

Berwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Berwick Parish Council held at the Berwick Village Hall, on Thursday 24th September 2015 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs B. Smith (Chairman), V Burrough, S Carnie and C Bird.

Maria Caulfield MP, District Councillor P Ede, PCSO Stephen Fenn, Alison Stevens (Clerk) and six members of the public were also present.

Minutes

BP.01.09.15 Apologies: Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr K Winter. Apologies for absence were also received County Councillor N Bennett.

The Chairman proposed and all councillors agreed to discuss the planning applications at this point in the meeting to allow those present the opportunity to leave after.

BP.02.09.15 Planning applications;

WD2015/1657F – 7 Downsway, Station Road – Proposed garden studio – Councillors **resolved** by three votes to one that they had no objections to this application which they agreed was an attractive design of low level construction. Those who objected were concerned that it was in front of the building line and might set a precedent for future applications.

WD2015/1635MEA – Land at Wick Street – Construction of a solar farm to include installation of solar panels to generate 4MW of electricity with switch room, deer fencing and cameras, landscaping and other associated works, together with measures to promote biodiversity – Alister Scott, Chair of Cuckmere Community Solar (CCS), described the solar farm application. He said;

- costs have been reduced because Susenco have already covered a lot of the groundwork.
- the scheme will provide electricity to 850 homes, benefit local investors and generate surplus funds for the benefit of the community.
- three households have objected so far but they (CCS) are working with them to try and allay their fears.

In answer to Councillors questions, he;

- also confirmed that an ancient hedgerow will be reinstated and an outdoor classroom has been set up.
- panels will be fitted low to avoid glare and stop birds flying into them. This way they will also provide shelter to livestock.
- a culvert has been cleared which has already stopped flooding at Wick Street.

After much discussion Councillors **resolved** that they object to this application because of the visual impact on the community.

BP.04.07.15 Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest.

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BP.05.09.15 County Councillor Report: There was no report from the County Councillor on this occasion.

BP.06.09.15 District Councillor Report: District Councillor Ede introduced himself and Maria Caulfield MP and reported the following;

New Wealden Local Plan

He has been briefed on the first phase of Issues and Options for the new Wealden Local Plan, which deals with housing need. Under this new plan Wealden's Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OHAN) is just under 20,000 dwellings by 2037. This plan is backdated to 2013 and will include units already granted permission since April 2013.

In the case of the parish of Berwick the new plan requires the construction of 26 dwellings between now and 2037, of which 11 have already been granted permission at Station Farm, leaving 15 dwellings to build by 2037.

This new plan has to go through a process of public consultation, where it will be tweaked, then sent for approval to cabinet, then Full Council and then the National Planning Inspector - a process which will take about two years. If all runs smoothly the new plan will be implemented by summer 2017.

He will receive a further briefing in October on Gypsy and Traveller Site allocations and also preferred commercial and leisure development sites.

He also warned that right up until this new plan has been approved and signed off by the National Planning Inspector the District remains vulnerable to developer led projects, taking advantage of the presumption in favour afforded by the current NPPF.

Neighbourhood Plans

He and several colleagues on the District Council are encouraging their Parishes to consider formulating and implementing neighbourhood plans as an additional layer of protection. He said should the Parish Council wish to formulate its own new formal neighbourhood plan then there is DCLG grant funding available up to £5000 to assist in that process. This can be obtained via Wealden District Council and drawn down by the Planning Department from a fund ring fenced by DCLG for the use of this particular local authority. Planning Officers can assist in helping Parishes devise a Plan.

Solar Farm

He recognises that there are direct and very significant benefits to the Parish and community in terms of revenue from what is proposed.

A27 Reference Group – Maria Caulwell MP and District Councillor Ede are on the A27 Reference Group which is looking into the best way of using the £75m allocated by Central Government to improve the A27. Some members of the

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Group would like to bank the money to put towards a bigger project at a later date whilst others want to see what the money will buy now. Schemes are currently being costed and parishes will be consulted in due course.

A27 Bridge – Maria Caulwell MP and District Councillor Ede have decided to look at campaigning for a footbridge across the A27 where the pelican crossing currently is – along the same design protocol and methods of the Itford Bridge over the A26 north of Newhaven. The cost would be £950,000

Protocol Meeting – Officers at Wealden District Council are to invite representatives from Berwick Parish Council to a meeting at their offices to further discuss planning application WD2015/1443 for Station Farm in Station Road

BP.07.09.15 Sussex Police: PCSO Stephen Fenn reported that as well as a couple of road crashes, the following incidents have taken place in Berwick;

- a theft of a purse
- a domestic
- horse clipping
- a deer hunt.

He also reported that Sussex Police is withdrawing 150 PCSOs and closing police stations. It is proposing instead to have hubs at Lewes, Eastbourne and Crowborough and a satellite at Uckfield.

BP.08.09.15 Public Question Time: There were no questions from the public on this occasion.

BP.09.09.15 Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting held on 23rd July 2015 and matters arising from the minutes:

The minutes of the meeting were reviewed. The minutes were then signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The minutes of the Planning Committee held on the 20th August 2015 were adopted by the Full Council.

