

BERWICK PARISH ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the Berwick Parish Assembly held at the Berwick Village Hall on 26th May 2022 at 7:00pm

1. Present

Cllrs Keith Winter, (Chairman), Beryl Smith, Victoria Burrough and Sally Carnie.

District Councillor D Watt and Alison Stevens (Clerk). There were two members of the public in attendance.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Nick Bennett.

3. Annual report by the Chairman of Berwick Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all the Parish Councillors, the Clerk and District Councillor Watts for all their hard work and support.

4. Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on the 17th May 2019

The Minutes of the Parish Assembly held on the 17th May 2019 were noted having been approved at the Full Council Meeting which followed that meeting.

5. Speaker Nick Foskett from Wealden Citizen's Advice

Mr Foskett said Wealden Citizen's Advice;

- Has a National Central Office which provides support and information to regional offices which are independent and self-funding.
- Provides free, independent and impartial advice.
- Meetings are held on a 1:1 basis from its offices at Crowborough, Hailsham and Uckfield. During the pandemic advice was given over the phone and by email.
- Helped over 4000 people who between them had 1500 different, often complex, issues.
- Issues include debt and housing, but nothing is off the table.
- Has an excellent relationship with Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council.
- Has found it to be a difficult time for many because of the increased costs of living, the end of furlough and the end of the £20 uplift. Debt collection services have also resumed.
- Has a small number of staff and 150 trained volunteers.
- Needs more volunteers and funding.

Further details of the service will appear on the Parish Council's website and councillors said they will consider donating a grant when they set next year's precept.

6. Speaker Ms Gill Hesselgrave from Cuckmere Flood Forum

Ms Hesselgrave was unable to attend but sent the following report;

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'We have had more incidents of flooding in the Catchment than any year since 2000. Many of these have been caused by blocked road gulleys and culverts. There has also been some fluvial flooding.

We held a meeting on 4th April, but there was no representative from the Environment Agency, so there is no recent update. However, as always keeping the mouth flowing is of utmost importance to all the parishes along the river.

Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Water Management Board – Gill Hesselgrave

The Board and the EA are co-operating and some extra work is being undertaken on the walls, until such time as a further report on the future of the estuary is published.

The mouth hasn't been cleared but the river is managing to empty. Keeping the river mouth functioning is one of the most important parts of preventing flooding upstream.

There was likely to be a problem with contractors working for the Board being unable to use red diesel, which vastly increases the cost plus the need for tanks to be drained and cleaned. However so long as there is an agricultural reason for the work IDBs can still use red diesel.

Cuckmere Catchment Partnership report

I was asked to attend an extra zoom meeting to discuss the new draft Flood Risk Management Plan for the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels. The document highlighted Eastbourne and Hastings as areas that were liable to flood, but there was no mention of flooding in the Cuckmere Valley. I made my representation, that we did have flooding in the valley which has been completely overlooked. As usual it is the lack of houses in our area that are vulnerable.

At our meeting on 30th March Dean Morrison gave an interesting presentation on Natural Flood Management in the Cuckmere. NFM is the way flood alleviation is moving. He has an interesting piece of software which shows water and also elevations. The Cuckmere is in 3 sections – the top piece above Horam, which has very steeply sloping valleys and is not suitable for NFM. The middle section - Horam to Hellingly is where this work can be undertaken and they are already training volunteers. A project is underway at Fontmills Farm on the A267 just north of Hellingly.

There are also some small woody dams on the Waldron Ghyll. Some of the leaking dams are made of small branches, but where the river is larger they fix alder poles into the banks and make a much more substantial dam. These poles can be quite substantial and take manpower to fix. There is also the risk of these pieces of wood dislodging and causing problems downstream.

There are also plans for more tree and hedge planting, and in places to change the species in grass crops to withstand flooding and some have much longer tap roots.

We are asking all parishes to pay an extra £10 per annum, as we are eating into our reserves. The amount of work has increased significantly over the last few years. We still only meet twice a year, but there are more reports needed between them.'

