

BURWASH PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Traffic and Transport Working Party held virtually by Zoom on Monday 6th September 2021 at 7pm.

Attended by: Cllr. Bob Franklin (Chair), Cllr. Fiona Hosein (Vice Chair), Helga Castle, David Cowell, Stephen Dixon, Lindsay Green, Halina Keep, Lesley Moore.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Steve Moore.

2. Disclosures of Interest.

There were none.

3. Minutes from the previous meeting held on 2nd August 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd August 2021 had been agreed at Full Council on 10th August 2021.

4. Feedback from Burwash Visit with Cllr. Kirby-Green.

Attending: D. Cowell, Cllr. R. Franklin, H. Stewart, L. Moore, G. McAllister and other residents. All parties agreed traffic on the pavement was unacceptable. A letter indicating the regulations for installation of bollards to protect the houses most at risk in the High Street had been received from Mr. I. Tingley, and Les Moore advised that George McAllister was happy to look into the feasibility of the measurements involved. Cllr. Franklin to liaise with G. McAlister. Depending on the amount, Cllr. Franklin advised it was possible that the costs of the Bollards could be borne by the Parish Council.

5. Feedback from Meeting with Huw Merriman MP.

Attending: Cllr. Franklin, Cllr. Kenny, Cllr. Stapylton-Smith, Cllr. Kirby-Green and Mr. Merriman's Office Manager. The meeting was primarily concerned with Biodiversity and the perceived failure of the new Planning Guidance from Government. Mr. Merriman was sympathetic, but it was felt his priorities were more with housing needs. Complete paper dossiers of the Parish Council's problems with the intractability of ESCC were given to both Mr. Merriman and Cllr. Kirby-Green, but Mr. Merriman was already aware of ESCC's reputation for non-cooperation. It was noted that BC&WRA have a meeting booked with Mr. Merriman on 24th September.

6. Burwash Common & Weald Changes of Speed Limit.

Lindsay Green advised they were no further forward - it had been agreed in principle but did not have a high priority for ESCC Highways. They had also suggested that an appropriate TRO could cost £10,000! It was felt that a Feasibility Study (which the parish council has already paid for) should lead quickly to costings but these had not been forthcoming.

7. Implementing 20mph in Burwash Village

The problems and delays encountered by the Parish Council had been passed to Cllr. Claire Dowling, Lead Member for Transport at ESCC. It was understood that there was

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£50,000 available in Match Funding, and BPC had £25,000 allocated in its Budget, if more was required the Council may have to consider using its Reserves or Fundraising. It is imperative that Highways allow the Council to be involved at costings stage. There is due to be a meeting arranged with RALC and Cllr Claire Dowling regarding Highways issues.

8. Village Gates Design.

These are awaiting the specification from Highways.

9. Car Park & Electric Charging Point Update.

An email had been received from BC&WRA (see Appendix 1.) Steve Moore had kindly replied despite being on sick leave (see Appendix 2), and Bob Franklin had responded (see Appendix 3). Following this there was a debate on whether the lease should be paused, but it was decided by a majority vote that the Council should proceed. There was a considerable discussion about the allocation of spaces and the management of the Car Park. It was agreed to ask Full Council to:

- a. Resolve to set up a Car Park Management Working Group
- b. Recommend that Council at the EGM proceed with the Lease.

It was hoped that by the removal of the Toilet block and rearrangement of the parking spaces an increase in the number of spaces could be achieved.

10. Community Toilet Scheme.

Unfortunately, the Blacksmiths Café had decided not to join the Community Toilet Scheme, which meant the Scheme would not be viable, and the Council will now have to look at alternatives.

11. Speedwatch.

The shortage of Volunteers had reduced the sessions in August. Speedwatch desperately needs volunteers – anyone interested should contact the Clerk.

12. Quiet Lanes.

The Chair spoke of the presentation by Sussex Greenways at the August Full Council, which hoped to link with Quiet Lanes and transform bridlepaths into safe routes which could be used by families for cycling, horse riding and walking. It was suggested that the bridlepath linking Lower Bough Farm and Spring Lane could be investigated as a means of providing a safe non-vehicular link between the villages.

13. Cycle/Footpath Update

No update available, however Mr. Merriman had advised that farmers were now being paid for the usage of their farms, and it could be possible for a farmer to receive a grant for allowing a strip of land to be used as a footpath/cycleway.

14. Information for Noting or including on a Future Agenda.

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15. Date of Next Meeting.

Monday 4th October 2021 7pm.

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Signature Chair.

Appendix 1

BURWASH COMMON AND WEALD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

c/o The Turnstile
Vicarage Lane
Burwash Common
Etchingham
East Sussex
TN19 7LJ

4 September 2021

Dear Bob

BURWASH CAR PARKS

Although we understand that the parish council has already decided to take over the responsibility for the management and operation of the car parks in Burwash village from Rother District Council (RDC) and that it has its pen poised over a lease, we respectfully ask that the council pauses to consider whether now is the right time to take on this responsibility.

Firstly, the arrangements for the operation of the car parks have not yet been established or even discussed. From the point of view of the BCWRA, there are a series of, as yet, unanswered questions (see the [Appendix](#) to this letter) which the parish council will need to address if it takes on this responsibility. Having established the working group to consider and propose new arrangements for the operation of the car parks, it seems illogical to enter into an irrevocable commitment with RDC before the working group has had time to meet, let alone report.

Secondly, following on from the first point, there has been no consultation with the parish about either the principle of the parish council taking over the car parks or the practical arrangements for their future operation. At what stage is parish-wide consultation planned to determine whether the council's plans are acceptable to the majority of residents within the parish?

Thirdly, when this idea was first raised, it carried with it the prospect of a transfer of ownership of the sites, tapered funding over a period of years towards running and maintenance costs, and more control for the parish over how the car parks are run. In the intervening period we have seen many of the potential advantages eroded as RDC has declined to transfer the freehold of the sites to the parish council, has provided only limited funding for a single year, and has sought to interfere in the way the car parks are managed particularly with their unreasonable insistence that charges cannot be levied

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unless RDC agrees to it and gets a share of the income. On the face of it, this does not look like such a great deal for the parish.

The parish council will be well aware that the operation of the car parks is likely to be contentious in some respects, in part reflecting the different perspectives of residents in Burwash village compared to those in Burwash Weald and Burwash Common. It is therefore important to clarify the rules for the operation of the car parks and to seek parish-wide consent for whatever approach is adopted. In the first instance, can we please ask that the council ensures that there is equivalent representation on the working group from all parts of the parish? We have suggested that Steve Dixon and Graham Bird, both residents of Burwash Common, should sit on this group.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Bird
Chair, Burwash Common and Weald Residents' Association

Appendix

Burwash car parks: questions from the BCWRA

(a) What steps will be taken to ensure that there is adequate car parking for visitors (including parish residents from outside the village) at peak times?

Burwash village is not easily accessible other than by car. Parish residents from outside the village who may need to visit Burwash, for example for a doctor's appointment, complain that it is too often not possible to find a parking space at peak times. The same is likely to be true for visitors from outside the parish where difficulties with visitor parking mean that their first visit is likely to be their last. This is not in the interests of the future of the village or the wider parish. If no other solution is possible, then a significant number of spaces need to be prioritised for short-term (say a maximum of 2 hours) visitor parking.

(b) What steps will be taken to prevent village residents (and others) from using the car parks for long-term, free-of-charge private parking?

Given that the cost of maintenance of the car parks will in future come from the parish precept, it is now even less acceptable than hitherto that some residents should receive this as a free benefit paid for by the rest of the residents of the parish. We are concerned that the new lease may unreasonably constrain the parish council from charging for parking as this would have been one way to ensure that those who are using the car parks for private parking pay for the privilege.

