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The Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council (CWRPC) that took place at the Hayton Baker Hall, Ripe on Monday 07th April 2025 commencing 7 pm.

Present: Cllr J. Ruddock-West (Chair), Cllr S. Flint (Vice Chair), Cllr Hamblin, Cllr C. Hallworth, Cllr A. Harvey and Cllr Lonsdale-Cleeve.

In attendance: Cllr Nick Bennett (ESCC), Cllr Alison Wilson (WDC), Cllr Johnny Denis (LDC) and Sam Adeniji (Parish Clerk)

Members of the public: 9

253. Attendance and Apologies for Absence - Cllr W. Farrer

254. Declarations of Interest – Cllrs Hamblin, Lonsdale-Cleeve and Flint declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 266 (Community Infrastructure Levy) as a Directors of the Ripe and Chalvington Community Association (RACCA). It was confirmed this did not preclude them from voting on the matter.

255. Approval of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 3rd March 2025

The minutes from the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 3rd March 2025 were approved.

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on the 3rd March be approved and the Chair could sign them.

256. Public Session – None

257. Report of the Member of Parliament –

A written report from James Macleary MP had been circulated prior to the meeting. Key points mentioned included the Exceat Bridge situation, local government reorganisation, Southern Water accountability regarding sewage, support for Seaford's Blue Flag status, safer rural roads, and engagement with the Rage of Sussex campaign for lower speed limits.

RESOLVED – To note the report of the Member of Parliament.

258. Report of the County Councillor

Cllr Nick Bennett (ESCC) presented his report, referencing notes previously circulated regarding devolution and the County Council's achievements. He added comments on:

- **Devolution:** Confirmed the critical date for ministerial sanction is awaited, after which consultations (including Parish Councils) will commence. The process involves setting up a project team and resources.
- **Road Conditions:** Acknowledged previous concerns about road conditions, closures, and ditching. He stated he hadn't received specific recent complaints but welcomed details of any outstanding issues.
- **Exceat Bridge:** Confirmed discussions with bus companies are ongoing regarding potential funding contributions, but progress is slow due to compulsory purchase order issues and land access, which is frustrating. He hoped for positive news by the next meeting.

RESOLVED: To note the report from the ESCC Councillor.

259. Report of the District Councillor

Cllr Alison Wilson (WDC) provided an update, primarily focusing on the Local Plan:

- The Local Plan Subcommittee met on 5th March. Much has changed since the first draft (new government planning policies - NPPF, transport assessment methods, higher housing targets, new site submissions).
- A redraft is required, followed by a second consultation (Reg 18, shorter/less complex) between September and December 2025.
- The timeline anticipates a Reg 19 consultation, final application submission between April-June 2026, submission for inspection in Summer 2026, and adoption between April-June 2027.
- Despite upcoming local government reorganisation, WDC is proceeding with the Local Plan as the new authority will initially lack its own planning vision.
- Housing numbers remain challenging; WDC is likely unable to meet the government target but hopes justification based on evidence and constraints will be accepted by the inspector.

RESOLVED: To note the report from the WDC Councillor

260. Report of the District Councillor

Cllr Johnny Denis (Lewes District Council Councillor and a local resident), provided an update based on his roles including LGA involvement and addressed the Council as follows:

- Clarified the distinction between the Devolution agenda (driven by top-tier authorities like ESCC) and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) involving all principal authorities (Districts, Boroughs, County).
- LGR requires collective response; a joint committee chaired by Cllr Zoe Nicholson (Lewes DC) is coordinating this, emphasising it's a joint effort, not a County takeover.
- Government guidance points towards a single new unitary authority for Pan-Sussex, although the possibility of multiple unitaries is kept open.
- Key LGR dates: 2026 Mayoral election (Pan-Sussex strategic authority); 2027 Shadow Authority elections for the new unitary; 2028 Vesting Day when the new unitary takes over.
- Discussed the interim period (2026-2028) where the Mayor and existing councils would operate, with structural details and decision-making powers still unclear, particularly regarding strategic planning remit.
- Noted the likely suspension of County Council elections after 2025.
- Impact on Parishes: No specific rules yet, but an expectation of collaboration. LGR might lead Districts/Boroughs to devolve assets or services to Parishes/Towns. Parishes need to consider building competence and capacity. Cllr Denis suggested that the Parish Council could liaise with Keith Stevens, Chair of Wartling Parish Council, who has been elected the Chair of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), regarding potential opportunities.
- The Parish Clerk mentioned mapping District Council services/assets affecting the parish, especially discretionary ones (parks, play areas) that a unitary might not provide, is planned. He emphasised the need for proactive planning versus rather than waiting.
- Cllr Bennett confirmed discussions with Parish Councils would start towards the end of April 2025.

RESOLVED: To note the verbal report from Cllr Johnny Denis.

261. Planning.

a) Applications.

- **WD/2025/0605/FA - Lovers Farmhouse, Church Farm Lane, Chalvington, BN27 3TD –**

Variation Of Condition 9 Of WD/2021/2207/F To Allow The Annexe Building To Be Used For Flexible Incidental/Ancillary Purposes And For Short Term Tourist Accommodation (Max 28 Days).

Councillors recalled objecting to a previous similar application for short-term letting. The current application specifies "tourist accommodation" for max 28 days. It was felt the change in wording did not alter the fundamental objections regarding sustainability, reliance on cars, and potential impact on neighbours in a sensitive location, as detailed in the objection to the previous application (Sept 2024). The original approval was for ancillary/workspace use.

RESOLVED: To OBJECT to the application, maintaining the position stated in the previous objection. The change to Condition 9 is not supported.

- **WD/2025/0515/F & WD/2025/0514/LB - Freshfield, Chalvington Road, Chalvington, BN27 3TA -** Replacement Of Modern Kitchen Extension With Larger Single-Storey Addition; Demolition Of Outbuilding/Garage/Accommodation And Replacement With Garage/Shed; Replacement Of Three Dormer Windows. (Includes Listed Building Consent).

Councillors noted this revised application addressed previous concerns. The proposed kitchen extension is smaller and more sympathetic, reusing timbers. Dormer window changes are improved (no UPVC). The replacement garage/shed is smaller and better proportioned. The impact on the Grade 2 listed building and setting (including hedge/tree) is now considered minimal. Heritage conditions regarding materials (e.g., glazing) would be expected.

RESOLVED: To SUPPORT the application.

- **WD/2024/2392/MEA - Land At Colbrans Farm Estate, Laughton, BN8 6AJ -** Installation Of Proposed Solar Farm, Energy Storage Facility And Associated Infrastructure. Environmental Statement Updated With Additional Information Relating To Ecology And Historic Environment.

The Council recalled its previous stance: the site is in Laughton Parish, so no comment on the main application, save in respect of the proposed traffic management arrangements which potentially impact on roads in the Parish of Chalvington with Ripe. The Council supports the proposed use of Cow Lane for construction traffic, and Dart Lanp for servicing. Laughton PC had objected. No reason to change the previous position was identified.

RESOLVED: To maintain the previous position: NO COMMENT on the overall application, save as to SUPPORT the proposed traffic management arrangements.

- **WD/2024/2893/F - Land At Westlyn And Dairylands, Poundfield Road, Chalvington, BN27 3TQ -** Demolition Of Dwelling And Erection Of Replacement Dwelling At Westlyn. Demolition Of Existing Business Unit On Land Known As Dairylands Erection Of New Detached Dwelling. Both Sites To Include Landscaping Works.

Members noted that there are two distinct parts:

Westlyn: Replacing an unattractive house. The Applicant previously had approval to convert Westlyn into two semi-detached properties. This proposal is for one larger, well-designed, sustainable replacement dwelling. This element was viewed positively.

Dairylands: Proposing a new dwelling on land across the road, currently open green space with man-made ponds and wildlife. Numerous previous applications for residential use on this land have been refused, primarily citing undesirable development in a rural location/greenfield site. While ancillary buildings exist, the Council considered it predominantly a greenfield site. The proposed house design is similar to Westlyn, creating uniformity which contrasts with the existing diverse character of Poundfield

Road. Concerns were raised about partially infilling a largely open countryside gap and the visual impact of a large new house. Partial screening with hedging is proposed.

Decision: A comment rather than outright support/objection. Support for the replacement dwelling at Westlyn was strong. Full support for the new dwelling at Dairylands was withheld due to concerns about its location in an open countryside gap and visual impact.

RESOLVED: To SUBMIT A COMMENT supporting the replacement dwelling application at Westlyn, but expressing concerns and withholding full support for the proposed new dwelling at Dairylands due to its location impacting an open countryside gap and its visual impact/uniformity contrasting with the diverse character of Poundfield Road.

b) Planning applications refused, approved, referred, withdrawn or appeals.

- **APPROVED** - WD/2024/2916/FR - Flock House, Church Lane, Ripe - Retrospective Application To Retain 28mm In 4 New Windows And Retain Existing Door And Frame With Fanlight Above.

RESOLVED - Noted

262. Other planning matters

None

263. Update From Previous Meeting

The Clerk provided updates on matters arising from the March meeting:

- **MP Summer Visit:** Correspondence with the MP's office is ongoing. A tentative date of Saturday 9th August has been suggested. The Council discussed timing, proposing 10:00 am or 10:30 am. The location agreed is the Community Field, potentially with an option for the MP to also visit the village shop. **Action:** Clerk to liaise with the MP's office to confirm the 9th of August as the date and agree a time (aiming for 10:00/10:30 am).
- **Speed Watch:** An update note was circulated. PC Steve O'Connell (Police Speed Watch contact) is supportive of reactivating the scheme. The existing speed gun has been located (with Steve). A new coordinator is required to register the scheme before training can occur. Cllr Hallworth offered to be involved but not necessarily as the main coordinator. It was agreed that registering as coordinator mainly involves being the point of contact. **RESOLVED:** That the Council will seek a volunteer coordinator. **Action:** Cllr Hallworth agreed to take the initial step of registering/liasing via the Clerk/link provided, to reactivate the scheme, with the view to finding wider community involvement and potentially a dedicated coordinator later.
- **Letter to a resident (re footpath gate):** The Clerk confirmed the letter regarding the broken gate on the footpath south from Channers Lane was sent to Lady Conway. A positive reply was received, and she has agreed to get the gate fixed. The Clerk will be kept updated.

RESOLVED: To note the report from the WDC Councillor

264. Highways, Footpaths, and Rights of Way – none

Community Match Appraisal Application (Speed Limit Reduction): An email was received from ESCC Highways regarding the application for a 20mph limit in Ripe. Officers noted the narrowness and parked cars likely already slow traffic. They stated speeds below 24mph could allow a 20mph limit, but it would require additional infrastructure (signing/lining) which could 'urbanise' the village and be difficult to install. The next step proposed by ESCC is four 7-day speed/volume surveys at a cost of £1288 + VAT. The Council has budgeted for this.

RESOLVED: To approve the expenditure of £1288 + VAT for the four speed surveys.

Balfour Beatty Liaison Meeting (12th May): Preparations were discussed. Two councillors had submitted road inspection reports. Outstanding reports were requested. A draft agenda was proposed:

- Criteria for pothole repair.

- Criteria for repair of broken/damaged tarmac road edges, including associated rutting.
- Road maintenance/improvement schedule for the parish (current financial year and next three years).
- Status of works to resurface Church Farm Lane.
- Request for delegated power (or mechanism) for the Parish Council to make good ruts in verges/passing places with suitable material (specific concerns: dangerous ruts along the side of Mill Lane, Ripe, south of the bridge going towards Langtye Lane, and in the Langtye Lane passing places. Other roads in the Parish also have dangerous ruts).
- The standard/guarantee of repair to potholes (citing recent rapid degradation of a pothole repairs on Church Lane near Little Meadow Stud, and on Church Lane outside 1 Church Lane Cottages, Ripe .

RESOLVED: To adopt the suggested agenda points for the Balfour Beatty meeting. **Action:** Remaining Councillors to submit their road reports to the Chair/Clerk ASAP. .

265. Update on The Community Field –

An update was provided by David Baker (RACA):

- Progress continues; a recent communication event was held at the village shop window, attended by usual supporters but perhaps fewer new faces.
- Information continues to be displayed in the shop window.
- Fundraising continues towards the target.
- Phase 1 (Southern Field): Progressing the items permitted by the planning permission as funds allow. The roof to the shelter is complete (subject of CIL request).
- Phase 2 (roadside paddock): Has not progressed to planning application stage due to onerous ecology requirements identified last year. Tactically exploring the best way forward.

RESOLVED: To note the update.

266. Community Infrastructure Levy

A request was received from the Ripe and Chalvington Community Association (RACCA) for funding support of £1316.63 towards the construction cost of the community field shelter roof. This figure represented the remaining balance of CIL funds held by the Parish Council. Members noted that this was for much needed community infrastructure in the parish. The expenditure was deemed appropriate CIL spending on community infrastructure.

RESOLVED: To approve the payment of the remaining CIL fund balance of £1,316.36 to RACCA towards the cost of the community field shelter roof.

267. VE Day 80

An update was provided on plans for 8th May 2025:

- A flag has been ordered (similar to D-Day one).
- Church bells will ring at 6:30 pm (confirmed by Charles).
- Event centred around the village shop during the evening pop-up.
- Theme: VE Day focus, with bangers and mash available.
- A villager will read the Proclamation; another volunteer needed for the Reading.
- Lanterns will feature.

RESOLVED: To note the update. **Action:** A poster will be designed and circulated via shop email/notice boards.

268. Annual Parish Meeting

Plans for the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) on Monday 12th May (held alongside the Ordinary Council meeting) were discussed. The APM is a meeting for residents.

It was agreed to invite reports from village organisations. RACAA (Paul Griffiths/David Turnerr) and the Litter Watch group coordinator (Professor Brian Hill) would be invited.

Other potential agenda items for residents: Update on Speed Watch reactivation, plans for Defibrillator/CPR training session (likely June). Update on the 20mph speed limit campaign progress.

RESOLVED: To invite RACCA and Litter Watch to present reports at the APM. Other updates (Speed Watch, Defib/CPR training, 20mph) to be included as appropriate.

The Chairman moved that Agenda Item 269 on the Recruitment of the Parish Clerk/RFO be discussed as the last item on the agenda.

269. Financial Regulations

The first draft of Financial Regulations, based on the NALC 2025 Model, had been circulated. These require review and adoption at the May meeting. **Action:** The Chairman will review and make amendments as required for adoption at the May meeting.

RESOLVED: To note the circulated draft.

270. Financial matters –

- a. Bank reconciliation statement and Budget Monitoring Report for Month 12 - The Council took note of the Bank reconciliation statement and Budget Monitoring Report for Month 12.

RESOLVED – To note and accept the Bank reconciliation statement and Budget Monitoring Report for Month 12.

- b. Authorisation of payment of account
The Clerk presented the schedule of payments, circulated previously. After review and consideration, it was **RESOLVED** that the payments be approved. The payment schedule is attached in Appendix A.

- c. **Final Internal Audit 2024/25**

The Council took note of the arrangements for the final audit for the 2024/25 financial year by the Internal Auditor (Mulberry & Co).

RESOLVED – Noted.

- d. **VAT Submission for the period 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025**

The submission of the VAT claim for the period 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025 was noted. A refund of approximately £579.13 is expected by May/June.

RESOLVED – Noted

271. Correspondence -

The Chair read out the correspondence received as follows:

- **Bench Repair:** Cllr Hamblin confirmed Rise Joinery had repaired the bench in Ripe free of charge, due to his persistence. Thanks were recorded to Cllr Hamblin and also to Mr Apps, who has oiled the bench.
- **Neighbourhood Plan Query:** An email from resident Alison Dunbar Dempsey asked if the Council has or intends to create a Neighbourhood Plan. Discussion confirmed the Council does not have one. The significant cost (£10-15k+), time, need for expert consultants, and referendum were noted. Given Ripe is not zoned for significant housing development, the benefit was considered unlikely to justify the expense compared to parishes like East Hoathly facing major development pressure. It was agreed that the Parish Clerk will reply to Ms. Dempsey stating the Council has no immediate plans to produce a Neighbourhood Plan due to the significant cost and complexity involved, which is not considered proportionate for the parish currently.

- **Sussex Police Rural Crime Team - Street Surgeries:** An email invitation was received offering tailored crime prevention advice sessions. Options are to host a session (requires space for a large van, e.g., village hall/car park) or join a neighbouring parish's event (Laughton mentioned as a possibility).

Members will explore joining forces with Laughton PC if they host an event. If not, the Council would be willing to host a session in Chalvington with Ripe. Action: Clerk to forward the email to Cllr Wilson as the Chair of Laughton Parish Council.

RESOLVED: - Noted

272. Urgent Items –

none.

Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED: To exclude the public and press in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1(2) due to the confidential nature of the business concerning staffing matters (Recruitment of Parish Clerk/RFO - Agenda Item 269).

273. Recruitment of Parish Clerk/RFO -

RESOLVED: The PC agree to appoint a sub-committee of 3 members of the Council to manage the appointment process and to interview any suitable candidates. Members appointed to the sub-committee are Cllr Flint, Cllr Hallworth, and Cllr Harvey. The Clerk is also delegated authority (in consultation with Cllr Flint) to make all necessary arrangements in connection with the appointment and interviewing process for the new clerk.

274. Dates of next meeting - The next Meeting will be the Annual Council Meeting to be held on the 12th May 2025, commencing immediately after the Annual Parish at the Hayton Baker Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.24 pm

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....