7. Annual Report from the County Councillor

County Councillor N Bennett had sent a report which said;

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Driving sustainable economic growth

The Council was successful in securing funding for East Sussex through two major national schemes – the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and the Levelling Up Fund. ESCC will receive over £2.5m from the UK CRF to go towards five projects, including £730,000 for two projects in Hastings and a £700,00 grant to reboot tourism in Lewes district. Some of the target outcomes across East Sussex include the safeguarding of 300 full time jobs and 470 participants engaged in skills and employment support. Our Levelling Up Fund bid to replace the single lane crossing at Exceat with a new two-lane bridge was successful in securing nearly £8m. Overall, around £170m is being invested into East Sussex because of the East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan. Through our business support programmes over 170 jobs have been created or safeguarded in the first three-quarters of 2021/22, against a target of 140 jobs.

The East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which proposes an ambitious network of preferred cycling and walking routes across the county was agreed in September 2021. This first plan focuses on areas where there is the greatest opportunity to increase levels of cycling and walking and to attract external funding, such as the coastal strip and larger market towns. In July 2021, the new Newhaven Port Access Road opened to cyclists and pedestrians, providing access to Tide Mills and the beach, and linking with existing footpaths to create new circular walking and biking routes.

Over 60 carriageway asset improvement schemes were delivered in the first three-quarters of 2021/22, to maintain and improve the county's roads. Over 17,000 potholes were also repaired. In autumn 2021, the Council committed a further £5.8m for highways including funding for extra patching work, improving pavements, refreshing lines and road markings, and replacing and updating road signs. Three bidders have been shortlisted to provide highway maintenance and infrastructure services in East Sussex from May 2023 onwards and have been asked to submit detailed tenders.

In October, the Careers hub delivered a live virtual careers event 'What's Next Sussex' with over 1,100 students, parents and teachers attending. Over 3,400 pupils are expected to go on work experience placements in this academic year, including through our Virtual Work Experience package developed in response to Covid-19. At the end of 2020/21 ESCC were 9th nationally for yearly outturn figures and joint 7th for cumulative targets for the percentage of apprentices employed in the Council, with 1.2% of our workforce being apprentices. In summer 2021 funding of up to £615,000 was agreed for a Supported Apprenticeship programme to create opportunities for some of the county's most vulnerable residents, including those in supported and temporary accommodation and those at risk of homelessness. 94.8% of academic age 16 pupils were participating in education, training, or employment with training in December 2021, against a target of 93%. 83% of Looked After Children in the same age group were also participating in education, training, or employment with training, against a target of 80%.

Keeping vulnerable people safe

In November 2020, the Government announced funding to provide holiday activities and food (HAF) to young people eligible for free school meals over the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays in 2021. 34 providers ran provision during Easter with 1,378 young people attending. The summer programme included 71 providers in 85 locations across the county, with places arranged for 3,612 young people. In October 2021, the Government announced the household support fund providing support to vulnerable households with the cost of food, energy, and other bills. During the October half-term and Christmas holidays we allocated approximately 36,000 food vouchers.

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Residents facing financial pressure because of Covid-19 restrictions were supported with funding of £500,000, announced in June 2021 with one off grants being provided to 11 voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations that offer financial advice, support, and practical help.

The Council has been delivering a package of support to all secondary and some special schools focusing on gangs, peer influence and coercion, including county lines. A number of workshops and assemblies have also been delivered by kNOwknives and by the Safer East Sussex Team on the risks of knife carrying. An East Sussex Violence Reduction Action Plan has also been developed, covering current and planned projects to identify local issues and address them through multi-agency action.

The East Sussex Local Offer website was launched in January 2022, providing a comprehensive range of information and resources aimed at supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The site was designed in collaboration with parents, carers, and professionals. A new Flagship School in Hastings, a special school for children with autism opened in September 2021. The school, opened to meet a recognised gap in provision, initially opened for 24 pupils and will grow to 72 pupils in future years.

The Domestic Abuse Act came into force in 2021, setting out new obligations for the Council and a Pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Partnership Board has been established. A new Community Development Officer is working across Sussex to set up a Lived Experience Board to ensure the voices of victims are amplified at a strategic level. Clarion Housing Association was awarded the contract for the provision of refuge services across East Sussex from November 2021 and are providing specialist support in 47 units of safe accommodation across the county for women experiencing domestic abuse and violence and their children. This will increase to 56 units over time.

ESCC were successful in securing funding from the national social care recovery grant enabling us to extend our Foundations Services, which works with couples/women who have had children removed and to establish Lifelong Links for children in our care, putting them back in touch with adults who have previously been close to them.