BP.10.09.15 Reports:

Berwick Playing Field – Councillor Carnie asked if the Caravan Club's contract can be updated to clarify what action needs to be taken to reinstate the field after caravans get stuck there. The Clerk will bring any existing contract to the next meeting.

Highways and Transport – Councillor Burrough asked for the drain to be cleared on the main road at the entrance to Mays Farm. The drain was reported to have been covered up by contractors fitting high fibre optics and the road now floods as a result.

Councillors also asked the Clerk to ask the County Council to repair the road sign at Coppice Corner following a recent collision.

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Tree Warden – there was no report from the Tree Warden on this occasion.

BP.11.09.15 Reports by Councillors from Outside Bodies:

Wealden District Association of Local Council – There has not been a Wealden District Association since the last Full Council Meeting. Chief Superintendent Neil Honnor is to attend the next Association Meeting to talk about Community Wardens.

Village Hall Committee – Councillor Burrough was asked to ask the Committee if it has any requests to use the Solar Farm money.

Parish Emergency Officer - The Clerk distributed the Emergency Plan to Councillors for discussion at the next Full Council Meeting.

Police Local Action Team – There was no report from the Police Action Team Meeting on this occasion.

Berwick Solar Farm Community Fund Meeting – Councillor Winter sent a written report in which he said;

A meeting was held in July with representatives from Arlington, Berwick, Chalvington with Ripe and Selmeston Parish Councils. The meeting was convened to discuss progress regarding the allocation of funds available under the Unilateral Undertaking last discussed at a meeting on 12th May 2015. The meeting also discussed the basis of allocation of the Fund.

At the meeting in May, it had been agreed that details of the funding would be publicised to ensure that all residents were aware of its availability and the qualifying criteria.

It was also agreed that the Parishes should be given a reasonable amount of time in which to bring forward proposals. The date set for this was 31 December 2015. Before that date, each Parish would be restricted to a quarter of the Fund. If, after that date, there were qualifying projects that would take a single Parish over the 25% level, they could nonetheless be eligible for approval.

It was reported that information on the Fund had been included in the relevant Parish magazines and similar publications for each of the Parishes. Two applications had been received from Arlington and one is likely to be made from Selmeston. Chalvington and Ripe also expect to receive two.

The meeting discussed the qualifying criteria set out in the Unilateral Undertaking, which are far from clear but refer to:

“ the making of grants and/ or loans to offer opportunities to grass roots community voluntary groups and individuals to receive grants for the promotion and installation of energy efficient measures, small-scale renewable energy projects and education and capacity building projects or other projects involving renewable energy , climate change and nature conservation and enhancing the public realm through planting so they may create and/or deliver outcomes for the

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benefit of their community and members by a simple effective inclusive programme within the local parishes.”

On this basis, it was considered that both of the Arlington Village Hall projects would be likely to meet the criteria for support from the Fund but it was noted that the aggregate cost of the projects exceeded a quarter of the Fund. In the absence of other funding towards the cost of these projects, it would therefore only be possible for one of them to proceed before 31st December. After that date, additional funding might be available if other Parishes had not come forward with qualifying projects.

A possible application from the Champions, whose property is adjacent to the solar farm and who were one of the three households most badly affected by its development. They had asked if additional planting to screen the site could be provided by the fund but their proposal had not yet been costed. The question was raised as to whether this additional planting should be provided by the developers.

After further discussion, it was agreed that there should be a further meeting in October to review progress. If there were no further applications forthcoming by then, the Parish magazine announcements might be repeated.

BP.12.09.15 Appointment of Permanent Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer:

The Clerk has emailed all Clerks in the Wealden area but there have been no applicants. She has therefore agreed to stay on as a permanent Clerk with immediate effect to allow the new Council time to settle in.

BP.13.09.15 Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations: Councillors **resolved** to keep the existing Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and review them at the Annual General Meeting in May.

BP.14.09.15 Finance: Members approved the following payments made since the last meeting;

Cheque Number 100943	A Stevens wages
Cheque Number 100944	Inland Revenue

Approval of Accounts to date:

Members approved the accounts to 31st August 2015 and agreed they can be presented on spreadsheets in future.

Internal Audit Requirements:

The Clerk said she will carry out a review of the Parish Council's Governance Procedures for Audit Purposes and report back in due course.

Transparency Code Fund:

The National Association of Councils has set up a Transparency Fund to help Councils with a turnover of less than £25000 to meet the requirements of the Transparency Code for the first year. Councillors **resolved** that the Clerk can apply for funding towards a new computer, scanner and the extra Clerk's hours needed to meet the requirements of the Code.

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To consider a grant from Cuckmere Community Flood Forum: This was deferred to the next Full Council Meeting when all grant applications will be considered for the forthcoming financial year.

Bank Signatories: Councillors resolved that two councillors sign each cheque and that there are three signatories. The signatories will be Councillors Smith, Winter and Burrough.

BP.15.09.15 Questions from Members: There were no questions from members on this occasion.

BP.16.09.15 Close of Meeting; The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.55pm

Signed as a true record of the meeting:

Signed: _____

Dated: **28th September 2015**