

BEECH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Louisa Thomson
Telephone: 01420 562130 E-Mail: clerk@beechpc.com

Minutes of the Meeting Monday 19th June 2023

PARTICIPANTS : Councillor Graham Webb (Chairman and Acting Clerk)
Councillor Kim Eakers
Councillor Nikki Pickard
Councillor Ingrid McCormack
Councillor Ruth Duffin

23.072 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Alana Coombes and Tony Ransley, from Louisa Thomson – Clerk to the Council, and from district councillor Tony Costigan.

23.073 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES – **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 15th May 2023, copies previously circulated, **Proposed as a true record by Kim Eakers, Seconded by Ingrid McCormack, UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED and signed by Chairman Graham Webb**

23.074 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Ruth Duffin declared an interest in Planning Item 8 b) 27887/014 Keepers Lodge, Basingstoke Road, Alton.

23.075 COUNCIL REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

Council reviewed two regulations and procedures.

- a) **Financial Regulations**, including proposed amendments for internet banking. Graham Webb reported that he and the Clerk had successfully trialled the set-up (by the Clerk) and authorisation (by a Councillor) of online payments using HSBC's internet banking system. If approved, this procedure would be rolled out so that other Councillors can also perform the online authorisation role. **Proposed by Ingrid McCormack, Seconded by Ruth Duffin and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to approve the internet banking procedure and the amendments to the Financial Regulations.
- b) **Risk Assessment**, updated to include the current value of the Parish Council's physical assets. **Proposed by Kim Eakers, Seconded by Ingrid McCormack and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to approve the updated Risk Assessment.

23.076 PLANNING

Council considered three planning applications, their comments to be forwarded to East Hampshire District Council.

- a) 25208/002 48 Kings Hill, Beech OBJECT
Demolition of existing house and 3 outbuildings. Replacement dwelling with one outbuilding.
Proposed by Kim Eakers, Seconded by Ingrid McCormack and RESOLVED (Ruth Duffin abstained):

Beech Parish Council OBJECTS to this planning application as it stands. It is likely that adjustments to the application would be able to satisfy the objections.

We note that the applicants' Planning Statement did not identify the policies of the Beech Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP) as needing to be complied with.

Our first concern is that the proposed northeast elevation of the house and attached car port presents a large featureless expanse of black timber cladding to the neighbouring property (46 Kings Hill), mostly forward of the front wall of that property. This does not comply with BNDP Policy BPC07 (Building Design and Character):

- Paragraph (a), in that we believe that the design of this elevation is unattractive and so not of good quality, and should be improved (perhaps by introducing more variation in the materials and plant screening along the boundary with No.46); and
- Paragraph (b), in that this elevation as presented would adversely affect the outlook of neighbours at No.46.

The black featureless northeast elevation is also highly visible (in an elevated position) from Kings Hill immediately to the east. Therefore it does not comply with Policy BPC06 (Development Setting and Scale) paragraph (c) in that the short view on a hillside, from the road, is not visually acceptable or in character with the area. It may be possible to rectify this by moving the house & car port a short distance back into the plot, so that the front of the house follows the building line of No.46 rather than No.50.

Second, the application states that the conifers along the road-facing boundary will be replaced, but it is not stated with what. Policy BPC01 (Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity) Note 1 seeks replacement and enhancement by the planting of indigenous species hedge. Likewise, Policy BPC01 seeks the replacement of any removed hedges etc along the boundaries with Nos. 46 and 50 with new. In general, the application is imprecise about existing and proposed boundary treatments (other than the compliant replacement of the existing rear hedge). The referenced arboricultural report is not present on the EHDC planning portal.

BEECH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Louisa Thomson
Telephone: 01420 562130 E-Mail: clerk@beechpc.com

Minutes meeting 19th June 2003 page 2 of 4

Third, it is not good practice to discharge surface water into the main sewer as proposed, nor will it be acceptable for surface water to discharge onto Kings Hill (which is prone to high surface water flows in heavy rain). All surface water should be disposed of within the plot.

