

EBERNOE PARISH COUNCIL



PLAISTOW AND IFOLD PARISH COUNCIL



# Meeting of the Northern Parishes

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023

19:30 via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85316502184?pwd=eDhoc25pTTNoOFJxNjVnN2ZZYm1xdz09>

Meeting ID: 853 1650 2184

Passcode: 047205

## MEETING AGENDA

### BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

Number	Item
1.	Introductions, apologies & housekeeping
2.	Northern parishes future meetings schedule ( <i>regularity, day, standing agenda items etc</i> )
3.	Northern parishes join training
4.	All Parishes Meeting ( <i>please refer to copy email below, received 20.09.2023 from CDC's Monitoring Officer, Nicholas Bennett</i> )
5.	Local Plan
6.	Neighbourhood Plans
7.	Speculative development applications

8.	<b>Speed / traffic safety issues</b>
9.	<b>Parish projects</b> <i>(a chance to share what we are doing / thinking about doing and share any tips from those who have done similar)</i>
10.	<b>AOB</b>
11.	<b>Next meeting</b>

Item 4

\*\*\*COPY EMAIL FROM NICHOLAS BENNETT\*\*\*

Hello all,

Some of the comments by participants during the “all Parishes and District Councillors” meeting earlier this week were very critical in a number of ways. It seems to me this is a good time, therefore, to ask you some fundamental questions about the meeting and what you all want from it.

Firstly, the meeting was set up to fill a stated need (raised by Parishes) for more information about what this District is doing, and what is “out there” to support your parish residents so we can work consistently together and to keep you and your members informed when doing their ward duties.

My recollection is that this was done particularly due to concerns raised by some of the rural parishes that they felt less engaged with activities of the District than larger parishes and that they had concerns that resources were therefore potentially being applied disproportionately to urban areas.

One Councillor was very critical indeed of an item which was prepared to make parishes aware of national and regional changes of legislation and also strategy on dealing with damp premises. The point being made was that she felt that Parishes were only interested in the core Local Government Act 1894 powers of Parishes, and not about being made aware of matters of relevance to Parishioners, signposting or similarly focussed presentations on the way in which I understood was wanted by the Parish representatives at the time the group was set up. Perhaps this has changed?

I suppose my first question is whether the wishes for general partnership and strategic information remain correct for the current members. Do you still wish to be aware of support available for your communities, that you can signpost people to when carrying out your ward business, or not? Is it just more noise, or useful information to know about our work that helps you support the most troubled in your Parish and let you signpost residents quickly and well?

Secondly the stated original intention was that Parishes would raise your own items for the agenda of general interest to other Parishes. So, not local narrow issues but general matters that might affect any number of other Parishes. I cannot trace any such items being raised with my team from any Parish for some time meaning almost all items are generated from the District. A second question I have then – how do parishes wish to have the agenda set? It feels uncomfortable that it is purely generated by myself and District colleagues and against the original intention. Would certain Parishes wish to take over responsibility for agenda setting every other meeting for example?

Thirdly – a little more specifically about whether intended items are useful to you. This Council has some items for the Spring (in person) meeting, meeting the new Chief Inspector, a presentation from Hyde Housing and one on the Council priorities from the new Executive. Are these the sort of issues you want the Council to present to you in this way? If not, why not?

Or a final question - has the meeting had its time? What might replace it? Anything? Significant officer time is dedicated to this (eight people each working between 3 and 10 hours on it as a “finger in the air” including preparation and attendance) and if it is not wanted, I would prefer to redirect the Council resources to something else where it would be more appreciated.

I am entirely open to consider **all suggestions** that would improve the meeting for you all. We moved to Autumn meetings online because of complaints about travelling being difficult at this time of year, obviously happy to re-open that discussion if face to face is felt to outweigh those concerns for example. Is a single topic meeting preferable? This all comes from a positive place of self reflection, and I hope you can constructively criticise in turn to make this a better meeting for everyone.

Finally, a more personal note with my Monitoring Officer hat on.

I would ask if the majority decision was that these meetings continue, that participants remember that officers presenting reports do so after significant effort and time in preparation as I mention above. The officers attend the meeting and give up their own family or relaxation time to attend for your benefit - and through you your community. Behind the scenes I know that some of them were working “out of hours” the weekend before to prepare so as not to interrupt their core regular duties.

Therefore: I ask that you think about how you raise concerns about presentations or content of presentations out of respect for the officers.

If you feel that proposed presentations are not going to be of use or were poor in some way, **please tell me privately**. Please do not say things in public meetings which the officers may very reasonably take as personal criticism.

Obviously, you can criticise this Council, the government, particular government policies, Planning law, the weather or whatever you choose within reason. But do not, please, “shoot the messengers”.



**Nicholas Bennett**

Divisional Manager  
Legal & Democratic Services  
Chichester District Council