

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held at Ewhurst & Staplecross  
Village Hall, Staplecross on Wednesday 15 January 2025**

**PRESENT** Councillors Jacqui Hyett, Larry Hyett, John Lederer, Gareth Matthews, Robin Matthews, Barbara Mould (**Vice-Chair**), David Young (**Chairman**)

**IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Parish Clerk; Jessica Neame – Deputy Parish Clerk & RFO; Rother District Councillors Tony Biggs & Tony Ganly; East Sussex County Councillor Paul Redstone; 11 other members of the public

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*The meeting commenced at 7pm.*

**1 APOLOGIES**

There was none.

**2 CODE OF CONDUCT**

The disclosures of interest following were made:

|                   |                |                               |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Cllr Larry Hyett  | <i>item 6a</i> | Bowls Club member             |
|                   | <i>item 9</i>  | Village Hall Committee member |
| Cllr Jacqui Hyett | <i>item 6a</i> | Bowls Club member             |
|                   | <i>item 9</i>  | Village Hall Committee member |
| Cllr Young        | <i>item 9</i>  | Village Hall Treasurer        |

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting for the Reports of the County and District Councillors – and any contributions/questions from members of the public.  
(See **APPENDICES A-C.**)*

*The meeting reconvened.*

**3 COUNCIL MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** To adopt the draft Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 November 2024 (C24-11) as an accurate record.

**4 PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**RESOLVED** To note the responses following, submitted under the Clerk's delegated authority.

[RR/2024/2005/P](#) Handsel Farm, Junction Rd, Staplecross  
One bay extension to existing garage outbuilding and associated enlargement of residential curtilage (alternative to that approved under extant planning permission RR/2022/1953/P).  
SUPPORT APPROVAL

[RR/2024/2014/P](#) 3 Dagg Lane, Spinney Cottage, Ewhurst Green  
Demolition of existing garage and erection of new timber framed and clad building.  
SUPPORT APPROVAL

[RR/2024/1704/P](#) Wish House, Beacon Lane, Cripps Corner  
Application to discharge the Section 52 Agreement dated 2 March 1970 in connection with planning permission A/70/230 which restricts the number of dwellings on the site.  
COMMENT Ewhurst Parish Council does not have sufficient information, nor the legal knowledge, necessary to reach an informed view.

[RR/2024/1875/P](#) Compass Park – Plot 3, Junction Road, Ewhurst  
Variation of condition(s) 3, 4 & 5 imposed on permission RR/2021/825/P in relation to drainage details, materials and working hours.  
SUPPORT APPROVAL

[RR/2024/2091/P](#) Watermans Vineyard, Lordine Lane, Ewhurst Green  
Removal of condition 6 (occupancy restriction) imposed on RR/2023/1052/P  
SUPPORT REFUSAL Overdevelopment.

- 5 STAPLECROSS: ADDITIONAL DOG WASTE BIN CONSULTATION**  
Members noted that, of the five responses to the recent consultation, four expressed support for an additional bin in Staplecross – and all favoured a location in the vicinity of the Village Hall/Club/K6 phone box.

It was noted that one option would be to relocate the bin at the entrance to St Marks Car Park.

**RESOLVED To install an additional bin next to the K6 kiosk. Clerk**

## **6 GRANT APPLICATIONS**

- a) Staplecross Bowls Club**  
Members were invited to consider an application for £900 towards the purchase of a defibrillator for the use of Club members/supporters/visitors.

Cllr Larry Hyett asked if RDC could be approached for funding. Even though the defibrillator proposed would not be accessible to the general public, he was in favour of additional provision. When it comes to cardiac arrest, minutes count. He suggested that the application be supported in principle and considered further once additional funding sources had been explored.

The RFO advised that there is £2,000 available in the Grants budget.

Cllr Biggs was aware of a number of possible funding sources and offered to liaise with the Bowls Club – bearing in mind that some funders require defibs to be generally accessible.

Cllr Lederer considered it was a case of ‘the more defibs the better’. However, the British Heart Foundation recommends that, ideally, one should be within 200m. The Bowls Club entrance is within 100m of the public access defib in the kiosk. A defib at the Bowls Club would be unavailable to the general public – especially if the entrance was locked. Also, the Club appeared to have sufficient funds to proceed.

**RESOLVED To ask the Bowls Club to investigate other funding sources before EPC considers the application further.**

**b) Ewhurst PCC**

**RESOLVED To approve a grant application from the PCC for £1,350 towards the upkeep of a burial ground for the benefit of all parishioners.**

**7 VERGE PARKING PROVISION (HERDMAN AND ALLOTMENTS)**

The Clerk advised that ESCC is prepared to undertake feasibility appraisals at both sites for £500 – and invited Members to consider the initial views of ESCC's Traffic Safety Team.

It was noted that Team considers that the verge opposite the Herdman Playing Field could accommodate 10-11 vehicles – and the verge fronting the allotments, 3.

**RESOLVED To ask ESCC to proceed with the feasibility appraisals for each site.**  
**Clerk**

**8 FINANCE**

**a) Reports**

**RESOLVED To receive and note/approve the Payment Schedules for November 2024 and December 2024 (below).**

**Ewhurst Parish Council Payment Schedule November 2024**

| Payee                                | Item                                                                                        | Invoice/Ref       | Net Cost         | VAT     | Total            |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------|------------------|
| Salaries                             | November salaries                                                                           |                   | £1,559.46        |         | <b>£1,559.46</b> |
| Richard Farhall                      | Adobe acrobat subscription, first aid kit, grit bin, postage, banners and signage, padlocks | Expenses          | £407.88          | £81.04  | <b>£488.92</b>   |
| HMRC                                 | PAYE & NI                                                                                   | November          | £443.14          |         | <b>£443.14</b>   |
| East Sussex Pension Fund             | Pension contributions                                                                       | November          | £480.34          |         | <b>£480.34</b>   |
| Brian Scowen                         | Handyman works                                                                              | 16.10.24-19.11.20 | £483.00          |         | <b>£483.00</b>   |
| Pet Waste Solutions                  | October dog waste collections                                                               | 36421             | £54.00           | £10.80  | <b>£64.80</b>    |
| Ewhurst and Staplecross Village Hall | Council meeting 20.11.24                                                                    | ESVH935           | £27.00           |         | <b>£27.00</b>    |
| Freshair Fitness                     | Replacement parts for SX playing field equpt                                                | 24842             | £126.00          | £25.20  | <b>£151.20</b>   |
| Staplecross Luncheon Club            | Donation from Chairmans Allowance towards Christmas dinner drinks                           |                   | £60.00           |         | <b>£60.00</b>    |
| <b>Direct Debits</b>                 |                                                                                             |                   |                  |         |                  |
| Tamar Telephone                      | Line rental                                                                                 | 4083614           | £5.78            | £1.16   | <b>£6.94</b>     |
| Unity Trust Bank                     | Bank charges                                                                                |                   | £8.70            |         | <b>£8.70</b>     |
| <b>Total Payments</b>                |                                                                                             |                   | <b>£3,655.30</b> | £118.20 | <b>£3,773.50</b> |

## Ewhurst Parish Council Payment Schedule December 2024

| Payee                                | Item                                        | Invoice/Ref       | Net Cost         | VAT    | Total            |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------|------------------|
| Salaries                             | December salaries                           |                   | £1,559.26        |        | <b>£1,559.26</b> |
| Richard Farhall                      | Adobe acrobat subscription, travel expenses | Expenses          | £79.80           | £2.19  | <b>£81.99</b>    |
| HMRC                                 | PAYE & NI                                   | December          | £443.34          |        | <b>£443.34</b>   |
| East Sussex Pension Fund             | Pension contributions                       | December          | £480.34          |        | <b>£480.34</b>   |
| Brian Scowen                         | Handyman works                              | 19.11.20-20.12.24 | £454.46          |        | <b>£454.46</b>   |
| Pet Waste Solutions                  | November dog waste collections              | 37368             | £54.00           | £10.80 | <b>£64.80</b>    |
| Ewhurst and Staplecross Village Hall | Finance Advisory WG meeting 02.12.24        | ESVH949           | £27.00           |        | <b>£27.00</b>    |
| Ian Stephenson                       | Ewhurst Green Christmas Tree                |                   | £140.00          |        | <b>£140.00</b>   |
| Safeplay                             | Quarterly playground inspections            | 28489             | £151.00          | £30.20 | <b>£181.20</b>   |
| <b>Direct Debits</b>                 |                                             |                   |                  |        |                  |
| Tamar Telephone                      | Line rental                                 | 4098859           | £5.78            | £1.16  | <b>£6.94</b>     |
| Unity Trust Bank                     | Bank charges                                |                   | £7.50            |        | <b>£7.50</b>     |
| EDF                                  | Electricity                                 |                   | £10.01           |        | <b>£10.01</b>    |
| <b>Total Payments</b>                |                                             |                   | <b>£3,412.49</b> | £44.35 | <b>£3,456.84</b> |

**b) Bank Reconciliations**

The RFO reported that these were up-to-date as at 31 December 2024. The November 2024 and December 2024 reconciliation checks had been completed.

**c) Draft Budget and Precept 2025-26**

Members were invited to approve the Draft Budget 2025-26 and proposed precept of £83,122.

It was noted that the Finance Advisory WG had agreed the Draft.

**RESOLVED To approve the Draft Budget 2025-26 and to agree that the precept for 2025-26 shall be £83,122. RFO**

Responding to a question put by Cllr Larry Hyett, the RFO advised that, to avoid the risk of having to return it to RDC, some of the CIL receipts would need to be used in the next financial year.

## 9 COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE

**RESOLVED To agree to a request from the Secretary of the Village Hall Committee for a contribution of £1,500 towards the COS running costs for the next 6 months. RFO**

## 10 EWHURST GREEN BUS SHELTER

The Clerk advised that he and Cllr Lederer had recently assessed the site.

The Clerk had arrange to meet two grounds work contractors and had contacted two makers of oak framed buildings.

**11 VILLAGE HALL: LAND FRONTING**

Members considered an alternative proposed planting scheme – comprising native hedging on the boundary with the BT Exchange and a Mature Liquid Amber Tree towards the centre of the land.

Cllr Larry Hyett suggested that there might be a risk of the hawthorn puncturing the tyres of ride-on mowers – and believed that privet is difficult to maintain.

Members generally supported the scheme.

The Clerk advised that there might be an issue with the supply of bare rooted plants in January-February. If this proved to be the case planting would need to wait until the autumn.

**RESOLVED To ask the Clerk to obtain quotes.**

**Clerk**

*The meeting ended at 7.45pm.*

Date ..... Chairman .....

**Report of the District Councillors**

*(Ward Report for January 2025 attached – see APPENDIX B)*

Cllr Biggs reported that the PCSOs had advised him of one incident in Staplecross in December – nothing major.

In relation to item 6 (Grant Applications) he had information on funding sources that might be useful for both applicants.

The Draft 2025-26 RDC Budget would be going to Council in February. He was hopeful that the proposal to charge for use of the Northiam car park would be removed from the Budget and debated separately.

**Report of the County Councillor**

*(Ward Report for January 2025 attached – see APPENDIX C)*

Cllr Redstone reported that, despite County having a £16m shortfall, officers were close to drafting a balanced budget for the coming year.

The settlement from Government for next year is insufficient. There had been some 'compensation' for the significant increases in the National Living Wage and employers' NIC contributions – but nothing to help County's main contractors.

Cllr Redstone was happy to take questions on his summary of the devolution and local government re-organisation proposals, circulated yesterday. He added that the Leaders of ESCC and the East Sussex Borough/Districts had agreed, jointly, to advise the Government of its interest in a unitary-strategic model.

The Chairman advised that the re-organisation would still see services delivered – possibly at a lower cost. The process is likely to take 2 years.

Cllr Redstone added that it has become clear that, if necessary, the Government is prepared to impose change. Financial incentives have been offered to those groups of councils expressing interest in the fast track/priority route. The proposal for East Sussex is that there would be 3 unitary councils (WSCC, ESCC, BHCC) – with a Mayor-led strategic authority covering the whole of Sussex. The 'light touch' Mayor would, most likely, oversee the Police, Fire & Rescue, strategic planning, major infrastructure and transport policy – with Government funding. The majority of services would be delivered by the unitaries.

Cllr Larry Hyett noted that the re-organisation could unlock more funding available for Sussex and presumed that redundancy packages might be necessary during the transition period. He considered that the principal authorities had not done enough to challenge austerity.

Cllr Redstone advised that existing staff would be transferred under the TUPE Regulations. Re-organisation had been on the horizon for some time. The Government was allowing little time for councils to submit proposals. ESCC had consistently lobbied Governments – of all colours – for adequate funding. Adult Social Care would be delivered by the unitaries. The assumption is that the re-organisation would largely replicate the Yorkshire model. He did not know whether that structure was effective.

Responding to a question put by Cllr Lederer, Cllr Redstone advised that it was looking likely that – in line with Government advice - May's County elections would be postponed in order to focus on preparations for the new structures. Provisionally, the Sussex Mayor election would take place in May 2026 – and unitary elections in May 2027.

#### **Public questions/contributions**

There was none.

## **NORTHERN ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT January 2025**

Dear Clerks, Councillors and Residents,

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year, lets hope 2025 is a good one .

At the time of writing this report, we are waiting for the PCSO's reports, so a verbal report will be given at the Parish meetings.

There has been a lot of media attention regarding the car parking proposals for the car park in Northiam.

We are still exploring various ways to see if we can stop the charges happening. But in the meantime, please continue to complete the survey which closes on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2025. A full council meeting took place in December, various issues were discussed, and the minutes of the meeting can be found on Rother's website.

One motion put forward was for Rother to ask the government to reinstate the winter fuel allowance, due to the high proportion of elderly residents living in Rother. Unfortunately, the motion was defeated in a recorded vote.

### **SOLAR PANELS**

THE installation of solar panels will help cut Rye Sports Centre's energy bill helping to improve sustainability and safeguard the future of the facility.

It is anticipated that as much as 40 per cent of the centre's energy will be supplied by solar panels fitted with the help of more than £140,000 of Government funding secured by Rother District Council.

The Sports England Swimming Pool Support Fund is designed to support public leisure facilities with swimming pools which have been adversely affected by rising costs, leaving them vulnerable to closure or significant service reduction.

Contractors DMA Maintenance Ltd fitted 180 solar panels to the Freedom Leisure-run centre in The Grove, Rye, last week.

Cllr Hazel Timpe, portfolio holder for neighbourhood services at Rother District Council, said:

"Swimming has huge benefits on both physical and mental health and can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities, and the funding and installation of solar panels should go some way towards

securing the sport centre's future for years to come.

"As well as reducing energy costs, the solar panels will help reduce the centre's carbon footprint and support the district's net zero efforts."

Rye swimming pool was forced to close temporarily in 2022 due to soaring energy costs and didn't reopen until October 2023.

Cllr Timpe added: "With the Sports England funding giving the centre a welcomed boost, we are continuing to lead this work with East Sussex County Council, Rye Town Council and the Rye Recreation and Well-Being Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to find a longer-term sustainable future for the pool."

This work follows on from the previous successful funding application for £128,000 from stage one of the Swimming Pool Support Fund which supported Rye Sports Centre and Bexhill Leisure Pool to remain open by funding some of the utility costs.

The plan below sets out what Rother would like to do. This might not take place if the government's proposals for a mayor for Sussex are approved.

#### [Four-year plan to guide council's work approved](#)

A PLAN which sets out a vision for the district and will guide the council's work over the next four years has been approved.

At its meeting on Monday (December 16) Full Council considered the Council Plan 2025-2029, which will ensure that existing and planned work is aligned with the authority's vision.

The document identifies the challenges and opportunities the district faces, and links to the council's three key objectives of creating and maintaining a thriving local economy, improving health and wellbeing, and protecting the environment.

Cllr Doug Oliver, Council Leader, said: "I was pleased to see the Plan gain approval at Full Council. It is vital that the council has a clear direction and purpose in which to meet residents' needs and to run efficient and effective services - even more so given the financial pressure we continue to face due to increased cost and demand.

"The Plan will help us build on the successes of the past four years and looks forward. It will also support the council in its effort to grow the rural economy, improve business resilience, and attract more visitors to the area for longer stays."

He added: "We have so many wonderful opportunities to improve our district, and this plan will support our efforts to realise its potential and ensure we are in the best place to meet future challenges and service demands."

The Plan looks forward to more than £120 million worth of innovative projects planned to deliver better facilities and services for residents including Barnhorn Green GP surgery and business spaces development, the De La Warr Pavilion regeneration project, 200 new homes at Blackfriars in Battle, Heart of Sidley Community Hub, Camber Welcome Centre, and the King Offa housing and leisure centre.

