

DEBDEN PARISH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF DEBDEN PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY,
30TH JUNE 2021 AT 8.00 PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

<u>Present:</u>	Cllr S. Watson	(SW) Chairman
	Cllr C. Diggins	(CD)
	Cllr A. Gardner	(AG)
	Cllr B. Lindsell	(BL)
	Cllr S. Luck	(SL)
	Cllr J. O'Brien	(JO'B) arrived at 8.25pm

In attendance:

Mrs. C. Griffin, Clerk
8 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting date had been changed to the last Wednesday of the month in order for Cllr Luck to attend the PC meetings at Wimbish on the first Wednesday of the month.

The Chairman then made the following statement.

This Council was elected in May 2019 for a four year term. One of our key objectives, which was clearly supported by the majority who voted for us, was to achieve what had been beyond the reach of Debden for so long. Namely to build a modern village hall to benefit current and future residents. That remains our resolve. We urgently need a new building as the social hub at the heart of the village. There is still strong support for this objective but, not surprisingly, people are growing tired of all the talk, the anger, bad feeling and worst of all, the fact that we still do not have a new village hall.

A bitter divide has emerged within the community over where to build the new hall and how it should be funded. To clarify, the current plan supported by the VHT, the DRG and the New Village Hall Group represents a compromise arrived at after a stalemate brought about by the previous PC/ DRG refusing to grant permission for the new hall to be built on the VHT's preferred site (opposite the existing hall, towards the football pitch).

The current plan acknowledges that compromise which is contained in a legally binding document called the Mediation Agreement (i.e the hall should be built on the site of the pavilion and the pavilion duly replaced by the PC). The mediation agreement was overseen by UDC and was signed by ALL parties – June 2017, and finally agreed Jan 2018.

The current bitterness, if we allow it to continue, threatens to damage this community irretrievably. It is in all our interests to set aside our differences and work together to achieve what is the only realistic hope of obtaining a new village hall, and that is to support the current project. We are aware that many residents have

endured years of debate about the proposed new hall and are very familiar with the history of the project, but there has been much misinformation recently and newcomers to the village must be totally bewildered by what is going on! We intend to take this opportunity, midway through our elected term, to set the record straight and correct some of the misleading information that has been circulated in the last 12 months.

A new village hall is about more than bricks and mortar. It will be the community hub at the heart of Debden. Many of you already work hard to maintain community spirit - such as organising social and sporting events and competitions, keeping the village magazine alive, supporting activities organised by the school and the churches, helping with litter picks, strimming footpaths, planting flower tubs, setting up community initiatives such as Debden Gardens, painting phone boxes and maintaining the playground etc. All these things, underlined with kindness to each other are the cement which bind a village community such as ours. The recent pandemic has thrown the importance of community into even sharper relief.

After several failed attempts over some 30 years to build a replacement village hall, we have one final opportunity to achieve that goal. An alternative site is just not a viable option.

Our current plan is achievable if the community can pull together. It will be a fantastic and long-overdue facility that everyone, especially future generations, can enjoy. It's time to stop the debate and for everyone to support our efforts and help to support this project with fund raising.

We don't underestimate the challenges ahead, in particular the amount we still have to raise in the face of escalating costs, but it is possible. We have expert skills within our project team, the support of professional architects, chartered and quantity surveyors and a community that could really make a difference and help regenerate the heart of Debden.

Please take time to read the factual account that will be printed in the Pump of where we are, how we got to this point and how we can, as a united village, rebuild our community for now and years to come.

21/470 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Bunting (private commitment) and from Cty Cllr Martin Foley.

21/471 Declarations of Interests

To receive disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in items on the agenda

SL declared that he is a UDC District Councillor.

SW declared an interest in 21/476 as a family member has been invited to quote for installing the play equipment.

21/472 Public participation session (15 minutes available if required)

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, and give evidence in respect of any item of business included on the agenda and other matters of interest.

The following matters were raised to which the Chairman and members replied:

- **Who is the Chairman of the Recreation Ground Trust and when did that change?**

The Chairman, Cllr Watson, confirmed that she is currently the Chairman of both the PC and RG Trust. JO'B is the Secretary of the RG Trust. Appointments were made at an RGT meeting.

- **There has not been an AGM of the RG Trust since 2018 and the Chairman should be appointed at the AGM which should be advertised and open to the public.**

SL said it was not possible to hold one in 2020 because of the pandemic. We could still have an AGM in 2021,

- **Why is item 21/475 and 21/476 on the PC agenda as they both relate to issues which should be dealt with by the RG Trust. The Accounts should be made available to members of the public at the AGM of the RGT.**

Item, 21/475 is included because the PC asked for regular updates on the pavilion. Item 21/476 is on the agenda because the donation from Debden Pre-School was given to the PC. It was agreed that the donation should be used to purchase equipment for the playground. The installation costs will be paid partly by the donation and we may be able to fund raise or obtain some grants for the balance. If required, funds from the RG Trust can also be used. The Chairman said the RG Accounts can be made available.

