



ALDWICK PARISH COUNCIL

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Chairman: Cllr Richard Gotheridge **Clerk:** Heather Knight

Minutes of the **ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING (457) OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**
Held on **Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at 7.15pm** in the Aldwick Parish Council Office.

Present: Cllrs Gotheridge (Chairman), Bence (from Min. 141.4), Patel, Purser, Rufey, Shepherd and Thas.
In attendance: H Knight (Clerk), Mr S Hill (WSCC Parish & Community Engagement Co-ordinator) (*part of meeting*) and 1 member of the public.

The meeting opened at 7.15pm.

132. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received, and reasons given approved, from Cllrs Bence (commitment to another parish/resident meeting) and Huntley (personal). *Cllr Bence subsequently joined the meeting at Min. 141.4.*

133. Declarations of Interest

None were made.

134. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Council Meeting of 18th December 2023

It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th December 2023 were a correct record and that the Chairman sign them.

135. Clerk's Report and Actions

There was no Clerk's report, since matters arising and actions were agenda items for this meeting.

136. Any such matters as the Chairman may wish to bring to the of the Committee for information only

The Chairman advised that he would be looking to step back from the role at the Annual Council Meeting and urged Members to think about a replacement chairman.

137. Adjournment for public questions

There were no public questions offered. The Chairman welcomed Steve Hill, WSCC Parish & Community Engagement Co-ordinator, to the meeting. Mr Hill had been invited following his recent introduction to parish/town clerks forums, and had already held a joint meeting with the Clerk and the Clerk of Pagham Parish Council.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7.19pm.

During the adjournment, Mr Hill explained the objectives of his role, which is to provide better communications between WSCC Highways, Transport & Planning with other bodies including parishes, and to act as a point of contact. He will assist where possible with trying to resolve some issues. As well as using the WSCC online reporting tool, public can email him at: active.communities@westsussex.gov.uk.

Members discussed with Mr Hill the sense of isolation from WSCC, particularly in relation to the planning process. There was frustration over the impact on local roads from development of circa 3.5 thousand houses in the broader vicinity over the past few years with no engagement from WSCC at planning and steering group meetings; Serious road deterioration/flooding issues were a major issue, the winter 2022 closure of Lower Bognor Road and Pagham Road being an example of lack of strategic thinking. Another example cited was development and proposed new spine road at Bersted impacting on the already over capacity Chalcraft Lane/Royal Oak PH junction but WSCC Highways stating that traffic re-modelling was unnecessary.

Following a query about a potential Community Highways Scheme for a Rose Green school crossing, for which a public questionnaire had been undertaken by APC and report being prepared, Mr Hill confirmed that the process is to evidence community and county member support and then submit a request to WSCC for assessment. He agreed to find out more clarity on the scoring process.

Members spoke positively about WSCC's recent pothole remedial works.

Mr Hill's intention is to get parish councils slotted into WSCC communications in a better way; He emphasized the importance of using county members too. He advised that much of the discussion tonight, including parishes needing an understanding of WSCC internal structure and contacts, had also been captured through his meetings with clerks. He spoke about the WSCC Social Value Programme, which can utilise WSCC contractors to implement community projects. This had unfortunately been delayed in bringing forward due to resourcing following the recent spate of severe weather. All site assessments were now postponed to at least mid-April. In closing, he said that he would be happy to attend future meetings and to bring a relevant professional officer along.

The Chairman and Members thanked Mr Hill for his time, and Mr Hill left the meeting.

The Meeting reconvened at 7.55pm.

138. To receive reports from the District and County Councillors representing Aldwick

Apologies had been received from D.Cllr Needs and D.Cllr Bence.

D.Cllr Purser reported that Arun DC budgets were in the process of being agreed, and that the consultation on the ADC Direction of Travel Document (Local Plan) had been extended.

C.Cllr Patel reported that the WSCC budget had been announced. There is a financial shortage and reserves were to be utilised, however there was no council tax increase. A new partnership worth £8.3b across the county meant additional access to specialist 'one stop' pothole equipment that reduced the need for road closures. WSCC had launched its 'Become A Councillor' campaign ahead of the May elections: Various information drop-ins will be available at libraries and on 18th June at County Hall.

139. To receive Committee meeting Minutes

The draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 9th January 2024 were received and noted.

140. Amenities (roads, PROW/footpaths and general maintenance of the parish).

140.1 Public Benches:

The Clerk's report on three ongoing public seats issues was noted.

It had previously been anticipated that Bench 1 would have a site visit in January to assess it for inclusion in the WSCC Social Value programme. However, Mr Hill had now reported that unfortunately no assessment visits would take place until mid to late April. Members were asked to decide whether they still wished to proceed with purchasing a replacement seat and store it whilst awaiting the WSCC assessment.

Members then discussed all three benches together, Benches 2 and 3 needing a decision on whether to repair, replace, or wait to see if these would also be eligible for the WSCC Social Value Programme. It was noted that the current budget line (Open Spaces Improvements) was already overspent due to participation in the WSCC tree planting scheme and purchase of other replacement benches. It was **RESOLVED** that:

- Bench 1 would still be put forward for the WSCC Social Value Programme but no seat ordered yet;
- The Clerk would meantime seek several comparison quotations for repair or replacement of all three benches, including contractors used by WSCC, for further consideration in new budget;
- C.Cllr Patel would pursue via WSCC whether they will undertake work for these 3 benches.

141. Finance

141.1 To consider request from Arun DC for financial contribution towards refurbishment of West Meads recreation ground public toilets

The Clerk's report was noted. Arun DC had been contacted for updates on public toilet opening hours and any ASB issues relating to Avisford Park and West Meads recreation ground toilets. In responding, the officer had asked whether the Parish Council might consider a financial contribution to their planned refurbishment of the West Meads sports pavilion changing rooms/toilets. The Clerk advised members on possible budget scenarios.

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to advise Arun DC that on this occasion the Parish Council could not contribute but might have been able to budget for it had information been available earlier. Additionally, it would be conveyed that if any similar projects are being planned to contact the Parish Council as soon as possible for early engagement.

141.2 Members' Allowances Scheme – Basic Parish Allowance

The Clerk's report was noted. Arun DC had advised that the Independent Remuneration Panel had set an increase of 5.72% on the Arun DC Members' Allowance, backdated to 1st April 2023, which Parish Councils should consider and, if wished, implement. The Independent Remuneration Panel recommendation for 2023-24 had been for the Basic Parish Allowance to be set at 10% of the Arun DC Members' Allowance. Parish/town councils must have regard to the recommendation but can set the amount they wish.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the current Aldwick Parish Council Members' Allowance would remain unchanged for this financial year, with no backdated amount applied, but that the 5.72% increase would be implemented in the new financial year, together with an adjustment to bring the Aldwick PC Members' Allowance in line with 10% of the Arun DC Members' Allowance. This would set the new Aldwick Members' Allowance at £637 for elected councillors from 1st April 2024 (subject to PAYE deductions where applicable) and necessitate a small increase to the budget (see Min. 141.5).

141.3 Members' Allowances Scheme – Chairman's Allowance

Members noted the Clerk's report looking into the setting of a Chairman's Allowance. The Clerk had not been able to ascertain a reason for this not having been resolved to adopt or to be paid in May 2023, but Council had subsequently so resolved in December (Min. 127.2 refers). The matter was now resting with the Chairman as to whether he wished to receive it or not. Members agreed that it was important to include the provision for a Chairman's Allowance for future chairmen.

Cllr Bence joined the meeting.

