

ITCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Monday 24th April 2023 in the David Francis Room of the Village Hall

Present:

Cllr Penny Simpson - Chairman

Cllr Richard French

Cllr Sanjeev Joshi

Cllr Brian O'Connor

Cllr Sarah Peay

The Clerk Jan Critchley

District Cllr Tricia Youtan

District Cllr Stuart Ritchie

- 46 Apologies for Absence** – were received from Cllr Alan Strudley and County Cllr Amanda Jupp. District Cllr Tricia Youtan will be a bit late as she is at another meeting prior to this one.

The Chairman welcomed District Cllr Stuart Ritchie to what will be his last Parish Council Meeting as a District Cllr as he is not standing in the May election.

- 47 Declarations of Interest** - *Members are reminded to make any declaration of personal and/or prejudicial Interest that they may have in relation to items on the agenda.* No declarations were given.

- 48 Minutes of the last Meeting to be approved**

The Minutes of the last meeting on 27th March 2023 had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The following amendment was made: a £ sign to be added before the 1.4m in County Cllr Amanda Jupp's Report item 2. The Minutes were then accepted and signed by the Chairman.

- 49 To consider any matters arising from the last Meeting that cannot wait until the next meeting.**

1. Minute 35:1 Fence at the back of The Ashmiles. The Clerk reported that the wooden posts on the fence at the back of The Ashmiles at the entrance to the Ancient Woodland owned by the Parish Council have now been replaced. Cllr Brian O'Connor reported that the fence at the back of the Orchard on the forest side may also be in need of repair. The Clerk will have a look and report back.

2. Minute 35: 2 Rubbish to be cleared in Bashurst Hill and West Chiltonington Lane. The Clerk was informed by HDC Environmental Department that this had been completed on 31st March 2023.

3. Minute 44:3 Kingfisher Farm site visit by Madeline Hartley. The Clerk was informed that Madeleine had carried out a site visit on 13th February 2023.

4. Minute 144:2 from the December 2022 Minutes – Grant to IPCC. After the Parish Council agreed to increase its grant to the IPCC from the precept 2023-2024, the Clerk had requested updated year end accounts which she has now received from Julia Huson, Treasurer, IPCC and these had been circulated.

It was proposed by The Chairman that going forward, the above on the agenda should be: "To consider any matters arising from the last Meeting and not on this Agenda" Agreed unanimously.

Action

Action

- 50 Welcome to the Meeting – Headteacher of Barns Green Primary School Tracey Newbold and Chairman of the Governors Alex Nicholson.**

Alex addressed the Parish Council by introducing the newly appointed Headteacher Tracey Newbold. Alex said that he last attended a Parish Council meeting back in late September last year when the school was in a very different place. It was the beginning of the Autumn Term and the Ofsted Report had just been published. Since then, the Governing Body which is now at full capacity, has very been busy appointing a new Headteacher and they will be appointing a Deputy Headteacher in the next academic year so he said he is very excited about what the future holds for the school.

Tracey then addressed the Parish Council by saying that she wanted to attend this evening to introduce herself and put a face to a name. Tracey said that she was very excited with the appointment and said that she thought the future of the village school looks extremely bright. There is a journey to go on, but it is one that is eminently achievable to be the best the school can be. She said that she understands that Barns Green Primary School should be the centre of its community. Everyone has been working extremely hard particularly this last year with a clear plan ahead. Tracey said that she has some great members of staff and the children are superb so she looking forward to the future success of the school. Tracey then asked if anyone had any questions for her.

The Chairman asked that with the new pathway from the village car park to the school being completed during the summer, would the school be open to holding an opening ceremony with the teachers and pupils

