

Worth Parish Council
Minutes of the Full Council
25th March 2019 commencing at 19.30hrs

Present:

Cllr Anscomb (Chairman)	Cllr Coote (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Blakemore	Cllr Casella
Cllr Cruickshank	Cllr Curzon
Cllr Dorey	Cllr Gibson
Cllr Hitchcock	Cllr Larkin
Cllr Lord	Cllr Phillips
Cllr Webb	
Mrs J. Nagy (Clerk)	1 member of the public

127. Public Question Time:

The Chairman welcomed councillors and members of the public to the meeting and advised that there was no fire drill planned; if the alarms do sound, make your way to the car park. Do not use the lift. Please put mobile phones on silent, and do not use these during the course of the meeting.

No member of the public wished to speak.

128. Apologies:

Apologies were NOTED and ACCEPTED from Cllrs Allen, Field, Hollands and Scott

Absent: None

129. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interest

Cllr Webb declared a personal interest in Council Land & Buildings, as his wife is Chairman of the Crawley Down WI.

Cllrs Anscomb, Coote, Cruickshank, Hitchcock and Webb declared personal interests in Accounts & Financial Matters – Grants, as they are all members of the CDRA.

130. To receive the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25th February 2019

It was proposed by Cllr Hitchcock seconded by Cllr Coote and agreed by all present that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25th February 2019 were a true and correct record of the meeting. Cllr Blakemore advised that he is still having issues accessing emails on his mobile; the Clerk will put him into contact with the Council's IT contractor.

131. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reminded Councillors that the purdah period has commenced; the Clerk has issued information as to what can and cannot be done via email to all councillors

132. Correspondence and Action Lists

The Chairman drew councillors' attention to the correspondence list and action list issued for this meeting.

The Clerk advised that she had contacted Mr David Carden to invite him to the Planning & Highways meeting on 3rd June, but he is unable to attend. He has suggested that the best approach would be for him to have an informal meeting with the Chair of Planning & Highways in order to progress the matter. Cllr Hitchcock has suggested that Cllr Gibson also attend; the Clerk is currently trying to arrange a mutually convenient date after the elections.

The correspondence and actions were NOTED

133. Committees

To receive and adopt the following Minutes

Planning & Highways Committee 4th and 25th February 2019
Date of next meeting: 15th April 2019

General Purposes and Finance Committee 14th January and 11th February Date of next meeting: 15th April 2019

The Minutes and resolutions therein were duly NOTED

Allotment Sub Committee 21st February 2019

Finalisation of these Minutes has been delayed due to staff sickness. As there is no agreed draft, they will be noted at a future meeting.

Date of next meeting: when required.

HR Committee 6th March 2019

These Minutes will be reported in Confidential session under Agenda Item 9 Personnel.

Date of next meeting: 3rd April 2019

Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan Sub Committee 12th March 2019

Date of next meeting: when required

The Clerk noted that the Chairman of the Sub Committee Cllr Gibson had today submitted suggestions for amendments to these Minutes; these will be presented to the next meeting for approval.

These draft Minutes were NOTED.

134. Accounts & Financial Matters

The GP&F Committee approved balances and transactions up to 28th February 2019 at its last meeting.

Councillors are asked to consider two grants, these being:

Grant for Crawley Down Residents Association for £500

Cllrs Anscomb, Coote, Cruickshank, Hitchcock and Webb all declared personal interests, being members of the CDRA. They took no part in discussion on this matter. Councillors with no interests numbered eight, so the meeting was quorate.

At the last AGM, a new group of volunteers joined the Committee. It is applying for a grant for website support plus equipment to assist in promoting membership and increasing public engagement.

It was AGREED by Cllrs Blakemore, Casella, Curzon, Dorey, Gibson, Larkin, Lord and Phillips that a grant of £500 be awarded to the Crawley Down Residents Association.

Grant for Copthorne Village Hall for £1000

The Village Hall is applying for a grant of £1000 to install new lighting bars on the stage and in the main hall.

The Clerk advised Councillors that the current Grant Policy states that grants over £500 will not typically be considered. This organisation had not had a grant in this financial year,

although Cllr Coote pointed out that it had received £3000 through the winding up of Worth United Charities.

It was AGREED by all present that a grant of £500 would be awarded to the Copthorne Village Hall.

135 Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan

The Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan is not progressing well, due in part to limited numbers on the Sub Committee. It met on 16th January, but the meeting was inquorate.

However, it was agreed in principle to issue a Housing Survey similar to that recently published by Crawley Down.

The Clerk asks that expenditure for that Survey is agreed, in order that work may proceed. She suggests that a covering letter goes out with the survey, asking for assistance from residents.

Based on the costs of Crawley Down, the Clerk asked for authority to spend up to £2800.

After discussion, it was AGREED that the Clerk would have delegated authority to spend up to £2800 on printing and distributing a Copthorne Housing Survey; she will report progress to the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting.

136. Council Land & Buildings

Crawley Down Afternoon WI

Cllr Webb declared a personal interest, as his wife is Chairman of the Crawley Down WI. He took no part in discussion on this matter.

This group has asked permission to plant a native species tree on the Green in Crawley Down to commemorate the Centenary of the WI in West Sussex in 2019. They wish to put up a commemorative plaque and are asking if the tree can be a Copper Beech; the Clerk has checked that a Copper Beech is native to the south east of England.

The Clerk reminded Councillors they had yet to replace the diseased tree on the green which was a beech, although not a Copper Beech

It was AGREED by all present with the exception of Cllr Webb, that the Clerk liaise with the Crawley Down WI to share the cost of planting a Copper Beech on the Green, this to be sited away from the area of the felled tree, to avoid cross contamination.

Burleigh Way Car Park Bus Shelter

The Council recently had to replace a window broken via vandalism. Now a different window has been broken, both below the insurance excess limit. The Clerk has reported this to the police.

Councillors NOTED this information

137 Dispensations

The Clerk advised that Cllr Hitchcock had asked for this item to be on the agenda for this meeting; she had agreed the wording with him prior to the agenda being issued. She referred Councillors to her report.

Cllr Hitchcock reminded Councillors about an email from MSDC's solicitor and Monitoring Officer Tom Clark advising councillors when they should declare interests. Cllr Hitchcock believes that whether or not to declare an interest is personal to that individual. His criticism is for the system and not related to the Clerk or her work.

The Clerk has reproduced advice that she sought from Tom Clark and from the East Grinstead Town Clerk. The current situation is that as dispensations cannot be issued, there will be times when the Neighbourhood Plan Sub Committees are inquorate.

Cllr Hitchcock believes that local councillors should be able to work on Plans, not to do so is an anathema to him. The Neighbourhood Plan feeds into the District Plan; Parish Councillors should be able to comment upon SHELAA sites when relevant to the parish.

Cllr Larkin asked if local District Councillors could make representations on the Parish Council's behalf.

Cllr Hitchcock said that District Councillors may also have to declare interests.

Cllr Coote said that it appeared that the Council was at an impasse. The Clerk has taken advice from the Council's solicitor; it would be wrong for her to issue a dispensation, even if the Council agrees that that all councillors should seek one. The Council cannot get the Clerk into trouble; he suggested that the Council makes its points in writing to Tom Clark and ask for him to offer a solution.

Cllr Gibson said that he remains unhappy with the fact that his own dispensation was refused, as the premise is that other councillors can carry out the work. If so, many have to declare interests, then the work cannot progress. If he were to write a paper on site selection, there would insufficient members to vote. One reason for granting a dispensation is that there is no other councillor to carry out the work; he is still waiting for the Clerk to advise him which councillors she considered had this ability.

Cllr Coote reiterated that such a point should be put to Tom Clark. The Council should protect the Clerk, who is the legal advisor and has to work in an appropriate manner.

Cllr Gibson suggested that if writing to Tom Clark, the Council should ask if it is possible to change Standing Orders to allow the Council to grant/refuse dispensations and not the Clerk.

Cllr Blakemore suggested that she meet with Tom Clark, rather than write to him. The Clerk replied that she had met with him.

Cllr Coote said that the Clerk has always acted in a proper manner.

The Clerk stated that she had responded to Cllr Gibson's request to know which councillors could carry out site assessment work in his stead; in her email of 25th February she had replied that she is not required to do so, and that is not up to a clerk to decide which councillor undertake which work. The premise is, that with 17 councillors, there should be a sufficient number without interests to make a decision.

She continued that whilst she appreciated the concerns of councillors as to not being able to fully participate in all aspects of neighbourhood planning, it was a fact that serving councillors had less "rights" than a member of the public in such matters.

Cllr Dorey said that whilst there were 17 Worth Parish Councillors, the decision had been made to have two separate Neighbourhood Plans, so in fact there were only 8 councillors able to deal with Copthorne matters, and 9 for Crawley Down. Taking away those with interests could leave a meeting inquorate for making decisions.

Cllr Hitchcock thought that all councillors should be allowed to take part whilst options on sites are discussed. When an application is lodged, then of course those with interests should withdraw.

Cllr Phillips was concerned that if blanket dispensations were granted, developers may challenge these at a later date. The Clerk agreed.

Cllr Hitchcock said that the Council should take advantage of and utilise expertise from within.

Cllr Gibson said that sites can be selected for inclusion in a Neighbourhood Plan. MSDC can select sites not identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. The Clerk confirmed that the AECOM site analysis work currently under way, was being applied to sites submitted under the Worth Parish not SHELAA sites.

It was AGREED that Cllr Hitchcock would provide wording for the Clerk to write to Tom Clark as Monitoring Officer and MSDC Solicitor to ask if Standing Orders can be amended to allow the Council to decide on dispensations, rather than the Clerk as at present. This will be sent after the elections.

138 Allotments

The allotment minutes of the 19th February are still being finalised due to staff sickness and there is currently no proposal to improve security to present to this meeting.

Councillors NOTED this information.

