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10th June 2025

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held in Five Ash Down Village Hall on Tuesday 10th June 2025 at 7.15p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Blandford (Chairman), Duck, Furber, Humphrey, Mallett, Marshall, Roberts, Rose, and Smith.
Also present: Clerks Beccy Macklen and Claudine Feltham.

Public : One

01/06/25 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received and accepted from Cllr Muddle, ESCC Cllr Galley and WDC Cllr Shaw

02/06/25 **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS 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.

03/06/25 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2025 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

04/06/25 **ESCC/WDC REPORT**

ESCC Cllr Galley – feedback following meeting to assess drains 9th June – In Cllr Galley's absence, Cllr Smith who also attended the meeting advised members that he met Cllr Galley and two Highway Stewards and walked from The Buxted Inn up the High Street to Broad Oak. They then parked at Binkeys Farm and walked to entrance to Buxted Park. In the first half there were no blocked drains. The second section revealed twenty-one blocked drains. The new Highway Steward took lots of photographs and map references and would refer this back to the drainage department to request clearing work is carried out prior to the next scheduled

clearance in December.

Cllr Furber commented there are drains further east from Broad Oak that are blocked. Cllr Marshall stated there are drains near Oast Farm which are blocked but have been reported.

The Clerk was asked to find out where the adopted highway ends at the entrance to Buxted Park as there are drains at the entrance that are also blocked.

WDC Cllr Shaw – Although Cllr Shaw was absent from the meeting, he did send the following updates:

- WDC has launched a new, £2M Community Led Infrastructure Fund, to support community buildings, green spaces, cultural infrastructure, and other leisure/ sports projects across the district. Applicants will need to have at least 20% match funding. I would be happy to discuss and support any ideas for local initiatives which this could support.
- Each councillor is to be given their own £10,000 budget to invest in local community and grassroots initiatives within their ward. I am already discussing potential ideas with two local organisations, but, again, happy to discuss with the PC any other ideas.
- Following a review of the council constitution, and to bring us into line with other planning authorities, we no longer have planning committees north and south. They are replaced by two different committees – one focusing on major planning applications (above 10 dwellings) and minor applications (less than 10 dwellings and householder applications). In recognition of increasing demands on planning committee members we are investing in more training and have reduced the size of the committees to nine members with five designated substitute members. I am a substitute for the majors committee. All will undertake additional training and will, hopefully, improve decision making. Though as you know government is toying with idea of abolishing planning committees altogether.
- In my last update I referred to the Planning Inspectorate's decision to support our right to impose planning conditions to ensure that Southern Water undertook necessary upgrades to sewers etc. prior to occupation of new sites. The developer concerned had an opportunity to appeal but did not do so. The decision is now being looked at by planning authorities across the country faced with poor performance by their water and draining companies.

The parish council would be interested to know with whom he is discussing funding options with as this could impact parish council grants into the future. There was a suggestion that the Rifle Club could benefit from funding - clerk to suggest to Cllr. Shaw the Rifle Club need funding and have plans to make the club more accessible

Cllr Humphrey commented that as the proposed development on land north of Budletts has been refused planning permission twice, it is proposed this land could be purchased using the above funding to create a nature reserve/recreation area for the community. Ownership of the land first needs to be established for the community group to then approach the land owner to ask if they are open to this suggestion.

05/06/25 OUTSTANDING MATTERS

Public footpaths: Nettles between Buxted to school and Buxted village are overgrowing. Clerk to ask Countryman to cut back nettles when they next cut the grass verge.

Trees: Nothing to report.

Road Safety: Nothing to report.

Wealden Local Development Framework: Nothing to report.

Property issues:

- **Buxted Recreation Ground – drainage improvements – update**
Since the following meeting, the clerk has ascertained that Buxted Recreation Ground has been identified in the Wealden District Council Sports Infrastructure Funding programme for improvements. The clerk has therefore submitted an expression of interest and received an initial questionnaire which is to be completed. The process is quite lengthy but if successful, any grant awarded would be directed towards the drainage improvements to the field.

Communications Matters: Nothing to report.

06/06/25 CORRESPONDENCE

P1 - High Hurstwood Resident – is the parish council looking to install electric charging points in High Hurstwood or Buxted?

