

WESTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7.00pm on Monday, 15 January 2024

at The Amenity Hall, Stone Cross School, Adur Drive, Stone Cross BN24 5EF

Present: Cllr P Baldwin, Cllr L Comfort, Cllr F Durling, Cllr M Fairweather*

Cllr C Hanson, Cllr R Mayfield, Cllr P Quanstrom, Cllr A Taylor, Cllr D Upton*

(* denotes WDC Councillors)

WDC Cllr C Primett, 2 members of the public

Also at the meeting: S. Sanders (Clerk)

77. Apologies

Cllr K Farley, Cllr D Axell, ESCC Cllr D Shing

78. Declarations of Interest

None

79. Questions from members of the public

The public were asked which agenda item they wish to speak on at the beginning of the meeting.

They were then invited to speak for two minutes (max) at the start of the agenda item rather than at the beginning of the meeting. This will be for any or all agenda items if required.

80. Draft Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 20 November 2023 to be agreed and confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the Meeting

The Minutes had previously been circulated to Councillors. They were agreed and signed as a correct record by the Chair of the Council

Proposed and Seconded

Unanimous agreement

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 20 November 2023 be agreed and signed

81. To receive information and raise any questions to ESCC / Wealden District Councillors present

Cllr Primett informed Councillors that the Local Plan was a key piece of work to come forward from the District Council

It was hoped that early February would be the date the Plan is presented at Wealden District Council. Currently the plan is confidential

The draft Local Plan would then at a date to be agreed be available for review and feedback

Cllr Fairweather reported that the District Council had now started the annual Budget process for finalising in the next two months

82. Agreement of the Precept for the Financial Year 2024/25

The Chair of the Finance Committee explained to Councillors that the Precept for the Financial Year 2024/25 should rise by 5% to mitigate inflation rises. The Precept for this Financial Year 2023/24 is £160,169

For the last two years the Precept has not risen but with maintenance costs rising a small increase was needed

A rise of 5% was recommended to Councillors. This would mean an increase in the Precept for 2024/25 of £8,008 totalling a Precept requirement of £168,177

This amount was then recommended in Councillors

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous decision

Resolved: Agreed that an increase of 5% to the Precept for 2024/25 £168,177

83. Agreement for the Draft Budget for the Financial Year 2024/25

The Chair of Finance introduced the draft Budget for the financial year 2024/25 to Councillors while the Clerk supplied them with copies

It was explained that certain account headings had been increased including grant funding

Councillors asked questions about the movement of monies in various accounts including the large expenditure of tree maintenance work in the Parish

It was decided that a separate account heading for Westham Village Pond be set up so that money spent could be monitored along with other account headings in the Budget

Proposed

Seconded

Unanimous agreement

Resolved: That the draft Budget for 2024/25 be agreed with a new account heading for Westham Village Pond included

84. Agreement for signage to be added to Adur Park signs regarding motor bikes

Councillors heard that it would be beneficial to add “No motor Bikes” signs to the Adur Park signs at Adur Drive and Friday Street entrances

The new signs (which are sticky) would be added to the existing signage at a minimal cost of £160. Metal signs would be added later

Proposed

Seconded

Unanimous Agreement

Resolved: That additional signage stating “No Motor Bikes” should be added to the existing signs at Adur Drive and Friday Street

85. Financial Items recommended for approval

(i) Reconciliation Reports for November 2023 for approval and resolution

The reconciliation reports were agreed by Council and signed by the Chair of the Council

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous agreement

Resolved: That the reconciliation reports for November 2023 are agreed

(ii) Bank Statements November 2023 to be approved

The bank statements were approved by Council and signed by the Chair of the Council

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous agreement

Resolved: That the bank statements for November 2023 are agreed

(iii) Re-confirmation of Councillor signature for the Metro Bank Account

Councillors agreed to re-confirm the signature of a Councillor be added to the list of signatories for the Metro Bank Account.

The named Councillor is Cllr P Baldwin.

A minuted confirmation was required from the Council plus Financial Regulations – Section 6 Instructions for the making of payments. These are attached to the end of these Minutes.

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous agreement

Resolved: That the signature of Councillor P Baldwin be added to the list of signatories for the Metro Bank Account

86. A discussion for a yearly contract for maintenance and management work at Westham pond

A member of the public spoke about the need for the pond to be kept in good condition to support the life in the pond but also to be looked after sympathetically for the benefit of residents.

An estimate for a yearly maintenance and management contract for work at Westham Village Pond had been received for Councillors discussion.

