



Maresfield Parish Council

REPRESENTING THE VILLAGES OF MARESFIELD, NUTLEY & FAIRWARP

Minutes of the Maresfield Parish Council meeting held remotely via Zoom on Tuesday 20th April 2021 at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr M Craddock (Chair), Cllr Mrs S Cumming, Cllr Dr P Handley, Cllr T Lewin, Cllr J Lewis, Cllr Mrs L Reeves, Cllr Dr B Smith, Cllr Mrs L Stevens-Smith, Cllr A Strevens, CCllr R Galley, DCllr P Roundell and Mrs C Goossens (Clerk).

A. Public session. None.

3648. To approve apologies for absence and to note other non-attendance.

Cllr R Hunter and Cllr D Watson.

3649. Declarations of Interest.

Cllr T Lewin and Cllr Mrs S Cumming – Maresfield Conservation Group

Cllr Dr B Smith – Governor, Nutley Primary School.

3650. To receive written requests for new DPI dispensations. None.

3651. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th March 2021:

1. For adoption. The minutes as previously circulated were **Agreed** to be a true and accurate record.

2. Matters arising from these minutes not elsewhere on the agenda. None.

3652. Reports by and questions to:

1. County Councillors. CCllr Galley had not yet joined the meeting.

2. District Councillors. Nothing to report as all very quiet whilst in Purdah ahead of the elections.

The following points were noted in discussion:

- There is currently a challenge in the courts to allow virtual meetings to continue once the current legislation expires on 7th May. WDC is making plans in case the challenge fails.
- Housing South of Uckfield has recently been approved by WDC in a bid to get housing numbers and land supply as up to date as possible.
- The application for 35 houses at Coopers Green was refused at PCN by 10 votes to 1. It seems when comparing this decision in relation to the approval of 25 homes on Straight Half Mile in Maresfield there is little consistency.

3653. Parish wards – issues, needs & Councillors' reports:

1. Fairwarp Ward.

Fr John has suggested that the church tower might be a suitable alternative to the proposed mast at the entrance to the village.

The Planning Committee suggested alternative sites as being either the church or the village hall car parks. **ACTION:** Asst Clerk to convey to applicant suggestion that Church tower is considered as an alternative. Check whether Conservators have been consulted.

2. Maresfield Ward.

The following points were noted:

- The village looks very neat with the verges having recently been cut and the planters at the entrance to the village in full bloom.
- There continues to be an issue with vehicles parked on the grass verge in Batts Bridge Road and churning up the grass.
- Some resurfacing has recently been carried out by ES Highways but much of the surface in the High Street/School Hill is in a state of disrepair.
- The Clerk gave an update on the cemetery wall as provided by the church. This has been examined by a structural engineer who reports that "despite some relatively minor disturbance to local areas of brickwork due to pressure from tree root activity and soil build up behind. this is by no means of sufficient proportions to give concern with regard to overall stability of the walls."



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- It was noted that canvassing leaflets for Cllr Galley were delivered to addresses during the recent period of mourning for the Duke of Edinburgh. It was assumed that these were delivered by the Royal Mail. It was however noted that a pause to campaigning is voluntary during mourning periods.

Cllr Galley joined the meeting.

- To consider and Agree proposal to grant the Freedom of Maresfield Parish to the Royals Signals Squadron.

It would be an ideal opportunity to convey this award at the Maresfield in Bloom event on Sunday 27th June.

The Lord Lieutenant of the County will be in attendance to present Dr Gillian Bullock with her British Empire Medal.

Cllr Galley supports the proposal and in his conversations with the Commanding Officer, Major Kathleen Bilney, he has confirmed the Royal Signals would be happy if the Freedom simply formalised the already existing relationship between the Royal Signals and Maresfield village.

ACTION: Clerk/Asst Clerk to consider wording/artwork/coat of arms/cap badge/village sign/MPC logo/exact & correct name of regiment and forward proposals to Councillors for consideration prior to sending to Cllr John Lewis for design and print.

The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Lewin and **Agreed** unanimously.

The meeting reverted to item 3652.1

Cllr Galley reported as follows:

- A recent ESCC Cabinet update reported encouragingly low numbers of COVID. There are plans in place for “surge” testing if required locally.
 - Nursery Lane/A22 junction petition – a lead petitioner is required to put the case to ESCC. It was **Agreed** that Cllr Dr Smith would take the lead as she has worked extensively on the project.
 - The level of litter throughout the county has worsened during lockdown. WDC has a programme with Biffa to clear verges etc. but this often necessitates application for a license for litter collection on major roads. Cllr Galley confirmed that he is working hard to ensure that “clear ups” are carried out more frequently. Advertising and educational campaigns are needed for what does seem to be a generational issue.
Cllr Mrs Cumming added that Clean Up day was well attended with some 30 volunteers collecting 20 bags of litter over the weekend.
- Nutley Ward.
 - Twinning with Nutley, NJ – thought to be a good idea which should be publicised/floated on the Parish Council’s social media to gauge the response from local residents. Cllr Mrs Reeves confirmed she will be in the vicinity of Nutley, NJ later in the year. **ACTION:** Cllr Dr Smith to progress.

3654. Council bodies - To receive minutes and decisions, followed by reports from Chairmen and questions:

1. Finance & Administration Committee:

- Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 6th April. Noted.
- Month 12 2020/21 Accounts to be noted.

The final numbers of the year as circulated with the meeting papers have no amendments apart from accruals. Andy Beams has met with the Clerk to ensure all is in order ahead of the Audit on 17th May.

- To approve recommendation of additional expenditure of £1100 on four new heaters for MRG Pavilion changing rooms.

The approved budget for the pavilion refurbishment allowed for a small contingency. The existing changing room heaters are very old, some are broken, and it is considered sensible to ensure that all electrical elements of



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the building are overhauled at this time. It is sensible that the sub-contractor responsible for the electrical refurb carries out these additional works. The Chairman made the proposal, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Reeves and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk.

iv. To consider and Agree Insurance Renewal.

The Parish Council is embarking on the third year of a three-year agreement with insurers. The premium for the coming year is slightly increased due to an increase in several of the sums insured e.g., MRG Pavilion.

The Chairman made the proposal, this was seconded by Cllr Strevens and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk.

v. To consider and Agree what to do with £25,000 invested with Hodge Bank on maturity.

Since maturity earlier in the month, the money remains at Hodge Bank awaiting re-investment. The Chairman proposed the money be reinvested with Hodge Bank at the best rate available for one year i.e., 0.25%. This was seconded by Cllr Lewin and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk.

vi. To consider and Agree request from FGMC for pitch improvement scheme grant.

FGMC have been awarded a grant towards pitch improvement and need to raise £12,000 over 6 years. FGMC is asking MPC to make a commitment of £500 per year over the period to facilitate this. The Chairman proposed awarding FGMC £500 per year for the next 6 years, this was seconded by Cllr Dr Smith and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk.

2. **Planning Committee:**

i. Minutes of the meeting held on 29th March.

It was noted there seems to have been a recent increase in the number of retrospective applications being approved by WDC. It is hoped that this does not lead to an increase in people building without the appropriate permissions. It was noted that the WDC Enforcement Team was hampered by lockdown but is now regaining strength. A far greater number of enforcement issues are being put before WDC Planning Committee of late.

Cllr Galley left the meeting.

3. **Environment Committee:**

i. COVID response.

The Clerk reported there continues to be next to no demand for assistance. She continues to disseminate information cascaded from ESCC and WDC to interested parties.

ii. Update from Climate Change Working Party.

This group continues to meet with enthusiasm and the monthly articles in the Parish Magazines are well received.

iii. Great Collaboration.

This impressive initiative has been set up in Hertfordshire. Maresfield Parish Council could benefit from access to this information resources.

ACTION: Asst Clerk send letter stating MPC would like to have access to the information held by the Great Collaboration and noting the existence of our Climate Change Group.

iv. Wildlife Verge Scheme – Down Street, Nutley

This initiative promotes healthier growth of verges and wildlife habitats by cutting at the correct times. The Chairman proposed the Council supports the initiative, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Stevens-Smith and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk to revert with Council's recommendation.



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4. Road Safety:

i. Update from Cllr Strevens.

The Parish Office team is in the process of arranging a long awaited SLR meeting. CCllr Galley should also be in attendance if possible. Cllr Strevens asked fellow Councillors to forward any concerns to him ahead of this meeting.

ACTION: Asst Clerk to progress.

There continues to be a lot of anti-social vehicle noise on the Maresfield bypass.

We continue to look into the issue of parking on the grass verge on Batts Bridge Road.

Cllr Strevens and the Clerk will be attending an Uckfield Area Sussex PCC Focus Group meeting on 10th May.

ii. Update on Speedwatch.

The Clerk reported that Speedwatch continues. Statistics will be provided to Council when available. **ACTION:** Asst Clerk.

ACTION: Asst Clerk to draft letter from Chairman thanking Speedwatch volunteers for their commitment and efforts.

5. Neighbourhood & Community Development Plan Steering Group.

i. Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 25th March.

Site assessment work is ongoing. Both the General Survey and Housing Needs Survey are live and accessible online.

Surveys to be publicised on Facebook and Twitter, with A5 flier to be placed in all public areas within the Parish, and via email to Parish organisations asking them to circulate their individual distribution lists. **ACTION:** Asst Clerk.

DCllr Roundell left the meeting.

6. Maresfield Recreation Ground Committee.

i. Pavilion refurbishment update.

The refurbishment is very nearly complete save a few finishing touches. All who have visited agree it is now an impressive facility.

Income has been particularly low of late and subject to the terms of the Trust Deed the pavilion could be available for other village groups to use for "recreational" purposes when not in use by the regular clubs. **ACTION:** Clerk. Publicise newly refurbished facility with video walk around for inclusion on Parish Council website, Press Release for Uckfield News. **ACTION:** Clerk.

ii. To consider three quotations and Agree contractor for requisite replacement of high-level Bowls Club Fence.

The Chairman proposed proceeding with SJ Fencing at a cost of £7015.00 ex VAT plus the rabbit fencing at £435.00 ex VAT. This was seconded by Cllr Lewis and **Agreed** unanimously.

3655. Outside bodies matters.

The matter of horses not using the appropriate routes on the Forest was raised and the subsequent mess of many walking routes. The Chairman confirmed the matter was raised at his recent meeting with James Adler, CEO of the Ashdown Forest Conservators and that a suggestion had been made that all riders must carry a copy of the map issued to them along with their license whenever riding on the Forest.

ACTION: Cllr Mrs Reeves to raise this issue and the matter of galloping at the next AFPLP meeting.

3656. **To receive a report from and put questions to, the Chairman.** None.

3657. **To receive a report from and put questions to, the Clerk.** None.

3658. **Matters arising from the meeting for public communication.** None.

3659. **Annual Assembly – To discuss and Agree options.** After discussion, the Chairman proposed not holding an Annual Assembly meeting this year. This was seconded by Cllr Lewin and **Agreed** unanimously.

3660. **Annual Report.** This is in the process of being prepared. The document will be professionally printed and posted to every household in the Parish.



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- 3661. To Agree to temporarily suspend item 5(b) of the Standing Orders to facilitate date change for Annual Meeting of Council to 4th May 2021.**
To facilitate the meeting being held via Zoom prior to 7th May when legislation permitting remote meetings comes to an end. This was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Lewin and **Agreed** unanimously.
- 3662. To discuss and Agree how to function when legislation ends allowing remote meetings.** It is impossible to make a decision until we know the outcome of the legal challenge relating to the requested extension of legislation allowing remote meetings.
- 3662. Date of next meeting – 4th May 2021.**

To move that the meeting goes into closed session; that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted in item 3663, it is required that the public and press be temporarily excluded and that they are instructed to withdraw.

- 3663. To consider and vote on recipient of 2021 Marjory Pegg Award.**
It was **Agreed** that as voting is normally anonymous for this award, the Councillors would use the Zoom “chat” function to register their vote with the Clerk.

Cllr Mrs Reeves left the meeting.

As there was no clear winner, the Clerk would email Councillors informing them of the two lead candidates and asking them to take part in a second round of voting.

ACTION: Clerk.

The Parish Council Meeting will close and reconvene as Trustee of Maresfield Recreation Ground.

- 3664. Matters relating to Council as Trustee of Maresfield Recreation Ground (MRG).**
None

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.41.