It was commented that it is cheaper to charge at home as there is a 5% VAT charge, whereas if you charge in public places VAT is set at 20%.

After a long discussion, members concluded that they do not feel there is a need for charging points in the two public owned spaces in High Hurstwood and Buxted as people use those car parks for short periods of time. There is no transport hub or clear stopping places in either village that would supply the ‘footfall’ to justify its cost.

Cllr Mallet could ask at the upcoming Uckfield Railway Parishes Committee meeting if there were any plans to put charging points in at Buxted Station.

07/06/25 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

None

08/06/25 FINANCE

- Payments:** On the proposal of Cllr. Roberts seconded by Cllr. Mallett, payments totalling £11,895.00 covered by BACS payments and direct debits were approved. Cllr Furber asked to see a breakdown of works completed by the Lengthsman.
- Bank reconciliations:** The clerk had circulated completed reconciliations for May which were signed.
- Noted:** RBS reports: Ear marked reserves, Trial Balance, Receipts and Payments, Cash, and Investment Reconciliation

09/06/25 OTHER MEETINGS

Cllrs Furber and Smith reported back following a first meeting (of two) of the Committee for a new Buxted Village Hall. They are building up concept and design for a new project looking at all the Ionides land in a more holistic way with a view to bringing together a community area in conjunction with all existing buildings on the site. The idea is to build a village hall with the support and consultation of the community whilst drawing in funding from all available opportunities.

10/06/25 MEMBERS QUESTIONS

30mph signs at the top of Buxted village are obscured – ask Lengthsman to cut back.

Cllr Smith reported back on the ongoing leak in the road by the allotments – South East Water visited but would not complete the job. Clerk to ask South East Water why the leak has not been fixed after it was reported in March.

Framfield Road Culvert – Cllr Furber is concerned the water will continue to erode the road whilst Highways are in the repair design stage. Clerk to refer to Cllr Galley as the fear is the road will not last another winter. What remedial works are taking place?

11/06/25 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Meeting – 8 July 2025 St Mary's Church Hall, Church Lane, Buxted

The Chairman advised this would be Cllr Roberts last meeting and wanted to thank him for all his hard work for the council. The clerks, especially Claudine, also wished to thank him for his role as Finance Chairman and all the support he has provided.

The meeting closed at 8.34p.m.

Ongoing Highways Issues:

DATE RAISED	CASE NO	DESCRIPTION	OPEN/CLOSED RESOLUTION
2003	HED000607	Overgrown hedge at Heatherwode Farm	<p>Ongoing since 2023.</p> <p>Highways Enforcement have sent out notices which expired in December 2024. A further notice is to be issued week beginning 20th January.</p> <p>13/2/25 – clerk chased – was notice issued? Has it lapsed?</p> <p>25/02/25 – Highways confirm hedge has still not been cut . Referred to relevant team for further action.</p> <p>03/04/25 – Confirmation from Highways, hedge will be cut in 28 working days (16th May)</p> <p>19/05 – Clerk reported the hedge has not been cut</p> <p>19/05 – Highways responded to say job was completed on 29/04/25. Clerk disputes this with photographs to show hedge still overhanging footpath.</p> <p>27/05 – Highway confirmed hedge would be cut (again) by the end of 28/05</p> <p>28/05 – Hedge not cut, reported back to Highways</p> <p>30/05 – Highways apologised and will confirm when hedge will be cut</p> <p>06/06 – advised by Highways hedge would be cut – it was not</p>
November 2024	EA007FRAMFIELD	Culvert, Framfield Road, Buxted	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>Collapsed drainage leading to culvert. Reported some time ago.</p>

