

# Berwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Berwick Parish Council held at the Berwick Village Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> January at 7:30pm

75. Present

Cllrs B Smith (Chairman), K Winter, V Burrough, D Robinson, S Carnie and C Bird.

County Councillor N Bennett, Alastair Deighton (Firle Estates), David Quysner (Selmeston Parish Meeting), Geoff Watkins (Alciston Parish Meeting), Alison Stevens (Clerk) and ten members of the public were also in attendance.

76. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for their absence.

77. Declaration of Interests

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

The meeting was then suspended.

78. Public Question Time (including a Question and Answer Session on the proposal to set up a new Parish Council with Alciston and Selmeston.

Mr Quysner said Alciston Parish Meeting and Selmeston Parish Meeting would like to amalgamate with Berwick Parish Council. In recent years, local government has had to address many changes and accept new responsibilities, whilst facing increased pressure on resources. For smaller Councils and Parish Meetings, the need to comply with legislation has proved to be time consuming and costly and it has been difficult to recruit and retain Councillors. Amalgamating with Berwick would help in that;

- It would help improve efficiency by saving both time and money.
- The three Parishes share common boundaries.
- The three Parishes share similar issues and the same relationships with outside bodies.
- There would be a greater pool of residents to draw new Councillors from.
- A larger pool of residents should also give us all a greater voice.
- A precedent has already been set in Long Man Parish.
- Wealden District Council and the County Association of Local Councils support the proposal.

Residents asked;

- If the external boundaries will change – it is the Parish Council boundary which would change because it would incorporate Alciston and Selmeston.
- If it could complicate planning issues - all three Parishes are part of the South Downs National Park and Wealden and that will not change.

Lord Lloyd sent a written statement, which was read out by Mr Clapson. It said;

‘The new plan has now been published. It will go before an Inspector appointed by

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Government for consideration. In the meantime Wealden District Council has published a lengthy commentary to explain what it has been doing. At page 100 there is a suggestion that the Parishes of Berwick and Alciston have already merged. This is hard to understand.

The explanation may be that Berwick and Alciston, together with Selmeston are among the six parishes which fall within the National Park as well as Wealden District Council; see page 56. But Wealden District Council has no power to merge us without our consent, and I can see no sense in a merger between us and Alciston. It would make more sense for a merger between Alciston and Selmeston if that is what they both want. But not between us and Alciston.

At one stage there was, I think, a suggestion from Selmeston that they would welcome a merger with us. It is true that in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the land around what is now Berwick Station, including Ludlay, was part of Selmeston parish, and we have an early map which shows this. But once Berwick Station was built the link with Selmeston was severed and we joined ourselves to Berwick. There is now no direct link by road or rail between us and Selmeston.

Of course we must listen to what Selmeston has to say, and we should welcome cooperation between the parishes. But I see no reason why they should want a say in things which concern us and not them, such as the future of the brick yard field, the factory, the service station, Ludlay Coppice and to a lesser extent the post office. We have separate churches and separate village halls. That is the way it has been, and should in my view remain'.

Some residents present reported their concerns with the proposed merger.

- They said the community at Berwick Station is at a very sensitive time in relation to the latest Wealden Local Plan and the Berwick Parish Plan. The Parish Plan does not consider the needs or wishes of Selmeston or Alciston and a new 'merged' Parish/Parish Council could 'muddy the waters', dilute the issues and confuse matters.
- They can see no advantages for Berwick residents and say the proposal only benefits Alciston and Selmeston.
- There could also be conflict or apathy when considering planning applications.
- Some residents said that a reduction in Council Tax following the suggested parish merger was not an issue for them.
- A merger will happen anyway in due course and presumably at no cost to the Councils.
- Berwick Parish Council is already doing a sterling job against all the odds.
- More responsibility is being handed down to Parish Councils which will negate any cost savings.
- Alciston and Selmeston could amalgamate with another Parish. Both Parishes Meetings feel they have more in common with Berwick.

County Councillor Bennett suggested the Parish Council circulates sends residents details of what the new Council might look like, how it would operate and what the pros and cons would be.

If the Parishes decide to proceed, the next stage would be to petition Wealden for a Community Governance Review and that would cost each Parish approximately £2000. The Community Governance Review would lead to the creation of a new Council, the number of councillors, the year in which regular elections of councillors would be held and whether or not the new Council would be divided into wards.

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Mr Quysner, Mr Watkins and County Councillor Bennett then left the meeting.

79. Reports from County Councillor

There was no report from the County Councillor on this occasion.

80. Report from the District Councillor

There was no report from the District Councillor on this occasion.

The meeting was then re-opened.

81. Proposal to Review the Parish Boundary

Councillors discussed how to proceed and, whilst they appreciated the views of those present, they felt that they did not have a large enough mandate upon which to base a decision. They agreed they wanted to find out what the other residents want by putting an article in the Parish News asking them to email or call the Clerk with their thoughts.

82. Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 (previously distributed).

The Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

83. Clerk's Report on Matters' Arising from those Minutes

All matter's arising were included elsewhere on the agenda.

84. Planning Applications

There were no planning applications to be commented on at this meeting.

85. Reports from Parish Councillors

i: Berwick Playing Field – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.

ii: Highways and Transport Matters – Councillors;

- reported potholes in Common Lane (15m from the Berwick end of the crossroads) and by the Drusillas roundabout.
- Noted the white lines at Berwick Village have not been repainted despite requests from the Parish Council and they also noted that there are still no cat's eyes at Wick Street.
- Have asked Highways how much a new path between Berwick and Arlington Reservoir would cost.

86. Reports from Outside Bodies

- i. Village Hall Committee – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.

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- ii. Cuckmere Community Bus – The Cuckmere Community Bus has a new bus but needs more drivers.
- iii. Tree Warden – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.
- iv. Cuckmere Community Flood Forum – Councillor Carnie attended the latest meeting. There have not been any reports of flooding from Berwick so Councillors agreed to put an article in the Parish News asking residents to report any flooding in this area.

## 87. Finance

- i: Approval of payments and receipts – Councillors approved the following payments;

		£
101111	Berwick Village Hall	68.50
101112	ESCC	156.17
101113	Berwick Village Hall	48.00
101114	Mass Media	25.20
101115	HMRC	641.60
101116	A Stevens - Salary	320.68
101117	ESCC	156.17
101118	A Stevens - Salary	321.08
101119	ESCC - Pension	156.17

- ii: Approval of Accounts to date - Councillors resolved to approve the accounts to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

## 88. Questions from Parish Councillors

There were no further questions from the Parish Councillors.

There was no further business and this meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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