

ICKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM ON 4TH MAY 2021 AT 7.15

Present: Cllrs. Mrs. C Merricks, I. McConnachie, A. Moore, Mrs J Stanford, H. Sutton, S. Tollett, P. Turner (Chairman) and N. Warren

Cllr. Turner announced the recent resignations of Mrs. Jane Austen and Mr. David Smedley.

21/80 Election of chairman Cllr. Peter Turner was elected Chairman for the coming year. The Chairman will sign an acceptance on 5th May in the presence of Cllr. Mrs. Stanford.

21/81 Election of vice chairman Cllr. Nick Warren was elected Vice-Chairman.

21/82 Public Questions Mr. Clark of Winchelsea asked what was happening regarding Public Works Loan on the traffic calming item 11. The Chairman confirmed the council had received confirmation that the extension has been granted to the loan. Jane Taylor Winchelsea asked what arrangements would be put in place to progress the traffic calming study. The bids need to be assessed and CVs of working group need to be dealt with. She was concerned that extra time and resource burden was to be taken by the clerk. The Chairman explained that until the parish has a new clerk we cannot proceed at present, and that he had received applications for the working group. Mr. Justice asked for confirmation on the loan and it was an acceptance or just an extension before applying for it. Chairman confirmed that it was an extension available to draw the loan down and spend it before end of current financial year end of March 2022. Mr. Rutman of Winchelsea raised his concerns regarding appointing clerks in an emergency and that there had been no movement on employing a locum or a new clerk. Chairman explained that there was nothing to stop any parish council from appointing a member of the council to this role on an unpaid temporary basis. Mr. Rutman then raised concern over councillors' resignations which he felt must be an embarrassment for the remaining councillors and whether the council could conduct its business on behalf of the community. The Chairman explained that there were more than enough councillors to run the Council and if that were not the case the District Council would have stepped in and appointed councillors. Mr. Rutman asked why there had been so many resignations and the Chairman explained it would be inappropriate at this stage to comment **because of the election taking place two days later.**

Cllr Warren reminded the meeting that one loss was not through resignation, but non-attendance at meetings and was therefore disqualified.

21/83 Apologies for absence.

None received. All present.

Cllr. Mrs. Merricks asked for confirmation of who was clerking and taking the Minutes of the meeting. Chairman confirmed that Cllr. Mrs Stanford had agreed to take the Minutes and Cllr. Warren confirmed that he was recording the meeting.

21/84 Disclosure of Interests – None declared.

21/85 Minutes. No amendments to 29th March 2021 Minutes. **It was resolved to approve the minutes.**

Matters Requiring a Decision by the Council

21/86 Vacant seats: -

(a) Chairman confirmed that four applications were received, but Brian Leonard had since withdrawn leaving.

1. James Justice
2. Alexander Justice
3. Rob Brown

All candidates gave brief biography and background to their applications. **Following two votes Mr. James Justice was duly elected to Rye Harbour Ward.**

The other candidates were urged to consider re-applying for the future seats becoming available. Cllr. Mrs. Merricks abstained from the second vote. Cllr. Justice confirmed acceptance of office. Cllr. Mrs. Stanford asked for confirmation that candidates 2 and 3 applications could be used for the other seats. Chairman confirmed fresh election and Cllr Mrs. Stanford urged them to reapply for those seats.

(b) Chairman confirmed there had been a delay with Rother, but Council could now go forward and advertise the vacancy for co-option.

(c) The resignations of Mrs Bradley of Icklesham Ward, Mrs. Jane Austen of Icklesham Ward, and Mr David Smedley of Winchelsea Ward were noted.

21/87 Working Group. Report from the Administration Working Group on matters to be considered before authorising the Staffing Committee to proceed with appointing a new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

a) No amendment to Minutes of the meeting held on 8th April 2021.

b) Terms of reference for that group:

To review the whole administrative process of the parish council (to include policies, staffing and social media) and make recommendations to full council . Resolved that they be agreed.

c) Adoption of a civility policy to be displayed prominently on the Council's website. **"Icklesham Parish Council has a zero-tolerance policy on bullying, and harassment therefore residents making an approach to the Clerks, or Councillors, should show civility when doing so, otherwise enquiries and requests will be reported to the Chairman of the Parish Council and ignored. Bullying, intimidation and harassment will not be tolerated."** Cllr. Mrs. Stanford explained that this was the result of the exit interview with Claire Dyer the previous Clerk that she and Cllr Tollett had conducted where she had reported abusive emails and telephone calls from residents. NALC are considering this policy for all Parish Councils. **Resolved it be adopted.**

d) Discussion regarding adopting the full list of the latest NALC policies now so that our website can be updated, and they are all in place before we appoint any new staff, and that these policies can be amended if needs be in the future. **Resolved they be adopted.**

e) 1. Proposal to adopt the latest NALC Standing Orders with following amendment:

Page 8 Standing Order 3 (x) Chairman asked for clarification on length of meetings. It was agreed 2 hours as there was the option to suspend Standing Orders to allow a meeting to run over. Unanimously adopted.