(c) What steps will be taken to prevent groups of commuters leaving multiple cars in the village car parks whilst using only one car to travel to either Stonegate or Etchingham stations?

We have been told that some groups of people are bringing multiple cars to the Burwash village car parks (where they can currently park all day for free) and then car-sharing to either Stonegate or Etchingham stations (which charge for car parking) while they commute to London or other centres. This could be prevented by placing limitations on the number of hours during the working day that any one vehicle can be parked.

(d) What steps will be taken to remove vehicles which are "dumped" long term in the car parks and not used, often for many months at a time?

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As the parish council is fully aware, there have been problems in the past with vehicles being dumped in the car park for long periods of time and seemingly not used during that period. A restriction limiting parking to a maximum of 23 hours in any period of 24 hours, as in Heathfield, would solve this problem.

(e) What steps, if any, will be taken to limit or prevent the use of the car parks by commercial vehicles, motorhomes and caravans?

If the car park is to be available for use by commercial organisations, they should be charged the going commercial rate.

(f) Whatever is eventually decided upon, how will new car parking arrangements be operated and policed so that they are fair to everyone?

The car parks are presently unsupervised, and this has led directly to the problems identified above. Past attempts by all of us to get RDC to manage the car parks properly and deal with the problems have not been successful. It goes without saying that none of the problems will be resolved unless new car parking arrangements are effectively policed? If there are no plans to police any new arrangements, then the existing problems and complaints will fall into the lap of the parish council who will have to account directly to residents if they fail to deal with them. What plans does the parish council have to ensure that car parks are operated fairly in the interests of all the residents of the parish?

Appendix 2 – Email from Steve Moore in response to Appendix 1.

Dated: 06-09-21 14.16

Dear Emma

Many thanks for circulating this note and questions from BC & WRA.

As you know I will not be attending the T & T meeting but felt I should at least circulate my thoughts on this.

The decision to proceed with the transfer of the car parks has been PC policy since 2017 and this has been reaffirmed on a number of occasions since then. RDC have until quite recently been inactive on this but we started to see some more urgency from them recent (or as urgent as you can see from RDC!).

This is because they now have their own Enforcement powers and could simply roll our car parks into their parking enforcement contract. This requires every car to move every day. For our mainly elderly residents who do not have the benefit of off road parking and have to rely on the scarce on street and limited car parking provision if this was imposed it would be a serious issue for the community. Failure to rise from a sick bed would mean parking fines.

This is simply not tenable.

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The lease will not be perfect (negotiated deals always come with some plus and minus) but to try answer all the questions posed here **before** taking this car parks would risk RDC going their own way at severe detriment to the day to day lives of predominantly Burwash Villagers.

The PC should continue to press for the transfer from RDC.

Part of the post transfer work (during which I had assumed the current parking regime would remain unchanged) is the work of the Sub Group and it is good to see Graham and Stephen joining this group.

I hope to be fully fit again in early 2022 and aim to take an active role in the post transfer roll out of improvements, electric metering, redesign and the formation of community supported policies for the fair and reasonable enforcement of these vital spaces.

Regards

Steve

Appendix 3 – Cllr. Franklin's comments to appendix 1.

- a We hope to increase the number of parking spaces by demolishing the toilets and moving the recycling to allow better use of the space available
- b The initial brief was to keep the car park as it is. We will of course have the ability to consider all option once we are responsible for it
- c At present we do not have any plans to change the use of the car park (see b)
- d We have had a system for removing dumped cars for over 2 years and it is working well
- e At present the terms of use remain the same (see b). However, we plan to continue with the allocation of short-term parking spaces when we paint the new parking lines.
- f It is unlikely that any use of the car park will be fair to everyone as that is an impossible task, our intention is always to try to do what is best for the Parish as a whole but we have to accept that some things only effect a minority (Vicarage Road speed limit for instance). Policing of the car park is likely to be a thorny issue, we hope that Rother will continue to help us with some of the issues but we need to consider if the various rules we apply are enforceable and if so, how much it would cost to enforce them.