



BUXTED

PARISH COUNCIL

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11th February 2025

Prior to opening the meeting, the Chairman wishes to remember George Claydon a long-standing resident of Buxted who created the parish emergency plan and played a key role in the Buxted Village Hall project.

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held in Five Ash Down Village Hall on Tuesday 11th February 2025 at 7.13p.m.

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

Public : 3

01/02/25 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received and accepted from Cllrs Marshall and Roberts and WDC Cllr Shaw.

The Chairman announced the Councillor Coxon has stepped down from the parish council. Peter was thanked for his work for the council over the last 5 years.

02/02/25 **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.

03/02/25 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

04/02/25 **ESCC/WDC REPORT**

ESCC - Cllr Galley reported on the County Council meeting that had taken place that morning which set a precept of 4.99% as per the last few years, and the maximum

allowed. Two percent of this is fixed for adult social care, so there will regrettably be the need for some savings, but the majority view is the budget needs to be balanced.

The cancellation of the ESCC elections due to the devolution programme is going ahead. The next stage is that Brighton, East and West Sussex County Councils need to put forward an outline proposal to Government by March 2025. A final decision will be made by Government in September 2025. Elections are delayed for up to a year with a view to recruiting a new Mayor by 2026 and a new Unitary Authority in place by 2027.

With regards devolution and the WDC Local Plan, Cllrs Galley reported that as far as he is aware, Wealden is continuing with the Regulation 18 and 19 proposals.

Highway Issues - Howbourne Lane to Pound Green Lane has – works to uncover the footpath has been completed by our Lengthsman and ESCC have cut back the hedges. Continuing to clear the footpath down to Limes Lane is a priority, however the Lengthsman does not feel safe carrying out this work and ESCC have advised they do not consider the work is needed.

Cllr Furber commented that there needs to be a more strategic link between the Lengthsman and ESCC works to ensure real changes are made to improve the parish. He also wished to point out that the permit for scheduled drainage works in Framfield Road expires at the end of February and no works have taken place to date. **Clerk to chase.**

Cllr Rose wished to point out that when the proposed speed limit change is implemented to a 50mph from Hadlow Down to Buxted, a footpath needs to be created to safeguard the pedestrians walking along the road.

Cllr Galley responded that Highways have miles of roadside that need to be monitored, and not all work requested can be completed as it must fall within budget.

Gordon Road/Framfield Road – some potholes have been fixed in Gordon Road, but some nearer the High Street were not included in the work. There is no update on fixing the culvert, even though there is fencing around the area to be worked on.

With regards funding for roads, Cllr Galley's interpretation of the figures is that there was a £27/£28 million budget for 2024/25, whereas this will be reduced to £21 million this year with a potential £1.9million extra provided by Government.

Cllr Galley will refer the following issues back to ESCC Highways Officers:

A272 between Buxted School and the village – ongoing, still waiting for clarification on the hedge as Highway officers could find no record of a request for hedge cutting. Still working toward some sort of shoring up of the bank.

A272 between Pound Green Lane and Limes Lane – This is the second most complained about piece of footpath in the parish, and it would make an enormous difference if this footpath were uncovered to make it safer to walk. The hedge has been cut back, so this is the perfect time to do the work. Please can Highways reconsider.(refer also to 1st paragraph under Highways Issues)

Gordon Road/Framfield Road – the surface of the road in lots of places is deteriorating. Small amounts of patching are carried out but is washed out and more holes have appeared. Please can the Highway Steward look at both roads.

These roads come up repeatedly.

Cllr Shaw gave his apologies as he was unfortunately taken unwell the previous day. Cllr Blandford would like to know if Regulation 18 of the Local Plan is still going ahead given the devolution decision. Hopefully, an update will be provided from WDC soon.

Thank you to Kevin Moss and Brighter Uckfield Team, councillors, and volunteers for work to cut back verge.

05/02/25 **FEEDBACK FROM STRENGTHENING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS (SLR) MEETING WITH ESCC HIGHWAYS**

The Chairman, two clerks together with the Headteacher of Buxted Primary School and a local parent/resident attended the meeting also attended by Cllr Roy Galley and six employees of East Sussex Highways and Balfour Beatty.

