

ICKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

A local council for the peoples of Icklesham, Winchelsea, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at 7:15 pm on Monday 8th January 2024 at Rye Harbour Village Hall

Present: Councillors: C Chappell, Ms. N Eldridge, J Justice, D Kitteridge, I Mann, I McConnochie, A Rixon, D Smedley (Vice Chair), Mrs J. Stanford (Chair), and N. Warren

In attendance: Jenner Sands, Clerk & RFO, Cllr Keith Glazier (ESCC), Cllr Paul Osborne (RDC) and Cllr Andrew Mier (RDC). One member of the public was present.

24/1 Item 1. The Chair opened the meeting and reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded. Then invited comments or questions from members of the public on matters relating to the business of the Council.

There were no public questions.

24/2 Item 2. To receive reports and ask questions of the County Councillor Keith Glazier and the Rother District Councillors concerning County Council and Rother District Council matters. (10 minutes)

Cllr Glazier confirmed that he was disappointed to not get the Rye Harbour Road done on the days they had planned for however they discovered that there are some faults with the concrete below the tarmac which needs doing and so the job has had to be re-evaluated. He does not have a date yet. The Chair confirmed that one of our residents came before the meeting started and that she said that she has heard that the works are going to start on 25th March. She has been told that the whole of the road would be closed. Cllr Glazier apologised and said that he had no knowledge of that. Cllr Glazier said that he would come back to the Clerk as soon as possible.

Cllr Glazier also said that we still need to be reporting potholes and that they are likely to get worse in the cold weather. He said it is important not to assume that others have reported potholes. He said that East Sussex Highways have invested an additional £15.5 million into the capital programme last year and they will spend all of that by the end of March but that is off the back of £300 million back log of works so it will not even touch the sides.

Cllr Glazier confirmed that the County Council are just about to set their budget. The Government have made no further allocations to local government apart from putting the living wage up which is a great thing to do for people that need it but that cost on the council has added another £6.5 million to the wages bill and no extra money to fund it so they are going to be more stretched than ever. They have an additional 6.5% spending power – 5% of that is council tax which is levied on taxpayers. They will have to take their reserves below what is recommended. Reserves are several million, but you can only spend it once. He confirmed that it is not a good place to be for and local government. The budget is due to be approved on February 6th. ~~Cllr Glazier confirmed that there are 700 children in East Sussex that are looked after by ESCC. The cost of this is over £1 million per year to look after each child and this is a statutory duty.~~ *Cllr Glazier confirmed there are 700 kids looked after in East Sussex which become the responsibility of the County Council and we now have children in East Sussex which cost £1,000,000 to look after each. This is a statutory duty which means we have to do it. 75% of the money that goes through the County Council is spent on 10% of the population.*

Cllr Smedley raised an issue in Winchelsea regarding a historic yew tree and an issue with Highways. Cllr Smedley confirmed that Andy Becvar, the Conservation Society and Highways came out last week and came up with a solution however another lady from Highways came out today and said that 7ft needs to be cut from the bottom of the tree which will kill it. The tree is 250 years old and is part of the street scene. Cllr Smedley asked if there is someone, we can talk to from Highways instead of having to badger people to try and get an answer. Cllr Glazier confirmed that in the first instance we should contact the Highways Steward, she will not make a decision, but she will go back and someone within the team will make the decision. On the case raised, it is now with the Assistant Director and a response will be going back shortly. Cllr Glazier said that he could also be contacted.

Cllr Warren said that residents have said to him that the roads in East Sussex are worse than in other counties. He asked Cllr Glazier if that was a fair comment. Cllr Warren said that he was in North Yorkshire a week ago and he doesn't remember seeing the number of potholes you see down here. Cllr Glazier confirmed

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it is the same across the country and if you look at unclassified roads in Kent, they are actually worse. Cllr Glazier reminded Cllrs that A roads are maintained by National Highways and their budget is 4 x what East Sussex has to use on roads.

Cllr Justice asked whether the road grips will be done whilst they are doing the work in Sea Road. Cllr Glazier said that he would raise this and that he thought Cllr Justice had been assured that they would be.

The Chair thanked Cllr Glazier for everything he does for the Parish.

Cllr Osborne confirmed that Rother are in a similar position as ESCC. RDC is currently looking at the budget and the forecast before Christmas was £3.8 million deficit which needs to be taken from reserves to balance the budget. Cllr Osborne thinks this could be reduced if the borrowing doesn't proceed from the housing company. One major increase which is causing angst with many other councils is the cost of homelessness which is now roughly £2 million which is around 16-18% of the entire budget. Rother now own 50 units of temporary accommodation at a cost of around £60 million but in the long run works out cheaper than supplying hotels etc. Cllr Osborne made it clear that these are families with a good family income that have found that their private rented house has been pulled beneath their feet. This is happening across the district, and they are finding more and more people not being able to afford private rented housing. They are working through the budget to see where they can make savings. There are going to be changes to the grounds maintenance but that does not affect Icklesham as the Parish Council maintain the grounds. They are closing toilets on a temporary basis which will potentially save £250,000. There is going to be an increase in car park charges although there is 20% VAT on that.

Cllr Mier confirmed that they have had some training this evening on disclosures of interests, and he thinks that all parishes will need some training on this as there have been some changes as to the wording.

Cllr Mier also wanted to speak regarding item 11, but it was agreed that this will be dealt with under the item.

24/3 Item 3. To record any apologies for absence.

Apologies received from Cllrs Mrs. Thomson and Mrs. Lyward.

24/4 Item 4. Disclosure of Interests - to receive any disclosure by members of personal interest required under the Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any written requests made by members for dispensation to allow them to participate in, and vote on, an agenda item for which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest. Members are reminded a) to repeat their declaration immediately prior to commencement of the item in question and b) complete the declaration of interests' form.

Cllr Warren declared a personal interest in item 8 d) as he audited the accounts.

Cllr Eldridge also declared a personal interest in item 8 d) as she is on the Winchelsea Beach Community Association.

Cllr Mann declared a personal interest in item 11 as he is a resident of a Park Home.

Cllr Chappell declared a personal interest in item 20 as his partner is on the Winchelsea New Hall Committee.

24/5 Item 5. To consider and approve the signing by the Chair of the attached minutes of the Full Council Meeting of 13th November 2023. **RESOLVED:** Cllr Warren highlighted an error in item 4 which should read as: *Cllr McConnochie declared a personal interest in item 6 as she he is on the Icklesham Parish Community Land Trust Trust Committee.* The Minutes were amended and approved and signed.

Matters requiring a Decision by Council

24/6 Item 6. To agree draft budget for 2024-25 and the precept in the sum of £166,729.95 and to authorise the Clerk to notify the District Council. **RESOLVED:** Approved.

24/7 Item 7. Co-option of Councillor to fill the vacancy in Rye Harbour Ward. Valid applications will be circulated to all councillors before the meeting. Candidates will be offered the opportunity to speak in support of their application; this will be followed by a vote by way of a show of hands. A declaration of acceptance of office to be completed after co-option.

One application was received from Stephen Haden. **RESOLVED:** Stephen Haden was co-opted onto the Council, and he signed the declaration of acceptance of office in the presence of the Clerk.

24/8 Item 8. Financial Matters

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- a) To receive the list of items paid to date in December and January and items for payment to date
RESOLVED: Approved.
- b) To receive receipts and payments report **RESOLVED:** Approved.
- c) To receive and approve the third quarter bank reconciliations. **RESOLVED:** the reconciliations were approved, and Cllr Smedley signed them.
- d) To consider Grant Application Received from the Winchelsea Beach Community Association in the sum of £1,725 – annual grant. **RESOLVED:** the grant was approved.
- e) To consider appointing an additional bank signatory. **RESOLVED:** Cllr Smedley was appointed as a signatory and Cllr Rixon will approve bank reconciliations.
- f) Issues with Lloyds Bank. **RESOLVED:** the Clerk highlighted that the bank have authorised two payments twice, one to Care Signs and one to C.S Engineering. The Clerk has contacted the bank about this, and the payments will be refunded to us. They are also looking into this to ensure it cannot happen again.

