**Minutes of Wadhurst Parish Council full council meeting held at The Pavilion, Sparrows Green Recreation Ground, Wadhurst on Thursday 8th February 2024.**

Present: Cllrs S. Gadd (Chair), I. Anderson, P. Moore, C. Moore, M. Ramsden, D Shairp, J. Edwards and J. Crawford.

Absent: Cllrs P. Smith and A. Tincombe.

In attendance: Locum Clerk Emma Fulham. Cllr Glynn-Ives (WDC), Cllr Howell (WDC) and Cllr Stanley (ESCC).

Public present: There were three members of the public at the meeting.

1. To receive apologies and reasons for absence.

Cllrs P. Smith and A. Tincombe.

1. To receive declarations of personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests on items on the agenda and updates to members’ register of interests.

The Chair reminded Cllrs to declare when necessary.

Cllr S. Gadd reported an interest in item 9:10 as a trustee of Hall and Fields.

1. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes.

* There was a concern about lack of signage for the WDC car park in the Village near the Greyhound. Cllr P. Moore is dealing with East Sussex Highways in regards to signage design as WPC are keen to install a fingerpost. **Cllr P. Moore would continue to chase up ESCC.**
* There was a concern about poor parking in St James Square which is causing dangerous issues for access. WPC had lobbied for line marking to East Sussex Highways to stop the obstruction but ESCC had been unresponsive about creating a solution.
* There was a query over ownership and condition on the High Street noticeboard. Cllr I. Anderson reported work would be completed on this noticeboard ASAP but Cllr C. Moore reported that the main priority for the WPC noticeboard was for WPC and the neighbourhood plan and suggested a possible replacement UVA noticeboard might be a solution for community notices and highlighted the WPC grant scheme for small projects.
* Parking in Blacksmiths Lane is becoming more and more difficult due to increased use and it is causing access issues and congestion. WPC did acknowledge the issue but it was difficult to see how any preventative measures could be enforced.
* There was a concern raised by the Tennis Club over recent inflationary increases in rent and affordability. **The Clerk would add this item to the next agenda for a formal discussion.**
* There was a concern raised that the tennis courts are not being brushed regularly. **Cllr J. Crawford agreed to follow this up.**

1. County Councillor and District Councillor reports.

County Cllr Stanley had circulated his report prior to the meeting. The highlights of budget stretching and use of reserves to cover off the financial challenges of adult social care and children’s services were noted. If there is central government additional funding forthcoming it will be forwarded to the highways budget as the roads need intensive works.   
Cllr P Moore asked Cllr Stanley to try to improve the SLR meetings to resolve highways and lighting issues as the current situation was not felt to be very productive.

District Cllr Glynn-Ives reported on the Local Plan submission which had now been initially approved by WDC. It would be out for public consultation for eight weeks which would be advertised in due course and it would be available for the public to comment both online and in person within local libraries and public spaces.

There was an environmental framework consultation which had a few more days left for people to comment on it.

There was a new well being initiative - Eat less move more.  
  
District Cllr Howell reported on recent WGOD meeting. She also reported on the community lottery which commences on 19th March.

1. To consider, and approve if appropriate, which agenda items are sufficiently confidential as to warrant exclusion of members of the press and public under the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960.   
   None.
2. To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 7th December 2023 as a true record  
   **Proposed by Cllr S. Gadd seconded by Cllr J. Crawford and majority accepted as a true record. One abstention.**
3. To determine matters arising from the meeting on 7th December 2023 for updating and noting.

None.

1. Correspondence List.  
   This had been circulated prior to the meeting there were no actions.
2. Finance items for decision and allocation of resources
   1. **To approve the updated payment list for December 2023**
   2. **To approve the payment list for January 2024**
   3. **To approve the initial payment list for February 2024**
   4. **To approve the bank reconciliations for December 2023**
   5. **To approve the bank reconciliations for January 2024**
   6. **To receive the RBS finance reports for December 2023**
   7. **To receive the RBS finance reports for January 2024**

**Items 9.1-9.7 were taken as one item for approval Cllr S. Gadd proposed acceptance Cllr J. Crawford and all items were unanimously approved.**

* 1. **Opening of additional bank accounts (and not proceeding with Flagstone) (paper attached)**

**Cllr P Moore proposed Cllr C Moore seconded and it was unanimously approved.**

* 1. To consider line painting options and costs at the Pavilion.   
     **Cllr I. Anderson proposed WPC proceed with F1 to do the works Cllr J. Crawford seconded and this was unanimously approved.**
  2. Consider quotes for CCTV and approve a contractor.  
     **Cllr S. Gadd removed herself from the discussion due to an interest.   
     Cllr P Moore chaired the meeting Cllr I. Anderson proposed that the contractors should attend and he could liaise with them to discuss location, European components and signage seconded by Cllr P Moore and this was unanimously approved.**
  3. To note the donation from the estate of the late Major Burlison and consider ideas for a suitable project/purchase.  
     **Cllr S. Gadd outlined the donation. Cllr J. Crawford proposed the money was used for the oak shelter over the table tennis tables subject to checking this was ok with his daughter Cllr C. Moore seconded this and was approved by majority vote.**
  4. To agree that a budgeted item of up to £10,000 for environmental/ecology reports for Bewl be allowed to be transferred to the general planning advice budget.   
     **Cllr D. Shairp proposed Cllr C. Moore seconded and unanimously approved.**

10.Non-Finance matters

* 1. To adopt Lone Worker Policy.   
     **Cllr S. Gadd proposed Cllr P. Moore seconded and this unanimously approved. It was acknowledged that a working party was needed to implement good working practice.**
  2. Adoption of replacement equality and diversity policy (Notes: as Claude has sent to Emma)  
     **Cllr C. Moore proposed Cllr P. Moore seconded and this was unanimously approved.**
  3. To approve a new location for the bench (In memory of HM Queen Elizabeth II) and agree for the Lengthsman to install it (paper attached).  
     **Cllr I. Anderson confirmed it is currently next to the tennis courts Cllr S. Gadd proposed it remains there until a better location is resolved Cllr C. Moore seconded and this was approved by a majority vote. One abstention.**
  4. To discuss and agree a response to Uplands Academy Sixth Form Closure consultation.

The Council had submitted the following response prior to the meeting due to the deadline:

A complete education from year 7 through to year 13 (i.e. including sixth form) has been provided at Uplands for over 40 years, so this is a very sad day under the start of the Academy administration. This clearly illustrates that the support during the consultation period for changing to the Academy has been an abominable mistake for education in respect of the Wadhurst area and for education as a whole. It is a tragedy that a 40-year legacy of sixth-form teaching has been undone in just over one year by the new management.

No effort or reasonable time has been given to fulfil the promises made during the ‘changing to an Academy ’ consultation in 2022. It has, therefore, become apparent, that the community has been misled.

The consultation concerning the change of status to an Academy, promised an improved educational experience for our children and an improved sixth form, offering a wider range of subjects, encouraging children to continue to sixth form at Uplands and attract those from other schools.

Minutes from the Uplands presentation (changing to Academy status) given to Wadhurst Parish Council in June 2021 stated:

*‘They would also like to offer 6th form students a wider range of A ‘Level results by offering them subjects at both Uplands and Beacon (with transport ferrying them between the two sites when required)’.*

In September 2022, the school opened as an academy, but with arrangements set for that academic year by the previous administration. At the first opportunity to offer additional subjects for September 2023, to attract more sixth form students, *none* were offered and instead a consultation to *close* the sixth form was announced.

Have the Department of Education and the School Commission also been misled?

The school was largely rebuilt, with the use of public funds, and then leased as an Academy. This increased the size of the school and yet the new Academy has been allowed to consider cutting the educational years offered from 7 years to 5 years. ***Therefore, our public funds have been used to reduce our service***. This is totally unacceptable! While the community, as taxpayers, have acted to support this rebuilding programme, the school has not acted in good faith by throwing in the towel on sixth-form teaching at Uplands so quickly.

The Wadhurst Parish Council requests that the Regional Schools Commission Board and the Department of Education insist that the leadership of Uplands, deliver on the promises made during its change to an Academy, with regard to improving the sixth form education and postpone any decision about its future, until such time as those attempts have been made and given a genuine chance to succeed.

**Cllr S. Gadd proposed this was ratified Cllr C. Moore seconded and it was unanimously approved.**

* 1. To adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 9th December 2023 and 13th January 2024 and 27th January 2024.  
     **Cllr S. Gadd proposed Cllr C. Moore seconded and it was approved by majority vote. One abstention.**
  2. Jardin d’Aubers lease from ESFR – Update and decision.  
     **Cllr C. Moore proposed this was now progressed with one clarification on pollution this was seconded by Cllr S. Gadd and this was unanimously approved.**
  3. St Georges Hall purchase – Update and Decision.   
     **Cllr S. Gadd proposed Cllr P. Moore seconded and this was unanimously approved.**
  4. To review Tapsell’s Wood project and actions requiring a decision.   
     **Cllr J. Crawford proposed works were progressed up to a cost of £5000.00 plus VAT apportioning works between contractors according to their specific skill sets. To resolve the works ASAP before nesting season with Cllr I. Anderson to oversee the works Cllr P. Moore seconded this and it was unanimously approved.**
  5. To consider arrangements for the annual parish meeting.   
     **Cllr C. Moore proposed a community event involving community groups attending with stands this was agreed it would be good to make it an informal meeting. The Clerk was asked to look into a late date in April with the Commemoration Hall and advise Cllrs C. Moore and P. Smith to get in touch with the local groups and advertise the event accordingly.**
  6. Playpark cleaning, report and action.   
     **Cllr S. Gadd would refer this cleaning request to Hall and Fields to apply for a grant.**

**Cllr C. Moore proposed up to £500 for an outside tap seconded by Cllr P. Moore and approved by majority vote. One abstention.**

* 1. Pavilion outside toilets report and action

Cllr I. Anderson described the issues and the need to improve the facility.

**It was generally agreed costs would be put forward for the next meeting for formal approval.**

* 1. To consider arrangements for D-Day celebration.   
     Cllr C. Moore outlined some ideas and there was a general discussion about events on different days involving the History Society, School and local shops etc.

Flags could be added to the heritage lamps / shops denoting the countries involved.

It was hoped the History Society would host something in the Commemoration Hall and would accept the Warriors offer to install a beacon in the evening. Cllr S. Gadd would follow up with the Twinning Association and History Society.   
**Cllr C. Moore proposed a budget up to £5000 for the celebrations subject to grant applications seconded by Cllr S. Gadd and unanimously approved.**

* 1. To consider meeting 6th February re Uplands Sixth form and any action required.

**Cllr S. Gadd proposed a further letter to the Department of Education and regional school commissioner to express concerns over the closure of the sixth form seconded by Cllr C. Moore and was approved by a majority vote. One abstention.**

* 1. Items for noting or inclusion on a future agenda.

March 14 2024, WPC has arranged an event with the Wadhurst Warriors to say thank you for putting up the Wadhurst High Street Christmas lights. Venue TBC. All councillors are welcome to attend the event.

Lack of phone signal / Wifi signal at the Railway station. **Cllr J. Edwards agreed to contact the network manager to see if a solution can be resolved.**

* 1. Next Meeting Date 7th March 2024

Meeting Closed at 9:30pm

WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL 2024-08-02 FULL COUNCIL MINUTES