

**Minutes of the Meeting of Rottingdean Parish Council** **at Monday 3rd of March 2025**

Present: Cllr Nixon (Chair), Cllr Lawrence, Cllr Evans, Cllr Cherrie, Cllr Snow, Cllr Poole, Cllr Levins.

C Hayes, Parish Clerk

Public Gallery: Ward Cllr Earthy, Ward Cllr Fishleigh, Dirk Mitchell, Sandra Hickin, Andrew Hickin, Jane Mead, Rose Daley, Bob McLellan, Colin Lane, Paul Lane, Caroline.

Questions from the Public:

**Dirk Mitchell** thanked Cllr Nixon and the Clerk for their visit to residents neighbouring Longhill School on March 1st to discuss concerns about the school's application for a 3G pitch. Mr. Mitchell expressed appreciation for the advice to speak directly to the school, but mentioned previous attempts had not received a response. He wondered if the Parish Council could help facilitate a discussion. **Cllr Nixon** noted it would be difficult for the Parish Council, having submitted its view on the application as a statutory consultee, to become involved before a decision on the application but promised to consider the request and write to Mr. Mitchell.

**Jane Mead** asked if the Parish Council was aware of plans by the South Downs National Park (SDNP) to build houses north of Saltdean. The Clerk responded that the SDNP was conducting a land availability review as part of the local plan review, which was available on line, but he was not aware of any specific development plans for Saltdean.

**Colin Lane** raised concerns about water run-off onto the brick path at the south of St Aubyns Field, particularly at the southwest corner. He also inquired if the Parish Council planned to direct people onto the Field once the temporary fencing was removed along the south side. **Cllr Nixon** stated that the first priority was to stop unauthorized vehicular access to the Field. He said that the gap in the bund would be filled, the bund would be seeded and extended by a further 2.2 meters to the grid-reinforced emergency service access, where lockable posts would be installed. Moreover, the land to the south of the Sweeps, compacted by heavy installation vehicles, had been perforated to improve drainage, which should help reduce water runoff. He agreed to look into the southwest corner**. Cllr Evans** added that additional trees would be planted in the southwest of the Field that would aid water retention. As for entry to the Field, **Cllr Nixon** said mown paths would be created to indicate where people should enter.

**Caroline Lane** thanked the Council for planting the wildflower meadow and asked if there would be paths through the meadow for people to fully enjoy it. **Cllr Evans** replied this would be considered once the meadow matured, bearing in mind that it was also intended to encourage wildlife.

**Sandra Hickin** asked if there were any updates on the Dene Nursing Home. Ward Cllr Fishleigh mentioned she was aware of inquiries by a number of nursing home companies.

**Andrew Hickin** inquired about the outcome of the discussion with the BHCC Planning Committee. **Cllr Nixon** indicated that this topic would be discussed later in the meeting.

**Bob McLelland** asked if Parish Councils would still exist in the future given the Government devolution plans. **Cllr Nixon** said the plans focused on streamlining the intermediate tiers of local government and that the White Paper specifically cited the continued importance of Parish Councils in representing local communities.

**Ward Cllr Earthy** asked if the Parish Council had an update on the repair of Kipling Garden wall. **Cllr Nixon** said this was raised at the meeting with the BHCC, CEO that would be discussed later in the meeting, but that the CEO had accepted responsibility for repair and had asked one of her senior team present at the meeting to investigate progress.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Lowery

1. **Declarations of interest**

None

1. **Agreement of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 3rd of February**. The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.
2. **Matters Arising**

None.

1. **Action Log.** The Clerk took the meeting through the outstanding actions
	1. 0210. Cllr Evans to follow up the Friends of Beacon Hill (FOBH) notice board proposal. **Cllr Evans** said following a change in membership FoBH the group did not have the capacity at the moment develop a proposal so he would take this work forward behalf of the Council. He was now in the process of contacting the designer of the current boards, assessing repair costs and the cost of a new design. Carried Forward
	2. 1015. **Cllr Lawrence** to follow up the repair of Kipling Gardens wall with BHCC. To be discussed later in the meeting. Closed
	3. 0202. Clerk to obtain a further quote for pond maintenance work. The Clerk said he had asked three firms to quote but only one had replied with a quote of £13,940 per annum plus VAT. This compared to the quote of £3500 per annum by the current contractor. The Clerk and Cllr Evans were therefore recommending that the current contractor be retained. **This was agreed by Councillors**. Closed
	4. 0202. Cllr Evansto provide advice to the March Council meeting about the planting of shrubs to protect the fruit trees. **Cllr Evans** stated that he had consulted with the BHCC tree officer, who believed that the shelter trees should provide adequate protection. However, he said that he would seek additional advice from the Tree officer and the Brighton Permaculture Trust (BPT) when they returned to maintain the trees. Closed
	5. 0302.Cllr Lawrenceto provide a proposal for a St Aubyns opening event to the March Council meeting. To be discussed later in the meeting. Closed.
2. **Finance Update**
	1. **Payments and invoices**. The Clerk sought authorisation for the following payments

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|  |  | **VAT** |
| HMRC February | £563.58 |  |
| C Hayes Salary February | £745.13 |  |
| C Hayes Comms (zoom) | £12.99 | £2.60 |
| Room Hire  | £76 |  |
| Village Survey (one year’s subscription) | £330 | £66 |
| St Aubyns Field - Planning Fee | £653.33 | £130.67 |
| Christmas Tree Lights  | £24.16 | £4.93 |
| **Total** | **£2405.19** |  |

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

* 1. **February 2025 Accounts.** The accounts were presented. The Clerk drew attention to an income of £15.99 shown in the accounts February that he said was a refund of an over payment for the Zoom video conferencing service. **The accounts were agreed**. **Cllr Nixon** suggested the Clerk should review recent use of the Zoom service and advise on whether it the subscription should be maintained.

**Action.** **Clerk** to review recent use of the Zoom service and advise on whether the subscription should be maintained.

1. **Co-option –** Panel recommendation on co-option**. Cllr Nixon** said the panel had interviewed the applicant on the 10th of February and had circulated a report recommending co-option. The Chair then called for a vote. **Co-option of Sandra Hickin was agreed by unanimous vote**. The Chair welcomed Sandra to the Council.
2. **Major Projects**
	1. **St Aubyns**

**Cllr Evans** gave the following feedback

* Planting of trees took place on the 13th and 20th of February with around ten volunteers in support on each occasion. The planting of the shelter trees was expected shortly and both BHCC and Permaculture Trust (BPT) would be maintaining the trees over the next three years.
* Part of the Forestry Commission grant package included provision for training on pruning and managing the trees.
* Planning permission for the revised field plan had been provided
* The Clerk said he had obtained a quote of £5700 per annum for Field maintenance as per the specification develop by the working group, subject to a visit to the site. This compared favourability to the quote received following the tendering exercise and he and Cllr Evans recommended this was confirmed with the contractor. **This was agreed by Councillors.**

**Action.** **The Clerk** and **Cllr Evans** to arrange a site visit with the contractor to take the quote to the next stage.

 **Cllr Nixon** provided the following update.

* Transfer of the Field, Chapel and Pavilion was expected on the 31st of April and between now and then the grass would be maintained by the developer and re-seeded, as necessary.
* The Field hedges had been cut prior to the start of the nesting season
* Repairs to the Pavilion had been completed, and practical completion could now proceed.
* Planning permission was needed to before window protection could be provided for the Chapel. A quote to develop a listed building application had been received and the Clerk was in the process of obtaining others.
* The hard standing on the artistic component had not compressed as expected and was too soft. The matter had been reported to Fairfax and CODA, the designers, to resolve.

**Cllr Lawrence** then provided an update on an opening event planned for the 28th of June.

* The aim was to establish the St Aubyns field, pavilion, and chapel as assets for the village and the broader Deans Community, initiate the process of identifying individuals interested in volunteering to maintain the field and its assets, and unite the community to acknowledge the efforts made to create the new estate and preserve elements of the old school.
* The Mayor would be asked to open the event that would begin with a community picnic with entertainment for children and adults such as children’s games and races. Music would be provided from the Brighton Big Band. BPT could also be on hand to instruct people about the trees.
* Tours of the buildings could also be organised to tell the story of the history of the school and its pupils.

**The meeting agreed that Cllr Lawrence should come back to the April meeting with a fully developed plan and budget proposal.**

**Action. Cllr Lawrence** to come back to the April meeting with a fully developed plan and budget proposal for the St Aubyns opening event.

1. **Planning**
	1. Applications considered in February Cllr Poole said that only one application came forward in February

**SDNP/25/00273/APNB, Balsdean Farm, Balsdean, Rottingdean, Brighton. The erection of nine polytunnels.** The Partish Council did not object.

**Cllr Poole** also provided an update on plans to extend the rear terrace of 11 Bazehill Road. Neighbours had objected to this development due to concerns about overlooking of their property. The Parish had also objected. **Cllr Poole** said he had since met with the developer who had presented revised design drawings that significantly reduced the size of the terrace and included hedging and fencing to address the overlooking issues. As a result, the Parish Council's objections had been withdrawn.

* 1. Meeting with Planning Committee Chair and Head of Planning. **Cllr Nixon** gave the following feedback:
* The visit had been arranged following a controversial application that had been approved despite RPC’s objection that it contravened a number of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) policies
* As the NP was fairly new the aim was to learn from this experience and better understand the process.
* At the meeting its was agreed that
	+ RPC objections to an application would be given a higher profile in planning meetings with the addition of a briefing sheet setting out RPC’s objections attached to the documents for Committee members.
	+ RPC would attend Planning Committee meetings where RPC had objected
	+ Where there was a difference of opinion in the interpretation of the Neighbourhood Plan policies, BHCC officers would set out their reasons for overriding the NP policies in their report and provide feedback to RPC.
* Cllr Loughran had noted that given the revised National Policy Planning Framework and increased Government housing targets, decisions would favour development in finely balanced cases.
	1. 5G Mast on St Margaret’s **Cllr Lawrence** said she had attended a meeting with the 5G mast company and representatives of St Margaret’s Court. They had provided more detail about the need for a 5G mast, particularly for the emergency services in the area, and took the meeting through why eleven other potential sites had proved unsuitable. The company were to resubmit their application on which the Parish Council would be consulted.
	2. SDNP Local Plan Review The Clerk reported that SDNP was consulting on their Local Plan review. This first round of consultation that ended on the 17th of March 2025 was at fairly high level and would be followed by a second round in 2026. After reviewing the draft, the Clerk had found no major concerns for the Parish Council and did not recommend a response to this first consultation. However, he advised that Parishes had been invited to submit a Parish Priorities Statement (PPS) that would form part of the evidence for the revised plan. He suggested the Parish Council submit a PPS and offered to circulate a draft. **This was agreed.**

**Action:** The Clerk to draft a Parish Priorities Statements (PPS) for the SDNP local plan review to and circulate for approval.

1. **Advisory Group Meeting Updates**
	1. **Strategy and Communications**
		1. Meeting with BHCC CEO. **Cllr Nixon** provided the following feedback on the meeting
* A meeting would be arranged between BHCC, RPC and Ward Councillors to share drawings and costings for an integrated improvement plan for the High Street carriage way and pavement
* BHCC would arrange for the costing of the Lower High Street phase 1 plan.
* BHCC would conduct a feasibility study on traffic management options for the High Street.
* The CEO had accepted responsibility for the repair of Kipling Gardens wall and said that BHCC would follow this up and provide an update.
* BHCC would review the state of the Cliff face adjacent to the Terraces to address concerns about the risk of chalk and flint collapses.
* BHCC would ensure that RPC received advance notification of upcoming road works/closures in the Parish

In addition, Cllr Nixon said that BHCC had asked to set up a meeting to discuss the extent to which the Parish Council would be interested in the transfer of community assets in the Parish currently held by BHCC. Cllr Nixon had said that at the moment RPC were just getting into operational management with the transfer of St Aubyns, but he would seek Councillors views on whether they would be prepared to explore what BHCC had in mind.

The following points were then made in discussion:

* Any offer would need to be viable for RPC in the long term.
* Councillors mentioned that there were a number assets in the Parish currently held by BHCC
* If the size of the City Council grew as a result of the devolution proposals, the management of community assets risk becoming more remote from the users.
* There were many Parish and Town Councils with a much wider scope than RPC today.

**Councillors agreed that Cllr Nixon and another Cllr should meet BHCC to explore the matter.**

* + 1. Energy efficiency information. **Cllr Poole** said he and Cllr Cherrie had attended a training session on the provision of energy saving information. They thought it would be useful to set up a mechanism to pass information and advice on how to save energy savings to residents. They proposed that they could provide this at the RPC stall at the Village Fair. **This was agreed by Councillors provided it did not include any referrals to information or services provided on a commercial basis**.
		2. Annual Village Meeting (AVM). **Cllr Nixon** said the group proposed that the AVM be held at 6.30 pm on the 19th of May at which time the St Aubyns transfer would have taken place, and the Field would be open. **This was agreed.**
	1. **Village and Community**. **Cllr Lawrence** provided the following update.
* A welcome pack for new Rottingdean residents had been developed with help of Clive Dickson. The pack advised people of local activities, encouraged shopping locally and included volunteering opportunities. The aim was to deliver this to new residents and ensure it was available to local estate agents.
* The local branch of the British Legion was organising a tea dance on the 3rd of May to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE day. The group would consider how the anniversary event might be recognised as part of the St Aubyns opening event.
	1. **Natural Environment.** No Update
	2. **Built Environment. Cllr Cherrie** provide the following update:
* The missing red paving bricks on Vicarage Lane had been repaired
* BHCC were to inspect the state of the Twitten footpath, with a view to repairing if they deemed it necessary.
* A complaint from the head teacher at St Margarets School about poor lighting in Whiteways Lane was forwarded onto BHCC who had committed to looking at the situation but had said they would not install any further street lamps.
* Following a complaint from a resident, Cllr Cherrie had contacted BHCC about overflowing bins on the seafront. BHCC had said that the current number of bins was sufficient, but they would deliver more later in the year to cope with increased footfall during the summer.
* Cllr Cherrie had contacted BHCC (City Clean) about the possibility of them emptying bins on St Aubyn’s Field. There had been no response so far. A further two companies would be approached.
* A quote had been obtained for the sum of £4708.80 for the repair of the pond fence. **Cllr Cherrie sought authorisation from the Council to incur this expenditure which was agreed.**

**Cllr Evans** noted that an informal path at the top of Whiteways Lane’s appeared to have been landscaped to accommodate a bike trail. It was suggested that the Clerk investigate this area and consider what action should be taken

**Action:** The Clerk to investigate potential unauthorised landscaping at to the top of Whiteways Lane and consider what action should be taken.

The public meeting closed at 21.35. The next meeting is on the 7th of April

***Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk March 2025***