

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FRANT PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT FRANT MEMORIAL HALL ON TUESDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2019 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllr Rutherford - Chairman
Cllrs Park, Crookshank, Howell

Cllr Keith Obbard
Mrs Rosie Karim – Clerk

Mrs Jan Steadman

1. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Standley, Macdonald-Brown, Wallis, Best and Luther. These were accepted.

2. To receive declarations of interests on items on the Agenda and changes to the Register of Interests

None.

3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting on 18th November 2019 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were **approved**.

4. To determine matters arising from the previous Minutes for updating and noting:

- The Clerk confirmed that she was liaising with Highways about a feasibility study for the new pedestrian crossing over the A267;
- The Clerk said the school's preference was to hold their fair on a separate day to the Parish Council's fair next year;
- The Clerk noted that a meeting was being set up in the new year with a landscaping firm suggested by Cllr Crookshank. She also said she had written to a local resident, who had had substantial landscaping work carried out, requesting the details of their contractor; and
- Cllr Rutherford said he had given Cllr Park his comments concerning the draft household survey.

5. Public forum – time limit 15 minutes

Mrs Steadman raised the issue of the proposed understorey planting at the Shernfold end of the green in Frant and said she was continuing to liaise with Orchard Landscapes about this. On the subject of the Sussex Lund grant, she confirmed that Friends of Frant Green Spaces (FOFGS) had decided to accept the grant, rather than ask the Parish Council to do so.

6. To receive reports from County and District Councillors

County

In Cllr Standley's absence, no report from County was given.

District

Cllr Obbard raised the following:

- The turnout for the General Election had been good and the results were obtained a bit earlier than in previous elections;
- The Health and Safety Review has given Wealden DC a 'high' rating;

- Cabinet is currently working on next year's budget, with a proposed £5 rise on a Band D property and 2.5% rise for Members and staff;
- Spending by visitors to the District increased by 8% last year with the value of tourism worth £370 million;
- Wealden DC has pledged to be a Modern Slavery Free district and is developing policies to that end; and
- Street Learning courses for over-19s are currently running, which aim to improve life skills.

Cllr Howell added to this with the following:

- Services for dementia support are being extended across the district;
- Advice concerning precautions to take during the winter period are now available;
- Advice is available for the Reduce for Christmas scheme, including tips for recycling and reusing wrapping paper, breaking-up cardboard and what to do with unwanted electrical items; and
- Cllr Howell concluded by wishing all those in the Parish a Merry Christmas.

Turning to other matters, Cllr Howell reported that there had been another accident at Pockocks Gate and she had spoken with Cllr Standley about this and the accident record generally, noting that there had been seven accidents since June. It was noted also that a car had come off the road at Chase Wood. Cllr Howell pointed out that the road surface on the A267 at the Tangier Road turning was in a very poor state and could be dangerous.

It was thus agreed that the Clerk would write to Highways, asking what could be done about the poor accident record and, separately, report the problem at Tangier Lane. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Rutherford considered that the formal recording of accidents on the East Sussex online accident map was inadvertently misleading, noting that despite a serious accident at the junction of the A267 and the turning to Wadhurst, the map suggested there had not been any accidents in this location for eight years. It was noted that if the police attend, as they had with this accident, it should be registered. Mrs Steadman said there had been another road accident in Frant.

7. Highways and Lighting

7.1 Lighting in Rushlye Close, Bells Yew Green

It was agreed in principle to install a solar-powered, motion sensor light on a wooden pole, not a galvanised pole (if possible). It was thus agreed that the Clerk would liaise with the firm which provides these lights, suggesting that this location could act as a suitable site to trial these types of lights. It was also agreed that the Clerk would liaise with ESCC about a licence and using a wooden pole. **Action: Clerk**

(Cllr Obbard left the meeting at 7.45pm)

The discussion turned to the parlous state of the roads in the Parish, with Cllr Howell identifying particular problems with the A267, Dundale Road and Bunny Lane, although noting the problems are not limited to these roads. She said that Highways appeared not to be able to adequately maintain the road network in light of the worsening levels of traffic. Cllr Crookshank agreed, noting that the C and D class road network was never designed to cope with the scale, intensity and type of traffic that is now commonplace. Cllr Rutherford queried why Highways appeared not to be reportable to ESCC and it was suggested that the Parish Council ask Cllr Standley to suggest that the Member responsible come and speak at a Parish Council meeting. **Action: JH**

