

Minutes of the Isfield Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday 25th March 2024
at Isfield Village Hall.

77. Present

Cllrs G Sambrook (Chairman), A Keys, T Mitchell-Cobb and P Roundell.

Alison Stevens (Clerk) and eight members of the public were also present.

78. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Cramond. The reasons for his apologies were accepted by the Full Council.

County Councillor R Galley and District Councillor C Coleman also sent apologies for their absence.

79. Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 22nd January 2024

The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 22nd January 2024 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

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

All matters arising were included elsewhere on the agenda.

81. Disclosures of Interest

Councillor Roundell declared an interest in minute 85 iii because he is a member of SABRE.

The meeting was then suspended.

82. Report from County Councillor Roy Galley

There was no report from County Councillor Galley on this occasion.

83. Report from District Councillor Christina Coleman

District Councillor Coleman sent a written report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

84. Questions from Members of the Public

The residents who were present complained about an unacceptable and toxic smell originating from KPS which has been affecting their lives recently. They wanted to know what is causing it, how long it is going to last and why it can't be stopped now. They also wanted to make sure it won't happen again and isn't likely to cause them any long term health damage.

Danny Smyth and Andy Seale from KPS apologised and said the KPS facility had received a waste type (allowed under the environmental permit) that when mixed with other compostable materials has caused the odour people are experiencing. As a result, KPS has now stopped receiving this waste.

Once this waste type has completed the composting process it should no longer cause an offensive odour and it will be removed from the facility. The composting process is likely to last until the end of May, until then there may be further odours but the residual odour should reduce.

An officer from the District Council has visited the site several times and the Environment Agency has confirmed in writing that nothing further can be done until the composting procedure has finished. Testing has proved the omissions are not harmful.

The residents remained frustrated despite being given reassurances from KPS that the situation wouldn't happen again, and they asked the Parish Council to get more details about the omissions.

Mr Smyth and Mr Seale then left the meeting.

Mr Levett said the verges alongside Lime Tree Villas are in a terrible state and asked the Parish Council to report the matter to Highways. Residents are no longer able to get out of the way when a vehicle passes them.

The meeting was then re-opened.

85. Reports – to include:

- i: Safety Report – Councillors complained about the number of potholes in the parish and were told the most efficient way to report them is via [fixmystreet.com](https://www.fixmystreet.com)

- ii: Planning Report - Councillors commented on the following planning applications:

WD/2024/0462/F - 1 Little Buckham Farm Cottages, Buckham Hill, Isfield, TN22 5XX - Single storey extension – Isfield Parish Council has no objections to this planning application.

WD/2023/1943/F - Boathouse Farm, Lewes Road, Isfield, TN22 5TY - Proposed agricultural dwelling (Resubmission of WD/2022/2002/F) showing alternative siting – Isfield Parish Council has no objections to this planning application.

WD/2024/0487/FA - Land to the west of Culpeper Close, Isfield - Variation of Condition 13 of WD/2023/1594/F (Erection of two detached dwellings, with access, garages and associated landscaping) to facilitate replacement of approved plans with revised plans - Isfield Parish Council objects to this application for the same reasons given in previous applications, namely WD/2020/1340/MAJ and WD/2020/2058/MRM. This latest application also contravenes 9.18 and 9.27 in the Strategic Assessment and two more houses will unnecessarily erode into the open countryside. It was also agreed that the village needs more affordable housing and not 4-5 bedroom properties.

WD/2024/0344/F - C R B Construction, Kiln Lane, Isfield, TN22 5UE - Erection of one secure plant and equipment storage building on area of existing open storage yard – Isfield Parish Council has no objections to this planning application.

Wealden Local Plan – SABRE (Stop Ashdown Business Park Extension) has posted a guide to make it easier for residents to respond to the Local Plan and is working on a detailed response for Fletching Parish Council. Once that response has been released it will be offered to Isfield Parish Council to use as a basis for its response.

There was concern that not enough people know about the plan and agreement that we need to create more awareness so the Parish Council agreed to distribute flyers using mailshot and also make full use of social media.

An Extra Ordinary Meeting was then called for the 22nd April 2024 at which the Parish Council will agree its official response.

- iii: Working Group Against Over Development Meeting (WGod) – WGod organised the next meeting of its members which took place on the 31st January at Horam Village Hall. Parish, Town and District Councillors were updated on the Wealden Local Plan and District Councillors had the opportunity to address any concerns.

Councillor Sambrook and Mr Nick Daines from the Group will appear on Ashdown Radio in April.

iv: Recreation Ground and Pavilion Report

- i. Repairs to the Pavilion – At the last meeting, Councillors resolved to accept the price from MBS to update the electrics at the Pavilion. The work is due to start on the 27th March.
- ii. Exercise Track – It was resolved:
 - To accept the price from Southern Land Services for an exercise track in the Recreation Ground.
 - To add a connecting piece of path across the verge for which Councillor Keys will get an estimate for so the Clerk can apply for the licence.
 - Not to proceed with the gate but fit posts at the entrance instead to make it more accessible.

