

Berwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Berwick Parish Council held on the Thursday 28th January 2021 at 7:00pm. This was a virtual meeting held on Zoom.

59. Present

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

Mr Graham Cann (Scottish Power Renewables), Sophie Williams (Scottish Power Renewables), County Councillor N Bennett, District Councillor D Watts, Alison Stevens (Clerk) and ten members of the public were also in attendance.

60. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

61. Declaration of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests or any changes to the Register of Interests.

The meeting was then suspended.

62. Report from the County Councillor

County Councillor Bennett said the County Council is;

- Continuing to send out regular Covid vaccine updates.
- Proposing to increase its share of next year's Council Tax by just under 3.5%.

Mr Cooper asked why the MP is still sending out literature in support of widening the A27 when the only option which seems to be being discussed by ESCC is an off line one.

63. Report from the District Councillor

District Councillor Watts said;

- Wealden's Community Hub is still operating.
- The number of vaccines being carried out is on track to meet the Government's February target.
- The District Council has paid out £45m so far in Covid business grants.

In answer to resident's queries he confirmed;

- Some Parish and Town Councils have replied to the Direction of Travel Consultation and said their preferred growth option would be for a new settlement somewhere in the District. A few suggested the best place would be in Berwick. Polegate Town Council is one of those Councils.
- The comments submitted by Polegate Town Council, where he is Mayor, are the views of the Planning Committee and are not his own. He will continue to support the residents of Berwick.
- The Planning System is extremely complex and this document has arisen partly because the council has a lack of a five year land supply and partly because of the failure of the previous Plan. If Wealden does not have a Local Plan any future development would be developer led.

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Also in answer to residents' queries, the Clerk confirmed;

- The consultation was advertised on the Parish Council noticeboards, on its website and in the Parish News. The Chairman agreed to include the dates of future meetings and agendas on the village WhatsApp site too.
- The Head of Planning initially attended the meeting where the consultation was discussed to explain the Direction of Travel consultation to councillors. He then left and was not present when the Parish Councillors discussed the matter and agreed their response.
- She will amend the Parish Council's response so the comments under 'Housing' are also included under 'Our Growth Options'.

Councillors noted that residents would like to have been notified when they heard Berwick could be considered as one of the new freestanding developments.

64. Public Question Time

Mr Cann is a Project Manager from Scottish Power Renewables and he showed those present plans Scottish Power has to build a solar farm west of Upper Dicker. He confirmed;

- The plan is an indicative one at this stage.
- Site assessments are being carried out and will include assessments in hydrology and ornithology.
- Pre-application discussions have taken place with a Planning Officer at Wealden.
- Sites across the whole of the UK are considered but the south east is preferred because it provides the best solar yield. The Clerk agreed to try and find out how many other sites are currently being considered for this area.
- The site is needed to help meet Government targets.
- Scottish Power Renewables expects to mitigate for any impact the farm has on the Arlington reservoir and it is aware of other potential future pressures such as the Local Plan and the A27.
- Consultations with UK Networks are also taking place. More pylons will be needed. Underground cables are also an option but can sometimes be more environmentally intrusive.

Mr Cann and Ms Williams then left the meeting.

The meeting was then re-opened.

65. Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 16th December 2020 (previously distributed).

The Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 16th December 2020 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Any matters arising were considered elsewhere on the agenda.

67. Planning Applications

There were no planning applications for consideration at this meeting.

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68. Reports from Parish Councillors

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

ii: Highways and Transport Matters – Councillors are concerned because Pound Lane has not been (temporarily) closed off yet because it is causing safety problems and they asked that a sign is put up to say access is for residents only.

Councillor Smith also reported an accident outside the pub. Councillor Burrough said traffic is driving through Selmeston more now that Station Road is closed.

69. Reports from Outside Bodies

- i. Village Hall Committee – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.
- ii. Cuckmere Community Bus – The buses are still running and the aim is to maintain at least a weekly service. Two buses have been sold recently and one bought. Another burst into flames in Hailsham and may also be replaced. Cuckmere Community Buses may be used to transport patients to their vaccinations if it is safe to do so.
- iii. Tree Warden – The Tree Warden sent in a written report which said;

‘During lockdowns and various tier restrictions I have done more walking than usual, much of it on the Vanguard / Berwick Way. There is nothing for me to report as Tree Warden. Talking to the foresters working for Firle Estate in the Brickyard it seems the new trees planted are American Oak and Norway Maple. They tell me these species have been chosen because they mature quickly and cope well with the residual detritus of the brickworks. This is good for the bio fuel supply for Firle but disappointing from an ecological perspective as neither species is indigenous and will not support wildlife in the way that the trees felled have’.

- iv. Cuckmere Community Flood Forum – The river has still not been demanded but the latest collective activity resulted in the Environment Agency allocating £95000 over 5 years to remove the shingle from the river mouth. The WLMB has put aside £20000 a year to contribute towards the cost as well.

The Environment Agency did carry out some dredging towards the end of 2020 which helped but Natural England is said to be making things difficult and the sluice gates still let water by.

- v. South Downs National Park – The South Downs National Park Authority is asking walkers to stay local and stick to the footpaths marked.
- vi. Parish Planning Cluster – The next Parish Planning Cluster Meeting is on Monday 1st February. Councillor Winter will attend and report back to the next Parish Council Meeting.

70. Finance

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

		£
101182	ESCC - Pension	159.32

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101183	Mass Media - Website	252.00
101184	A Stevens - Salary - November	448.19
101185	A Stevens - Salary - December	448.19
101186	HMRC - PAYE	353.80
101187	ESCC - Pension	327.24
101188	Mass Media - Website	100.80

ii Councillors resolved to approve the accounts to 31st December 2020.

71. Questions from Parish Councillors

Parish Councillors asked if anything can be done;

- to stop drivers parking at the Common Lane end of the Berwick Way because the grass is getting badly churned up. Bollards and no parking signs were also suggested.
- about the large number of people visiting Arlington Reservoir because they could be breaching the Coronavirus rules. The Clerk will write to South East Water and ask if someone can be on site. She will also ask the PCSO to patrol the area more too.

District Councillor Watts asked for it to be noted that everyone in the District is concerned about the amount of new housing developments. Towns and villages with main line railway stations are initially chosen because their stations are less likely to close so it is very important residents make their views known.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.22pm

Signed: _____

Chairman

Date: _____

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