

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Wartling Parish Council held at The Reid Hall in Boreham Street on Wednesday 1st May 2024

1. Present

Cllrs K Stevens (Chairman), W Reid and M Shine.

A Stevens (Clerk) and three members of the public were also in attendance.

2. Apologies for absence

County Councillor Bob Bowdler and District Councillor Mark Fairweather sent apologies for their absence.

3. Election of Chairman

Councillor Shine proposed and Councillor Reid seconded Councillor Stevens for the role of Chairman. Councillor Stevens duly accepted the role.

4. Election of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Stevens proposed and Councillor Shine seconded Councillor Reid for the role of Vice-Chairman. Councillor Reid accepted the role.

5. Minutes of the Last Parish Council Meeting

The draft Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 6th March 2024 were read, confirmed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Minutes of the latest Planning Meeting

The draft Minutes of the meeting held on the 8th April 2024 were adopted by the Parish Council.

7. Clerk's Report on Matters Arising from those Minutes

All matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

8. Areas of Responsibility

Councillors were appointed the following areas of responsibility;

Planning	Cllr Stevens
Environment	Cllr Shine
Footpaths	Cllr Reid
Highways	Cllr Shine
Police	Cllrs Paterson
Communication (to include responsibility for both the website and the community distribution list)	Cllr Reid
Speedwatch	Mr Lawrence/All Councillors
Tree Warden	Cllr Paterson

9. To adopt the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Councillors resolved to adopt the latest NALC Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which had been distributed to all Councillors before the meeting.

10. To appoint Councillors to serve as Representatives of the Parish Council on the following bodies.

The following appointments were agreed;

Representative to the Village Hall Trust	Cllr Reid
Wealden District Association of Local Councils	Cllr Stevens
East Sussex ALC Ltd (to attend the AGM)	Cllrs Stevens and Shine

11. To approve the accounts for the financial year to 31st March 2024.

Councillors resolved;

- i. to approve the Annual Governance Statement, the Risk Assessment, the Asset List and the Statement of Internal Control for the financial year to 31st March 2024. It was resolved to write off the laptop (2010) and speed detector camera (2016) because they have reached the end of their useful lives. The speed detector camera is being replaced on loan from Sussex Police.
- ii. to approve the Accounting Statements for the financial year to 31st March 2024.
- iii. to confirm the dates for the Exercise for Elector's Rights as the 3rd June 2024 and end on the 12th July 2024.
- iv. that they are exempt from an External Audit for the year to 31st March 2024 because the Parish Council's receipts and payments for the year were each less than £25000.
- v. that the following subscriptions and insurance will continue;
 - Wealden District Association of Local Councils (£15.00)
 - Society of Local Council Clerks (£30.00)
 - East Sussex Association of Local Councils (£134.87)
 - Zurich Insurance (£264.00)
 - Information Commissioner (£40.00)
- vi. to approve the following payments;

		£
101043	ESALC Ltd - Subscriptions	134.87
101044	ESCC - Verge Cutting	446.40
101045	Information Commissioner - Subscription	40.00
101046	Jakk – Fingerpost Sign	785.04
101047	Peter Frost – Internal Auditor	68.25
101048	Wealden – Parish Conference	30.00
101049	Zurich - Insurance	264.00
101050	A Stevens - Salary - March	447.36
101051	A Stevens - Salary - April	410.96
101052	HMRC – PAYE	85.40
101053	ESCC - Pension	238.84
101054	Barkweb – Website Hosting	300.00
- vii. the bank signatories will continue to be Councillors Stevens, Paterson, Reid and Shine and the Clerk.
- viii. the Internal Auditor for 2024-2025 will be Peter Frost.

12. Code of Conduct

Councillors **resolved**;

- i. to re-adopt and abide by the Code of Conduct introduced by Wealden District Council under the Localism Act 2012.

- ii. To re-adopt the Civility and Respect Pledge.

13. Meeting Dates for the Ensuing Year

Councillors resolved the meeting dates for 2024-2025 will, subject to confirmation from the Reid Hall, be;

2024

Wednesday 3rd July	7.30pm
Wednesday 4 th September	7.30pm
Wednesday 6th November	7.30pm

2025

Wednesday 8th January	7.30pm
Wednesday 5th March	7.30pm
Wednesday 7th May	7.30pm
Wednesday 2nd July	7.30pm
Wednesday 3rd September	7.30pm
Wednesday 5th November	7.30pm

14. Planning-

- i. The following planning applications were commented on at this meeting:

WD/2024/0109/F - Land at Byways, Boreham Street, BN27 4SE - Conversion and Change of Use of Shed into 1 No. 2 bed dwelling – Wartling Parish Council has no objections to this planning application.

WD/2024/0900/F - Woodlands Farm House, Wartling Road, Boreham Street, Wartling, BN27 1RR - Proposed extension and alterations - Wartling Parish Council has no objections to this planning application.

WD/2024/0177/LB - The Limes, Boreham Street, Hailsham, BN27 4SF - Repair existing roof using like for like materials - Wartling Parish Council has no objections to this planning application as long as it meets the listed building requirements.

- ii. Wealden Local Plan – Having carefully considered the Local Plan it was resolved to send the following response;

Climate Change

We support the District Council's proposals to promote climate-positive interventions. But the theory is not always wholly practical in rural areas.

For example here in Wartling there are many older and listed properties which rely on log burners or oil fired central heating as there is no direct gas supply. The reduction in public transport means there is a higher reliance on the usage of private cars in rural areas.

Infrastructure to support growth

Whilst the Parish Council supports the reduction in housing numbers from the previous Plan, more support for the numbers would be forthcoming were the necessary infrastructure to be in place. Too often residents are told that the infrastructure will follow the housing but this is just not happening especially in rural areas in terms of education, doctors, dentists and

roads. The existing train services need to be urgently reviewed and it is questionable whether or not Polegate station is fit for purpose. As housing numbers grow so does the need for good train services with good bus services or at least adequate parking. Obviously the A27 needs to be improved but what finally happens will be a determinable factor in the proposed future growth of business and in terms of protection for biodiversity and landscape plans.

Housing

We appreciate that new housing numbers are dictated by government but they need to be applied in areas of Wealden proportionate to existing numbers. Many areas of Wealden contain large under-occupied properties where owners would move if they could only find good quality smaller properties in the same location. It is not always affordable housing that is needed. What is affordable housing? People hold differing views on this and often affordable housing does not end up in the correct ownership. Land prices and the desire to move in to areas of Wealden makes it difficult to determine exactly what is affordable. There are too many poor quality, badly designed new builds in our area and the situation is worsened by the lack or reduction of gardens and trees. The need for gardens has surely been highlighted during the Covid pandemic. Residents remain concerned that we continue to build on flood plains. It is appreciated that Wealden is often overruled by Government but in more and more cases flooding is becoming an issue as earlier predicted by local residents.

Local Economy

The promotion of the local economy is supported but more emphasis needs to be placed upon supporting existing agricultural businesses especially because of Wealden's restrictions in terms of AONB and the National Park.

Whilst telecommunication has improved there are still areas where broadband is inadequate and this needs to be resolved. Good local economy helps attract more tourism. With 76% of Wealden being farmland it is important that the Local Plan takes in to account the effects of Brexit on our farming industry. The loss of direct support means that farmers and landowners are having to restructure their businesses. In some cases this might mean embracing environmental projects or even "rewilding" which is good for biodiversity but there will also be a temptation to sell land for development. With so much of our district being classified as AONB there is a concern that some parishes will be over developed.

Town Centres

Before jumping in to improve existing town centres a study is needed to determine what will be needed from town centres in 5/10 years. It is all well and good to talk about our market towns but does the definition need to be changed. Are plans to improve town centres what planners want rather than what shoppers want? Has post Covid seen people return to town centre or do they continue to shop on line? Again a problem arises with inadequate public transport which means that more cars come in to town centres thus adding to parking and climate problems.

Tourism

Tourism is vital to Wealden and it is a crucial part of the East Sussex jigsaw of tourism. The problem is that the new housing programme and lack of good infrastructure is at odds with tourism which for the most part is attracted by our natural environment. It is appreciated that responsibility for public rights of way falls upon the County Council but new developments in villages can have a significant effect on the usage of rights of way. It would be good if their protection could be taken in to account in the Plan as our footpaths attract many visitors in to Wealden district.

Biodiversity

We support the protection of biodiversity and the natural environment but the plans refer to existing areas and the generation of buffer zones presumably between large scale developments. We need to expand this more rather than just use it as a tool to separate developments.

Landscape/Heritage/Cultural Assets

All the proposals are welcomed but rather like biodiversity it seems to refer to sites and properties with existing protection. We need to consider what other sites and properties need to be safeguarded for the future. Much of Wealden's landscape is suitable only for livestock grazing due to soil, topography and historic field layouts. Farms that involve grazing sheep and or native cattle breeds are entirely appropriate for the area and help maintain its unique character. Local producers should be encouraged particularly those that supply customers direct or through the market towns. It needs to be acknowledged that this type of farming is not the intensive "feedlot" enterprise seen in other areas and countries that is so demonised by the media.

Health

The policies are welcomed but it must be questionable that much will be funded by CIL and Section 106 agreements especially as these sources of income are under review by the Government. GP surgeries grow in size and partner numbers depending upon the number of patients. New surgeries or medical centres (such as Herstmonceux) can be built with financial help from central government. To help attract good medical services suitable land needs to be identified in conjunction with the existing CCG when identifying new building sites. Not just for the surgery but also in terms of housing to attract the medical staff in to the area.

The meeting was suspended.

15. Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from any members of the public and the meeting was then re-opened.

16. Highways

- i. Councillor Shine reported that two incidents of flytipping, one outside the Reid Hall and the other in Boreham Lane, have been dealt with.
- ii. It was resolved to ask Arrow Cleaning to clean the bus stop in Boreham Street.
- iii. County Councillor Bowdler has been looking into an issue which is causing delivery drivers and visitors confusion at the section of the A271 known as The Strait. He recommended taking the issue up with the Electoral Registration department at Wealden which Councillor Stevens has now done and will chase them up for a response.
- iv. Councillor Stevens met the Chair of Herstmonceux Parish Council, David Harding, and he has agreed to carry out two traffic surveys in Boreham Street. It was resolved to commission the surveys. The Clerk is looking into whether the Community Infrastructure Levy can be used to pay the £250 cost.

17. Questions from Parish Councillors

There was no further business and the meeting concluded at 8.10pm.