



**Minutes of a Virtual Annual Meeting of the Billingshurst Parish Council  
Wednesday 5 May 2021  
7.30pm**

**Present, via ZOOM.**

Cllrs Paul Berry (Chairman), Graeme Acraman, Barry Barnes, Edna Benger, Garry Commins (from Minute 49/21), Sandy Duck, Craig Gale, Dave Homer, James Marchant, Ken Peters, Caroline Beresford Pratt (from Minute 39/21), Doug Waller, and Sarah Wilson.

**In attendance, via ZOOM.**

G Burt, Clerk to the Council  
District Cllr Nigel Jupp  
County Cllr Amanda Jupp  
Mark Snelgrove, Billingshurst Tennis Club (BTC)  
Rob Faulkner, BCT  
Pat Homer, Member of the Public

**43/21 Election of Chairman**

On the proposal of Cllr Ken Peters seconded by Cllr Doug Waller **RESOLVED** that Cllr Paul Berry be elected Chairman of the Council for the forthcoming year. Cllr Paul Berry then signed the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office in front of the camera.

**44/21 Election of Vice Chairman**

On the proposal of Cllr Graeme Acraman seconded by Cllr Doug Waller **RESOLVED** that Cllr Ken Peters be elected Vice Chairman of the Council for the forthcoming year. Cllr Ken Peters signed the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office after the meeting.

**45/21 Chairman's Announcements.**

The Chairman

- a) Reported that the September meeting would not be at Adversane due to the limited size of the venue;
- b) Reminded residents to vote in the Neighbourhood Plan referendum on 6 May;
- c) Wished West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) candidates good luck for the following day;
- d) Advised that the Council's Annual Report was now available on the website;
- e) Reported that Cllr Mary Wild had resigned for personal reasons but hoped she may be able to re-stand in the future.

**46/21 Apologies for Absence.**

An apology for a likely late arrival was received from Cllr Garry Commins (work commitments). On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Sarah Wilson, **RESOLVED** that the reason given be accepted.

Apologies were seen after the meeting from Cllr Roy Margetts who was unable to join the meeting due to technical difficulties.

**47/21 To Receive Declarations of Interest and consider any requests for a dispensation.**

- Cllr Graeme Acraman declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute 49/21 as Chair of the Scouts & Guides.
- Cllr Sandy Duck declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute 49/21 as a Trustee of the Scouts & Guides and also as a Member of the Billingshurst Show Cttee.
- Cllr Barry Barnes declared a personal interest in Minute 49/21 as a former member of the Tennis Club.
- Cllr Dave Homer read out the following “I wish to declare a personal interest in item 7 as my wife has had involvement with Billingshurst Scouts and Guides for many years. It was suggested that I ought to have declared an interest in this proposal on an earlier occasion. I admit this just did not enter my mind and was a completely human oversight. I will add that, in order to be completely sure that I am not in breach of any protocols, I have taken advice from the Horsham District Council Monitoring Officer who has suggested that I advise the Council of this.”

*Adjournment for*

**48/21 Public Session (Members of the Public may speak for up to 3 minutes at the discretion of the Chairman).**

The public had been offered the opportunity to either join the meeting to ask a question, or have the Clerk read out a question submitted in advance.

The Clerk read out the following submitted comment from Helen Rodriguez:

*I would like to put the following objections to the above proposal:*

*There is no need for a further court as the current courts are never fully occupied. I live opposite the Rec and regularly walk my dog during the day. The most recent court – one which I believe is used by non-members – is largely unoccupied and this was the pattern both pre and post-lockdown. The member courts are rarely used at full capacity. Local dog walkers and users of the Rec are really confused about why the club feels the need for another court when all we see are empty ones. The impact on an already congested road which is already under pressure from traffic of all kinds. The tennis club members do not appear to be sufficiently local or mobile to walk to the club. They all drive and park in Lower Station Road. The disabled space opposite our house was used regularly by one of the coaches and I did complain once because my terminally ill Mother-in-Law was unable to use the space. The few spaces which have been created with the tarmac work are presumably drop off only. Certainly, the gate is never open and the members are still parking in the road and blocking the entrance. If the club ever does work at full capacity this would mean four cars per court (as they all seem to drive in separate cars) and this would be an intolerable strain on the road. The works lorries required for the court would add to the lorries from the industrial estate and the lorries from all the new builds – all trundling up and down our road. Witness the state of the level crossing to see the impact of this. I see no evidence of community initiatives from the club. Free classes for the*

