



BUXTED

PARISH COUNCIL

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8th October 2024

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held in St Mary's Church Hall, Church Road, Buxted on Tuesday 8th October 2024 at 7.11p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Blandford (Chairman), Duck, Furber, Humphrey, Mallett, Roberts, Rose, and Smith.

Also present: ESCC Cllr. Galley, WDC Cllr Shaw and Clerks Beccy Macklen and Claudine Feltham.

Public : 3

Two members of the Bonfire Society addressed councillors providing initial feedback from the evening. The main points were:

- no fire incidents
- no medical incidents
- £901.16 was raised for local charities (TN22 Club & St Wilfreds hospice).
- a full clean up including litter picking took place on Sunday morning.
- the Bonfire Society has received over 100 messages of support not including FB messages.
- just a couple of complaints prior to the event.
- no complaints on the evening
- a Police emergency vehicle tried to get through the procession as the Police were not aware of the road closure. The Bonfire Society has raised this with Sussex Police as they should have been made aware given the SAG meetings prior to the event.

Learning for next year – some logistical matters, but overall, the night was a success and received a good response from visiting bonfire societies and villagers. Fireworks display was excellent and well worth the money. Some negative feedback on FB was the delay on the fireworks which was explained and was due to the Police presence through the procession, some intoxicated youths, and then finally waiting for a train to pass.

One councillor wished to comment that there were some residents of High Hurstwood who were not aware of the fireworks that were heard loudly in the village. The members of the bonfire society commented that the event was advertised on the High Hurstwood Facebook page as this was done by the parish clerk sharing a post from the Buxted Talk page.

Cllr Humphrey commented that walking back from the village to FAD there were a lot of people not adhering to the road closure. The Bonfire Society advised that the

security person in charge of the road closure in this location no longer works for the company, however this matter will be fed back.

Cllr Mallett commented that it may be worth looking at train times and factoring in delays which are quite regular on this particular train. He also asked if next year, the security can extend wider to cover incidents such as 'intoxicated youths' which can be quite intimidating. The Bonfire Society confirmed an extra security team will be in the village.

Four days prior to the event the parish council received an enquiry from management at WDC, as they had received complaints about the road closure (6.30 -11 p.m). BM has not noticed any signage whilst being out and about that morning in the parish, so CF went to check.

There was a small sign at Five Chimneys Oast (Hadlow Down) and a small sign on the traffic lights at Five Ash Down. Both had fairly small type face and were difficult to read.

Given the length and period of the road closure, CF suggested that to avoid such complaints next year, and to better warn residents, we would recommend clearer and multiple advanced warning road closure signs next year. CF gave an example of the type of signs that could be reused annually, and BM was to send photos of this to BBS.

The chairman wished to feedback that the first time will always consist of teething problems. We know now the date for the next year (which the PC can help with circulating). There needs to be more advanced notice that the event will happen, especially the notification of the road closure – road closure signs need to be bigger; and prior warning of fireworks and timings (taking into consideration possible train delays).

The parish council congratulated the Bonfire Society on a successful first bonfire evening back in the village.

Event for next year is set for Saturday 27th September.

01/10/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs Coxon and Marshall

02/10/24 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL, PREJUDICIAL, AND DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA AND UPDATES TO MEMBERS' REGISTER OF INTERESTS

All councillors declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Ionides Trust by virtue of the parish council being managing agents of the site.

Cllr Smith declared a personal interest in any matters related to allotments due to being an allotment holder.

Cllr Duck declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the High Hurstwood Village Hall Committee by virtue of being a member of the committee.

Cllr Humphrey declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Five Ash Down Village Hall Committee by virtue of being the parish council representative on the committee.

03/10/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2024 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

Cllr Galley reported the County Council met that morning discussing transport plans and the financial situation as ESCC have a £55 million hole in the budget. There are eleven areas of adult services currently undergoing consultation which could mean unwelcome changes in non-statutory provision. (Further information available in Cllr Galley's monthly update uploaded to the Buxted PC website under 'news')

ESCC - Any update on cutting back and shoring up of overgrown pathway on A272. Cllr Galley has walked and driven slowly along this stretch of road and concluded there is now a clear path all the way. The issue regarding shoring up the banks is still up for debate, but the landowner also needs to cut back the hedge. Clerk to chase this to ask Highways to ask the landowner to cut back the hedge.

Cllr Smith commented that everything they moved to uncover the footpath has been dumped on the bank and after every rain shower it falls back onto the pathway. Cllr Blandford remains sure the bank should have been cut back further to be wider as the pavement is there and still covered up.

Cllr Roberts commented the path between Oast Farm and FAD is becoming more difficult to walk along due to overhanging hedges – clerk will report this to Highways.

