

Minutes of the Isfield Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 28th September 2020. This meeting was held on Zoom.

29. Present

Cllrs G Sambrook, R Levett, A Keys, T Mitchell-Cobb, K Meakin and S Cramond.

Mr and Mrs Buchanan (Applicant for Planning Application WD/2020/1244/MAJ), District Councillor Roy Galley and Alison Stevens (Clerk) were also in attendance.

30. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

31. Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 1st September 2020

The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 1st September were read, confirmed and signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

32. Clerk's Report on Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on this agenda

The Rights of Way Officer said;

- the path at Meadow Farm has been inspected. The gates were assessed to be in a reasonable state, subject to some small improvements.
- The adjacent hedge also needs cutting back and they will follow this up with the landowner now the bird nesting season is over.
- The path looks quite well trodden and the loose wire present at the last inspection has been removed from the fields.
- A ditch bridge near one of the gates will need replacing at some point as it's made from sleepers but the County Council doesn't use these any longer. Rights of Way has updated its condition on its database so that ESCC Rangers can assess where it fits into their priorities.

County Councillor Galley is also chasing the Environment Agency to find out what it is doing about the bunds.

33. To welcome and officially sign in the new Councillors

The Chairman welcomed Simon Cramond to the Parish Council. Mr Cramond duly signed the Acceptance of Office, the Register of Interests and the Consent to Receive Electronic Agendas forms and participated in the rest of the meeting.

34. Disclosures of Interest.

There were no disclosures of interests on any items on this agenda.

The meeting was then suspended.

35. Questions from Members of the Public.

There were no questions from any members of the public.

The meeting was then reopened.

36. Reports – to include:

- i: Safety Report – Councillors discussed whether or not to commission a feasibility study to see if anything can be done to reduce the amount of speeding in Station Road. A feasibility study will cost in the region of £500, and will include a site visit and meeting with the engineer who will assess the merits and feasibility of a scheme based on current traffic flows, highway boundaries, safety implications and logistics. It will also give an indicative cost for the design and construction of the project.

Councillors said they would need to provide evidence and agreed to ask Sussex Police and ESCC for their latest statistics. County Councillor Galley suggested the Parish Council might like to also consider buying mobile speed signs. Councillor Cramond said he will try and find out what the accident record is for there.

- ii: Planning Report – the following planning applications were considered;

WD/2020/1244/MAJ - Land South of Copwood Farm and to the west of the A22 Uckfield Bypass, Uckfield TN22 3PT - Proposed development of a solar electric forecourt, comprising 24 core electric vehicle charging points, a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm of up to 5.5mw and energy storage. The hub building will contain a mix of ancillary dwell facilities including wcs, coffee shop, retail, seating area, meeting rooms/workspace and a display area. Provision of car parking, hard and soft landscaping and access arrangements off the Copwood Roundabout. Diversion of public footpath. - Isfield Parish Council has considered the above development application, and would comment as follows:

1) As a general principal, Isfield Parish Council is supportive of green initiatives in the development of the County. However, it is important to understand that projects are not by definition 'good' simply because they are 'green'.

2) This project as it stands would not confer significant benefits on the inhabitants of Uckfield or the surrounding villages. The site is around a mile and a half from the High Street, and to use it would require a special journey on the part of locals. To suit the local community, a facility would need to be located in close proximity to the provision of other services in the town. To overcome this problem, the applicants intend to include a (not insubstantial) retail facility on the site, which would try to attract customers away from the existing High Street. Development should not be planned to be disadvantageous to existing businesses in the community.

3) In previous communications with District and County Councillors on the subject of ever-increasing HGV traffic from Newhaven port using both the A22 and A26, Isfield Parish Council has been told that the long-term plan to solve this problem is to dual the section of A27 between Lewes and the Newhaven roundabout. The intention there is to attract HGV traffic to take the (then) dual carriageway A27 to the A23 junction and follow the A23/M23 to the M25 to reach other parts of the country. Putting HGV charging facilities on the single carriageway A22/A26 is a complete contradiction of this policy; it will attract more HGV traffic along the less suitable highways. This policy (A27 improvement) has been outlined to us more than once - we rely on information we are given.

4) The location to the west of the A22/A26 encroaches on agricultural land, which - it has been made clear in the past - should not be happening. The Uckfield bypass (A22/A26) is the natural boundary for development; again, this is a policy that has

been repeated to us on more than one occasion.

5) This putative development is likely to increase traffic flow on roads which are already over-full. And that is before the impact of the Ridgewood 1000-house development. This facility would attract traffic; it is far more enticing for passing traffic than it is for locals.

6) The retail space proposed is likely to contain at least some fast food outlets; we already suffer from a problem of McDonalds cartons abandoned by the roadside - it would be disappointing to see this issue get worse.

7) We agree in general with the comments made by Uckfield Town Council in their submission on this matter, however with the proviso that we do not believe Maresfield would be a suitable alternative sight, as that would effectively cause the same problems we have outlined in a slightly different location. If Uckfield wants a facility more appropriate for local use, then sites such as petrol forecourts, supermarket car parks or local authority car parks would be more suitable. If a facility for HGVs and long distance traffic is sought, then the logical place to put it is on one of the dual carriageways, which would be more appropriate. Effectively, this application is to install a motorway service area on a single carriageway road; obfuscating that intention by putting electric charging points rather than petrol pumps does not make it any more suitable.

WD/2020/6507/SO - Land at Downlands Farm, Uckfield - Request for screening opinion for proposed residential development of up to 550 dwellings – Councillors said that 550 dwellings will mean that there will be at least an additional 1100 cars on our roads which are already too busy. The Government is obsessed with building and sets unrealistic targets and this area has already has more than its fair share with the development at Ridgewood. Isfield Parish Council feels more development should be taking in the north of the country and understands its view is supported by the local MPs. They do not want this development to go ahead.

WD/2020/1434/F - Beeches Farm Oasthouse, Beeches Farm Road, Uckfield, TN22 5QD - Alterations and improvements to existing converted oasthouse, works include; new floors, ceilings, internal and external walls and doors and windows. Making good of the existing roof and rainwater goods and the removal of the chimney, with the addition of a new parking area and outdoor space – Isfield Parish Council has no objections to this application on any planning grounds.

iii: Recreation Ground and Pavilion Report –

- The Clerk gave an update on the situation regarding the cricket nets. She said a Principal Planning Officer has now officially issued Legal Services with the completed instructions form for the preparation of the indemnity agreement. The officer has told them it is urgent - to be completed before the end of October in order for the Parish to secure a discount on them. Once the Parish Council has that it will need to authorise the Clerk to sign it, the Clerk can return it to Wealden and the money should follow fairly quickly. Councillors asked the Clerk to update the contractor.
- Councillors resolved to supply and fit a teak Bericote Bench (1.8m long) on the Pavilion veranda in memory of Jim Smith, the former Vice Chairman of Isfield Parish Council. They will discuss wording for the plaque at the next Full Council Meeting.

- Councillors agreed it would be inappropriate under the current circumstances to increase the rental charges for the recreation ground and pavilion for 2021.

The contractor who cuts the hedge at the ground is unable to cut the hedge in the new play area because the new equipment is in his way. Councillor Levett has asked the contractor who cuts the grass if they can help instead. The Clerk said she will also chase him up. Councillors also agreed that Councillor Levett can fit new plastic no dog signs at a cost to the Council of £68 plus VAT.

- Councillors decided not to provide a new waste bin in the new play area as litter does not seem to be a big problem, but they said they will monitor the situation and revisit this decision if the situation changes
- The District Council had been emptying the wheelie bins at the pavilion and not charging the Parish Council but they stopped when new contractors were appointed. They were asked to empty the bins as a one off in the summer to allow the Parish Council time to make new arrangements but they seem to be continuing to empty them. Councillors agreed no further action was necessary at this stage.

iv: Village Hall Report – Councillor Levett is the new Chairman of Isfield Village Hall. The hall was said to be generally ‘holding its own’ thanks, in part, to a grant from Wealden District Council. Bookings are generally down because of the current situation but there have been a few new ones.

37. Memorial Stone – Councillors were asked to consider supporting a proposal from a resident who wanted to provide a memorial stone to remember Jim Smith. They agreed it is not in their jurisdiction because the proposed site is near the river.
38. Bank Signatories – Councillors agreed to consider adding another signatory once the current restrictions have been lifted.
39. To consider contributing towards the cost of a new bar billiards table at The Laughing Fish – Councillors agreed this is not really a matter for the Parish Council.
40. Christmas Tree Licence application – Councillors resolved to apply for a licence from ESCC again this year. They also agreed to pay £200 towards the tree.
41. Questions from Parish Councillors.

There were no questions from the public on this occasion.

There were no further questions from Parish Councillors and the meeting closed at 8.30pm.