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**Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held at Blackstone Playing Fields, Woodmancote
on Tuesday, 8 June 2021 at 6.30 p.m.**

Present: WPC Cllrs. C. Dixon (Chairman), W. Noel, P. Williams, M. Batchelor,
R. Noel and D. Austin
S. Mamoany (Clerk)

Others Present: 10 members of the public
2 representatives of Sussex Cricket Club

2021-272. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. J. Pragnell, Cllr. L. Fricker, District Councillor M. Croker and County Councillor P. Linehan.

2021-273. Minutes of the meeting held on the 4 May and 27 May 2021

Some minor amendments were made to the minutes. The minutes were **RESOLVED** by the Council and duly signed by Cllr. Dixon.

2021-274. Actions from previous Minutes

The Clerk confirmed Zurich had added the SID poles to the insurance policy with no additional charge.

It was noted the road subsidence on Blackstone Lane has not been repaired but uneven road warning signs have been placed at both ends of Blackstone Lane.

2021-275. Public Participation

Members of the public made the following comments in relation to the Blackstone Playing Field lease:

A resident asked if the Council had the original 2003 lease as it was assumed to be lost. They noted that a lot of clauses were in a document which no one seemed to have and there was an understanding that a gentlemen's agreement was in place covering areas such as residents being able to use the grounds. Cllr. Dixon responded that the Council were in possession of the original signed lease and it had not been lost. Any

gentlemans agreement would not be a legal document; although he noted some conditions were detailed within the Management Plan and Planning Condition documents. Renewing the lease would give the Council the opportunity to ensure that the correct clauses were in the new lease. The Clerk would check with the solicitor as to if any further documents were stored with them. It was noted that the new draft lease would be available for a period of 28 days on the Council website for residents to submit comments to the Council for them to consider.

A resident raised concerns about the increased use of the grounds, which increased the traffic to the site and caused parking issues; they felt that too many matches are being held every day and this includes adult games. The understanding was that the grounds were for the use of youth cricket only. Cllr. Dixon responded that the current lease makes no reference to youth cricket and that the Council are looking at negotiating the number of senior fixtures that can be held at the ground in the new lease.

A resident noted that the lease was in the name of the Sussex Young Cricketers Trust.

Jon Filby from Sussex Cricket spoke and sympathised with the issues raised and fully accepted the points about senior fixtures. He explained the charity on the current lease is no longer active, with the exception of the current lease and they now operate as the Sussex Cricket Foundation and have done since 2015. He hoped that residents were as proud of the facilities at Blackstone as Sussex Cricket are and it is known as the best cricket facility in the county with the exception of the County Ground at Hove. He pointed out it was not the intention to play regular senior cricket at the grounds and they were in agreement to put a limit of fixtures in the new lease.

A resident noted if they had the opportunity to object to Sussex Cricket taking the lease in 2003 they would have done so.

A resident commented that she was proud of the grounds, however it was also their home. This was more important than the cricket activities and they noted that it started off small and the activity has grown to a much larger scale. Cllr. Dixon noted that the current lease has no limits on who can play or how many fixtures. It was noted the lease stated for the purpose of playing field and training facilities. The options were to continue with the remaining lease for another 12 years with no limitations or issue a new 30-year lease which could include clauses to assist with the management of the site.

A resident suggested that a cap on the number of all fixtures is put in any new lease as the traffic has increased significantly; and as a walker many drivers are disrespectful.

A resident commented they felt reassured that the lease is being reviewed and although the grounds are an amazing place, unfortunately they are in the wrong location with limited accessibility and parking facilities and they felt that it was a creeping development. No one wants development on their doorstep but moving forwards we should achieve clarity on any new lease and support young people to play cricket from all groups and it should not just be a club for the elite.

A resident noted that these issues have been brewing for years and Sussex Cricket have pushed and pushed the boundaries. Residents would be proud if they had the chance to use the facilities. They felt a formal referendum should be the process for consultation on any new lease.

Cllr. Dixon noted that the current negotiations with Sussex Cricket, although were confidential due to it being a commercial lease, were also around the rental income. The current rent is £100 which in turn is paid to the Allen family for the lease of the area of ground that is owned by them. A rental valuation was carried out

recently; which confirmed the current market rental is significantly higher. It was noted that if Sussex Cricket moved on from the site, this would have a substantial financial effect on the Parish Council as they would have to maintain the site themselves.

A resident noted that the District Valuer normally puts a rental fee on Parish Council owned facilities, for example tennis courts.

David Bowden representing Sussex Cricket advised that currently the ground costs in the region of £75,000 pa to run and this is funded by the charity with the emphasis on youth cricket and development. He noted that from the conversations it seemed some residents do not want Sussex Cricket here and perhaps we need to seek another alternative, although he noted another 12 years was still remaining on the current lease. However, if a new lease was in place the conditions would be better moving forwards.

