

# WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL



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## WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**MINUTES** of proceedings for the monthly meeting of Washington Parish Council held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023

**PRESENT:** Cllr B Hanvey (BH), Cllr P Heeley (Chairman), Cllr T Keech (TK), Cllr A Lisher (AL), Cllr J Luckin (JL) and Cllr J Thomas (JT)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Cllrs Paul Marshall (WSCC) and Cllr Joan Grech (HDC). Cllr James Wright (HDC) gave his apologies prior to the meeting.

**ALSO:** Clerk to the Council Ms Z Savill

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** 4

**ABSENT:** SB

The Chairman opened the meeting at 19:30 hours.

**2023.01. To Consider accepting Apologies for Absence**

**RESOLVED** to **ACCEPT** apologies from SB.

The Chairman reported on the remaining Washington Story Books for sale at the Village Larder. Three were sold at the meeting with proceeds to the council.

**2023.002. To record Declarations of Interest from members in any item to be discussed and Agree Dispensations.**

No declarations of interest made as defined under the Localism Act 2011 and the Parish Council Code of Conduct were made.

**2023.03. Public Speaking**

A representative of CLAG3 (Chanctonbury Local Action Group) confirmed they were attending the meeting to hear the council's discussions on the Rock Common Quarry application WSCC/028/21.

**2023.04. To Approve and Sign the Minutes of the last Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and Parish Council Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

**RESOLVED** unanimously to **APPROVE** the Minutes for the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 to be duly signed by the Chairman. Approval of the draft Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting was deferred to the next Council meeting.

**2023.05. Reports from the District Councillor**



Cllr Grech reported that the Local Plan will be considered by the Horsham District Council (HDC) Full Council meeting on 18th January. She answered questions about the water neutrality development requirement. BH raised the matter of HDC's Breach of Condition Notice served last August regarding DC/17/2117 for Longbury Hill Woods but Cllr Grech did not know the reason for HDC's slow response to ensure compliance. The Chairman reported that the matter was being discussed later in the meeting.

#### **2023.06. Reports from the County Councillor:**

Cllr Marshall reported on the following:

- A public consultation will begin next month on changes to hospital-based stroke services in West Sussex.
- The WSCC draft budget could rise by 4.99% for an average Band D taxpayer subject to approval by Full Council in February. No cuts are proposed, and significant investments would be put forward particularly in adult and children's services.
- He had requested an update on the WSCC plans for an equestrian crossing on the A283 by Georges Lane. Delays are due to further issues around the street lighting aspect of the proposal which conflict with the South Downs National Park Authority's Dark Skies policy.
- Rampion2 consultation response: The Chairman thanked Cllr Marshall for sharing his personal written response to the recent consultation with the council, and expressed disappointment that WSCC's submission did not contain the issues which the Parish Council felt were key, in particular the access roads off the A283 opposite Hampers Lane and near Georges Lane. Cllr Marshall explained that WSCC's responses were made within a particular planning framework and which is the reason he gave a personal response.

The Chairman thanked Councillors for their reports. Cllr Marshall left the meeting.

#### **2023.07. To Report matters arising from the last meeting**

None raised.

#### **2023.08. To Consider a consultation response to the submission of further information and evidence respecting an environmental statement for Planning application WSCC/028/21 - Rock Common Quarry, The Hollow, Washington RH20 3DA.**

*The continued winning, working and processing of sand from the existing Rock Common Quarry, the importation of inert classified engineering and restoration material, the stockpiling and treating of the imported material, the placement of the imported material within the quarry void and the restoration and landscaping of the quarry*

Councillors considered the further information and evidence in an environmental statement, together with written comments from a number of residents which were previously circulated.

It was noted that the 166-page document included largely technical information to address issues raised from the original consultation of the application and that the quarry proposals had not materially changed. WSCC had agreed to extend the public consultation deadline to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

A member of the CLAG (Chanctonbury Local Action Group) spoke of his serious concerns about the application. He criticised the statement and gave examples of incomplete, incorrect or missing data. CLAG's submission to the application was in progress and he agreed to share this with the Council after the meeting.

Councillors similarly questioned the data. They agreed this undermined the whole application and was a



serious concern which should form the main overview of the Council's submission. Strong emphasis should also be given to the traffic impact on the local community, as this was by far the biggest issue raised by respondents in the original application. It was noted that the Council had submitted a strong objection to the application in the earlier consultation and that the position remained unchanged.

The following points were discussed and it was proposed to include them in the Council's comments on the new information and statement submitted by the Applicant:

- Significant disruption and safety risks from the cumulative impact of the projected increase in HGV traffic on the local road network - up to 500 daily lorry movements over 8-10 years of the proposed quarry infill. The A283 is already under pressure from lorries serving other local working quarries, and the A24 is at traffic management capacity. The statement does not acknowledge this or put forward any sufficient traffic controls.
- The proposed Rampion 2 scheme includes up to 3 construction compounds in the quarry area. The report did not take this into account. The additional traffic with both projects running simultaneously, will be intolerable to the local community.
- No mitigation proposed to protect Storrington High Street and the AQMA area from the risks of additional HGV traffic and air pollution.
- The time scale of the proposed quarry infill operation is unrealistic and there is no guarantee completion date from the applicant. The report does not take into consideration the future local availability of sufficient inert waste e.g. due to a potentially suppressed housing market or other factors. This could potentially expand the quarry operation for many years with repeated requests from the quarry operator for extensions.
- The amount of inert material being proposed for the quarry infill and the environmental risks of the processing operation; the water contamination from the quarry into the local water course, and surface water and ground water flooding. The scientific data provided needs close examination in order that the issues are adequately addressed
- The associated noise and dust from the processing of inert materials, and the traffic pollution would seriously impact the area which is close to the residential Washington village and its popular school and campsite.
- Councillors are concerned to know if financial provisions have been made to protect and compensate local businesses and property owners from the negative impact of the project. This is especially if it was incompleting or abandoned.

It was proposed by the Chairman and unanimously **RESOLVED** to include these issues in the Council's consultation response, to be drafted by the Planning & Transport Committee for submission before the 20<sup>th</sup> January deadline.

### **2023.09. HDC and SDNPA Planning Decisions for significant applications in the Washington parish.**

None reported.

### **2023.10. Planning Compliance**

**Breach of Condition Notice served (August 2022) in relation to Condition 7 attached to DC/17/2117 for Longbury Hill Wood.**

An email (9<sup>th</sup> January 2023) from HDC's Senior Planning Compliance Officer was previously circulated which confirmed that they will follow up on further action by the Legal Team in respect of the non-compliance with the Breach of Condition Notice. The officer reported that the agent for the woodland site was looking to submit a planning application for the land.





Councillors agreed that the anticipated planning application should bear no relation to the enforcement action. Following a discussion it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to request that the Council is notified within the next two weeks on how HDC is dealing with the enforcement matter. Clerk to action and copy to the Ward Councillors.

**2023.11. Appeals**

None reported

**2023.12. Road Closures for information**

None reported.

**2023.13. To Report any maintenance issues affecting Parish Council property outside the Recreation Ground and Agree any required action.**

None reported.

**2023.14. To Consider and Agree the 2023/24 Draft Budget and Precept recommended by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

The draft budget was previously circulated and reviewed in full at the meeting. The Chairman explained that the Council was in a strong financial position due to anticipated underspends in the current year, generous Community Infrastructure Levy monies for capital expenditure, and a 1% increase in the number of council-tax paying residents in the parish. Councillors agreed that the budget proposal will allow the Council to absorb anticipated costs whilst not increasing the precept payable by residents during the cost of living crisis. Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the 2023/24 budget. Clerk to request a precept of £42,830 from Horsham District Council, the precepting authority. The amount represents no change to the parish element payable by residents i.e. £38.22 per Band D household.

**2023.15. To Agree an increase in the Council's authorisation thresholds recommended by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.**

Councillors considered the Finance Committee's proposal to increase the payment authorisation thresholds of the Open Spaces Committee from £1,000 to £2,000 and from £500 to £2,000 for the Clerk. This would be a more appropriate level to ensure efficient authorisation processes are in place, and in line with the Auditor's advice. The Chairman advised that there had been occasions when urgent works far exceeded the current payment thresholds which made it difficult to get them done quickly. Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the increases subject to the Council's Financial Regulations and within the adopted budget.

**2023.17. To Review recruitment and assistance for new Councillors.**

The Councillor application form was previously circulated together with a list of ideas for helping new Councillors ease into the role. Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to introduce the following measures:

- Assign a Councillor to mentor a new member;
- Strongly encourage participation in training courses;
- Reduce meeting papers where possible by creating a cloud reference folder for "non-essential" documents; create an acronyms list;
- If a new member decides to leave, they should be encouraged to meet with the clerk so that the council better understands their decision and whether further changes were required.

**2023.18. To Ratify a change to the May 2023 Council meeting dates.**

Councillors were previously informed that the planned council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 had to be



rescheduled as the day would be a public holiday for the coronation celebrations of King Charles III. The village hall had confirmed a new booking for the meeting to move to Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May and the committees to take place on the following Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023. Councillors had already diarised the new dates and it was **RESOLVED** to **RATIFY** the changes.

**2023.19. To Note the Chairman's quarterly report for the next edition of the Sussex Local.**

The Chairman reported that he would be drafting the report to include an update on the main issues being raised at this meeting such as Rock Common Quarry and next year's precept.

**2023.20. Washington Recreation Ground Charity**

**2023.20.1. To Report any maintenance issues on the Recreation Ground and Agree any action.**

There were no urgent maintenance issues to report

**2023.20.2. To Report the 2022 Annual Return of the Washington Recreation Ground Charity.**

The Chairman reported on the figures for the 2022 Annual Return for the Washington Recreation Ground Charity prepared by the Clerk. **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the Annual Return to be submitted to the Charity Commission

**2023.20.3. Rampion 2: To consider quotations for land access negotiations for the proposed inshore cable route through the Recreation Ground.**

An estimate from Savills to advise on the Rampion land access negotiations for the Recreation Ground was previously circulated. Councillors noted these and RWE's offer to cover up to £6,500 of professional fees incurred by the council. They agreed that the fees should not be capped for a major development project which had been forced upon the council and which could result in a compulsory purchase order of part of the grounds. Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** to write to Savills for advice on how to proceed.

**2023.20.4. To Receive reports from Committees, Working Parties and Outside Bodies.**

There were no committees in December 2022. The draft minutes of HDC (Horsham District Council) and HALC (Horsham Association of Local Councils) Annual Meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 with a copy of update on Water Neutrality and the Local were previously circulated to Councillors and noted.

**2023.22. To Report the Council's Bank Reconciliation**

**RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the reconciled bank balance of **£79,546.52** for the main Treasurer's Account and **£70,000** in the Business Savings Account.

**2023.23. To Approve Payments**

The payments schedule with invoices were previously circulated and it was **RESOLVED** that the total payments of **£3,132.26** be **APPROVED**.

**2023.24. To Report Outstanding Purchase Orders:**

**RESOLVED** to note the following outstanding purchase orders since the last meeting:

Noticeboard repairs: **£ 1,383.40**

Post Box address: 378.00

Total outstanding: **£ 1,761.40**

**2023.25. To Report Outstanding Sales Invoices**

None reported since the last meeting.



### 2023.26. To Report Income

None reported since the last meeting.

### 2023.27. To Report VAT

Q4 2022/23 VAT to be reclaimed in April 2023.

### 2023.28. To Report PAYE and National Insurance contributions

Q4 2022/23 contributions to be paid in April 2023.

### 2023.29. To Report correspondence received and agree any further action.

- **National Trust Forestry Track in Georges Lane, public bridleway:** It was noted that four further emails (16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> December 2022) were received from Mr Murray (resident) in response to the Council's letter. The letter had explained the council's reasons for awarding £12k to the National Trust for the forestry track in Georges Lane, and later withdrawing the funding due to deterioration of the track so soon after its completion. Mr Murray further questioned why the Council had committed to the expenditure based on "misleading information" that the charity's income was dwindling when at the time it was "sitting on" more than "£1B" reserves. The Council had explained in its letter to Mr Murray that the upgrade was important for the local and wider community and that improvements to the public rights of way network were supported and encouraged in the neighbourhood plan. But as the pandemic started to bite, the Trust severely cut its operational budgets, and it became clear that the Georges Lane project would not go forward in the foreseeable future. The monies had been offered by the council to ensure that the project was prioritised within the year. It was noted that the expenditure was lawful under Section 137 of the Local Government Act. Councillors commented that the Trust's reserves quoted by Mr Murray were for fixed assets and not cash reserves, but that this was not relevant to the argument. Mr Murray was not satisfied with the council's explanation in its letter, and argued that that it was totally unacceptable that the Council committed to the expenditure of "hard-earned public monies." He sought assurance that *"all future information provided to the Council will be checked for accuracy prior to any financial decisions being made."*

Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** to write to Mr Murray to explain that the Council was sorry that he did not accept the Council's position, but that it had been transparent in responding to his concerns and there was nothing further to add.

- **SDNPA Shoreham Cement Works Plan Update:**

The SDNPA (South Downs National Park Authority) Area Action Plan was previously circulated with a summary of comments on the consultation. The information was noted including thanks from the SDNPA for the council's comments.

### 2023.30. Clerk's Report

**GDPR:** Councillors were reminded to delete all emails over 6 months in accordance with the Council's privacy and file retention policies.

**Council email accounts:** One member reported that although he could read council emails via his browser, he was still unable to access them via his own email client. It had been suggested that this may be due to an out of date version of the program. The clerk would make further enquiries with the council's email hosts.



**2023.31.To Receive items for the next agenda**

The Chairman requested the following items to add to the next agenda:

- Review of interest rates on the Council's savings account
- Finalise arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

**2023.32. Dates and time of next meetings at Washington Village Memorial Hall (Dore Room).**

**Full Council Meeting: Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 7:30pm**

**Open Spaces Committee: Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 7:00pm**

**Planning & Transport Committee: Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 7: 45pm**

**Personnel Committee: Date to be advised.**

There being no further business to transact, the meeting was closed at 9:38pm.

Signed.....

Dated..... 6.2.23