- **Do you get 3 quotes for everything. More information should be available to the village.**

AG said that in the present climate it is very difficult to get three quotes. The Chairman confirmed that when quotes are received, they are considered and the PC decide which quotation to accept. It is not necessary to make details of quotations available to members of the public.

- **Thank you to the Chairman for the statement made at the beginning of the meeting. I hope the PC realise that the people involved hope that we can go forward. We are aware there are divisions but nothing is irreparable, and the further we get the better everything will be. Thank you for all that you do.**

The Chairman thanked the resident for her comments.

- **I was unable to obtain the agenda from the website due to a security message (a big red notice)**

AG had advised the Clerk but when she looked at this there was no problem. The Vice Chairman will deal with this matter.

- **With regard to the statement made at the beginning of the meeting, you said the whole plan was dependent on the mediation agreement that was signed in 2017. That is not accurate. There was an initial agreement where we agreed to move the village hall to the other side of the recreation ground and after that it was agreed that the co-ordinating group would decide where the pavilion would be located. It was never going to be next to the village hall, it was going to be on the current village hall site. That is why the application submitted to the Charity Commission stated that it would be in the best interests of the RG Trust and the open space would remain the same. The village hall has now been brought forward on to the car park which is the source of the problem and means you have to resurface the car park. If you had kept the village hall on the agreed site there would be no need to do that. We went into that in great detail. Please bear that in mind.**
- **The agreement was not physically signed, every party involved sent an email to the mediator confirming agreement and that complied with the requirements.**

21/473 To approve and authorise the Chairman to sign the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 19th May, 2021

The following changes were made:

Page 802, item 21/460, Update on the Pavilion, the following to be deleted

Sport England lodged an objection to the previous application to change the condition. The VHT did not think Sport England would object to the amendment but it was decided to withdraw the application for the amendment. As it stands the pavilion has to be finished before the village hall can be occupied. The pavilion will not take as long to build as the village hall. When we have planning permission we will apply for grants. The PC have set aside £25,000 to help fund the pavilion. We will be looking to draw down against that when it is needed.

We will make the plans available to the public when we have them. It will look more like a traditional village pavilion rather than an extension to the village hall and it is more viable and cheaper. Sport England have confirmed they are happy with it.

Replaced with the following section, reworded by the Chairman:

Sport England lodged an objection to the application made to change the pre planning condition which stated that the pavilion had to be completed before the new village hall could be opened. The VHT did not think Sport England would object to the amendment, and indeed UDC Planning Dept actively encouraged the VHT to apply for it as they thought the condition was restrictive. Sport England did object, however, so it was decided after careful consideration, to withdraw the application for amendment. As it stands, the pavilion still has to be completed before the new village hall can be occupied. The pavilion will not take as long to build as the village hall. When planning permission for the pavilion is granted, the DRG, as owners will

be able to apply for grants. The PC has set aside £25,000 to help fund the build. DRG will be looking to draw down against these earmarked funds as and when required.

The pavilion plans will be made available to the public when they are received. It will look like a traditional village pavilion rather than an extension to the village hall and it will be cheaper to build. Sport England has confirmed they are content with the interior design and layout

With this amendment it was resolved that the Minutes should be signed as a correct record.

Proposed: SW

Seconded: SL

All agreed

The Clerk queried the re-wording as she did not recall that being said at the meeting and therefore the Minutes were not a correct record.

Cllr O'Brien arrived at the meeting.

21/474 To discuss planning applications received and receive an update on outcomes and any other planning matters

UTT/21/1704/HHF Weffells, 2 Newhouse Farm Cottages

Single storey rear extension to dwelling and single storey rear extension to existing garage. Proposed landscaping works.

No comments

UTT/21/1831/HHF Brickle House, Walden Road

Single storey extension with rear build form amendments, new fenestration, and internal alterations.

No comments

UTT/21/1908/FUL Howe Barn, Newport Road

Erection of storage barn

A response will be circulated for members comments/approval and sent to the Clerk by 6th July.

UTT/21/1833/FUL Land west of Thaxted Cutlers Green Lane

Construction and operation of a solar farm comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays and battery storage together with associated development, including inverter cabins, DNO substation, customer switchgear, access, fencing, CCTV cameras and landscaping.

A response will be circulated for members comments/approval and sent to the Clerk by 8th July.

21/475 To receive an update on the Pavilion and approve any expenditure concerning the new build

The Chairman reported that the plans arrived today, 30th June. The VH/Pavilion Project group meet next Tuesday, 6th July, and will review these. These will be available on the website together with the costs involved. Sport England will also be contacted as they need to approve the plans although they have seen the draft.

It was proposed that if the VH/Pavilion Project group and Sport England approve the plans, an application should be submitted by the PC to UDC, cost £231.

