

Minutes of the Meeting of Beech Parish Council **held in the Village Hall on Monday 24th February 2020**

PRESENT: Councillor Graham Webb (Chairman)
Councillor Daniel Gordon
Councillor Ruth Duffin
Councillor Alana Coombes
Mrs Louisa Thomson – Clerk to the Council

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – NONE AGENDA ITEMS

A member of Beech Neighbourhood Watch informed council that recently there hasn't been a local police officer and when they queried this were told if there was a problem to dial 999. Beech Neighbourhood Watch wrote to the Police and Crime Commissioner asking what was the point of Neighbourhood Watch if there was no means of communication, they have been advised that Temporary Sergeant Ross is their new point of communication.

Neighbourhood Watch asked the Parish Council to write to the Chief Constable requesting more staff are allocated to Alton and district and if they would contact other local Parish Councils to request they send the same message, they feel Alton has been abandoned by the police.

The Parish Council agreed to put this on the agenda for their March meeting.

20.11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Tony Ransley.

20.12 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES – **RESOLVED**

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20th January 2020, copies previously circulated,
Proposed as a true record by Alana Coombes, Seconded by Daniel Gordon and signed by Chairman Graham Webb.

Graham Webb stood down as chairman and from the council so he could speak as a member of the public on a planning item. Proposed Alana Coombes, Seconded Daniel Gordon and Resolved that Ruth Duffin takes the Chair.

20.13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – AGENDA ITEMS

Graham Webb addressed council regarding planning application Kings Hill Cottage, 10 Kings Hill. He explained his objections to the application which state for the last ten years the land has been used an extension of the garden and should therefore be amenity land. Mr Webb stated in his opinion this was not the case and the land in question is some 250 meters from the property, full details of his objections have been loaded on to the East Hampshire District Council website.

Councillor Graham Webb left the meeting.

20.14 PLANNING

Council considered two applications their comments to be forwarded to East Hampshire District Council, comments to include reference to the draft Beech Neighbourhood Plan where applicable.

- a) 30797/028 Kings Hill Cottage, 10 Kings Hill **NOT QUORATE SO NO COMMENTS**
Lawful development for an existing use or operation – change of use of land for residential amenity use (C3).

Councillor Graham Webb rejoined the meeting and took the Chair.

- b) 58585 Brant Storage & Removals, Basingstoke Road, Alton **COMMENTS**
Change of use of existing land to B8 usage – storage area – predominately caravan/motorhome storage and associated storage.

Beech Parish Council is in favour of using the site temporarily for storing and renovating the railway bridge as long as it is removed after a reasonable time.

Beech Parish Council OBJECT to the use as caravan/motor home storage because:

- i) Road Traffic - a of large numbers of towed vehicles using the entrance / exit would be dangerous.*
- ii) Landscape - the field is generally open with occasional use for car boot sales and should be kept so rather than the permanent installation of vehicles and structures.*
- iii) Council would request, if permission is granted, that a condition is placed that there can be no permanent residential use.*

20.15 ROAD SAFETY AND FOOTPATH WORKING PARTY

Proposed Alana Coombes, Seconded Ruth Duffin and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders so a member of the working party can report to the council as follows:

Beech Road Safety Working Group

Informal report to Parish Council Meeting - 24 February 2020

- 1) Beech Road Safety Working Group first met on 5 Feb 2020 - 5 members at that point; four more appointed since then. Chair and Secretary appointed by unanimous vote.
- 2) Minutes were produced and a copy submitted to the Parish Council (later updated)
- 3) The Clerk of the PC has reminded us to ensure that the appointment of officers needs to be seconded and proposer and seconders named. So noted. (Action CC - agenda for next working group meeting.)
- 4) We have given ourselves an 18 month time frame to accomplish our objectives, which we intend should create impetus.
- 5) Actions were divided among the group and are currently being followed up. At this point these actions may be characterised as information gathering.
- 6) We agreed a vision which will give structure to our deliberations and ensure that we remain broadly in line with the terms of reference set out in the slides shown at the Village Hall meeting on 24 January 2020. That vision is recorded in the minutes. We note that we need to formally adopt the terms of reference. (Action - CC agenda for next Working Group meeting)
- 7) We quickly became aware of a survey being carried out by EHDC, which is open to residents on walking and cycling in the District. This prompted the thought that it might be possible for the Parish Council to make representations in response to the survey. We have seen and commented on the draft produced by the PC and would support the submission of the amended draft to EHDC.
- 8) Clearly money is going to be a key issue and once we have completed our information gathering we anticipate that there will be two major issues to be addressed: a) winning the support of the village for our chosen solutions; b) finding the money to fund the solutions.
- 9) At this early stage, we are concerned to establish why policy at HCC is not in favour of 20mph zones. It may be possible to gather support from other villages where through roads and traffic speeds are an issue, as they are in Beech. The HCC stance appears to run counter to recent government policy.
- 10) We understand that the working group cannot spend money without the agreement of the Parish Council. However, the PC may be willing to pay the cost of establishing the ownership of land on Medstead Road depending on the amount involved. Figures will be required for approval at the next PC meeting. This means that the Clerk will need to receive them for circulation with the PC papers by Monday 16 March 2020 in time for approval at the March meeting of the PC.