2. Adoption of new Financial Regulations. Cllr Tollett opposed setting up an independent Finance Committee. Chairman asked whether the full council should meet to discuss the financial issues rather than just dealing bi-monthly. All councillors would be part of that, but just meet to deal with financial issues as part of our Committee cycle rather than have a full meeting.

Cllr N. Warren asked for clarification that this would just be meeting in the interim in between full council meetings i.e. six full council and six finance committee meetings per year. It was agreed that dealing with finances monthly would assist a new RFO.

Page 8 on banking arrangements seeking credit references in respect of members or employees who act as signatories. Cllr. Warren said credit references were a waste of time and that a credit search could be carried out if needed, so It was agreed that this be deleted.

Page 9 para 6.4 cheques signatories two members of the Council, but also option to be countersigned by Clerk. It was agreed that it would be two signatures on a cheque and delete being countersigned by Clerk.

Item 6.15 online banking that the Clerk to appointed service administrator. It was agreed that this should read RFO.

Page 11 Changes to account details for suppliers: Hard copies required as authority of change to be signed two signatories i.e., RFO and member. This was agreed.

6.21 regarding petty cash to officers. Cllr Mrs Stanford raised concern that expenses had been paid in the past without the Chairman signing these off and this needed to change in the future. It was agreed that 6.21 be deleted regarding petty cash.

Page 16 payments under contract for building or construction works, stores and equipment. It was agreed that this should be deleted.

Page 17 Charities. It was agreed that as we were no longer trustees of any charities this could be deleted. **Resolved that subject to the amendments the Regulations be adopted.**

- (f) The adoption of a new NALC Performance Improvement Policy and Procedure. Unanimously adopted.

Cllr. Mrs. Stanford for the Minutes sought confirmation that the Chairman would now sign and date these new Policies and that they could be uploaded to the website. The Chairman confirmed he would make the amendments just agreed, sign and date and scan to Cllr. Mrs. Stanford then they would be uploaded to website.

- (g) It was agreed that Council would review the terms of reference (TOR) for committees at the next meeting to ensure they fit with our new adopted Standing Orders to allow a report to be prepared by the Administration Working Group.

- (h) New committees/working groups. Cllr Nick Warren reminded the meeting that the Planning Committee meets every two weeks and that it was important to select the Planning Committee immediately to deal with planning issues. Cllr Mrs. Stanford suggested that the Planning Committee stays as is and asked Cllr J justice to take ex Cllr Lyward' s seat. **This was deferred to Item 10.**

21/88 Resignation. The resignation of the Deputy Clerk was noted. Cllr Mrs. Merricks asked for it to be Minuted thanking the Deputy Clerk for her 16 years of service.

- a) To appoint a Councillor to act as a temporary Responsible Financial Officer in accordance with Standing Order 16. Cllr. Mrs. Stanford proposed that possibly Cllr N. Warren would take on this role as Vice Chairman. Cllr. Mrs. Merricks said it was incorrect to quote SO 15 and 16 and whilst she was happy for a councillor to be appointed as temporary officer, she asked why nothing had been done to appoint a locum. Cllr. Mrs. Stanford reported to the Council that it was the Monitoring Officer who had confirmed that it is acceptable in the interim to appoint a councillor especially as there were many things to sort out and put in place before a new Clerk is appointed as we will have the same problems as in the past. Cllr Mrs. Merricks reiterated her question regarding employing a locum. The Chairman confirmed that we needed to have this meeting to have the authority to do so. Cllr N. Warren confirmed that due to commitments he was unable to take on the role as RFO and that we should employ a locum. Cllr Warren proposed we employ a locum and Cllr Mrs. Merrick seconded. Cllr Tollett raised the question of cost because his understanding was that it would be very costly. **It was unanimously agreed that a locum would be sought. Chairman confirmed he would contact E SALC and report back to Staffing Committee.**
- b) Appoint a Councillor to act as a temporary Clerk and Proper Officer in accordance with Standing Order 15. No longer relevant
- c) Councillors elected to act under a) and b) above will act unpaid – No longer relevant.
- d) Appointment of a full-time Clerk in place of the two part-time posts as at present. Cllr. Warren believed that having two clerks had been a problem and that it was better to have control under one person on a full-time basis. **The proposal was carried** Cllr Tollett against proposal.

21/89 Appointment of Committees.

On a temporary basis bearing in mind that we will have new councillors soon and then we can review again.

Planning Committee — Cllrs. N. Warren, P. Turner, T. Moore, Mrs. Stanford, and J. Justice. **Agreed.**

Staffing Committee — Cllrs. Mrs. Stanford, Tollett, P Turner, I. McConnachie + 1. Unanimously agreed.

TO BE DEALT WITH AT A LATER DATE

Open Spaces Committee — five councillors plus the chairman and vice chairman ex-officio

Neighbourhood Plan and Affordable Housing Working Group — all councillors

Allotments Committee — five councillors and four site representatives.

21/90 Working Groups. Council is recommended to defer the appointment of working groups to the next meeting. Cllr Mrs. Stanford suggested Administration Working Group continue as Council needed to continue sorting out documentation etc.

Discussion took place regarding Winchelsea Traffic Calming Working Group. Cllr Tollett proposed Cllr Justice be appointed to the group, seconded by Cllr. Moore. **Unanimously agreed.**

(COUNCILLOR MERRICKS LEFT THE MEETING)

21/91 Appointments to External Bodies and groups:

Cllr Tollett proposed everyone continue in their roles en bloc if they wish to **unanimously agreed.**

Rye Partnership — Cllr P Turner and give him authority to nominate another councillor to attend in his absence.

Rother Association of Local Councils — Cllr P Turner and Vice-Chair Cllr N Warren and in their absence the Clerk attends in a non-voting capacity and reports back.

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve — Cllr Mrs. Merricks and can vote as she considers proper at meetings.

Rye Harbour Village Hall Committee — Cllr. Mrs. Stanford.

Winchelsea Little Shop Association — Chairman Cllr P. Turner giving him authority to nominate another councillor to attend in his absence, the Council's representative being able to vote as he or she considers proper at meetings.

Harbour of Rye Advisory Committee — Cllr Mrs. Stanford and she can vote as she considers proper at meetings although individual councillors cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council.

ESALC — Chairman Cllr P Turner and Vice Cllr N Warren (subject to his availability) the representatives can speak and vote as they consider proper at meetings. Continuing to meet on Zoom.

21/92 Membership of External Bodies. Council reviewed its membership of the following bodies:

- a. East Sussex Association of Local Councils at an annual cost of £2711.52 **Agreed.**
- b. National Association of Local councils at an annual cost of £156.65 **Agreed.**
- c. Action in Rural Sussex at an annual cost of £50.00 approx. **Agreed**
- d. Rother Association of Local Councils at an annual cost of £90 approx. **Agreed**
- e. Society of Local Council Clerks (subscription for Clerk) at an annual cost of £150 approx Hold in abeyance until new clerk.
- f. South East Employers at an annual cost of £248.40 including VAT. **Agreed**

21/93 Review of Governance Documents.

- a. standing orders — (Item 10) **Already dealt with**
- b. financial regulations (Item 10) **Already dealt with**

- c. inventory of and assets including asset policy — Committees should review these at their next meeting. Chairman confirmed there is an electronic copy which he does not have access to at present. **Agreed to review.**
- d. insurance arrangements: **Chairman to check we are still covered.**
- e. complaints procedures These have been adopted within the NALC policies under 8(d) above.
- f. disciplinary and grievance procedures **Adopted under 8(d) above.**
- g. requests under the Freedom of Information Act: **To be reviewed.**
- h. press/media policy: **To be reviewed.**
- i. email policy Chairman noted this is not on website. Cllr Mrs. Stanford confirmed that we did have this because she had drafted it and it had been adopted previously. She raised her concern that recently she had found this Policy and that someone had added a Correspondence Policy to it which had never been agreed by Council. **To be reviewed.**
- j. financial risk assessment **To be reviewed.**
- k. safeguarding policy: **To be reviewed**
- i equality impact assessment **To be reviewed.**
- m. dates and venues of ordinary meetings: Needs to be reviewed and venues organised.
- n. data protection policy **To be reviewed.**

It was proposed that item c be referred to the relevant committees and items d – n referred to the Administration Working Group. **Unanimously agreed.**

21/94 Appointment of the Internal Auditor.

The Clerk recommends the re-appointment of Mr Keith Robertson as its internal auditor for the next year. **Unanimously agreed.**

21/95 Approval of the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21; Council is asked to approve the Annual Governance Statement, to review the system of internal controls and preparation of accounting statements. This was not available at present and Auditor confirmed an extension of time would be granted if needed.

21/96 Financial Matters — to consider the approval of the following:

- a. Receipts and payments report up until 30th April 2021. Not available as Deputy Clerk off sick.
- b. To approve items for payment for May 2021 and those paid since the March meeting. Chairman confirmed that everything for April had gone through the bank. One item missing which was the DD to EE for telephone for £28.07 had also gone through. Additional figures for April for receipt a refund of £581.51 from HMRC (VAT?). Income from Rye Harbour Car Park £1,073.06. Allotment rents £743.50, there is still one cheque to bank, but it is incorrect and needs to go back to tenant. Half year's precept came in £56,807.50 so in total £59,285.57 came into bank account during April. Two additional invoices received from Mark Saunters to be paid for monthly bin collection £400 and maintenance check £65 and 5 days mowing and strimming £600 and Smeaton's Lane £1,650. Proposed payment Cllr Warren seconded Cllr Tollett. **Unanimously carried.**
- c. **Bank reconciliations** for the end of the financial year — the Clerk seeks a Councillor who is not a signatory to conduct the final quarter end of year reconciliation. Cllr Warren confirmed that he had done two quarters, but the information needs to be provided by Deputy Clerk.
- d. To approve the list of regular payments — please note that all payments will be presented for scrutiny at ordinary meetings. Cllr Turner confirmed there is a standing order for Deputy Clerk which needs to be cancelled. Cllr Mrs. Stanford asked whether the Chairman had spoken to the Bank Manager yet about the changes to council. Cllr Turner said that he was being sent several forms but without an RFO and now only one signatory there would be a problem. Cllr Mrs. Stanford raised the problems with the signatories and the fact that these changes had taken place to the signatories without the Chairman and Council's knowledge. Cllr Moore had been removed without discussion, Cllr Bradley had been assigned without Council's knowledge and we now only have just Cllr. Mrs. Merricks and Cllr Smedley as signatories and now Cllr Smedley has resigned. Cllr Warren reported back that ex Cllr Smedley had very kindly offered to sign still so Cllr Warren proposed that he type up an authority to cancel the Standing Order to the Deputy Clerk and get the two signatories. Cllr Stanford questioned asking an ex-councillor to sign but it was felt it would be irresponsible not to try and stop the Standing Order. Cllr Warren felt it was important to get these signatories on any new bank mandate to move things forward. **Unanimously agreed.**

e. To review the councillor bank signatories: Six councillors as authorised signatories: Cllrs. Warren, Mrs. Stanford, Moore, McConnachie, Justice and Turner. Cllr. Turner explained that there had also been a change of address to the bank and our PO Box without our knowledge and it is now useless because it was based in Hastings. It was agreed that we should cancel the Hastings PO box and open one for Rye so that they will deliver to Icklesham Parish Council. **Unanimously agreed.**

- f. To consider the grant application from Rev Jonathan Meyer on behalf of Winchelsea Parochial Church Council. in the sum of £1800 for the maintenance of St Richards churchyard and St Thomas's churchyard. **Unanimous.**

Standing orders suspended to finish meeting. Two hours having been exceeded.

- 21/97 To consider setting up a Finance Committee** consisting of all councillors to meet monthly to approve payments and deal with financial matters. This would provide better support to a new Clerk and RFO. Cllr Warren proposed all councillors meet bi-monthly. **Unanimously agreed.**

Matters for Information or Noting

- 21/98 Programme of Works for April.** Updated list will be tabled if available. Council is asked to note progress. No list available as Deputy Clerk sick
- 21/99 Report back from Planning Committee.** Minutes of the meetings have been circulated. Cllr Warren reported he is monitoring all planning matters and is providing Minutes of meetings. Cllr Stanford gave a vote of thanks to Cllr Warren for fast and efficient Minutes. If applications come in for comment they will be sent to committee members for email comment and vote by email.
- 21/100 Correspondence.** Late received correspondence will be tabled. Letter of complaint from Mrs Jared re the poor condition of the hazard strip on the step in the gentleman's toilet at Rye Harbour. It was agreed that Cllr Warren will repaint step with hazard paint.
- 21/101 Reports of Councillors and Officers on Outside Bodies and Attending Events.** To receive any reports verbally.
- 21/102 Future meetings or events** — all to advise of future attendance at meetings. Cllr Turner continues to attend RALC and SALC and is on the board of ESALC.
- 21/103 Date and venue for next meeting.** The next full council meeting is scheduled for Monday 12th July 2021, venue subject to confirmation, commencing at 7:15pm.