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Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting of Woodmancote Parish Council (WPC) held at The Pavilion, Blackstone Lane, Blackstone, Henfield BN5 9TA on 14th January 2025, 7.30pm

Present: Cllr R Noel, Cllr W Noel, Cllr Dixon
Others Present: The Clerk and 2 members of the public.

Cllr R Noel pointed out that the meeting may be recorded by devices within the room.

2025 – 001 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Austin, Cllr Batchelor, Cllr Donald and Cllr Croker (District Councillor).

2025 – 002 Declarations of interest

None.

2025 – 003 Public participation

A member of the public enquired about the situation with the Old Parish Hall. Cllr R Noel confirmed that planning permission had now been granted and that the issue concerning water neutrality had been resolved using an alternative water source for to gain offsetting requirements.

Another member of the public pointed out that 'PRIVATE' had been painted at the front of the playing field gates. Cllr R Noel said he would follow this up with Sussex Cricket as the playing field is for public use; and with Horsham District Council (HDC) in case this is a way of deterring travellers from parking in the area.

The same member of the public mentioned that the agenda for the meeting on the noticeboards read December and not January. The Clerk apologised for the typo and pointed out that the date of publication of the agenda correctly read January 2025 and that it appeared on the website as the agenda for January 2025.

The same member of the public also mentioned that the fence alongside the stream bridge had collapsed. Cllr R Noel said that he believed this to be in Albourne Parish as the stream was the boundary but confirmed that he would follow this up with WSCC and send the pictures of the collapsed fence that Cllr Batchelor had sent to the Clerk.

2025 – 004 Minutes

The Minutes of the WPC Ordinary Meeting on 14 December 2024 were RESOLVED without amendment.

2025 – 005 Reports from outside bodies

005.1 WSCC – Cllr Linehan was not present at the meeting.

005.2 HDC – Cllr R Noel updated the Council:

River Recovery – In December 2023 HDC carried a Notice of Motion to produce a Rivers Charter in association with several other organisations such as Sussex Wildlife Trust. The rivers affected will be the Adur, Arun and Rother and the Charter will be designed to protect these rivers by maintaining their flora, fauna and complex ecosystems. In response to the Motion, the HDC Cabinet would be recommending a Declaration for River Recovery to be approved at the next Cabinet Meeting on 29 January.

Water Neutrality – Under new planning regulations, the Minister for HCLG will allow a variation in the Water Neutrality directive to make Grampian Conditions to become part of any planning decision, therefore allowing more applications to succeed where Water Neutrality would have previously led to a refusal.

HDC Local Plan – The Inspector has suspended the Local Plan Consultation and cancelled any further Regulation 19 hearings. More work is required from HDC to facilitate a higher number of homes per year across the District. If the Plan eventually fails to be made, the new NPPF, which comes into force in March of this year, will demand a minimum of 1,327 houses per year. This could lead to the re-introduction of strategic sites such as Mayfield and Buck Barn.

Devolution – Cllr R Noel explained that West and East Sussex County Councils, and Brighton and Hove Council, have agreed to apply for priority status as a Mayoral Authority which would report to central Government. Strategic authorities would be formed under the Mayor, with roughly half a million residents in each authority. This would mean that HDC would become obsolete in around two to three years. A further ramification would be that more powers may be given to local parishes and therefore parish councils could be amalgamated to administer larger areas than at present.

2025 – 006 Planning

006.1 New planning applications – DC/24/1487 - Glenard Farm, Henfield Road, Albourne - Covered horse exercise area. It was unanimously agreed to submit a comment of 'No objection'.

006.2 Late planning applications – None to discuss.

006.3 Planning consultee comments – Comments submitted by WPC since the last meeting were noted as per the supporting paper.

006.4 Planning update – HDC/SDNP planning decisions since the last meeting were noted as per the supporting paper.

2025 – 007 Finance and Payments

007.1 Reconciled accounts - The reconciled accounts for November and December 2024 were approved.

007.2 Payments – The following payments were approved, and it was unanimously agreed to transfer £1,000 from the WPC Savers' Account to the the WPC Current Account as a temporary measure until HDC released the agreed S106 monies.

Date			Payee		Amount		Description				
21.12.2024			Southern Beeches		822		Surgery to oak tree				
30.12.2024			WSC C		930.8		Clerk salary				
08.01.2025			Elizabeth Trundle		8.11		Mileage to notices				
14.01.2025			Elizabeth Trundle		6.22		Mileage to meeting				
14.01.2025			Elizabeth Trundle		6		Home working allowance				
24.01.2024			Talk Talk		4.95		Mobile phone				PAID
				Total	1778.08						

007.3 The retrospective NALC Pay Scales from 01/04/2024 were approved as per the supporting paper.

007.4 WPC Budget for 2025/6 - The Clerk distributed an updated budget comparison sheet and draft budget for 2025/6. Councillors discussed and amended the draft, and it was unanimously agreed to increase the precept by 4% as per the draft amended budget (with the inclusion of an extra solar-powered SID at the southern end of the B2116).

2025 – 008 Blackstone Playing Field

008.1 New playground installation – Cllr R Noel reported that Sussex Cricket had not agreed, so far, to pay for a share in the cost of the playground fencing and that the cost may need to be borne by the Parish.

Once DMF Fencing (using Beacon Timber Supplies) had installed the fence the new sign denoting the playground age limit 'up to the age of 15 years' would be affixed by Sussex Cricket.

The Playing Fields Committee had reported that a 'dip' had been created at the foot of the new slide due to use during the recent wet weather. Councillors agreed to wait until April to see if this improves before taking any action.

008.2 New signs indicating public access – Cllr R Noel circulated a proposed re-wording for a new sign on the gate of the playing field. The following wording was agreed: 'Woodmancote & Blackstone Playing Field – All residents welcome to use these grounds and playground area – Please keep the pedestrian gate shut'.

Cllr R Noel had obtained three quotes for a 1100cm x 600cm sign: Scotts Signs, Horsham Sign Company and Sussex Signs. Sussex Signs produced the cheapest quote at £164 + VAT (inclusive of screw attachments) using aluminum composite board. It was unanimously agreed to appoint Sussex Signs to produce the sign.

008.3 Revised playing field lease with Sussex Cricket Club and The Allen Trust - Cllr R Noel updated the Council: David Barling (DHB Solicitors) had written to both Sussex Cricket and the Allen's solicitors and had not received a reply from either. Cllr R Noel confirmed that he would also be writing to them both to follow this up. Cllr Dixon noted that any new lease would need to be agreed by residents with a public consultation. It was unanimously agreed to hold a WPC Extraordinary Meeting to approve the revised lease with members of the public present once a draft lease had been agreed.

008.4 Woodmancote and Blackstone Community Hall – Cllr R Noel suggested that the Council issues residents with a pre-paid response form to gauge support for a new community hall and to agree that the Parish takes out a PWLB loan if funds could not be secured privately. Cllr R Noel agreed to prepare a suitable form for discussion at the next meeting and this was agreed unanimously.

2025 – 009 WPC Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr R Noel reported that work on the Neighbourhood Plan was on hold until the situation with the HDC Local Plan had been resolved.

2025 – 010 Local Winter Neighbourhood Plan (LWP)

All the grit bins are currently full. However, it was noted that the LWP on the website needed updating. The following amendments were agreed: To remove Cllr Dixon as a contact and 4x4 driver as he no longer had a 4x4 vehicle. Cllr R Noel and Cllr Austin to remain as listed drivers/contacts. And Colin Bourke to continue as tractor driver for digging out deep snow.

2025 – 011 Environmental issues

011.1 Climate Action Plan – Cllr W Noel agreed to draft a Plan for the March meeting.

011.2 Dark Skies – Cllr R Noel reported that he had not heard back from the HDC Planning Enforcement Officer regarding how bright night lights could be addressed (so the Council could advise residents accordingly). He confirmed that he would update the Council at the next meeting.

2025 – 012 Correspondence

The Clerk drew Councillors' attention to the forthcoming Government Consultation on Standards in Local Authorities, a copy of which she had circulated to all Councillors with an associated NALC Parish Council survey regarding Parish Council standards. It was agreed that Councillors respond to the NALC survey on an individual basis and that the Clerk re-circulates the relevant document links.

2025 – 013 Items for the next agenda/to note

Cllr Dixon noted that the list of Councillors needed to be updated for 2025; and that his Register of Interests needed to be updated to exclude 'Woodmancote Hall CIO Treasurer'. He also asked the Clerk to contact the HDC Monitoring Officer to request an exemption to exclude his personal address.

Cllr R Noel confirmed that he expected to step down as Chair in May 2025.

Cllr W Noel reported that a resident had mentioned that the seats in the new bus shelters were too narrow to sit on comfortably. It was agreed to follow this up when Cllr Austin returned.

2025 – 014 Date of next meeting

11 February 2025

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

Cllr R Noel – Chair

Woodmancote Parish Council