

ITCHINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Monday 26th February 2024 in the David Francis Room of the Village Hall

Present: Cllr James Sheppard – Vice Chairman
Cllr Ross Dye
Cllr Brian O'Connor
Cllr Sarah Peay
Cllr Alan Strudley
The Clerk Jan Critchley
District Cllr Tricia Youtan
County Cllr Amanda Jupp
Chris East – Group Land Director, Sigma Homes and Tony Kenny – Production Director, Sigma Homes
Members of the Public: Paul Allen, Richard French, Simon Smith and Alan Peers.

15 To elect a new Chairman due to the resignation of current Chairman.

It was proposed by Cllr Ross Dye that Cllr Alan Strudley be elected as Chairman up until the AGM in May 2024, when a new Chairman will be elected. Seconded by Cllr Sarah Peay and agreed unanimously. Cllr James Sheppard did not put his name forward for the role of Chairman and will continue his 6 month leave of Absence when the new Chairman is established. It was agreed that Cllr James Sheppard – Vice Chairman will continue to chair this evening's meeting.

16 Co-option and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

It was proposed by Cllr James Sheppard that Elaine French be co-opted onto the Parish Council, seconded by Cllr Ross Dye, agreed unanimously. The Clerk asked that Elaine sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which she did in the presence of the Clerk.

Action

17 Apologies for Absence were received from District Cllr Kasia Greenwood. County Cllr Amanda Jupp will be late due to attendance at a prior meeting.

18 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.

19 Minutes of the last Meeting to be approved

The Minutes of the last meeting on 29th January 2024 had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The Minutes were approved, accepted and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

Action

20 Sigma Homes Development

At the last meeting, it was proposed that the Parish Council form a sub-committee to discuss solely Sumners Field Development. Cllr Ross Dye said that following a discussion with Cllr Alan Strudley, he would now like to put his name forward to Chair sub-committee and to lead it through the period of the development. He said that he has put together a document with Terms of Reference which he had circulated to the Cllrs. This sub-committee is a more flexible approach of communication and will communicate back to the Parish Council, Sigma Homes and District and County Cllrs as and when it is necessary. The sub-committee will consist of two Parish Cllrs, Simon Smith from Sumners Ponds and a representative from the residents group. As and when required, a representative of Sigma Homes will be invited to attend a meeting. Cllr James Sheppard proposed that Cllr Ross Dye be elected to Chair the sub-committee, seconded by Cllr Brian O'Connor, agreed unanimously. The Terms of Reference for this sub-committee were also agreed to be accepted. Chris East, Group Land Director, Sigma Homes was invited to address the Parish Council. He said that HDC have had all the pre-conditions since October 2023 and received all the information from WSCC Highways on 19th December 2023. Prior to the Stop Notice, Chris said that Sigma Homes were putting in an access route through the site and so the construction areas would have been fenced off. Cllr James Sheppard asked where Sigma Homes are with regard to the CEMP. Tony Kenny said that it has been issued with a revision regarding the access route and WSCC Highways has already accepted this proposed route, so it is now down to HDC to discharge these conditions. Tony said that Sigma Homes are hoping to commence work again on 12th March 2024. However, it was pointed out that there are still 5 conditions that are referred to on the HDC portal that still need to be discharged by HDC. Cllr Alan Strudley said that the Parish Council appreciated Chris and Tony attending the meeting this evening and by virtue of the setting up of the sub-committee, this will clearly help what appears to be a gap in communication and hopefully will enable these misunderstandings to be sorted out in a timely manner. HDC are the decision making body. It was concluded that Sigma Homes has done all it can do, so it is now in the hands of HDC to action. Tony finished by saying that he is overall director of safety and takes safety very seriously. Cllr James Sheppard thanked Chris and Tony for attending.

- 21 To consider any matters arising from the last Meeting that are not on this Agenda.**
1. Minute 12 – Pathway and Parking Markings, Muntham Drive. The Clerk reported that she had re-sent the details to all Cllrs and it was agreed that the Parish Council will go ahead and accept the quote from Tidey and Webb to carry out the work. **Action**
- 22 Open Session for Members of the Public** – no members of the public present wished to address the Parish Council.
- 23 Planning Applications** – Circulated to all Cllrs ahead of the meeting.
- 1. New Applications**
- DC/24/0230 - c/o 3 Bramble Close, Barns Green - Surgery to 4no Oak trees, in common land to road frontage of the Ashmiles Estate. T1, T2, T3, Removal of deadwood within crown to make safe road and amenity areas. T4 Removal of deadwood. Reduce crown up to 1metre radial from 10meters to 9metres on north/east aspect only. Back to previous points to clear T3.**
 Itchingfield Parish Council feels that reducing the crown to previous reduction points could mean reductions of over 3 metres which could be excessive, but would leave the decision to HDC's Arboriculturist
- DC/24/0229 - Mr Richard Sutcliffe Smith, 15 Bramble Close, Barns Green - Surgery to Oak tree, T1. Trimming south west side to previous reduction points to contain tree and reduce overhang by 0.5metres -1.0metres from 8metres to 7metres. Removal of significant deadwood to reduce falling debris over property.**
 Itchingfield Parish Council has no objections to this planning application.
- DC/23/2309 - Mr Francis Pulvermacher, Christ's Hospital, Christ's Hospital Road - Site address: - Westons Farmhouse, Westons Hill, Itchingfield - Conversion of annex to independent dwelling.**
 Itchingfield Parish Council would like to make the following observations on this planning application: the intimate proximity of the annex with the active farm retained in the current application is bound to cause problems due to opening windows facing directly into the farms working area, since the two properties may well become owned by different parties. For this reason, we consider that the design of the annex makes it unsuitable as an independent property. The current access to Westons Farm House was permitted under DC/15/1212 as an additional point of access with two car parking spaces at the main entrance. Westons Farm House has, we believe, 5 bedrooms and thus needs more than 2 car parking spaces to comply with current building standards.
- DC/24/0203 - Mr Simon P Smith. Land at Sumners Ponds, Chapel Road, Barns Green - Full planning permission for the relocation of existing Wardens Accommodation at Sumners Ponds, Chapel Road, Barns Green.**
 Itchingfield Parish Council recommends this planning application for approval.
- DC/24/0114 - Mr David Exwood, Westons Farm, Westons Hill, Itchingfield - Demolition of building to be replaced with an agricultural garage/store and extension to boundary wall and DC/24/0115 - Listed building consent.**
 Itchingfield Parish Council recommends this planning application for approval.
- 2. HDC Local Plan and representation from the Parish Council**
 Cllr Brian O'Connor gave the following report: All representations to the HDC Local Plan need to be sent by 1st March 2024. There are two more sites that have been added to the HDC Local Plan as well as the two sites that are already in our Barns Green and Itchingfield Neighbourhood Hood Plan which has still not reached the Referendum stage due to being held up by HDC. In our Neighbourhood Plan there are two sites for development, 42 houses at Sumners Field and 20 houses at the old school site. In the HDC Local Plan there are two more sites added for development opposite the shop, 50 houses on a large field and 25 houses on a smaller field, both of which were the least favourable sites when our Neighbourhood Plan was being considered. The proposed 141 units at Wellcross Grange are not included in our housing numbers. HDC has disregarded our Neighbourhood Plan. After deliberation by the Cllrs, it was agreed that Cllr Brian O'Connor will draft a representation with our strong objections by this Wednesday and circulate to all Cllrs for approval. This will then be sent before 1st March 2024. It was also agreed that a notice be put on our Parish Council website and our facebook page stating the deadline for representations and add a link directing parishioners to the HDC site. It was reported that the framework document for making representations on the HDC Local Plan is not very user friendly. District Cllr Tricia Youtan said that she will bring this matter up with HDC. **Action**
- 24 Reports by County and District Councillors**
County Cllr Amanda Jupp gave the following report:
- 1.** The heavy rainstorms we have experienced over the winter have unfortunately led to potholes appearing/reappearing on many of our roads and I am very grateful to the Parish Council and residents who have reported these direct to Highways. However, if these reports need following up, please let me know so I can contact Highways to ensure that these potholes have been logged on the system.
- 2.** Since **Operation Watershed** was established ten years ago, the County Council has successfully supported

local communities with £5m of funding for over 500 projects to alleviate the risk of flooding. Parish and town councils as well as constituted community and volunteer groups within the county can apply for funding for projects that they are able to deliver themselves. Criteria used to assess applications to the fund include how flood issues will be addressed, whether there is strong community support, how benefits to the community will be realised and value for money. Further information is available on the WSCC website under Operation Watershed.

3. **Riparian Rights** - it is the responsibility of riparian owners to maintain any watercourses that are on or under their land or property. Ditch clearing helps keep water flowing freely and reduces flooding and pooling on the road surface. Under the provision of the **Highways Act 1980**, it is an offence to block, obstruct or damage road verges with logs, stones, posts, etc. If someone is injured or vehicles damaged by items that have been placed on verges, then legal action can be taken against the homeowner.
4. **West Sussex County Council will invest £2bn** to support residents, communities and businesses over the coming year, including an extra £81.9m of funding for vital day-to-day services. The budget for 2024/25 was agreed at a meeting of Full Council on Friday 16th February. Extra funding includes: £31.2m more for vulnerable children and young people, £18.3m more for adults' social care, £4m extra to maintain the county's 4,000km of roads, £27.8m to manage increased costs, as inflation levels remain high. The Council also plans to spend £131.6m of its £695m five-year Capital Programme. The main areas of investment being highways, schools and the environment. Included in the budget are efficiency savings of £15.7m, an increase in core council tax of 2.99%, and an additional adult social care precept of 2%.
5. **Apprenticeship funding** is available to local businesses as the County Council is part of the apprenticeship levy fund scheme and as a large employer can transfer 25% of its own funding to other employers. Applications can be made at any time of the year. The Council has invested a total of £1,240,453 of apprenticeship funding since 2017, when the apprenticeship levy was introduced to support local businesses. The funding has supported a total of 385 apprenticeships in West Sussex and £324,369 of the total amount was invested in the last financial year. Apprenticeships are equivalent to educational levels ranging from GCSE/A level to Foundation, Graduate and Postgraduate degrees. They are open to people over the age of 16 and cover hundreds of subject areas. Businesses can find out more and apply for funding by visiting: [Apprenticeship levy transfers - West Sussex County Council](#) on the Council's website. Anyone interested in becoming an apprentice at West Sussex Council can also visit the website for more information and to search for current opportunities.