			<p>Highway advised works need planning and extensive repair.</p> <p>19/3 – Highways contacted PC to advise Structural Team will contact PC to arrange a site meeting likely to be in April.</p> <p>May – Cllr Furber attended meeting with ESCC/Balfour Beatty. Agreed work from culver to KSV would be carried out. Design for culvert currently being designed. Work to be carried out in next financial year.</p> <p>10/06 – clerk to ask Highway if any remedial works will take place to stop the road falling away while a design is being drawn up.</p>
04/02/25	THF003389	Width of footpath between Limes Lane and Pound Green Lane – request to cut back and uncover footpath	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>10/02/25 – Highway Steward has inspected and does not consider works are needed at this time but would keep an eye on it.</p> <p>14/02/25 – Raised with Cllr Galley at meeting. He is raising this issue again with Highways.</p> <p>March 25 - Issue now CLOSED after work carried out by Cllr Furber</p> <p>01/04/25 – Highways confirmed job is now scheduled!</p>
17/02/25	CCY000737	Broken away tarmac (50cm) in Framfield Road/Limes Lane outside KSV and bollard fallen over	<p>REOPENED</p> <p>20/02/25 – ESCC Highways do not consider work is necessary at this time but would continue to monitor – Raise again with Highways.</p> <p>17/3 – Highway Steward revisited. Road still does not meet criteria, but bollard will be replaced.</p> <p>May – work should be carried out in conjunction with culvert repair woks (as above EA007FRAMFIELD)</p>
24/05/25	SLO000572	Blocked drains on Buxted High Street	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>29/04/25 - Highway Steward has identified the blockages and has scheduled a job to remove water and any excess debris. Additionally, we will conduct a CCTV inspection to check for any breaks or blockages in the pipelines and will use jetting if necessary.</p> <p>02/06 – Cllr Galley suggests walking the route with Highway Steward and councillors. Walk arranged for 10am 9th June</p> <p>09/06 - Cllr Smith walked Buxted High Street (no blocked drains) and Binkeys Farm to Buxted Park which identified 21 blocked drains. Highway Steward to report.</p>

25/04/25	DGD005639	<p>Drains on the A272 between the end of the houses (from Buxted) and Buxted Primary School on the A272</p> <p>Parish Council has walked this stretch and has noted 4 drains in a row that appear to be blocked</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>28/4/25 – Highway Steward inspected No works required.</p> <p>20/05 – Highways confirmed comprehensive assessments to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the planned works have taken place. The root cutting operations will address blockages and prevent future obstructions, while the pipe repairs will ensure the reliability of the drainage system for the community. Works start date to be notified.</p> <p>02/06 – Cllr Galley suggests walking the route with Highway Steward and councillors. Walk arranged for 10am 9th June</p> <p>See above</p>
28/05/25	DGD005645	<p>This blocked gully pot is 60m west of Coopers Green traffic lights on A272.</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>30/04/25 – Highway Steward inspected. No works required. Later informed this is due to be cleared!</p>
03/04/25	HED004388	<p>Overgrown hedge Chillies Lane, High Hurstwood. Opposite Church</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>03/04/25 – reported to Highways</p>

1. Apologies – B.Muddle

2. Declarations of Interest – None

3. Scout Hut - update on outstanding issues

Before the meeting, the clerk chased up responses to issues raised following the previous meeting. Please find below (end of document) the full response received from the Scouts representative and comments from the Ionides Trust.

4. Illegal Camping – Since the previous meeting it has become apparent the occupier has abandoned the tent and scattered belongings. On legal advice a letter was left in the tent and has remained unmoved and unopened (*photographic evidence taken*). Therefore, arrangements are being made to remove the tent/paraphernalia from the land.

The parish council solicitor has been contacted to ask if it is possible to put some sort of policy/legal licence on the land to prevent overnight/unauthorised camping in the future. Signs may need to be erected stating 'no camping without authorisation' but will check with solicitor for need and wording. Costs for the solicitor to provide legal advice are in the region of £750 + VAT. Members agreed to progress with asking for the advice. Proposed by Cllr Rose, seconded by Cllr Smith - **agreed**.

5. Network Rail Fence

Now reported for the third time following the recent fire in the woods. No response from Network Rail received. (*photographic evidence taken*). Members have seen Network Rail staff on site in the last week, so it is hoped this work is scheduled.

6. Replacement Cherry Tree for COVID Memorial - Prunus Uniemko 3-4 metres in a 45-metre pot £291.60 plus £50.00 extras and £35.00 delivery. Clerk to ask the Lengthsman if they would be willing to collect it from English Woodlands and plant. It could be paid for in July, to be planted in August/September.

7. Hedge Cutting – arrange for Lengthsman to cut the hedge around Ionides in September.

8. New benches – Research has begun into new benches for the land. Other clerks recommended a recycled material bench which does not rot over time like wood. Costs start from approx. £600 assembled. Two new benches to be located on the top by the beacon and one down towards the play area.