24/9 Item 9. Audit

- a) To receive the 2022-23 Notice of Conclusion of Audit. **RESOLVED:** Noted.
- b) To receive the 2023-24 interim Audit Report. **RESOLVED:** Noted. Cllr Warren proposed a vote of thanks to the Clerk for an excellent report with no recommendations. This was unanimously approved.

24/10 Item 10. To review charges levied by the Parish Council

Please see the attached schedule. **RESOLVED:** it was agreed to keep all charges as they are for now.

24/11 Item 11. Parish Flooding Issues

- a) To consider the attached emails received from Cllr Andrew Mier and the Head of Environmental Health at RDC in response to article published regarding flooding issues in Winchelsea Beach.

The Chair suspended standing orders so Cllr Mier could be part of the discussion.

Cllr Mier gave his sympathies to residents of Winchelsea Beach and confirmed that it is a terrible situation. However, on November 23rd an article was published in Rye News. It wasn't named by anyone personally, but he is assuming it was sent on behalf of the Council. He has asked the question privately with the Clerk as to how this came to be written and whether it was authorised by the Council or a Committee.

The Chair explained that it was a Press Release and that the Council decided that was the next step to take as everything we have tried prior to this has made no difference whatsoever. The Chair confirmed that the Council decided to issue the Press Release. The Chair confirmed that it wasn't one person, it was from Icklesham Parish Council. Cllr Mier asked if it was Minuted and the Chair confirmed that it was. Cllr Mier said that it was unfortunate that when he asked the question in correspondence, he wasn't told that as we could have dealt with the matter quietly and privately. The Chair confirmed that all correspondence is dealt with by Full Council at the next Full Council meeting. The Clerk had replied asking for Cllr Mier to explain what points of the article were inaccurate which is all we needed to do at that time. The Chair confirmed that Cllr Mier published a reply to the article and the damage was done by then. Cllr Mier said that the harm was done by publishing an inaccurate article in the first place and he sees no reason why he couldn't receive a straight answer from the Clerk or the Chair. He said that he thinks it is very inconsiderate to elected members to treat them in that way. Cllr Mier said that he works with three parishes, and he doesn't have this sort of trouble with them. Cllr Mier said that we need to resolve this relationship and help each other.

Cllr Mier said that matters raised in the article should have been discussed with Cllr Mier, Cllr Osborne or with officers before publication to ensure they were correct and what the problems were. Cllr Mier said that in terms of inaccuracies, the article said that Rother have been granting permission for 2 or 3 houses in place of one house along Winchelsea Beach and this isn't actually the case, certainly not since 2019 when the new local plan was adopted. Cllr Warren confirmed that he can think of a number of cases immediately where this has happened, one was where several buildings replaced one building. The Parish Council put objections in to do with the lack of parking and the sewerage and flooding issues, we were ignored, and approval was given. Another case was where someone had gone ahead and built two properties without planning permission at all. The Parish Council put in an Enforcement Notice and again planning permission was given for those.

Cllr Warren said that when Cllr Mier replied in Rye News Cllr Mier stated that the extension of time for people living in caravans has minimal impact on the flooding issues and Cllr Warren asked what evidence Cllr Mier has of this as the Parish Council feel that this is just adding on to an already failing system and

making it worse. Cllr Warren also stated that when they attended the Southern Water public meeting, Cllr Warren raised the matter that the Parish Council's planning committee have raised these objections to the extension of caravan park opening times and additional properties and Cllr Mier said that he would take it away and come back and liaise with us on it however Cllr Warren has not seen any evidence of that since. Cllr Warren confirmed that we had got to a stage where quite honestly, we felt we had no option other than to go to the Press having consulted already with several Rother District Councillors over a period of time, in addition to Southern Water and other various agencies we haven't got anywhere. The Parish Council felt it was time to involve the Press and if Cllr Mier feels uncomfortable about that then how do our residents feel for whom this is a real problem, and nothing seems to be done about it. Cllr Mier confirmed that there is an argument to be had there about the extended opening times of caravan parks however we all know from Southern Water that the problem is the surface water getting into the drains and inundating the system. Windmill Park is one or two meters above mean height which means that sometimes it is actually below sea level and there is always going to be a problem with getting water away from there if there isn't adequate storage for it. The amount of water from domestic use such as flushing lavatories etc. is very small and we all know the problem is from surface water and that is nothing to do with Rother at all, that is a Southern Water problem. Cllr Mier said that the only thing that Rother has done is that when permission was given to extend the opening times at Windmill Park that there was a condition put in that no surface water should go into the Southern Water sewer and that was actually an improvement to what had been the situation before. Yes, Southern Water were consulted, others were consulted, that was taken on board and a condition was imposed to alleviate the problems so far as anyone could on that particular site.

The Chair confirmed that this has been going on for years and it is the residents who are suffering. As we said in the Press Release, what people are flushing down their toilets is then appearing in their front gardens. We have a situation where people do not contact Rother, they contact the Parish Clerk in tears because they have sewage lapping at their doors. We had one of our Councillors (Cllr Warren) proposed to the Council to support more building at Icklesham and then we hear from one of our Councillors that he has also been ankle deep in sewage where he lives. The Chair confirmed what when we had our meeting in September, we really did expect someone from Environmental Health to attend because to us it is about Environmental Health and for them to not attend is not good. The Council understand that the Head of Environmental Health was on leave and unable to attend however you cannot have a lead of a department being the only person who knows what is going on and the only one who can attend a meeting and that is no way to run a department. Everyone should know, there should be other people who can turn up and listen to what residents have to say. The Press Release was all about letting residents know what we have tried to do. Residents know that IPC have tried their best but all we are is a Parish Council so we do not control Southern Water, they will not give us information as we asked how much the tankering costs because we know that costs a lot of money and this money would be better spent actually dealing with the problem with the sewers. The Chair said that surely Rother must have some influence over Southern Water who are causing so much misery to local residents.

Cllr Justice stated that one of the main issues is that RDC do not allow people to sleep on the ground floor and so instead of two-bedroom bungalows we end up with 3- or 4-bedroom houses which obviously adds to the flow. He also stated that the Environment Agency have recommended that caravan parks should not be open for more than 8 months of the year because of the flooding issues but these recommendations have been ignored. Cllr Justice confirmed that there is no one checking that people do not live in these caravans full time. He said that Winchelsea Sands only have 12 letting units, the rest are all privately owned. He said that Rother have the power to stop this, but they don't as all applications are based on tourism. Cllr Mier confirmed that he discussed the issue of caravan park licencing with the Environmental Health Department and since 2016 there have been strict conditions as to record keeping for people on the sites and Rother does enforce that. Cllr Mier stated that the Council need to find evidence of all year-round occupancy and report it to Rother. Cllr Justice confirmed that we have done this and complained about the spacing between the caravans, but nothing is ever done about it.

The Clerk then explained what had happened with the Windmill Park application and explained that the application took almost two years for a decision to be made, the Parish Council objected to it, around 50 residents objected to it, the Environment Agency objected, and Southern Water also objected to it. The Clerk explained that for some reason Rother were very reluctant to call the application in to the Planning Committee. The Clerk had sought advice from the SLCC Planning Advisor and in his opinion, the public interest in the case should have been a sufficient ground alone to call the application in. The Clerk was

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also of the opinion that the amended application that was readvertised was within the time limit for call in. The Clerk confirmed that Ben Hook had eventually agreed to call it in to Committee however the previous Chair of the Planning Committee (Jonathan Vine-Hall) had vetoed his decision as if the application was refused the applicant would have a chance on appeal which would have an effect on Rother's figures.

The Chair confirmed that she sat on IPC's planning committee for years which she feels was pointless as when she first moved to the area, she was told by Richard Wilson that they do not take any notice of Parish Council decisions. The Chair asked Cllr Mier if he had permission from RDC to publish his reply to our article, Cllr Mier confirmed he did not and he said he made it quite clear that the comments were his own. The Chair said that the way his reply was worded it was very obvious that he was speaking as the Chair of the Planning Committee. Cllr Mier said that it would have been quite odd if he had concealed that fact from people.

Cllr Mier confirmed that in relation to the Windmill Park application, the public interest would have been better served by the application going to committee. Cllr Mier confirmed there is a strict time limit for cases to be called into the committee and Cllr Mier said that he thinks it would have been better if it had been put to the committee. Cllr Mier confirmed that the outcome would have been likely to be the same. The Clerk explained that actually the application was not out of time because when the description of the application changed, the application was readvertised on the District Councillors call in list and Cllr Hacking did try to call it in.

Cllr Osborne said that the only thing he doesn't agree with the Parish Council on is naming the officer. The Chair and the Clerk confirmed that the article did not name any Rother officer. Cllr Osborne confirmed that both he and Cllr Hacking tried very hard to get the Windmill Park application called in and got nowhere with it. Cllr Osborne confirmed that he actually went to the Town Hall to see Cllr Vine-Hall face to face. Cllr Osborne confirmed that he was told by Cllr Vine-Hall that it will not make any difference to the outcome. Cllr Osborne disagreed with this and said that the application should have been considered by the committee. Cllr Osborne stated that the new call-in system is very difficult to navigate and makes it much harder for Councillors to call applications into committee. He raised this at the recent training session however the process is unlikely to change.

Cllr Osborne confirmed that he had his treatment plant at home emptied that morning and he was told by the tanker driver that the tankering costs Southern Water £1m per day to pump surplus water from their systems. Cllr Osborne asked the tanker driver about the issues in Winchelsea Beach and the driver said that it doesn't help that the sewer is below sea level. Cllr Smedley confirmed that the pipe is only 5 inches in diameter and so whatever extra is added to the flow is going to cause a problem.

Cllr McConnochie confirmed that he has had the same issues at his home in Icklesham for the last 15 years. Every time they have heavy rain they are surrounded by sewage and his 87-year-old mother, and his two young grandchildren have to walk around in it. He said that Southern Water have blamed the gully water for overloading the system and that this should be separated from the sewer. Cllr McConnochie stated that if the infrastructure isn't there to support new houses, then someone needs to demand the upgrade of a system. He said that Rother cannot say it is nothing to do with them when Rother are allowing people to build new houses whilst knowing that there is inadequate infrastructure.

Cllr Osborne explained that the issue is that Southern Water are not a statutory consultee, and they are asked if their system can cope with new development. Often, they just say yes so, they can accept the infrastructure charge which supposedly is to go towards infrastructure.

Cllr Mier agreed with Cllr Osborne's point regarding the call-in system and said to call applications in when in doubt.

Cllr Warren proposed that we note the correspondence for the time being to allow breathing space. **RESOLVED:** this was agreed.

b) Update regarding Laurel Lane flooding in Icklesham.

The Clerk gave a verbal update in relation to the sewerage flooding issues in Icklesham. The latest update she had from SW was that root ingress in the pipes has been cleared and the pipes sealed however the flooding is still occurring. This is because now there is free flow, the WTW further down the line gets overloaded. The Clerk has asked for an indication as to whether there are plans for upgrade, but she has not received a response so far. **RESOLVED:** Noted.

24/12 Item 12. Use of Harbour Field

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To consider the attached Clerk's report and to consider the Clerk's suggested conditions. **RESOLVED:** The Clerk's report was noted, and the recommendations were approved.

24/13 Item 13. Winchelsea Traffic Calming

Following the discussion at the budget meeting, to confirm the repayment of the remaining loan monies in the sum of £12,877.33 to the PWLB to reduce annual repayments by roughly 50%. **RESOLVED:** Approved.

24/14 Item 14. Meeting List Schedule

To approve the updated meeting list schedule for 2024 meetings. **RESOLVED:** Approved.

24/15 Item 15. High Fords Allotments

To consider the attached Clerk's report/update and to confirm whether the Parish Council wish to proceed with the transaction. **RESOLVED:** it was agreed to proceed with the transaction and to accept Heringtons' revised quote in the sum of £1,600.

24/16 Item 16. To consider response to East Sussex Local Transport Plan

The LTP Strategy, Implementation Plan and supporting documents are available on the County Council's webpages and consultation hub – <http://eastsussex.gov.uk/DraftLTP4> **RESOLVED:** Cllr Chappell will look into this and will email round a suggested response to be submitted.

24/17 Item 17. Open Spaces Committee

- a) To appoint Councillor to fill vacancy on the Committee. **RESOLVED:** Cllr Rixon was appointed to the Committee.
- b) To note draft Minutes of Open Spaces Committee Meeting held on 27th November. **RESOLVED:** The Minutes were noted.

24/ 18 Item 18. Grounds Maintenance Contract 2024/25

The following quotes were tabled:-

John O'Conner	£4,874.00
Countrywide Grounds	£7,510.00
Philip Merricks	£6,750.00

The Clerk confirmed that Glendale had withdrawn their tender as they lost their East Sussex contract which means they no longer have a local depot.

RESOLVED: the quote from Philip Merricks was approved.

24/19 Item 19. Update regarding Winchelsea Beach Bus Shelter

Application for match funding from East Sussex Highways has been successful (£11,500). Clerk has applied for a Community Grant which is only available for 50% of the cost of the bus shelter (£1,934).

The update was noted. The Chair asked the Clerk if she had written to the Winchelsea Beach Community Association regarding them returning the grant monies. The Clerk confirm she had, and they responded to explain that they will have new plans available soon. The Chair suggested that the previous grant was awarded based on the original plans. New plans would need a new grant application. **RESOLVED:** The Clerk to write to the Winchelsea Beach Community Association requesting the grant monies back and explaining to them that they will have to reapply once the new plans are finalised.

Matters for Information or Noting

24/20 Item 20. Correspondence. (Any late received correspondence will be tabled at the meeting).

- a) Email from Winchelsea New Hall regarding hall hire fees. **RESOLVED:** Noted
- b) Email from Winchelsea Beach Community Association thanking us for Christmas Tree. **RESOLVED:** Noted.

There was then a general discussion about whether or not the Council need to respond to Cllr Mier and the Environmental Health Department however no resolution was made.

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24/21 Item 21. Reminder for Councillors to update list of interests throughout Council year.

RESOLVED: Noted.

24/22 Item 22. Programme of Works. Consider and update where necessary. **RESOLVED:** Noted.

24/23 Item 23. Reports from Councillors on meetings they have attended. Councillors to update Council.

The Chair confirmed that she attended HORAC which was an interesting meeting. They spoke about the ongoing works on Strand Quay etc. which will hopefully encourage more boat owners to the area.

Cllr Mann is attending a meeting on Wednesday with the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Cllr Rixon and Cllr Warren also attended the online Planning Training hosted by RDC. RDC were impressed that we split the planning applications to a separate planning committee.

24/24 Item 24. Items for Consideration for Future Agendas.

Cllr Warren raised the speeding in Icklesham and the speed traps that are supposed to be put in place by Sussex Police. He has not seen any evidence that this has happened, and he asked if this could go on the next agenda and asked the Clerk to try and get an update for the next meeting.

The Clerk highlighted that the funding from RDC that we were looking at for Pound Field closes at the end of February and the Clerk asked if Council would like her to try and organise a public meeting in Rye Harbour Village Hall prior to this. **RESOLVED:** Agreed.

Cllr Chappell also raised the black cat data and asked if we could look at other ways this could be used as he feels that we could do more with the data.

Cllr Justice asked if the Clerk could look into who owns the trees on the hill of Tanyard Lane as there are more and more trees coming down here.

24/25 Item 25. Date and venue for next meeting.

Monday 11th March 7.15 pm at Winchelsea Beach Community Hall.

Agreed as a true record of the meeting

Signed **Dated: 11th March 2024**

Cllr J Stanford
Chair