There was concern from a Councillor about how and when the work would be carried out during the year. Also, they were afraid that the aims of the pond management plan would not be carried out

They requested that the maintenance contractor be asked to read the pond management reports and the pond management plan on the website before they started work

The Clerk said that they would contact the contractor and meet them to discuss the particular requirements/conditions that had been requested by the Pond Management Group

Proposed

Seconded

Unanimous agreement

Resolved: That the Clerk contact the pond contractor and discuss the timings of the work during the year and certain requirements requested

87. Agreement for the replacement of a lamp and post in Castle View Gardens, Westham

Due to the change of the maintenance contractor for ESCC Lighting the replacement of this lamp and post had been waiting for several months. The replacement has now been progressed and now agreement by Councillors for the expenditure is required

The Clerk explained to Councillors that this particular replacement had been waiting for nearly a year much to the disappointment of the residents.

With Councils agreement it was hoped that the replacement work would soon take place. The cost of the post and lamp would be £2167.61

Proposed

Seconded

Unanimous

Resolved: Agreed that the replacement post and lamp should be replaced at a cost of £2167.61

88. Review of the Health and Safety Policy

The Health and Safety Policy had previously been circulated to Councillors. The Clerk explained that it should be reviewed and if any updates were required then they should be made at this meeting

It was decided that no revisions were need so the Policy was agreed

Proposed

Seconded

Unanimous agreement

Resolved: That the Health and Safety Policy reviewed January 2024 is agreed

89. To resolve to exclude Members of the Press and Public (Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act) 1960

The Meeting closed at 8.20 pm

6. Instructions for the making of payments

- 6.1. The council will make safe and efficient arrangements for the making of its payments.
- 6.2. Following authorisation under Financial Regulation 5 above, the council, a duly delegated committee or, if so delegated, the Clerk or RFO shall give instruction that a payment shall be made.
- 6.3. All payments shall be affected by cheque or other instructions to the council's bankers, or otherwise, in accordance with a resolution of the Finance committee.
- 6.4. Cheques or orders for payment drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule as presented to council or committee shall be signed by two members of council and countersigned by the Clerk, in accordance with a resolution instructing that payment. A member who is a bank signatory, having a connection by virtue of family or business relationships with the beneficiary of a payment, should not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to the payment in question.
- 6.5. To indicate agreement of the details shown on the cheque or order for payment with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall each also initial the cheque counterfoil.
- 6.6. Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at a council or committee meeting (including immediately before or after such a meeting). Any signatures obtained away from such meetings shall be reported to the council [or Finance Committee] at the next convenient meeting.
- 6.7. If thought appropriate by the council, payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone and water) and any National Non-Domestic Rates may be made by variable direct debit provided that the instructions are signed by two members and any payments are reported to council as made. The approval of the use of a variable direct debit shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 6.8. If thought appropriate by the council, payment for certain items (principally salaries) may be made by banker's standing order provided that the instructions are signed, or otherwise evidenced by two members are retained and any payments are reported to council as made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 6.9. If thought appropriate by the council, payment for certain items may be made by BACS or CHAPS methods provided that the instructions for each payment are signed, or otherwise evidenced, by two authorised bank signatories, are retained and any payments are reported to council as made. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 6.10. If thought appropriate by the council payment for certain items may be made by internet banking transfer provided evidence is retained showing which members approved the payment.
- 6.11. Where a computer requires use of a personal identification number (PIN) or other password(s), for access to the council's records on that computer, a note shall be made of the PIN and Passwords and shall be handed to and retained by the Chairperson of Council in a sealed dated envelope. This envelope may not be opened other than in the presence of two other councillors. After the envelope has been opened, in any circumstances, the PIN and / or passwords shall be changed as soon as practicable. The fact that the sealed envelope has been opened, in whatever circumstances, shall be

reported to all members immediately and formally to the next available meeting of the council. This will not be required for a member's personal computer used only for remote authorisation of bank payments.

6.12. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the working of the council or its bank accounts, to any person not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.

6.13. Regular back-up copies of the records on any computer shall be made and shall be stored securely away from the computer in question, and preferably off site.

6.14. The council, and any members using computers for the council's financial business, shall ensure that anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software with automatic updates, together with a high level of security, is used.

6.15. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Clerk [RFO] shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate approved by the council shall identify a number of councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts. The bank mandate will state clearly the amounts of payments that can be instructed by the use of the Service Administrator alone, or by the Service Administrator with a stated number of approvals.

6.16. Access to any internet banking accounts will be directly to the access page (which may be saved under "favourites"), and not through a search engine or e-mail link. Remembered or saved passwords facilities must not be used on any computer used for council banking work. Breach of this Regulation will be treated as a very serious matter under these regulations.

6.17. Changes to account details for suppliers, which are used for internet banking may only be changed on written hard copy notification by the supplier and supported by hard copy authority for change signed by two of the Clerk and a member of the Finance Committee. A programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed