

BARCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of Electors held at the Sports Pavilion, Barcombe, at 18.45 on May 25th 2022

Present: Cllrs Arbenz, Bennington, Cornwell, Holman, Pack, Parsons, Skan, Stewart, Stroude, Cllr Linington, Cllr Milligan and three members of the public.

- 1. Welcome by the Chairman of the Parish Council:** Cllr Holman
- 2. Apologies:** Cllr Smith
- 3. Signature of the Minutes of the last meeting,** Wednesday 5th May 2021: Agreed
- 4. Chairman's report, Cllr Holman, May 2019 – May 2021**

We have welcomed two new councillors to the team in the last year. Cllr Bennington and Cllr Parsons bring different experience and perspectives to the team which will enable us to engage more effectively with parishioners.

Many thanks to Cllrs Loughlin and Mills carried out their responsibilities on the Council to good effect before leaving the Parish Council earlier in the year. After ten years of diligent service, Cllr Stewart has indicated his intention to step down from the Parish Council at the end of the current term (April 2023). A handover of Cllr Stewart's responsibilities will take place through the coming months.

Planning

Planning matters have rather dominated the agenda for the Parish Council during the year 2021/22. Applications for 5G masts, Polytunnels and 'Natural' cemeteries caused parishioners great concern and required a robust response to the Lewes District Council from the Parish Council. In addition, the reserved matters applications relating to the Bridgelands and Hillside outline planning permissions have required significant levels of discussion and feedback to the planning committees. Cllrs Arbenz and Pack have made an excellent job of ensuring that we understand the views of those potentially impacted by planning applications. They also ensure that our responses are appropriate and balanced to ensure that our comments are given due consideration by Lewes District Council.

Concerns were raised by residents due to the development of industrial units bordering Barcombe Mills in Ringmer Parish. Barcombe Parish Council has taken steps with Lewes District Council planning team to ensure that, in future, planning applications relating to properties adjacent to Barcombe Parish will be referred to Barcombe Parish Council for comment.

Cllr Bennington and Cllr Parsons represent the Parish Council on the Rydon Community Liaison Group (CLG) with Cllr Parsons acting as Chairman. To date the effectiveness of this group, from our point of view, has been disappointing and appears to be no more than a box ticking exercise for Rydon Homes. Further discussions will be held with Rydon to try and improve levels of understanding and eventually deliver better outcomes.

In addition, our concerns regarding the level of attention Rydon Homes has paid to points made at the CLG by Barcombe residents will be raised with the LDC planning team.

Close monitoring of the Bridgelands and Hillside applications will continue. Both applications are at the Reserve Matters stage awaiting a number of decisions from Lewes District Council. The applications have been 'called in' and the

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outcomes will be decided by a full Lewes District Council Planning Committee. There is no indication at the present time when that will be. (See below for more detail).

The Parish Council, in collaboration with surrounding local councils, is putting pressure on central government and local planning administrators to drop the 'standard method' of housing need calculation in favour of a system that takes better account of local constraints when determining housing need.

Recreation

"You are so lucky to have this a home venue and I wish we could play here every week" - words from a visiting cricket team, which makes all the time and effort keeping the recreation ground as beautiful as it is worthwhile. A big thank you to Richard Osmond and Tim Austin for their efforts as well as our regular contractors for their work in and around the village.

Lovely to see that after a tough couple of years all our Sports clubs back up and running, with both Cricket and Football putting out two teams weekly and giving many of the villagers both young and old sporting opportunities. The range of clubs utilising the facilities; Bowls, Tennis, Stoolball, Circuit Training, Art Club and Venture Scouts is fabulous. The School also continues to make good use of the recreation ground.

Progress is being made towards the goal of refurbishing the playground in Barcombe Cross. Proposals were sought from several playground equipment providers and these were assessed against the pre-defined requirements set by the Playground Working Group. It was decided that the Parish Council would work with Natural Playscapes to refurbish the playground and that Playsafe would be our partner in the project to place equipment next to the lower playing field.

A grant to fund half of the cost has been requested from the Community Infrastructure Levy fund. The success or otherwise of the grant application will be known in August. We await the funding to come through to get the work underway. This project will also see the closing and demolition of the old toilet block which has been more of an eyesore over recent years. Toilet facilities will be provided using the external toilet attached to the Pavilion.

Placements were provided for two new 'memorial' benches around the recreation ground.

Environment

Cllr Bennington has had several meetings with the Ouse Valley Care project who put in for a grant application to help manage the old railway line for wildlife. We are continuing to monitor the progress of this project. She has also joined the Wild About Barcombe committee and is contributing to a 5-year management plan.

A new bus survey has been designed and is being distributed to residents on-line and as a hard copy. The results of the survey will be fed back to the District Council.

We are in discussion with a representative from Barcombe Primary School with a view to setting up a community project involving the school – one idea has been native hedge planting. A site has been identified on the lower recreation ground for a tree to be planted for the Queens Canopy project. The tree(s) will be planted in the autumn.

We are looking at the possibility of holding a Dark Skies event early in 2023. Cllr Bennington is currently trying to get support for this from the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

Wild About Barcombe (WAB)

The Wild About Barcombe committee continue to manage the area to good effect.

A contractor able to make safe the underground water storage tanks near the pump house at WAB is being sought and it is hoped that the work will be completed in 2022/23.

Traffic/Roads

Barcombe Parish Council has agreed to support the '20's Plenty' campaign and has sent a letter to Lewes District Council.

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Footpaths

The Monday Group carried out work on the footpath crossing the brook at the bottom of the lower field making the footpath much safer. Cllr Smith will be looking for further opportunities to improve the footpaths/stiles in the area during 2022/2023.

Premises

A full electrical installation report was prepared for the Sports Pavilion in 2021. This was the first time this had been inspected since the pavilion was built in 1993. As a result a fair number of defects and deficiencies were identified during the inspection and these have been subsequently corrected. In particular, the main consumer unit was not up to modern standards but has now been replaced. All circuits have RCD protection provided, making the installation much safer for users.

The next inspection of the pavilion will now not need to take place until 2026.

Problems with the metering of water and associated billing have been resolved in the year.

Cllr Skan arranged for a defibrillator to be installed at the Pavilion.

Barcombe Mills

The Parish Council have been working with both Sussex University and the Environment Agency investigating the flooding at Barcombe Mills and in particular, the flooding that closes the road when there are high levels of rainfall. One of the outcomes of the project could be that there is a flood monitoring system put in place where anyone can view a web portal and find out the current state of the road.

The project is at an early stage but first signs are encouraging. It is envisaged that there will be little Parish Council funding needed to support any system put in place as Sussex University is applying for the necessary grants by using this project to support a number of student projects. It is early days in the project but the Parish Council is hoping that the outcome of this project will be very beneficial to the residents of Barcombe, and to others that use the Barcombe Mills Road.

Cllr Stroude arranged for the entrance to the car park to be resurfaced.

Signage installed at the Barcombe Mills car park has been successful in raising some funds towards the cost of maintaining the car park.

Accounts

Significant reserves have been held in order to match fund the Playground refurbishment. These will be drawn down during 2022/23 as the playground work progresses.

The Parish Council continues to operate within the precept on a day-to-day basis, allowing for only a token increase in the Council Tax contribution. For the year 2021/2022 the Parish Council has operated under budget due to some projects not being advanced.

Planning - Bridgelands and Hillside

The Bridgelands Reserved Matter application for Landscaping (LW/21/0872) was submitted in November 2021, and the Parish Council was neutral to the application. Essentially the Parish Council in recommending that the decision on the Reserved Matter application should be deferred until such times as the possible flooding issues on the site have been resolved. The second Reserved Matter application for the Bridgelands site (LW/21/0245) for both Layout and Appearance (following the withdraw of Landscaping by the applicant) was submitted previously but due to delays by Lewes District Council, to date no decision has been made on this Reserved Matter application either.