We also note that the drive and parking area at the front of the house is proposed to be loose gravel, as opposed to the concrete surface currently in place. Measures should be taken to prevent loose gravel being swept down onto Kings Hill in the event of heavy rain, another unwelcome common occurrence through Beech. If this cannot be achieved, an alternative surfacing material should be sought.

Finally, the existing house appears to be of a design in which asbestos was a commonly used material. We question whether any asbestos is present. If so, there should be appropriate conditions applied around using suitably licensed contractors for the demolition and removal of debris.

Ruth Duffin took no part in the discussion or decision for the next item.

- b) 27887/014 Keepers Lodge, Basingstoke Road, Alton
Retention of bank and implementation of proposed landscaping.

Proposed by Nikki Pickard, Seconded by Ingrid McCormack and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

Beech Parish Council defers to the EHDC Planning Enforcement Team as to whether the application acceptably complies with their enforcement notice.

Ruth Duffin rejoined the meeting.

- c) 59914/001 Sarum, 1 Snode Hill, Beech NO OBJECTION
Construction of a 3-bay garage with office space/ancillary accommodation.

Proposed by Kim Eakers, Seconded by Ingrid McCormack and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

Beech Parish Council has no objection to this application.

23.077 ROAD SAFETY WORKING GROUP Report from the Road Safety Working Group.

On-road Footway Project

After the May council meeting we wrote to Ian Janes at HCC accepting his position on our previous (February) comments on the proposed on-road footway scheme. But we asked that we might add a number of our own "On-Road Footway – Pedestrian Priority" signs along the footway to reinforce the concept to drivers. Ian Janes has now responded, acceding to our request. He is now revising the scheme drawings and hopes to revert to us at the end of June. A further safety audit and updated costings would then follow.

Off-Road Footway Project

The last month has all been about how to fund an off-road footway from the village centre to the Bushy Leaze entrance. I have been having discussions with the EHDC CIL Team about what project costs they are prepared to fund using their Strategic CIL. They have also recently issued new guidance on what they will accept that Neighbourhood Portion CIL can be used to pay for.

Local authorities can set their own policy regarding the spending of Strategic CIL, so long as the spending falls within that permitted under Government regulations. EHDC has decided to allow Strategic CIL to be spent only on direct construction costs. It will not allow Strategic CIL to be spent on 'project development' costs (such as surveys and detailed design) or professional fees (such as procurement and management/supervision of the construction contract). This is a more restrictive approach than is taken by some other local authorities, which is frustrating.

EHDC's stance on Strategic CIL gives us a funding problem:

- HCC quoted an estimated total project cost of £380,000.
- Of this, the elements falling into categories that EHDC would fund under Strategic CIL comprise about £270,000.
- That leaves £110,000 to be found from other sources.
- Currently available other funding is from HCC (£30,000), Beech Parish Council Neighbourhood CIL & reserves (£30,000) and *possibly* EHDC Supporting Communities Fund (£25,000) – a *best case* shortfall of £25,000.

However the funding shortfall could be significantly larger because:

- There is no guarantee that we will receive the £25,000 from the Supporting Communities Fund; and
- EHDC's latest guidance states that it may not accept project development or other professional fee costs as an acceptable spend of our uncommitted Neighbourhood CIL (about £20,000). We would need to successfully challenge their guidance, to prove that those costs are all 100% guaranteed to result in the construction being completed. A successful challenge after spending the funds is not, of course, guaranteed.

BEECH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Louisa Thomson
Telephone: 01420 562130 E-Mail: clerk@beechpc.com

Minutes meeting 19th June 2023 page 3 of 4

So the worst case scenario is that we have only £40,000 available funds to meet the £110,000 of costs not covered by EHDC's Strategic CIL.

So, as things stand, there is major uncertainty that the full project cost can be covered, even if we can persuade EHDC that we can validly deploy our Neighbourhood CIL funds. HCC's estimate for projects development and professional fees is £77,000 even without adding any optimism bias, to which we can deploy a maximum of £60,000 (without SCF funds) or £85,000 (with SCF funds). Proceeding at this time with such uncertainty seems an unacceptable risk for the PC to take; more funding would need to be found.

On a more positive note, HCC has now confirmed that VAT will not be charged to Beech PC on top of the project cost. The parish council could never have run the unacceptable risk of paying up to £75,000 of VAT, and then not being able to recover it from HMRC.

Proposed course of action: EHDC CIL Team will make its recommendations about funding our Off-Road Footways project in early July. We should wait for this outcome before taking any further action, as it will inform us of EHDC's candid opinion of the project, which will determine whether:

1. We pursue finding additional funding for the current project to cover any shortfalls, including lobbying for the £25,000 from the Supporting Communities Fund (which is due to make its funding decisions in mid August); or
2. We look to fund ourselves the detailed design of the footway, after which HCC could produce a much more certain construction cost, permitting a more precise revised application for Strategic CIL; or
3. We halt the project, for now.

Note that our decision making may hinge on negotiating with EHDC around them permitting the spending of our Neighbourhood CIL on project development costs, such as on footway detailed design, which we would be unable to fund from other parish council resources.

23.078 AUTOSPEEDWATCH CAMERAS

Written update from Tony Ransley:

- Awaiting EHDC legal team decisions on the Autospeedwatch cameras that are to be allocated to other villages, that will inform how the camera network within East Hampshire will work, as the camera data will be co-ordinated across the police district. Once these decisions are made we will meet with the police to look at driver education and enforcement.
- I am waiting for battery housings to become available before purchasing the camera batteries and associated mounting accessories.

23.079 FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

Update from Graham Webb:

- We will need to approve, at the July Parish Council meeting, the purchase of timber for the handrail to be installed at Bridleway 713.
- Will liaise with Alton Ramblers to fix a date (expected in July) for them to clear vegetation from Bridleways 713 and 704.
- Will liaise with the Village Hall committee regarding disposal of debris from Bridleway 713.

23.080 SOUTH EAST WATER

Proposed by Ingrid McCormack, Seconded by Nikki Pickard and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: that the Chairman should write to South East Water asking them to investigate solutions to the very high water main pressure at the lower end of Beech that is causing regular pipe and equipment failures.

23.081 S106 FUNDS CLAIM

Proposed by Kim Eakers, Seconded by Ingrid McCormack and RESOLVED (Ruth Duffin abstained): that the Clerk should make a claim of £3,730.37 (representing costs incurred in connection with the Autospeedwatch project and the purchase of a Speed Indicator device) from EHDC's S106 transport-related funds assigned to Beech Parish Council.

23.082 ACCOUNTS 2023/2024

Proposed Kim Eakers, Seconded Ruth Duffin and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the following payments are approved:

a)	Clerk's Salary (June 2023)	£ 799.99
b)	Clerk's Expenses (June 2023)	£ 10.80
c)	Hampshire Pension Fund (Clerk's Pension – June 2023)	£ 223.46
d)	HM Revenue & Customs – PAYE April, May & June	£ 30.09
e)	DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd – Monthly payroll processing	£ 36.36
f)	Beech Village Hall – Parish Council meetings	£ 197.02
g)	Beech Village Hall – Replacement for lost cheque previously authorized	£ 23.29

BEECH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Louisa Thomson
Telephone: 01420 562130 E-Mail: clerk@beechpc.com

Minutes meeting 19th June 2023 page 4 of 4

23.083 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS – No members of the public or press were present.

23.084 CLERK'S JOB DESCRIPTION

Proposed by Ingrid McCormack, Seconded by Kim Eakers and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the job description for the Clerk presented by Graham Webb.

23.085 CLERK'S APPRAISAL

Report from Graham Webb following the Clerk's appraisal by him and Ingrid McCormack. **Proposed by Kim Eakers, Seconded by Ruth Duffin and UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the appraisal.**

23.086 MEETING DATES

Confirmed the date of the next scheduled Parish Council meeting as Monday, 17th July 2023 at 7pm with public question time at 6.45pm.

CLOSURE OF MEETING – Chairman thanked all present for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

signed:

Chairman Beech Parish Council

date: 17th July 2023