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Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held at Blackstone Pavilion, Blackstone Playing Fields, Woodmancote on Tuesday 13 February 2024, 7.30 p.m.

Present: WPC Cllr Dixon, Cllr Austin, Cllr Batchelor, Cllr Morris, Cllr R Noel, Cllr W Noel
Others Present: Cllr Mike Croker (HDC), 2 members of the public.

Cllr. Dixon noted that the meeting was being recorded and that CCTV was present in the room which could also be taking images.

2024-015 Apologies

No Apologies were received. Cllr Donald was absent.

2024 - 016 Meeting minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the WPC Ordinary Meeting on 9 January and the Confidential Minutes of 9 January were RESOLVED subject to agreed amendments and signed by Cllr Dixon.

2024 - 017 Actions & Updates

017.1 – Blackstone Wastewater Treatment Works - Cllr Dixon updated the Council: He had emailed Richard White of Southern Water requesting that the Works’ tankers do not park on the road and that the mud on the road be cleared. He had received a reply from Sue Cobb of Southern Water on 21 January saying that Richard White had been off sick and that she would look into the situation out. Cllr Dixon had replied on 28 January stating that Southern Water needed to clear the road and had a legal liability to do so. Having received no update he followed this up with an email on 13 February. He was awaiting a response but committed to following this up and to request that Southern Water keep residents up to date with developments at the Works.

017.2 – Footpath from A281 to Bylsborough House – the Clerk updated the Council: she had spoken to the landowner, Mick Hills, of Swains Farm Shop, and asked him to clear the path as a matter of urgency. He agreed to ask his landscape contractor to clear the path so that it could be accessed by residents, and the Clerk requested that Cllrs check to see if this had been done. It was agreed that the Clerk should chase up Mr Hills to ensure that the path is cleared.

017.3 – Bus Shelter Replacement – Cllr Austin reported that he had not had a response from JD Fears with regards to a quote for a new shelter. He said that he would chase this up one more time and if they still did not respond, would look for an alternative contractor to supply the shelter. Cllr Austin stressed that any alternative contractor would need to be able to provide a galvanised steel base to prevent damp and rot.

017.4 – Anti-Litter Poster - Cllr Morris updated the Council: The Henfield Parish Council Youth Coordinator who was keen to run a poster competition through the Henfield Primary School had reported that it was hard to coordinate with the school to do this, so was planning to set up a competition with the local Scouts and Brownies instead. Cllr Morris agreed to follow this up.

Cllr R Noel informed the Council that SDNP had put up yellow and black ‘Do not throw litter’ signs. Henfield Parish Council has a budget for Henfield nature projects and Cllr Noel agreed to look into this as a possible way of funding the signs. He also confirmed that WPC would need eight signs in total – along the A281, one going West and one going East; Horn Lane, by the Hascombe Farm entrance; Blackstone Lane, one going North and one going South; B2116 opposite the Wheatsheaf PH; B2116 going West; and Bramlands Lane going East as you enter the village. The Clerk was asked to contact WSCC Highways Dept for permission to erect the signs once Cllr R Noel had confirmed exact locations. and that Hello Print was offering the most favourable price to produce 2x2m corrugated plastic signs.

017.5 – Anti-Fly tipping Poster – Cllr Morris confirmed that she would complete a poster.

2024-018 Public participation

A member of the public requested that a link to the meeting supporting documents be added to the agenda. The Clerk confirmed that she would do this as a One Drive link as the old Dropbox had now reached a maximum. The same member of the public had also received emails from residents complaining about rubbish along Furners Lane and the A281. Cllr Dixon confirmed that the Council was tackling this through signage as discussed under 017.4.

2024-019 Declarations of interest

Cllr Austin declared that he had been employed as a consultant for the applicant of DC/24/0106

2024-020 Reports from outside bodies - Horsham District Council - Cllr Croker updated the Council:

- The HDC Planning Portal is currently faulty and will take two weeks to fix. Cllrs Croker and Noel to request consultee deadline extensions for planning applications received during this time.
- HDC Councillors had had a peer review by the Local Government Association regarding Governance and a report is awaited. Policy Development Advisory Group meetings had attracted special scrutiny with regards to public accountability. The Planning Committee formation is also under discussion, with the aim of Councillors being better trained, and there will be a workshop on 15 February 2024 to discuss this.
- The Full Council meeting on 21 February will focus on approving many items, mostly financial, including the budget for 2024/25, the medium-term financial strategy to 2030 and Council Tax – it is proposed that premiums for second homes will increase to 100% from 2025, and unoccupied homes to 100% for the forthcoming year.
- The Independent Remuneration Panel will be reporting on Councillors’ allowances; and the Council is considering reducing the number of joint Policy Advisory Group meetings to reduce the amount of evening work by officers.

