

Mountfield Parish Council

Minutes of the virtual Mountfield Parish Council Meeting
held on 9th March 2021

Present

Councillors S. Rickman-Smith (Chairman), C. Hollamby (Vice-Chairman),
J. Ray, J. Snuggs, S. Taylor, N. Whines
Mrs. I. Marchant (Parish Clerk/RFO)
County Councillor K. Field
District Councillor E. Kirby-Green
One member of the public

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None declared.

2. DISPENSATIONS

None requested.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hardy.

4. ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

RESOLVED – that the draft minutes of the meeting held on 14.01.21 and the planning meeting held on 09.02.21 be confirmed as being accurate records of the proceedings. Councillor Snuggs proposed, and Councillor Whines seconded, the voting was unanimous.

5. OPEN FORUM

5.1 County Council report (ESCC) – Councillor K. Field

- The budget has been set for 2021-22, there will be an increase of 1.99% and an additional increase that is ringfenced for Adult Social Care.
- All secondary school places in East Sussex are almost full.
- Councillor Field has spoken to ESCC about the problems at the Mountfield waste tip – traffic jams etc., caused by social distancing rules.

5.2 District Council report (RDC) – Councillor E. Kirby-Green

- Please report all fly-tipping due to problems with the waste tips. RDC have a very good record for dealing quickly with this.
- Due to lockdown/working from home/staff shortages, RDC planning are taking about 6/8 weeks to validate planning applications.
- All parishes have been notified that RDC Enforcement are not investigating what they consider to be minor complaints.
- RDC are to set up a lottery to fund the Community Grant Scheme.
- £70K is to be spent to install a hybrid meeting system.
- £14M is to be spent on redevelopment of Bexhill Town Hall, including £450K on architect's fees.
- £17M reserves will be used by 2025 to fund the budget moving forward.
- Councillor Field was asked to contact RDC's waste contractor (Biffa) about the rubbish on the roads, particularly the A21 and A2100.

5.3 Public Question Time

- A resident mentioned the concern that planning officers are not conducting site visits. There is a legal obligation that they must do so. Has this rule just been waived by RDC?

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6. MPC LIAISON WITH SUSSEX POLICE

6.1 There are concerns that PCSOs no longer attend PC meetings, although MPC understand that with fewer officers/shift working, it is difficult. The PCSOs are holding virtual monthly meetings with the parishes to overcome this.

6.2 Councillor Hollamby attended one of these meetings recently and reports as follows:

- It was an interesting meeting and very good to network with other PCs.
- Safety plans are being actioned for safety works on the A21.
- Parishes were asked to remind their residents to be vigilant regarding burglaries and install CCTV signage as this is a proved deterrent.

7. RDC CORPORATE PLAN

MPC will not comment on this.

8. OFFER OF FREE FRUIT TREES FROM EFORESTS

Unfortunately, there is no public land available for 200 fruit trees.

9. WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY

RESOLVED – to subscribe to the full UserWay accessibility package, the cost is £352/pa, less 10% as MPC is a non-profit organisation. The Chairman proposed and Councillor Whines seconded, the voting was unanimous.

10. PLANNING

10.1 Planning applications for consideration

RR/2021/21/P – 3 Church Cottages, Church Road

Construction of replacement garage/carport with storage room in roof and external stairs.

AGREED – to object to this application for the following reasons:

- We consider the design and materials are excellent, but the proposed building is far too big.
- It scarcely fits into the width of the curtilage on the plans. The overhang of the eaves, and whatever guttering will be added will put it very close to the boundaries of No.2 Church Cottages and the churchyard on the other side.
- The excessive height is clear from the fact that the ridge of the proposed garage is 5.5 metres, whereas the ridge height and gable height of the original cottages behind is only 4 metres. Also, the width of the proposed garage is 6.5 metres, compared with the 4.5 metres of the gabled returns on Nos.1 and 3 Church Cottages.
- The effect would be overbearing in relation to the main house, the neighbouring curtilages and the overall built setting around the Church.
- The Church itself – All Saints, Mountfield is one of the most important Norman building in the High Weald AONB, an historic site of the utmost importance, which should command the most sensitive consideration.

RR/2021/118/P – Taylors Cottage, Mountfield Lane

Single storey extension.

AGREED – to support this application.

10.2 Update on the RDC planning focus group virtual session by the Clerk.

- It was a good start by RDC Planning to employ IESE to work with RDC and their planning stakeholders to improve RDC's planning and enforcement services.
- It was interesting to find that all attendees had the same issues, with Communication/Working Together and Growing Understanding and Knowledge being the most important.
- The scores on the above were low.
- It was agreed that Mark Bright (RDC Enforcement) was always helpful and overworked.
- RDC do not put the full email address of the planning officer relevant to the application on the weekly list. All clerks then have to ring their District Councillor/take a guess etc. This is time consuming and irritating, particularly with new officers/staff turnover.

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10.3 No other planning matters for discussion.

11. ENFORCEMENT

- 11.1 Three Mountfield items on the most recent RDC enforcement lists. Two awaiting further information and one, no further action.
- 11.2 MPC are very disappointed and concerned that RDC Enforcement did not apply their powers to the original application, but merely asked for another application. They have informed their District Councillor and RDC Planning about this. However, no further action will be taken by RDC.
- 11.3 RDC Enforcement have restricted, from 09.02.21, investigating enforcement complaints unless RDC consider them high priority, due to unfilled vacancies and long-term sickness. MPC consider what RDC Enforcement consider a low priority may well be of the highest priority and concern to residents.
- 11.4 No other enforcement matters for discussion.

12. HIGHWAYS/RIGHTS OF WAY

- 12.1 The verge opposite the houses in Solomons Lane is being damaged, we believe, by heavy vehicles entering the SW compound. Bollards have been suggested and the Clerk will investigate the ownership of this verge and other means of protecting the verge.
- 12.2 Any other highways/RoW matters to be discussed – there have been two incidents recently of HGVs getting “lost,” and entering the village via New Cut, driving down Hoath Hill and existing via Solomons Lane. These have caused damage to resident’s verges and driveways, plus being extremely dangerous. We have identified the hauliers and believe the HGVs were going to British Gypsum, but as all drivers asked did not speak English, we have no real evidence. The matter was reported to British Gypsum before the meeting and MPC received an apology on behalf of the residents and the assurance of an investigation. The Clerk will also write to the haulage company (Hegelman) and other businesses in Mountfield that use HGVs

13. FINANCE

- 13.1 Bank balances at 28.02.21
- MPC deposit account - £14,724.61
 - MPC current account - £3,588.05
 - KGF current account - £4,421.54
- 13.2 RESOLVED - to approve the following payments, Councillor Whines proposed, and the Chairman seconded, the voting was unanimous.
- Clerk, salary/HO (Feb/Mar21), expenses - £983.32
 - * S. Sutton, village/playground grass cutting - £711.00
 - * Donation to BACT in memory of Colin Harmer - £1,000.00
 - * Godaddy, website backup renewal - £43,06
- * already paid
- 13.3 RESOLVED – to approve the budget monitor and bank reconciliations at 28.02.21. Councillor Whines proposed and the Chairman seconded, the voting was unanimous.

14. DATES OF NEXT MEETING(S)

- 13.04.21 – Planning meeting (provisional, will only be held if required)
- 11.05.21 – Annual Council Meeting