

MARESFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING THE VILLAGES OF MARESFIELD, NUTLEY AND FAIRWARP

Minutes of the Maresfield Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 19th October 2021 at 7.30pm in Fairwarp Village Hall

Present: Cllr Martin Craddock (Chairman), Cllr Dr Penny Handley, Cllr Rob Hunter, Cllr Dr Birgit Smith, Cllr Alan Strevens, Cllr David Watson, DCllr Peter Roundell and Mrs Claire Goossens (Clerk).

A. **Public session** – None.

3733. To approve apologies for absence and to note other non-attendance.

Cllr Mrs Sheila Cumming, Cllr Trevor Lewin, Cllr John Lewis, Cllr Mrs Lolita Reeves, Cllr Mrs Laura Stevens-Smith, Cllr Dr Emma Worrell and CCllr Roy Galley.

3734. Declarations of Interest.

Cllr Dr Smith – Governor, Nutley Primary School.

Cllr Watson – Trustee, Nutley War Memorial Hall.

3735. To receive written requests for new DPI dispensations. None.

3736. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21st September 2021: -

1. For adoption. The minutes as previously circulated were **Agreed** to be a true and accurate record. Proposed by Cllr Craddock, seconded by Cllr Watson and **Agreed** unanimously.
2. Matters arising from these minutes not elsewhere on the agenda. None.

3737. Reports by and questions to: -

1. County Councillors. Cllr Galley was not in attendance, but his monthly written report was circulated with the meeting papers. It was noted that Wealden District Council is pursuing the political statements made by Central Government reference no further development on Greenfield sites.
2. District Councillors.
The following points were noted:
 - A sub-committee of the Cabinet has been formed (Local Plan Sub Committee) which will meet monthly. This sub-committee comprises members of the Cabinet together with the Chairs of both Planning Committee North and South and will scrutinise the draft Local Plan through various stages. The first meeting looked at draft policies, specifically climate change policies and the sustainability of such policies.
 - Nothing can be fixed in terms of the draft Local Plan until Government publishes the results of its White Paper "*Planning for the Future*". This may result in a delay to the draft Local Plan.
 - Environmentally friendly housing was discussed. It was noted that consideration is being given to restrictions from a building regulations point of view. Smaller developments can become less viable the higher the expectations in terms of environmentally friendly building. There may also be a detrimental effect on affordable housing provision on developments.

3738. Parish Wards – issues, needs and Councillors' reports: -

1. Fairwarp Ward. None.
2. Maresfield Ward. Maresfield Conservation Group were thanked for their efforts both with regard to the flower planters throughout the village and for the recent village clean up day.
3. Nutley Ward. Cllr Dr Smith has been approached by Nutley Primary School to ask the Parish Council if it can write to East Sussex Highways to ask for signage warning drivers of the presence of the school. **ACTION:** Parish Office to write to Education Department and East Sussex Highways. Add to SLR Agenda.

3739. Council bodies - To receive minutes and decisions, followed by reports from Chairmen and any questions: -

1. Finance & Administration Committee

- i. Month 6 2021/22 expenditure and accounts to be noted. It looks as though there has been an overspend but this includes expenditure to be charged against reserves and the grants and donations totalling approximately £15,000 for the year were paid in May. The accounts are on track to come in on budget.

