

# Aylesford Parish Council

## Meeting of the Council

### Minutes of the Meeting held at the Eccles Methodist Church Hall, Eccles on Tuesday 27 September 2022

**Present:** Councillors Sullivan (Chairman) and Councillors Mrs Eves, Fuller, Gledhill, Mrs Ogun, Sharp, Shelley and Walker.

**In Attendance:** Mrs Randall (Clerk)

**Also in Attendance:** Three members of the Public

**Apologies:** Councillors Balcombe, Base, Beadle, Ms Dorrington, Mrs Gadd, Hammond, Ludlow, Rillie, Smith, Ms Oyewusi, Williams and Winnett. TMBC Councillor Keers.

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#### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies of Absence from Councillors Balcombe, Base, Ms Dorrington, Mrs Gadd, Hammond, Ludlow, Rillie, Smith, Ms Oyewusi, Williams and Winnett were received, and the reasons for absence agreed.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest additional to those contained in the Register of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest additional to those contained in the Register of Members Interests, other than Councillor Fuller disclosed an interest in item 16 as he is the Chairman of the Aylesford Football Club.

#### 3. Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's Announcements

#### 4. Adjournment of the meeting to allow public participation

A resident stated he and others feel that Eccles have been wrongly classified in the 'TMBC Call for Sites' for being close to healthcare facilities and bus stops. The GP Practice is due to reallocate to Peter's Village before the Local Plan will be adopted and there is currently no longer a daily bus service, with residents having only two return journeys into Maidstone per week. Residents feel this is insufficient to support people travelling into town for employment. The turnaround time of the twice weekly

service is also insufficient as realistically there is not enough time for things like eye test or dental appointments.

## **5. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 26 July 2022**

It was proposed by Councillor Gledhill and Seconded by Councillor Fuller that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 26 July 2022 be **approved** as a correct record and signed.

## **6. Any Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no Matters Arising

## **7. To Receive and Note the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee**

- a) It was **Agreed** to note the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee on 2 August 2022. There were no matters arising.
- b) It was **Agreed** to adopt the following Policies as submitted to the Policy & Resources Committee on 6 September 2022 following a review; Dignity at Work and Harassment, Disciplinary Procedure, Equal Opportunities, Grievance Procedure and Disciplinary and Grievance Arrangements. There were no matters arising.

## **8. To Receive and Note the Minutes of the Environmental Services Committee**

- a) It was **Agreed** to note the Minutes of the Environmental Services Committee on 26 July 2022. There were no matters arising.
- b) It was **Agreed** to note the Minutes of the Environmental Services Committee on 23 August 2022. There were no matters arising.

## **9. To Receive and Note the Minutes of the Planning Committee**

- a) It was **Agreed** to note the Minutes of the Planning Committee on 26 July 2022. There were no matters arising.
- b) It was **Agreed** to note the Minutes of the Planning Committee on 2 August 2022. There were no matters arising.
- c) It was **Agreed** to note the Minutes of the Planning Committee on 23 August 2022. There were no matters arising.
- d) It was **Agreed** to note the Minutes of the Planning Committee on 6 September 2022. There were no matters arising.

## **10. To Receive the Report of the County Councillor**

There was no County Councillor present, however members were provided with the monthly report for residents that is produced by Councillor Kennedy. **Noted**

## **11. To Receive the Report of the Borough Councillor(s)**

TMBC Councillor Base had submitted a report for members.  
Attached at Appendix A **Noted**

## **12. Accounts for Payment**

The Council considered the Payment Schedule attached to the Agenda and Councillor Sharp proposed and Councillor Shelley seconded and it was **Agreed** that 23 payments totaling £2,899.33 be made.

## **13. Council Vacancies**

There are currently no Vacancies.

## **14. Memorial Tree in Memory of Ryan Hughes**

The Chairman explained that a request had been received from Ryan's friends and Director of Sixth Form to plant a tree in Old Bridge Gardens by the Old Bridge in Ryan's memory. They have suggested a suitable tree might be one of either a Black Alder, River Birch or Downy Birch. The tree would be funded by those persons making the request. Ryan's family are aware of the request and have given their consent to his friends and agree that it would be a nice way to celebrate his life. It was **Agreed** to grant permission for a memorial tree for Ryan to be planted in a location to be pre-agreed with the Clerk. The Parish Council accepts no responsibility for the planting of the tree and if it matures or not, but will maintain it as it grows. **Closed**

## **15. Cyber Security Policy**

The Clerk explained that this is something new the Parish Council is required to have in order to meet the most recent auditing requirements. It was **Agreed** to adopt the Policy as submitted. **Closed**

## **16. Decisions taken under S101 Delegated Authority**

There had been one decision taken under S101 Delegated Authority which was to open a second bank account solely for the 3G Pitch to ensure that all funds received from the grant and all payments made are kept separate from the Councils day to day account. **Noted**

## **17. To Consider Any Other Items of Correspondence**

### **Bushey Wood and the Local Plan**

A Councillor asked the Clerk if she could seek an answer from the Borough Councillor to the following: will the Bushey Wood proposal count towards the required housing numbers in the new Local Plan or is the new required number of housing in addition to the Bushey Wood proposal.

**Answer** (obtained after the meeting): Those granted planning permission but not yet built during the Local Plan timeframe are counted towards the housing number. Obviously some which did count have now been delivered; say in Peter's village, and they now fall out of the calculation as the timeframe has moved forward.

There are also those proposed but not yet granted; like Bushey Wood. These do count, but in preparing the Local Plan, TMBC are advised to adopt a contingency of around 25 percent to that category. So, if you need 10,000 houses after subtracting those with an extant permission, you would need to plan for 12,500 to take into account those Planning Applications that fail to secure permission etc.

### **Tunbury Primary School**

A Councillor reported that there had been Traffic Wardens outside the Tunbury Primary School, moving people on. The Clerk will make some enquiries with TMBC.

## **18. Duration of Meeting**

7.40pm to 8pm

REPORT TO AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL from Cllr Michael Base

Dear Fellow Councillors,

My apologies that I cannot be with you this evening.

However, should you have any questions, I will be more than happy to reply in the coming days via The Clerk.

My two main focusses at TMBC continue to be the financial position of the Council, which is not good, and the Area 3 Planning Applications.

In terms of finance, the deterioration of the position at TMBC is partly due to wider economic events, but also opportunities for savings that were not taken up by the Membership over the preceding years: With many long-time members, still believing hope to be a strategy. However, we now have a Conservative Group on-line meeting tomorrow, where I understand that a number of clear structural/service changes will be proposed in order to improve things. If agreed however, I understand that some non-mandatory services, currently provided, would be stopped.

The biggest shift has been in the cost of the Waste/Recycling Contract which is partially linked to the rate of inflation. With the pound falling from around \$1.40 over the year to below \$1.10, it is expected that inflation will now get to around 11-13 percent, and that will further impact the cost of this contract. The situation is a moving one, but at the last estimate I believe an additional £500,000 was required to offset increasing costs overall. Offsetting this we do still have a large and well-managed investment portfolio, albeit with some exposure to commercial property. Whist returns are improving, due to the rising interest rates, these will not offset price/cost increases to any real degree. The last figure I was given for the savings target factoring in inflation was £2.6m, to be saved over the short/medium term.

In terms of what we didn't do as a Council; the biggest cost still remains our adherence to the KCC Final Salary Pension Scheme. I estimated some time ago that this costs around 30 percent of salary per current employee to fund and contribute to the existing fund shortfall. It is thus no surprise then that TMBC now employs around 150 fewer staff than when I started eight years ago. A transition to a money purchase scheme would be the correct policy in my view, but this finds no backing at TMBC.

Likewise charging in the 'Northern Car-Parks' was again mooted but not taken forward; CCTV in Tonbridge was 'saved' at a cost of £100,000 pa and it would now take two years to make any changes to this contract. Fees and charges are largely legally linked to the actual cost of the department, so cannot be used to fund other areas. Sadly we also continue to adopt a position of not using our substantial capital to redevelop our own land, even as solar-farms, which is a mistake in my view. I suggested it to the Climate Change Forum, but they are generally too busy reading expensive consultant-generated reports.

A peer-review was undertaken, but it's thinking and recommendations do not seem to be taking hold within the organisation, and a number of us are pushing for a fundamental restructuring of the Management Team to provide more modern and inspirational leadership.

Finally, we still have a number of large Area 3 applications working their way through the system. Bushey Wood and now Aylesford Quarry Later Living being the most noted. As always please send your comments during official consultation to TMBC Planning via any reasonable route. Comments on Facebook are useless from an Area 3 point of view. Remember too, that unless you participate in the official consultation, you are unable to address the Committee should that application get to that stage.

I am always asked if I know when an application is coming forward for decision, and on either of the above I honestly have no information. It may well be after next May 4th, when I step down.

On the upside I am told that our area is unsuitable for fracking - small mercies.

Given the current polling I expect the Brough Council to look politically different after that election.

Michael Base