Cllr Park said her property had been flooded again, as neither the nearby roads nor the gullies had been cleared and were blocked once again. It was agreed to write to Highways about this, particularly as this area is on a two-year rotation for clearing, which is proving to be wholly inadequate. **Action: Clerk**

8. Green Spaces

Cllr Howell raised her concerns with the poor state of parts of the green in Frant, largely due to errant parking. She said the Parish was at risk of losing the green through inertia. Cllr Rutherford responded that much work was ongoing to address these issues but it would take time to see results. Cllr Howell acknowledged how well the bund and wildflowers around the green in Bells Yew Green had worked to drastically reduce parking there. Mrs Steadman said heathers could be a planting option at Frant if something similar was proposed and that provided another specialised contractor undertook the planting, then Orchard Landscapes were well placed to maintain these areas. Cllr Rutherford agreed to liaise with a contractor he knows, who has experience of building shaped bunds. **Action: WR**

It was noted that, following recent works to a property behind the green in Frant involving several contractors, the green now needed to be made good. It was agreed the Clerk would write to the owners requesting that this now be done. **Action: Clerk**

Mrs Steadman noted that following a third-party survey of all the greens in Sussex, it was concluded that the green in Frant had the richest habitat, with sixty-five rare and/or unusual plants.

(Mrs Steadman left the meeting at 8.10pm)

Cllr Crookshank raised his concern that if planning permission were granted for new housing behind the green in Bells Yew Green, the new residents would ultimately end up walking or cycling across the green as a matter of course.

Cllr Howell noted that a manhole cover was sticking up at the end of the green in Bells Yew Green and she was concerned that this was posing a danger to vehicles and pedestrians. Cllr Crookshank agreed to investigate whether it was a drain or a service hatch so that the organisation responsible could be alerted. **Action: SC**

Turning to the application for the new green in Eridge, Cllr Rutherford said that Cllr Best had liaised with nearby residents and they were now supportive of the application and would be writing to Wealden DC to that end. He noted that amended plans concerning the proposed boundary treatment had been submitted to the planning officer for his consideration. Cllr Rutherford noted further that he had raised the issue with the Eridge Estate of installing bollards at the start of the lane and was awaiting a response. He also suggested that the Parish Council write to the Sussex Wildlife Trust about potentially contributing to the installation of a gate at the Eridge Rocks, similar to the gate at the RSPB Broadwater Warren site, to deter anti-social behaviour in this area.

Cllr Rutherford said he had been approached about moving a litter bin on the A26. It was agreed the Clerk would consult the asset register to see if it is within the ownership of the Parish Council. **Action: Clerk**

The Clerk raised the issue of the litter bin outside Frant Stores, noting that the previous contractor, Kier, had advised they were unable to empty certain types of bins that had lids aimed at deterring foxes, etc. Cllr Howell said she would pursue this issue with the new contractor, Biffa, and also their schedule of bin emptying, given the bin on the green in Frant often overflows. **Action: JH**

9. Finance

9.1 To approve the bank reconciliation and cash book

The bank reconciliation and cash book were **approved**.

9.2 To approve the accounts payable

The amount payable for the local election costs was queried. The amount was considered excessive for an uncontested election. It was agreed that, despite being collected via direct debit, Cllr Howell would follow this up with Electoral Services at Wealden District Council. **Action: JH**

The 'to be confirmed' amount for staff holiday pay was discussed and it was agreed that it was acceptable for the Parish Council to pay for unused holiday (although it was considered that, as a matter of principle and good practice, all leave should ideally be taken as such). Cllr Rutherford said he was considering the amount owing and would respond directly to the Clerk.

Action: WR

All other accounts to be paid were **approved**.

9.3 To consider the forward budget and agree the precept for 2020

The Clerk noted that, historically, the Parish Council's budget was usually more than the precept requested and that this year was no different. She pointed to rising costs generally but also a widening remit of responsibilities that the Parish Council was expected to cover during the year. Further, she noted that while the current general reserves allowed for some leeway, there was a real possibility that if the Parish Council continued to seek a precept that did not cover the budget, the general reserves would ultimately be diminished. Cllr Howell agreed that, more and more, parish and town councils were being asked to take on duties that had traditionally been within the realm of the district and borough councils.