Sir Charles Cockburn Bt.
Chair, Beech Road Safety Working Group

Proposed Alana Coombes, Seconded Daniel Fordon and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to reinstate Standing Orders.

- 20.16 EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL CYCLING & WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN
- a) EHDC posters to be put on the parish council noticeboards and a link to be put on Nextdoor Beech.
 - b) **Proposed Daniel Gordon, Seconded Alana Coombes and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the following comments are forwarded to EHDC:**

EHDC Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan – Public Engagement Survey

Thank you for forwarding to us the latest version of the Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan. We note that the Plan was developed after consultation with 18 local stakeholder groups. Although it is clear that some town and parish councils were among the 18, Beech Parish Council was not. We welcome the opportunity to outline the current position regarding walking and cycling in Beech parish, and to present our perceived needs that we would like to be incorporated into the next iteration of the Plan.

Current provision for walking and cycling in Beech Parish

There are a number of off-road public rights of way – footpaths and bridleways – in Beech parish, see the guide/map, and also the Hampshire County Council definitive list of public rights of way, at <https://www.beechpc.com/footpaths-and-bridleways/>. These footpaths and bridleways are used almost exclusively for recreational purposes. In addition, there are numerous paths used by the public for recreation (and dog walking) in Ackender Wood and Bushy Leaze Wood, both owned by Forestry England (with part of Bushy Leaze Wood privately owned) and made fully accessible to the public.

There are only three roadside footways in Beech parish:

1. On the north side of the A339, from the junction of Basingstoke Road with Whitedown Lane to the junction of Basingstoke Road with Medstead Road. This paved footway is potentially wide enough to act as a shared use cycle path (there is no signage in place to suggest that cyclists may use it), but most cyclists seem to prefer riding along the A339 itself.
2. On the south side of Medstead Road, from its junction with the A339 for about 350 metres until the first village house is encountered. This is an unpaved, compacted footpath not suitable for cycling.
3. About 15 metres of paved footpath on the north side of Medstead Road, at the bus stop layby outside the village hall.

The roads of Beech Parish

Almost all of the houses in Beech parish are in the village itself. The village is strung out down a 2.5km long valley, descending as a continuous hill from Alton Abbey to the A339. The residential roads are Medstead Road, Wellhouse Road, Kings Hill and Snode Hill. The main village thoroughfare, Medstead Road/Kings Hill, is a C-class road from Alton to Medstead, Wield and the Candovers. It also acts as a rat run between the Four Marks area and the A339/B3349 north of Alton. As a through road, the traffic is regular (highest volumes in rush hours) and, since the road is not congested and either descending or ascending a long hill, fast for the road conditions. This road is relatively narrow, winding, with steep banks alongside in many places, and devoid of roadside footways other than the minor lengths detailed above.

The speed limit through nearly all of Beech village is 30mph, but our SLR data (from various village locations) shows that a significant proportion of vehicles exceed the limit, with speeds of up to 50mph being recorded regularly. The monitored average speed is 35mph and the 85th percentile speed is 38mph.

The nature of the main road, together with regular (often speeding) traffic and the absence of footways in the village, means that walking and cycling by residents on that road is severely inhibited. The perceived hazardous nature of the road leads, for example, to residents driving 150 metres to the village hall rather than walking. In general, residents not being comfortable with walking or cycling on this road significantly hinders all forms of social interaction in the village. It has been known for people to move house from Beech because the road is too dangerous for them to allow children to cross it to play on the village green play equipment. Walkers, including schoolchildren waiting for or alighting from the school bus, have to shelter in private driveways from passing traffic. The perceived unsafe nature of the main road is the principal concern of residents about their village.

The walking and cycling needs of Beech parish

Beech village centre (at the village hall) is only about 2.5km from the centre of Alton. Beech relies on Alton for all of its services. Beech residents go to Alton to work, to school & college, to shops, to medical facilities, to the train station and so on.

It is possible to walk into Alton from the eastern end of Beech village on roadside footways. As outlined above, however, it is hazardous for residents to walk through the village itself to where the footway begins. Cycling through the village is considered equally hazardous. The result is that Beech residents overwhelmingly travel to Alton by car. It follows that it is impossible to encourage Beech residents to walk or cycle more unless they can travel on Medstead Road and Kings Hill more safely. The necessary infrastructure would likely consist of new roadside footways (and possibly cycleways), together with pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly traffic features in the village centre where there is likely to be little or no room for new footways.

We ask, therefore, that the Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan recognises that new in-village infrastructure is a vital part of encouraging walking and cycling within and from villages in East Hampshire such as Beech. This is just as important to East Hampshire residents as the higher profile, long distance routes currently set out in the Plan - arguably more so. We ask that Beech village walking and cycling infrastructure be formally included as part of the Plan.

New Beech in-village infrastructure will benefit not only Beech residents, who will in particular find it more convenient and attractive to access community facilities at the village hall and the recreation ground (which is badly under-used at present because of unsafe roads and no car parking facility) and the off-road footpath network. Such infrastructure will also benefit longer distance walkers & cyclists travelling between Alton and Medstead (and beyond), and recreational walkers coming from Alton and the surrounding villages who wish to access the numerous splendid off-road footpaths in Beech Parish.

- 20.17 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PUBLIC HEARING – 12TH FEBRUARY 2020
East Hampshire District Council / The Examiner will produce minutes of the public hearing which will be made available.
- 20.18 SPEED LIMIT REMINDER SIGN
Ask the Road Safety and Footpath Working Party to look into the possibility of purchasing either another Speed Limit Reminder sign or a Speed Indicator Sign.
- 20.19 BUSHY LEAZE WOOD FOOTPATHS APPLICATION TO HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Due to the volume of applications it may take Hampshire County Council 5-7 years to look at the application. There may be a possibility of having the application put on the priority list which would then be looked at in 3-4 years. The Parish Council would need to write to Hampshire County Council stating the reasons for this request. This will be included on the March agenda.
- 20.20 BUSHY LEAZE WOOD ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE APPLICATION TO EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
The application has been turned down by EHDC.
- 20.21 MEDSTEAD ROAD FOOTPATH MAINTENANCE
Proposed Ruth Duffin, Seconded Alana Coombes and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to accept the quotation from P J Grace totalling £470, although this is the higher quotation council felt the work they carried out last year was of a very high standard and council wish to maintain the same standard.
- 20.22 GRANT APPLICATION
- a) **Proposed Daniel Gordon, Seconded Ruth Duffin and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to apply to District Councillor Tony Costigan for a grant to cover the footpath maintenance work of £470.
 - b) **Proposed Daniel Gordon, Seconded Alana Coombes and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to apply to County Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee for a grant to cover the cost of the new speed limit reminder sign battery and charger costing £147.50.
- 20.23 GRIPS AND DITCHES
Clerk to contact Hampshire County Council to find out if they are scheduled to be cleared.
- 20.24 HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
No councillors are able to attend, clerk to ask for copies of slides of the presentations.
- 20.25 ALTON RAMBLERS WARDEN MEETING
Graham Webb will attend.

20.26 ACCOUNTS 20109/2020

Proposed Alana Coombes, Seconded Daniel Gordon and UNANIMOUSLY RESLOVED that the following payments are approved:

a)	Clerk’s Salary (February 2020)	£710.57
b)	Clerk’s expenses (February 2020)	£ 70.84
c)	Hampshire Pension Fund (Clerk’s Pension – February 2020)	£159.52
d)	Citizens Advice East Hampshire – Grant application	£150.00
e)	John Slater Planning Ltd – Neighbourhood Plan planning consultant	£966.36
f)	DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd – Monthly payroll processing	£ 30.00
g)	PHS Group – Speed Limit Reminder sign move	£ 78.00
h)	Index eBusiness Ltd - HOST100 beechpc.com domain renewal	£ 15.60

20.27 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

Proposed Ruth Duffin, Seconded Alana Coombes and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that members of the public and press are excluded from the meeting for Part II so that confidential matters can be discussed.

Part II

20.28 CLERKS SALARY

Proposed Alana Coombes, Seconded Daniel Gordon and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the clerks current hourly rate is increased by 0.04p and backdated payment is made as follows:

- a) April 2018 to March 2019 - £23.66
- b) April 2019 to February 2020 - £24.79

Part III (Held in public)

20.29 MEETING DATES - Confirmed the date of the next scheduled Council meeting as Monday, 23rd March 2020 following the Annual Parish Meeting at 7.00pm, time will be made available for public question time.

CLOSURE OF MEETING - Chairman thanked all present for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.10pm.

signed:

Chairman Beech Parish Council

date: 4th March 2020