Councillor Keys said he was worried the height barrier could restrict access for the emergency services so it was agreed that he will let them know the padlock number.

- iii. EV Charging Points – There was nothing new to report on this occasion.

v: Village Hall Report – The Village Hall Committee had circulated a copy of its Business Plan for a new extension before the meeting.

Councillor Sambrook said that Councillors will need more time to read it but:

- i. He has checked the VAT regulations and because the Parish Council is a Custodian Trustee it will not be able to reclaim the VAT (VAT Notice 749).
- ii. He understood the object of the Parish Council putting money into the project was so that the Village Hall could apply for grants from elsewhere. If the Parish Council has the means to contribute £40000 towards the scheme, the other £40000 should be made up by others and not a Public Loans Board Loan which is complicated to apply for and time consuming with no guarantee of a successful outcome.

Mr Levett disagreed with the VAT situation and offered to invite a representative from Acre to a future meeting who can explain a way round it.

Councillor Roundell suggested the Village Hall holds a specific fund raising event and that the Parish Council sets up a joint committee with the Trustees to work on the project.

Councillors were keen to stress they are not against the plans for an extension but need to work out the best way forward. They then deferred the item to the next Full Council Meeting to allow members more time to read the plan in more detail.

86. Finance Report

Councillors;

- i. Resolved to approve the following payments :

		£
101694	Barcombe Landscapes - Outside Maintenance	1068.00
101695	A Keys - Pavilion keys	22.00
101696	A Stevens - Salary - January	588.42
101697	A Stevens - Salary - February	588.42
101698	ESCC - Pension	382.12
101699	HMRC - PAYE	447.80
101700	Isfield Village Hall - Hall Hire	38.00
101701	Clean Corner - Pavilion Cleaning	240.00

- ii. To approve the cash book and bank reconciliation to 27th February 2024.
- iii. It was resolved to buy a Parish Council laptop with the necessary packages and anti-virus software for a maximum cost of £1000.

87. Landline Telephone Charges

The Parish Council understands that BT plan to have all landline telephones operating via Wifi, and that analogue phones will be redundant by 2025. At the last meeting it was resolved that the Clerk will write to the County Councillor and ask what ESCC is doing to ensure residents are not left without any emergency contact. She received the following reply;

‘The Parish Council is correct that Openreach is undertaking a national programme of switching off the existing analogue phone network by 31 December 2025, although this timeframe is subject to change. This is part of an ongoing industry-led programme, announced in 2017, to replace old, ageing copper telephone cables with newer fibre ones that are faster and provide a more reliable connection. You may be interested to hear that this is also happening in other countries, with some having already moved over to a fully digital phone service, and others are in the process. Responsibility for the switch off and for providing emergency cover does not lie with the County Council. It is the telecoms provider's responsibility to ensure that back-up is available in the event of a power cut or the internet being down. For anyone who is dependent on their landline phone - for example, if they don't have a mobile phone or don't have mobile signal at their home - their telecoms provider must offer them a solution to make sure they can contact the emergency services if a power cut occurs. This could be a battery back-up unit for a landline phone, or there may be other options offered. Any solution should be provided free of charge to people who are dependent on their landline. For those who are not eligible for a free resilience solution, they may be able to purchase one from their provider or another retailer. Ofcom guidance is that consumers should make sure that their provider knows about their needs and circumstance and how the service will work for them, either in advance of the switchover or when they're notified of the dates it will happen - this is generally one month before it is actioned.

The following may be helpful to you:

- * analogue phone lines will not be sold to new customers from September 2023;
- * from 1st January all 2026 landline phone calls will be hosted via the internet;
- * phone providers will contact businesses and residents when they are ready to begin the switchover in an area.
- * for anyone who does not currently have an internet service but does have a landline, they won't be forced to pay for a fibre broadband service they do not want. Instead, any new digital phone service will use a dedicated broadband connection and hub that will be provided by their phone supplier, often at no additional cost. Those in this position will need to speak with their landline provider to discuss options;
- * a key issue for some is that digital voice is not designed to work with care lines or alarm lines, and this also applies to CCTV/fax machines. Some devices might need to be replaced or reconfigured to continue working. With the pending switch off of the analogue network, those who have these alarms should speak to their supplier to clarify the supplier's plans for back-up systems should the internet go down - some emergency alert system providers are already in touch with customers.’

The Parish Council has now also heard from Chris Hockley who is the Engagement Manager of Digital Voice at BT. He confirmed:

- the landline telephone system is being decommissioned in 2025
- BT is keen to engage with all local authorities before the switch off date
- The new landline service works on a digital platform called Digital Voice.

More information on this can be found on:

- A brief video on this: Introduction to Digital Voice – YouTube
- The Parish Council's website.

The Clerk has invited Mr Hockley to attend the Parish Assembly to answer resident's questions.

