



Minutes of the Meeting of Rottingdean Parish Council on Monday 5th February 2024

Present; Cllr Nixon (Chair), Cllr Levins, Cllr Poole, Cllr Cherrie, Cllr Lawrence
Chris Hayes, Parsh Clerk
Public Gallery: Mike Haggard, Janice Mead, Rose Daley, Gillian Randall.

Questions from the public.

Mike Haggard asked when the damaged wall at Kipling Gardens was to be reinstated. He also asked for an update on the Section 106 funds. **Cllr Lawrence** said she understood from Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) that the delay was due to an insurance claim but would follow up progress. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said he was working with Cllr Fishleigh in trying to obtain details of the S106 funding available from BHCC and that they were currently waiting a for a reply to a letter from Cllr Fishleigh requesting an update.

Rose Daley asked if the Councillors knew how often parking attendants were in Rottingdean as she had observed cars parked on the double yellow lines at junction of Nicholson Place and Steyning Road. She also added that to her knowledge all the St Aubyns residents living near the junction were in favour of the proposed new parking restrictions around the junction. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said that while he was not aware of the frequency of visits to the Village of parking attendants, he had recently seen three cars parked illegally at the junction that had been ticketed. He also provided the phone number to report cars parked illegally to the BHCC parking enforcement team which, in his experience responded within the hour.

Janice Mead said she was concerned about the dim street lighting at the bottom of Steyning Road and outside Field House that, given the poor state of repair of the paving, was quite hazardous. **Cllr Cherrie** agreed to follow up the matter.

Action: Cllr Cherrie to follow up the dim street lighting at the bottom Steyning Road and opposite Field House.

Gillian Randall said she didn't understand what the Neighbourhood Plan referendum was about and that there had been little publicity about it from the Parish Council. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** explained that the referendum regulations prohibited the Council from issuing any promotional material about the referendum during the referendum period apart from the

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statutory information that was published on the website. The Clerk explained that currently Brighton and Hove City Council made planning decisions based on policies in the local Development Plans. The Clerk said that when a neighbourhood plan passed a local referendum, it became part of the statutory Development Plan, and its policies must be used to help determine planning applications within the designated neighbourhood area. The Clerk said that information about the referendum had been placed on the Parish Council and BHCC websites and a number of information messages sent out on social media. He also said that a copy of the plan could be viewed in the Grange library.

The Clerk reported that he had received a letter from **John Bryant** pertinent to the precept agenda item and read out the following.

“I wish to make comment on the discussion about the level of Precept.

Annex C of the 24/25 Precept paper prepared by the Clerk lists items of expenditure amongst which there are a number “Projects”. I asked to see the updated IDP but have been told this is to be discussed this evening.

It is difficult for members of the public to follow the logic and understand the details about this kind of expenditure fully when it is not made available until late on the day of the Precept debate.

The expenditures listed are estimates, useful for financial planning, but in my view are not sound for use in calculating a precept level.

I see £10,000 for Bus Shelter this is the responsibility of BHCC/Bus Company and should not fall to the RPC. I have been told this is a contingency because it is hoped to fund from other sources, in which case it should not be included in the RPC budget for precept calculations.

Pavement Repair £10,000 is another area of BHCC responsibility the RPC should not allow BHCC off the hook on such matters. The danger as I see it, is that BHCC will always seek ways to avoid what to them is unessential expenditure and would argue there are more important items. Who will continue to be responsible for maintenance if the RPC pay for repairs?

I can see no justification for the RPC to increase the current precept level. Because the number of houses paying the precept has increased it will receive an addition of £1,430 in any case, at the existing precept level, and has sufficient funds to meet its expenditure.

It is interesting to note the Operational costs of £27,400 are 52% of the Net Precept, in other words more than half of the Precept is used for the RPC to exist. How does this compare with other similar sized Councils?”

Cllr Nixon (Chair) The Chair said the issues raised by Mr Bryant would be taken into account in the discussion of the precept and that a written reply would be issued following the discussion.

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1. **Apologies for absence**

Ward Cllr Earchy, Ward Cllr Fishleigh and Cllr Turnbull

2. **Declarations of interest**

None

3. **Agreement of the minutes of the meeting on 8th January.**

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair

4. **Matters Arising**

- i **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said that further to paragraph 4, i of the January minutes a meeting had been arranged with a BHCC about elements of the sustainable transport element of the S106 funds which included provision for safety barriers and a Zebra crossing on Steyning road opposite the Twitten, signage about no 2 bus services at the nearby bus stop and an assessment the quality of the paving in the High Street.

5. **Action Log** – The outstanding actions were updated as follows:

- i 1004. Cllr Turnbull to obtain stone samples for the new pond path and organise a visit to the site. Carried Forward
- ii 0101. All Councillors to make time to visit the public art concepts of the 5 selected Artists on display during the weekend on 13th and 14th January and let the Chair know if they had objections to any of them. Closed
- iii 0201. Cllr Nixon (Chair) to speak to the manager of Rottingdean Pharmacy about the future of the practice given plans to redevelop the site. Ward Cllr Fishleigh had spoken to the manager and Cllr Nixon (Chair) was waiting for the details. Carried Forward
- iv 0301. Cllr Cherrie to establish the ownership of the electrical junction boxes on the Green before any re-medial work takes place. Cllr Cherrie had contacted both UK Power and BHCC who were not aware of ownership, UK power had offered to provide an assessment. Cllr Cherrie is to follow up again with BHCC. Carried Forward

6. **Finance Update** - papers circulated

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- i Payments and invoices. The Clerk sought authorisation for the following payments

		VAT
HMRC January	£531.85	
C Hayes Salary January	£ 709.80	
C Hayes Comms (zoom)	£12.99	£2.60
J Lawrence (expenses)	£36.70	
Room Hire (including main hall for 2024/25 RPC meetings)	£521.00	
Total	£1812.34	

Authorisation was proposed by Cllr Levins, seconded by Cllr Poole and agreed by unanimous vote.

- ii Bank balances The Clerk advised the meeting that the bank balances at the end of January were

Unity Trust Bank Current Account	£	104.09
Unity Trust Bank Instant Access	£	42,288.37
C&C savings account	£	81,798.43
Cash at Bank	£	124,190.89

- iii January Accounts. The January accounts were presented and agreed.

- iv Precept for 2024/25. The Clerk took the meeting through paper circulated (Appendix A) highlighting the following points:

- Based on the latest estimates for the 2023/24 outturn and expected income for 2024/25 (with no change to the precept), the funds available to the Council in 2024/25 would be sufficient to meet planned expenditure and provide an estimated project reserve of around £24,500.
- In deciding the referendum Cllrs may wish to bear in mind:
 - The Government had not applied to Parish Councils the 3% limited above which a referendum would be required that applies to unitary councils.
 - More households in Rottingdean would be paying the precept in 2024/25 so there would be an increase in precept income of £1430 even if the precept paid by households remained the same as in 2023/24.

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- The Bank of England's latest monetary policy report (November 2023) suggests inflation would fall sharply in the near term to 4.75% and reduce to 3.75% later in 2024.
 - Precept income had been increased over the last three years by 2% in 2021/22, 2% in 2022/23 and 0.9% on 2023/24
 - The nearby parishes of Ditchling and Alfriston were to raise their precepts for Band D properties by 5% and 2.6% respectively
 - The impact of an increase in the precept on the amount paid by households would be moderated by the fact that more households would be paying the additional sum.
- v The following points were made in discussion:
- **Cllr Lewis** said that as inflation over the 2024/25 would average around 3.8% he favoured a 3% increase in precept income that would only add 15 pence to the current £32.06 annual amount paid. He also said that while he recognised that pavement repair was for BHCC, as My Bryant had pointed out, the City Council would tend to opt for the cheapest solution which could mean tarmacking damaged pavement in the Village. Parish Council provision for a contribution towards repair was therefore prudent.
 - **Cllr Lawrence** said it was important to recognise that due to Government funding cuts BHCC were not alone in facing a funding crises. She added that the Parish Council should be prepared to raise extra money for the future through the precept and she supported a 3% increase in precept income.
 - **Cllr Poole** supported a 3% increase in precept income although said it was important to recognise that even 7% increase would only raise an additional £3970, an insignificant amount compared to the huge costs of pavement repair.
 - **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said Cllr Trumbull, who could not be present had asked that the meeting be informed of his views which were that while he recognised the danger in taking on responsibilities of BHCC, if the Parsh did not take action BHCC would not fund important projects like pavement repair. He was of the opinion that with a growing number of people paying the precept, Rottingdean could afford to fund projects and would favour a 5% increase.
 - **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said that the Council had to accept that BHCC were under financial pressure which was not likely to change in the near future. We are increasingly experiencing difficulties in getting improvements that are important to residents done due to lack of BHCC funds. It was therefore important to have funds available to contribute to improving or maintaining essential facilities like had been the case for Park Road Toilets. The updated IDP reflects this and provides some provisions for foreseen issues. However, as there remains an estimated £24,500 reserve foreseen at the end of the financial year and some flexibility to re-direct funding set against long term projects such as the Lower High Street. As a result, in his view an increase beyond inflation would be hard to justify. He would therefore support a 3% increase in income,
- A 3% increase to precept income was proposed by **Cllr Levins**, seconded by **Cllr Poole** and agreed by unanimous vote.

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7. **Co-option Cllr Nixon Chair** advised that there were two applicants for the Councillor vacancies. The agreed process was to form an interview panel which had, for recent co-option exercises, consisted of the Chair, Vice Chair and another Councillor. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** asked for agreement to that arrangement and if a Councillor was willing to volunteer. The meeting agreed to the panel membership and Cllr Cherrie volunteered to join the panel. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** then asked if the questions to be put to the Councillors should remain unchanged from those agreed for the previous exercise, which was also agreed. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** asked the Clerk to set up interviews with the applicants

Action: Clerk to liaise with members of the panel and applications for the Councillor vacancies and arrange interviews.

8. Major Projects

- i St Aubyns **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** provided the following update

- Cllr Nixon (Chair) had chased up a signed copy of the Third Deed of Variation with Fairfax who had advised that it was awaiting the signature of the developer's lender.
- Cllrs Nixon and Turnbull were to meet Fairfax and their landscaper on February 8th to discuss details of the landscaping plans due to start in mid-February.
- Hedge cutting was due to start week commencing 19th February and completed before March 1st.
- Cllr Nixon (Chair) and the Clerk were to meet BEAG in February to discuss the action plan for the maintenance contract, utilities and security for the Pavilion and Chapel.
- Cllr Turnbull who was to step down in March, had generously offered to continue supporting the St Aubyns working group on all aspects of the landscaping until Field handover for which the Chair wanted to express his gratitude on behalf of the Council.
- The artistic component selection panel had met on the 17th of January and selected the concept presented by CODA as the winner. This was a 60 m² hard standing meeting and seating place in the centre of the Field shaped to represent the Rottingdean Windmill sail and used retaining walls with coloured glass to represent the Burne Jones stained glass windows.
- Councillors were asked to formally endorse the CODA concept and delegate responsibility to BEAG to approve the detailed design mid-February.

In discussion, **Cllr Poole** asked when the installation would be put in place. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said that only an amendment to the landscaping planning consent was required rather than full planning permission. The installation would then be put in place when the changes to the landscaping plan were agreed.

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The meeting then approved the selection panel recommendation.

Action Clerk to set up a meeting with BEAG to discuss the action plan for the maintenance contract, utilities and security for the Pavilion and Chapel.

- ii Neighbourhood Plan. The Clerk advised that there had been some confusion about the referendum on social media, so he had been posting messages to clarify the role of the Neighbourhood Plan and directing people to the RPC and BHCC websites for further information.

9. Planning

- i Applications considered in January. **Cllr Poole** advised that the following planning applications had been considered in January

10 Wilkinson Close Brighton BN2 7EG. Erection of single storey rear extension to replace existing conservatory. No objections

31 Chailey Avenue Rottingdean Brighton BN2 7GH. Application to remove condition 4 of planning permission BH2023/02228, which required the vehicle crossover to be converted back to a footway by raising the existing kerb and footway. No objections

42 Gorham Avenue Rottingdean Brighton BN2 7DP. Erection of oak structure to rear of property to provide first floor balcony to include glass balustrade and timber screens to sides, new entrance gates and brick piers and new driveway. No objections

10. Advisory Group Meeting Updates

- i **Strategy and Communications**

- a Infrastructure development plan (IDP). The Clerk took the meeting through the revised infrastructure development plan (annex B) drawing attention to the new projects included following the Councillor workshop in January; the repair to the electrical supply to the Village Green, a more permanent repair to the barrier between the pond and The Green (B2123) and a contingency sum of £10,000 for repair of the bus/tram shelters outside the White Horse should other funds not be found. The IDP was agreed by Councillors.

- ii **Village and Community**. **Cllr Lawrence** provided the following update.

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- **Cllr Lawrence** said that the Village and Community Group had considered the grant application from the PARC charity that raises money for children. £960 had been requested to pay for the story tellers for little smugglers reading season and recommended it be approved. The group recommended the grant be approved.

The following points were made in discussion

- **Cllr Levins** commented that the accounts provided by PARC showed that they had considerable finding in reserve and that given there were only around 200 under 9-year-olds in Rottingdean the sum requested seemed high. He suggested that a grant for two thirds of the amount applied for would be more reasonable.
- **Cllr Cherrie** said that the matter had been thoroughly discussed by the group and it was considered appropriate to support the event.
- **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** asked how widely the event would be advertised and if the event would also benefit disadvantaged children in the area.
- **Cllr Lawrence** said that the event would have wide benefit in around the village for young people which had often not directly benefited from Parish Council grants. **Cllr Lawrence** then proposed that that the full amount be approved pending the provision of further information about coverage and on the condition that an appropriate amount of the grant would be returned if any events were cancelled.

This was seconded by Cllr Poole and agreed by vote with one abstention.

iii **Natural Environment. Cllr Nixon (Chair)** gave the following update on behalf of Cllr Turnbull:

- Cllr Nixon (Chair) had been in correspondence with BHCC who were to inspect the condition of the Rottingdean Beach cliff face, but they were anxious not to disturb the biodiversity embedded in the cliffs.
- Cllr Turnbull was to meet the resident on Sheep Walk shortly and indicate that the Parish Council only intended to place stones on the west side to prevent parking.
- The responsibility for the pond path had passed to BEAG but Cllr Turnbull had contacted the preferred contractor and arranged for a meeting to get estimates for the additional works related to the posts and rails.
- Ward Cllr Fishleigh was waiting for a reply to an enquiry sent to BHCC about whether the Access to Beacon Hill project had been included in the approved spending plans.

iv **Built Environment. Cllr Cherrie** gave the following update:

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- The proposal to lobby Brighton and Hove Buses for a new Rottingdean to Lewes route was discussed by BEAG and Cllr Cherie was to contact bus company
- The group agreed the proposal to hand over the final steps in the art installation work at St Aubyns to BEAG. It was also agreed that some matters that currently lie with NEAG should be transferred to BEAG, such as the pond path works.
- Cllr Cherie was to take forward the proposals for new yellow lines at the junction of Nicholson Place and Steyning Road with BHCC.

The meeting closed at 21.34. The next meeting is on 4th March 2024

Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk

February 2024

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Councillors

From: Chris Hayes, RFO

Date: 5 February 2024

The 2024/25 Precept

Summary

Based on the latest estimates for the 2023/24 outturn and expected income for 2024/25 (with no change to the precept), the funds available to the Council in 2024/25 will be sufficient to meet planned expenditure. In addition, there would be an estimated project reserve of around £24,500.

In setting the precept for 2024/25 Councillors will wish to bear that inflation is forecast to all to 3.75% by Q2 2024 and although central Government has imposed a core council tax referendum limit of up to 3% on unitary councils, no such principle has been proposed for town and parish councils. One key point to bear in mind is that more households in Rottingdean will be paying the precept in 2024/25 so there will be an increase in precept income of £1430 even if the precept paid by households remains the same as in 2023/24. An illustration of the impact of different levels of precept income on Band D households is shown in the table at paragraph 4.

Background

1. The draft budget requirement for 2024/25 agreed at the December Council meeting and amended following the workshop on 11 January is summarised below (see Annex A for more detail).

PAYE	£15,500
Operational Costs	£27,400
Grants	£7,500
Infrastructure	£2,700
St Aubyns	£16,500
Lower High Street	£50,000
Pavement Improvement	£10,000
Pond Path (c/f)	£7000
Bus/Tram Shelter	£10,000
Village Pond Barrier	£10,000
Village Green Electrical Supply	£6,000
<u>Total Budget</u>	<u>£162,600</u>

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2. The precept requirement calculation is shown at Annex C. My current projection suggests that the Council will end the 2023/24 year with funds of £112,000 (see Annex B), which with the current level of precept income would be sufficient to cover agreed expenditure for 2024/25 and provide a project reserve of around £24,500. In addition, the Council will have access to the one-off payment from the developer of £350,000 (indexed linked from 2019) towards future maintenance of St Aubyns Field and buildings.

Context

3. In deciding where exactly where to set the 2023/24 precept there are some external factors that Councillors may wish to consider:
 - i **Central Government Guidance.** [The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024 to 2025](#) was published on 18 December for consultation. A referendum requirement for council tax increases of 3% or more has been set for primary authorities but no such limit has been placed on town and parish councils. The average increase in the Band D precept charged by local precepting bodies for 2023/24 was 6.1%.
 - ii **Inflation.** The Bank of England's latest [monetary policy report](#) (November 2023) suggests inflation will fall sharply in the near term to 4.75% and reduce to 3.75% later in 2024.
 - iii **Recent Precept Changes.** Changes in the last three years are as follows:
 - 2021/22 a 2% increase in the precept - 60 pence annual increase for Band D
 - 2022/23 a 2% increase in the precept - 64 pence annual increase for Band D
 - 2023/24 a 0.9% increase in the precept – 28 pence annual increase for Band D

Councillors may also wish to note that the nearby parishes of Ditchling and Alfriston are to raise their precepts for Band D properties by 5% and 2.6% respectively.

- iv **Project Reserve.** During the last three years the Parish Council project reserve funds have reduced from £55,500 to £24,500.

2024/25 Precept Calculations

4. The number of households estimated to be paying the precept (the taxbase) during 2024/25 has increased from 2023/24 estimates. This has a number of effects on the precept income:

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- i As there are more households paying the precept, if the Council decided to keep the precept income the same as in 2023/24 (£56,700) each household would pay **less** per year.
- ii If the Council wished to keep the amount paid by each household the same this would raise an extra £1430 from the precept.
- iii If the Council wanted to **increase** the precept income further, the consequent increase in the precept paid by households would be moderated by the Council Tax Rebate (CTR) provided by central Government and the fact that more households will be paying the additional sum. For example, an increase in the precept income of 5% would equate to an increase in the Band D rate of 2.4% (or 79 pence per annum) and would provide an additional precept income of £2840.

Some illustrations of the effect of changes on the Band D rate on precept income are shown in the table below

	2023/24	Income same as 2023/24	Same Band D precept	1% Increase in income	3% Increase in income	5% Increase in come	7% increase in income
Income from Precept	£56,700	£56,700	£58,130	£57,130	£58,400	£59,540	£60,670
CTR Grant	£2,200	£2,190	£2,270	£2,210	£2,240	£2,290	£2,378
Net Precept	£52,272	£52,282	£54,430	£52,807	£53,866	£54,906	£55,907
Tax Base	1667	1706	1706	1706	1706	1706	1706
Band D	£32.66	£31.86	£32.66	£32.18	£32.81	£33.45	£34.07
% Change in Band D		-2.4%	0.0%	-1.5%	0.5%	2.4%	4.3%
Change per annum		-£0.80	£0.00	-£0.48	£0.15	£0.79	£1.41
Increase in precept income from 2023/24		£70	£1,430	£430	£1,700	£2,840	£3,970

Signed

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2024/25 Budget**Annual day to day operational costs**

Clerks salary + PAYE	£15,500	
Clerk Expenses	£50	
Payroll admin	£450	
Printing & Stationery	£250	
Insurance	£2,500	
Meeting room hire	£1,500	
Subscriptions	£50	
Postage & comms	£200	
Audit fees	£900	
Website (DD)	£550	
Newsletter/Publicity	£650	
LNR Expenses/Leaflets and Annual Reports	£400	
St Aubyns Maintenance	£12,000	
Pond Maintenance	£2,900	
General expenses/Contingency	£5,000	
Sub Total		£42,900

Grants & Donations

Grants & Donations	£7,500	
Sub Total		£7,500

Infrastructure

General Improvements	£250	
Access improvements	£1,000	
Well being	£300	
Road safety speeding and 20 & 30 mph signs	£1,000	
Sub Total	£150	£2,700

Major Projects

St Aubyns	16500	
Lower High Street	£50,000	
Pavement Improvement	£10,000	
Pond Path	£7,000	
Bus/Tram Shelter	£10,000	
Village Pond Barrier	£10,000	
Village Green Electrics	£6,000	
Sub Total		£109,500

TOTAL BUDGET**£162,600**

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Estimated Outturn 2024/25

Bank Balances 30/12/2023							
Unity 1	£104						
Unity 2	£44,256						
C&C	£81,493						
	£125,853						
Income Jan - Mar	£1,250						
Total Income	£127,103					£127,103	
Expenditure Jan - Mar			Jan	Feb	Mar		
Operational			£1,925	£2,412	£1,304		
Grants			£1,650	£2,000			
Infrastructure							
Projects					£5,000		
Total Spend Dec-Mar			£3,575	£4,412	£6,304	£14,291	
End Year Bank Balance							£112,812
Est Income 24/25	Bank interest					£3,600	
	Precept (23/24 level)					£56,700	
	Transfer St Aubyns					£14,000	
							£74,300
Total Available							£187,112
Less Budget							£162,600
Surplus							£24,512

Notes

- All amounts are ex VAT
- St Aubyns maintenance costs will be met from the one-off £350,000 developer future maintenance payment

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Precept Requirement 2024/25

<u>Available Funds</u>		<u>Expenditure Plans</u>		<u>Minimum Precept Required</u>
Bank Balance 31/03/23 (Est)	£112,812	PAYE	£15,500	
Income (Bank Interest)	£3,600	Operational Costs	£27,400	
Transfers (St Aubyns Maintenance)	£14,000	Grants	£7,500	
		Infrastructure	£2,700	
		St Aubyns	£16,500	
		Lower High Street	£50,000	
		Pavement Repair	£10,000	
		Pond Path	7000	
		Bus/Tram Shelter	£10,000	
		Village Pond		
		Barrier	£10,000	
		Village Green		
		Electrics	£6,000	
Total Available	£130,412		£162,600	£32,188
Precept income at 2023/24 level	£56,700			
Total available	£187,112	Less expenditure	£162,600	Surplus £24,512

Signed

Date