

Minutes of Wadhurst Parish Council full council meeting held at The Pavilion, Sparrows Green
Recreation Ground, Wadhurst on Thursday 4th April 2024.

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

In attendance: Locum Clerk Emma Fulham. Cllr Howell (WDC) and Cllr Standley (ESCC).

Public present: There were six members of the public at the meeting including Cllr Howell (WDC) and Cllr Standley (ESCC).

1. To receive apologies and reasons for absence.
Cllr J Edwards – Holiday.
Cllr Glynn-Ives.
2. 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.
10.1 – Cllr S. Gadd declared an interest.
3. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes.

A representative of Wadhurst Warriors outlined the plan to light the beacon with a six minute soundtrack leading into the last post and further commemorative music animated with a subtle lightshow. The likely cost would be in the region of £1500.00.

There was a member of the public present who provided a paper on the issues of traffic, congestion and parking within the parish.

Cllr Gladd asked that the Council agree to move forward the following items due to public interest:

9.1 To consider grant for Wadhurst History society - £1000.

9.2 To consider grant for Wadhurst Warriors DD celebrations - £1500.00

The Council agreed unanimously to move these items forward to this part of the meeting.

Cllr C. Moore proposed the Council provide a grant of £1000 to Wadhurst Historical Society Cllr S. Gadd seconded it and this was unanimously approved.

Cllr C. Moore proposed the Council provide a grant of £1500.00 to Wadhurst Warriors subject to a grant form being submitted seconded by Cllr I. Anderson and unanimously approved.

Cllr Gladd asked that the Council agree to move forward the following items due to public interest:

9.18 To consider request from Tennis Club for reduced fees.

10.8 To discuss the issue of parking and traffic congestion in Wadhurst

The Council agreed unanimously to move these items forward to this part of the meeting.

9.18 To consider request from Tennis Club for reduced fees.

After some discussion on the tennis club contract and various options were reviewed.

Three proposals were discussed and voted on as follows:

Cllr C. Moore proposed RPI index linking the membership threshold. There were no seconders or votes in favour.

Cllr P. Moore proposed a two year freeze and RPI index linking the membership threshold. There were no seconders or votes in favour.

Cllr D. Shaibe proposed a one year freeze and thereafter CPI index linking the rent and membership threshold this was seconded by Cllr I. Anderson and agreed unanimously. An amendment would be required for the existing contract.

(Cllr J Crawford arrived at the meeting. 8:10pm)

10.8 To discuss the issue of parking and traffic congestion in Wadhurst

Cllr Standley outlined some of the issues with the solutions proposed by the traffic paper presented. Cllr P. Moore responded to some of the issues raised and the actions the Council had attempted to date. This includes ongoing discussions with Nus Ghani MP, Uplands, WDC and ESCC to try to extend the Wealden owned Greyhound Car Park into Upland's tennis courts (which requires the school to provide alternative sports facilities and Secretary of Education approval) and a pledge of £80,000 of Parish funds towards this. Council discussions with Wealden, ESH and Sussex police over traffic calming and parking restrictions includes requests to ESH that 30mph speed limits be put in place on single-track rat runs, more 3-hour parking spaces in the Greyhound car park, and "no parking" lines at the top of Blacksmith's Lane. The council has also offered help to the Primary school to re-open its drop-off and has asked Uplands to make taking busses off the High Street a priority. Cllr C. Moore confirmed the efforts that the Council had completed but reiterated that the Council was reliant on the authorities that had the control over highways (ESCC), Car Parks (Wealden) and landowners (Schools). The issues with parking and congestion were the top priority in the Neighbourhood Plan Household Survey, Unfortunately, as a strategic concern, this is not something a Neighbourhood Plan is allowed to address; however, Wealden District Council is consulting on its draft local plan which can address these concerns. The Council's High Street Improvements working group plans had been informed by Hamilton-Baille best practice, as referenced in the paper, which is why psychological traffic calming measures had been requested from ESH and white lines in the High Street were not repainted (unfortunately, although requested, coloured tarmac had not been used when the high street was resurfaced) and there is ongoing work on 20 mph speed limits and village gateways. Although Hamilton-Baille Associates had ceased trading since Ben's untimely death, the council could look to employ one of his ex-associates, who had worked on the Jevington project, as a consultant to assess the practicalities of what was achievable before a public consultation on what was realistic and allowed but there would be costs associated with this.

Cllr C. Moore proposed that a quote for a consultant was obtained to review at the next meeting seconded by Cllr S. Gadd and unanimously approved.

(The public with exception of the County and District Cllrs left the meeting).

4. County Councillor and District Councillor reports.

Cllr B. Standley – in addition to his report which had been circulated he reported on the possibility of signage 'unsuitable for HGVs' or no right turn for exiting the Faircrouch site. He confirmed banning HGVs was unlikely and would possibly simply displace the problem. He also reported an update on lighting contracts at ESCC.

Cllr J. Howell – The report had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Council thanked Cllr Howell for her support to oppose the Bewl application at the WDC planning meeting.

(Cllr Howell left the meeting 8:35pm)

Cllr C. Moore proposed that the following item was moved to this part of the meeting whilst Cllr Standley was present.

10.7 To consider update on streetlighting contract and outstanding works and consider moving to an alternative contract with Streetlights.

The Council agreed unanimously to move these items forward to this part of the meeting.

Cllr C. Moore outlined the difficulties with the current contract with Balfour Beatty. There were 172 lights and 27 lights not working and awaiting repairs. There was a lack of communication from the contractor about repair and replacement status. There was approximately £35,000 of repairs and replacements and several lights had been removed without prior warning.

Cllr C. Moore reported it was possible to get further repairs on top of the basic maintenance contract from another contractor.

Cllr C. Moore proposed the Council financial regulations should be suspended due to the lack of suppliers and time expediency and proposed that a repair budget was allowed up to £10000 to instruct Streetlights for emergency repairs. Formal quotes for replacement items would be sought in due course for the bigger jobs and would be returned to the Council for formal review, this proposal was seconded by Cllr S. Gadd and unanimously approved.

Cllr C. Moore would report on maintenance contracts and further replacement costs at the next meeting.

Cllr Standley was asked to follow up the location of the lights which had been removed and was asked to follow up the concerns of the Council to ESCC and Balfour Beatty.

5. 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.

Items for noting – Cllr. S. Gadd requested a confidential item.

6. To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 7th March 2024 as a true record.

Cllr C. Moore proposed them seconded by Cllr P. Smith approved by majority vote and signed as a true record. (one abstention)

7. To determine matters arising from the meeting on 7th March 2024 for updating and noting.

None.

8. Correspondence List.

The list had been circulated and there were no further actions.

(Cllr B. Standley left the meeting 9:10pm)

9. Finance items for decision and allocation of resources

9.1 To approve the updated payment list for March 2024

9.2 To approve the initial payment list for April 2024

9.3 To approve the bank reconciliations for March 2024

9.4 To receive the RBS finance reports for March 2024

Items 9.1-9.4 were taken as one item proposed by Cllr C. Moore seconded by Cllr P. Smith and unanimously approved.

9.5 To note that the internal audit by Mulberry & Co is scheduled for 9th May 2024

Proposed by Cllr S. Gadd seconded by Cllr P. Smith and unanimously approved.

9.6 Members to review the internal audit arrangements for year ending 31.3.24

The purpose of the independent internal audit is to review and report to Wadhurst Parish Council whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective. The internal audit's function is to test and report on whether its specific system of internal control is adequate and working satisfactorily. The internal audit reports are made available to all members of Wadhurst Parish Council to support and inform them when they considering the authority's approval of the annual governance statement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) at the financial year end.

Wadhurst Parish Council have engaged Mulberry & Co for internal audit. Both the interim and year end audit are being conducted by Michelle Webber on behalf of Mulberry & Co.

Michelle Webber has over 27 years' experience in the financial sector with the last 12 years specialising in local government. Michelle Webber is independent from the management of the financial controls and procedures of Wadhurst Parish Council and has no conflicts of interest with the audit client.

Proposed by Cllr C. Moore and seconded by Cllr S. Gadd and unanimously approved.

9.7 For members to approve for the continuation of Mulberry & Co to provide professional payroll services and note the slight increase of £5 per month. Annual fee will increase from £420 to £480.