Councillor Keys will also write to him.

88. Co-option of Councillors

The Parish Council currently has two vacancies. Anyone who is interested is invited to chat to any of the Councillors or contact the Parish Clerk.

89. Questions from Parish Councillors

There were no further questions.

90. IN VIEW OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM ON THIS AGENDA, THE PRESS AND PUBLIC WERE EXCLUDED UNDER THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS TO MEETINGS) ACT

90.1 Isfield Parish Council resolved;

- to appoint Lee Dunkley as its permanent Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer from 1st May 2024.
- Mr Dunkley is to be paid LC3 Scale 37 pro rata.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 8.45pm

District Councillor Report

It is time for you to have your say on the developments that will take place in Wealden over the next sixteen years and beyond. These developments will have an impact on all of us. While I would like to see far less development than is demanded by central government, having a Local Plan in place does offer significant and worthwhile protections. The previous Conservative administration at Wealden failed to get a Local Plan approved and the result was the unplanned developer free-for-all that can sadly be seen across too much of Wealden. We need your input to ensure that the new Local Plan is the best that it can possibly be. The consultation is now open and will run from **5pm, Friday 15 March to 5pm, Friday 10 May 2024**.

Alongside the face-to-face exhibitions of the draft Local Plan, Wealden District Council will launch a virtual exhibition accessed via the council's website so that residents who cannot, or do not want to, visit in person, can still partake in the consultation. Please register using the portal at <https://consult.wealden.gov.uk/kse>. There will also be advice on how to respond to the consultation.

The locations of the face-to-face consultations are confirmed below.

Venue	Address	Date	Time
Hailsham Civic Centre	Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 2AX	Saturday 23rd March 2024	10.00AM - 16.00PM
Maresfield Village Hall	Bridge Road, Maresfield, East Sussex TN22 2HJ	Monday 25th March 2024	14.00PM - 20.00PM
Polegate Community Centre	43 Windsor Way, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6QF	Tuesday 26th March 2024	14.00PM - 20.00PM
Uckfield Civic Centre	Council Offices, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 1AE	Saturday 13th April 2024	10.00AM - 16.00PM
Heathfield Community Centre	Sheepsetting Lane, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 0XG	Wednesday 17th April 2024	14.00PM - 20.00PM
Crowborough Community Centre	Pine Grove, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1FE	Saturday 20th April 2024	10.00AM - 16.00PM
East Hoathly Village Hall	Church Marks Lane, East Hoathly, East Sussex BN8 6EQ	Monday 22nd April 2024	14.00PM - 20.00PM
Frant Memorial Hall	The Green, Frant, East Sussex TN3 9ED	Tuesday 23rd April 2024	14.00PM - 20.00PM
Horam Village Hall	Horam, East Sussex TN21 0JE	Saturday 4th May 2024	10.00AM - 16.00PM

Positive and Negative:

It is really important that you express what you like about the draft Local Plan, as well as your objections. Once the consultation has taken place, the draft Local Plan will gain 'weight' in planning law, according to the magnitude of opinion.

There are two controversial sites that require particular attention which are not formal allocations in the draft Local Plan, but which have been included for public comment. They are the Ashdown Business Park Expansion and Owlsbury. The former is a vast industrial development that would extend over land the equivalent of 100 football pitches, adjacent to ancient woodland; the latter proposes a 2,000 house residential development in an unsustainable location. It is my opinion that should these sites be included in the final Local Plan, they would have a devastating impact on the area, not least the health and resilience of the Ashdown Forest, local waterways and the wider environment. I have been particularly campaigning against these potential developments. If you would like to know more please visit: <https://sabreowl.com/>.

Support:

If you need any support, please do contact me. Alternatively, you can visit planning policy support on: planningpolicy@wealden.gov.uk or by calling 01892 602008

For additional news about Wealden go to Let's talk Wealden at <https://letstalk.wealden.gov.uk/>

Weald to Waves:

Lots of Parish Councils are now getting involved in Weald to Waves. Please do share the following links with your colleagues to learn more about the pledges we've had to date and how to sign up to the Gardens & Greenspaces project (which is open to everyone in Sussex):

W2W map showing partners and pledges to date:

<https://www.wealdtowaves.co.uk/map/weald-to-waves-main-map/>

Gardens & Greenspaces background information (including sign up):

<https://www.wealdtowaves.co.uk/get-involved/gardens-and-greenspaces/>

Gardens & Greenspaces blogs:

<https://www.wealdtowaves.co.uk/blog/gardens-greenspaces/>

Including my introductory blog when we launched the project:

<https://www.wealdtowaves.co.uk/article/gardens-and-greenspaces-communities-connecting-for-nature/>

It would be wonderful if you can encourage the community to sign up (whatever the size of their space). If the parish council manages any green spaces, then please do sign those up too!

Contact: **Amy Hurn | Weald to Waves - Gardens & Greenspaces Coordinator**