

Cuckmere Valley Parish Council

www.cuckmerevalleyipc.org.uk

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Minutes of the Meetings of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 10th May 2022 at Litlington Village Hall, commencing at 7.00pm.

Present: Cllr Mark Lamb
Cllr Christine Ayers
Cllr Richard Brown
Cllr Ray Ellis
Cllr Vanessa Rowlands

In attendance: County Councillor Stephen Shing
District Councillor Michael Lunn
6 Parishioners
Parish Clerk

Public Question Time

The Parish Council recently sent out its draft Parish Plan and invited residents to comment. Some replied by email and Councillor Brown asked if anyone present would like to say anything.

Mr Richard Mann said he was involved with the original plan and would like to see the following matters addressed;

'The overall aim and message remains the same, a Rural Parish set in wonderful surroundings in the South Downs, wishing to remain relatively untouched by the march of modernity.

However the focus on energy reduction and the need for improved house insulation raises problems. Is the need for insulation to be imposed or left to the individual house holder? We have a very varied age of dwelling in the Parish and I would think that everyone will need to be assessed.

The reduction or control of energy usage is up to the way different houses are run, as well as the different ways that energy equipment is invested in and installed in each house. Does the Parish have a responsibility to see if these requirements are carried out and is there a timeframe for these actions to be completed by?

With regard to the Cuckmere River, and if we wish to see more direct control by the affected Parishes, we need to devise a stronger area of organisation moving towards ourselves, including the Water Level Management Board (WLMB), This will need an aggressive and continued operation aimed at the EA and higher Government Policy. It will almost certainly need a new part of our organisation to carry this through and to not give up until we are satisfied with the result.

With regard to emergency operations re flooding of roads and property, we have a wonderful example of the Alfriston Emergency Group, who have saved both property and roads from considerably worse situations during the past year as their influence has grown. They have also rescued many cars and people from our flooded roads, giving much support when needed. I recommend that we strongly support them with both money and people’.

Councillors Lamb and Brown said they attended the Estuary Group Meeting earlier that day and found that the Environment Agency is still being very negative in respect of clearing the river channel in the Alfriston and Litlington area, and not sufficiently clear and supportive in respect of keeping the river mouth clear. They agreed with Mr Mann that we need to adopt a more forceful approach. At that meeting;

- the National Trust also outlined its plan for Chyngton Brooks and the west bank which involves cutting breaches into the bank meaning the footpath will be lost as a result.
- ESCC and the Water Levels Management Board said they have reviewed the Pathfinder Project (which considers various options for dealing with rising sea levels and the abandonment of existing sea and river floodbank protection by the Environment Agency). The Report is due out soon but the Executive Summary made it clear that the recommendations of Pathfinder had not been implemented.
- The National Trust said further consultation on the Chyngton Brooks project would be limited to the formal planning process. Councillor Lamb and Brown pointed out this would not prevent the Parish Council, or the public, from making their views known in the manner of their choosing.

Everyone agreed that some more intelligent maintenance work is required, and that we need to involve other bodies such as the ramblers, and also the MP.

Councillor Lamb offered to work out a way forward to recommend to the next Full Council Meeting.

Mrs Newman said the speed of cars is another problem in the parish and asked for signs saying ‘Slow – Children’ or ‘20 is plenty’. She also asked for the speed limit to be reduced to 20mph because there are often children playing outside. Councillors explained that while we don’t meet the criteria for reducing the speed limit it might be possible to put some temporary signs up.

Mrs De Angeli said parking on verges also remains a problem because it is destroying the verges. She suggested A Boards could be put out at peak times to discourage parking on them. The Parish Council has previously offered to build up the verges but meeting the criteria set by the County Council proved to be expensive. Councillors agreed to set up a Zoom meeting between themselves, the SDNPA, ESCC and the County Councillor to find a way to resolve the issue. Councillor Rowlands said she has checked and CIL can be used to rectify the verges.

The Annual Meeting

1616. Election of Chairman

Cllr Brown **proposed** Cllr Lamb for election to the office of Chairman, this was **seconded** by Cllr Ellis and **agreed** by all present.

Councillor Lamb thanked Councillor Ayers for her hard work and many years of service as the Chairman of Cuckmere Valley Parish Council.

1617. Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr Lamb **proposed** Cllr Brown for election to the office of Vice Chairman, this was **seconded** by Cllr Ayers and **agreed** by all present.

1618. To re-adopt the observe Code of Conduct

Councillors resolved to accept the Code of Conduct introduced by Wealden District Council under the Localism Act 2012.

1619. Register of Members' Interests

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

1620. General Power of Competence

Cuckmere Valley Parish Council resolved that it meets the prescribed conditions for the General Power of Competence.

1621. To adopt the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as recommended by the National Association of Local Councils

Cuckmere Valley Parish Council resolved to adopt the Standing Orders (2022) and Financial Regulations (2022) recommended by NALC.

1622. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hodson and Giles and the reasons for their apologies were accepted by the Parish Council.

1623. Approval and Signature of the Annual Return for the year to 31st March 2022

Copies of the Cuckmere Valley Parish Council accounts for the year to 31st March 2022, audited by Nigel Butten, were circulated before the meeting.

Councillors resolved;

- a) to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2021-2022
- b) to approve of the Accounting Statements 2021-2022
- c) that Cuckmere Valley Parish Council is exempt from an External Audit for the year to 31st March 2022 because its receipts and payments were each less than £25000.
- d) that the Exercise for Elector's Rights relating to the Annual Accounts will start on the 13th June 2022 and end on the 22nd July 2022.

1624. Appointment of Representatives to outside bodies

a) Wealden District Association of Local Councils - Cllrs Ayers and Ellis.

b) East Sussex Association of Local Councils (for October/November AGM) To be decided when the date of the meeting is known.

c) Cuckmere Buses (CCB) - Susan de Angeli

d) Verges for Wildlife - Cllr Brown.

e) Tree Wardens

Lullington - Cllr Ellis

West Dean – Cllr Hodson.

Litlington – Barney Coleman

f) Police Liaison Committee - Councillor Giles

g) Cuckmere Flood Forum - Councillors Brown and Lamb.

The Ordinary Meeting

1625. Chairman's Welcome

Cllr Lamb once again thanked Councillor Ayers for all her hard work during her many years as Chairman of Cuckmere Valley Parish Council.

1626. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11th January 2022

The unadopted Minutes had been previously circulated. Cllr Brown **proposed** acceptance, Cllr Ellis **seconded** and they were **agreed** by all.

1627. Clerk's Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes.

All matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

The meeting was then suspended.

1628. Report by County Councillor Shing

County Councillor Shing reported;

- This is his 21st year as a County Councillor.
- ESCC had its Full Meeting on the 10th May. It has granted approval for a number of projects on the A22 and allowed £41m to improve bus services.

Councillor Rowlands reminded everyone the planned Jevington Road closures which will impact all the surrounding roads.

1629. Report by District Councillor Lunn

District Councillor Lunn sent a written report which said;

'The District Council is responsible for planning, housing, waste collection, licensing, environmental health, council tax collection and benefits. We also have some non-statutory responsibilities such as leisure, economic development and tourism. In addition, we have a number of assets we are responsible for including council car parks and redundant graveyards etc. We also operate the crematorium, own shops in Vicarage Field in Hailsham and have a housing company. These commercial operations generate income and help to meet the strategic aims of the District Council. Some of the services, such as building control, environmental health and licensing are provided through a shared service with other authorities and some are out sourced such as waste collection and leisure. On the other hand, unlike most other authorities, we continue to own and manage council housing of which we own over 3000 units.

All these services are provided out of a tax which represents about 10% of your Council Tax bill. The District Council has been prudently managed and been able to hold a good level of reserves and last year was able to freeze our portion of the council tax. This year we have had to increase by £5 a year for a Band D taxpayer, with uncertainties about income from central government and inflationary pressures. Over the past years, financial support from government has been reduced and councils are largely reliant on their own resources and council tax.

In the past, one of the most difficult service areas has been waste collection, which has improved immensely with our current contract with Biffa, who have done a very professional job even through the pandemic period and having to cope with staff absences. Missed bins are at a record low and recycling is very high. However, this week we learnt that a threat of industrial action which could last two to four weeks has started but we are trying to maintain services at all costs.

Planning is always a contentious issue. Fortunately, we are protected by the South Downs National Park who acts as the planning Authority despite being in Wealden District. This protects Cuckmere Valley from the worst excesses of over development. As someone who is on the board of the South Downs National Park, I am very concerned that everything we do conserves and enhances the beautiful landscape of the area whilst maintaining economic value through tourism and contributes to a vibrant village community.