Proposed by Cllr C. Moore and seconded by Cllr P. Moore and unanimously approved.

9.8 To note the increase in fees by Wealden District Council for dog and litter bin emptying. From 1st April 2024 the cost will increase from £275 to £286 per bin per year.

Proposed by Cllr S. Gadd seconded by Cllr C. Moore and unanimously approved.

9.9 To note the 2024-2025 price for grass cutting at Sparrows Green Recreation Ground by CS Landscape Services (we are in year 2 of a three year contract) £65.46 per cut (16 cuts per year)

Proposed by Cllr M. Ramsden seconded by Cllr S. Gadd and unanimously approved.

9.10 To agree and approve a budget for a finger post for the greyhound car park sign replacement (up to £1,500 from Jakks)

Proposed by Cllr P. Moore seconded by Cllr I. Anderson and unanimously approved.

9.11 To consider approval of the sellers legal fees for land at the primary school (up to £1500)

Proposed by Cllr S. Gadd and seconded by Cllr C. Moore and unanimously approved.

9.12 To consider license provider and costs for Microsoft licenses.

Proposed by Cllr S. Gadd and seconded by Cllr C. Moore and unanimously approved.

9.13 To consider Wadhurst PTA grant request

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

9.14 To consider grant for Wadhurst History society.

This item was moved to earlier in the meeting.

9.15 To consider grant for Wadhurst Warriors DD celebrations.

This item was moved to earlier in the meeting.

9.16 To consider request from Tennis Club for reduced fees.

This item was moved to earlier in the meeting.

9.17 To approve grant policy and forms.

Cllr S. Gadd proposed the new form was accepted seconded by Cllr I. Anderson and agreed by majority vote with one abstention.

Cllr S. Gadd reported the grant policy would need to be brought back to a future meeting as further changes were required.

10. Non-Finance matters

10.1 To consider remedial works and actions to prevent further vandalism at the public toilets. (PSCO / Uplands response.)

Cllr S. Gadd had an interest so Cllr P. Smith was Chair for this item.

Recent events and damage were reviewed.

The Council agreed to get Secom to change the timings on the locking mechanism with appropriate signage to confirm opening hours and review the situation once CCTV is installed. The Clerk would chase the CCTV supplier.

10.2 To adopt the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 9th and 23rd March 2024.

Proposed by Cllr D. Shaipr seconded by Cllr P. Moore and unanimously accepted.

10.3 Jardin d'Aubers lease from ESFR – Update and decision.

Cllr S. Gadd reported on the meeting proposal and this would be deferred to the next meeting,

10.4 St Georges Hall purchase – Update and Decision.

Cllr S. Gadd reported on recent correspondence. There was still information outstanding before a formal decision could be made and therefore the Council would defer the decision until further information was received.

Clarification on the usage clause within the contract was required.

10.5 To receive Neighbourhood Plan update.

Cllr C. Moore reported on the referendum on 2nd May 2024 and the promotion of a drop in session for public questions would be held.

The referendum would require promotion and a budget of up to £500 was proposed by Cllr S. Gadd seconded by Cllr P. Moore and was unanimously approved.

10.6 To consider re-establishing formal committees with physical meetings.

Cllr S. Gadd proposed that amenities re-commence as a working party and they could then add in non-cllr members seconded by Cllr P. Smith and unanimously approved.

Co-option was an issue and would need to be addressed as numbers of Cllrs were still low and left committees short of resources.

10.7 To consider update on streetlighting contract and outstanding works and consider moving to an alternative contract with Streetlights.

This item was moved to earlier in the meeting.

10.8 To discuss the issue of parking and traffic congestion in Wadhurst.

This item was moved to earlier in the meeting.

10.9 Items for noting or inclusion on a future agenda.

- Co-option.
- Annual Parish Assembly - 30th May 2024 the date was noted.
- There was a confidential item which was reviewed by the Council and it was agreed that Cllr S. Gadd could progress this outside of the meeting and any expenditure would be sent back to the Council for approval.

10.10 Next Meeting Date 9th May 2024

Meeting Closed at 9:50pm

WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL 2024-04-04 FULL COUNCIL MINUTES