After some discussion, it was thus agreed in principle, *and subject to a wider discussion at the Full Council in January with the remaining councillors*, to request a precept that matches the proposed budget for 2020/21.

10. To consider a range of projects for 2020

The Clerk suggested there were a number of projects that the Parish Council might like to consider for the forthcoming year, including formulating a Community Resilience Plan and recording its support for the Climate Change Emergency declared by Wealden DC. The Clerk noted that, as a Parish, there were a number of practical measures that could be taken – some of these had recently been published by Friends of the Earth in a document entitled '20 Actions Parish and Town Councils can take on the Climate and Nature Emergency'. It was agreed to forward this document to Cllr Rutherford. With respect to a Resilience Plan, Cllr Rutherford suggested that a list of contact details for all councillors should be circulated amongst themselves, in addition to the contact details for all those who had attended the First Aid course recently, with their permission.

Action: Clerk

11. To consider adoption of the amended Code of Conduct, as recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Wealden DC)

It was **agreed to adopt** the most recent version of the Code of Conduct.

12. Communications

12.1 To consider whether to submit a response to the Draft Transport Strategy for the Southeast

It was agreed that the Clerk would draft representations and circulate these to Cllrs Crookshank and Howell for their initial comment before submitting.

Action: Clerk

13. Planning

13.1 Update on planning application for the new green in Eridge

As discussed under item 8 above.

14. Horizon scanning

None.

15. Chairman's announcements & correspondence for noting

Cllr Rutherford tabled an email from Highways concerning proposed improvements to Bayham Road and this was welcomed by councillors.

He then read out a letter from Holy Trinity Eridge, requesting a contribution toward the cost of maintaining its churchyard. It was noted that the Parish Council had previously contributed a one-off sum but it was agreed they would decline to do so this year as funds were being used elsewhere. Clerk to respond. **Action: Clerk**

Lastly, Cllr Rutherford noted correspondence from Treework advising the cost of reducing a limb on the ancient oak on the green in Frant. The quotation was **approved**. **Action: Clerk**

16. Urgent issues at the discretion of the Chairman, for discussion only

Cllr Howell said thanks were due to both FOFGS and Manor Farm for the Christmas tree on the green. Councillors agreed that the tree was a great success.

Cllr Park enquired about progress with the new website and the Clerk said it should be complete by the end of the Christmas period.

Cllr Park also asked Cllr Howell if she could liaise with the relevant parties about the constant stream of litter along Benhall Mill Road that Cllr Park suspects is being deposited by workers from the Countryside development site. Cllr Howell agreed. **Action: JH**

Cllr Rutherford said he would be carrying out a staff appraisal with the Clerk in the new year and said he would be asking councillors for input and for two councillors to attend the appraisal itself.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9pm.

ACTION	BY WHOM
Liaise with ESCC and manufacturer about provision of a solar light for Rushlye Close.	Clerk
Request through Cllr Standley that the member responsible for Highways attends a Parish Council meeting.	JH
Write to Highways about gully clearing.	Clerk
Write to local resident to make good the green after renovation work at their property.	Clerk
Investigate raised manhole near the green in Bells Yew Green to ascertain what it is for.	SC
Liaise with contractor about options for a bund at the green in Frant.	WR
Consult asset register to determine ownership of a litter bin on the A26 in Eridge.	Clerk
Determine whether Biffa is able to attend to litter bins with anti-pest lids.	JH
Follow up with Electoral Services about the fee imposed on the Parish Council for the uncontested local election.	JH
Respond to the Clerk about holiday pay.	WR
Generate a list of contact details for First Aiders and councillors.	Clerk
Circulate response to Draft Transport Strategy to Cllrs Howell and Crookshank.	Clerk
Respond to the request made by HTE for a contribution to maintenance of the churchyard.	Clerk
Ask Treework to carry out work to oak on Frant green detailed in their quotation.	Clerk
Liaise with Wealden DC about Countryside contractors depositing litter along Benhall Mill Road.	JH