The new local plan preparation is advancing, against the background of a target for house building from government which is excessive and, in my view, unachievable. The Council have

accepted the principle that development should be concentrated around existing sustainable settlements with the possibility that a new settlement might be considered. With the uncertainty about planning reforms and possible new targets from government we are waiting for an announcement before publishing a draft plan. However, the planning officers are kept very busy assembling the evidence for the new plan and assessing sites for inclusion in the plan. We are hopeful for a lower target but also changes to the rules on the 5 year housing land supply, which will give us more control over planning applications which are being submitted, particularly in the South of the district.

My final update which I would like to report is the Cuckmere and Pevensey Water Levels Management Board which has maintained dialogue with the Environment Agency over works along the Cuckmere. From my observations I can see a much more positive dialogue between the EA and other agencies which has been a welcome relief. But the proof will be with real action, and I remain committed as does Wealden District Council in keeping the River Mouth open to allow flood waters to flow from the valley’.

He also added that;

- The bin strike has started and is expected to last four weeks. In the meantime residents are being officially advised to put their waste collection bins out as usual and leave them out for three days. If after that time they are not emptied, they need to put them out again in two weeks’ time. Garden waste is not being collected. Recycling centres remain open and those who need support are being asked to contact Wealden District Council.
- Talks are taking place between the Leader of Wealden, the Portfolio Holder and Michael Gove to try and get the housing numbers in the Local Plan reduced.
- Wealden has very little influence with flooding issues because it is the responsibility of the County Council.

1630. Report from the South Downs National Park Representative

Councillor Rowlands reported the following;

- The SDNPA has been given their budget allocation for this year, which will be the third year of flat cash so savings of £1m need to be made. It is hoping that after efficiencies, voluntary redundancies and not automatically replacing vacated jobs, there should only need to be £500k worth of redundancies to be made.
- The new South Downs Corporate Plan has been approved. The three main priorities are Nature Recovery, Tackling Climate Change and Access for All.
- The South Downs National Park Local Plan review is starting this year. One of its aims will be to help make homes more energy efficient.
- Plans for the Exceat Bridge have been delayed because the speed limit needs to be reconsidered and some of the land involved is a SSSI site.
- DEFRA received over 8000 replies to its consultation of the Glover Landscape Review.
- The SDPNA holds regular meetings for Parishes which she finds are really useful. The next East Sussex meeting will be in July at the Seven Sisters Country Park.

1631. Reports by Parish Councillors

- a) Cuckmere River and Estuary** – This was covered in the public session.
- b) Highways** – This was also covered in the public session.
- c) Rights of Way** – Councillor Brown said 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.
- d) Public Transport** – The new bus timetable is out now. Details of the new timetable can be found at <https://cuckmerebuses.org.uk/timetables.htm>
- e) Planning** – There were no planning applications for commenting on at this meeting.
- f) Any other report** - There were no other reports.

- 1632. Report by the Clerk** - Councillors resolved to approve the payments list and Finance Report to 10th May 2022. It was noted that the Parish Council has had to change payroll providers. The new payroll provider will be Team4Payroll.
- 1633. Representation on outside bodies**
a) Wealden District Association of Local Councils (WDALC) – 39 out of 42 Councils were represented at the Working Group Against Over-Development Meeting held on the 8th April. The minutes of the meeting can be found at: <https://www.chiddingly.gov.uk/working-group-on-over-development/>
- b) Cuckmere Flood Forum (CFF)** – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.
- 1634. Parking on the verges**
This was covered in the public session.
- 1635. Queen’s Platinum Jubilee**
Various events are planned which include;
- i. A Beating of the Bounds walk followed by refreshments on the 2nd June.
 - ii. Lighting of the beacon at Barn Cottage Garden at 9.45pm on the 2nd June.
 - iii. A special church service in Litlington Church at 9am on the 5th June.
 - iv. A commemorative tea and a play on Sunday 5th June at Litlington Village Hall
- 1636. Parish Plan** – The Parish Plan has now been distributed to all residents. Councillors will consider each response and produce a final draft for the next Full Council Meeting.
- 1537. Dates of Meetings of Cuckmere Valley Parish Council for the forthcoming year**
Tuesday 12th July 2022 in West Dean Church
Tuesday 11th October 2022 in Litlington Village Hall
Tuesday 10th January 2023 in Litlington Village Hall
All meetings will commence at 7.00pm and be preceded by Public Questions from 6.50pm

The Meeting closed at 8.35pm