- ii. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 7th October.
The following points were noted:
Staff hours are to remain the same but become more flexible in terms of when and where worked. It is to be publicised that any Parishioners wishing to meet with the Clerk/Asst Clerk are most welcome to do so but should call ahead to make an appointment.
It is hoped that negotiations with the Social Club will result in a reduction of the Parish Office rent by approximately one third. There is an alternative viable office space if these negotiations are unsuccessful.
- iii. To approve monthly expenditure of £9.99 on Dropbox. It is now possible for Councillors to access files electronically from a shared folder on the Parish Office system. However, an alternative to SharePoint is required for sharing files electronically with those Councillors who do not use maresfieldparish.or.uk email addresses. It was felt that there may well be cheaper alternatives to Dropbox. **ACTION:** Parish Office to investigate alternative options.
The Chairman proposed expenditure of £9.99 per month be approved for two months until an alternative can be found. This was seconded by Cllr Dr Smith and **Agreed** unanimously.
ACTION: Parish Office to ask PS Tech to assist those Councillors without MPC email addresses to - set them up if they wish.
- iv. Progress report on Budget/Precept setting for 2022/23.
The following points were noted:
- The proposed budget is £91,640.
 - This is £9,000 less than the current year budget resulting from a number of savings. The budget has been looked at very conscientiously.
 - Sufficient reserves are being carried forward to cover any unexpected rise in inflation.
 - Current year projected total expenditure is £120,942 but this includes around £28,000 which will be charged to reserves.
 - The F&A Committee carefully considered and agreed grants to local organisations totalling £15,260 which is similar to the level of contributions in the current financial year.
 - The Road Safety reserve has been maintained to allow for a possible traffic survey in Maresfield and the purchase of an additional MVAS device.
 - The Fords Green Play Area refurbishment reserve has been increased by £5,000.
 - The proposed budget would result in a proposed precept increase of 1.49%.
- v. To consider response to Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) reference Town and Parish Councillor Allowances for 2022/2023.
The following points were noted in response to the questions posed by WDC:
- (1) No, the Basic Allowance is not sufficient to attract a wide range of people to become Councillors. It was noted that people are not drawn to the role for financial reward.
 - (2) It is not known to what extent the present level of Basic Allowance reimburses Councillors the costs of carrying out this role. Although it is unlikely that the after-tax allowance covers the cost of printer cartridges, paper, and fuel for travelling to and from meetings.
 - (3) As above.
 - (4) Allowances should be paid to co-opted members as well as elected members.
- ACTION:** Clerk to respond as above.
- 2. Planning Committee.**
- i. Minutes of the meetings held on 27th September. Noted.
It was noted that at the previous evenings meeting the subject of Enforcement was discussed. There is growing concern, both in this Parish and many surrounding Parishes, that there are an ever-increasing number of retrospective planning applications.
Enforcement action can be a very drawn-out process.
- 3. Environment Committee.**
- i. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 5th October. Noted.
This meeting was attended by two members of Maresfield Conservation Group who were keen to relay their concerns regarding the unsatisfactory parapet repairs on the Underhill bridge as undertaken by ES Highways. MCG have designed a replacement parapet and are seeking moral support from the Parish Council in this regard when they approach ES Highways with their

proposal. The Environment committee unanimously **Agreed** to support MCG in its endeavours and the Chair of this Committee seeks similar backing from the Parish Council as a whole. The Chairman proposed Maresfield Parish Council supports Maresfield Conservation Group in its bid to employ Thorne Civil Engineering of Uckfield to remake the parapets in a safe manner, which would simultaneously solve safety problems and aesthetic issues. This was seconded by Cllr Dr Handley and **Agreed** unanimously.

The Committee has regretfully **Agreed** not to replace the inclusive swing seat at Maresfield Recreation Ground Play area due to repeated vandalism. The committee resolved to replace the existing seat with a standard flat swing seat.

The disrepair of the pavement close to the Bowls Club in Nutley was again discussed and disappointment expressed that it does not meet East Sussex Highways criteria for improvement.

ACTION: Clerk to add to Agenda for next SLR meeting.

ii. Update from Cllr Strevens on Road Safety.

It was noted that the Clerk is in the process of arranging an SLR meeting for late November/early December. **ACTION:** Clerk.

It was noted that the MVAS devices are very worthwhile, and it may be worth considering installation at another location.

The Clerk confirmed that the licences have recently been renewed for a further two years, valid until December 2023.

4. **Neighbourhood & Community Development Plan Steering Group.**

i. Update from Chairman.

Informal meetings of the site assessment panel continue. A meeting will be held tomorrow with the promoters for Site D.

Part of the assessment process is considering what any future developments could deliver for the benefit of the existing community.

The promoters of Site D will not apply for Planning permission until the Draft Local Plan has been published.

The Chairman confirmed that he would be collating the responses to the recent Housing Needs and General Survey in the next few weeks.

Cllr Roundell left the meeting.

5. **Maresfield Recreation Ground Committee.**

i. Draft minutes of the meeting held on 28th September.

The Clerk reported as follows in the absence of the Committee Chairman:

- It has been agreed that fees will increase modestly from April 2022.
- Fund raising events are planned to include a Sports Day in May 2022.
- Clubs will combine forces to paint changing rooms in the Summer of 2022.
- With a view to raising funds and making MRG more financially independent, the possibility of tendering for a coffee shop franchise based at the Pavilion could be considered. This was thought to be worth investigating though Councillors wondered whether the volumes would make it worthwhile. It may be that the WI would consider providing such a service.

3740. **Outside bodies matters.** None.

3741. **To receive a report from, and put questions to, the Chairman.** None.

3742. **To receive a report from, and put questions to, the Clerk.** None.

3743. **Matters arising from the meeting for public communication.** None.

3744. **Date of next meeting – 16th November 2021**

The Parish Council Meeting - closed and reconvened as Trustee of Maresfield Recreation Ground

3745. **Matters relating to Council as Trustee of Maresfield Recreation Ground (MRG).**

1. To Approve recommendation the Pavilion to be renamed "The John Mason Memorial Pavilion".

It was noted that John Mason died in September having only recently moved from Park Farm Lane where he and his wife lived for many years. John was the fount of all knowledge and worked tirelessly for the good of the Pavilion and the recreation ground for decades. The Chairman proposed the Pavilion be renamed “The John Mason Memorial Pavilion”. This was seconded by Cllr Strevens and **Agreed** unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.50.