



## Minutes of the meeting of Rottingdean Parish Council on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Present: Cllr Nixon (Chair) Cllr Turnbull, Cllr Poole, Cllr Lawrence, Cllr Cherrie C Hayes, Parish Clerk

Public: Ward Cllr Eathy, Ward Cllr Fishleigh, Phil Evans

Before beginning proceedings **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** remarked on the sad passing recently of Roy Wales, BEM, a former Councillor. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said that Mr Wales had made a significant contribution to the community through his work and especially through music. He led the group that refurbished the Terraces and, together with his wife Christine, organised many concerts there over the years. A minute's silence was then observed in his memory.

### Public Questions.

**Ward Cllr Fishleigh** said that she was waiting for a reply from Brighton and Hove City Council about the bus shelter that had been removed from West Street. She understood that the company were looking for a replacement. **Cllr Fishleigh** also raised the issue of the progress being made to liberate the Section 106 funds destined for Rottingdean from BHCC. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** confirmed that Cllr Fishleigh and he planned to meet Simon Barrett at BHCC about release of the funds. Cllr Nixon (Chair) also confirmed that he had yet to fix a date for an on-site meeting with the Sustainable Transport Project Manager regarding the planned St Aubyns specific work.

**Ward Cllr Eathy** said he continued to work with Cllr Turnbull on the undercliff safety and that he had set up an energy workshop in Saltdean and was looking for willing volunteers to set up a Rottingdean workshop. **Cllr Lawrence** agreed to follow up with Ward Cllr Eathy.

### 1. **Apologies for absence**

None

## 2. **Declarations of interest**

None

3. **Agreement of the minutes of the meeting on 5th February.** The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair

## 4. **Matters Arising**

- i Neighbourhood Plan. The Clerk said that having passed the referendum the final stage was adoption by BHCC at their Council meeting on 28 March.
- ii Kipling Gardens Wall. **Cllr Lawrence** reported that BHCC were now gathering estimates for the repair work.

5. **Action Log** – The Clerk updated the action log as follows:

- i 1004. Cllr Turnbull to obtain stone samples for the new pond path and organise a visit to the site. Cllr Turnbull and Cllr Poole had met with contractor and would update as part of the advisory group feedback Closed
- ii 0201. Cllr Nixon (Chair) to speak to the manager of Rottingdean Pharmacy about the future of the practice should planning consent be granted. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** advised that Ward Cllr Fishleigh had spoken to the manager. **Ward Cllr Fishleigh** said that the manager had said he had a two-year lease for the premises but on Cllr Fishleigh's advice would check if there was break clause. Cllr Fishleigh was waiting to hear further. Closed
- iii 0301. Cllr Cherrie to establish the ownership of the electrical panels on the Green before an assessment of their condition or any remedial work takes place. **Cllr Cherrie** said he had enquired with City Parks who had been unable to help so he was trying the street lighting team. Should this not be successful he would revert to UK Power Networks Closed
- iv 0102. Clerk to liaise with members of the panel and applicants for the Councillor vacancies and arrange interviews. An interview had taken place on 16<sup>th</sup> February and a further interview would take place on 26 March. Closed
- v 0202. Clerk to set up a meeting with the Built Environment Advisory Group (BEAG) to discuss the action plan for the maintenance contracts, utilities and security for the Pavilion and Chapel. The meeting had taken place on 27 February Closed

6. **Finance Update** - papers circulated

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

		<b>VAT</b>
HMRC February	£531.85	
C Hayes Salary February	£709.80	
C Hayes Comms (zoom)	£12.99	£2.60
One Digital (NP printing - est)	£110.00	
Room Hire	£97.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1461.64</b>	

Authorisation was proposed by Cllr Cherrie, 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 February were:

Unity Trust Bank Current Account	£	104.09
Unity Trust Bank Instant Access	£	40,473.43
C&C savings account	£	82,085.04
<b>Cash at Bank</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>122,662.56</b>

- iii February Accounts. The accounts for February presented by the Clerk and approved.
- iv Options for investment of the St Aubyns Maintenance lump sum. **Cllr Nixon (Chair) reminded** the meeting that a one-off payment of £350,000, adjusted for inflation from 2019, for future maintenance of St Aubyns was due to be received by the Parish Council on transfer. He then asked the Clerk to draw out the key points of the paper he had circulated on options for investment of the lump sum. The Clerk made the following points:
- It was incumbent on the Council to ensure that the lump sum lasted as long as possible to provide funds for the maintenance of St Aubyns. The paper circulated considered options to invest the money to provide an income stream whilst protecting the capital sum.
  - There were a number of options set out in the paper. The most straightforward was to deposit the lump sum across a number of bank

accounts in amounts below the £85,000 limit covered by the financial services compensation scheme (FSCS). This approach would generate a variable return depending on interest rates and ensure the capital was fully protected. Similarly, the money could be deposited in a fixed interest rate account for a longer period which could provide a higher and more predictable return but with a slightly higher risk as only £85,000 would be covered by the FSCS.

- Government bonds or gilts could offer a higher return still but would tie the money up for longer and the income would vary with interest rates. Only £85,000 would be covered by the FSCS, but it was unlikely that the capital would be at risk.
- There were also a range of other options, for example, investing in corporate bonds, infrastructure projects or social impact bonds, which could offer a higher return, but which would tie up the capital for longer periods and present a higher risk to the capital
- The key consideration for Councillors would be to balance a steady income stream from the lump sum, maintaining some liquidity and managing the risk. Regulations on Local Government investment, which were reflected in the Parish Council investment policy, required the Council to conduct thorough due diligence on investment opportunities to assess their financial viability, regulatory compliance, and alignment with the Council's objectives
- In view of this the Clerk proposed that the Council agree to the commissioning of a professional investment option and risk analysis report.  
**This was approved by Councillors.**

## 7. Co-option

- i Recommendation from interview panel. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** advised the meeting that Phil Evans had been interviewed on 16 February for co-option to the Council. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said that Mr Evans met all the criteria for co-option and had a wide range of experience in dealing with local government a local communities both in the UK and abroad. The interview panel therefore recommended his co-option to the Council. **This was approved by unanimous vote.** **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** then suggested that when in place, Cllr Evans join the St Aubyns Working Group, which was agreed.

## 8. Major Projects

- i St Aubyns **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** provided the following update:
  - Final Completion of the transfer was subject to a Third Deed of Variation (DoV) to include the Parish Council (RPC) in the list of parties exempt from certain

Developer obligations. The lender had now signed the DoV, and completion of the document was expected within the next 2 weeks.

- The Working Group had reviewed the draft St Aubyns Stewardship Group Constitution which was to be reformatted along the lines of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) constitution before sharing with Councillors.
- A variation to the weed killing plan of the Field Specification had been requested to enable handover in mid-May. Spraying to kill weeds required weed growth and then approximately 6 weeks before grass seeding. This would then delay the establishment of the grass until mid-summer with hotter drier weather. Fairfax had agreed to spray in September 2024 and again in Spring 2025 with broad leaf weedkiller.
- The BHCC planning team had been asked to confirm that a fence was not needed around the Infiltration Basin. The Clerk said the team had advised that that this was not a planning matter, but a health and safety issue and he would enquire further.

**Action:** Clerk to investigate the health and safety requirements for the infiltration basin.

- Options for the contract management approach for maintenance had been discussed. This could take the form of a wide-ranging facilities management approach requiring fewer contracts but that could be more expensive unless done at scale with a precise specification. The alternative would be a number of separate contracts which would provide greater flexibility and be easier to fine tune for individual areas of work.
- The Working Group recommended the latter approach with rolling contracts so that amalgamation/ simplification could take place at a later stage where appropriate. **Councillors agreed this approach.**
- A BEAG meeting took place on 27th February to discuss the action plan for the maintenance contracts, utilities and security for the Pavilion and Chapel. A visit to the Pavilion and Chapel had been arranged for 13th March and a detailed and plan of action would be developed for the April Council meeting.
- Field preparations were under way. The aim was to finalise the maintenance scope documents or Mowing and Landscaping (including, if possible, bin collection) with the Chair and Clerk in early March and seek Council agreement to this, proposals for combined general waste and dog waste and for accessible picnic tables and benches at the April Council meeting.
- Cllr Lawrence and the Clerk were preparing a Policy for the Field Use, for inclusion in entrance notices. This would be reviewed by the Working Group on March 18th prior to Council approval.
- Good progress had been made on the artistic component with the ground work being prepared by Fairfax. An updated Field landscape plan, including the CODA installation, had been submitted to BHCC for approval. A community interaction day was planned with CODA. **Cllr Lawrence** said she was keen to involve local schools and would talk about this to former Cllr Sue John who was supporting the work.

## 9. Planning

- i Applications considered in February **Cllr Poole** said a planning application for a heritage sign at Tudor Close had been discussed with Chris Davidson (Chair of Rottingdean Heritage) as the proposed site had been judged unsuitable because it could restrict access along the pavement. An alternative position had been agreed and an amended application was to be submitted.

## 10. Advisory Group Meeting Updates

- i **Strategy and Communications (SCAG). Cllr Nixon (Chair)** provided the following update
  - As Cllr Turnbull was to step down as a Councillor at the end of March, it was proposed that Cllr Poole join SCAG. Cllr Turnbull had agreed to continue to work on St Aubyns Field and it was proposed that he be co-opted onto to BEAG until the end of May. **These proposals were agreed.**
  - The group also proposed that the annual village meeting was held on 9<sup>th</sup> April, preceded by the issue of the annual village newsletter in late March. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** suggested that the meeting open with a presentation about the work of the Council to inform residents and prompt discussion. **This was agreed.**

Action: **Clerk and Cllr Nixon** to work up a presentation for the annual village meeting

**Clerk** to organise contributions to the annual village newsletter and arrange printing and distribution by late March.

- **Cllr Lawrence** said that a future communication approach has been discussed by SCAG. The aim would be to provide a more structured approach which would include a deep dive article in each Rottingdean Village News (RVN) issue, posting rights for Councillors on social media channels, the use of mailing lists of local community groups and getting regular feedback on community engagement. **Cllr Turnbull** suggested the approach should include reaching out to new residents. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** said that an addition page in each RVN would cost around £600 and asked for Councillors agreement. **Councillors approved the extra expenditure, in principle.**
- ii **Village and Community. Cllr Lawrence** provided the following update:
    - PARC had responded to the request for further information on their grant application which would be discussed with the group and fed back to the Councillors.

- Cllr Lawrence was discussing a proposal from a local resident for an artisan fair in the Village Hall
- The group were to discuss the setting up of a register of all local venues to help people wishing to organise community events and activities

iii **Natural Environment. Cllr Turnbull** provided the following update.

- Cllr Turnbull said he would continue to work with Ward Cllr Earthy on safety in the undercliff and would keep the Council informed through the Natural Environment advisory group. The matter of challenging BHCC's position on the status of the undercliff would not be pursued, as the police had made clear they would not be in a position to enforce any restrictions that would result of designation as a highway. The intention was now to involve the Friends of Rottingdean Coast and Environment. (FORCE) and develop a package of proposals such as signage, barriers and rumble strips to put to BHCC.
- The project to make Beacon Hill more accessible had attracted section 106 funding but news about its deployment was awaited.
- Cliff face safety was still a concern as work had been delayed until October because of rare sea heather growing on the cliff face.
- No progress had been made on repair to the Terraces despite a number of enquires made with the seafront manager. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** suggested that the group might consider if RPC could fund the repair
- Good progress had been made on the designation of bathing status for Rottingdean beach which was now being consulted on by DEFRA along with another 27 sites. The consultation ended on 8<sup>th</sup> of March and confirmation status was expected in May following which BHCC would be required to provide regular reports on water quality.

iv **Built Environment.** In addition to the note circulated **Cllr Cherrie** provided the following update:

- BEAG met on 27<sup>th</sup> February with Cllr Nixon and the Clerk in attendance for an initial discussion about the maintenance of the St Aubyns Field and buildings. The group will now begin initial investigations into building maintenance contracts, insurance, window protection quotes, etc. The first step would be a site visit scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> March.
- Cllr Cherrie had contacted Brighton and Hove Buses who advised they would not be in a position to introduce a direct Lewes / Rottingdean route at this time. They do not believe such a service would be cost effective and believe BHCC would be unlikely to subsidise it.

- A request had been received the construction company undertaking the refurbishment at St Margaret's to position a site office either on the grass verge outside the church or on The Green. Following discussion within the group and with Father Anthony, it had been suggested the office be placed in the corner of the church grounds. A further proposal to dump aggregate on the grass verge for daily removal was being dealt with by the church warden, Heather Butler.
- Cllrs Nixon and Cherrie were to meet a representative from BHCC to discuss deployment of the S106 infrastructure improvement funds for the village, including the possibility of a zebra crossing on Steyning Road, new barriers at the exits from St Aubyn's and, improvements to kerb and pavement quality.

In closing the meeting **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** expressed thanks to Cllr Turnbull on behalf of the Council for his commitment to the work of the Council over the last five years acting as Deputy RFO, Chair of NEAG, member of SCAG and BEAG and most recently lending his expertise to work on the specification and transfer for St Aubyns Field.

**The meeting closed at 21.15. The next meeting is on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2024.**

***Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk***

***March 2024***