Cllr Humphrey commented on the illegal large signs for Feagans Farm advertising the pumpkin picking on the verge at Coopers Green and despite reporting this to Highways, no acknowledgement has been received.

Pound Green to Howbourne lane hedge – verge has been cut (paid for by the PC) whereas the hedges still need to be cut back.

WDC Cllr Shaw reported from WDC on the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies. As I'm sure you know it is deemed a "material consideration" when Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) make planning decisions.

In response to their wish to increase economic growth government have identified what they see as deficiencies in the planning system and what they see as the under-performance in delivering new housing. They have published a new, draft NPPF to which LPA's have been able to respond. Wealden District Council (WDC) has responded, but time was short, and this had to be completed quickly.

The draft NPPF covers a lot of themes and is complex, leaving lack of clarity, gaps and further questions. So, I'll pick up three areas and make some general comments. But please note I am not a planning expert!

1. The calculation of housing numbers

Calculation of the numbers of houses each LPA is expected to deliver is made by government using a "standard method" – an algorithm applied to all LPA's. Generally, this doesn't consider any exceptional issues an LPA might face. The draft NPPF continues this approach, so Wealden's situation of covering, for example, part of the South Downs National Park (which has its own planning regulations not governed by the standard method) isn't classed as an exception. The same applies to the Ashdown Forest and Pevensey Levels protected sites. The draft doesn't address this problem. Nor does it give weight to the importance to the specific demographic situation within a local authority area.

So, the top-down approach using this nationally decided algorithm still seems to be in place. Government says we are expected currently to deliver 1186 houses per year, which would change to 1397. Our actual figures are about 850.

2. Housing Land Supply

The draft proposes to maintain the “5year housing land supply” approach where LPAs are expected to show they have a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years’ worth of housing (and appropriate buffer) against the housing requirement. The draft still doesn’t take into account the distortion created by planning permissions that are not built-out. Wealden has over 8 years’ worth of planning applications agreed, yet our 5yHLS is deemed to be below 5. The draft NPPF proposes a mandatory 5yHLS to ensure a pipeline of housing but as we can see that is delivered by developers actually building rather than simply permissions being granted.

This proposal might also impact on our local plan process. As the consultation process reaches a certain point (which we are near) the 5yHLS expectation would drop to a 4yHLS. But the draft NPPF has changed this so we may need to review some of the local plan (but not all!). Only about 20% of LPA’s have adopted a local plan in the last five years. It seems that those who have, in the process of producing one, are being penalised.

3. Infrastructure

On a more positive note, paragraph 100 introduces the idea that significant weight should be given in planning decisions for “facilitating new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development”.

It raises the importance of sustainable transport when assessing sites. But how this is done beyond talking about a “vision led approach” isn’t really clear.

4. Other comments

There are sections dealing with many other issues which I need to better understand, including questions of affordability, design codes, brownfield, green and grey belt sites, changes to planning fees etc. And the so called “viability” which guarantees developers a 15-20% profit – not something other businesses can expect.

The draft doesn’t really address the perception that planning is a top-down process with a lack of transparency. Even elected councillors are not involved in developer-planner discussions. It doesn’t really allow for the fact that local people may take a more considered view of local housing needs than developers and national planners.

We know that Wealden needs more affordable home and social homes for rent but it’s not clear how the new NPPF would help us meet that need. Though it talks about housing assessments including providing social rent as part of the affordable housing mix, the standard method – which takes us back to the beginning – classes a 7 bedroomed detached house as the same as an affordable or rental home.

So, there’s still much uncertainty as to what will be the outcome of the consultation and areas to better understand. Watch this space!

Cllr Mallett – on infrastructure – commented that he attended a WDALC meeting at which an ESCC Highways officer linked the poor quality of the road network to a lack of development within the county. He commented that the county is

underdeveloped, and therefore this has a knock-on effect on road quality. What does that mean in so far as improvements to roads?

Cllr Galley commented we do have CIL which can be used for roads. Therefore, a lack of development would leave a shortfall in CIL to make improvements.

05/10/24 REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Prior to the meeting, the clerk asked all councillors to review the current council policies and circulated an updated Health and Safety policy.

Resolved all policies have been reviewed and the Health & Safety policy be updated.

REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE REGULATIONS FOLLOWING UPDATE FROM NALC, BACS PAYMENT POLICY AND REGULAR PAYMENTS LIST

Circulated prior to the meeting. Proposed by Cllr Roberts and seconded by Cllr Rose, members **resolved** to adopt the amended Financial Regulations, BACS Payments Policy and Regular Payments List as circulated.

06/10/24 BUXTED BONFIRE NIGHT – INITIAL FEEDBACK FOLLOWING 28TH SEPTEMBER 2024

See minute 'Public' section above.

07/10/24 OUTSTANDING MATTERS

Mobile Phone Coverage: Nothing to report.

Public footpaths: Nothing to report.

Trees: Nothing to report.

Road Safety:

UPDATE ON A272 PATHWAY (AS ESCC REPORT ABOVE): see minute 04/10/24 above (Cllr Galley update)

SPEEDWATCH – POSSIBLE NEW VOLUNTEERS: Cllr Fuber mentioned a member of his family may wish to restart Speedwatch if other volunteers can be found.

Standing Orders suspended to allow H. Cox to speak:

Homer was a Speedwatch volunteer for a number of years and comment that it does need someone to coordinate the group. The previous volunteer lost faith in the system as there didn't seem to be any follow up from the Police.

Standing orders reinstated

Clerk will put a post on social media to try and find some volunteers to form a new group. There is some question as to how effective it is and how much the Police follow up the data provided.

There is also some evidence that village gateways have a psychological impact on the speed of drivers.

Cllr Fuber, whilst on the subject of roads, mentioned he has an issue with signs, cleaning them and being able to see them through the overgrown vegetation. The clerk commented that in Wadhurst, they have a lengthsman who has the right insurance to be able to work at the roadside to clean signs, but back vegetation etc. The funding of a lengthsman to be added to next agenda and included in the finance committee for budget setting for next year.

INVITATION TO PARISH COUNCIL TO REINTRODUCE STRENGTHEN LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS (SLR) MEETINGS:

Strengthening Local Relationship meetings between ESCC Highway Officers and Parish Councils have been running sporadically since 2010 and are for members to discuss highways issues with officers. Buxted attended meetings until June 2012 but stopped after attending meetings at which subjects we had raised could not be discussed as the relevant officers were not available. We are now being asked if we would like to re-start these meetings. Wishing to show a willingness to work together with ESCC the clerks and chairman have agreed a first meeting on 28th January 2025. Cllr Galley confirmed a representative from Balfour Beatty would be in attendance at the meeting.

Wealden Local Development Framework: see minute 04/10/24 above (Cllr Shaws update)

Property issues:

BUXTED RECREATION GROUND – BREAK-IN AT BUXTED FOOTBALL CLUB – UPDATE: Following the previous meeting the clerk advised the football club chairman of its decisions regarding the barriers for the access track. The chairman of the FC has advised the club is awaiting confirmation from the insurance company as to what will be required. The Parish Council agreed to wait until this information has been provided and then would consider what (if any) recommendations are made in relation to barriers.

POSSIBLE PLACEMENT OF TRAUMA KIT AT FOOTBALL CLUB (NEXT TO DEFIBRILLATOR): Councillors were asked if they would consider installing a Trauma Kit alongside the existing defibrillator at the Football Club. A public access trauma first aid kit, also referred to as a PAcT First Aid Kit is a first aid kit which supports the treatment of immediate, life-threatening injuries or unresponsiveness. The range of PAcT kits go further to meeting counter terror recommendations (Martyns Law) by featuring glow in the dark labelling and signage and being available in a wider range of formats to suit all kinds of premises. Members **resolved** to install trauma kits in all locations where the defibrillators are currently located in the parish.

REVIEW OF RENT CHARGES FOR COUNCIL OWNED LAND: The only land regularly rented out by the parish council is the High Hurstwood allotment field rented out for £520 per annum. Members **resolved** to keep the rent as is.

Communications Matters: Nothing to report.

08/10/24 **CORRESPONDENCE**

ESALC AGM – Monday 4th November, Amex Stadium: Any takers? Clerks attending. As councillors were happy for the clerks to attend, they were given the voting rights on behalf of Buxted Parish Council.

09/10/24 **COMMITTEE MEETINGS**
None

10/10/24 **FINANCE**

- i) **Payments:** On the proposal of Cllr. Roberts seconded by Cllr. Rose, an updated payments list for September and payments totalling £14,705.61 for October were approved.
- ii) **Bank reconciliations:** The clerk had circulated completed reconciliations for September 2024 which were signed.
- iii) **Noted:** RBS reports: Ear marked reserves, Trial Balance, Receipts and

Payments, Cash and Investment Reconciliation

- iv) To receive the conclusion of the 2023-2024 external audit from PKF Littlejohn and note that there were no advisories or comments: The external auditor commented the following: *“On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.”*
- v) To note that the conclusion of audit, and the signed sections (1,2,3) was placed on the parish council website on 20/09/24 and placed within the noticeboards on 24/09/24 - **noted**.
- vi) To receive the RBS reports for the halfway point for the current financial year – **noted**.
- vii) To set a date (ideally prior to November full council) for the Finance Committee to consider the budget setting and precept requirement for 2025-2026 – date for finance meeting set provisionally for 26th November 2024.

Cllr Roberts commented that at the half way stage of the financial year we are on budget. The sale of the Reading Room has made an impact to the income this year.

11/10/24 **OTHER MEETINGS**

Cllr Mallett attended the WDALC meeting and circulated some notes prior to the meeting and reported that the main event was a highways officer explaining general pothole rules and other highway matters (capital spend vs budget for road repairs).

Cllrs Smith and Duck attended planning training on the NPPF with no real progress on specifics of future changes to the system.

Cllr Humphrey attended a FAD Village Hall Committee meeting and wished to pass on thanks for funding the village hall insurance for the year.

12/10/24 **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

CLLR HUMPHREY/CLLR MALLETT – Request for the PC to purchase neighbourhood watch signs for the various Neighbourhood Watch groups in the parish – agreed.

13/10/24 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY/APPOINTMENTS ON COMMITTEES – updating appointments with two new councillors joining the parish council (see attached appendix)

Cllrs Furber and Mallett both agreed to be members of the planning committee and Cllr Furber agreed to join the Finance Committee.

Cllr Furber commented the new Limes Lane triangle fencing looks really good. The contractor has done a very good job.

The meeting closed at 8.47p.m.

Appointments and Responsibilities

<i>Role</i>	<i>As of 8th October 2024,</i>
Chairman of the Council	Cllr Blandford
Vice Chairman	Cllr Humphrey
Planning Committee	<i>(Chairman)</i> Cllr Smith, plus Cllrs Blandford, Coxon, Furber, Humphrey, Mallett, Marshall, Roberts and Rose
Finance Committee	<i>(Chairman)</i> Cllr Roberts, plus Cllrs Blandford, Coxon, Furber, Marshall and Rose
Ward Chairman Buxted	All Buxted Councillors available
Ward Chairman High Hurstwood	Cllrs Marshall & Duck
Ward Chairman Five Ash Down	Cllr Humphrey
Parish Tree Warden	Cllr Blandford
Parish Footpath co-ordinator	Cllr. Coxon
School Governor Buxted	TBA, if required (not asked for one)
School Governor High Hurstwood	Not required
Wealden District Association of Local Councils	Cllr Mallett/Cllr Furber
WDC Parish Liaison Panel	Clerks
Police Liaison Officer	Cllr Smith
Uckfield Rail Line Parishes Committee	-
High Hurstwood Village Hall Management Committee	Cllr Duck
Five Ash Down Village Hall Management Committee (2 representative members)	Cllr. Humphrey
Buxted Pavilion Charity Management Committee	Cllr Rose
Ashdown Forest Parish Liaison	Cllrs Blandford & Coxon

Ionides Trust Update 8th October 2024:

1. **Apologies – Cllrs Coxon and Marshall**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Scout Hut – update**

Cllr Blandford visited the site today and can report the cesspit is in situ, but the land is a mess and will not be able to be put right until next Spring.

The Bonfire Society wish to have their Christmas Tree event at the end of November, but the tree site is adjacent to the tree site. The contractors have agreed to move the site hut to allow siting for the tree, provide toilets and a marque. This information has been passed to the chairman of the Bonfire Society to work with the contractor on this event. It was also noted no Scout representative attended the meeting. Requested attendance at the next PC meeting.

4. **Repair/Replacement of play small children's play equipment update** – the clerk is meeting with a play equipment company the following day who will be asked to suggest a number of options for the space available.

The chairman circulated some photographs and sketches of the fencing between the Ionides land, and the new houses recently built on the back gardens of the houses along Framfield Road. The new fence has been doglegged to take in a large holm oak which has been subject to some considerable tree surgery, thus reducing its size. This tree was previously part of an outgrown hedge which formed a border between the two pieces of land. However, the smaller trees growing along the boundary line have not been included within the new property when the close-boarded fence was installed leaving a maintenance issue. All of these trees, of an outgrown hedgerow are within about 15-20 cm of the upstairs windows of the new property and will pose a serious ongoing maintenance hazard. The posts and barbed wire previously in situ were also replaced on the Ionides side of the fence, leaving an unsightly appearance and H&S issue with unnecessary barbed wire. The Ionides has regularly carried out tree surveys along this hedge line and has, in the past maintained it, which included some work on the holm oak. The Ionides Trust should have been consulted before the work was carried out as it now leaves issues with boundary queries and maintenance problems.

The Clerk and Chairman to compose a letter to write to the owners of the land to draw to their attention this issue and to ask why the dogleg on the fence was included and land previously outside of the ownership of the property is now included without any consultation with the Ionides Trust. We will also ask why the existing hedge was not removed before the fence was put in place.

Meeting closed 9.07pm