



CONTACT - Paul Richards, Parish Clerk

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The Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the Bramber Parish Council that took place at the Beeding and Bramber Village Hall on Wednesday 18th October 2023 at 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr A. Blakelock (Chair), Cllr S. Blakelock, Cllr H. Bayford, Cllr D. Croker, Cllr M. Croker, and Cllr Tilley.

In attendance: HDC Cllr Noel and Paul Richards (Parish Clerk).

Members of the public – none.

140. Apologies for absence – Cllr Goodall, Cllr Green, and Cllr Kitson.

The Chair reported that, due to illness and a change in date for the October meeting, Cllr Green had inadvertently missed six consecutive meetings. This would normally result in her disqualification. The Chair suggested that Members offer a dispensation given the circumstances. This was **AGREED** unanimously.

141. Declarations of interest – The Clerk was asked to remind Members on the declaration of any interests. The Clerk referred to their signed Register of Interests declarations that relate to personal (spouse or partner) and financial obligations. If there were such interests, then the declaring Member would need to leave the meeting when that item was being discussed and would be unable to vote upon it. The Clerk reminded Members that they may declare an interest in an agenda item should they happen to know of any person being discussed. Providing they do not have a personal or financial interest, they may remain in the room and vote on that matter. There were no declarations of interest.

19:09 – Cllr D Croker joins the meeting

142. Minutes of the previous meetings held on 6th September 2023.

The minutes of the Ordinary Parish Meeting held on 6th September 2023, circulated previously, were **AGREED** by the Members, and were duly signed by the Chair.

143. Matters arising - none.

144. Public Session – none.

145. Reports.

a) **HDC** – Cllr M. Croker advised Members that HDC Cllr Noel had been delayed by the bad weather and that he would provide an additional update later in the meeting. Cllr M. Croker reported that:

- At the last HDC meeting, a proposal from Governance Committee to adopt electronic voting was referred back to Governance Committee to reconsider. Members felt that it lacked transparency as members of the public could not see how each Member voted;
- The sale of Bramber Brooks had yet to be finalised. HDC Legal Services had yet to sign-off on the contract. He suggested that the proposal had cross party support and saw no political reason why it should not be completed;
- HDC re-confirmed their objection to the expansion at Gatwick Airport;
- HDC re-confirmed the Green Party's proposal to seek higher building development standards. This could take the form of a Supplementary Planning Document; and

- The draft Local Plan will be put forward for approval at the HDC meeting on 11th December 2023. The draft Plan will be circulated before the vote.
- b) Neighbourhood Wardens** –The Chair noted that there were no incidents relating to Bramber parish in the report save for an instance of fly-tipping.
- c) Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee** – no meeting.
- d) Joint Parishes Youth Committee** – Cllr Bayford referred to the revised Youth Services Business Plan, circulated previously. She proposed that BPC adopt the Plan, and this was **AGREED** (5 x votes for with 1 abstention). The Chair thanked Cllr Bayford for her efforts on this matter and asked that she advise Steyning PC of the BPC decision. The Chair advised that the Administrator dealing with the previous youth service provider had invoiced BPC for a small amount. The Clerk reported that the payment appeared to be for services that had not been delivered and is disputing the invoice with the Administrator.
- e) WSALC** - The Chair reported that the draft minutes from the last meeting had yet to be circulated and advised that;
- Not all Local Councils had signed the Civility and Respect Pledge aimed at reducing bad behaviour. The Clerk reminded Members, that at a previous meeting, they had agreed that the existing Code of Conduct (incorporating the seven Nolan principles) was sufficient and had not signed the Pledge;
 - Allowances had been made available for New Councillor training. The Chair asked the Clerk to circulate the training programme;
 - Some Local Councils were experiencing difficulty in recruiting new Clerks. This was a widespread problem but support for training/qualifications is available;
 - Resilience and Emergency Plans were not just for emergencies. They should be a response hierarchy of those who could assist. The recent water outage was an example when a parish resilience plan should be implemented. The Chair asked the Clerk to update BPC’s plan and asked that it be finalised by the end of the year;
 - Reports were received relating to the lack of Planning Enforcement across the District. Cllr M. Croker agreed and advised that he and HDC Cllr Noel had raised this issue with the HDC Planning Officers. He reported that the HDC officers had little power regarding this matter and that new legislation is awaited to help resolve this issue;
 - Long delays in the answering of non-emergency calls via the Sussex Police 101 service had been reported. A relaunch of the service is scheduled for 8th January 2024 where improvements to the service (including a call-back system) were promised. Sussex Police will invite Councillors to tour the Police HQ Call Centre and view the system in January 2024. Currently, average call waiting times are reported to be between 3 and 5 minutes;
 - Two Sussex Police meetings are scheduled.
 - 30th October 2023 – Operation Downsway – the Clerk was asked to circulate the invitation; and
 - 27th November 2023 - South Horsham focus group. The Chair suggested Cllr Goodall might like to attend.
- f) Village Hall** – Cllr Tilley advised that a CCTV system had been installed and will be monitored by the Management Committee. The repainting of the halls had been completed but refurbishment of the kitchens and toilets will be deferred until Summer 2024.
- g) Website** – Cllr Tilley advised that a large increase in visits and new users to the website had been recorded. This may be due to an email circulation in relation to the closure of the White Bridge which referred users to the BPC website.

h) The Steyning and District Community Partnership cycling/footpath project – Cllr A. Blakelock referred to a meeting of the Working Group called to review the closure of the White Bridge. There was concern raised that the closure of the bridge was, in some way, linked to the Partnership footpath project. This was misleading as WSCC had decided to close the bridge and that the project had nothing to do with their decision. There was also a real concern that WSCC was not prioritising the replacement of The White Bridge. However, the chair of the Working Group has now met with WSCC and can confirm that the replacement of The White Bridge is being prioritised and plans are moving ahead. Site surveys had been undertaken and costings will be produced by the end of the financial year. WSCC suggested that the project will be approved for implementation in the 2024/5 financial year. It is hoped that the Working Group may be involved in the final design of the replacement bridge. The Chair confirmed that the underside of the existing bridge was badly corroded and agreed with WSCC's decision to close the bridge to ensure the safety of the public. Cllr M. Croker agreed to share the information (obtained by him under a Freedom of Information Act request) in relation to the condition surveys of the bridge with the Members.

146. Finance and General Purposes.

- The issue of costs associated with the blocked drains in the car park was deferred. The Clerk was asked to contact Cllr Kitson for his assessment of the report. The Clerk was also asked to write to the adjacent homeowner whose drains might also be linked to the car park system;
- A donation request of £600 from the Bramber Society was discussed. The Chair read out a note from Cllr Kitson that suggested that any such donation should be qualified, and that the parish council should request the Society raise funds in other ways. The Clerk advised that Section 137 of the Local Government Act allows for donations providing it *"is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, their area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants..."*. The request from the Bramber Society had been made in accordance with this provision and a budget for the amount requested was agreed by BPC in December 2022. The Clerk further advised that it is not the place of the parish council to advise/request another body on how they run their business or raise money. Any 'conditional' offer of a grant may not be allowed. Members approved the donation without qualification. It was suggested by the Members that Cllr Kitson might wish to raise this matter, as a private individual, with the Society;
- Members **AGREED** that the October payments be made. Details are attached at Appendix A; and
- The Clerk's report, attached at Appendix B, on the Q2 variances was noted.

147. Planning.

a) Applications.

- DC/23/1776 - Bramber Brooks, (Off) The Street, Bramber - Excavation and creation of wetland ponds, bunds, a raised public access footpath, removal of existing timber bridges and replacement with bridged footpath sections (to allow gaps for conveyance of surface waters on the site) and railings. Installation of coir matting on the banks of the footpath to prevent erosion and destabilisation of the banks along with re-seeding.
Members voted, unanimously, to **SUPPORT** the application.

b) Other Planning matters – Cllr M. Croker had been concerned that a field shelter on the land south of Downland Park might be occupied at some point in the future, potentially establishing a precedent. He had since received reassurance from HDC Compliance that this was highly unlikely as unchallenged occupation over 4 years would be required for a certificate of lawful development, and there were many other constraints on the site. It was also noted that the property may be up for sale. The Chair asked him to report this matter to HDC.

148. Highways and Public Rights of Way - Cllr M. Croker advised that the overgrown vegetation on the footpath behind the caravan park had now been cut back.

149. Consultations – none.

150. English Heritage/Bramber Castle – no update

151. Environment and Parish Actions - Cllr M. Croker advised that he is evaluating a multi-sectional recycling bin as used by Steyning PC. The cost of the bin would be £500 plus a £300 installation charge from HDC. Bin emptying would cost £2.95 per visit. HDC had advised that the waste bin by the Tollgate Hotel was the least used and would be the one to remove if BPC wished to offset the emptying charge on a new bin. Members thought this was not a good idea as it's the first bin you get to from Bramber Castle when walking to the village. Members **AGREED** to defer this matter.

152. Climate Emergency and Steyning Greening 2030.

- a) **Greening Steyning** – Cllr A. Blakelock reported that a Green Drinks event on the Weald to Waves project would be held at the Steyning Centre on Monday 30th October 2023.
- b) **20 mph zone project** – no meeting.
- c) **Emergency Plan** – the Emergency Store Inventory had been circulated. Keys to the Store were now held by the Chair, Vice-Chair, Cllr Bayford and Cllr Tilley.

153. Correspondence – the report, circulated previously, was noted.

154. Items for inclusion on the next Agenda.

- 2024/25 budget; and
- Toilet – proposal to increase opening hours.

155. Date of the next meetings.

- The next **Ordinary Parish Council meeting** will be on Wednesday 15th November 2023 at the Beeding and Bramber Village Hall commencing 7pm.
- **Planning Meeting** – TBA subject to receipt of planning applications.

156. Additional HDC Update.

Having joined the meeting, HDC Cllr Noel provided a further update that included:

- The new Council had agreed to be more open, and a Council Plan (2023-2027) will be drawn up. The plan will focus on supporting communication, greener futures, listening, learning and improving;
- Plans for a proposed environmental site (known as Site C) had now been withdrawn; and
- £100,000 had been approved at an emergency meeting to repair a car park.

The meeting closed at 20:47.

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....

Appendix A – Payments

Payments 18th October 2023					
Income since last meeting		Amount			
2nd Precept payment	£	16,667.28			
Cleansing grant	£	429.71			
TOTAL INCOME	£	17,096.99			
BALANCES ON ACCOUNT					
Current Account (Treasurers)	£	24,119.05	30/09/2023		
EARMARKED RESERVES					
NHP reserve	£	1,380.00	Additional from reserves		
Elections	£	1,500.00	Additional from reserves		
AVAILABLE RESERVES	£	2,880.00			
PAID SINCE LAST MEETING					
Invoiced Services					
Julie Bakker	Toilet Cleaning - September	69	BACS	£	176.40
Paul Richards	Clerk's salary - September	70	BACS	£	549.48
NEST	Clerk's pension - September	71	DD	£	86.75
Chichester Payroll Services	Payroll costs	72	BACS	£	15.00
HMRC	PAYE - September	73	BACS	£	144.60
Danny Flynn	6 x watering flowers	74	BACS	£	165.00
Business Stream	Water supply/waste water 7/6 to 6/9	75	BACS	£	89.20
PAYMENTS TO APPROVE			TOTAL	£	1,226.43
Blockbuster	Jetting drains to blocked toilet	76	BACS	£	108.00
HALC	Subscription 1/4/23 to 3/3/2024	77	BACS	£	20.00
Moore	External audit 2022/23	78	BACS	£	252.00
Beeding and Bramber Village Hall	Hall hire 6/9	79	BACS	£	20.00
Thomas Locksmiths	Reset toilet timelock	80	BACS	£	118.20
Blockbuster	CCTV survey - drains in car park	81	BACS	£	300.00
Paul Richards	Duplicate keys - emergency store	82	BACS	£	17.92
Paul Richards	Traffic cones	83	BACS	£	44.99
Paul Richards	Safety tape	84	BACS	£	9.99
Paul Richards	Microsoft 365 licence	85	BACS	£	59.99
EDF	Toilet electricity supply	86	BACS	£	44.00
Bramber Society	Donation	87	BACS	£	600.00
PAYMENTS TO APPROVE			TOTAL	£	1,595.09
Position at bank on 30/09/2023		£	24,119.05		
New payments to approve		£	1,595.09		
CASHFLOW POSITION AS AT 30/09/2023		£	25,714.14		
Earmarked reserves		-£	2,880.00		
RESERVE/BUDGET POSITION AS AT 30/09/2022		£	22,834.14		

Appendix B – Q2 Variance

Agenda Item: 146/23

Report to:	Bramber Parish Council
Report on:	Quarter 2 – 2023/24 Budget Report and Material Variances
Report by:	Clerk

Summary

The Bramber Parish Council Financial Regulations require that the Clerk prepare a financial report to be presented to the Parish Council.

1. **Statement of receipts and payments** – the statement at below describes the first quarter position. Reserves are in line with previous reports and in accordance with good practice i.e., that General Reserves should be sufficient to cover 3-6 months running costs. Material variances are highlighted.

2. Recommendations

That BPC note the variances as listed below.

Paul Richards, Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer to Bramber Parish Council

18th October 2023

Receipts	Budget	Actual	Variance	%age	Comment
Insurance	£ 550.00	£ 408.50	£ 141.50	25.7%	Lower than expected premium
Village Hall hire	£ 220.00	£ 100.00	£ 120.00	54.5%	Payments due in Q3
Phone / admin	£ 200.00	£ 34.16	£ 165.84	82.9%	Not claimed
Clerk employment costs	£ 9,107.28	£ 5,569.41	£ 3,537.87	38.8%	National pay award pending
Chairmans allowance	£ 150.00	£ 14.99	£ 135.01	90.0%	Not claimed
Travel expenses	£ 300.00	£ 93.60	£ 206.40	68.8%	Not claimed
Postage	£ 50.00	£ -	£ 50.00	100.0%	No spend to date
Street lighting	£ 850.00	£ 1,038.50	-£ 188.50	-22.2%	Higher than budget but income expected
Toilet - cleaner salary	£ 2,661.75	£ 2,046.00	£ 615.75	23.1%	Seasonal impact
Toilet - water supply and loo roll	£ 350.00	£ 278.06	£ 71.94	20.6%	Lower costs than forecast
Toilet - electricity supply	£ 720.00	£ 219.00	£ 501.00	69.6%	Price rise effective from June
Subs inc website	£ 1,000.00	£ 690.51	£ 309.49	30.9%	Payments due in Q3
Audit fees	£ 420.00	£ 171.00	£ 249.00	59.3%	Lower costs than forecast
Neighbourhood Wardens	£ 8,285.00	£ 7,984.00	£ 301.00	3.6%	Not a material variance
Youth Provision	£ 4,285.92	£ 1,132.17	£ 3,153.75	73.6%	Q2 invoice not paid
Training	£ 250.00	£ 90.00	£ 160.00	64.0%	Lower costs than forecast
Floodlight contribution	£ 50.00	£ -	£ 50.00	100.0%	Not requested to date
Christmas tree	£ 175.00	£ -	£ 175.00	100.0%	Payments due in Q3
General maintenance	£ 945.00	£ 4.99	£ 940.01	99.5%	Lower costs than forecast
Environmental maintenance	£ 100.00	£ 965.00	-£ 865.00	-865.0%	£900 = 2 x bollard repairs
Donations and grants	£ 1,100.00	£ -	£ 1,100.00	100.0%	Not requested to date
Flowers & watering	£ 2,650.00	£ 2,300.84	£ 349.16	13.2%	Not a material variance
Dog bin emptying	£ 485.88	£ 151.84	£ 334.04	68.7%	Payments due in Q3
Neighbourhood Plan	£ 1,000.00	£ -	£ 1,000.00	100.0%	Fund building
Emergency Reserve	£ 1,000.00	£ -	£ 1,000.00	100.0%	Fund building
BBMC	£ -	£ -	£ -	0.0%	
Election Costs	£ 1,000.00	£ -	£ 1,000.00	100.0%	Fund building
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 37,905.83	£ 23,292.57	£ 14,613.26	38.6%	

Income	Budget	Actual	Variance	%age	Comment
HDC Precept	£ 33,334.55	£ 33,334.56	£ 0.01	0.0%	
HDC Cleansing grant	£ 781.28	£ 859.42	£ 78.14	10.0%	More than expected
Maudlyn Residents Assoc	£ 140.00	£ -	-£ 140.00	-100.0%	Payment due Q3
Refunds / VAT Reclaim	£ 1,000.00	£ -	-£ 1,000.00	-100.0%	Payment due Q3
Misc income	£ -	£ 620.00	£ 620.00	0.0%	
NDP Grant	£ -	£ -	£ -	0.0%	
Bramber Society	£ 2,650.00	£ -	-£ 2,650.00	-100.0%	Payment due Q3
TOTAL INCOME	£ 37,905.83	£ 34,813.98	-£ 3,091.85	-8.2%	

TOTAL INCOME	£ 37,905.83	£ 34,813.98			
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 37,905.83	£ 23,292.57			
Overall position end Q2	£ -	£ 11,521.41			