



ALDWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Aldwick Parish Offices, 88 Pryors Lane, Aldwick, West Sussex. PO21 4JF
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Chair: Cllr Guy Purser **Clerk:** Heather Knight

Minutes of the **ORDINARY MEETING (467) OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**
Held on **Tuesday 21st January 2025 at 7.15pm** in the Aldwick Parish Council Office.

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

In attendance: H Knight (Clerk)
1 member of the public

The meeting opened at 7.15pm.

137. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received, and reason approved, from Cllrs Huntley (personal commitment), Shepherd (personal commitment), Bence (County Council commitment) and Patel (personal reason).

138. Declarations of Interest and Changes to Register of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

There were no changes to the Register of Interests made.

139. Minutes of the Council Meeting held 17th December 2024

It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17th December 2024 were a correct record and that the Chair of the meeting sign them.

Clerk's Report

Min. 103/89.4 26.11.24 – Christmas Tree: Final invoices were awaited to enable analysis of the project cost, however the Clerk anticipated an overspend of around £200, as previously indicated to Members, due to issues with the stability of the temporary anchor points. The Clerk was researching options and costs for installing permanent anchor points or an alternative method of tree stabilization for 2025-26 and would report back in due course.

Min. 127, 17.12.24 – Lt. Prior Memorial Plaque: The landowner had now written confirming permission for the council to reinstate the plaque on their wall. The Clerk was investigating costs for a competent contractor to undertake the repairs and reinstatement. The intention is to remount the plaque as soon as possible and then, at a later date, the RNA Bognor Branch would be organising a rededication service.

Financial Regulations (FRs): A numbering error had been identified in the model FRs adopted in 2024, under point 5 Procurement, which under paragraph 5.5 quoted a non-existent paragraph 6.12. This had been amended in the Council's FRs to read 5.12 and NALC had been notified of their error.

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

The Chair reported that he had attended the Mayor of Bognor Regis Town Council's Civic Carol Service on 1st December 2024. He would be attending the forthcoming ADALC meeting on 28th January, which the Vice Chair also hoped to attend.

141. Adjournment for public questions

There were no public speakers.

142. Reports from the District and County Councillors representing Aldwick

D.Cllr Purser reported that D.Cllr Bence had been very involved in resolution of flooding issues affecting the area, mainly impacting Aldwick East Ward. Resultant talks between the District and County Councils and Southern Water had identified some funds available through WSCC to help extend some surface water outfalls that had been backing up with beach stones. Arun DC has cleared these on several

occasions. Discussions continued around longer term solutions and adoption of the pipes, which were not currently the responsibility of any single body.

The Clerk reported that she had circulated to Members on behalf of CCIr Patel the officer response he had received to the recent reporting of poor quality footway repairs undertaken by WSCC contractors (Min.110.2, 26.11.24 refers). The Highways Stewards had checked and confirmed that the work was satisfactory but can look messy until weathered in, however the matter would be kept under review to ensure value for money was being obtained.

Comment was made about a Member's report to the CC ward member regarding recent unmanned roadworks on the Lower Bognor Road causing lengthy traffic delays. However, the works had been removed after a couple of days so had probably been an urgent repair issue.

143. Committee Meeting Minutes

143.1 The Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 17th December 2024 and 7th January 2025 were received and noted.

144. Amenities

144.1 Review of annual allotment rent charges

Members considered the annual rental charge per plot, which at £20 pa had remained unchanged for several years. The Clerk advised that the tenancy agreement required one year's notice to tenants of any change. Members had previously asked for some comparison with other parish councils' charges. The Clerk reported that this was not straightforward as size of plots and facilities provided varied. Members commented on the need to offset maintenance and administrative costs whilst remaining fair in providing this amenity for the community. It was **AGREED** to discuss the item at the February and /or March meetings, when it was hoped further information on running costs and other allotment sites would be available.

144.2 Summer Play Scheme 2025

The Clerk reported that she was investigating alternative options and was imminently meeting with a service provider. This did not rule out using the previous contractor but might give the Council options to consider. It was noted that the draft budget provided for the same level of funding as previous years to allow for providing the same scheme if council wished. Members were also asked to think about potential service providers and let the Clerk have any details. It was **AGREED** that the item would be discussed at the next meeting when the Clerk planned to have more information.

145. Finance

145.1 Income & Expenditure Report and Cashbook Reconciliations: Members received bank reconciliations and the Income & Expenditure report for Cashbooks 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 to month ending 30th November 2024. The December accounts were not yet available. It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair sign the bank reconciliations and agreement to bank statements.

145.2 Payments for Authorisation: Members **RESOLVED** to approve the List of Payments for Authorisation, as detailed below, and that the payment schedule be duly signed.

Castle Water	£19.57
Zen Internet Ltd	£69.22
Bognor Regis Town Council	£268.41
Allan Lang Timber Sales	£738.00
Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	£162.00
Barclays Bank	£17.80
Octopus Energy	£92.66
Copiers & Printers.co.uk	£77.99
Castle Water	£6.70
Castle Water	£15.82
Zen Internet Ltd	£66.64
Barclaycard Commercial	£150.09

David Chaffe (ProcessMatters2)	£120.00
West Sussex County Council	£2,827.00
Sussex Views Magazine	£120.00
Business Stream	£24.09

145.3 Members' Allowance Scheme: Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** that the Council would adopt the Arun DC Members' Allowance Scheme, by which it approves payment equal to 10% of the District Council Basic Member Allowance from 1st April 2025, as recommended by the Arun Independent Remuneration Panel. It was noted that only elected Parish Councillors are eligible to receive this, currently being three Members. Allowance had been made in the draft budget for the potential for 14 elected councillors being eligible to receive the Councillor's Allowance following the 2027 elections, for which an Earmarked Reserve (Elections) was being used to build up the reserve.

145.4 Budget and Precept 2025-26: The Clerk's report was noted. Members received and discussed a draft Budget 2025-26 V3 arising from the Budget Working Group meeting of 14th January 2025 and final amendments by the Clerk/RFO. As expected, staffing was a significant part of council resourcing, with the added impact of the Government's increase to employer national insurance contributions from April 2025. This meant that the re-introduction of an Assistant Clerk post, as well as adding to planned salary costs, would now meet the Government's revised Employer NI contribution thresholds. The other large cost areas related to the provision of the summer play scheme, grounds maintenance, open spaces projects/tree planting scheme, and large funding contributions towards local public toilets. Members commented on the MS SharePoint licence and whether it is sufficiently utilised. The Clerk was asked to look into bringing this back into use for sharing of documents.

The revised draft budget produced a £121,909 precept requirement, which was a 6.5% annual increase on last year, and a 4.1% Band D increase. This represented an annual charge of £22.41 for a Band D property, an increase of 89p per annum, or 2p per week. Members considered that the increase was justifiable and still represented good value for residents. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Budget 2025-26 V3 and resulting precept of £121,909 as set out. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would place the budget and an accompanying statement on the Council's website and also publicise within the next newsletter.

145.5 Settlement of alleged outstanding debt: The Clerk reported urgent action taken, in liaison with the Chair, to resolve the matter of an alleged outstanding debt claimed by Ensure Fire Systems, relating to two unpaid invoices dating from 2017 and 2020 (reported under Correspondence on 21st January 2023). Negotiation had resulted in agreement to pay only the 2020 invoice of £105 (exc. VAT), without any compensation or interest applicable, and with written confirmation that this resolved any such outstanding invoices. Owing to the length of time that had passed and the feasibility of checking past files for historical reasons for non-payment, or seeking legal advice, and the potential for the matter to be taken to the County Court, the Clerk/RFO and Chair had considered it prudent to come to mutually agreed terms. The contractor had complied, payment had been made by the Council's credit card and appears on the List of Payments under agenda item 9.2.

146. NALC Sector Standards Survey

Members considered the member survey NALC was conducting in order to formulate its own response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) recent consultation on sector standards. The Clerk reported that NALC, WSALC and SLCC are urging councils to respond, to demonstrate to the Government the importance and strength of feeling on the matter and sector support for the Government to act. Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk and Chair of Council would draw up and submit an appropriate response on behalf of the Council.

147. West Sussex Road Safety Strategy Public Consultation

Members noted the consultation, closing at 11.55pm 2nd February 2025. Link to consultation here: [West Sussex Road Safety Strategy 2025-2036 | Your Voice West Sussex](#). It was **AGREED** that no formal response would be submitted.

148. Transport for South East (TfSE) Draft Transport Strategy Consultation

Members noted the consultation, closing 7th March 2025. Link to consultation here: [public consultation](#)
It was **AGREED** that no formal response would be submitted.

149. Representatives to External Bodies

There were no reports or meetings attended.

The Chair advised that there would be a Bathing Water Quality Partnership meeting next month which he planned to attend and would report back on.

It was noted that the West Bersted Stakeholder Group was expected to meet again in March.

150. Correspondence

The Clerk reported on correspondence of note as follows:

- NALC – E-letter 06.01.25: Chair’s open letter to parish and town councils (circulated)
- WSCC – E-news release 09.01.25 – Sussex Councils agree to submit expression of interest on devolution (circulated)
- South & South East In Bloom – E-letter about the ethos and objectives of the In Bloom competition and reminder for council’s to consider entering
- WSCC – Email 14.01.25 – King Charles III England Coast Path, funding opportunity
- Southern Water – Email 19.12.24 – Southern Water and Ofwat’s Final Determination (circulatd)
- CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural Sussex) – Email 02.12.24: Final results from CPRE Sussex sewerage survey (circulated)
- CAGNE (Communities Against Gatwick North Extension) – Email 11.01.25: January Newsletter
- Clerks & Councils Direct – January 2025 issue 157

151. Date and time of next Council Meeting: Tuesday 18th February 2025, at approximately 7.15pm (preceded by short Planning Committee at 7.00pm).

The meeting closed at 8.49pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATED