



Maresfield Parish Council

REPRESENTING THE VILLAGES OF MARESFIELD, NUTLEY & FAIRWARP

Minutes of the Maresfield Parish Council meeting held remotely via Zoom on Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 7.30pm

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

Mr John Lewis and Mr Robert Hunter

Public session.

3633. To approve apologies for absence and to note other non-attendance. None.

3634. Declarations of Interest.

Cllr Lewin & Cllr Mrs Cumming – Member of Maresfield Conservation Group
Cllr Dr Smith – Governor, Nutley Primary School

3635. To receive written requests for new DPI dispensations. None.

3636. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th January 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.

3637. 1. Co-Option of Mr John Lewis to fill Councillor Vacancy in Maresfield Ward.

Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Strevens and **Agreed** unanimously.

Cllr Lewis signed the Declaration of Acceptance form and presented the document to the meeting.

2. **Co-option of Mr Robert Hunter to fill Councillor Vacancy in Nutley Ward.**

Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Lewin and **Agreed** unanimously.

Cllr Hunter signed the Declaration of Acceptance form and presented the document to the meeting.

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to both newly co-opted Councillors.

3638. To consider placement of Co-Opted Members onto Committees.

The Chairman proposed Cllr Hunter be appointed to the Planning Committee and NDP SG and that Cllr Lewis be appointed to the NDP SG and the Maresfield Recreation Ground Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Reeves and **Agreed** unanimously.

3639. Reports by and questions to:

1. **County Councillors.**

CCllr Gally reported as follows:

- ESCC and Police Elections have been confirmed to go ahead on 6th May.
- Council Tax changes for this year have been agreed as follows:
ESCC up 3.5%, ESFR up 1.9%, WDC 0% and the Police precept was increasing also.
- Nursery Lane/A22 junction petition should be forwarded to CCllr Galley by 14th April to enable him to present it to the May ESCC meeting. Any interested parishioner could sign it. **ACTION:** Clerk.

2. **District Councillors.**

DCllr Roundell reported as follows:

- All feedback from the Direction of Travel Consultation has now been collated. Around 1700 responses were received from approximately 304 respondents. Of the four broad options for where development could take place, none received majority support.



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- WDC Parish Cluster Meetings are a good opportunity for Parish Councils to engage with WDC reference the Draft Local Plan. The Chairman confirmed that information obtained by the NDP SG through surveys and site assessment work will be fed into the Cluster Meetings.
- WDC Draft Local Plan is anticipated in the Spring of 2022.

3640.

Parish wards – issues, needs & Councillors’ reports:

1. Fairwarp Ward.

Cllr Mrs Reeves reported as follows:

The Village Hall Committee have agreed to cancel the fete this year as the scheduled date is just a couple of weeks after the anticipated end of lockdown. The proposed telephone mast for Fairwarp resulted in the Parish Council receiving several comments from Parishioners. Many acknowledged a need for improved mobile reception in Fairwarp but were opposed to the proposed siting in a prominent location on the approach to the village and within an AONB. All comments together with a request for a disguised multi-user mast, including two alternative sites which had not seemed to have been considered, were relayed by the Parish Council Planning Committee to Sinclair Dalby.

2. Maresfield Ward.

Cllr Strevens reported of complaints about the parking of several vehicles on the grass verge particularly at No 1 Parklands, Batts Bridge Road. The grass has now been churned up leaving a muddy mess. **ACTION:** Clerk to ascertain ownership of grass verge and enforcement possibilities.

i. Maresfield in Bloom – To Approve expenditure of up to £250.

This is an event organised by St Bartholomew’s Church which will be attended by Civic Officers and the Royal Signals. With no village fete planned for Maresfield this year so this will be a welcome celebration, hopefully at the end of lockdown. Cllr Mrs Cumming confirmed she would be replanting the planter at the entrance to the Recreation Ground shortly before the event. The possibility of baskets/pots of flowers at the Pavilion was discussed. The Chairman proposed expenditure of up to £250 on flowers/plants for this event. This was seconded by Cllr Strevens and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk.

3. Nutley Ward.

Cllr Dr Smith reported that she has been working with Nutley residents to put together a petition for ESCC regarding the dangerous junction of Nursery Lane with the A22. **ACTION:** Asst Clerk to put details on website to facilitate gathering of additional signatures.

Nutley in New Jersey have reached out via Facebook to enquire about the possibility of “Twinning”. **ACTION:** Cllr Dr Smith to explore idea.

The Chairman reported he has had an approach from the Royal Signals, who have a long-standing association with Maresfield village, about the possibility of establishing/being granted a formal relationship with the village e.g., “Freedom of the Parish”. CCllr Galley confirmed he too has had a similar approach and has asked the Chief Executive to research the feasibility of this. Cllr Watson reported that the Fords Green Management Committee is looking to extend the FG Pavilion and will be making an approach to the Parish Council for a grant. The Chairman confirmed that this item will be on the Agenda for the April Finance & Administration Committee for consideration. **ACTION:** Clerk.



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3641. Council bodies - To receive minutes and decisions, followed by reports from Chairmen and questions:

1. Finance & Administration Committee:

i. **Month 10/11 2020/21 Accounts to be noted.**

There is an anomaly when comparing expenditure to date and the annual budget, i.e., bank charges of £25,000. This represents a two-year deposit with Cambridge & Counties. The internal auditor has recommended this amount be written off as an expense in the current financial year, added to the asset register and then brought back as a receipt when the investment matures and removed from the asset register at that time.

ii. **To Agree ESCC Annual charge of £1410 for six urban cuts in 2021/22 as provided for in the budget for the coming year.**

This amount has already been provided for in the 2021/22 budget. The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Reeves and **Agreed** unanimously.

iii. **To Agree opening of Unity Bank Current Account, closure of NatWest Current Account and transfer of £45,000 From Barclays to Unity Bank to ensure appropriate FSCS cover.**

it is good practice to keep funds in Barclays under the £85,000 limit covered by the FSCS. To this end an account with NatWest was opened but the institution is unable to offer a dual authentication facility for the withdrawal of funds and this is not permissible under the terms of MPC's Adopted Financial Regulations. Many Local Authorities use Unity Bank which is covered by the FSCS and facilitates dual authentication. The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Lewin and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk.

iv. **To consider proposal from PS Tech for two Parish Council "Pool" laptops and to approve expenditure of up to £800.**

The quotes received from PS Tech were significantly more than considered appropriate to spend on "pool" devices. **ACTION:** Clerk to investigate alternative devices and ask PS Tech for set up costs. It was **Agreed** to defer the item to the next meeting but thought appropriate that a "pool" laptop should be loaned to Mr Fred Taylor who is the custodian of the draft NDP and whose personal machine is not up to the job. **ACTION:** Clerk to make arrangements.

v. **To consider and Agree Working from Home Policy.**

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

vi. **To consider and Agree broadband and telephone package.**

Three quotations were considered. Changing from KCOM to bOnline would save approximately £25 per month. The Chairman proposed changing from KCOM to bOnline. This was seconded by Cllr Lewis and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Asst Clerk.

vii. **To retrospectively approve grant of £500 to Maresfield Recreation Ground.**

The MRG Committee was dangerously close to running out of money because it has had next to no income from either match or membership fees for the past 12 months due to COVID restrictions imposed on its regular users. The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Strevens and **Agreed** unanimously. The Chairman expressed Councils thanks to Dynamo Junior FC, who kindly donated £250 in view of the financial difficulties of the MRG Committee.



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It was noted that there are two other recreation grounds in the Parish who may look to MPC for a similar grant award. Whilst it was acknowledged that this is indeed the case, Fords Green and the QE11 Field are not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council unlike MRG for which it acts as Trustee. If FG and QE11 can demonstrate a need this will of course be considered by the Parish Council (although this is a separate approach from the funding for building work at FG as discussed earlier in the meeting).

viii. **To review and Agree Scheme of Delegation.**

It is good practice to have a document of this kind in place detailing the powers of the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees, Working Groups, and the Clerk. The Chairman proposed the motion, it was seconded by Cllr Dr Smith and **Agreed** unanimously.

2. **Planning Committee:**

i. **Minutes of the meetings held on 25th January and 15th February and Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 8th March.** Noted.

The Planning Committee recently recommended a reserved matters application for six dwellings at Mill House Farm, Maresfield approval and we await WDC's decision.

It is disappointing that an application recently recommended for refusal by MPC on the grounds of insufficient information, was later approved by WDC when they sought additional information which they failed to share with MPC or seek a further recommendation from us.

3. **Environment Committee:**

i. **Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 9th February.** Noted.

ii. **COVID response.** The Clerk reported there has been no recent demand for assistance from Parishioners. She continues to disseminate information from WDC and ESCC to local groups for wider distribution.

iii. **Update from Climate Change Interest Group.** This group continues to meet monthly and publishes a piece in the Parish Magazines each month. Last month detailed water saving initiatives and next month will outline the benefits of peat free compost. This is a group "sponsored" by the Parish Council, but is not a formal Committee, and has attracted much support from around the Parish.

iv. **To Agree subscription to the Open Spaces Society at the cost of £45 per annum.**

This is a modest cost for a resource providing information as to how we can find, manage, and preserve open spaces. The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Reeves and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk.

Cllr Galley left the meeting.

4. **Road Safety:**

i. **Update from Cllr Strevens.** Awaiting date of next SLR meeting with East Sussex Highways. **ACTION:** Clerk

ii. **Update on Speedwatch.**

Speedwatch activities have carried on throughout the Parish during lockdown, resulting in an average of 20 police letters being sent out each week to speeding motorists.

ii. **To note correspondence – Maresfield Bypass.**

It was noted that there is considerable local concern regarding the noise and safety of the bypass. We have previously made proposals for two lanes in one direction with a switch over at the Batts Bridge Roundabout but have been told by ES Highways that there are insufficient KSI's to justify this and no available funding.



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5. Neighbourhood & Community Development Plan Steering Group.

i. **Update from Chairman.**

Informal meetings have been held and work continues particularly focussing on the sites recently put forward to WDC in the recent SHLAA. Some 30 sites in Maresfield Parish have been put forward including some which had previously been considered unsuitable. It is imperative that through the NDP we make sure the right homes are put in the right places. WDC Planning have been supportive of MPC's NDP activity. The protection previously afforded by the Ashdown Forest is not the same now as it was in 2013.

ii. **To Approve proposed Housing Needs Survey and General Survey and Agree method of circulation to all households in Parish.**

It is imperative that the evidence in the Parish Council's NDP is up to date and the data obtained from the 2013 surveys is now out of date. In May, Parishioners will need to complete a General Survey. The Housing Needs Survey will only need completing if Wealden are unable to provide the NDP with the relevant figures. The draft Housing Needs Survey has been sent to Wealden either for approval or for them to confirm they will provide the figures.

The surveys will be completed electronically using Survey Monkey which will facilitate analysis of the feedback including filtering of responses by Ward. The Parish Council will use every means possible to communicate the need to complete the survey online i.e., fliers included with door-to-door delivery of Annual Report, Facebook, Twitter, Website, Parish Magazines, and fliers in local shops. It is hoped to achieve a 25-30% response rate. Anyone wishing to complete a hard copy questionnaire can request this via the Parish Office.

The Chairman proposed the motion subject to a consultation with Cllr Dr Smith, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Reeves and **Agreed** unanimously.

iii. **To Approve expenditure of £384 fee for Personal Advantage Annual Survey Monkey subscription.** The basic Survey Monkey package does not allow for our requirements. The upgrade facilitates up to 5000 responses. The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Reeves and **Agreed** unanimously.

DCllr Roundell left the meeting.

6. **Maresfield Recreation Ground Committee.**

i. **Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February.** Noted.

There has been next to no activity by clubs for nearly a year. It is hoped that clubs will begin to play again in early April. The Committee thanks the Parish Council for its grant of £500 towards the running costs of Maresfield Recreation Ground and the Pavilion.

ii. **Electricity expenditure.**

This has been unexpectedly high over the last year, and as we now know, due in part to several factors including estimated billing, inefficient lighting, a faulty thermostatic frost heater in the loft. The electrician working on the refurb has given the electrics a complete overhaul and confirms that the pavilion has one of the more up to date meters. Regular meter readings are now being submitted.

iii. **Pavilion refurbishment update.**

This is progressing well, and it is hoped that works will be completed on schedule.



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- iv. **To consider three quotations and Agree contractor for requisite tree works.**
The quotations were all considered. It was noted that Simon Young had provided the cheapest quotation and that he has previously carried out satisfactory works for the Parish Council.
The Chairman proposed engaging Simon Young to carry out the requisite high and medium priority works, this was seconded by Cllr Lewin and **Agreed** unanimously.
- v. **To consider three quotations and Agree contractor for requisite replacement of high-level Bowls Club Fence.** It was **Agreed** to defer this item to the next meeting as the Clerk needs to obtain a third quotation. **ACTION:** Clerk.

3642. **Outside bodies matters.** None.

3643. **To receive a report from and put questions to, the Chairman.** None.

3644. **To receive a report from and put questions to, the Clerk.**

1. **Annual Assembly 2021 and Annual Report.**

The Annual Assembly will likely be held remotely via Zoom this year. Requests will this week be sent to local clubs, groups, and societies for content for the Annual Report which will again be posted to all households in the Parish.

Cllr Hunter left the meeting – IT issues.

2. **Report on Audit and AGAR 2021 timetable.**

The Year End Internal Audit is booked for 17th May and the AGAR timetable will be the same as last year with final approval from Council being sought at the June meeting.

3645. **Matters arising from the meeting for public communication.** As highlighted previously.

3646. **Date of next meeting – 20th April 2021.**

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

3647. **Matters relating to Council as Trustee of Maresfield Recreation Ground (MRG).**

1. **To Approve recommendation that a new bank account be opened with Unity Bank and existing funds are transferred from Lloyd's bank and that account be closed.**

The Chairman explained the current banking arrangements and that the mandate could not easily be changed to add the Clerk for online banking access. The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Cumming and **Agreed** unanimously.

2. **To Agree and Adopt MRG Usage Policy.**

The Chairman proposed the motion, this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Cumming and **Agreed** unanimously. **ACTION:** Clerk to put copy of policy on Website and draft basic "rules of usage" signage for the rear of the large green sign adjacent to the planter at MRG. **ACTION:** Clerk to draft letter to all regular users of the pavilion reminding them of required conduct and care of the newly refurbished facility.

3. **To Agree recommendation to change electricity provider from Corona Energy back to EDF.**

The Chairman proposed that considering the issues as discussed under item 3641.6.ii that we continue with existing provider. This was seconded by Cllr Strevens and **Agreed** unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.51.