*disabled and elderly would be good to witness, along with a warmer, more collaborative sense of community. This is fundamentally a business and this planning is being sought under the guise of a community service – which it patently is not. This is public green space. And not a tennis club. With the new proposal, the Rec will become an addition to Billingshurst Tennis Club, rather than one of our few green public spaces. It will be the first thing to be seen when walking into the Rec, which has already been carved up and reduced by the present courts.*

The Clerk read out the following submitted comment from Andrew Pearson:

*Does the Chairman not agree that the Council should adopt a policy of zero tolerance to any further erosion of the precious green public space still belonging to the Council, and, in particular, of the land adjacent to Natts Lane which is so highly valued and constantly used every day of the year by courting couples, dog walkers, footballers and the public in general, especially when we all know the briefness of the English summer for the purpose of playing tennis it being authoritatively declared by King Charles II that the English summer consists of three fine days and a thunderstorm?*

Patricia Homer joined the meeting via ZOOM and commented

*I speak as a long-standing resident of Billingshurst. I do wonder if Parish Councillors and residents who do not understand the objection to the Tennis Club's proposal are aware of the history of the Lower Station Road Recreation Ground? It is my understanding that all residents of Billingshurst have the right to enjoy the green space and that it should not be taken over on a permanent basis by any person or organisation and that there should be no disposal of any part of the land without public consultation.*

*There are areas of the ground which have been leased to other organisations - the south eastern corner to Dauxwood Playgroup and, to the north, an area to the headquarters of Billingshurst Scouts and Guides and a large area to the Tennis Club. Further loss of this valuable green space will have a significant impact on those who already regularly enjoy using the space and also those who have yet to discover it. As we have been told many times during the past difficult months, green spaces are one of the most beneficial things to the physical and mental wellbeing of the human race. Billingshurst has taken a huge amount of residential development in recent years which has meant the loss of large green areas and this is particularly true of the southern end of the village. I feel that retaining as much as possible of Lower Station Road Recreation Ground must be priority for the Parish Council. It is a space for all residents to enjoy, regardless of age and whatever their interests, and I urge Councillors to delay making a decision on the granting of permission for an extra tennis court until a proper public consultation has been carried out and those who are unsure of the history of the site have had a chance to carry out their own research.*

*Resume Meeting*

**49/21 To consider a revised proposal from Billingshurst Tennis Club for the location of a 5<sup>th</sup> Court.**

The Chairman reminded Members that at the last meeting, the Council had tasked the Tennis Club to discuss with the Scouts & Guides and the Show Committee, alternative locations for their proposed new court. This they had done and the revised site was shown in the meeting papers; the Show Committee had no objection to the new site, although the Scouts and Guides had sustained their opposition.

Cllr James Marchant felt that as there could be no certainty that the Tennis Club would not want a 6<sup>th</sup> or 7th court in due course, he wondered if the Club should be thinking about re-locating.

Cllr Dave Homer commented on the history of the site, in that it was acquired as open space to be used by all parishioners; there was a problem of water-logging in that area and where would the water go? He agreed with the observation that most of the week the courts were lightly used.

Cllr Sarah Wilson thought that the Club should be congratulated for their efforts in trying to work with others and move this project forward. She asked if efforts could be made to allow club users parking on Gillmans Industrial Estate.

Rob Falkner and Mark Snelgrove from BTC spoke to their application and answered some of the queries raised by the public earlier. They were looking at car parking nearby and had no plans to floodlight the proposed new court. They couldn't comment on the usage alluded to earlier, but the courts were very busy at weekends. The court surfaces were permeable, thus there should be no water run-off to make any water-logging worse.

The Clerk advised Members that if they voted to grant landlord's consent, the Council still had to advertise that it intended to dispose of public open space (by way of lease) and invite comments which it would then have to formally consider, prior to disposal. Also, the Council could not fetter the will of future Councils by including clauses prohibiting further expansion.

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry seconded by Cllr Sarah Wilson **RESOLVED** the Council grant landlord's consent for the provision of a fifth tennis court by the Tennis Club in the revised location as shown.

[Although no recorded vote was requested, Cllr Dave Homer asked that it be minuted that he voted against the proposal.]

**50/21 To receive a brief presentation on the Rural/Market Town Group and consider membership.**

David Inman from the Rural/Market Town Group spoke of the benefits to a locality of a Council joining this network. The problems and issues of rural areas were the same but, due to their disparate nature, they rarely came together to fight their cause, unlike more urban areas. Noting that the first 6 months of membership was free, £100 p.a. thereafter, on the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Ken Peters, **RESOLVED** that the Council join the Rural/Market Town Group of the Rural Service Network.

**51/21 Council Structure 2021-22.**

**a. To Review Committee Structure**

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Garry Commins, **RESOLVED** the Committee Structure accordingly, as per website.

**b. To Review Committee Terms of Reference**

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Edna Benger, **RESOLVED** the Committee Terms of Reference accordingly, as per website.

**c. To Appoint *en bloc* Committees, Working Parties and representatives on outside organisations**

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Craig Gale, **RESOLVED** the appointments as set out in Appendix A.

**d. To Appoint Chairs to Committees.**

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Sandy Duck, **RESOLVED** the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen as set out in Appendix A.

**52/21 To readopt existing Standing Orders (in Members Handbook) in the interim and ask the Working Practices Committee to consider the new model National Association of Local Councils (NALC) or Horsham District Council (HDC) Standing Orders.**

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Ken Peters, **RESOLVED** that the Standing Orders be readopted accordingly.

**53/21 To review and readopt Financial Regulations.**

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Sarah Wilson, **RESOLVED** that the Financial Regulations be readopted accordingly.

**54/21 To refer *en bloc* the following to the Finance & General Purposes Committee:**

- a. Annual review of inventory of land and other assets including buildings and office equipment.
- b. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks.
- c. Review of the Council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies.
- d. Review of arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, not-for-profit bodies and businesses.
- e. Review of the Council's expenditure incurred under s.137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Graeme Acraman, **RESOLVED** that the above be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee accordingly.

**55/21 To refer *en bloc* the following to the Working Practices Committee:**

- a. Review of the Council's complaints procedure;
- b. Review of the Council's policies, procedures and practices in respect of its obligations under freedom of information and data protection legislation
- c. Review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media;
- d. Review of the Council's employment policies and procedures

On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Dave Homer, **RESOLVED** that the above be referred to the Working Practices Committee accordingly.

*Adjournment for*

**56/21 Reports from:**

- a. County Councillor Mrs Amanda Jupp gave the following report:

*The past year has certainly been completely different to any other year I have represented residents as a County Councillor.*

*When I think back to a year ago, I believe I was slightly in shock or even limbo as to what I could or couldn't do! However, with the help of technology, I began to attend meetings online and continued to work as normal albeit from the luxury of home.*

*I hope I have been as receptive to residents' enquiries as usual during the past year and although not able to meet with the Parish Council in person, I have attended Zoom meetings and kept in regular touch with Paul Berry and Greg Burt.*

*One of the highlights of the past year for me has been the opening of the link road to the east of Billingshurst. I believe it is now taking more traffic out of the village although the Parish Council recently requested clearer and better signage for HGVs, speed indicator signs and a clearway along the entire route. I have been assured by our Highways Engineers that this will be discussed with the contractors and hopefully a response will be forthcoming shortly.*

*The County Council set up a Community Hub at the outset of the pandemic to help residents and has worked with District and Borough Councils, Parish Councils and local communities to help those who were shielding or vulnerable. The Billingshurst community was one of the first to get organised and rallied round to make sure everyone was supported and I know that this has been greatly appreciated by many.*

*Our schools in Billingshurst stayed open during the pandemic for vulnerable children and children of keyworkers thanks to dedicated staff, and attendances since the schools were fully open have been consistently amongst the highest in England.*

*The Highways Budget for 2021/22 will include an extra £6m which will go into maintenance of the roads and I hope that the Parish Council will be able to make use of Operation Watershed funding for any drainage or flooding issues.*

*The County Council have worked closely with the NHS throughout the pandemic providing care packages for discharged patients, sourcing PPE and supporting carers and care home providers. This partnership working has been of great benefit and I am keen to see it continue.*

*I have enjoyed being involved in the Neighbourhood Plan which has had considerable input from various Councillors as well as volunteers and I look forward to it being adopted following the referendum tomorrow.*

*I have also enjoyed working with the Parish Council and hope that I have given you help and support when needed.*

*I would like to thank you all for your contribution to the community and particularly Paul, Greg and everyone in the office for their hard work and effort on behalf of us all.*

Cllr Sarah Wilson asked if any progress had made on improving the *Running Track* footpath? County Cllr Amanda Jupp said she was still on the case!

- b. District Cllr Nigel Jupp reported the following (having given apologies from District Cllr Kate Rowbottom): Because Horsham District Council had healthy reserves at the start of the pandemic (£15million – minimum required £6 million) it had been able to weather the storm of reduced income and increased expenditure quite well with reserves currently down to approximately £11-12 million. Work on the new Local Plan was progressing. He had received to date lots of e-mails about the 3 sites in or adjoining the parish, most relating to Adversane; there was still time for residents to write in with their views.
- c. Council Representatives on Outside Bodies.  
The Clerk had previously circulated an update on the public art project.

#### *Resume Meeting*

#### **57/21 Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 March 2021.**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021, previously circulated were taken as read. On the proposal of Cllr Dave Homer, seconded by Cllr Ken Peters, **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and signed as a correct record accordingly.

#### **58/21 Matters Arising – that are not separate agenda items**

Pursuant to the presentation at the last meeting from the Doctors Surgery, the Chairman reported that he had noticed an item on the Doctors' website about changes to the way you contact the surgery.

#### **59/21 2020-21 Accounts**

- a. To receive the Internal Audit Report, (and refer any matter requiring detailed consideration to F&GP Cttee)  
On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Graeme Acraman, **RESOLVED** to receive the Internal Audit Report 2020-21.
- b. To approve the Annual Return Governance Statement  
On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Graeme Acraman, **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Return Governance Statement 2020-21 – Appendix B.
- c. To approve the Annual Return Accounting Statements  
On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry, seconded by Cllr Ken Peters, **RESOLVED** to approve the Accounting Statements for 2020-21 – Appendix C. [Detailed accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 would be considered by the F&GP Committee on 26 May 2021.]

**60/21 To receive Minutes as approved by the following Committees:**

- a) On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry seconded by Cllr Garry Commins **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee of 4 February and 4 March 2021 be received.
- b) On the proposal of Cllr Ken Peters seconded by Cllr Craig Gale **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the F&GP Committee of 24 Feb and 24 Mar 2021 be received.
- c) On the proposal of Cllr Barry Barnes seconded by Cllr Paul Berry **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Property Committee of 17 Feb 2021 be received.
- d) On the proposal of Cllr Paul Berry seconded by Cllr Doug Waller **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Working Practices 4 Nov 2020 be received.

**61/21 Neighbourhood Wardens - to receive Wardens' Reports for March and April.**

As these had yet to be received they would be on the agenda for the July meeting. Cllr Sarah Wilson queried the correct contact details online which the Clerk would investigate. Cllr James Marchant commented that sometimes HDC didn't put domestic bins to the edge of the pavement once emptied; HDC had been contacted about this previously and would be reminded.

**62/21 To note the current position on Council projects.**

NOTED. Cllr Paul Berry said Cllrs appreciated this and all other regular updates, but sometimes Cllrs were frustrated when things didn't seem to be happening!

**63/21 To note that physical meetings recommence Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2021. There is no scope for virtual or hybrid meetings to continue. We will endeavour to continue to stream meetings.**

Updates on this ongoing matter had been shared to Councillors, including the latest which stated that the public must be allowed to also attend physically. Councillors raised concerns about how meetings would operate and public attendance be managed so as to comply with COVID regulations. The Clerk advised that officers would consider all these matters prior to physical meetings recommencing.

**64/21 Any other matters for information only.**

Cllr Barry Barnes thanked the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Clerk and all staff for their hard work over the particularly difficult last year.

**65/21 Date of Next Meeting – 7 July 2021.**

*Meeting finished at 9.09pm*