The minutes of the meeting have been circulated to all councillors but the main points arising from the meeting are as follows:

1. Village gates – clerk to meet with enforcement officer to discuss possible positions.
2. Roadside advertising – there is a tolerance accepted by ESCC which includes seasonal and charity advertising (rules previously circulated). However, any concerns should be reported to ESH who will send an Enforcement Officer to check if an advert abides by the rules.
3. Reporting Issues to ESH – it is imperative that the public use the reporting system on the ESH website, otherwise officers are not aware of issues. The use of photographs and ‘what three words’ is extremely useful assisting the Highway Steward to accurately identify and issue. If a job is deemed to not have been completed satisfactorily, then this should also be reported back.
4. Forthcoming Highway works – can be viewed on the OneNetwork link on the ESH website. This is a third-party website. There was some discrepancy regarding the information on the website and how parish councils are notified. Cllr Galley is to raise this with officers in Highways.
5. Road Safety at Buxted Primary School – there was a long discussion on what has been done to alleviate the issue. The main problem is not parents dropping off/picking up. The issue is impatient drivers who drive around standing traffic, sometimes abusing the staff/parents. The Traffic & Safety Manager is looking into further road markings/colourings/signs to warn drivers of queuing traffic. Head Teacher to obtain a quote (see below) for more CCTV cameras that would cover parts of the school and the junction of A272/Hurstwood Road.

QUOTE FOR CCTV FOR BUXTED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Prior to the meeting the Clerk circulated a quote for two CCTV cameras for Buxted School totalling £1500 + VAT. The Head Teacher is not expecting the cameras to be funded entirely by the Parish Council, however, there are huge financial pressures on the school at present which would mean something else at the school i.e. ICT equipment.

There were some queries regarding the cost of the cameras and if an alternative could be used, but it was explained that these are two further cameras in addition to those already in place, and it is a fully integrated system, and therefore the same contractor would need to be used. These cameras will cover the entrance to the school which currently does not have a wide-ranging enough coverage.

Members resolved to use CIL funds to pay for the extra cameras at the school to

cover the High Hurstwood entrance to the school.

With regards the reporting of Highway issues, the Chairman commented that previously the council was split into areas and councillors can individually report issues within those area. **Agreed.** Clerk to suggest areas of the parish for councillors to cover.

06/02/25 **OUTSTANDING MATTERS**

Mobile Phone Coverage: Nothing to report.

Public footpaths: (see 'road safety' below)

Trees: Nothing to report.

Road Safety:

- **Update on A272 pathway (as ESCC report above)**
- **Speedwatch – update on borrowing Black Cat speed recorder device from Wadhurst PC:** Since the previous meeting, the clerks have established that Wadhurst are willing to lend the BlackCat equipment to Buxted and it can be covered by our existing insurance. However, the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan volunteer who had experienced of using Black Cat and downloading data had left (and moved away). Claudine has been trying to establish if another councillor would be able to download the information and therefore teach someone at Buxted PC to do the same. We are awaiting a response from the Cllr who is currently busy with other projects The clerks are happy to keep working to try and establish the viability of using the device with a view to it being used in Buxted.

Cllr Furber asked if the parish council could use CIL funds to purchase a BlackCat of our own. Yes, but it was agreed to borrow the Wadhurst device first and assess its effectiveness.

Wealden Local Development Framework: National Planning Policy Framework published – any feedback? – in the absence of Cllr Shaw, no update was provided. Is the call for sites still going ahead? Is Regulation 18 still going ahead? Local roads are at capacity, what will happen with this? All questions to be answered by WDC.

Property issues:

- **Lengthsman – review of effectiveness**
Members consider the Lengthsman is a great asset to the community and members thanked Claudes for uploading the photographs to Facebook.
- **Possible disposal of Nevill Road, Uckfield site – update**
Following the December meeting, the clerk contacted the Arboriculturist at Wealden District Council to ask if it would be possible to remove the Tree Preservation from the land to make it easier to dispose of the site. A detailed response was received which explained that even if the TPO was successfully removed (which is unlikely), any development of the site would be improbable due to restrictions on developing on land adjacent to ancient woodland with a designation of as a priority habitat and the buffer zones associated with this. The entire email was circulated to councillors. Options have been explored, and it was **agreed** to keep the site at the present time.
- **Buxted War Memorial – required repairs.**
Ian Anderson, who is a qualified stone mason, was asked to assess the war memorial and has created a schedule of repairs. After initial contact with WDC

we are recommended to submit a request for pre-application advice. However, this is costly and would then still require a formal Listed Building application. Therefore, the chairman will contact the War Memorial Group for further advice. The works are not urgent, so time is on our side to be able to obtain the correct advice to ensure money is not spent where it is not necessary.

