

# BEECH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Louisa Thomson  
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## Minutes of the Meeting Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023

PARTICIPANTS : Councillor Graham Webb (Chairman) Louisa Thomson - Clerk  
Councillor Tony Ransley  
Councillor Alana Coombes Hampshire County Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee  
Councillor Kim Eakers  
Councillor Ingrid McCormack Members of the public

### 23.032 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Ruth Duffin.

### 23.033 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES - **RESOLVED**

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023, copies previously circulated,

**Proposed as a true record by Alana Coombes Seconded by Kim Eakers, RESOLVED: signed Chairman Graham Webb**

### 23.034 EAST HAMPSHIRE LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING PLAN WORKSHOP -7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023 **Report from Graham Webb**

You may recall that improving walking infrastructure through Beech was a local project mentioned in the East Hants Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) version 1.2 of August 2020, published by EHDC.

On 7 March HCC transport planners held a workshop as part of its process to revise the East Hants LCWIP (there was to be a second workshop the following day, covering the same ground). Apparently HCC is taking responsibility for developing the various district & borough LCWIPs and integrating them into a county-wide LCWIP.

The attendees were divided into three groups to cover (i) the Alton Area, (ii) the Bordon area, and (iii) the Petersfield & Horndean area. I was in the Alton area group. There were two hour-long sessions of playing with interactive maps.

In **Session 1** we had to identify local barriers to walking and cycling. Examples were the railway line in Alton, the new Butts roundabout, and busy roads unfriendly to walkers & cyclists, such as the A31, A32 and A339. I had the main road through Beech on this list.

In **Session 2** we first had to define the area of a 'cycling and walking zone' in Alton town centre. Then we had to identify desirable improved walking and cycling routes, both (i) short distance, such as across busy roads from new housing estates in Alton; (ii) long distance, such as between Alton and Farnham, Bordon & Arlesford: plus (iii) any medium distance routes in between. The route from the A339 up through Beech to Medstead village was included.

The next steps were outlined as:

- HCC will go away and produce a new East Hants cycling & walking network plan, which they will share in May, possibly holding another workshop to review.
- In June & July HCC will audit the network on the ground.
- This will be followed by a public consultation on a new draft LCWIP.

Ultimately the approved LCWIP will be used when chasing future funding opportunities. In correspondence after the workshop, the HCC transport planners have stated that the money they spend on walking and cycling schemes comes almost entirely from government grants, that have to be bid for, or developer contributions. In practice, this has meant that urban areas with high residential and employment densities have tended to benefit, rather than rural areas. Also, government funding up to 2025 is expected to be significantly lower than originally anticipated.

### 23.035 ROAD SAFETY WORKING GROUP

#### i) **BRSWG Report to Beech Parish Council, 20 March 2023**

The Road Safety Working Group has provided parish councillors with a draft application for EHDC Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money, to comprise the majority of the cost of constructing a new off-road footway on the south side of Medstead Road, from 100 Medstead Rd up to the main entrance of Bushy Leaze Wood. The footway would be constructed on the verge owned by Hampshire County Council (HCC), and would cross the existing drainage grips and ditches. The CIL application must be submitted by this Friday, 24 March.

To recap recent events: in September 2022 the parish council commissioned a feasibility study from HCC on the construction of off-road footways on Medstead Road, alongside the Forestry England land, and at the top of Kings Hill.

At the beginning of March we received from HCC, a few weeks late, the draft final feasibility study report, including initial designs. At the parish council meeting on 6 March it was decided that:

- The section on upper Kings Hill should not be pursued because HCC advises that the technical challenges are, in their view, insurmountable, and because it is the council's lowest priority.

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- The 140m long section to the west of the Bushy Leaze Wood entrance, opposite nos. 174-188 Medstead Road, should not be pursued at this time. The additional expense here is not warranted because off-road pedestrians should be able to walk in the open-access woodland close to the road, establishing narrow tracks similar to the many dog-walking tracks that criss-cross the wood.

This leaves the section running from the bridleway at 100 Medstead Road (the edge of the village centre) up to the Bushy Leaze Wood entrance. HCC estimates the cost of detailed designing and constructing a 500m long footway here, including installing modified drainage measures where the path crosses the eight or so drainage ditches en route, at £264,000. However, HCC has increased the possible maximum cost to £380,000, to accommodate any future design changes that may arise as the project progresses. We suspected that HCC had added too much contingency here, and we tried to persuade them to reduce that £380,000 figure. But HCC has responded, saying that they still regard the design to be at a preliminary stage, and so are sticking to their figures.

HCC has also advised that the modified drainage arrangements are not intended to improve the drainage of surface water from Medstead Road, but to maintain the status quo after the footway has been constructed. If we wanted to include in the scope the upgrading of the drainage system to the latest standards, this would be very onerous and very expensive.

So, in our application for Strategic CIL money, we propose asking EHDC to contribute the project cost (estimated at between £265,000 and £380,000), minus £60,000 that the parish council will source from elsewhere. The rules prevent Strategic CIL funds from covering 100% of the project cost, and precedents suggest that (for large projects) EHDC may well fund 80% but will not go as far as 85%. We also propose that EHDC takes into account the £12,500 that the parish council has spent on the feasibility report so that, at the very maximum cost estimate, EHDC CIL would be contributing £320,000 (81.5%) and others £72,500 (18.5%).

Two areas of possible concern have been raised around this funding application:

## **1. Is the project worth the money?**

This is precisely the question that EHDC will be asking themselves when they are evaluating the application, as they are being asked to fund about 80% of the project. EHDC's CIL team are experienced in looking at applications in respect of all sorts of types of infrastructure, from low cost to high cost. We recommend that we leave it to EHDC to make the decision as to whether the project should be funded, as they have much more experience in these matters than us. For example, they will be aware that construction costs have risen significantly in the past couple of years. What we **do** know is that, for our successful 2022 application, EHDC has accepted the rationale and business case for funding improved pedestrian facilities through Beech. That gives us grounds for optimism.

If EHDC says 'YES' to funding, then fine, we should back their judgement. If EHDC says 'NO', then it is likely the off-road footway will be shelved, as we currently see no way it can be financed without Strategic CIL funding. We think it would be a mistake to not make this application for funding now, particularly in light of the 90% support for this footway seen in the 2021 public consultation.

## **2. Where do we find the other £60,000?**

The parish council currently has £7,000 of its own uncommitted CIL funds, plus probable access to £8,000 of unallocated S106 developer contributions held for us by EHDC, plus £23,000 of general reserves. The parish council might receive a further £25,000 of its own CIL funds if certain housing developments occur (that have been granted planning permission but not yet started) – but that money is not guaranteed and so can't be relied upon.

Third party funding organisations give grants almost exclusively to registered charities, which excludes parish councils. A phone call to the National Lottery Community Fund suggested that they would probably not be able to make a grant to us because building footways on highways land is a 'statutory activity' of HCC. We are due to meet the Lottery at an event on 30 March to discuss this further.

The other source of money is HCC itself. Late last week HCC transport planners confirmed that they would provide £30,000 of funding for this project, in the event that EHDC approves our application for Strategic CIL funds. Securing this money means that the £60,000 target can be achieved through a combination of HCC funds and money that the parish council already has, even if no money can be obtained from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Finally, the Working Group believes that delay to a future year is not a good strategy. Construction cost inflation has been significant over the past three years (HCC say that costs have virtually doubled) and, if cost inflation continues, the project cost could well quickly increase so as to be out of reach. This could really be our only chance to get pedestrians off this 500m section of straight residential road in the middle of the village, which is the last piece of the jigsaw when it comes to improving pedestrian facilities in Beech village.

**Proposed Ingrid McCormack, Seconded Kim Eakers, UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders so member of the public can comment and ask questions.**

County Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee said he would support the application if he were a Parish Councillor and thinks the argument for submitting the CIL application now is overwhelming.

Members of the public were initially surprised at the cost of the project but having heard the rational of the available funding they would support the project.

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**Beech Road Safety Working Group Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Graham Webb for all his hard work on this project.**

**Proposed Ingrid McCormack, Seconded Alana Coombes, UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to reinstate Standing Orders.**

Following discussion in which Councillor Ransley stated his support for money being spent elsewhere i.e. helping young families with childcare costs. He also thinks there is an adequate path in the wood that pedestrians could use. Councillor McCormack doesn't feel safe using the path in the woods and would like a path accessible to pushchairs etc. Councillor Eakers agreed a huge amount of money and is concerned people won't use it, he would like a plan on how the path usage is to be measured. Councillor Webb advised there was 90% support for a proposed pathway in the consultation. The design and construction must be to Hampshire Highways standards. The costs are high and have doubled in the last three years, raw material costs have gone up significantly.

- ii) **Proposed Ingrid McCormack, Seconded Kim Eakers, RESOLVED (Tony Ransley voted against)** to apply to EHDC for Strategic CIL money to part finance the project. Project estimated cost to be £265,000 - £380,000.

## 23.036 SPEED CAMERAS & SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE

- i) Tony Ransley updated Council.  
The Police are being pushed to take action using the speeding data. East Hampshire Police are in support. District Council has lost its ability to look up addresses, this is now done by Hampshire County Council. Twenty AutoSpeedWatch cameras have been purchased by East Hampshire District Council for use by Parishes, the data collected will be collated. During the last year the cameras have recorded 130 offences by one vehicle.
- ii) AutoSpeedWatch camera battery purchase to be included on the April agenda, the costs have changed from those published.

**Councillor Alana Coombes proposed a vote of thanks to Tony Ransley for all his hard work and time spent.**

## 23.037 CLIMATE ACTION

Report from Kim Eakers, Appendix A.

23.038 INTERNET BANKING – to be included on the next meeting agenda.

## 23.039 ACCOUNTS 2022/2023

**Proposed Tony Ransley, Seconded Alana Coombes, UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the following payments:**

a)	Clerk's Salary (March 2023)	£786.99
b)	Clerk's Expenses (March 2023)	£111.18
c)	Hampshire Pension Fund (Clerk's pension March 2023)	£223.46
d)	HM Revenue & Customs (January, February & March)	£69.09
e)	Citizens Advice East Hampshire – Grant approved February meeting	£300.00
f)	Mr G Webb – Defibrillator pads and battery	£344.26
g)	Hampshire Pension Fund (Replacement for lost cheque)	£208.29
d)	DCK Payroll Solutions Ltd – Monthly Payroll processing	£54.36

## 23.040 MEETING DATES

Confirmed the date of the next scheduled Council meeting as Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7pm, public question time 6.45pm.

CLOSURE OF MEETING – Chairman thanked all present for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9pm.

signed: .....

Chairman Beech Parish Council

date: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023