A resident asked how it would be better when we were informed in 2003 that we would have 10/20 cars. Sussex Cricket advised that this was not written into any lease and moving forwards they wanted to reduce the senior cricket not increase it.

Jon Filby confirmed Sussex Cricket would agree to putting a clause in a new lease with a maximum number of senior fixtures, which would be in the region of 8-10 per annum.

A resident commented that it should be the parish who decide if a new lease should be issued and it should be discussed with all residents.

A resident noted that if the proposed new lease was available for comment for a period of 28 days and residents could come back with comments this would be an acceptable level of engagement as long as the comments were genuinely considered and an open meeting should be held for residents to comment and a decision made from that information. Youth cricket cannot be the worse use for the site but clearly there is local concern about a local asset and the views of residents should be taken into account.

Jon Filby confirmed that residents do have access to the site and are welcome to use it, together with the playground area which was provided by Sussex Cricket. In addition, the grounds also support football and stoolball none of which is contractual but for the future this should be included in the new lease so as not to repeat history.

Cllr. Austin noted that an international player had commented that the wicket at Blackstone was the finest south of London and we should be proud of the grounds.

Jon Filby commented that players such as Jofra Archer were developed at the Blackstone grounds and if the lease is improved together with better communication, it should be possible to manage things better in the future and that he was proud to bring representatives from the ECB to visit the Blackstone facilities.

Cllr. Williams noted that if any residents were interested in joining the Council, a vacancy was available and she commented that the Council are here to serve the community with no hidden agenda.

2021-276. Declarations of Interest from Members in respect of any items in the Agenda

No declarations of interest were made.

2021-277. Reports from other Authorities:

277.1. Report from Horsham District Council

Cllr. R. Noel reported as follows:

- There have been some changes recently at HDC due to disagreements regarding possible sites within the Local Plan and a new Leader is now in place with a new cabinet, including Cllr. R. Noel.
- Decisions are due to be made imminently relating to sites and Cllr. R. Noel noted confidential information was recently leaked; although the information read out in the House of Commons was incorrect.
- Stickers have been put on bins to inform residents of new recycling scheme for textiles, electrical items and batteries.

277.2. Report from West Sussex County Council

Cllr. R. Noel reported as follows on behalf of Cllr. P. Linehan:

- A kissing gate will be installed on the Furners Lane/Blackstone footpath to improve safety for pedestrians in relation to cyclists using this path.
- The Community Highways Scheme has been accepted to the next stage which will include some sort of speed reduction or speed limit expansion on the A281.

2021-278. Planning

278.1 To note application comments submitted under delegated powers

Cllr. Dixon noted one application where comments were agreed under the delegated powers put in place at the meeting held on the 4 May 2021 as follows:

DC/20/2556 - Farm Hill Brighton Road Woodmancote Henfield West Sussex BN5 9ST - Change of use of pool area and facilities to allow for private classes to take place and provision of dedicated parking area.

Following the additional information provided on the 11 May to this application, Woodmancote Parish Council wish to object to the application in relation to the change of use to a Class E for the following reasons;

- unsuitable location for a business situated in a residential/rural area,
- noise implications;
- additional traffic and access to the site off a busy main road;
- the application states that some classes will run till 6pm which could require additional lighting requirements on the site, which would be contrary to the SDNPA Dark Skies Policy;
- in addition, it is noted that public swimming pools have now been reopened.

278.2 Any applications received since publication of the agenda.

No applications had been received.

2021-279 Planning Update

The following decisions were noted:

DC/21/0569 Bramcote Farm Bramlands Lane Woodmancote BN5 9TG – Erection of single storey side extension – Permission granted

DC/21/0512 Woodmancote Parish Hall Brighton Road Woodmancote BN5 9SR – Construction of four detached dwellings with carports and relocation of vehicle access. - Permission refused.

2021-280. Woodmancote Parish Hall

280.1. Update on application to Historic England

The Clerk confirmed the online application had been submitted to Historic England in relation to requesting the building is listed. Thanks was given to Cllr. Batchelor for her assistance with the information for the application.

2021-281. Keep Britain Tidy

281.1. Woodmancote volunteer litter pick

The Clerk advised that no volunteers had been forthcoming. It was noted that residents were not aware of the campaign (which was on the website and noticeboards) and therefore suggested it was added to the BN5 magazine. Cllr. Batchelor advised she would add it to the community Facebook site.

2021-282. Blackstone Playing Fields

282.1. To agree next steps with regard to lease

Following the extraordinary meeting Cllr. Dixon had contacted Sussex Cricket in regards to the proposal that was agreed by the Council and was expecting a response in the early part of next week.

In relation to timelines the new lease could be prepared over the summer and once agreed by both parties it could be made available for residents to view in September. This would be dependent on Sussex Cricket and the current ongoing rental negotiations. It was noted that any new lease would need to note the necessary clauses and consider the items raised at the meeting this evening by residents.

Cllr. Dixon noted that a request had been made by Sussex Cricket Club to change the name on the current lease however it was the Council's view that this was not required if a new lease was the way forward.

Cllr. Dixon advised the Council that he had received several emails from residents in the past week relating to the transparency of the extraordinary meeting that was held on the 27 May. He had explained that due to the nature of the discussions, which involved negotiations on a commercial lease the meeting had to be held without members of the public being present.

A resident had requested a meeting with the Council and it was agreed Cllr. Dixon, Cllr. Williams and Cllr. Austin would meet with them on the 19th June.

It was noted that there are 12 years still remaining on the current lease which does not not give the Council much control as to what goes on. The current negotiations include trying to obtain a better financial agreement than the original lease, together with additional clauses to make the lease a better document moving forwards for the next 30 years.

282.2. To consider proposal from Sussex Cricket for signage on the pavilion.

Sussex Cricket are renaming the pavilion in memory of Matthew Hobden who was a promising young Sussex born fast bowler, who died in a tragic accident and a request had been made for a sign to be located on the west wall of the building. **It was RESOLVED** that the sign was acceptable to the Council.

A further request was made for a mural of Sussex born players along one side of the building, however it was felt that this was quite obtrusive in the location and Jon Filby withdrew the suggestion and advised they would do something internally instead.

2021-283.1. WSCC Highways/Traffic Speed A281

283.1. Update on Community Speed Watch

The Clerk advised that the recent training did not happen due to a technical issue, but it was rearranged for the 16 June at 1pm.

283.2. Update on SID pole installation.

The Clerk has chased Balfour Beatty again in relation to the SID pole installation date and will continue to do so.

2021-284. Code of Conduct

284.1 To consider adopting the revised Code of Conduct

Horsham District Council had recently reviewed the Code of Conduct and adopted a new one and had written to all Parish and Town Councils to recommend they adopted the new version. This had been circulated and **it was RESOLVED** to adopt the new Code of Conduct.

2021-285. Finance/Payment

285.1. Reconciled accounts and bank statement

It was RESOLVED to approve the above dated 30.04.2021 and 31.05.2021.

285.2 To note payments approved under delegated powers.

The following payments were approved under the delegated powers put in place at the meeting held on the 4 May 2021.

Balfour Beatty – SID Pole supply and installation - £1,898.10
Zurich Municipal – Insurance - £279.60
Age UK Horsham – Donation from COVID grant unused - £59.14

285.3 To approve the schedule of payments

It was RESOLVED to pay the following, listed on the schedule of payments.

WSSC – Salaries May - £652.59

Including the payments agreed under delegated powers, this amounted to £2,889.43.

2021-286. Correspondence/meetings/consultations

286.1. Age Concern UK

A thank you letter received to acknowledge the donation was noted.

286.2. Freedom of Information Request

This was noted and the Clerk had responded in the timescales required.

286.3. Email from resident regarding bridleway from Woodmancote Place to Lime Kiln Cottages

The Council noted the request from a resident to change the bridleway to a footpath. The Clerk was asked to write to the resident and inform them to contact WSSC Rights of Way regarding his proposal.

286.4. Request to use Blackstone playing fields car park by Astronomy Group

The Clerk confirmed that Sussex Cricket had agreed to this request if security was maintained. This would therefore mean that a member of the Council would have to open and lock up the gates. The Clerk was asked to write to the Astronomy Group to find out further information regarding dates/times and to invite them to attend the next Council meeting.

2021-287. Other Business

Cllr. R. Noel will report back from the Safer Routes Group at the next meeting.

Cllr. Austin advised that the materials to pay for the notice board repairs in Bramlands Lane were £48.

Cllr. Williams mentioned that the Blackstone Playing Fields signs still needed to be put up.

Cllr. Williams asked if a response had been received from the HALC Chairman regarding the requested apology; Cllr. Dixon confirmed no response had been received as yet.

Cllr. Batchelor informed the Council that a water trough had been stolen near to Blackstone Playing Fields in the past few weeks.

Cllr. Dixon noted that it seems residents are not aware of what is going on using the noticeboards/website and requested that the issue of publicity should be added to the next agenda.

2021-288. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in the marquee at Blackstone Playing Fields at 6.30pm on Thursday, 15th July 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm