

Hooe Parish Council

Minutes of the full council meeting of 10 January 2022

Attendees: Chairman Cllr. Pam Doodes (PD) Vice Chairman Cllr Robert Pilbeam (RP) Cllr. D Constable (DC), Cllr. G Durman (GD), Cllr. Peter Haywood (PH) District Cllr. Ray Cade and 14 members of the public. Jenny Cosham taking minutes.

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and thanked Jenny Cosham for once again stepping in to take the minutes of the meeting, which will be recorded by DC.
2.
 - a. A written application had been received for the office of Parish Councillor from Chris Bloor who addressed the meeting following which ballot papers were circulated to the parish councillors who cast their votes. Chris Bloor (CB) was subsequently elected.
 - b. Exclusion of the public – The Chairman declared there was no reason to exclude the public.
 - c. CB signed the declaration of office and took his place on the Council and was welcomed
3. **Apologies** received from the Clerk, Jane Warrener and County Cllr. Bob Bowdler.
4. **Disclosure of Interests** – None
5. **Minutes of the previous meeting** – The December meeting having been cancelled the minutes of the meeting on the 8th November 2021 were agreed as a true record DC proposed and PH seconded.

6. **Chairman's Report**

Much has been achieved since we met in October. Our new Clerk has been in post since the end of November. Jane Warrener lives in Ninfield and so is local to us. She has spent a great deal of time and energy learning the ropes; attending training sessions; meeting councillors. Jane has been taken on a tour of the area to familiarise herself with the parish.

After quite some time we are now up to a full complement of councillors. Now there are seven of us we will be able to spread the workload. DC joined in October and CB today.

Administration was difficult during lockdown. In line with many other parishes we concentrated on keeping the parish running, so, as a result there is much to do. Forward plans are being formulated as it can't all happen at once. We will be able to report more fully as the months go by.

Historically the council met every two months. However we will continue to meet monthly for the time being. Covid regulations are changing all the time, but please be assured we will follow them.

A reminder that we hold a list of contact details of those residents who have indicated their wish to be kept informed of our activities, if you are not on that list but would like to be then please let Jane our Clerk know. Email addresses are kept confidential.

7. Reports from:

a. County Councillor

Cllr Bob Bowdler's report has been circulated to the Parish Councillors and this is available on email. There were no questions

b. District Councillors

The District Councillors report has been circulated to the Parish Councillors. Cllr Ray Cade outlined the housing support fund available to those people who are on means tested benefits and urged anyone struggling to check on the Wealden website.

Cllr Bob Standley, Leader of Wealden District Council has recently met with the Chancellor and Minister Michael Gove to voice concerns on the amount of development in the Wealden area.

c. St Oswald Church

Revd Frostick reported the carol concert was a success although the Hooe Band had to cancel due to members with Covid. The bells have now gone for renovation and will be back in March. Planning for a permanent WC is on-going.

8. Parish Councillor's Reports

a. Village Hall Technical Committee

RP will be arranging another meeting of the committee and will report at the next parish council meeting.

b. Village Hall Grants and Fundraising Committee

GD reported on the various items which has been discussed including the benefits of obtaining a charitable status; membership of ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and AirS (Action in rural Sussex, affiliated to ACRE), and sources of funding. The recent Beetle Drive was a great success as was the Christmas Prize Draw. GD thanked everyone who had taken part in the draw

Other events planned for 2022 include:

Jan/Feb: A film night for which a new screen is already in place.

5 June: Both a matinee and an evening event with world renowned trumpeter Crispian Steele-Perkins.

25/26 June: Open Gardens.

7 August: Hooe Motor Show – help with refreshments.

Further events, including the possibility of a 'Hooefest', a festival offering a variety of entertainment, are under discussion and will be reported at a later date.

PD thanked the two gentlemen, who wished to remain anonymous, who purchased and donated the large projection screen already installed in the hall

9. Matters for Consideration and Resolution

PD explained that the Clerk has agreed to increase her hours for the short term to cope with the extra workload. It was also agreed that there should be an allowance to cover the use of her home for business purposes. DC proposed and GD seconded. ALL AGREED.

a) Budget and Precept

DC outlined the issues that had needed to be addressed which explained why the budget will increase. In addition to the extra time allocated for the Clerk the figures include the purchase of new electronic equipment an accountancy package and increased maintenance costs.

After much discussion it was agreed that the budget required for the 2022/2023 year is £41,910. This figure would be met by precept of £32,000, an increase of £1990 on the previous year, the rest being covered by income and reserves. DC confirmed the reserves would still meet the statutory level required. PH proposed and DC seconded. ALL AGREED.

b) Internal Audit

DC reported the parish council is required to have the finances audited once a year and the service provider must be changed every three years. Following research the Clerk has recommended that the parish council appoint Mulberry & Co. accountancy to provide the annual internal audit. The company specialises in providing accountancy services to over a hundred parish and town councils. They are also recommended by East Sussex Association of Local Clerks. DC proposed and PD seconded. ALL AGREED.

c) Bank Signatories

DC reported the need to change bank accounts and so he is looking at various options, including on line banking, with the Clerk who will be submitting recommendations shortly. The Clerk recommends three approved signatories and having previously discussed the subject with the Clerk PD put forward the recommendation the councillors should be PH as the longest serving member and having the responsibility for legal requirement and documents, the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. PD proposed and CB seconded. ALL AGREED. It was noted that this may change once new accounts were adopted.

d) Retrospective approval to reduce match fees

The reduction by £10 per match of the fees payable by Sidley Football Club was agreed in principal and now requires agreement by the full council. Sidley FC was unable to use the pavilion facilities for nine matches during the lockdown as it was closed to comply with Covid regulations. They pay £40 per match which includes the use of the pavilion. GD proposed that the fee be reduced to £30 for the nine matches in question, seconded by RP. ALL AGREED.

e) Subscription to AIRS

CB explained the many advantages of joining AIRS who had great experience and expertise in the field of village community halls. He proposed that the council agree to subscribe to AIRs at a cost of £144 per annum. Seconded by RP. ALL AGREED.

f) Land Valuation Surveyor

The Clerk has explained that the parish council has a duty to appoint a land valuation surveyor to assess the valuation of parish assets every five years. As this is a statutory duty the cost has been allowed for in the budget but needs specific council approval. DC proposed and GD seconded. ALL AGREED.

g) Employment of young person to the position of hall cleaner

PD explained that to comply with employment regulations the Council is required to obtain a work permit from ESCC to allow the appointment of a young person under the age 18 to carry out any work for the council. Immediately upon learning this PD contacted the young ladies parents to inform them of the situation and to ensure they were comfortable, which they were. It was agreed all legal regulations would be adhered to and the situation regularised. PD proposed and RP seconded. ALL AGREED.

10. Financial matters for Consideration and Resolution

a) PD congratulated the Clerk on the easy to read detailed payment schedule presented. PH agreed, adding the format made checking details very straight forward. Details AGREED

b) The parish councillors agreed that the presentation of the bank reconciliation and authorisation was excellent. All details AGREED and NOTED

11. Report on any other financial matters for information - Nothing to report.

12. Questions from the public

a) Mrs Sinden said she was pleased that excellent financial spreadsheets were now being produced by the new Clerk.

b) Mr Carey drew attention to the fact that Lower Street Stores was for sale. He said if the shop closed it would be a huge loss to both villages. He asked if the Parish Council could investigate and actively work to ensure it was retained as a shop. PD agreed it would be a loss but without further thought was unsure how Hooe Parish could influence the outcome as the shop is within the parish of Ninfield.

13. Matters for consideration at the next meeting – The Queen’s Jubilee, the tree project and the responsibilities allocated to the Councillors now there are seven.

14. Date of the next full council meeting is 14th February 2022 at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.