



ALDWICK PARISH COUNCIL

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Chair: Cllr Guy Purser **Clerk:** Heather Knight

Minutes of the **ORDINARY MEETING (463) OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**
Held on **Tuesday 24th September 2024 at 7.15pm** in the Aldwick Parish Council Office.

Present: Cllrs Purser (Chair), Basford, Buckley, Gotheridge, Huntley, Rufey, and Shepherd

In attendance: H Knight (Clerk) and 2 members of the public (part of meeting)

The meeting opened at 7.15pm.

65. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received, and reasons approved, from Cllr Bence (personal), Cllr Thas (personal) and Cllr Patel (personal).

66. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Huntley declared an interest in agenda item 5 as a member of Aldwick Baptist Church, representatives of whom were to address Council during the public participation item.

67. Minutes of the Council Meeting held 23rd July 2024

It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 23rd July 2024 were a correct record and that the Chair sign them.

Clerk's Report

- Min. 54, 23.07.24: As suggested, the Chair had arranged a family condolence card and charity donation from his Chair's Allowance, in commemoration of Pat Dillon.
- Min. 59, 23.07.24: The order for trees from WSCC had been placed, further update on planting dates was awaited.
- A number of enquiries had been made from public and councillors regarding three tents that had been inhabited for several months in the High Trees/Dark Lane area. D.Cllr Bence had been involved in action to remove them and the Clerk had also been liaising with Arun District Council Community Safety Officer and StreetLink (homeless outreach service): An update today from ADC had advised that the tents were now unoccupied, and plans were in place to remove the tents and contents as soon as possible once final required checks had been completed.
- Following an alert by residents, the Clerk had collected the commemorative plaque for Lt. Prior, which had fallen off the wall at Dark Lane beach entrance. It seemed that the fixings had rusted and a check on the site wall condition was awaited from Cllr Patel.
- Other examples of enquires dealt with included an issue with driving on/parking on verges at St Peter's Close, a missing road sign at the Aldwick Road/Chalcraft Lane area, and a caravan being used as permanent habitation in a front garden. Residents had been signposted to relevant authorities or district ward member where appropriate.
- The recent Code of Conduct training by Arun DC Monitoring Officer had been attended by Cllrs Gotheridge and Thas and the Clerk, together with councillors and a clerk from several other Arun area parishes. The evening had been useful and the presentation slides are available for those unable to attend.

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

None reported.

69. Adjournment for public questions

The Chair welcomed two representatives (Deacon and Secretary) from Aldwick Baptist Church, who had asked to give a short presentation, and invited them to address the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.23pm. A handout and presentation was given by Aldwick Baptist Church representatives, who explained the church work in the community and aspirations for growth in providing a community resource. As a result, plans were in progress to improve and upgrade external areas at the church and a grant aid application had been made to the Council. The purpose of the presentation was to introduce themselves, give context to the project and application, and explore ways of future working in partnership with the Council for the community. The Chair thanked them for their presentation and offered to visit a church activity.

The meeting reconvened at 7.33pm.

70. Reports from the District and County Councillors representing Aldwick

D.Cllr Dawn Hall had sent apologies due to a conflicting meeting.

D.Cllr Purser reported on attendance with D.Cllr Bence at the recent West Meads Residents Association AGM. Following the recent unauthorised traveller encampments, he and D.Cllr Bence had also undertaken an asset 'walkabout' with ADC officers to review security of the various parks within Aldwick. A significant budget had subsequently been made available to improve security, with works taking place as soon as possible.

D.Cllr Purser reported on attendance at the Bathing Water Quality Partnership meeting. A good deal of work had been done by Southern Water to secure faulty sewers and drainage. A spike in contamination readings for July was being examined. Unfortunately, as previously reported, although the actual bathing water quality this year is likely to be good, a bad spike two years ago results in a poor result overall due to the data being measured over a four year period.