139 Assets of Community Value

The Clerk has submitted the application for the Royal Oak pub to be re-registered as an Asset of Community Value. However, when she sought confirmation that the application has been received, she was advised that it would not be accepted until the previous one has expired.

On consulting the MSDC website, there is now a different form to complete – an expression of interest to take over a contract, a generic form which now seems to be applied to re-registering ACVs. This process can take up to 26 weeks. Once accepted, the application for re-registration can be lodged.

With only 23 weeks to go before the Royal Oak listing expires, the Clerk has expressed concerns that there may be a “gap” when the ACV is not listed, copying in Tom Clark and Peter Stuart.

It seems that Tandridge District Council is accepting re-registration forms now; the Clerk now has sufficient information to re-apply for the Burstow Allotments so will submit this asap.

With regard to the Prince Albert, it was thought that this had been sold, which is contrary to the terms of the ACV. However, Tom Clark investigated on our behalf supplying land registry details as proof that this is not the case; the holding company has changed its name.

The Clerk advised that she continue to progress all the ACVs with both district councils and would keep the Council informed.

Cllr Coote advised that he had been contacted by the Co-Op in his role as a district councillor to seek his views as to whether the Co-Op opening in the Royal Oak would be an option, this having been suggested in the past. He had not offered an opinion.

Cllr Gibson said that it was clear from the responses to the recent housing survey that the majority of Crawley Down residents wanted the Royal Oak to re-open as a pub.

140 Working Party Terms of Reference

The Clerk referred to the draft circulated with the meeting pack.

The draft Working Party Terms of Reference were AGREED without amendment.

141 Community Land Trust Working Party Terms of Reference

The Clerk referred to the draft circulated with the meeting pack

The draft Community Trust Working Party were AGREED after the addition of a clause stating that work should be completed by December 2019.

The Clerk suggested that the membership of this Working Party should be decided at the Annual Council Meeting after the elections, which was AGREED.

142 Report from representatives attending outside meetings

Councillors and Officers are asked to give a verbal report on meetings and training attended on behalf of the Council since the last meeting. These include:

CAGNE, 27th February 2019 – Cllr Gibson attended a presentation by the Aviation Environment Federation

All Saint's Church, Crawley Down – 6th March 2019. The Clerk met with the Vicar and Churchwardens to discuss what local protocol the Church would follow in the event of the death of a senior national figure. Discussions are also taking place with St Johns

Election Drop In sessions - 9th and 16th March. Councillors and the Clerk were on hand to meet with residents interested in becoming a parish councillor at two events, one in Crawley Down and one in Copthorne.

SLCC Mid Sussex Clerks – 21st March. The Clerk attended a meeting of Mid Sussex Clerks, where the guest was Inspector Peter Dommett. Inspector Dommett advised that due to increased funding, by June of this year, he will have the same amount of PCSOs as previously. Police officer numbers will take up to four years to get back to previous numbers.

The proposal is to split Mid Sussex into three, based around the three towns of Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath. Each parish will be affiliated to a town; he will be consulting with parishes as to what each considers to be its nearest town. Each area will have one officer and two PSCOs. These local teams aim to visit each parish in its patch to liaise with the Clerk on local issues. They will also use desk space if available, connecting to Wi-Fi etc.

He reported that there are no plans to close Checker Meads police station in East Grinstead, and no immediate plans to sell the station at Burgess Hill, a proposal suggested previously. Haywards Heath police station was in the process of re-furbishment.

Crawley Down Memorial Society

The Society has asked that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council attend the next plaque unveiling ceremony as representatives of the Council, where they will be wearing their chains of office.

It was AGREED that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council could represent the Council at this ceremony

143 Personnel

At this point the Chairman announced that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 190 s1 the press and public would be excluded during the next item due to the confidential nature of the matter to be discussed, as it relates to named staff members.

This item will be Minuted under Confidential Minute

It was AGREED by all present that the Clerk would be paid at her normal rate for additional hours worked to cover the Assistant Clerk's sick leave; it was further AGREED by all present that she would be paid at time and half for working on a Saturday.

Due to progress not currently being made on the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan as previously reported, and due to the sick leave of the Assistant Clerk, the Neighbourhood Plan Administrator has been carrying out general duties not specific to neighbourhood planning.

It was AGREED that the Neighbourhood Plan Administrator would log the hours that she spent on general tasks. This would be reviewed at the end of each three-month period and the staffing costs allocated accordingly.

Councillors NOTED these resolutions.

The Clerk reported that the HR Committee is dealing with a personnel issue. Professional HR advice has been sought and is being followed; it is not possible to report details to the Council at the current time, due to legal implications. A full report of the matter will be supplied when considered appropriate.

A meeting of the HR Committee has been called for 3rd April.

Councillors NOTED this information

The Meeting returned to open session

144 Items for future agendas

Cllr Gibson asked that this agenda item be changed to "Items for the next agenda"

145 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday, 29th April 2019.

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place on 8th April 2019

Meeting closed at 8.43pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____