

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FRANT PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT BELLS YEW GREEN VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllr Rutherford - Chairman
Cllrs Macdonald-Brown, Park, Wallis, Howell

Cllr Bob Standley
Cllr Keith Obbard
Mrs Rosie Karim – Clerk

Mr Andrew Best

1. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Crookshank and Luther and 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 17th July 2019 as a true and accurate record.

Cllr Standley said there was an error at item 11.1 where it reads “Cllr Crookshank enquired about the proposed pedestrian crossing over the A267. Cllr Standley said there was a possibility that the Eridge Estate would give the money for the crossing to Wealden DC, for them to implement it”. Cllr Standley noted that he did not say that Wealden DC would “...implement” the crossing. The Minutes were duly amended.

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

- The Clerk confirmed that she had submitted the application for a feasibility study to ESCC for a new streetlight in Rushlye Close by the recommended date of 1st August. Completed.
- With respect to the fingerpost at Tea Garden Lane and High Rocks Lane, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have confirmed they do not own the *land*. It was therefore agreed that Frant PC would take responsibility for it and seek match-funding from ESCC. **Action: Clerk**
- Cllr Standley confirmed he had written to Nus Ghani MP about the poor Broadband service in the Parish, explaining to her that he had met with senior personnel at BT. He is awaiting a response.
- Cllr Standley said that Highways would not object in principle to a new pedestrian crossing across the A267 but would not fund it. He said Wealden DC has agreed to hold the £120K for the crossing from the Nevill Estate for five years, but would have no part to play in implementing it. If the money was not used in that time, it would be returned to the Nevill Estate. Cllr Standley said that the Parish Council would have to ‘top-up’ any additional funds required over and above the £120K and would need to first pay for Highways to carry out a safety audit. Cllr Standley also confirmed that a third party contractor could carry out the works, provided the audit passed.
- The Clerk confirmed that one contractor had responded and had declined to tender for the work to mitigate the effects of erosion around the green. Another firm was yet to respond. Cllr Rutherford said he knew of a third firm that might be interested in submitting a quote and would contact them. **Action: WR**
- The Clerk confirmed she had written to Orchard Landscapes, expressing the Council’s regret about the recent theft the firm had experienced. Completed.
- The Clerk said she had not yet investigated a way to secure the gate on the boundary with the playing field. Carried forward. **Action: Clerk**

- The Clerk confirmed that the Council was able to legally accept the Sussex Lund grant funds; however, on reflection, the Friends of Frant Green Spaces (FOFGS) had decided to take receipt of the money instead. Completed.
- New website – on agenda to discuss.
- Village green policy – on agenda to discuss.
- The Clerk said she had been recommended another bank for Parish Councils and she was investigating this further. **Action: Clerk**
- The Clerk confirmed she had written to BT about the Sleeches Cross phone box. Completed.
- Neighbourhood Plan – on agenda to discuss.
- Cllr Macdonald-Brown confirmed that he had responded to English Heritage about their Bayham Abbey research. Completed.
- Cllr Park said she would circulate the AONB report to councillors shortly. **Action: Clerk**

5. Public forum – time limit 15 minutes

Cllr Rutherford welcomed Mr Andrew Best to the meeting, explaining to councillors that he wished to join the Parish Council. Mr Best gave a brief summary of his background, noting that he had previously served on the Council for some ten years.

It was agreed to formally vote on co-opting Mr Best at the next Full Council meeting in October.

6. To receive reports from County and District Councillors

County

Cllr Standley raised the following points:

- This year's GCSE results showed improvements on previous years. Uplands in Wadhurst had done particularly well, while Beacon Academy again had the best results in Wealden.
- The Comprehensive Spending Review had allocated sums per primary and secondary student which was welcomed. Cllr Standley noted, however, that any caveats to this were yet to be seen.
- With respect to the need for streetlighting in Rushlye Close, Cllr Standley said he was keen to see this to fruition and he would help the Council to overcome any obstacles that might arise.

District

Cllr Obbard raised the following points:

- There is advice on ongoing Brexit preparations for all citizens on Wealden DC's website, plus links to other Government advice websites.
- Residents can sign up for 'My Alerts' on Wealden DC's website, which sends weekly news updates, including about planning applications and refuse collections.
- At its Full Council meeting in July, Wealden DC declared a Climate Emergency. Although some amendments to the Cabinet Report were voted down, it was noted that the issue of the climate crisis was discussed; it is hoped that the Council will continue to progress its intention to become carbon neutral at least by 2050, but hopefully prior to that date.
- The official opening of the second largest SANGS site the Council has created was held at Horsted Green Park on the Uckfield By-pass. It was attended by Councillors and members of the public and the High Weald Beekeepers had an informative stall and gave a talk to local school children.
- The Wealden DC's Community Grants are now open for local organisations to apply for grants up to a maximum of £15k for capital projects. The deadline for applications is 30th November and pre-application advice can be sought from the funding support officer.
- The annual updating of the Electoral Register is underway. All residents should by now have received a letter to update their details. It is requested that residents respond quickly and preferably do so online.

Cllr Howell noted the following:

- The Local Plan Inspector is expected to report her findings within the next two weeks.
- Following on from Cllr Obbard's comments, Cllr Howell also noted that the community grants are now available comprising smaller grants of £500-£3000 and capital grants of £1000-£15,000.
- High Weald Walking Festivals are taking place soon.
- Street Learning is taking place again this year, with forty free courses for over-19 year olds.
- There will be a series of road closures affecting the Parish as South East Water carry out works in Tunbridge Wells.
- Cllr Howell and Cllr Macdonald-Brown are meeting with English Heritage on 14th October to discuss the state of repair of parts of the Bayham Abbey site, particularly the Dower House.
- Cllr Howell said she had met with representatives from Inspired Villages concerning their application for a retirement 'village' in the Parish. She said that Wealden DC's view about the scheme remained negative. She said the proposed GP surgery would be a satellite surgery (likely of a Tunbridge Wells surgery) and was intended to be open to all to use. Cllr Macdonald-Brown confirmed that, on average, a GP has a portfolio of 2000 patients. Cllr Park noted that significant trips could thus be generated by people attending GP appointments. Cllr Howell said that the Inspector might reinforce the issue of trip generation vis a vis the Ashdown Forest and the proposed development would thus not be acceptable to Wealden DC in this respect. Cllr Wallis thanked the Clerk for the representations she made about the application on behalf of the Council.

(Cllr Standley left the meeting)

7. Green Spaces

7.1 To review draft policy for the village greens

Cllr Park thanked councillors for their comments on the draft policy (previously circulated). Highlighting point 14, she suggested that the policy should not specify the amount for the charge for not adhering to the policy, but rather announce the amount annually. This was agreed. Cllr Howell noted that there might be conditions enshrined in the original documents from when the green was gifted by the Camden and Nevill Estates. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Rutherford thanked Cllr Park for her efforts in researching and producing this draft policy. He noted a few minor amendments and suggested that the policy make reference to the Parish Council's Advertising Policy. Cllr Park suggested that other green spaces in the Parish be dealt with separately, particularly as they do not benefit from the same legislative protection. This was agreed. It was also agreed that Cllr Park would update the draft version and once the original deeds and land registry map were identified, the policy should be advertised on the website and letters sent, with a link to the website, to those residents immediately surrounding the green. **Action: DP**

Cllr Rutherford noted that Mrs Steadman (FOFGS) had produced a draft strategy for the green environments within the Parish. Cllr Park said that the strategy included a number of assumptions about the Parish Council's position and it should be looked at carefully. This was agreed and Cllr Rutherford asked councillors to review the policy and email the Clerk with any comments. **Action: All**

7.2 To discuss stakeholder meetings about the Parish field

It was agreed that Cllr Howell, as a member of both the Parish Council and FOFGS, should maintain a watching brief at any such meetings.

8. Finance

8.1 To approve the bank reconciliation and cash book

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

(Cllr Obbard left the meeting)

8.2 To approve the accounts payable

The accounts to be paid, as follows, were **approved**:

Payee	Item	Cheque No.	Amount
N.McGregor-Gould	Permanent handrail repair	3021	£122.16
N.McGregor-Gould	Jul/Aug/Sept clean and repairs to shelters	3022	£207.65
Playdale	Inv 0000036074 Various repairs to play equipment in Frant	3023	£1735.98
Staff	Tax/NL, salary, expenses & mileage	3024/25/26	£1225.13
IMAGO	Dial2Drive for Jul 19 (with H.Smith funds)	3027	£105.33
		TOTAL	£3310.48

8.3 To consider renewal of contract with GDPR consultant for an additional year

The Clerk noted that a second year retaining the GDPR consultant would cost a flat fee of £150. The benefits of this were discussed and **approved**.

9. Communications

9.1 Update on new website

Cllr Park said that she and the Clerk had met to discuss the website. She said she wished to record the Council's thanks to the Clerk for establishing the new website. She also thanked other councillors for their photographs and asked others to submit theirs. It was agreed to launch the new website by coinciding with an upcoming edition of the Parish News. Cllr Park agreed to liaise with Ms Kinley about her editorial deadlines. **Action: DP**

9.2 Summary of recent webinar / useful information concerning the Neighbourhood Plan process

Cllr Park said that she and the Clerk had attended a webinar, hosted by My Neighbourhood Plan, a network of planning advisors specialising in developing Neighbourhood Plans. Cllr Park summarised the advantages of producing a Plan, including that it would help to shape the future of the Parish, it would carry substantive legal weight and it would attract increased CIL funds to the Parish arising out of local development. The disadvantages were noted as being the length of time it could take to produce a Plan and the cost, largely because of the statutory requirements during the process, including a referendum, an independent assessment, accordance with the adopted Local Plan at the time and the need to engage widely with the local community, reflecting on this and then re-engaging.

