllr Nick Giles  
Cllr Andrew Hodson  
Cllr Mark Lamb  
Cllr Vanessa Rowlands  
13 Parishioners  
Alison Stevens (Clerk)

### 1. Chairman's welcome.

Cllr Christine Ayers extended a warm welcome to those present.

### 2. Minutes of the Thirty First Assembly held on 13th April 2021.

The Minutes had been distributed and circulated previously. Minute 6 line 2 was amended to read 'Her' not 'His'. A **proposal** to accept the Minutes as a true and accurate record was then made by Cllr Mark Lamb, **seconded** by Cllr Vanessa Rowlands and **agreed** by all. The Minutes were then signed by the Chairman.

### 3. Chairman's review of activity

Cllr Ayers read her report which said;

'Firstly I would like to thank Councillors for all their hard work over the past year and in particular Councillor Richard Brown for all his recent endeavours revisiting and redrafting the Parish Plan.

As soon as it was allowed Councillors attended meetings in person, a much more useful way of handling parish business. Zoom or Team meetings are ok if everyone knows how to handle the mute button. Some public bodies continue to meet this way.

We had no particular contentious planning applications and all were dealt with by phone, email or face to face.

Ownership of the Country Park finally happened in April and its been interesting to see how things are progressing. South Downs National Park Authority has got some very good ideas for this area and how to make the most of our beautiful valley. I do remain a little concerned that car parking, although important to them is not their priority. Parking in the villages and on the verges continues to be something of a problem at busy times of the year. If anyone has any good solutions to offer please let your council know!

There are a number of topics on the agenda and I look forward to any discussion at the end of the meeting. This is yours, the village's, meeting and if as a Council we can do anything about a problem then we will certainly give finding a solution our best shot. Thank you.'

#### **4. Mr David White – to talk about the Cuckmere Flood Forum**

The Forum, was established in 2000 to co-ordinate the many authorities who were dealing with flooding. It;

- Pulls together the nine parishes along the Cuckmere.
- Invites other bodies such as the Environment Agency, South East Water and Southern Water to its meetings on an ad-hoc basis and reports any issues directly to them.
- Also has good links with the National Flood Forum, the Cuckmere Catchment Flood Partnership and the Pevensey Levels Management Board.
- Is asking parishes to walk their section of the Cuckmere and report any problems to them.

In answer to councillor's and resident's questions, Mr White confirmed;

- Incidents can be reported to Gill Hesselgrave on 01323 844613. Gill is Secretary to the forum. The issue will then be investigated and reported to the lead authority (ESCC).
- The Forum has no on line presence or constitution and operates on a shoe string budget but it prefers to remain small.
- The Forum was able to make changes to the Flood Risk Strategy in the Wealden Local Plan.
- De-maining the river would take the responsibility away from the EA.
- Developers of major planning applications can sometimes make one off payments to help.
- At one point the EA agreed to demain the river but it later changed its mind.

#### **5. Kate Davidson, Wealden Citizens Advice**

Ms Davidson said Wealden Citizen's Advice;

- Provides free, independent, impartial advice, and listens to people. It also feeds issues back to Local or Central Government.
- Helped over 4000 people who between them had 1525 different, often complex, issues.
- Meetings are held on a 1:1 basis from its offices at Crowborough, Hailsham and Uckfield. During the pandemic advice was given over the phone. 'Outreach' appointments are also available.
- Has an excellent relationship with Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council.
- Has received 48% more calls than this time last year. It's a difficult time for many because of the increased costs of living, the end of furlough and the end of the £20 uplift. Debt collection services have also resumed.
- Has between 80-90 trained volunteers. Training can take up to a year but it is important that people receive the right advice.

In answer to residents' questions, Ms Davidson confirmed;

- Poverty is on the whole scattered throughout the District. Those in rural areas are often asset rich but cash poor.
- A Bluebell Walk has been organised at Arlington on the 14<sup>th</sup> April to help raise funds.
- Citizen's Advice works with the Trussell Trust and refers people to its foodbanks. There is no cap and people are not initially means tested.
- Funding comes from voluntary donations and grants.
- They will refer cases to Social Services if someone is at risk.

The Chairman thanked Ms Davidson for attending who then left the meeting.

## 6. Presentation of the updated Parish Plan

Councillor Brown said that;

‘Periodically the Parish Council should review its overall policies and strategies on the issues which the community face, and in which CVPC has some influence. This is incorporated into the Parish Plan, which was last formally undertaken in 2009.

Many of the issues are familiar and unsurprisingly, our approach to most of these has not changed much. Nonetheless it is important to review the issues, to offer some policies, and to get community feedback. The draft Parish Plan has been sent to everyone in the Parish.

He invited feedback, via the Clerk – or direct to Councillors. The Parish Council will then review the feedback at its meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> May, where it will discuss amendments to the document, and finalise the new version of the Plan by the time of the following meeting.

Residents agreed the Plan was very succinct and clear. They questioned whether the policies were hard hitting enough before agreeing that a softly spoken approach was probably better.

Everyone agreed that ‘Transport’ is the biggest problem, particularly at Exceat Bridge and the A27. There was also some disagreement about whether the new cycle paths were worth the money.

Parking on verges is also a problem, especially opposite Friston Forest car park where drivers seem to prefer to park on the verge rather than in the car park, where they have to pay. The Parish Council said it will visit the matter again at its next Full Council Meeting.

## 7. Presentation of Village Hall Accounts

The Litlington Village Hall accounts were presented by Chris Mason, the Honorary Treasurer a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Income was £5828 last year which was down because of Covid but it included a grant of £750 from the Parish Council and £1348 in Government Gift Aid. Expenditure was £2780 but included a new dishwasher. Running costs included insurance, website expenses and apple juice. Electricity is supplied by SSE on a three year tariff. The bank balance is approximately £7000 but it is needed to build up funds for much future projects.

Cllr Richard Brown **proposed** acceptance of the accounts, which was **seconded** by Mr Richard Hayward and agreed by all.

## 8. Report and Election of Village Hall Committee

11 members currently serve on the Village Hall Committee. There was one new member. Cllr Christine Ayers **proposed** the election en-bloc of the Committee. Her proposal was **seconded** by Cllr Nick Giles and **agreed** by all.

There are three trustees – Annie Brown, Richard Hayward and Jeremy Carver who replaced Richard Mann.

The Chairman, Caroline Giles, thanked all the members for doing such a fantastic job and, as a result, the hall is in a great condition. The kitchen has been refitted and there are new acoustic panels. Internet connection and an electric car charging point are being considered next. The hall also has a new website.

Activities held at the hall included apple juice selling, plays, book launches, picnics, yoga, restated Christmas drinks, a sewing club and coffee mornings.

She thanked the Parish Council for its financial contribution and also singled out, Councillor Rowlands, Cally Southern, Chris Mann and Maggie Carden for all their hard work.

#### **9. Use of Defibrillator**

The Village Hall is to arrange a get together so that as many residents as possible know how to use the defibrillator. The defibrillator, which is on an outside wall at The Plough, is regularly checked by the landlord.

#### **10. Presentation on Cuckmere River and Estuary issues**

Cllr Mark Lamb said the river is still flowing and getting out to sea. The MP has chaired meetings with the Water Levels Management Board (WLMB), the Environment Agency and others but the Environment Agency has changed its mind and will not now reclassify the river. It has agreed to partially clear the shingle but only on an emergency basis for up to five years of which there are only two to three years left. The trigger point was understood to be when the water reaches West Dean but it is not now the case. Maria Caulfield MP is to be asked to continue arranging the meetings with the EA to help keep the pressure up. The Cuckmere Estuary Group which was looking at more long term solutions appears to have run its ground.

Cllr Brown confirmed he, with the full co-operation of the National Trust, has removed scrub from the river bank and cleared the path. He is now looking for funding from the South Downs National Park so that he can repair the river bank.

Both Councillor Brown and Councillor Lamb agreed that the Friends of the Cuckmere and the Water Levels Management Board work well together and will keep pushing for action.

Residents suggested it might pay to find out how many other areas are in the same position but as most main rivers run through urban areas they tend to be the ones which are prioritised.

#### **11. Public discussion**

There was no further public discussion so the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.35pm.