at the beginning of the new term. Tracey said that the school council would be delighted to get involved with arranging that. The Chairman then asked that with the Coronation coming soon, was there anything the school needs that the Parish Council could finance in memory of the Coronation. Tracey thanked the Cllrs and said that she would put the question to her staff and the school council and get back to the Cllrs. Tracey said that the school is currently looking at Rewilding Projects so this maybe something to think about. Cllr Brian O'Connor asked whether the school was considering alternative energy sources like solar panels. Tracey said that the school has secured a 10k grant from Shell, 5k grant match funded from HDC, so 5k will be spent from the school budget and the school will then purchase as many solar panels from the grants as they can. Then money saved from energy costs will be used to purchase more solar panels. Cllr Sarah Peay said that there was a scheme run by the South of England Agricultural Society called 'Loan a Lamb' whereby a sheep and her two lambs along with all the necessary equipment are loaned to a school for a week for the children to learn about farming. Tracey will contact Cllr Sarah Peay for more information. Finally, Tracey said there is great concern from the parents about the amount of dog poo that is around the village, but especially on the paths by the school which appears to be anti-social. This could have an effect on the children's health. The Chairman said she would contact Erica Baxter who is a PCSO for another area but lives in the village opposite the school about the legality of putting up some cameras. The Chairman said that she will also contact County Cllr Amanda Jupp. District Cllr Tricia Youtan said she would have a word with Mark Rankin who is the Environment Officer at HDC. Cllr Sarah Peay suggested that the Barns Green Primary School be put as an agenda item whilst we have these on-going matters. This was agreed.

Action

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District Cllr Tricia Youtan arrived at 7.55pm.

51 Neighbourhood Plan Update – Report from Ian Walker, Chair of Itchingfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan Committee.

"Since my verbal report to last month's Parish Council meeting, I was sent a number of documents by HDC, including the full legal opinion from counsel on the subject of the progress, or lack thereof, of Neighbourhood Plans. The opinion was obtained from Stephanie Hall of Kings Chambers, Manchester. She appears to be well experienced in planning matters.

Her opinion confirms that:

- (a) The Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) require any plan or project to demonstrate that there will be no impact on water usage and, if there is, to describe how such impact will be mitigated;*
- (b) This requires a proper mitigation strategy, not merely a passing reference to water neutrality (WN) as an issue;*
- (c) The Part C mitigation strategy, set out in the expert report obtained by HDC, is not sufficient as a mitigation strategy for the purposes of the Regulations;*
- (d) Therefore, parishes preparing a Neighbourhood Plan will need to wait until HDC has got a fully-formed water mitigation strategy, upon which parishes can legitimately rely, before their Plan can be "made";*
- (e) To proceed before HDC has got its mitigation strategy sorted out would lead to an unacceptable risk of legal challenge by disappointed developers.*
- (f) It is arguable that our Plan may have to demonstrate WN Mitigation for every site chosen for development (in our case only the one remaining site) but we can rely on the HDC strategy to do this.*

We were asked to keep the document restricted and therefore I do not attach it to this report.

Counsel does not say so, but it is obvious, that preparing a fully-formed Water Neutrality mitigation strategy is beyond the resources of a parish, unless expert consultants were used at great cost.

My firm opinion is that we have no ammunition with which to challenge this legal opinion and that the cost of obtaining our own would be (probably) throwing good money after bad. Even if we got a dissenting opinion would we really want to go to litigation?

It is right to say that the representative of Pulborough does not accept my analysis and we have exchanged emails. The Chairman has seen the exchange. I see no point in seeking an audience with the Secretary of State because there is nothing that we can say to him to puncture HDC legal opinion.

Cowfold and Lower Beeding have been silent since the meeting with HDC and the email exchanges. I take that to signify that they have no appetite for further action at this time and that Pulborough are rather on their own. Malcolm Eastwood of HALC seems to support my view. Accordingly, I feel that we have no option but to proceed as HDC suggested and wait until they have their Water Neutrality Strategy set out in the District Plan which we can then adopt and rely on.

Counsel suggests that we will eventually have to amend the draft Plan to deal with Water Neutrality, and for safety's sake should have the Plan re-examined by our Examiner. This should be a short process. However, of more concern, is the suggestion that we might need some form of re-consultation, although this would be a job for HDC, given the stage at which the Plan has arrived.

*In the meantime, the situation is going to HDC Cabinet in June and thereafter to the full Council.
We shall of course see what Pulborough decide to do – their Parish Council meeting is on 20th April 2023.*

52 **Open Session for Members of the Public** – no members of the public were present.

53 **Planning Applications** – Circulated to all Cllrs ahead of the meeting. Can Cllrs please check all documents relating to the planning applications on the HDC Planning Portal ahead of the meeting.