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For the Hillside site, the application for the development (LW/21/0530) was submitted by Rydon Homes in July last year, following the earlier refusal by Lewes District Council to approve the application (LW/20/0633). Lewes District Council were apparently satisfied that the original objections were overcome by the applicant and this further application for Outline Planning Permission was approved. Rydon Homes has since submitted a Reserve Matters application (LW/21/0153) in March this year for the details of Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale. The Parish Council was negative towards this application as it felt strongly that the Reserved Matter application has changed existing details. Other points made by the Parish Council include lack of renewable energy, lack of green space and drainage concerns. Again, to date no decision on this application has been made by Lewes District Council Planning Committee.

5. Finance Report

Accounts circulated pre-meeting. The audit has been completed and is with the internal auditor. The accounts are on track to be approved at the July Parish Council meeting.

6. Report of the District Councillor, Cllr Linington

Cllr Linington reported on the return to more 'normal' working at Lewes District Council post-Covid. She is conscious that the limited face-to-face opportunities can make it difficult to get a response to concerns. Cllr Linington asks residents to contact her if they face difficulties due to changes in working patterns.

Throughout the year Cllr Linington has been working with residents to represent them in areas such as housing, Council Tax and planning. She was able to report that funding has been made available for additional planning enforcement officers. Following a recommendation from Cllr Linington, Barcombe Parish Council will gather ideas to refute any proposal that Gladman may make in the future regarding the 'Blackcurrant Field'.

7. Report of the County Councillor, Cllr Milligan

I have been the County Councillor for just over a year following the elections in May 2021. I would like to thank Jim Sheppard for his years of service as the previous County Councillor. I have been glad to continue his work on areas such as our Children's Services which Jim was very involved with, and I have been able to take up his place on the Corporate Parenting Panel which oversees the looked after children of our county.

East Sussex County Council is responsible for several areas such as Roads, Schools, Adult Social Care and Children's Services. Over the past year we have continued to make additional investment in our roads; we recently announced additional one-off funding of £5.8 million which will be spent on improving our road signage, pavements and road surfaces.

At the budget in February 2022 we also announced that we are increasing the Highways Budget by 15%, as we recognise that residents want to see more investment in this area to ensure our roads are maintained to a good standard. I have been making representations to Cabinet members about issues such as the intervention level for pothole repair, as I know many residents believe that the current criteria is too strict on the depth, length and width a pothole must be before it can be repaired.

We are also in the process of tendering the new highways contract. Three bidders have been shortlisted and we expect the announcement of the preferred tenderer in September 2022.

The Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was submitted to the Department for Transport in October last year and we have recently been informed that we have been allocated £41.4m of indicative funding which is one of the highest allocations from the scheme. Council officers are currently looking into the detail on how this money will be spent and I have been pushing for rural bus services to be a priority. As soon as I have more information about how this will affect our local area, I will let residents know. The Council is also investing in measures to mitigate climate change, including a £3m investment to replace boilers with low-carbon heating in schools and offices, installing solar panels at 10 council sites and spending £140,000 on low-energy lighting in 12 schools and care homes.

Due to the difficult decisions that previous administrations have had to make, I am glad that the County Council is now in good financial standing and has not had to make any additional savings this year. I would like to thank you for your time

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today and I will continue to work with residents to deliver on the priorities they would like to see from the County Council.

8. Report from the Parish Council's representative to Sports Hall Management Committee

Cllr Arbenz reported that Cllr Holman has joined the committee as the third Parish Council representative. Nigel Hawes has resigned; a replacement is sought. The new Bursar at the village school has been proactive at undertaking improvements and repairs and a new cleaner, privately employed, has been recruited.

The reserve for the replacement floor is secure and there is £8,000 available for the current round of repairs and improvements.

10. Question Time: No questions.

Meeting closed at approx 7.40pm.