In the absence of a County Concillor report, Members discussed briefly the current footpath renewal work taking place around Aldwick, which seemed low priority compared with other areas not being dealt with, and also on the poor quality of road repairs that had recently been undertaken.

71. Committee Meeting Minutes

71.1 The Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 23rd July, 6th August and 3rd September 2024 were received and noted.

71.2 The Minutes of the Staffing committee meetings held on 6th August and 3rd September 2024 were received and noted. Members were updated on the current stage of recruitment of an Assistant Clerk.

72. External Audit – Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for Year End 31st March 2024

The Clerk reported on the conclusion of the external audit by Moore, Members having considered and noted the signed External Audit Report and Certificate. A minor administrative point had been made in their cover letter for future reference, and comment had been made in the External Auditor's Report on a matter relating to the Internal Auditor's report. However, the findings of the Report and Certificate confirmed that following review of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR the information provided by the Council was in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. The Clerk advised that the Notice of Conclusion of External Audit had been published as required. Members thanked the Clerk for the work and time spent on the process.

73. Finance

73.1 Members received bank reconciliations and the Income & Expenditure report for Cashbooks 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for Q1 ending 30th June 2024, and bank reconciliations for Cashbooks 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for July 2024. The Clerk reported that the August bank reconciliations and report were not yet available owing solely to a query on Cashbook 5 (credit card) recording and would be forwarded as soon as possible, for formal noting at the next meeting. It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair sign the bank reconciliations and agreement to bank statements.

Members received an Earmarked Reserves (EMR) report to date, which showed the previously agreed payment of elections expenses from EMR 322 Elections.

73.2 The Clerk reported that there was no Payments List and expenditure items would be rolled over to the next meeting for formal approval.

73.3 Members noted that the first precept instalment of £57,212.00 had been received from Arun DC in September.

The Clerk reported that due to the issues in running two different accounting systems concurrently over the past few months, late VAT submissions had resulted in penalty points by HMRC. Notice had now been received that a fine of £200 was due. The Clerk had appealed this on the grounds of technical issues and HMRC review was awaited.

73.4 Members considered the Clerk's Report regarding the necessary purchase of a new copier/printer following the failure over several months of existing equipment and having to use personal /home supplies and equipment. In liaison with the Chair, and under permitted delegated authority, urgent replacement had been arranged, with outright purchase (not leased) and a service level agreement put in place. The SLA was for a 12 month rolling period and could be ended in the future. It was **RESOLVED** to ratify the following:

- Outright purchase of a Toshiba e-Studio 339CS at a cost of £750.000 (exc. VAT) plus the Toshiba one-off set up fee of £29.99, purchased from Copiers&Printers.co.uk (Gold Standard Documents Ltd);
- Commencement of a 12 month service agreement, payable quarterly by variable direct debit at a cost of £5 per month, plus actual printing costs per sheet as per schedule;
- Disposal of the redundant Xerox Versalink C600 by Pronetic Ltd at a cost of £30.00 (exc. VAT).

73.5 Members considered the advice from the IT contractor that existing router equipment was now end of life, being over 5years old, and should be replaced, together with their quotation for £394.76 (exc. VAT). It was **RESOLVED** to approve the quotation for purchase and installation of the new equipment from Pronetic Ltd.

74. Amenities

74.1 Summer Play Scheme

Members noted the report by Cllr Buckley, who had observed a number of the play sessions and spoken with both the provider and public attending. Other councillors commented on their attendance and observations. The Clerk had asked through the forthcoming October newsletter for public feedback. Members discussed the merits and disadvantages of the Play Rangers scheme, including what it delivers versus cost. It was unfortunate that the inflatable equipment had for a second year caused licence difficulties and been refused permission by Arun DC, and that the play scheme provider had again been unable to resolve the continued issue.

It was noted that arrangements for next year needed to be put in place very shortly if the Council wishes to secure alternative arrangements, as well as part of imminent budget discussion. The Clerk advised that she had already contacted Freedom Leisure with a view to reserving 4 sessions per week at 2 parks in 2025. The cost of this was significantly less than the previous scheme and would mean that other youth/play offerings could potentially be provided within the same budget. A firm response was awaited. It was **AGREED** to refer the item to the October agenda for further information if available.

74.2 Gardening/Grounds Maintenance – referred from 23.07.24 meeting (Min. 59.2)

Members noted the confidential report by Cllr Basford. Following considerable discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to establish a Grounds Maintenance Working Group to look at the way forward and make recommendations to the Council. The Terms of Reference to be: review existing planters/troughs for repair or replacement; content removal; review of general grounds maintenance needs for all areas under APC care; any interim arrangements for winter planting and maintenance; process of appointing contractors and contractual terms for Spring 2025 onwards. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllrs Basford, Rufey and Huntley to the Working Group, which would meet as soon as possible.

The Clerk reported action taken under delegated authority, in liaison with the Chair, to extend the planter watering service by BRTC /Town Force beyond the original period to the 27th of September latest, whilst prolonged dry conditions continued. This would be within budget allocation. It was **RESOLVED** to ratify the action taken.

The Clerk reported that the Millennium Garden needed grass mowing and border maintenance/weeding, and that the roundabouts maintained by the Council were also in need of attention. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Clerk's delegated authority to arrange for these ad hoc works within the budgeted Grounds Maintenance cost centre.

74.3 Benches

The Clerk was still awaiting any update from WSCC on inclusion of one bench into their Social Value scheme. No new information on costs or potential installers for public seats was available. It was **AGREED** to defer the item to the October meeting.

74.4 Christmas Tree

The Clerk sought Members' decision on proceeding with budgeted arrangements for the annual Christmas tree at Rose Green. Allan Lang forestry could supply either of a 13', 16' or 20' tree. Installation costs were not yet available. Members commented that being able to achieve a tree installation last year having been a positive achievement given previous difficulties, although it had been a smaller tree than in other years due to some of the risk concerns. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Clerk having delegated authority to arrange ordering and installation of the Christmas tree and a 16' tree was agreed, at a cost of £385.00.

74.5 Remembrance Day

The Clerk sought confirmation that Members wished to proceed with budgeted arrangements for the small annual service on Armistice Day. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk proceed with arrangements, the bugler having been provisionally reserved already, and that this year light refreshments would be available in the Parish Council rooms after the service, Cllr Rufey kindly agreeing to provide some cakes.

74.6 Allotments

Cllr Huntley gave a verbal report of the recent inspection she and the Clerk had carried out with the Allotment plot holders' representative. The majority of plots were in good and cultivated condition, some required cultivation work. The Clerk was in the process of contacting some plot holders as necessary. Both the sheds needed repair work, the replacement/repair work last year not having been arranged. Costs for this were awaited.

75. Grant Aid

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllrs Rufey, Basford and Huntley to the Grant Aid Working Party to initially review applications following the 30th September deadline, and make recommendations to Council.

78. Representatives to External Bodies

No reports made, some having been reported under earlier agenda items.

79. Correspondence

A Correspondence List had not been prepared due to time constraints. The Clerk reported that the majority were general circulars from other authorities, some of which had been forwarded to members where of particular interest. Members **AGREED** that in future it was not necessary to provide a regular formal list of all such correspondence and would be left to the Clerk's discretion to circulate or report anything of note or importance under this item.

80. Date and time of next Council Meeting: Tuesday 22nd October 2024 at approximately 7.15pm (preceded by short Planning Committee at 7.00pm). The Chair gave advance apologies for the meeting.

Cllr Basford enquired about the Business Plan Working Group previously appointed. The Clerk would email those appointed with a view to setting up an inaugural meeting as soon as practicable.

The meeting closed at 9.21pm.

CHAIR

DATED