

Full Council Meeting
Rendlesham Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2025 at 12 noon, Room 16
Rendlesham Community Centre Walnut Tree Avenue Rendlesham Suffolk
IP12 2GG

<u>PRESENT</u>	
CHAIRMAN	Councillor Mrs N Delacamp
COUNCILLORS	Councillor Ms O Johnston(Vice Chair) Councillor M Stevenson; Councillor R Routledge; Councillor E Points; Councillor Mrs J Weller; Councillor M Eley-Jones
CLERK TO THE COUNCIL	Mrs D Humphris
ALSO PRESENT	East Suffolk District Councillor Tim Wilson Approximately 30 members of the public

<u>089/24</u>	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> <u>RESOLVED : (unanimously)</u> to accept apologies for absence from the Councillor J Bird and Councillor G Moir
<u>090/24</u>	<u>Opening the meeting</u> District Councillor Tim Wilson addressed the meeting as follows: There has been a heavy cloud since the cancellation of the fireworks but since that time he has been working with the Clerk and Chairman, reviewing policies and procedures, HR matters and working through the legalities of relationship between the Council and the Community Centre Charity. The finances of the Council have been thoroughly reviewed and as a trained management accountant and with experience of being both portfolio holder at ESDC and in looking a financial statements, he can confirm this review has been undertaken thoroughly and with probity and he can confirm that there is no suggestion of anything illegal or corrupt. There have been problems with communication and

	<p>ESDC are making £1000 available to instigate a new village newsletter to help rectify a terrible situation. Councillors have been under intense personal scrutiny, with inaccurate social media comments and submissions to East Anglian Daily Times which have no basis in fact. With the Council in a better position with Governance than it has been for some time, it is time to lower the temperature, de-personalise the situations, work together and be factual and kind.</p>
<p><u>091/24</u></p>	<p><u>Public Forum</u></p> <p>The Chairman explained that this is a Council meeting open to the public NOT a Public meeting and therefore speakers will be asked to keep to one question per speaker , maximum3 minutes and the public forum will be closed after 15 minutes. Any further questions remaining can be written on forms provided and email responses will be sent and added to the parish council website.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Will the legal advice received with regards to the Community Centre Charity and the position with regards potential employment of a councillor by the Charity be released? Chair confirmed that this will be put on our website. Chair also confirmed that contrary to rumour and speculation, she had no part in the decision taken to advertise the role, and had always excused herself from meetings where this was discussed, she had not applied for the role and whilst she had been offered the role she had not accepted it. This means we now need to find someone to fill that role if the Community Centre is to remain open. 2) Are there any updates with regards to the Youth Club? The Chair advised that talks are ongoing and updates will be provided as soon as matters can be finalised. 3) Where has the money gone? The Chair advised that no money is missing and specific questions around finances should be sent in writing to be answered in full. 4) A member of the public was concerned about the gossip and hearsay being spread around the village and on social media, some of which

amounted to slander and which had a negative impact on councillors, staff and their families. She felt that Rendlesham residents should support the Council as it tried to fix past mistakes and that the current behaviour by some individuals was not reflective of the lovely village that Rendlesham used to be. The Chair confirmed that much of the information being circulated was simply gossip, speculation and was untrue and that not one person from the Village, or of those responsible for social media comments have contacted the Council directly to raise concerns or queries. It is acknowledged that this Council are in crisis but 90% of the current Council have been in post for only a few weeks and need time and space to be able to deal with everything and get the council back on a good footing. The new councillors have come on board with great ideas for improving the community and residents should support the Council as it tries to move forward. With the constant unpleasantness and criticism there has been no time to breathe as the Council have been dealing with FOI requests and correspondence consistently since November. All councillors are volunteers and will listen and do the best they can to correct the mistakes of the past with a view to 'making Rendlesham great again'.

- 5) Were employment rights breached when making parish council staff redundant and not offering those staff the new Facilities Manager role at the Community Centre? The Chair advised that we can not comment on HR matters but that the role was open for anyone to apply if they so wished and not one application was received.

The Chair went on to explain that she has been doing this role on a voluntary unpaid basis for the last 2 years and with a young family she can not continue to do this with no support. Right now it is impossible for the Council to make much needed decisions and move forwards because of the intense and factually incorrect gossip and accusations being spread on social media and around the Village. This was affecting everyone, councillors, their families and staff in a negative way

	<p>that was bad for everyone's mental health. The Chair advised that she was closing the public forum but if anyone has any other questions they can complete the contact forms available with their questions and we would get back to them.</p>
<u>092/24</u>	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> - None
<u>093/24</u>	<p><u>Councillor Resignation</u> Members noted the resignation of Charles Ward Wilkinson as Councillor effective from 14 January 2025</p>
<u>094/24</u>	<p><u>Minutes of the last meeting</u> RESOLVED: (unanimously) to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record for signature by the Chairman as follows: Minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2025</p>
<u>095/24</u>	<p><u>Community Centre</u> Members noted that following the recent recruitment campaign not one application has been received and the offer of the job to the Chairman who has been fulfilling this role unpaid for the last two years had been turned down. This now left a critical situation as with no-one to run the centre it faced closure. It was noted that the Community does not use the Community Centre and that efforts to bring on board new hires and encourage local use would be critical to its success moving forwards. After some discussion it was RESOLVED: (unanimously) to advertise both the Community Centre Manager role and the caretaker/handyman role again locally and this time more widely with a closing date of 8th February. If suitable applicants still could not be found the Council may have to take the difficult decision to close the Community Centre until either volunteers or paid staff could be sourced. Councillors have agreed to work voluntarily to keep the</p>

	<p>centre open until 8th February when the outcome of the further recruitment campaign would be known.</p> <p>On the positive side the employment of two staff for the Community Centre charity for one year would now be funded by East Suffolk District Council with a grant of £35,000.</p> <p>It was noted that CIL funding was still available for capital projects which could include improvement works for the Community Centre.</p>
096/24	<p><u>Budget/Precept for 2025/2026</u></p> <p>With the benefit of the funding support from ESDC it was <u>RESOLVED (unanimously)</u> to finalise the precept for 25/26 by reducing the figure agreed at the January 13th meeting by £35,000. This will result in a precept of £188,420 (one hundred and eighty eight thousand four hundred and twenty pounds) and an annual payment for the parish element of council tax, for a Band D taxpayer of £192.24. This represents a 17.5% increase on 24/25 or an increase of 56p per week per household. Whilst costs have been cut this year, the shortfall in funding for the budget in 24/25 kept last year's precept artificially low which has had an impact on the percentage increase needed this year.</p> <p>Full budget can be viewed in Appendix 1.</p>
097/24	<p><u>Social Media</u></p> <p>Whilst the Parish Council will not comment on social media posts it was <u>RESOLVED (unanimously)</u> future slanderous or libellous comments will not be accepted and the Council will seek legal action against those individuals making unsubstantiated allegations. It should be noted that as the Council's only source of income is via the precept and hence villagers' council tax, being forced to take such action may lead to higher council tax bills in the future to cover those costs. It was agreed that the Council would look at a committee or working party for the future to deal with these matters.</p>
098/24	<p><u>Positive Progress</u></p> <p>East Suffolk District councillor finished the meeting on a positive note advising that new play parks are being</p>

	<p>provided this year by East Suffolk District Council, and additionally the owner of various pieces of land around Rendlesham had been located and wants to work with the Community to bring new projects forward and joint meetings will take place alongside the Chair of Rendlesham Parish Council.</p> <p>There being no further business the meeting was closed.</p>
	<p>Signed:</p> <p>Chairman</p> <p>Date:</p>