

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council on 10th January 2017 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks.

Attendees: Parish Councillors: Kate Bailey (part); Jane Baker; Justine Fisher; Peter Gibbons; Bill Hatton; Sue Hatton; Chris Hobbs; Nick Owens; Rev Darryl Sinclair (part) & Ian Weir (Chair)

Locum Clerk: Colin Hunt

17/591 APOLOGIES

591.1 To Accept Apologies for Absence.

Parish Councillors Judith Foot; Frances Gaudencio; Leslie Campbell and Victoria Standfast. Councillor Bailey also sent apologies as she would be arriving late for the meeting.

17/592 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

592.1 Disclosure by Councillors of personal interests in matters on the agenda, and whether the Councillor regards their interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations of interest at the onset of the meeting.

17/593 MINUTES

593.1 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13th December 2016 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

593.2 The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 19th December 2016 were challenged in respect of the accuracy of comments made by a member of the public at the meeting. The Minutes were subsequently not confirmed and deferred to the next meeting of the Council.

17/594 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

594.1 There was 1 member of the public present who observed proceedings and did not raise any questions or make comments.

17/595 MINUTES

595.1 The Minutes of the Planning Committee held on the 3rd January 2017 were noted.

17/596 FINANCE

- 596.1 The Finance report and payments totalling £26,128.76 were approved. One matter that Council considered would clarify the ledger was to amend the heading entitled 'Balance per Cash Book' to 'Movement in receipts and payments in the current month'. This matter would be explored.

17/597 REPORTS

- 597.1 Police Report - None

- 597.2 District Councillor Report

District Councillor, Gordon Marples reported on three matters.

The first was that the District Council had set the Council tax for 2017/8 albeit subject to agreement by the DC's Scrutiny Committee. This would rise by 1.99%, which is below the capped level of 2% and thus avoiding a local referendum. Cllr Marples explained that the Governments Rate Support grant had dropped considerably over the last seven years from £6.4M to £854k and was expected to fall again next year with estimates as low as £128k.

Despite the loss of grant, increases in income via the New Homes Bonus scheme and usages in services, especially leisure which was nearing self-sufficiency, had helped strengthen the District Council's position and resulted on average in only a 1%rise in service costs.

The second matter was to report an unfortunate accident to an elderly resident in the car park at the rear of Budgens supermarket on the High street. Cllr Marples was however pleased to report that a barrier had been installed very quickly which would hopefully prevent a reoccurrence of the incident.

Lastly Cllr Marples reported that the District Plan enquiry was to re-open on Thursday (12th) and could run over into Friday.

The Chair thanked Councillor Marples for his reports.

Cllr Gibbons informed Cllr Marples that he had witnessed commercial vehicles parking on the grass verges on Dale Avenue. Cllr Marples would look into this matter.

- 597.3 County Councillor Report

WSCC Councillor Andy Petch had that afternoon emailed a report to the Clerk, who had forwarded the same to all Parish Councillors. The contents were noted but as the item was not on the Council's agenda the matter could not be resolved that evening. In view of the request for

a reply by 20th January, Council agreed to delegate the response to the P&RC Committee who were scheduled to meet on 19th January. An item will be placed on that agenda.

Councillors who were not members of the PR&C Committee were invited to contribute to the discussions relating to Cllr Petch's email and attachments by emailing the Clerk who would present comments at the meeting.

597.4 Rail Matters

Cllr Peter Gibbons reported on the current rail dispute and gave details of the strike days and figures relating to the loss of rail services at Hassocks.

In December alone it was reported that there were 760 cancellations which meant a total of 4,861 train cancellations for the calendar year. This figure included 986 trains that ran but failed to stop at Hassocks, 782 which were affected by strike action and a further 76 which were due to an overtime ban. This resulted in over 3,000 cancellations for other reasons for the year which was approaching 60 a week.

598.5 Cllr Justine Fisher reported that the Youth club will re-open on Friday 13th January 2017

598.6 Reports from Councillors on outside bodies.

Although not strictly an outside body, Cllr Nick Owens reported on a meeting that he had attended at Downlands School where ground source heating was being considered. Although the finance for such a project was not clear at this time, Cllr Owens had noted from the email received from WSCC Cllr Petch that grants may be available.

Cllr Bill Hatton reported on the Mid Sussex District Plan and the Burgess Hill Strategic Partnership. Cllr Hatton had found the discussions on the District Plan interesting but could add little to that previously reported by DC Cllr Marples.

On the subject of the Burgess Hill Strategic Plan Cllr Hatton informed Council that this was aware that the matter was sensitive and could not report in too much detail at this stage on the so called 'Northern Arc' but this could have a bearing on Hassocks. He also made the point that developers were generally more enthusiastic about small developments as they were keen to avoid the additional infrastructure costs involved in large developments.

17/599 CHAIRMANS REPORT

The Chairman had nothing to report.

Cllr Kate Bailey arrived at this point.

17/600 CLERK'S REPORTS

600.1 Committee Membership

Following the co-option onto the Council of Cllr Chris Hobbs at its last meeting, Council wished to review its Committees memberships.

The Chair asked Cllr Hobbs if he had any preferences regarding Committee membership. Cllr Hobbs favoured the Grounds and Environment and the Policy, Resources and Communications Committees.

Cllr Sue Hatton was concerned that sometimes the Planning Committee struggle to be quorate at their meeting.

The Chair spoke of an unwritten policy that generally only members that have been on the Council for a year and having gained experience in council procedures etc. are normally elected to the PR&C Committee. However, after having considered how Cllr Hobbs 'skill set' might benefit the PR&C Committee, the Chair raised separate motions to elect Cllr Hobbs to both the G&E & PR&C Committees. **Both motions were carried unanimously in favour of Cllr. Hobbs sitting on both the G&E and PR&C Committees.**

In order to address the sometimes low attendance at Planning meetings the Chair advised Council that the Locum Clerk will be proposing some changes to the Standing Orders to allow short notice substitutions for all Committees. As a temporary measure to bolster membership Cllr Peter Gibbons agreed to sit on the Planning Committee until Council reform all its committees in May.

Councillor Sinclair was unfortunately taken ill at this point and retired from the meeting. Cllr Bailey also left the meeting at this point to attend to her and transport her home. The Chair wished Cllr Sinclair a speedy recovery and thanked Cllr Bailey for her help.

17/601 URGENT MATTERS

Urgent Matters at the discretion of the Chairman for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda.

There were none

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted Councillors were referred to the Confidential Agenda. Members of the public or press in attendance were requested to withdraw from the meeting in the public interest.

17/602 RECRUITMENT OF NEW CLERK

Cllr Justine Fisher, who was the Chair of the Council appointed recruitment panel, informed Members that a second round of interviews had been conducted on 4th January, which had been very useful in further assessing the three candidates suitability for the post.

Cllr Fisher explained the process which included an 'in tray' exercise and all candidates had talked with staff, whose feedback had been extremely useful.

All three candidates had done well and after due consideration an offer was made to Mr. Ian Cumberworth which was accepted. It is anticipated that Mr Cumberworth will be taking up post on 23rd January and Council agreed that the Locum Clerk will draw up the necessary employment contract, which will be vetted by the Chair, and provide support to the new Clerk as required.

In order to ratify the appointment, the Chair raised the motion to appoint Mr Ian Cumberworth as Clerk to the Council subject to satisfactory references being received and the condition that he will attain CiLCA within one year of taking up post.

The motion to appoint Ian Cumberworth to the post of Clerk and Responsible Finance to the Council was carried unanimously.

The meeting closed at 8.46 pm.

Chairman's Signature -----