Action

1. New Applications

DC/23/0462 – Lower Toat Cottage, Five Oaks Road, Slinfold – demolition of existing garage and erection of two bay garage, workshop and music room.

Itchingfield Parish Council recommends this planning application for approval.

DC/23/0492 – Elgin Lodge, Trout Lane, Barns Green – First floor side extension.

Itchingfield Parish Council recommends this planning application for approval.

DC/22/1977 – Slaughterford Farm, Chapel Road, Barns Green – submission of updated and revised plans regarding site curtilage and comments mainly relating to water neutrality issues.

Itchingfield Parish Council has no objections to this application and welcomes the revised plans regarding site curtilages. Itchingfield Parish Council notes that the matter of water neutrality has been addressed by utilizing the mains water currently consumed by cows etc. in the existing barns. The cows which will occupy the barns approved under DC/21/1736 and DC/21/1737 will utilize rain water collected from the roofs of these barns for 170 days of the year. Clearly from the above, Itchingfield Parish Council would like to draw attention to the fact that the water consumption of the current cow barns cannot be utilized to offset the proposed development DC/21/2697 with regard to water neutrality. See revised Water Neutrality statement from C Barker to Amanda Wilkes 07/07/2022.

DC/23/0456 – Nightingale, Baystone House, Mill Lane, Itchingfield – erection of an agricultural barns and access track.

Itchingfield Parish Council is unable to make any decision on this planning application as the design of the barn needs clarifying and justification for the new dedicated access needs to be provided. Itchingfield Parish Council therefore reserves judgment on this planning application until these items are resolved.

DC/23/0607 – 15 Trout Lane, Barns Green – Demolition of existing garage. Erection of a part single storey, Part two storey rear extension, a two-storey side extension and alternations to front porch.

Itchingfield Parish Council recommends this planning application for approval.

DC/21/1141 - Kingfisher Farm, West Chiltington Lane – Revised documents published 28/03/2023. – Change of use of the land and retention of 11No gypsy mobile residential units and 11No touring caravans on the site, full drainage and car parking and bin storage and hard and soft landscaping.

Itchingfield Parish Council **strongly objects** to the revised drainage scheme and water neutrality statements for the following reasons: -

Valewood Lane has historically suffered from land run off water running down the road almost constantly, even in times of drought. Due to the heavy clay soil, there is little or no opportunity for soak-aways to function reliably. The application form states that the site is within 20 metres of a watercourse. This is patently not so. There is no watercourse other than the road. Treated water from the adjacent Greenfield Farm site does not run away and causes frequent issues with noxious smells emanating from ponding in local road drainage ditches which are not part of a functioning watercourse. The drainage scheme plans show 11 pitches discharging treated water into a 150mm diameter collecting pipe which then discharges into a final 150mm diameter pipe which will effectively discharge into Valewood Lane carrying both treated and untreated foul water as well as surface water down Valewood Lane past the properties on the south side of the road and will eventually discharge onto farming land on the East side of the railway. The proposed drainage scheme will at best only move the problem of treated and untreated water from the site flowing in an uncontrolled manner onto land approximately 1km away and impacting local agricultural, domestic and equestrian properties as well as causing potential health risks to the many visitors to the Sumners Ponds camping and fishing sites who walk and cycle on the road and adjoining footpaths.

It is stated in the revised water neutrality statement by Ms. Anna Becvar that the water utilization figures are based on there being 11 fixed dwellings and 11 touring caravans. The touring caravans being used for trips away from the site. At the time quoted by Ms. Becvar in the unpaid invoice submitted to justify her calculations, from actual observations in the early part of February 2023, there were only some 5 pitches occupied with substantial fixed mobile homes and Pitch 1 was filled with stored commercial vehicles. A visit by HDC Enforcement Officers on the 13th February 2023 showed that there were 12 static caravans and 13 touring caravans and a subsequent visit on 27th April 2023 showed that there were 8 static caravans and 12 touring caravans on the site. These observations make M.s Becvar's quoted calculations regarding proposed water consumption totally unreliable.

Reports by County and District Councillors –

District Cllr Tricia Youtan gave the following report:

Tricia said that the WSCC Cabinet Member for Road Transport has said that her people are working flat out repairing potholes but Tricia said she wondered where as she had not seen anyone. The Chairman wished Tricia all the best in the forthcoming elections and thanked her for all she has done in the last four years.

District Cllr Stuart Ritchie gave the following report:

Stuart said he wondered whether people were using the WSCC app to report the potholes. Cllr Richard French said that the Parish Council are trying to encourage people to use it.

Stuart said that he, along with Tricia he receives the quarterly Section 106 and CIL reports as does the Parish Council. Stuart said that there was a CIL payment for Itchingfield of £22,937.38 and in line with CIL Regulations, Parishes will receive a 15% or 25% proportion of the CIL collected in their area, depending on whether there is a Made Neighbourhood Plan for that area. He said that It doesn't say whether this amount has been allocated for any project yet so assumed it is still open. The Chairman and Clerk to make enquiries although it is believed that this money has been held over as the delay in the Neighbourhood Plan being made is not the fault of the parish. Stuart said that with regard to Section 106 money, it looks like all monies have been allocated and the money spent. The Chairman said that she is waiting to hear from Suzanne Shaw because that Section 106 money has been applied for by the Playing Field Trust.

Stuart said that the 2023 National Young Market Trader's Competition is coming to Horsham on Sunday 30th April and this will be the first time it has been held in Horsham.

Finally, Stuart thanked all the Cllrs for the kindness they have shown him since he has been our District Cllr. The Chairman thanked Stuart for all he has done over the years and wished him well for the future.

County Cllr Amanda Jupp sent the following report in her absence:

As you know, Highways have been at full stretch recently managing the maintenance and repair of the roads following the extreme weather and I thought I would pass on the email from Michele Hulme, Head of Local Highway Operations, regarding the current situation. As she mentions, this may mean that responses from Highways take longer than usual but if I can help in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

"Dear All, as you will be aware, following the weather events we have experienced over the last year, we are now tackling a large number of issues on the network. We continue to see exceptionally high numbers of customer reports, in March this was just under 8,000 enquires, this is double what we would normally expect at this time of the year and this trend continues. In January the number of enquiries exceeded 11,000. The impact on the Highways teams has been significant. The teams are incredibly busy and the volume of work is unrelenting. Current staff vacancies and the significant incidents on the network have also added pressure to the workload. I would like to assure you we are doing all we can to manage the workload; officers are working over-time and we have successfully recruited new staff but they need support and training to become fully operational. Our contractors' gangs are also working twilight shifts and Saturdays to manage the increased number of jobs. We are also looking to increase the number of gangs further but as I am sure you will appreciate; this is common to the entire south-east and nationally, sourcing additional gangs at this time is very difficult. We have deployed 3 Jet Patchers in the county, so this will help.

To enable the Highway Teams to effectively deal with the volume of safety issues being reported, we have paused non-statutory activities for a period of 4 weeks as we did in January. We have extended our response times to customers on general enquiries from 10 to 20 days. On this basis, our responses to Parishes and Town Councils are likely to take much longer. Of course, if you have urgent issues then these can be escalated. We appreciate your support at this very busy time.

A summary of the temporary measures we have put in place is detailed below.

Temporary measures (from April 17th up to 12th May)

- (i) Extend SLA for customer responses – up to 20 days
- (ii) Pause non-essential licensing activities (e.g., residential Vehicle Crossovers, Standard Forms of Consent for activities like licensing banners or planters).
- (iii) Pause responses to general enquiries, including Community Highway Schemes

Highways

1. Valewood Lane drainage issues – no more to report in Cllr James Sheppard's absence.

Local Traffic and Roads

Cllr Richard French gave the following report:

1. Richard started by making reference in Amanda's absence to the email she had reference in her report above stating that the WSCC are working hard to manage the maintenance and repair to the roads with adverse weather conditions and work forces being stretched.
2. Richard said that he has been chasing up regarding white lines and speed limits on Dog Barking Bend, Two Mile Ash Road and has written to Southwater Parish Council to discuss this as the road is within both parishes.

