

GRAFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Graffham Parish Council meeting held on Monday 15 May 2023, at the Empire Hall, Graffham, commencing at 7pm.

Present:

Cllr. Roger Coakes

Cllr. Colin Barker

Cllr. John Bracey

Cllr. Jon Warren (Co-opted minute 5)

Cllr. Sandy Macqueen (Co-opted minute 5)

In attendance: Tracy Rowe, Acting Clerk. CDCllr. John Cross. WSCCllr Tom Richardson

Three members of the public.

Cllr. Roger Coakes, welcomed all to the meeting and explained that the first item was to elect a chairman.

1) To Elect the Chairman of the Council and to receive the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr. Roger Coakes was duly elected as Chairman of the Council, following a proposal from Cllr. Bracey, seconded by Cllr. Barker. The Chairman signed his Declaration of Acceptance to the Office as Chairman.

2) To elect the Vice-Chairman of the Council and to receive the Vice-Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr. John Bracey was duly elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council, following a proposal from Cllr. Coakes, seconded by Cllr. Barker. The Vice-Chairman signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Vice-Chairman.

3) To receive the Member's Declaration of Office

Cllr. Colin Barker duly signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Member.

4. To receive apologies for absence. A parishioner, Janet Wakeford had submitted her apologies.

5. Co-option of Members - to receive written applications for the office of Parish Councilor and to co-opt candidates to fill the existing vacancies. To receive the Declarations of Acceptance of Office.

Written applications had been received from Major Jonathan Warren and Mr. Charles Alexander Maqueen (known as Sandy). Both Major Warren and Mr. Macqueen were unanimously accepted as Councillors and both duly signed their Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

6. To receive Declarations of Interests. Notification of Changes to Members' Interests and to consider any request for a dispensation.

There were none.

7. To Receive a report from the WSCCllr. Tom Richardson.

WSCCllr. Richardson, noted the detrimental impact of the closure of North Street, Midhurst caused by the terrible fire at the Angel Inn. He had contacted the South Downs National Park, asking them to use their powers to expedite the works to open North Street. He announced that works would be commencing as of today's date, and that the Highways department would resurface North Street itself as soon as the building was

secure. He noted the big effect on the local roads - increased traffic doing diversions through Graffham and the local villages to get around Midhurst.

WSCCllr. Richardson also informed those present that BT Openreach would be implementing Fibre Broadband throughout the parish, and would be closing the road out of Graffham towards Duncton for up to two months, from approximately 12 June. He noted that this would not occur until the road through Midhurst was open though. Following that, it was suggested that Graffham Common Road (known as Selham Road) leading to Petworth would be shut also.

Discussion took place about the impact on parishioners, and businesses within the parish: the pubs, the school, the village shop and those nearby, eg. the campsite etc. WSCCllr. Richardson also noted that it may be necessary for currently closed Fitzlea Road to remain closed for some time, but it was hoped that perhaps a layby might be created to allow the large pumping lorries to pass each other, so the road could be reopened.

Following discussion, it was agreed that GPCllr. Warren would liaise with Openreach to see if a mutually acceptable agreement could be made re road closures relating to broadband, which would be so detrimental to the village, its parishioners and businesses. It might be possible for the works to be delayed until Autumn. Cllr. Warren noted that parishioners wanted fibre broadband but at minimal impact on the village.

ACTION: Cllr. Warren

Cllr. Bracey also noted that the road closed signs, on the section of road turning left from Duncton Common Road, into the Street leading towards Graffham village, were in the wrong place and were causing confusion. WSCCllr. Richardson stated that he would liaise with the road closures team to rectify this situation.

8) To receive a report from Chichester District Councillor John Cross.

CDCllr. Cross noted that he did not have a full report to give, as CDC would not convene until Wednesday 17 May. He noted the impact of the recent water outage, largely in the area around Billingshurst. Due to this, he enquired as to whether GPC had devised or implemented an emergency/resilience planning strategy should something similar happen in the parish (in particular, knowing who the vulnerable parishioners were and having a system in place to ensure they were attended to appropriately). He noted that a Mr. Warren Townsend at CDC, advised on health and safety issues, and maybe could advise on these matters. WSCCllr Richardson agreed to supply to Cllr. Jon Warren, the details of a local parish who had an effective emergency plan, which GPC could use as an example. **Action: GPC Cllr. Warren**

At this point the agenda was re-ordered.

9) Withdrawal of Post Office Services to Graffham.

A member of the public present, expressed dismay at the closure of the outreach post office service which had been visiting twice a week, in the Empire Hall. This had been due to an assault on a member of the Post Office team (not in Graffham) resulting in worries about the employees safety. Cllr. Bracey noted that a Buddy scheme had been devised whereby the post office worker would be accompanied by a "buddy", when they arrived at a local venue and were taking the cash out of the van into the venue and reverse. In some venues, the buddy would stay for the duration of the village. This scheme would be advertised in Graffham and if a volunteer(s) were to make themselves to available to assist as above, it was hoped that the Post Office would return to Graffham on Tuesday mornings at first, this being the most profitable morning. If this was a success, it was hoped that a second session a week would also resume.

It was noted that the Post Office was happy with the Empire Hall as a venue.

10) Public Questions.

A member of the public raised the subject of the defibrillator at the Church and enquired why it was locked away? Discussion ensued and the Chairman gave the history of the two defibrillators in the village (the second one being on the south wall of the Empire Hall). He noted that at one-time time, the one in the Church was in an open access position in the boiler room but it was vandalised. He noted that it was useful to have a defibrillator in the south end of the village, which could be accessed by the Infant school and Church congregations. He noted that it is not locked when the Church is open, yet one of the members of public stated that recently the Church had been locked up for two days and so therefore the defibrillator had not been accessible.

The member of public stated that it could be placed instead in the disused telephone box in the centre of the village. Following discussion, it was confirmed that GPC had an approved budget item to purchase and fit a third defibrillator in the telephone box. Discussion ensued as to how this would occur.

CDCllr. John Cross left the meeting at 7.33pm. The agenda was reordered again

11) To approve the minutes of the last parish council meeting held on 17 March 2023.

The minutes had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting. With one amendment noted, In minute 13, the abbreviation SIL should read CIL, (Community Infrastructure Levy), they were **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED**.

12) To appoint Members to serve on the Planning Committee (all) and Finance Committee. To appoint the Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Cllr. Bracey that as there were only currently five GPC councillors, (Clerk's note - 9 places available) it would be desirable to co-opt further councillors. It was therefore **RESOLVED** to defer deciding who would sit on which committee/individual roles until further councillors were appointed.

13). To appoint Representatives to Outside Bodies; Graffham Recreation Ground Committee (3) and the Empire Hall Committee (1). As per minute 12 above, it was **RESOLVED** to defer these decisions until after more councillors were co-opted.

At this point the Clerk present, strongly advised the members to ensure they sought clear advice from Sussex Association of Local Council (SALC), or as to the correct procedure they needed to follow to ensure that the co-option process was legal and in order. (that is, could they continue to further co-opt more councillors now other than the two co-opted today, or did they need to follow the strict Casual Vacancy process. The Clerk also advised them to ensure that the process of inviting applications, interviewing candidates at a formal GPC meeting and voting etc etc was checked and followed.

14) To allocate Councillor responsibilities for the following:

Highways and Footpaths; Selham and Ambersham; Minerals; Freedom of Information Officer; Website Maintenance and upgrades.

As per minute 12 above, it was **RESOLVED** to defer these decisions.

WSCllr Richardson was thanked and left at 7.40pm. The three members of the public also left.

15) GPC Website - to note that this needs to be made operational and brought up to date. Cllr. Barker agreed to take responsibility for this issue. **Action: Cllr. Barker.**

16). Planning including

a) New applications

SDNP/23/01156/HOUS The Folly. Replacement of the existing attached garage and erection of two storey extensions together with veranda and balconies.

Cllr. Macqueen explained that it was confirmed that there was an application in 2019 for change of use of the garage and a first-floor extension was granted. No work had been undertaken so the consent was no longer valid.

Cllr. Macqueen noted that the current application was for a considerably larger extension which measured approximately 306sqm and comprised five bedrooms and a small one-bedroom self-contained ground floor flat.

The existing building has an area of approximately 242sqm. The proposed scheme would in our opinion exceed SD30/31 and accordingly we would recommend refusal. In addition, the number of car parking spaces on the plans would be inadequate for the accommodation proposed.

It was agreed that Cllr. Macqueen was to email the response direct to the appropriate planning office. **ACTION: Cllr. Macqueen**
SDNP/23/01247/HOUS Perrott Farm, Woodcote Lane. Demolition of existing conservatory and side extension and construction of two-storey side and rear extensions to north and west elevations. Garden Wall and extension of existing driveway. At a recent meeting of the GPC Planning Committee, it had been agreed to Support this application. Cllr. Macqueen was to ensure that the response had been submitted to the appropriate planning officer. **ACTION: Cllr. Macqueen**

b) To receive any new or amended applications.

c) To note decisions from the last meeting on 17 March 2023

SDNP/22/00373/FUL Tangletrees, The Street. Replacement dwelling and associated landscaping Clerk's note: As at 24.05.23, the SDNPA website still stated "application in progress".

17. **Finance**

a) To address how to resolve the issue of accounting being out of date, and to consider approaching the External Auditor for an extension to the Limited Assurance Review. Cllrs. Barker and Macqueen would attempt to source the necessary documentation (invoices and bank statements etc). The accounts would be brought up to date by an outside organisation.

b) To appoint an internal auditor. Noted and deferred.

c) To resolve the issue of internet banking and to ensure that all councillors are signatories to the GPC Bank Account and that each transaction should be authorised by two signatories. Cllrs. Macqueen and Barker would address this issue.

18. Insurance. To note that the insurance policy covering Graffham Parish Council (including KMGF, the Playing Field (recreation ground) and Bowls Club expires at the end of May 2023. Cllr. Coakes would take responsibility for this issue.

19. To agree dates for future GPC Meetings: July, September, November, January and March. A decision to these dates was deferred but might be 11th July TBC
- 20 To agree a date for the Annual Meeting of the Parish. Cllr. Bracey had sought advice from Andy Beams, Mulberry and Co, who had advised that it was acceptable to delay the Annual Meeting of the Parish until mid-July. A suggested date was 19 July tbc.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm