**ALRESFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

**Parish Council Meeting**

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 6th of September 2023.**

**Held at 7.30pm the Pavilion, Ford Lane, Alresford**

**Cllrs. Present:** Cllr. F. Belgrove (Chairman), Cllr E. Osborne (Vice Chairman), Cllr L Belgrove, Cllr G Scott, Cllr. A. Wiggins, Cllr A Broom, Cllr S Clark, Cllr V Dalzell.

Also present: The Clerk, County Cllr. A. Goggin

Members of the public x5

**Meeting opens:** 19.30 hrs transacting the following business:

**Minutes from the Published Agenda**

**09.23.162 Announcements- Formal Announcement regarding Cllr John Housden.** Cllr F Belgrove announces the sad demise of Cllr J Housden on August 13th 2023. He reads out a prepared statement from the family, requesting no flowers but offering an option to donate to charity, announcing a small family funeral ceremony in London, and that a memorial will be held in Alresford once a date is set. A brief Obituary is also read out.

**09.23.163 1 Minutes Silence in remembrance of Cllr John Housden.** All present stand in silence for one minute

**09.23.164 Apologies for Absence.** Cllr R Swash and Cllr J Claremont-Brown extend their apologies. Cllr A Wiggins is at another meeting and will join later.

**09.23.165 Minutes of the last monthly meeting:** To review and consider the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 5th of July 2023. Minor adjustments to Capital Letters and punctuation to be made by the clerk. Proposed to accept Cllr A Broom, Seconded E Osborne. Carried.

**09.23.166 Declarations of Interest.** Councillors to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in agenda items. Cllr G Scott declares an interest in item 173.

**09.23.167 Public Forum** This council is committed to community engagement and welcomes members of the public to contribute in this part of the meeting. Time limit 3 mins per person. Item limited to 10 minutes.

**During the public forum:** Members of the public and guests can address the Council on matters presented on the publicised agenda. Council can only take decisions on agenda items. Matters raised that are not on the agenda can be carried forward for a response later. Any questions not presented to the council far enough in advance may be noted and responded to at another time.

**After the public forum:** Members of the public are asked to respect that this is a meeting to conduct council business and interruptions during the remainder of the meeting are not permitted.

A member of the public offers’ condolences to council for their sad loss. Commenting that in the short time they had known Cllr Housden, they had found him a gentle, kind, and supportive person. The MOP then asked a question regarding Coppice Road and the kerbstone repairs, asking if the area to be completed will be increased. They state that the situation is in such disrepair that there are accidents waiting to happen for pedestrian and motorists alike.

Cllrs offer to share a Map of what will be addressed in the repairs, and minute that this matter is an ongoing concern to residents and councillors alike.

Cllrs expand on the areas requiring attention and that the double taxation aspect is not acceptable. They comment that the county council is letting the residents down. Another member of the public suggests that a letter is written to ECC to seek match funding given that the Parish Council is undertaking the work that the County Council ought to undertake. It is agreed by councillors that a letter should be written to the County Councillor asking for the portfolio holder to respond and review. The chairman reminds all present that there is a need to follow protocol and not go above the county councillor’s head. It is also suggested that the Health and Safety Executive are contacted over the issue.

A second member of the public asked about repairs to a circular manhole cover on Ford Lane, asks if council can phone it through as an emergency.

A third member of the public comments on the item relating to mobile phone strength, and the poor signal locally often only 2G in strength.

They also ask about the VAS Pole installation and its angle of view. Councilors clarify that there is to be a cantilevered pole attachment to ensure the angle of view of works.

The MOP finally comments that in the tree planting and public realm improvement, that fruit trees should be carefully thought about due to spoil and fruit fall. Cllr G Scott said that fruit trees and their history in the area, provides fresh fruit to those on low incomes and allow the public to harvest natures’ bounty.

No further questions.

Cllr F Belgrove closes the public forum.

**09.23.168 Finance Matters.**

1: July 2023 Finance Report - Council to review and consider. Proposed Cllr A Broom, Seconded Cllr V Dalzell, Carried.

2: August 2023 Finance Report - Council to review and consider. Cllr F Belgrove adds two items which arrived after the report had been finalised and draws Councils’ attention to the matters of £1,150 for the VAS Pole installation and the Octopus Electricity Bill.

Cllrs Ask about paying Item 6 in advance in full and the matter of redress should the County Council appointed contractor not perform adequately. Is there a retained amount? Cllr Scott askes that photographs are taken of before during and after the kerbstones are worked on.

Also it is questioned how the recycling credits are arrived at and what weights are monitored and paid for. Cllr Scott agrees to raise this at Tendring District Council with the officer and portfolio holders. Cllrs present, ask that it is investigated as to how recycling credits are arrived at and apportioned.

Cllr F Belgrove brings the council back to the August Finance Report and asks if councilors will propose to accept the report. Proposed Cllr A Broom, seconded Cllr G Scott. Carried.

**09.23.169 Council to resolve to amend APC Finance Regulations** to delegate the approval of the payment of invoices to the Clerk in cases where the expenditure has already been approved by the Council.

Proposed Cllr F Belgrove, Seconded Cllr G Scott. Carried.

* + 1. **Council to consider approval of suggestion from the RFO:**

1: Cambridge Building Society Saver Account be chosen as the additional APC bank account, as a dedicated local council bank account. Following robust debate Cllr E Osborne proposes to accept, Cllr V Dalzell seconds and the motion is carried.

Cllr L Belgrove requires it minuted that councillors need to know more in the agenda item listing, on how the bank was selected, what alternatives were, how the account is to be accessed, and that an explanation from the clerk, whilst clarifying, should have been sent out with the agenda. Cllr A Broom, males it clear that branch access is not relevant as the account is only set to take payments from Alresford Parish Council and to make payments to Alresford Parish Council. Cllr L Belgrove asks that a clearer proposal is made so that residents have clarity on decisions taken.

Following robust debate Cllr E Osborne proposes to accept, Cllr V Dalzell seconds and the motion is carried.

2: Proposal:  Signatories of the new account to be the RFO, The Chairman and the Vice Chairman. Clerk to have access to view the account and to view the existing Barclays account. Cllr L Belgrove asks if this will be a clause to the Financial Regulations, and that it also requires clarifying that we have a Single Vice Chair even though we are allowed two. This also requires clarifying.

Cllr A Wiggins arrives 20.10 from another meeting.

Proposed by Cllr F Belgrove, seconded Cllr G Scott, Carried. 1 Abstention as Cllr has just arrived from another meeting.

* + 1. **External Audit:** The clerk to report on the external audit from PKF Littlejohn. Reads out all correspondence. Essentially summarising that we have a clean bill of health with no censure from the external auditor. The clerk thanks the RFO and the Internal Auditor Jan Stobbart. The chairman thanks the finance committee, the whole council and the clerk for their hard work in achieving a clean bill of health.
		2. **Quiet Lane Status:** Council to resolve to apply for Quiet Lane status for Cockaynes Lane. Cllr F Belgrove introduces the item, explains the criteria and that we meet the majority of conditions laid down to achieve the application. Cllr V Dalzell agrees it is a good idea; but asks what the cost is to council. Cllr F Belgrove explains that we are not duty bound to purchase signs for a quiet lane from Essex County Council, and that even with the administration charge from Essex, we are looking at £3000 to £3500 to achieve the status and signpost the area. Cllr E Osborne explains that this has been a project council have pursued for years and that it is something to pursue. Proposed Cllr L Belgrove, Seconded Cllr V Dalzell, Carried.
		3. **District Councillor’s report (Written Report)** and 5 min verbal report. Cllr A Wiggins delivers the District Councillor report.

Cllr Wiggins declares a personal non pecuniary interest in the item.

Cllr Wiggins lists the attendances and their purpose.
At the end Cllr Wiggins and Scott field questions from Parish Councillors.

Cllr S Clarke asks about the local plan review procedure, from the District Councillors. Cllr G Scott responds that the process is in the earlier stages of development and review. He goes on to ask about the Garden Community consultation with Latimer and Clarion and their PR Company Connects.

Cllr L Belgrove asks for clarity on outcomes arrived at on behalf of the Parish Council from part of the report moving forwards. Cllr Belgrove suggests that council writes to our District Councillors on the issue of kerbstones for District Councilors to pursue with TDC. Cllr Scott explains the process.

* + 1. **Essex County Councillor Report (Written Report)** and 5 min verbal report. County Councillor Alan Goggin gives his report. County Councillor opens with condolences to council on the sad loss of Cllr J Housden, and of his professional respect for him.
		2. **Council to consider:** Mobile Phone signal strength issues in Alresford. Council to consider writing to appropriate bodies requesting service improvements.

Cllr G scott mentions that for many residents a land line is no longer used or retained as an option. Cllr S Clark asks if the companies are obligated to provide a good signal. I tis resolved that the clerk will write to the ombudsman on the matter of signal.

The clerk clarifies how the network is owned, currently administered, and how the sea is used to reflect and transmit signal, making low tide signal worse than at high tide significantly affecting coastal towns and villages against those inland.

* + 1. **Council to consider:** Council to consider adopting a new Media/Social media policy (draft policy presented by Personnel Committee).

Cllr F Belgrove introduces the item.

Cllr V Dalzell asks about the use of American English, requesting it be changed; and asks that the policy reflects the What and How of the implementation of said policy. He goes on to ask for clarity on how council engages and clarity on what council will actually do.

Cllr L Belgrove clarifies that policy exists to protect council and councillors, and that the NALC and EALC are not statutory bodies with responsibility of the implementation of the draft policy presented to council.

Cllr L Belgrove does not support two-way engagement on social media as there is no way of clarifying if the respondents are residents of Alresford. A social media policy would need to be implemented by the Clerk as the Proper Officer of the council and with the Clerk being a part time role, there are insufficient hours in the Clerks contract to manage any inward dialogue or administer or moderate the social media feeds.

Councillor Dalzell suggests that the social media policy could be offered as a work experience position to a university student to monitor and moderate, but other councillors respond with the lack of accountability of such a position; stating that the only person with the authority to deal with any incoming queries is the Proper Officer of the council – The Clerk.

Cllr G Scott suggests that rather than taking a vote on the policy, that the Clerk forwards the policy to the Monitoring Officer at Tendring District Council for their view, to review it against the District Councils Social Media Policy, and to report back. Cllr L Belgrove supports this, and also states that we would not be the first council to attempt this process. That Council needs to be risk averse, especially since some comments once made may take time to be removed as the clerk is part time. Cllr S Clark comments that in his opinion our engagement and media presence is excellent as it is.

Cllr G Scott, proposes an alteration to the agenda proposal to delay reporting, following review of Tendring District Council Monitoring Officer.

Seconded Cllr L Belgrove
Carried.

* + 1. **Council to review** Letter from TDC Director of Planning re adherence to the Alresford Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr F Belgrove reads the letter from Gary Guiver focussing on the comment, and requiring the matter to be minuted:

“….., I have discussed with our Head of Planning and Building Control the need to ensure that any future planning decisions in Alresford have full regard (and are shown to have full regard), to the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Our Planning Officers will, from now on, be sure to include a clearer and fuller consideration of the Neighbourhood Plan policies in their reports. Furthermore, I can give assurances that, in line with what is already written into the Council’s constitution, if a Planning Officer is minded to recommend the approval of planning permission contrary to the policies in either the Local Plan or the Neighbourhood Plan, the application will be referred to the Planning Committee for a decision.”

* + 1. **Council to consider:** Issues of speeding and vehicles on Alresford Viaduct- Correspondence received. Cllr A Wiggins to introduce.Councillor Wiggins reports on residents commentary on speeding especially heading toward Thorrington over the viaduct across the hatched markings. Cllr L Belgrove proposes that Essex Police are informed of the speeding. Cllr E Osborne agrees that reporting to the police is the correct response. What would be useful is for those reporting to provide times. Cllr A Wiggins agrees to further correspond with the resident to provide times and ask that the resident report the matter to Essex police and the clerk,
		2. **Council to form a working Party**. Council to discuss the formation of a working party to include ACRFC in the review of the Pavilion Lease. Lease to be initially reviewed by Ellisons Solicitors and a Working Party. Cllrs F Belgrove, L Belgrove, E Osborne and S Clark agree to form a working party to review the lease and report on findings.
		3. **After Dark Access to the Playing Field**. Council to discuss correspondence received concerning anti-social behaviour on the Playing Field after dark. Options to be considered. Cllr F Belgrove introduces the item. Explains to all present the nature of the complaints. That the clerk has spoken with the PCSO, to councillors and that the PCSO knows that residents know who is responsible, and that with times further action can be taken. Cllr V Dalzell states that in his opinion council need to encourage people to report it to the police, that it should not be up to council to further pursue and that unless there are arrests or convictions names should not be made public. No action or vote taken.
		4. **Council to consider.** Four Year Plan - Project list (some projects already approved)

i) Additional MUGA for playing field (multiple use games area)

ii) Re-surfacing of Hard Court.

iii) Installation of toilet block.

iv) Solar power system for pavilion.

v) Obtain General Power of Competence.

vi) Pursue speed limit reduction B1027.

vii) Continue Public Realm improvements with judicious planting and landscaping.

viii) Improve and maintain to a high standard public access areas at Staunton Gate.

ix) Continue (subject to budget) kerbstone works.

x) Address APC leasing issues.

Council agree that the list above is not exhaustive, that projects may be added, but agrees that as a start point the projects listed above require completion.

Agreed by all present.

* + 1. **PCSO/Police Report**. Policing update and PCSO crime report. The clerk reports on a meeting with the PCSO, Cllr F Belgrove and Cllr L Belgrove both report on scams and e-mail attacks targeted at council, utilising devious methods and personal details of councillors and the clerk. Cllr G Scott also speaks about the attacks on Tendring District Council. Cllr V Dalzell also comments that this is a risk to all public bodies and corporations currently. Cllr V Dalzell also asks if outcomes of the crime report could be reported as part of the PCSO report.
		2. **Updates:** The clerk delivers a report on Taylor Wimpey - Staunton Gate north site handover – conveyancing is with Ellisons solicitors. The south side is awaiting a variation of conditions to pass through planning in relation to tree planting and their positions. Once this is complete the south site can also be handed over to our legal advisors for conveyancing.
		3. **Clerks Report.** The clerk reads out his typed report. Cllr G Scott asks a question in relation to the design of the flag, he also reports a missing plaque from one of the Queen Elizabeth II memorial bench - the clerk to organize a replacement. Cllr E Osborne makes a point regarding Staunton Gate; stating that money is held by Tendring District Council and that council needs to pursue the release of those funds to Alresford Parish Council. Cllr S Clark makes a point to the council in relation to the planning commentary by Gary Guiver, enshrining the process in writing, and stating that this was a brilliant result achieved by Cllr F Belgrove and Cllr E Osborne.
		4. **Meeting Ends** 21.35hrs

Prepared by the Clerk/Proper Officer: Matt Cooke 12.09.23