



DITCHLING PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Ditchling Parish Council Meeting held at Ditchling Village Hall, Ditchling on Tuesday 25th February 2025 at 7pm

Present: Cllrs Barna, Farrands, Godley, Ingham, Madden (Chair) Orme, Rowling, Sansom, Seddon and Stapleton.

Tracey Euesden (Clerk)

Absent: Cllr Linstead

Public Participation:

8 Members of the public were present.

123.	Apologies for absence. No apologies were received.
124.	Declarations of interest. Cllr. Orme declared an interest in Items 6.1 and 6.2, Cllr Godley declared an interest in item 15.2, Cllr Ingham declared an interest in item 18.
125.	To Approve the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 21st January 2025. the Minutes were APPROVED and were signed by the Chair. The revised Minutes of the meeting held on 26 th November were also signed.
126.	Actions from previous minutes. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Min 30.1 Emergency / Resilience Plan. Ongoing• Min 46.1 To arrange meeting with lantern manufacturers (Clerk)• Min 96.6 To complete set up of dual control online banking (Completed)• Min 101.1 To commence drafting a Communications Strategy (All - ongoing)• MIn 113.3 Ditchling FPTA's application to be added to agenda for February meeting. (Completed)• Min 114.1 Playground Project. Draft a comprehensive report on all stages of the tender process and to present this to the council for consideration (Completed)• Min 115.1 Solar light Column. Contact manufacturer to enquire about the condition of the column and whether the peeling paint would be covered under guarantee. (ongoing)• Min 116 Approved actions to be completed (Completed)• Min 119. Consultations to be added to agenda for February meeting (Completed)
127.	Clerk's Report. The Clerk's report had been circulated with the agenda papers.
128.	Planning - for full details of planning applications listed below please go to https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-applications/ or https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control The Following Applications were discussed.

	<p>128.1 <u>SDNP/25/00574/TCA. 88 East End Lane.</u> T1 - Beech - Fell tree to ground level and grind stump. T2 - Silver Birch - Fell tree to ground level and grind stump. T3 - Eucalyptus - Fell to ground level, T4 - Cherry - Crown reduction by 2m all round to natural target pruning points</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to submit a comment of NO COMMENT.</p> <p>128.2 <u>SDNP/25/00499/HOUS. 88 East End Lane.</u> Replacement of rear conservatory with single storey extension, addition of single storey front extension, addition of log burner with external flue and replacement of fenestration at all elevations</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to submit a comment of NO COMMENT.</p> <p>Appeals Lodged.</p> <p>128.3 <u>SDNP/23/05134/FUL. Ditchling Rugby Club.</u> It was noted that an appeal had been lodged against the Local Authority's refusal to grant consent for engineering works to consist of re-profiling of site and realignment of pitch, new drainage system, creation of new access from Clayton Road leading to new parking area, erection of groundsman's store/facilities, associated landscaping and extension to the existing allowed playing season. Cllr Stapleton suggested that, as the parish council had made more than one submission to the Local Authority objecting to the application, these comments should be merged and relayed to the Appeal Inspectorate. Cllr Rowling pointed out that all comments received during the consultation process would be reviewed by the Inspectorate but agreed to review the submissions made to identify whether further comments are required in respect of any new planning related matters that may have arisen.</p>
129.	<p>Parish Council Business Plan</p> <p>129.1 To Receive and Adopt Updated Projects Document. Following the Planning Event held on 11th February, Cllr Orme had distributed this document which was formally ADOPTED.</p> <p>The matter of funding for future projects (particularly associated with Safer Roads for Ditchling) was raised and it was suggested that the council should begin to consider whether precept should be increased. Cllr Sansom suggested that he could work with the Clerk to produce some budget projections over the next 5 years and draw up a paper for consideration at the next meeting. This was AGREED.</p>
130.	<p>Finance.</p> <p>130.1 To approve schedule of payments for February 2025 (plus any additional invoices to be noted at the meeting. Members had been provided with a revised schedule of payments The Payment Schedule was APPROVED.</p> <p>130.2 To receive bank reconciliations for January 2025. Cllr Orme reported that he had checked and signed the reconciliation documents which were NOTED.</p> <p>130.3 2024 2025 Budget Review. Members had been provided with a copy of the Budget to January 2025.</p> <p>130.4 To Review Applications for Grants from outside bodies. Ditchling FPTA - £620 or contribution towards a bench as finishing touch to landscaping project and in memory of a local resident with a close bond to the school. Whilst it was pointed out that it would be unusual for a memorial bench to be funded by the council, contributions have previously been made towards the landscaping project. Cllr Orme Proposed the sum of £250, Seconded Cllr Stapleton, 8 in Favour, 2 Abstentions. It was therefore RESOLVED: To award the sum of £250.00</p> <p>130.5 To Receive the External Auditor's Conclusion of Audit report 2023 2024 and to consider the comments therein. The Auditor's report was unqualified, and the following matters were drawn to the attention of the Council:</p>

	<p><i>"The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance Assertion in Section 1, Box 2, but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified. We received challenge correspondence in relation to the 2023/24 AGAR which we considered before completing our work. The authority will receive an invoice in relation to this additional work."</i></p> <p>Members expressed disappointment that the details of the challenge correspondence have not been provided and commented that without this information, it would be impossible to consider whether the amount invoiced is commensurate with the work that has been undertaken by the external auditor. Whilst the National Audit Office guidance suggests that Objections received from Electors must be shared with the council, it is not clear whether the same applies for "challenge correspondence". The Clerk was asked to clarify the situation with the external auditor.</p>
131.	<p>Recreation Ground & Burial Ground.</p> <p>131.1 Playground Project. To Consider Business Case on playground tender process and to authorise working group to work with preferred contractor to produce final design. Cllr Farrands presented his report detailing the various stages of the tender process and the working group's findings following meetings with the shortlisted contractors. Cllr Farrands Proposed, Seconded Cllr Rowling, <i>That Kompan be appointed as the preferred contractor and that the working group be authorised to work with them to finalise the design which is expected to be presented for consideration at the April meeting.</i> All In Favour and AGREED.</p> <p>131.2 Review of Fees for hire of Pitches. Members had been provided with a list of the current fees and it was RESOLVED that no changes would be made for the 2025 / 2026 financial year. It was however pointed out that an overarching review of the recreation ground usage and maintenance requirements is planned for the future so the fees will be further assessed as part of this work.</p> <p>131.3 To Review Burial Ground Fees. Cllr Stapleton Proposed, Seconded Cllr Ingham, <i>That fees be increased in line with RPI from 1st April 2025.</i> All In Favour and AGREED.</p> <p>131.4 To Consider request for use of recreation ground for company social events. The Clerk had been approached by a Brighton based company for permission to host a social event for its employees on the recreation ground. The matter of whether to charge a fee for such events was discussed. Cllr Stapleton Proposed, Seconded Cllr Rowling, <i>That a fee of £100 be charged for company events.</i> All in Favour and AGREED.</p> <p>131.5 To Consider special request for a headstone outside of guidelines. The proposed headstone measures 128cm from ground level and the Council's memorial policy is for no more than 76cm. The matter was discussed and it was RESOLVED <i>that all memorials must comply with the guidelines and therefore the design submitted is declined.</i></p> <p>The matter of inspections of the burial ground and enforcement of the rules was raised and this will be added to the agenda for the next parish council meeting.</p> <p>131.6 To Consider grass cutting contract quotations for 2025 2026 and to appoint a contractor. The council had been provided with 3 quotations. Cllr Farrands Proposed, Seconded Cllr Rowling, All in Favour and RESOLVED <i>To accept quotation number 3.</i></p> <p>131.7 To Consider quotation for tree surgery following receipt of the Tree Survey Report. A quotation for the necessary pruning of a mature ash tree at the recreation ground had been received for the sum of £820 plus VAT. Cllr Farrands Proposed, Seconded Cllr Sansom, All in Favour and RESOLVED <i>To accept the quotation.</i></p>
132.	<p>Car Park</p> <p>132.1 Solar light Column. The Clerk is awaiting details of the manufacturer's warranty to ascertain if the paint work can be rectified under the warranty.</p>
133.	<p>Safer Roads for Ditchling</p>

	<p>133.1 Update on progress with priority schemes from Traffic Working group and to consider authorising a budget to engage Wilbar Associates to provide preliminary proposals to progress priority projects. Cllr Stapleton provided an update on the group's activities and reported on a meeting with a consultant to discuss how to progress them further. A scope of works had been drawn up for Wilbar Associates to complete a proposal for delivery and this had been distributed. Cllr Stapleton Proposed, Seconded Cllr Orme, <i>That expenditure of up to £2,000 be approved for this proposal work.</i> All in Favour and APPROVED.</p>
134.	<p>Streetlights</p> <p>134.1 Members were provided with an update on the lanterns that had been replaced to date. From the inspection carried out by councillors in May 2024, there are 6 lights remaining that are not working at all, and it is hoped that these may be replaced during the next financial year. However, a report from Balfour Beatty is expected shortly to ascertain whether there are any others that may need to be prioritised. It was noted that there may be some of the list of replacements works undertaken that have not actually been done so Cllr Ingham said that she would review the list and report back to the Clerk.</p> <p>134.2 ESCC has issued a new maintenance and supply contract for parish councils to sign but many have expressed concerns about the content. ESALC has requested legal advice and the solicitor's comments will be considered prior to the contract being signed.</p>
135.	<p>Footpath Improvements. Hassocks PC has approached Cllr Madden and the Clerk with an invitation to discuss improvements to the footpath between Keymer and Ditchling and it was RESOLVED: <i>To nominate Cllr Madden and the Clerk to represent Ditchling Parish Council in the discussions.</i></p> <p>Cllr Stapleton raised concerns that funds should not be committed towards this project and Cllr Madden confirmed that any financial matters would be brought to the council for consideration.</p>
136.	<p>Ditchling Community Land Trust</p> <p>136.1 To Consider request to commission a Local Housing Needs Survey to be carried out by Action in rural Sussex at a cost of £3,085.45 plus VAT. Members discussed the proposals and it was generally considered that the survey would be beneficial to the parish council in respect of reviews of Local and Neighbourhood Plans, and to the CLT to enable it to become a legal entity by establishing a need for local housing. The matter of funding was discussed and it was noted that funds were available in the budget for Ditchling Gardens / Research reports. Cllr Rowling Proposed, Seconded Cllr Barna <i>That funds be vired from the Ditchling Gardens / Research reports to fund the Housing Needs Survey produced by AirS at a cost of £3,085.45 plus VAT.</i> All in Favour and AGREED.</p> <p>Cllr Madden requested that the Clerk confirm the timeline of producing the report by June 2025.</p>
137.	<p>Consultations and Communications.</p> <p>137.1 Lewes District Council Local Plan Consultation." Defining our policies and early site allocation proposals". This consultation is open from 6 Jan 2025 at 16:00 to 28 Feb 2025 at 17:00. Members had been asked for their opinions and Cllr Rowling had distributed her comments in support of Policies NE1, HW2 and D3. Support for LDC's efforts to achieve a plan with lower housing numbers than the Government's revised targets was also noted. And it was suggested that the council should comment that any reintroduction of the Eton New Town would be particularly harmful. It was RESOLVED: <i>That the Clerk should submit the Parish Council's response to the consultation in line with the above discussion.</i></p> <p>137.2 South Downs Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation. Following her attendance at a consultation event, Cllr Rowling had distributed a briefing document containing proposals for the council's response to the consultation.</p> <p>Members AGREED with Cllr Rowling's recommendations regarding Point 2 of the briefing document (Land east of Lodge Lane, Keymer), Point 3 (size of new builds / extensions and</p>

	<p>responses to consultation questions with 1 abstention) and regarding Point 4 (policy SD27 – mix of homes).</p> <p>However, A discussion ensued regarding Point 1 of the briefing document (The inclusion of the land rear of 71 East End Lane as a proposed new allocation). The matter of whether a development could be achieved that would not compromise or impact upon its sensitive surroundings within the vicinity of the Grade II listed building, abutting the defined settlement boundary and within the conservation area was debated. Cllr Rowling Proposed, Seconded Cllr Stapleton, <i>That an objection be lodged against the inclusion of this site as a proposed new allocation.</i> 7 In Favour and therefore RESOLVED. To Object to this allocation.</p> <p>137.3 East Sussex Rights of Way Access Plan. East Sussex County Council has launched two consultations. One for completion by Town and Parish Councils and one for completion by members of the public. Cllr Rowling would be visiting the office to review the council survey. Both Consultations close on 17th March.</p>
138	<p>Events.</p> <p>138.1 VE Day – 80th Anniversary – Thursday 8th May 2025. The Royal British Legion will be holding a brief service at the War Memorial on 8th May and will be hosting a commemoration Tea in Westmeston Parish Hall on Sunday 11th May from 2.30pm.</p> <p>138.2 Ditchling Village Association – Newcomer’s Party - Sat April 12, 2025.</p>
139.	<p>Next meeting date.</p> <p>139.1 Parish Council Meeting 25th March 2025 – 7pm.</p>
140.	<p><i>CONFIDENTIAL SESSION - Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public will be excluded from the following items on the grounds that the confidential matters to be discussed under item 140.1 below would be prejudicial in the public interest.</i></p> <p>140.1 Ditchling Gardens – Update on Sales Process and to Consider next steps. Members were presented with outline details of the highest bid received. The Sales Agent has obtained proof of funds and positive responses to the parish council’s requirements for the site as detailed in the working party report presented to council at a meeting on 3rd September 2024. and the working group described conversations with the solicitor about how these requirements may be protected in the final construction.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED: <i>To formally accept the purchase price based on the purchaser’s architect’s responses to the parish council’s requirements for the site, subject to planning permission and covenants being drawn up as part of the contract and agreed by both parties to protect against deviation of final design.</i></p> <p>Next stages were discussed and the Clerk was tasked with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with the Sales Agent to confirm the resolution and to request a Heads of Terms be drawn up to include key dates. • Engage with solicitor to commence sales proceedings.
	<p>Actions taken forward.</p> <p>From previous meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min 30.1 Emergency / Resilience Plan. Ongoing • Min 46.1 To arrange meeting with lantern manufacturers (Clerk) • Min 101.1 To commence drafting a Communications Strategy (All)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Min 115.1 Solar light Column. Contact manufacturer to enquire about the condition of the column and whether the peeling paint would be covered under guarantee. (Clerk) <p>From this meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Min 129.1 To draw up paper containing budget prejections (R Sansom / Clerk) Min 130.5 To make contact with External Auditor (Clerk) Min 134.1 To review list of streetlight replacements undertaken (VI) Min 136.1 To commission Housing Needs Survey (Clerk) Min 140.1 To Carry out tasks agreed (Clerk)

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.