Trading Standards were involved in 133 interventions over the first three-quarters of 2021-22 to protect vulnerable people, including installing call blockers to try to prevent people from falling victim to telephone scams. The team also participated in the national Scams Awareness Fortnight in June 2021 highlighting the risks of financial scams.

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 2021 91.5% of older people discharged from hospital to reablement or 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 products, such as wearable alert buttons, fall detectors or medication dispensers. At the end of 2021, 8,274 people were receiving TECS. In July 2021, the Council's three year Being Digital strategy was launched setting out how 30 digital solutions projects will be used to improve and deliver care and support to adults, making it easier for clients and carers to find support and to manage their care online.

Work continued on the further integration of health and social care. Work is underway to establish a new Integrated Care System (ICS) made up of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and an Integrated

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Care Partnership. The ICB for Sussex will be responsible for a health budget of over £2bn and will oversee the commissioning, performance, financial management and transformation of the local NHS. The current focus is on setting out the arrangements between local NHS organisations, Local Authorities and wider partners covering the ICS vision, principles, and governance arrangements. The intention is to complete the governance arrangements and key recruitment campaigns so that the ICB starts operating in shadow form no later than 1 April 2022.

Thirteen road safety schemes were completed during the first three-quarters of 2021/22 to improve road safety infrastructure, with a further 13 schemes scheduled for completion before the end of the financial year.

A partnership between Public Health and Hastings Borough Council was successful in securing £2.2m from the Government's Sustainable Warmth Competition. The funding will boost the ESCC Warm Home Check service until March 2023, offering home energy efficiency improvements to at least 150 low-income, fuel poor households.

Making best use of resources in the short and long term

The Council's budget and Council Plan for 2022/23 were approved at the meeting of Full Council on 8 February 2022. ESCC approved a £453m budget for 2022/23 for the day-to-day provision of services and £753m for capital investment, which includes a commitment to spend an additional £6m to help combat climate change and £31m to maintain and improve roads and pavements over the next decade. The 2022/23 budget also cancels almost £900,000 of savings due to be made from the early help service.

In autumn 2021, Councillors reaffirmed their commitment to become a carbon-neutral authority, setting aside £3.055m (additional to the £6m highlighted above) to be spent on reducing climate change. The Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan includes reducing corporate carbon emissions by 13 per cent a year and the additional funding agreed will be spent on replacing ageing boilers, installing solar panels and low energy lighting.

The Council spent £288m with 928 local suppliers over 2021, equating to 68.3% of total spend. In addition, during the first three-quarters of the year, 21 contracts which qualified for the Social Value Measurement Charter were awarded with a total value of just under £50m with over £3.5 million of social value commitments included.

Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES) is a partnership of public bodies and other organisations to improve sharing of the property estate, to save property costs and release capital receipts. The SPACES strategy was approved in May 2021 and the programme has now developed an Implementation Plan, including activities around Electric Vehicle infrastructure. The Property team were awarded the Outstanding Customer Satisfaction SECBE award for the building of Ropemakers' Academy in Hailsham; a £12.5m build creating a new 80 place social, emotional, and mental health facility for children'.

8. Annual Report from the District Councillor

District Councillor Watts said;

- i. A new Leader has been appointed at Wealden District Council. Councillor Ann Newton takes over from Bob Standley who announced he was stepping down earlier this year. A new Cabinet has also been appointed, details of which can be found at <https://www.wealden.gov.uk/news/new-leader-wealden-district-council/>
- ii. The bin strike continues. The GMB has rejected the District Council's latest pay offer.

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- iii. Councillors Newton and Standley have had meetings with Michael Gove MP and two other Housing Ministers to try and get the housing numbers in the District reduced.
- iv. The Ukraine refugee situation is ever changing. Another 560 families are expected in Wealden. More details about the situation can be found at;
<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/ukrainian-refugee-crisis/>

9. Reports from Clubs and Associations

There were no reports from any Clubs and Associations on this occasion.

10. Open Forum

Residents asked;

- i. What is happening about the missing gate opposite Beacon View and the bench which is sloping on the Berwick Way – Firlle Estates is looking into the matter of the gate. Berwick Way as a whole is being considered once the works by National Highways have finished.
- ii. If the Parish Council is aware that Wealden's Monitoring Report mentions the potential for an off line A27. Details are the report can be found at;
<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/authority-monitoring-report/>

There was no further business and this meeting closed at 7.45pm

Signed:

Chairman

Date:
