

Berwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Berwick Parish Council held on the Thursday 25th March 2021 at 7:00pm. This was a virtual meeting held on Zoom.

72. Present

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

County Councillor N Bennett, District Councillor D Watts, Alison Stevens (Clerk) and six members of the public were also in attendance.

73. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Carnie. The reasons for her apologies were accepted by the Parish Council.

74. Declaration of Interests

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

The meeting was then suspended.

75. Report from the County Councillor

County Councillor Bennett sent a written report which said;

Driving sustainable economic growth

In September 2020, Team East Sussex – a partnership of business, local authority, social enterprise and education representatives published the East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan to set out how investment will be used to support businesses hardest hit by the Coronavirus pandemic. £45 million of investment was identified in the plan, including £11.8 million awarded to East Sussex through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership for eight projects across the county including in Newhaven, Eastbourne and Hastings. These projects alone will deliver 445 new jobs and safeguard a further 177 jobs. In addition, the plan sets out how local skills and further education providers have allocated money towards retraining, skills and employability programmes to support those out of work alongside details of Council funding available through the East Sussex Invest programmes to support business growth.

Transport for the South East (TfSE), our partnership of the area's 16 transport authorities approved the 30-year Transport Strategy, which sets out an ambitious 2050 vision for the region with net-zero carbon, sustainable economic growth alongside integrated transport, digital and energy networks.

Over 10,000 young people, parents and carers tuned in to a virtual Careers Hub event, 'What's Next Sussex', in November 2020, to hear from employers, post-16 colleges and apprenticeship providers. At the end of 2020 the Department for Education performance tables showed that the Council was sixth nationally amongst all county councils, with 1.8% of staff, 200 individuals, currently undertaking an apprenticeship. The Council has also supported National Apprenticeship Week (February 2021). As well as highlighting the national campaign, the Council launched a £600,000 Transform programme to support small and medium sized businesses to access apprenticeships.

An 18-month scheme to improve street lighting began in October 2020, with additional funding to

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upgrade 16,000 streetlight units to modern high efficiency LED lights and replace 3,000 ageing concrete street lighting columns. The work will reduce Council energy bills and lower carbon emissions. This project takes the Council closer to achieving its intention to be carbon neutral by 2050 at the latest, as set out in the Climate Emergency Plan (February 2020).

Over 140 carriageway asset improvement schemes were delivered in the first three-quarters of 2020/21, to maintain and improve the county's roads. This included major road improvement schemes in Crowborough.

Between October and December 2020, the Council consulted on the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The plan (which relies on securing external funding) sets out an ambitious network of proposed cycling and walking routes, initially focused on where there is greatest opportunity to increase levels of cycling and walking, including the coastal strip and in larger market towns.

In March 2020, the third superfast broadband contract was finalised with BT enabling delivery of a further 5,586 superfast premises by December 2021. In September 2020 it was also announced that the Council was investing £500,000 to support the Government's Rural Gigabit Voucher scheme to help businesses and residents in rural areas to access fast and reliable broadband.

Powers to enforce parking restrictions across Rother district transferred to the Council in September 2020, following a significant consultation and legal process. This will enable the Council to ease congestion caused by inconsiderate parking, improve road safety, air quality and increase parking turnover making it easier for people to park.

Keeping vulnerable people safe

The year 2020/21 has been dominated by the Council's work to keep the most vulnerable residents of the county safe during the Coronavirus pandemic. Over 21,000 people have been identified as extremely vulnerable to Covid-19.

Staff from across the Council have made calls at different times during the pandemic to these people to ensure support is in place for them. A new food distribution service was set up in April 2020, delivering 8,000 food parcels during the first three months. The Council organised the distribution of PPE across the county to organisations including care providers, GPs and pharmacies. The Council also played a key role in establishing Community Hubs, alongside the district and borough councils and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

Public Health worked with the NHS and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to support COVID-19 testing, launching a local COVID-19 tracing partnership agreement in November 2020, to support the national test and trace systems. The Council also helped to set up three local testing sites, in Bexhill, Eastbourne and Hastings; numerous locations for Mobile Testing Units; and a Regional Testing Site at Plumpton racecourse

The Council has been supporting vulnerable households with the cost of food, energy and other bills with £1.5 million from the COVID-19 Winter Grant scheme. The funding provided food vouchers, to pupils eligible for free school meals, during the Christmas and February half term holidays. Vouchers were also provided to eligible pupils aged 16 – 19, and 2, 3 and 4-year olds attending early years provision who were eligible for pupil premium. By the end of the scheme we will have provided food vouchers to approximately 16,500 pupils. In addition, the Council is awarding grants ranging from £3,000 to £100,000 to several voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to help them continue their vital work.

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The Council was the first local authority to place an order for laptops under the Department for Education scheme, to try to ensure that all pupils could continue to learn from home during school closures in the pandemic. During the first lockdown a strong focus on securing school attendance for the most vulnerable pupils meant that East Sussex had one of the highest rates of attendance for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Schools were then supported to fully open for all pupils in September with 91% of primary schools, 100% of special schools and 58% of secondary schools accessing the Council's support to encourage pupils back to school.

A new Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption South East, went live on 1 April 2020, with the Council leading on behalf of Brighton and Hove City Council, West Sussex and Surrey County Councils. The agency hopes to broaden the range and increase the number of people considering adoption.

In October 2020, Council leaders signed the Modern Slavery Pledge, underlining the Council's commitment to becoming a Slavery Free Community by 2030. Work has also continued to deliver interventions to safeguard children against serious and organised crime through, for example, workshops and distribution of guidance around knives and exploitation to students. When schools reopened in September, 50 workshops were also delivered to primary school pupils on online safety.

In November 2020, Hastings was announced as a pilot area for Project Adder, a £5 million Government initiative the Council is supporting, to help organisations work together to reduce drug related deaths and offending.

Helping people help themselves

Reablement services are provided to help people to regain mobility and daily living skills, especially after a hospital stay. Between April and September 2020 88.8% of older people discharged from hospital to reablement/rehabilitation services were at home 91 days after discharge. Frail adults across East Sussex can also receive Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS), to help manage risks and maintain independence at home. TECS includes Telecare, which offers a range of sensors and detectors to meet different needs, such as wearable alert buttons, fall detectors or medication dispensers. At the end of 2020, 8,851 people were receiving TECS.

Work continued on further integration of health and social care services to support people during the pandemic, including our out of hospital support and discharge hubs to ensure timely discharge to appropriate care. We have also been developing a single mental health plan and programme for East Sussex with agreement that work will be taken forward in emotional wellbeing services, enhancements to community services for adults with personality disorders, eating disorders and rehabilitation and housing and supported accommodation needs.

Over 700 Covid-related calls were made to the Council's trading standards team from March to December 2020. The team have issued advice and guidance to a large number of businesses and residents as well as carrying out 158 visits to barbers and hairdressers, homeware stores and garden centres. This is in addition to the team's regular work including for example interventions to protect vulnerable people and delivering EU Exit training.

Making best use of resources in the short and long term

As a result of ongoing lobbying, the Government's November 2020 Spending Review included several provisions that assist our financial position for 2021/22. The Council's budget and Council Plan for 2021/22 were approved at the meeting of Full Council on 9 February 2021. The budget includes spending of £417 million on services for East Sussex with no new cuts beyond those

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already considered by the Council last year.

The Social Value Marketplace is an innovative platform to help councils leverage their expenditure with suppliers to maximise community benefit. The marketplace enables local charities to request non-financial support from suppliers that are looking to support the community. During the first three quarters of the year, over 30 contracts which qualified for the Social Value Measurement Charter were awarded with a total value of over £35 million. Over £2.5 million of social value commitments were secured as part of these contracts.

The Council's Hailsham Primary Academy project won 'Building Project of the Year under £10m' at the South East Centre for the Built Environment (SECBE) 2020 Construction Excellences awards in July 2020. The award recognised the completion of the project 11 weeks ahead of schedule, meaning pupils could start the new term in a brand-new school rather than in temporary accommodation. The project also saved 145 tonnes of CO2 and reduced waste by around 39%.

County Councillor Bennett also announced the County Council process has started.

76. Report from the District Councillor

District Councillor Watts said;

- The Wealden Community Hub is still fully operational.
- Chris Bending from Wealden District Council has emphasised how important Parish Cluster Meetings are.
- There have been an increasing number dog snatches, nationwide. One case was in Polegate so he asked dog owners to take extra care.

77. Public Question Time

Mr Cooper asked that given how important Parish Cluster Meetings are, should they not have an agenda and be minuted. Feedback is currently dependant on one person attending. District Councillor Watts said he will ask Mr Bending and let the Clerk know the outcome.

Councillor Winter explained the meetings are easy informal discussions, nothing is concluded and at the moment they seem to centre around solar farms. Mr Bending then explains what the relevant policies Wealden has to abide by are. There has been no mention of Berwick.

At the last meeting those who attended were all also asked what they (The Parish Council) would like to happen to their Parish in the future ie; more houses, more jobs locally etc and let Wealden know by the 30th March. Councillor Winter asked residents for their input too. The members of the public present said the Parish Council could have asked them sooner and felt it had wasted five days by not doing so. They also suggested that the Parish Action Plan could be reviewed and submitted in response.

The Clerk read out the following report sent in by Maria Caulfield, MP;

'Sorry I can't join you this evening. I just wanted to update you on a couple of issues

1) Cuckmere River

I have been meeting with the Environment Agency and the Friends of Cuckmere regularly and the five year maintenance plan is now in place which means annual drainage of the river mouth will happen every autumn to help prevent flooding in the valley and work has also been done on

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the sluice gates and while there was flooding this year, hopefully it was slightly less than previous years.

We are now working on demaining the river and handing it over to the local drainage board who can then take on the management at a local level in future. We expect to know more about this before the summer.

2) Covid

We are now working towards lifting restrictions and the timescale for this has been set out by the PM. Schools have gone back, and further restrictions will be lifted on Monday and we expect most retail to be open from the 12th April. I am aware that parish councils are keen to see that virtual meetings are allowed to continue, and I am pushing ministers for a decision on this which we expect to be announced imminently.

3) Potholes

£5.9 million has been allocated to East Sussex who are working their way through repairing the roads. If you have any roads in need of repair do let me know and I can follow this up with the County Council

4) Rural Crime Team

The police have set up a rural crime team to help tackle issues such as thefts and break ins on farms, dog thefts, sheep worrying and trespassing. The team are happy to come and meet with parish councils and are able to provide advice to rural communities on crime prevention. Please do let me know if you need the contact details.

5) A27

The Highways England team will start consulting on route options for the A27 improvements in the summer. I will keep you updated on this as I know how crucial it is for the parish. They have made clear no decisions have been made and they will be starting the process from scratch in terms of improving the existing road'.

Mr Whitehead from Govia Thameslink also sent the Parish Council a report which said;

'I wanted to get in touch to let you know about some improvements starting at Berwick station over the coming weeks:

Berwick

Landscaping
Additional seating
Cycle security

The improvements are part of the Improving Your Stations programme through the Passenger Benefit Fund. The fund is supporting a range of work across the network including waiting shelters, refurbished toilets, more seats, information screens, automatic doors, more cycle parking, refurbished waiting rooms, station planters and LED lighting.

We've put together an area on our website to detail these projects station by station, you can

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download the list here - <https://www.southernrailway.com/improvingyourstations>. We're also reporting progress on these schemes on Twitter using the hashtag #ImprovingYourStations.

Mr Cooper asked the Parish Council to consider live streaming meetings in the future and Mr Woodgate offered to help. This will be an item on the agenda for the next meeting by which time the Parish Council hopes to know what the legal position on Parish Councils holding virtual meetings will be.

The meeting was then re-opened.

78. Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 28th January 2021 (previously distributed).

The Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 28th January 2021 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

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

The Parish Council has received a request from the Senior Asset Engineer (Soft) Estate at Wealden to designate the section on the west side south of the stream alongside the Berwick Way, plus a small section on the east side south of the stream as a Wildlife Verge after a user noticed Corn Cockle and proposed it to him.

Councillors resolved to agree to the designation which they would ideally like to see applied to both sides of the path but they said they would still support it, if it applies to just one side.

80. Planning Applications

There were no planning applications for consideration at this meeting.

81. 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. A broken swing was reported and the Clerk said she will arrange for it to be repaired/replaced as appropriate. It was also noted that some maintenance work is needed to the pitch.

ii: Highways and Transport Matters – Councillors were concerned because a lot of vehicles are ignoring the road closed signs at Pound Lane and driving down there still. Councillor Burroughs said she will ask Highways England if anything more that can be done. It was noted that it might be difficult to do more though because access is still needed for those who live there, as well as cyclists and the school bus.

Councillor Smith asked the Parish Council to carry out another traffic survey because speeding is still an issue in Station Road. The Parish Council agreed to consider commissioning another speed survey at the next meeting. In the meantime the Clerk will ask the police to increase their patrols and see if they will also put a speed camera there.

82. 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 (CCB) – CCB is to resume its weekend services from Easter and its full service from 1st April 2021.
- iii. Tree Warden – There was no report from the Tree Warden on this occasion.
- iv. Cuckmere Community Flood Forum – This was covered by the MP in her report. It was also reported that the field next to 14 Downsway is still flooded. It has been reported to all the relevant authorities so the Clerk will also report it to the Cuckmere Flood Forum.
- v. South Downs National Park – There was nothing new to report.
- vi. Parish Planning Cluster – This was covered earlier on in the meeting in the public session.

83. Finance

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

		£
101189	Mass Media - Website	194.40
101190	A Stevens - Salary – January	448.19
101191	A Stevens - Salary - February	447.99
101192	HMRC - PAYE	336.20
101193	ESCC - Pension	327.24

ii Councillors resolved to approve the accounts to 26th February 2021.

84. Face to Face Meetings

This item was deferred until the next meeting by which time the Parish Council hopes to know what the legal position on it holding virtual meetings and face to face meetings will be.

85. Berwick Way/Common Lane

At the last meeting the Parish Council was 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.

The Parish Council asked Highways England for help and they put cones there. The Parish Council also asked Highways if they will put a bollard there but they will not because they say it will keep getting knocked down. Highways will consider allowing the Parish Council to as long as the Parish Council pays. The Parish Council will also need to pay for a licence and use ESCC approved contractors. Councillors agreed to monitor the situation to see if any further action is needed.

86. Questions from Parish Councillors

Councillor Burrough asked;

- The Clerk to include Lower Wick Street in the Wealden District Association of Local Council's (WDALC) list of roads which need litter picking. The list is being compiled for the next WDALC Meeting.
- If a planning application has been submitted for a new solar farm at Pollards Farm. The Parish Council understands that no planning application has been received by Wealden yet.

Councillor Robinson asked;

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- If better broadband speeds can be taken back to Wealden Planning Cluster Meetings as something Parishes would like. It was also noted that ESCC has a third contract in place which should improve broadband speeds for those in hard to reach areas. Residents who are experiencing poor broadband speeds are asked to let the Parish Clerk know their postcode so she can find out if their properties are included.
- If anything can be done to find out why there are a significant amount of some dead birds near Coppice Cottages. The Clerk will ask the Police Community Support Officer and RSPB if they know.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.00pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:

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