Cllr Park noted there were alternatives to a Neighbourhood Plan, including updating the Parish Council's current Parish Plan, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Village Design Statements. Cllr Howell suggested that the Parish was more vulnerable from development without a Neighbourhood Plan in place.

It was thus agreed to consult the local community by way of a pre-survey, to identify the will for beginning the Neighbourhood Plan process and what the community feel the important issues to be. This could coincide with the launch of the website. Cllr Wallis noted the polarity of opinion that was evident at the recent Rydon Home event and councillors considered that some of the issues pertinent to local residents might not be issues that could legally be included in a Plan. Cllr Rutherford noted that this first consultation could form part of the baseline for the Plan,

demonstrating community engagement. Cllr Howell said that the definition of key phrases, such as 'council housing' and 'affordable housing' would need to be clarified. Cllr Macdonald-Brown suggested that the survey comprise of a scale and scoring system for the questions.

It was thus agreed that Cllr Park would draft the survey questions and circulate for comment and the Clerk would obtain information on the demographic make-up of the Parish from Wealden DC. **Action: Clerk/DP**

10. Planning

10.1 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 29th July 2019

The Minutes were **approved** as a true and accurate record.

10.2 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 2nd September 2019

The Minutes were **approved** as a true and accurate record.

10.3 To consider licence and planning applications received and make recommendations:

- **WD/2019/1389/F – The Hirsell, Ely Grange, Frant, TN3 9DY**

Single-storey ground floor extension including roof conversion to main dwelling. Single-storey extension to ancillary building to create an annexe.

There was discussion around the extent of the development proposed and, in particular, the 3-storey element. It was agreed that the extensions would result in over-development on the site and parts of the scheme would be overbearing. It was also agreed that the proposed development would be out of keeping with its surroundings, which largely comprises small gardeners' cottages, stables and so on, and there were concerns around the number of skylights proposed. The Council agreed to object to the application.

- **WD/2019/1800/F – 2 Rushlye Cottage, Hawkenbury Road, Frant, TN3 4AP.**

Proposed conversion of existing outbuilding to create new kitchen and proposed single-storey extension to link the existing outbuilding to the existing house.

It was agreed to object to the proposed on the grounds that the development was extensive and would be overbearing to its neighbours. Specifically, the Council had concerns that the existing footprint of the converted outbuilding was being substantially increased.

10.4 To note applications determined by Wealden District Council or withdrawn:

- **WD/2019/1451/LDE – Flowerpot Nursery, Frant Road, Frant, TN3 9HB Commercial horticultural nursery – open to the public, including temporary structures, sheds and hard standing.**

Issued: 29th August 2019

Councillors noted this decision.

11. Highways and Lighting

11.1 Lighting in Rushlye Close, Bells Yew Green

Cllr Wallis expressed her concerns about the length of time the process to install lighting in the Close would take. It was agreed to ask Cllr Standley to help to establish the expected timeline for the Feasibility Study and the licence that would ultimately be needed. **Action: Clerk**

12. Horizon scanning

Cllr Wallis requested that the ivy be removed from the BT phone box in Bells Yew Green. **Action: Clerk**

13. Chairman's announcements & correspondence for noting

None.

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

Cllr Rutherford noted that a local resident had attended the recent planning meeting to ask whether the Parish Council had considered installing a defibrillator in the phone box in Frant. He said he had reassured her that the this option had been considered at length and that the Parish Council had decided instead to fund First Aid courses.

Cllr Rutherford gave an update on the Parish Council's application for the new green in Eridge, noting objections had been submitted from the residents opposite the proposed site. He said that Wealden DC had agreed to extend its decision to 4th October and it was suggested that the Clerk seek a further extension. **Action: Clerk**

Mr Best noted that there had been a history of generosity from the Eridge Estate and that it would be a shame if the community did not embrace this grant of land as a future community asset.

It was agreed that the residents who objected would be reconsulted.

Cllr Howell informed councillors that there had been some recent unrest in Warren Ridge and the police had been called. She asked councillors to let her know if they became aware of anything relating to this.

Lastly, Cllr Rutherford recorded with regret the recent passing of Mr David Addey, who had, at one time, served as a committed member of the Parish Council.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9.30pm.

Action	By whom