3. Richard said he had written an article regarding drain clearance and advertising for a Drain Warden which had gone into in the April edition of the BIG MAG. The Clerk reported that she hadn't received any responses.
4. Richard said he is currently chasing James Strachan at WSCC regarding the SID's Proposal and Speed Strips. James has confirmed that regarding the locations of the SID's on the A264, this would **not** be permitted as it doesn't meet the criteria. The other locations look hopeful. With regard to Speed Strips, James has informed Richard that he currently has a tranche of speed surveys to considers in the next few weeks so he should be confirming soon as to when the strips will be placed in Bashurst Hill and West Chiltington Lane.
5. Richard reported that he has made contact with David Exwood regarding the realigning of the fence on the A264 and David said he would have a look at it.
6. Richard said that he has spoken to Adam Bazley at WSCC regarding the cars parked at Toat Hill Garage. Cllr Sarah Peay reported that there is still issue with water on the roads near to Toat Hill Garage. The Clerk reported that there is now constant flooding under the bridge in Two Mile Ash when there is heavy rainfall. Richard said that not only do the drains need clearing, but the drain pipes that run underneath the bridge have been damaged by passing lorries at some stage which is making the situation worse. The Clerk to write to WSCC and also Network Rail. **Action**
7. Finally, Richard said that it had been suggested to him by some parishioners that when we have torrential rainfall and the potholes are filled with water so cannot be seen, that a small group of volunteers' put Visibility Markers adjacent to the serious potholes. Richard said that he put this proposal to James Strachan at WSCC, but was told that we couldn't do this so Richard is going to request that WSCC do it. **Action**
8. Cllr Sarah Peay said that she had contacted Southern Water regarding the cleaning of the road and clearing of the drains in West Chiltington Lane after a burst water main. Southern Water did come along but have not cleared the ditches so she will call them again. **Action**
9. Cllr Sarah Peay also mentioned about the three 'Little Barn Owls' minibuses parking on the bend by Possession House Farm in West Chiltington Lane near to Eastlands Farm every day, making it a road hazard. Sarah will report this through Operation Crackdown. **Action**

57 Finance – All payments for approval since 24th March 2023.

1. There are ten payments to be paid
£28.50 to EE Home Broadband in respect of the Internet Service for April 2023.
£22.50 to Barns Green Village Hall in respect of rental for Meeting on 24th April 2023.
£1,000.00 Grant to KSS, Air Ambulance Kent Surry Sussex as agreed at the meeting on 27th March 2023.
£50.00 to Barns Green Community Publications (BIG MAG) in respect of the inserted flyer.
£53.51 to Treetop Design & Print in respect of the printing of the flyer.
£555.86 to WSALC in respect of WSALC subscription (£456.40) and NALC subscription (£99.46) for 2023-2024.
£100.00 to Pat Cochran in respect of Litter Warden duties for April 2023.
£1,169.35 to the Clerk comprising of £1,082.55 salary for April 2023 and £86.80 expenses.
£340.20 to the Ed Gardener in respect of replacing the wooden posts on the fence at the back of The Ashmiles.
£18.47 to Royal British Legion Industries in respect of King Charles III 2023 Coronation Flag.
2. Year-end Bank Reconciliation. The Clerk presented the year-end 31st March 2023 Bank Reconciliation to the Councillors. Full year end accounts will be presented at the AGM in May.

58 Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.

The Chairman reported that she and Cllr Sarah Peay had considered both documents and recommended that The Code of Conduct remain the same but be redated and approved. With regard to the Standing Orders the Chairman and Cllr Sarah Peay have made some amendments. Both documents to be circulated ahead of the next meeting when they will be adopted. **Action**

59 Correspondence

1. The Clerk reported that she has received an invitation to join an on-line meeting on 11th May 2023, along with other Parish Clerks in the area, to meet the new Horsham Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) Police Inspector Neil Durkan **Action**

60 Any other Business

1. The Chairman reported that the new oak tree on the village green has now been planted by Matthew Treasure-Jones. The plaque has now arrived so the Chairman said that we will arrange a planting ceremony shortly.

61 Date of Next Meeting - Monday 22nd May 2023. This meeting will be preceded by the AGM. There being no other business closed at 9.32pm.