- **Coopers Green Bus Shelter** – recommendation from Lengthsman – has advised that some repairs works could be carried out, but the structure will still look scruffy. Therefore, he recommends no work until a full replacement is needed.

Suspend standing orders to allow G Midmer to comment – the bus shelter area could be part of the Durrants field development so improvement works could be included in that development.

Communications Matters: Nothing to report.

07/02/25 **CORRESPONDENCE**

P1 – East Sussex County Council – Transport and Development Control - S1/450_Coopers Green Road_Uckfield_Proposed s278 highway works – any comments? – no comments.

P2 - East Sussex Rights of Way - Views Sought - East Sussex Rights of Way Access Plan – clerk to complete and circulate for comment.

P3 – GTR - Station Improvement Fund – any suggestions for Buxted Station?

Painting the bridge over the A272? New planters for the station to be positioned on the platform. Cllr Smith put himself and other allotment holders forward to fill and maintain the planters. The current planters, in a different location had been vandalised but they had been made by the Men’s Shed in Uckfield. These had been very popular over the years.

08/02/25 **COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

None

09/02/25 **FINANCE**

- i) Payments:** On the proposal of Cllr. Smith seconded by Cllr. Mallett, payments totalling £5,445,.67 for January and £7,509 for February 2025 covered by direct debits and BACS were approved.
- ii) Bank reconciliations:** The clerk had circulated completed reconciliations for January 2025 which were signed.
- iii) Noted:** RBS reports: Ear marked reserves, Trial Balance, Receipts and Payments, Cash, and Investment Reconciliation

10/02/25 **OTHER MEETINGS**

Cllr Mallett – WDALC meeting focusing on devolution and Unitary Authority proposals – feedback – main topic was the proposed planned devolution. Locally that means WDC, and other district and borough will be merged into East and West Sussex County Council. East and West County Councils will form a Statutory authority with Brighton and Hove led by an elected mayor. As reported above, the new arrangement will be finalised and in place by May 2027. It is not known if the current County Council constituencies will remain as they are. One down side is that and ‘East Sussex’ council would be more remote than Wealden as it covers a bigger geographical area. Parish councils could be expected to partly fill that gap. East Sussex have about one hundred town and parish councils so there may be some federations created within these. It could be that parish councils have more responsibilities e.g. licencing decision, but there is not much more information on

the future of parish councils at the present time.

Cllr Mallett was asked if there any mention of reorganization/distribution of staff from the district and borough councils if responsibilities are legislated to parishes. It is only speculation, but staff could be redistributed to the other remaining authorities. It is inevitable there will be some redundancies included to enable a merge and cost savings. There is no action for parish councils yet, but there will be in the future.

Cllr Blandford – ACRE Navigating Rural Realities – ACRE provided information on a range of services they can provide to town and parish councils including, ensuring rural voices are heard, details urban does not win out over rural; re organisation of services; understanding voices, amongst others. However, it is felt that these services are costly and do not necessarily provide what councils specifically need.

11/02/25 **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**
None

12/02/25 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**
None

The meeting closed at 9.00p.m.

Ongoing and recently resolved Highways issues:

DATE RAISED	CASE NO	DESCRIPTION	OPEN/CLOSED RESOLUTION
2003	HED000607	Overgrown hedge at Heatherwode Farm	Ongoing since 2023. Highways Enforcement have sent out notices which expired in December 2024. A further notice is to be issued week beginning 20 th January.
December 2024	CFW000627	Cracks in roadside/kerbs on A272 close to Buxted School	CLOSED 25/1/25 – notified repairs works have been completed. 28/1/25 – more broken kerbside reported at SLR meeting – Highway Steward will investigate.
06/01/25	SIG001612	Damaged sign (lost its reflectiveness) in Five Ash Down on left hand side just before the Pig & Butcher public house when you enter the village from A26. More or less outside No.70	ONGOING
January 2025	SIG001602	Falling over 30mph sign in Hurstwood Road	ONGOING Highways confirmed case close after repair. 17/01/25 – lengthsman tried to clean the sign but it has not been fixed properly into the ground. Requested further repairs are carried out. 21/01/25 – Highways confirm case is closed. Clerks send a further email to explain the signs are not fixed

			into the ground and the case needs reopening! 28/1/25 - Highways confirmed new repairs taking place that week.
17/01/25	SIG001637	Chillies Lane, High Hurstwood. One sign is leaning and partially hidden by bushes.	CLOSED (BEING MONITORED) 21/01/25 – Highways responded to say the sign does not need any repairs
17/01/25	SIG001638	Chillies Lane, High Hurstwood By the road up leading up to the church is twisted/leaning	CLOSED (BEING MONITORED) 21/01/25 – Highways responded to say the sign does not need any repairs but has been twisted back into place
17/01/25	POT030898	Hurstwood Road – approx. 2 metres from the 30mph sign – on the left-hand side as you head towards Buxted Primary School, there is a large hole on the edge of the road. Our Lengthsman believes that this could cause the road to collapse in.	REOPENED 21/01/25 – Highways responded to say the pot hole does not need repairs. 21/1/25 – after a complaint by the clerk, Highways have confirmed this would be reinvestigated. 24/01/25 – after reinvestigation, confirmed pothole will be repaired within 28 days.
17/01/25	DGD005096	Just off of Limes Lane and you go towards Nan Tucks Lane (outside of a property named Orchard House – the drain is overflowing	ONGOING 17/01/25 – Highways advise they are already aware of issue, and it should be resolved in 28 days.
17/01/25	CWY004501	Someone has dumped a load of vegetation/ivy in Limes Lane. Residents have reported this to us as causing an obstruction and quote dangerous in the dark. Our Lengthsman has tried to move it in, but it needs collecting/removal	ONGOING 20/01/25 – Highways notified the matter has been passed to WDC as it would be classed as flytipping
03/02/25	THF003374	Large divots left in Toll Farm verge after a lorry got stuck and needed pulling out	ONGOING
04/02/25	THF003389	Width of footpath between Limes Lane and Pound Green Lane – request to cut back and uncover footpath	ONGOING

1. Apologies – Cllrs Marshall and Roberts

2. Declarations of Interest – none.

3. Scout Hut – update

The Scout Hut is nearing completion with the Licence for Alteration now received and will be passed to our solicitor to checking. The following update was received by the 7th of February 2025:

Moody's are about 3 days off finishing the SW drainage works. They were not on site this week due to annual leave but will be back on Monday and weather permitting should be off site by the end of the week.

I have asked Moodys to install an inspection chamber at the point where then pipe changes direction to run through the gate. This will allow for easy connection from the village hall and also help with maintenance of the system.

Fencing will remain in place for the time being due to ongoing works and soft ground conditions.

The Groundworkers are back on site to connect the drainage & finish all the landscaping works. They have said it will take 4 weeks, so we have another 3 weeks to go.

Painters are due back in next week and I assume they will be 90% finished by the end of the week.

Plumbing, Heating and Electrical are progressing well and they should be all finished by the end of February.

First layer of Cladding is starting to go on the walls. There will be cover strips to, but these were not ordered so will be arriving in a couple of weeks.

Flooring is due to be laid in February, but I have not been given a definitive date.

As you know I have asked for a line on the programme to include snagging by the IT, so you have a chance to look at the landscaping before the contractors leave site.

VB, CH, PS and SF to visit and assess the site.

4. Repair/Replacement of play small children's play equipment – update

Two quotes for the replacement of one set of swings and the broken balance equipment were circulated prior to the meeting. It was **resolved** to accept the quote from Playsafe Playgrounds Ltd and to include extra matting at the entrances to the site.

5. Hedge Cutting – we cannot get the hedge cut the moment due to the construction works but will reassess again outside of the cutting season.

6. Buxted Bonfire Society – request for Christmas Lights switch on 29th November 2025 – approved.

Meeting closed 9.09pm