

Berwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Berwick Parish Council held on the Thursday 26th November 2020 at 7:00pm. This was a virtual meeting held on Zoom.

36. Present

Cllrs K Winter (Chairman), B Smith, V Burrough and D Robinson.

Mr D Quysner (Selmeston Parish Meeting), Mr Chris Sowerbutts (Lightrock Power), County Councillor N Bennett, District Councillor D Watts, Alison Stevens (Clerk) and two members of the public were also in attendance.

37. Apologies for absence

Cllr S Carnie sent apologies for her absence which were duly accepted by the Parish Council.

38. Declaration of Interests

Cllr Burrough declared a pecuniary interest in the solar farm proposed at Lower Mays Farm and did not take part in the discussion. There were no changes to the Register of Interests.

The meeting was then suspended.

39. Report from the County Councillor

County Councillor Bennett said East Sussex County Council expects to have a budget deficit this year but plans to meet any shortfall from reserves.

40. Report from the District Councillor

District Councillor Watts said;

- The Wealden Parish Conference took place virtually on the 18th November. Slides and a recording of the event can be found on the Wealden District Council website.
- Wealden has paid out £41m in Covid Business Grants so far this year.
- Those who may not be able to pay their rent or council tax this year are asked to let the District Council know sooner rather than later so help can be arranged. There will be no evictions until at least March.

He also encouraged people to shop locally to support their local businesses.

41. Public Question Time

Mr Sowerbutts from Lightrock Power said his company is planning to submit a planning application for a solar farm at Lower Mays Farm and was here to answer any questions. He confirmed;

- Construction traffic will be kept off Langtye Lane as far as possible. Traffic will come off the A27 and only use Langtye Lane for the last 100m or so. Other options were looked at but were considered to be more disruptive.
- A Traffic Management Plan will be in place to keep disruption to a minimum.
- There will be further engagement to address and mitigate for any ecological concerns. For example they would be very keen to talk to beekeepers and install bee hives.

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- The construction process is expected to last between two and three months.
- There will not be no new road, access will be via an existing farm track.
- The plans are expected to be submitted in February/March 2021.
- A virtual exhibition about Lightrock can be found on its website.

The meeting was then re-opened.

42. Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 24th September 2020 (previously distributed).

The Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 24th September 2020 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Councillors agreed to call an extra ordinary meeting so the Parish Council can respond officially to the Wealden Local Plan Direction of Travel consultation. The Clerk will see if Chris Bending, Head of Policy and Economic Development at Wealden can be there to answer any questions.

44. Planning Applications

WD/2020/0966/F - Gatehampton, Station Road, Berwick, BN26 6SZ - Demolition of garage and summer house to the existing property and construction of 6 no. semi-detached dwellings – Berwick Parish Council resolved to unanimously object to this application on the following grounds;

- Councillors understand the plans are wrong and that some of the land shown belongs to The Rowans.
- Six additional properties on this plot is an overdevelopment and is out of keeping with the rural nature of Berwick. The density would be 35 units per hectare which is above that recommended for towns. Berwick is a rural village and the recommended density for such is 20 units per hectare.
- The parking provision for seven cars is too low and unrealistic.
- Access is dangerous because visibility is poor and it is on to a very busy road.
- The width of the drive is too narrow which means amenity vehicles will be unable to gain access. Councillors accept the houses could be fitted with sprinklers but sprinklers would be inadequate. The houses will therefore not comply with the building regulations.

45. Reports from Parish Councillors

i: Berwick Playing Field – Play parks are allowed to stay open under the latest Covid regulations as long as users comply with the social distancing rules.

ii: Highways and Transport Matters – Councillor Smith said the Berwick Way has been repaired. ESCC has been seen filling in the cracks.

46. Reports from Outside Bodies

- i. Village Hall Committee – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.
- ii. Cuckmere Community Bus – The Cuckmere Community Bus is still managing to run most of its services. There will be a new bus in service later this month.
- iii. Tree Warden – There was nothing new to report on trees on this occasion.

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- iv. Cuckmere Community Flood Forum – There was nothing new to report from the Flood Forum.
- v. South Downs National Park – There was nothing new to report from the South Downs National Park.
- vi. Parish Planning Cluster – At the Parish Cluster Meeting held on the 3rd November Wealden reported that;
 - Under the current Planning System, new guidelines issued by Central Government state that Wealden District Council has to supply 1,175 new build houses per year which is a slight reduction from 1,200 as previously allocated.
 - WDC has responded to the Government’s Planning White Paper “Planning for the Future”, (use the following link to view WDC’s response)
<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Appendix-A-MHCLG-Planning-White-Paper-Response-October-V4.pdf>
 - There will be a public consultation on Wealden’s emerging Local Plan at the end of November or beginning of December 2020.
 - Feedback will be possible through the ‘Teams’ Planning Cluster meetings but as yet there is no date for the next South West Planning Cluster meeting.
 - The new Local Plan will consider limited expansion in existing settlements/villages.
 - New larger settlements might also be considered, especially if there is good existing connectivity to road and rail services. Chris Bending cited Berwick as an example but was at pains to point out that; “at this stage it’s just an idea”.
 - The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is now available to view by the public on the WDC website. Invariably, there will be more sites submitted for consideration but, Chris again underlined during the meeting that; “We have not yet assessed any of the new sites. It therefore follows that a site being shown does not mean that the site is suitable for development or that the site has planning permission or will be automatically granted planning permission or allocated within a Local Plan. The SHELAA is not a statement of Council planning policy, it is an evidence base to inform plan making only.”

47. Finance

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

		£
101175	Champagne Tree Services - Grass Cutting	395.00
101176	South Coast Locksmiths - Recreation Ground lock	20.00
101177	Mass Media - Website	75.60
101178	WDALC - Subscription	11.00
101179	A Stevens - Salary - September	436.45
101180	A Stevens - Salary - October	518.84
101181	ESCC - Pension	353.08

- ii Councillors resolved to approve the accounts to 30th October 2020.
- iii: Councillors resolved to continue with the existing verge cutting arrangements for 2021 (Option 2).
- iv: Councillors also resolved the precept for 2021-2022 will not increase and it will stay at £14356

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48. Questions from Parish Councillors

Councillors noted the following;

- UK enterprise Riding Sunbeams has secured a grant to build a 3.75 MW solar farm that will directly power the rail network in East Sussex. The Cuckmere Community Solar Farm will be located in Berwick. The Farm was granted planning consent in 2017 but has only just secured funding.
- Wealden District Council is revising 'Hailsham Inspires' because recent events have proved it can operate in a smaller building.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 7.55pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

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