141.4 Financial reports to Q2 30/09/23:

Members received bank reconciliations for Cashbooks 1, 2 and 3 to 31st December 2023. Members received a finalised Income & Expenditure compared to budget for Q2 to 30th September 2023, as the accounts data input and transfer to Rialtas software had been caught up. Members received the Income & Expenditure Compared to Budget for Q3 to 31st December 2023. Members discussed the I&E Q3 report and the Clerk highlighted notable budgetary variances: Code 4410 Open Public Spaces Improvements budget line is overspent following allocation of the WSCC tree planting scheme and various bench replacements during the year; Code 4020 Employers NI is overspent so has possibly been underbudgeted; Code 4120 Stationery is overspent, as several printer cartridges had been required consecutively; the Clerk had reduced ordering to essential items only. The majority of codes/budget lines were in line with budget and running as expected as the year end approaches.

141.5 Draft Budget V4 2024/25:

Members considered a further budget draft V4.1a which included the Chairman's Allowance of £600, and an increased figure for Members' Allowance incorporating the revised £637 each for three elected Members at 10% of the current Arun DC Members' Allowance. The December Council meeting had noted that a potential reduction on the public toilets contribution to Arun DC may be possible, but the Clerk had subsequently clarified a misunderstanding on her part, so there was no saving to be made.

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Budget V4.1a for the financial year 2024-25 without further amendment, and **RESOLVED** to approve the resulting precept requirement of £114,424. This equates to a Band D rate of £21.52 per annum, an increase on the previous year of £3.78 or 7p per week.

141.6 List of Payments for Authorisation: Members received and **RESOLVED** to approve the payments, as shown below, and that the payment schedule be duly signed.

Barclaycard Commercial (paid phone 22.12.23)	£	227.28
Zen (paid DD 27.12.23)	£	59.81
Castle Water (paid DD 28.12.23)	£	35.12
Barclays Bank (paid DD 09.01.24)	£	2.50
Heather Knight (paid chq 08.01.24)	£	1,833.36
HMRC (paid phone 08.01.24)	£	596.79
Nest Pension (paid DD 10.01.24)	£	129.08
Octopus Energy(paid DD 08.01.24)	£	418.38
Willowhale Community Association (paid)	£	35.00
Zen Internet (due 25.01.24)	£	67.61
Barclaycard Commercial (due 29.01.24)	£	178.26
Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	£	300.00
Chichester Payroll Services	£	15.00
Sussex Views Magazine	£	120.00
David Chaffe (ProcessMatters2)	£	170.00

141.7 To note plans for Fraud Awareness presentation by Arun West Community Wardens and to consider waiving hall hire

The Clerk advised that the Arun West Community Wardens were planning a Fraud Awareness presentation in February or March for residents and had approached the Clerk regarding potential Aldwick venues. The APC council chamber was available and the Clerk sought Members' views on whether this should be charged. Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that no room hire charge would be levied for this community benefit event.

142. Representatives to External Bodies: Members noted brief reports of representation at external meetings and details of forthcoming meetings as follows:

There were no reports received.

CLr Purser advised that the Bathing Water Quality group were due to meet in early February, from which he would report back.

143. Questions to the Chairman or Clerk previously submitted in writing.

None received.

144. Correspondence.

Details were noted, attached as Appendix 1.

145. Date and time of next Council Meeting: Tuesday 20th February 2024 at approximately 7.15pm (preceded by short Planning Committee at 7.00pm)

The meeting closed at 8.53pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATED

CORRESPONDENCE LIST FOR COUNCIL MEETING 23.01.24

West Sussex County Council (WSSC)

Member Information Bulletins 04.01.24, 11.01.24 and 18.01.24 (*forwarded to Cllrs*)

Arun District Council (ADC)

Arun Business Partnership January 2024 Newsletter

NALC

CEO Bulletins 11.01.24 and 18.01.24 and Chairman's Open Letter to All Councillors 10.01.24 (*forwarded to Cllrs*)

Sussex Police

Fraud Newsletter 19.01.24

P&CC e-newsletter 19.01.24 – 101 waiting time improvements

Neighbourhood Watch

Sussex Alerts 08.01.24 – January 2024 edition of Our News

West Sussex Mind

News update January 2024

Publications

Clerks & Councils Direct January 2024, issue 151