Proposed; SW

Seconded: SL

All agreed

If the £25,029.00, earmarked for the pavilion in the PC Savings Account, is required the RG Trust should submit a formal request and this would need to be included on the PC agenda.

21/476 To discuss quotations received for installing new playground equipment and approve quotation and agree arrangements for its installation

AG reported that it is extremely difficult to obtain quotations at present. To date one quotation has been circulated and another one arrived today. AG will endeavour to obtain a third quote. To be deferred until the next meeting,

21/477 To resolve whether to request the External Auditor to carry out a Limited Assurance Review for 2020/21 or claim exemption as the PC's gross income and expenditure does not exceed £25,000.

It was proposed that the PC should claim exemption for 2020/21.

Proposed: SW

Seconded: AG

SL abstained as he joined
the PC in May 2021
All other members

agreed

The Chairman and RFO signed the Exemption form.

21/478 To receive and note the Internal Auditor's Report for 2020/21

It was proposed that the Internal Auditor's Report for 2020/21 should be accepted and noted. The PC will decide how to resolve the issues raised.

Proposed: SW

Seconded: CD

SL abstained

All other members agreed

21/479 To approve and sign the Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21, Section 1

The Chairman read all the assertions and it was proposed that all the "Yes" boxes should be ticked. The form was completed and signed by the Chairman and RFO.

Proposed: SW

Seconded: CD

SL abstained

All other members agreed.

21/480 To approve and sign the Accounting Statement for 2020/21, Section 2

The form had been completed and circulated prior to the meeting. It was proposed that the form should be approved and signed by the Chairman and RFO.

Proposed: SW

Seconded: CD

SL abstained

All other members agreed

The Clerk advised that the notice of public rights will be posted today for the period 1st July – 11th August, 2021.

21/481 To consider a request for a reduced speed limit in Debden Green and Hamperden End and to approve wording for a survey to be sent to residents,

BL, a former resident of Debden Green, had drafted and circulated a consultation survey to be sent to all residents (from the crossroads to just past Staines Farm) to obtain their views on various options. A quotation will be obtained for printing 100

copies. In the meantime it was agreed that the letter should be finalised and approved at the next meeting together with the printing cost. To be included on next agenda.

Proposed; BL

Seconded; SW

All agreed

It was also agreed that a letter would be sent to a company operating outside the parish regarding large vehicles coming through the village. BL has drafted and circulated a polite letter which will be delivered by hand in order to speak to the owners.

21/482 To consider requesting a follow up meeting with Highways and agree issues to be raised.

JO'B and BL attended a previous remote meeting and we have now received the speed survey results from Highways.

It was considered that another meeting would be useful and should be requested with the new Cabinet member for Highways, Cllr Lee Scott. The Clerk will contact Cty Cllr Foley to arrange a convenient time and BL will send a list of items for the agenda.

The Clerk provided information from the minutes and agenda for the LHP on 5th July. The Smiths Green lay-by is included on "Schemes awaiting funding" and Byway 75 is on hold.

21/483 To approve the purchase of Dog Poo signs to be located in various areas of the village.

It was proposed that the Clerk should order 5 signs in White, 200 x 300mm, "Please clean up after your Dog".

Proposed: AG

Seconded: CD

All agreed

21/484 To approve the purchase of a new litter bin for the High Street

The Clerk circulated details of a new bin and it was proposed that a Trimline 25 bin in Dark Green, cost together with post, should be ordered, cost £116.98.

Proposed: SW

Seconded: SL

All agreed

21/485 To approve the payment schedule, circulated prior to the meeting

UDC	£1,055.93	Parish Poll – 20 th May
UDC	£757.68	Parish Election – 6 th May
C. Griffin	£413.16	Net salary May + expenses (£26.00)
Ace of Spades	£180.00	Grass cutting (May)
HMRC	£289.80	PAYE (Apr/May/June)
Debden Recreation Ground	£4,000.00	Grant (as per Budget 2021/22)

Direct Debits

A & J. Lighting (May)	£23.86	Street light maintenance
E-on (May)	£53.81	Street lights

It was agreed that an invoice for £180.00 from Ace of Spades for June grass cutting, received on day of meeting, should be paid. AG will now be reimbursed with the

£60.00 for the Competition, included on last schedule, as receipts have now been received.

Proposed: SW

Seconded: AG

All agreed

21/486 To discuss any urgent matters of interest to the Parish

- SL reported on the UDC Extraordinary meeting on Monday, 28th June, which he attended as District Councillor. He has also visited the new UDC premises at Lt. Canfield.
- SL asked if the Action list, used by the previous PC, could be re-circulated. The Clerk said this only includes standard items and will send with next agenda.

21/487 Items for the next agenda

- To approve final draft and printing costs of letter to the residents of Debden Green regarding a speed limit.
- To discuss quotations received for installing new playground equipment and approve quotation and agree arrangements for its installation

21/488 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 28th July, 8.00pm in the Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.32pm.

Signed.....(Chairman)

Dated: 28.07.21