2024-021 Planning

021.1 DC/24/0106 - Blackstone Gate Farmhouse, Henfield, Albourne, W. Sussex – application to confirm the change of use from residential annexe to separate single dwelling (Lawful Development Certificate - Existing). Cllrs agreed to request an extension for this as it was unable to make a decision without accessing the HDC Planning portal, and to discuss at the March Ordinary Meeting.

021.2 Other applications since publication of agenda: None.

2024-022 Planning update

022.1 Planning decisions received as per the supporting paper were noted and received as read.

2024-023 Blackstone Playing Fields

023.1 To discuss any matters relating to the leases of a confidential nature and associated costs.

Cllr Dixon reported that he and Cllr R Noel had met with Ian Waring, the acting CEO of Sussex Cricket, and Jon Filby on 13 February 2024. Certain suggestions were put forward by Mr's Waring and Filby, but Cllrs Dixon and Noel had made it clear that they were unable proceed on the basis of suggestions and that they would need written concrete steps forward and an agreement.

The Council is now awaiting Sussex Cricket's written response as agreed.

2024-024 Finance/Payments

024.1 Reconciled accounts – there was a mismatch between the WPC Unity Trust Bank Savers Account balance quoted on the income/expenditure sheet and the bank statement. It was agreed that the Clerk would discuss the WPC Accounts Excel spreadsheet calculations with the Chair and for Reconciled Accounts to be resolved at the March Ordinary Meeting.

024.2 The Schedule of payments were approved as follows:

29/01/2024 - £755.11 – WSCC Salaries and on-costs

24/01/2024 - £53.42 – WSCC Payroll admin cost

28/11/2023 - £564.01 – WSCC Salaries and on-costs

08/02/2024 - £8.10 – Elizabeth Trundle, mileage to noticeboards

08/02/2024 - £6.00 – Elizabeth Trundle, working from home allowance

13/02/2024 - £6.22 – Elizabeth Trundle, mileage to meeting

02/01/2024 - £21.50 – Elizabeth Trundle, Printer cartridge

2024-025 Response to HDC regarding the Precept increase for 2024/25

Following an email from HDC regarding WPC's precept increase being greater than 5%, Cllr Dixon proposed that the Clerk responds by stating that the Council requires a larger percentage increase than for 2023/24 as it has two significant projects it needs to complete during the coming year - the replacement of its bus shelters and switching its SIDS from battery to solar-powered. This was unanimously agreed.

2024-026 WPC's response to the Horsham District Council Local Plan Consultation

It was agreed to make no response to the HDC Local Plan: From a planning perspective, there is not much that will have an effect on Woodmancote; however, the Council made a specific note of Chapter 5 - Climate Change and Chapter 6 - Enhancing our Environment.

2024-027 External speaker options for the WPC Annual Parish Meeting (APM)

It was agreed to invite the Fire Service to give a presentation at the WPC APM in April and that Cllr R Noel would contact the Service to arrange this. A representative from the Henfield Birdwatchers group (celebrating its 25th

anniversary this year) would be a second option if the Fire Service is unable to send a spokesperson. Someone to speak on the history of Blackstone as a third option.

2024-028 Correspondence

The Clerk drew the Council's attention to the next HDC Parish Council Climate Action Network meeting to be held on 25 March online via teams, 6-7:30 pm. Cllr R Noel agreed to attend this meeting.

The Clerk had received correspondence from Mulberry Associates regarding the 2024 audit. It was agreed to continue to appoint Mulberry for the annual audit and that the Clerk would respond requesting a date in June 2024.

A member of the public also mentioned that she had received correspondence from a resident saying that at the playing fields committee meeting it was mentioned that the council and Sussex County Cricket were looking at new playgrounds. Cllr Dixon confirmed that this was not the case.

2024-029 Items for the next agenda/to mention.

Cllr Morris requested that there is an environmental update included on each agenda, focussing on biodiversity and re-wilding issues/concerns. She also updated the Council regarding the Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement for planning which will mean that developers will need to prove that there will be an enhancement in biodiversity of 12% over the next 30 years within the site (unless it is offset elsewhere in Horsham District).

A member of the public raised the issue of the Albourne Common development. Cllr R Noel said that he would be in touch with the Mid-Sussex Planning department about this and request that someone attends the next WPC Ordinary Meeting to update the Council.

Cllr Batchelor said that although the Furners Lane footpath had been retained as a PRW and not changed to a bridal way, it is likely to go to appeal. Cllr R Noel confirmed that this might be the case but that it would take a long time and that the applicant will be charged for the appeal process.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

2024 – 014 Date of next meeting – 12 March 2024