

WESTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held at 7.00pm on Monday, 19 June 2023

At the Amenity Hall, Stone Cross School, Stone Cross BN24 5EF

Present: Cllr P Baldwin, Cllr L Comfort, Cllr F Durling, Cllr M Fairweather*, Cllr K Farley, Cllr J Hayward, Cllr R Mayfield, Cllr P Quanstrom, Cllr A Taylor (7.30pm), Cllr D Upton*

(* denotes WDC Councillors)

In attendance: WDC Cllr C Primett (Polegate Central)

Three members of the public

Also at meeting: S. Sanders (Clerk)

18. Apologies

Cllr D Axell, Cllr C Hanson

19. Declarations of Interest

None

20. Questions from members of the public

A member of the public spoke of their concerns about the condition and maintenance of the Westham pond in Peelings Lane. They were concerned about the expansion of reeds on the pond and how they would be controlled. They then handed out photos to Councillors

They asked Councillors to explain the future maintenance plan for the pond and when and how the reeds would be removed

21. Draft Minutes of the Annual Full Council Meeting held on Monday 22 May 2023 to be agreed and confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the Meeting

Proposed and Seconded

Unanimous agreement

22. A report from the Pond Management Working Group on the current conditions of the pond and progress on the coming months

This item was brought forward on the agenda for discussion by agreement of the Council

The Chair asked if members of the Pond Working Group could explain to the member of the public the current management of the pond and what would be done to tackle the number of reeds that needed to be cut back

A Councillor said that the latest notes from the Pond Management Working Group had been circulated to all Councillors

The Councillor explained that the removal of several of the larger reeds was planned for the end of the summer

To answer the questions that the member of the public had about the management of the pond the Chair asked that Standing Orders be suspended so that their questions could be answered

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous decision

After 15 minutes Standing Orders were reintroduced

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous decision

The Chair thank the group for all their hard work in maintaining the pond during the year

Councillors were then asked to note the latest report from the Pond Management Working Group

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous decision

23. ANNUAL RETURN & FINAL ACCOUNTS 2021/2022 FINAL ACCOUNTS DOCUMENTS PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED FOR RESOLUTION:

Annual Return – Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 (to be agreed at the meeting)

All Councillors were supplied with a copy of the Annual Governance Statement before the meeting

Proposed and Seconded

Unanimous Agreement

24. Annual Return – Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2021/22

Explanation of Variances in the Accounting Statements

Working Details for the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021/22

Final Internal Audit Report 2021/22

Bank – Cash and Investment Reconciliation as of 31 March 2022

Bank Reconciliation Statement as of 31 March 2022 for Cashbook 1

Bank Reconciliation Statement as of 31 March 2022 for Cashbook 2

Bank Reconciliation Statement as of 31 March 2022 for Cashbook 3

Bank Reconciliation Statement as of 31 March 2022 for Cashbook 4

Supporting Reserves Reconciliation for Annual Return 31 March 2022

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2022

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31 March 2022

Asset register 2022/23

Agreement to pay the invoice for ESALC for the year 2023/24

All Councillors had previously been supplied with all Accounting Statements. There were no questions

Proposed and Seconded

Unanimous agreement

25. Agreement for all items to be discussed at Full Council meetings by suspending Committee Meetings for a trial period of 12 months

Councillors were supportive of all items being discussed at Full Council Meetings and agreed to suspend Committee Meetings for a trial period of 12 months. A councillor suggested that if there were any projects or items that need in depth discussion then a working group could be set up to meet and report findings to Full Council

This was agreed by Councillors

Proposed and Seconded

Unanimous agreement

26. Recommendations for amendments to the grazing licence for Butchers Field to be discussed (recommendations previously circulated to Councillors)

This item was discussed at length and was divided into two parts. The first part dealt with additions to the grazers license from 1 July 2023

Conditions to the licence

To cut back vegetation behind the fence line at least annually

To remove any scrub encroaching onto the field

To repair and maintain all the fences and gates to the current standard

A copy of the Grazers Insurance to be sent to the Parish Clerk annually

It was agreed that the licence would be reviewed in six months as advice would be taken to strengthening and update the present one

Proposed and seconded

Unanimous agreement

Splitting the field for amenity use

There was a lengthy discussion on the use of a section of Butchers Field if it were decided that it could be split. Various suggestions were made including splitting the field with a fence to separate the sheep from the public. Seats along the fence line would be provided with a field gate within the fence line.

Councillors wanted to know the full cost of splitting the field before any decision could be made

It was proposed to defer this item to a future meeting so that costings could be sought

Proposed and Seconded

1 abstention, 1 against

Majority agreement

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

Grass Cutting Contract 2023

The present contract was discussed at length and Councillors were informed that not all conditions required in the contract were being met. Various suggestions were made as to the number of cuts that should be made per year noting that to support biodiversity that moving forward the Council should consider fewer cuts during future years.

Finally, Council decided to delegate further decisions to the Chair of the Council, the Chair of Finance and the Clerk so that grass cutting in the area can return to a normal level.

The Meeting closed at 8.40pm

