



Minutes of the Meeting of Rottingdean Parish Council on Monday the 1st of June 2026 at the Whiteway Centre

Present. Cllr Nixon (Chair), Cllr Lawrence, Cllr Poole, Cllr Course, Cllr Dawes, Cllr Cherrie, Cllr Evans, Cllr Levins.
Parish Clerk

Public Gallery. Ward Cllr Fishleigh, Ward Cllr Earthy, Clive Bonny, Phil Boucher, Chris Grinsted, Rose Daley, Julia Wood and 15 residents.

Public Questions. A number of residents raised concerns about the management of Beacon Hill nature reserve, in particular the impact of the current sheep grazing plan.

Clive Bonny said he was a lifelong active member of the RSPB, had supported Raystede Rescue Dogs for 20 years, and co-founded the Beacon Hub charity, which helped turn the former golf course into a rewilded nature reserve for dog walkers. He added that he had spent the past 10 years promoting Beacon Hill to tourists through TripAdvisor and the Brighton Skies website, which has 75,000 followers. He said recent statements unfairly suggested that dogs off the lead on Beacon Hill posed a threat to nesting skylarks. Mr Bonny referred to an official RSPB skylark nest risk assessment, which he said stated that grazing sheep should not be on the same land during the nesting season from March to July, as they can damage long grass habitat and consume eggs and chicks while grazing. He said he had lived and worked beside the main entrance to Beacon Hill for 16 years and, using telescopic photography, had observed all movement across 20 acres towards Greenways. During that time, he said he had never seen an unleashed dog eat chicks or eggs, although he had seen a small number of dogs occasionally chase away predators such as crows, magpies, seagulls, hawks and foxes scavenging at night. He added that almost all dog walkers used leads for puppies and dogs needing control and otherwise allowed dogs off the lead while keeping them within sight.

Mr Bonny went on to say that the dog-walking paths run alongside electrified netting, and that a 2-metre lead brings dogs too close to this hazard. He said his own small Jack Russells had brushed against the netting, been distressed by it, and would no longer walk

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on a lead within 2 metres of the fencing. He also said dogs needed room to move off the path when horse riders passed. Mr Bonny said Beacon Hill also attracted some of the city's 8 million annual visitors. He said he often saw visitors arrive with dogs, notice the electrified netting, decide not to enter, and leave for a more welcoming location. He added that the local hospitality and retail economy also needed protection

Finally, Mr Bonny said the RSPB had asked him to attend an MP's meeting in Westminster Hall on 24 June to help ensure its conservation advice was followed. He then asked the Parish Council to confirm that responsible dog walkers could continue to allow safe off-lead walking, and to ensure sheep grazing was managed responsibly in line with RSPB guidance.

Phil Boucher said that on Friday he had seen volunteers moving sheep to nesting bird sites on the reserve. He had spoken to the Ranger, who said he was aware of the nesting birds but that there were not many in the area. Mr Boucher said he had watched sheep among the nesting birds and had seen a number of birds fly off. He subsequently visited the Parish Council website and raised questions with the Parish Council and Brighton and Hove City Council, seeking information about how the reserve was managed and how the public had been involved in planning the sheep grazing. He said he was looking for openness and transparency, but that it seemed the volunteers were a private group.

Mike Sexton said he had raised the issue of sheep grazing three months ago but had not had a response

Chris Grinsted said that Beacon Hill was a community asset, but there had not been any consultation with the community about how it was being managed.

A resident said that although sheep had been introduced to keep down the weeds they were not enough sheep to be effective and some were damaging the natural flora on the reserve.

Another resident said that the sheep were damaging the benches and were an obstruction around the windmill. She suggested these areas were cordoned off during grazing.

A resident also pointed out that Sheep were leaving significant deposits in popular visitor areas such as the Windmill.

In responding **Cllr Nixon** made the following points

- Section 5 of the Parish Council's Standing Orders clearly explained the management arrangements for Beacon Hill. One of the key elements was the Beacon Hill Stewardship Group, of which he was Chair.

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- The land was owned by BHCC who, through City Parks, were responsible for managing the reserve
- The Parish Council co-administered the reserve and worked with stakeholders to maintain and improve it. For example, the Parish Council had worked with the Friends of Beacon Hill (FoBH) and the Ranger on the installation of the new notice boards.
- The Friends of Beacon Hill (FoBH) are volunteers who work under the Ranger's supervision. They are on the reserve year-round in all weathers and deserve the highest respect from anyone who interacts with them.
- The grazing plan had been discussed at the annual meeting of the Stewardship Group in the autumn. Sheep usually grazed for a period in the autumn and from January to March. The new Ranger was concerned about the scrub on the eastern side of the reserve, which the FoBH had been unable to clear fully despite their efforts. Mechanical cutting had therefore been undertaken. The Ranger proposed that further grazing of remaining scrub in this section was needed once the new shoots emerged in Spring. Therefore, for this year grazing would begin later than normal (January) in the north-eastern section, then move anticlockwise around the reserve, arriving back in this section just in time for spring (April). The plan was that the sheep would be moved on when each area had been fully grazed, and it was expected that the Westerly areas would be completed by the start of Skylark nesting. However, the sheep had arrived late (early February), and this had delayed the process. The Ranger had assured the group that care would be taken to minimise disturbance to nesting skylarks.
- The plan would be reviewed this autumn and, in view of the strength of feeling, Cllr Nixon said he would endeavour to facilitate a meeting with concerned residents and City Parks to discuss their concerns prior to the development of the 26/7 management plan.

In response to Mr Bonny's request that the Parish Council should allow responsible owners to let their dogs off the lead on the reserve, **Cllr Nixon** said this was not a decision the Parish Council could make and that it was the responsibility of owners to follow the Countryside Code rules on dog walking on the reserve.

Action. Cllr Nixon to organise a meeting with concerned residents and City Parks to discuss and review this year's grazing plan.

Julia Wood said that she had witnessed a number of occasions of horses being ridden off the bridleway, which was difficult to challenge because the signage was confusing and the maps showing the paths on the reserve were misleading. The matter had been raised with the Council but not yet resolved. **Cllr Evans** said some new signs had been erected to direct riders to the bridleways and that, to his knowledge, the maps on the notice boards were correct, but he would follow this up.

Action. Cllr Evans to check the accuracy of the maps on Beacon Hill notice boards

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Rose Daley said she was aware that the Parish Council had been opening the Chapel during May and was considering its future use. She asked whether residents would be consulted. Her concern was that using the Chapel as a venue would lead to more unauthorised parking, which was already a problem. **Cllr Lawrence** said that residents would be consulted before any decisions were made and that she was now making efforts to contact the emerging residents' association. **Cllr Nixon (Chair)** added that if events were held at the Chapel, it would be made clear that there was no on-site parking.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Snow, and Ward Cllr Earthy had advised that he would be late for the meeting.

2. **Declarations of interests** **Cllr Cherrie** said that as he was a member of Rottingdean Arts he would not take part in the discussion or voting on their grant application that would be discussed later in the meeting.

3. **Agreement of the minutes of the AGM and Parish Council meeting on 11th of May.** The minutes were agreed as drafted and signed by the Chair as a true record of the proceedings

4. **Matters Arising**

None

5. **Action Log.** The Clerk took the meeting through the outstanding actions

- i. 0202. Cllr Evans to follow up progress on setting up a working group to consider measures to protect skylark nesting on Beacon Hill. **Cllr Evans** said the action, as worded, had been cleared, with signs drafted and awaiting comment from one FoBH member. It was agreed that Cllr Evans would report back on the completion and installation of the signs. Carried forward.
- ii. 0403. **Cllr Lawrence** to seek further information on the grant application for the purchase of a Maypole and advise the Council. **Cllr Lawrence** reported that the application had been withdrawn as the existing Maypole had been found and was to be refurbished. Closed
- iii. 0104. Cllr Cherrie to follow up the gate security with the company that had installed the LAP. **Cllr Cherrie** said he had obtained the instruction manual for the LAP gate and the St Aubyns working group were arranging for the gate springs to be adjusted. Closed

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- iv. 0105. Cllr Evans to speak to the field maintenance contractor about the condition of the wildflower meadow fence rope. **Cllr Evans** said he had not yet had the opportunity to speak to the field maintenance contractor but on inspection the fence had looked robust. Carried forward

6. Finance Update

i. Payments and invoices.

The Clerk sought authorisation for the following payments

		VAT
HMRC May	£796.66	
C Hayes Salary May	£937.97	
C Hayes Phone	£30.00	
Room Hire	£36.00	
Affordable Waste (DD)	£116.92	
Gary Steel	£200.00	
Sam Cocks (Grass cutting)	£600	£120
EDF Energy	£37.12	
St Aubyns Building Insurance	£1,643.07	
Total	£4,447.74	

The Clerk noted that, at the May meeting, a payment of £1,481.52 had been approved to renew the existing St Aubyns building insurance policy. However, when the renewal documents were received, the insurer had changed the terms. The buildings were classified as unoccupied, cover was limited to natural disasters only, and the premium had increased to £2,184. The Clerk said he had therefore obtained an alternative quote of £1,643.07 from a specialist broker. To ensure cover was in place from midnight on 31 May, he had agreed with the Chair and Deputy RFO to incur this expenditure. He also said the insurer was offering a three-year agreement that would keep premiums at the same level, subject to no claims. **Cllr Nixon** said this appeared to be a very good offer but wanted Cllr Course to review the quote to confirm it was adequate for the Council's needs. **Cllr Nixon** then proposed that the Council approve the payments, including the insurance

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premium payment, and agree in principle to the three-year contract unless Cllr Course raised any concerns. **This was seconded by Cllr Levins and agreed unanimously.**

The Clerk advised the meeting that during May the following payments became due and were authorised as per Paragraph 5.15 of the financial regulation

- £340 to Gary Steel for fitting the Chapel Door
- £450 (plus £90 VAT) to Iexcel Accountants Ltd for the internal audit
- ii. Bank balances The Clerk advised that the total money in the bank accounts was £584,213.45, which, after deducting the St Aubyns maintenance fund, left £179,719.89 available.
- iii. May Accounts The May accounts were presented and agreed.
- iv. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26. The Clerk took councillors through the accounting return, explaining that it set out the reconciliation between the accounts spreadsheet and the bank accounts as at March 2025. He also advised that he was required to explain to the auditor any variation in income or expenditure exceeding 15% from the 2024/25 year, which he had done in the accompanying note previously circulated. **Councillors approved the accounting return, which was signed by the Clerk and Chair for publication and submission to the external auditor.**

7. Major Projects

- i. **St Aubyns.** Members of the Working Group (WG) provided the following update.
 - Cllr Evans said that the last WG had concentrated on issues raised at the annual village meeting
 - The safety concern about the south-west entrance could be addressed in the short term by planting wildflowers at the field entrance to form a natural barrier and direct people onto a safer route into the field, although more robust measures might be needed in winter.
 - The group had agreed that further benches on the Field would be desirable and would consider the practicalities in the longer term once residents' use of the field was better understood.
 - The Chapel opening had gone well and the WG were to consolidate the ideas put forward by visitors for future use at their next meeting and report to the Council
 - The large red bin was to be relocated to the north east entrance where the Field maintenance contractor had cut a space in the hedge and reinforced the grass with gird force. **Cllr Cherrie** asked that someone provide him a photograph of the new bin in place to send to the waste removal contractor.

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- The instructions on how to tighten the LAP gate were to be passed to the local maintenance contractor to tighten the spring.
- There had been a report of a disturbing anti-social behaviour incident on St Aubyns Field that Cllr Lawrence was to raise at the next Local Action Team meeting

Cllr Lawrence provided the following feedback,

- The Council should celebrate the wildflower meadow that was now looking lovely. Caroline Lane had taken photographs charting its development that it would be good to put on the Website. **Cllr Lawrence** also said
- The group had discussed signage at the entrance to the meadow and were recommended that owners should be asked to keep dogs on a lead. **This was agreed by Councillors**
- An offer had been received from PARC to provide funds from a recent legacy to provide more play equipment in the Local Area for Play (LAP). The group had concluded that they didn't want to extend beyond the current area as it was specifically designed for young children and could duplicate what was available at the recreation ground. Cllr Lawrence was to contact the designers of the LAP to enquire about any suitable enhancements/additions to the existing equipment.

The following points were made in discussion

- **Cllr Nixon** said it would be useful for the Working Group to consider how to gather ideas for the future use of the Pavilion, and that the group might also consider how sponsorship could be used at St Aubyns.
- **Cllr Evans** said that BHCC policy was to purchase very low maintenance benches
- **Cllr Cherrie** said the surveyor David Smith had looked at both buildings and was compiling a schedule of minor repairs that would be needed at the Chapel before painting. Mr Smith was also providing quotes for a regular building inspection routine for the Working Group to consider and make a recommendation to the Council.

Action. The St Aubyns Working Group to consider future sponsorship opportunities and how best to gather ideas for the future use of the Pavilion

- ii. **High Street.** **Cllr Nixon** said a meeting with the Head of Highways Projects at BHCC, and members of the High Street working group had been arranged for the 16th of June. It was hoped that early findings from the traffic management study would be available. There will also be senior BHCC personnel changes shortly so it would be important to ensure continuity arrangements with his successor were discussed at the meeting.

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Cllr Course provided the following update on the High Street Engagement and Economic Development Project Draft Plan previously circulated.

- The priority was to make the most of the current season by:
 - Engaging face to face with business owners to get views on the constraints and barriers to improving footfall and economic activity
 - Encouraging visitors to visit the High Street by means of a booklet highlighting local businesses that Cllr Course had developed ‘ *A short walk though Rottingdean*’ This would be discussed with Rottingdean Heritage in view of their own trail before production of 2000 copies to hand to visitors and place in shops, cafés and pubs. The cost for the leaflet had been estimated at £1000. The aim would be to use the leaflet in initial discussions with businesses and then return after the season to discuss how it had been received and any perceived difference it had made.
 - The third element was a survey of residents to explore use of the High Street and retail/amenity needs. It would also remind residents that they had role to play in the future of the High Street. A draft had been circulated for approval.

The following points were made in discussion

- **Cllr Evans** said the plan and the proposed survey was good. He agreed that RH should be consulted in the leaflet to ensure minimal overlap. He also agreed that it would be a big step forward to get traders more active collectively that had proved difficult in the past.
- **Cllr Lawrence** said she had discovered that the blue business signage in West Street car park consisted of pull-out plastic strips and was making enquiries about production costs, which could provide a low-cost way of keeping the sign up to date.
- **Cllr Nixon** said it would be important to include businesses in Park Road and Nevill Road in the proposals.
- **Cllr Course** proposed that the Council approve expenditure of up to £1,000 for the leaflet. **This was seconded by Cllr Lawrence and agreed unanimously.** Cllr Course and the Clerk would work up a draft for SCAG consideration prior to submission to the Council for approval at the July meeting.
- Councillors also approved the launch of the survey that would be promoted via the website, notice boards, weekly social media posts, at the Village fair and potentially posters in local shops.

8. Planning

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- a. Applications Received in May. Cllr Poole took the meeting through the following application

BH2026/00825. 38 Dean Court Road Rottingdean Brighton BN2 7DJ. Erection of an additional storey to existing bungalow.

This was a slightly unusual application in as much as the plan is to add an extra floor to a bungalow which currently has a pitched roof - but for it to be built with a flat roof so the overall increase in height would be quite limited. As the drawings suggest, permitted development could lead to a second floor with a pitched roof, which would be a taller structure and more visible, even though the site is somewhat lower than Dean Court Road at this location. Having carefully considered the likely visual impact on the street scene of this proposal, RPC did not object

9. **Advisory Group Meeting Updates**

i. **Strategy and Communications. Members of the group provided the following updates**

Policy Reviews. The Clerk presented the Communications and Website Policy, which he and Cllr Cherrie had revised and circulated. Councillors were content with the policies and **approved their adoption**.

- a) **Village Fair**. The group suggest that the focus of the RPC stall should be on the High Street project and St Aubyns with suitable display material developed. SAWG would consider what material to develop for St Aubyns and the Clerk would seek volunteers to man the stall throughout the fair.

Village and Community. **Cllr Lawrence** took the meeting through the grant application from Rottingdean Arts for £2,200 towards the cost of the free summer music concerts and minor repairs to the terraces. **Approval was proposed by Cllr Lawrence, seconded by Cllr Course, and agreed unanimously. Cllr Nixon** said he had noticed that overheads for the concerts had increased significantly since the last application and asked that more information be provided on this in any future applications.

ii. **Natural Environment. Cllr Dawes** provided the following update.

- The telehandler to remove the remaining pebbles on the undercliff was due to arrive on 10 June, and Cllr Dawes would be on hand to support the work.
- He had seen the proposal sent to BHCC and copied to the Parish Council for a jetty over the drainage pipe and although it looked good, he doubted its longevity given the high tides

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- He had spoken to the Friends of Rottingdean Coast and Environment (FORCE) and was to attend their next meeting
- He had been informed by Bernard Turnbull that the slope to the beach was too steep for wheelchair access, but this would be a very difficult problem to resolve
- He had inspected the beach huts; the western huts were in a very poor state of repair; the ones on the east needed painting.

Cllr Nixon said that any issues involving BHCC that were proving intractable could be raised at the upcoming meeting the BHCC, CEO. **Cllr Lawrence** mentioned that the dog-unfriendly beaches were often full of dogs so perhaps better signage was needed.

iii. **Built Environment** No update

10. **Communications**

Councillors agreed that the following issue should be included in the communication about the meeting.

- The wildflower meadow
- The Chapel opening
- The High Street engagement plans and resident survey
- Key points of the discussion on Beacon Hill

The meeting closed at 21.43. The next meeting is on Monday the 6th of July

Chris Hayes, Parish Clerk

June 2026

Signed

Date