9. Grass cutting areas – Countryman are now cutting the Ionides land and working around the newly landscaped areas. Clerk to ask Countryman if they are happy to cut the slopes when the fencing is removed. Clerk Can we ask for the docs to be cut – ask Ian.

On next agenda – extend the lease for rifle club.

Questions asked and full response received by Scouts to outstanding matters, and IT comments:

- **Access points: to recreation ground and up to Beacon Lawn** - The pathway going out from the back of the Scout hut through to the Recreation Ground - once the grass is established elsewhere, the fencing can be moved sideways and the present access made good. The Ionides Trust will need to look at the provision of a pathway up to the area where the Beacon is located, as the current access (as on beacon lighting night) is not particularly user friendly.

Scout comment: Yes, this was always our plan, although the seeding may have to wait until the Autumn, but we will access conditions.

We note with interest that IT plan to build a path for the BBS to have a beacon lighting event that happens once or twice per year and is attended by a relatively small number of people but not minded building one from the car park to the scout centre, which would be used by hundreds of members of the public per week. We do not feel a track from the drive to the beacon is necessary give the gentle gradient, the amount of usage it will get, and are concerned it would be a trip hazard where our young people play.

Ionides Trust Comments: The Trust has not said it will be building a path to the Beacon site, simply we need to look at access to the top area. The IT have been supportive of a path down to the car park but would not have constructed it in the manner it has been done. This was part of discussions prior to any work taking place. We do not agree it is a gentle gradient. We are looking at the entire site for improvements, good access to the Beacon Field area maybe one of them, and any work will be what is best for all and easy maintenance.

- **Informal pathway from car park to Scout Hut update** - please could you confirm if you accede our point regarding the Ionides trust not taking responsibility for the pathway. Having spoken again to Chris Humphrey, he believes concrete or plastic would be very difficult to install on such undulating land and would be slippery in the winter when wet or icy. He is still of the view that rubber matting or stones are the best option if the pathway is to remain. If rubber is used, it would need to be installed so no parts are sticking up to get caught in the grass cutters mowers. If stones are used, they would need to be replenished regularly as rain will wash them down the track.

Scout comment: Given the lack of support from IT for the path from the car park to the hut, our latest thought is we may remove it completely and return it to grass. We have a trustee meeting scheduled for 10 June to discuss as the group will have to cover this cost. I will let you know the outcome.

Ionides Trust Comment: noted, this is a decision for the Scouts.

- **Bonfire Society Paving Slab** – covering the Christmas Tree hole. This was broken during building. Contractors were asked to replace it, but they simply put a new slab on top of the hole. This is a trip hazard. Please could the slab be counter sunk into the ground as it originally was. Thank you.

Scout Comment: The slab was broken, and we replaced it like for like. We do not accept this is any more of a trip hazard than it was previously as no adjustments were made to the hole or slab gap.

Ionides Trust Comment: We have photos of the countersunk slab so can provide to show what it previously looked like. However, given it will take little time to correct this obvious trip hazard and maintenance problem, we will ask the Lengthsman to fix it.

- **CCTV or not?** – Representatives from the Rifle Club attended the meeting and mentioned they have installed CCTV following the criminal damage to the roof. You may have already considered CCTV or perhaps you have already installed some security measures which can be shared, if and when necessary.

Scout Comment: Yes, we have CCTV installed. We would not be able to allow access to our system to for anyone else for safeguarding reasons, but in the event of a police inquiry we will obviously provide recordings.

Ionides Trust Comment: Noted. We are asking all tenants to co-operate with the safety of the site, the Rifle Club and Surgery responded positively but their coverage is localised.

- **How do you feel the seeding is going, are you happy with re-instatement of land?** – the IT are pleased with the work carried out.

Scout Comment: We had to fund the cost of this from our group, and it was considerable work for our leaders to water it once or twice a day. It is good to hear IT recognise our efforts.

It is a shame that the BBS cherry picker caused damage to the area up to the beacon leaving two clearly visible track marks. Are IT asking them to fix this?

Ionides Trust Comment: The damage done is minimal and is healing well, compared to other areas.

- **Jacob (contractor) said keep vehicles off path to recreation land for a year. Is this true?** - did he same the same to you? As this may affect proposed works to the drainage in the recreation ground as the only viable access for this work would be through the Ionides land.