District Cllr Kasia Greenwood sent the following report in her absence:

1. **February Local Plan** As you are aware, the consultation period for the Local Plan, otherwise known as Regulation 19, is now open and will run until Friday 1 March. I have been advised that we have been experiencing some technical problems at HDC, which has meant that some members of the public have been unable to access the online portal to provide their feedback on the plan. The IT department is working hard, looking into these problems and trying to rectify them as soon as possible. If you do encounter difficulties, please do report them and bear with us as we work on a resolution. We have been asked whether the consultation period may be extended to allow adequate time for further feedback and we are taking advice on that.
2. **Crackdown on Littering** Horsham District Council is working in collaboration with Sussex Police, the Environment Agency and West Sussex County Council carry out a major crackdown on highways littering in the Horsham District. The appearance of litter on roadsides is a blight on our environment and its clearance currently costs local taxpayers thousands of pounds a year. The Council and its partners have hosted enforcement days on local roads where they had previously witnessed litter and fly-tipping as a severe problem. The targeted unannounced operation days were designed to address drivers who transport controlled waste. In total over 60 vehicles were stopped one operation day, resulting in a number of fixed penalty notice fines. Further unannounced enforcement days are being planned throughout 2024 across different locations. In the past 12 months the Council has issued some 70 litter-related fines. The Council also asks that if road users or members of the public spot offenders littering or fly-tipping they should report incidents to them by going to the Council's website or alternatively supply the Council with Dash Cam footage where possible.
3. **Food Waste Collection** Following the announcement by the Government that mandatory domestic food waste collections are to be introduced nationwide by the end of March 2026, HDC are currently in the process of assessing the costs and options available on how to implement the service.
4. **Health and Wellbeing** February is Heart Month, and Heart UK are encouraging everyone to take action during this month to know and understand their cholesterol levels. You can get your cholesterol tested during an NHS Health Check, which also looks at your overall health to assess your risk of developing heart-related health conditions.

District Cllr Tricia Youtan gave the following report:

1. Tricia said that she will go to see HDC's Head of Planning regarding the issues Sigma Homes are experiencing.
2. Tricia reported that HDC had had a very contentious 4 hour meeting last Wednesday trying to approve HDC's Budget.

25 Highways, Local Traffic and Roads – nothing more to report.

26 Finance – *All payments for approval since 29th January 2024.*

1. There are five payments to be paid

£7.00 to Barns Green Village in respect of the February 2024 Meeting less £9.00 refund from the December invoice.

£28.50 to EE Home Broadband in respect of the Internet Service for February 2024.

£79.99 to McAfee in respect of a two year antivirus protection subscription.

£100.00 to Pete Cochran in respect of Litter Warden duties for February 2024.

£1,252.04 to the Clerk comprising of £1,172.10 salary for February 2024 and £79.94 expenses.

1. Signing of a new Bank Mandate

It was agreed unanimously to add Cllr Ross Dye as a new signatory to the Bank Mandate. Cllr Ross Dye signed the new Bank Mandate.

Action

27 Correspondence

1. A letter was received from Susan Diamantakis asking if she can put 3 or 4 ornamental trees on the verge by the level crossing to try to cut down the noise and lights of vehicles coming down Valewood Lane. It was agreed to suggest to Susan to take her fence up higher and also grow the hedge higher inside her land.

Action

2. The Clerk to also write to WSCC Public Rights of Way regarding the broken gate that leads from Finians Field out onto Chapel Road by the level crossing as it is a safety issue.

Action

28 Any other business – items to be advised before the meeting.

1. Cllr Sarah Peay reported that there has been a huge amount of fencing going up at Kingfisher Farm over the last few weeks. It was agreed no action to be taken at the present time.
2. Simon Smith said he would like to just let the Parish Council know that he will shortly be felling lots of trees at Sumners Ponds due to Ash dieback. Cllr Sarah Peay suggested that Simon put something in the BIG MAG.

29 Date of Next Meeting – Monday 25th March 2024. There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.25pm.