It includes actions that will need to be delivered by partners, with the council committed to working with communities and partners to achieve these. It also identifies ways in which success will be measured.

The agreed Council Plan 2025-2029 can be viewed at <https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s11404/Appendix%20A%20Council%20Plan%202025%20-%202029.pdf>

Kind Regards

**Cllr.Tony Biggs   Cllr Tony Ganly**

**Northern Rother**

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## Report to Parish Councils – January 2025

This report is written is for Parish Councils meeting in January.

I hope everyone has had a good Christmas break and wish you a Happy New Year (as this is written two days before it).

Some of the items here are from information circulated by ESCC but which may not have been drawn to the attention of parish councillors and others.

### ESCC Funding Update

The government published their funding update (called the local authority settlement) shortly before Christmas. The full implications are being worked through and I will have more information in January. However, some aspects are already clear:

- Council tax can be increased by 5% total made up of 3% on council tax and an additional 2% for adult social care
- There is no significant increase in funding beyond what was expected and indeed some reductions
- Some funding such as the 'Recovery Grant' will be moved to areas seen as having higher levels of deprivation. Although we have such areas in places such as Hastings this is believed to be seen as not significant! The likely impact is that we will lose such funding to other areas, mostly in the North.
- There is some extra funding to compensate for the increases in national insurance and minimum wage, but this is probably not enough to fully compensate the council
- There was an announcement about extra funding for potholes and highways maintenance. This mapped to about £21M for ESCC of which £1.9M is withheld depending on some sort of measure of performance. We'd already assumed £19M in our budgets based on previous years, so there is no significant improvement and certainly not seen in the context of more than £300M needed in ESCC to get our roads to Green standard

### Unitary Authority and Mayors

I first reported on this last month. This is a fast-moving situation so by the time you read this it may be out of date, but I will give verbal updates at Parish Councils.

The government has invited counties such as East Sussex to submit proposals by 10<sup>th</sup> January for proposals to become unitary. A likely format is:

- East Sussex would become a unitary authority, taking over responsibility for aspects

currently run by the Districts and Boroughs such as bin collection and planning. The Ds and Bs would cease to exist

- East Sussex would also be part of a combined authority with two other unitaries, Brighton and Hove and West Sussex. A directly elected mayor would run this with responsibilities to include police, fire and rescue and some strategic aspects. The mayor would preside over a board made up of a small number of councillor leaders from each of the three unitaries

Discussions with the leaders of Brighton and West Sussex are taking place.

If we do not submit proposals, it is likely that it would be imposed on us. The government will decide whether to go ahead later in January or early February. If this does go ahead it is thought possible it would come into effect at the May 2027 election, and the May 2025 and May 2026 elections delayed until then. All of this would be decided by central government. Watch this space!

### **Highways**

As always, we do not have enough funding though Balfour Beatty do seem to be on top of most pothole repairs which 'meet the intervention criteria'. The intervention criteria are not as inclusive as we would like but this is limited by funding. I am in constant communication with our highways steward and Highways Management.

Current hotspots in my view are:

- Junction Road (Sedlescombe to Merriments Lane). This really needs to have some serious structural work. The Lead Asset Manager has been asked to come up with a plan for this.
- Curlew to Hurst Green
- Merriments Lane

There are others of course but these are top of my list unless people tell me differently

### **Grants for Parishes**

As I mentioned last month, this section will occur each month and is a list of possible sources of funding for parish level projects

- Dungeness Power Stations. I sit on the Site Stakeholder Group which liaises between the massive project to decommission these and the local community. They often provide grants for local activities including some in East Sussex even though the power stations are in Kent. For example, this Christmas Rye food bank is their designated charity.
- Veolia Green and Food Waste Composting Facility. As a member of Place Scrutiny I recently visited this site near Lewes. Their 'output' is compost and they deliver 'one tonne bags' at no cost to local community gardens and similar. I put Peasmarsh parish council in contact with them and they have already received two bags for the community gardens.
- Southeast Water do make grants to local communities, for example to support playgrounds
- Gatwick Airport are keen on funding local projects, at least partly driven by their

desire to open a second runway which would have some impact on East Sussex, though less in the Eastern part

If you have a project which might benefit, please let me know and I will put you in contact and try to help get it approved.

Please let me know if you come across any new sources of funding and I will add them to the list.