Scout Comment: Access to the football pitch from our lease land was intended for occasional emergency vehicle access and such. We are not happy for heavy machinery to be driven across our patio and lease land at any time. Access to the football pitch should be via their concrete drive.

Ionides Trust Comment: We can get past without touching the patio (just). Some works vehicles will simply not fit down the driveway to the football club, hence the inclusion of an access through to the Recreation Ground in the discussions before and throughout the project.

- **Pipe in woodland still unfinished** – please could you let us know when this work will be completed, especially as the land appears to be being used more now it has been opened up.

Scout Comment: We are continuing our negotiations with the contractor over this, but it will be fixed one way or another. However, as agreed the final termination point of the pipe must on IT land as agreed as the culvert itself is on railway land.

Ionides Trust Comment: We refer to their Licence for Alterations which states “Following completion of the project, should the proposed surface water and drainage scheme prove to be inadequate, the Tennant shall rectify any drainage issues (to the specification of the Landlord) and the Tenants expense. Such works will be carried out as soon as reasonably possible and to the reasonable satisfaction of the landlord.”

Additionally, we have been asked the following:

Can I also check when you plan to move the table tennis table as we discussed previously?

Ionides Trust Comment: The most recent minute item that this was discussed was July 2023 in which it was stated we would ask Scouts to move the table as part of the wider construction works. Before works began, at an in-person meeting, the Scouts said they could ask the contractors to move it as they would have heavy plant on site.

Further communication was received from Buxted Scouts on Monday 9th June. A summary is below:

In March 2025 the IT became aware that the Buxted Bonfire Society had been advised that they may not be able to use the new Scout Hut for any commercial purposes (stall holders) in relation to any event being held. Subsequently at an Ionides meeting the Scout representative advised members that this matter still

needed clarification. The clerk was asked to contact the Scout Association for such interpretation. It has taken three months for the Scout Association to respond and advise they are not in a position to answer this and referred the email to the Buxted Scout Association. A response was received direct from the Buxted Scout Association on Monday aggrieved that the Ionides Trust had not asked the Scouts directly for this information and challenging that the building has never been for dual use.

The Ionides Trust can understand Buxted Scouts are a little upset having received the email from the Scout Association; however, this was something the Scouts themselves had previously raised at a meeting when they advised that the hire of the hall needed further investigation and clarification.

Members queried that they did not think a zero-rated building would stop it being used by other bodies and therefore asked the clerk to investigate this directly with the Scout Association given other new scout huts must have been built, and they would easily be able to answer the question. We have also been told by others that all new builds are zero VAT and so this would not have been a reason for no community use.

Just to clarify, we have never requested DUAL use and have only taken the wording from the Scouts own website which states: *"We are now one step closer to our dream of a new building with flexible space for scout meetings and community events. The proposed design for a larger building will enable us to expand our group, as well as offer space for use by the wider Buxted Parish community"* From what was subsequently stated at various meetings with the Trust, the 'community use' aspect was now in question.

The Trust was simply trying to clarify a query which had been raised and which the Scouts did not know the answer to at the time (bearing in mind this question was originally asked in March), whilst we are trying to balance the needs of the community / groups and respond to their requests.

The Ionides Trust feel that stating *"If Buxted Parish Council/Buxted Bonfire Society carry on with this underhand behaviour, you will make the decision about whether to hire our hall (or not) really easy for us."* is a quite hostile, and we do not believe is justified bearing in mind the IT is the Scouts landlord and has the right to ascertain such information without being accused of being underhanded. We did ask Simon Morely, face to face, at a previous meeting about other users and received a negative response stating 'zero VAT build reasons.

Comments regarding the commercial use of the Ionides land has long been misunderstood and was part of the Surgery lease only put in place because, had the surgery failed the community would not wish to see the site being used for purely commercial purposes such as a supermarket. It was never intended to prevent small scale stalls attached to a charity or local event.

Throughout the build the Ionides Trust have struggled to receive updates on progress, and we would like to remind Buxted Scouts that the Ionides Trust responded to its many requests in a timely and helpful fashion whilst trying to manage the land for all comers. We object to the tone of the email, accusing us a being underhand repeatedly.

Meeting closed 9.08pm