

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FRANT PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT BELLS YEW GREEN VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 18TH JULY 2018 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllr Rutherford - Chairman
Cllrs Mrs Wallis, Mrs Best, Crookshank, Rowland

Mrs R. Karim – Clerk
County Cllr Whetstone
Mrs J. Steadman – Frant Open Spaces Group

1. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from County Cllr Standley, Cllrs Mrs Howell, Mrs Park, Stevens and Macdonald-Brown. Apologies 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 20 June 2018 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

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

4.1 Cllr Rutherford to meet with Mr McGregor-Gould to identify a location for the circular bench. Carried forward.

Action: WR

4.2 Cllr Rutherford said he had carried out risk assessments of the assets in Frant ward and would forward the forms to the Clerk.

Action: WR

4.3 Cllr Rutherford offered to refurbish the village sign in the coming months.

4.4 Cllr Rutherford said he would liaise with the Cricket Club and Orchard Landscapes about frequency of cuts.

Action: WR

4.5 The Clerk confirmed that she had followed up with Highways about the broken light along the A267.

4.6 The Clerk said she was looking at options for securing the litter bin outside the corner shop. Carried forward.

Action: Clerk

4.7 Cllr Rutherford asked councillors whether they had been able to install their new email addresses. Most said they had not and the Clerk said she would liaise with Mr Murray about his offer of one-to-one support on this.

Action: Clerk

5. Public forum

Mrs Steadman raised the following matters:

- A number of tiles are loose, or have fallen from, the Victoria Well;
- A new replacement bench has been installed in the football field;
- A date needs to be agreed for the walk around the green to look at various issues, related particularly to any risks arising from the new way in which the green is being managed. Cllr Rutherford confirmed that it was not necessary to be accompanied by a health and safety officer during this walkabout;
- The latest ecology report from Corylus has been registered with the relevant authority and the local habitat given policy protection in the latest Draft Local Plan; and
- Whether there is a possibility that a dog bag dispenser could be attached to the existing dog bin on the green.

Cllr Rutherford noted that he had been informed by ESCC of a local resident's concern about the length of grass along the pavement near Shernfold Park, along the main road. He said he had walked this route and did not consider that it posed a tangible problem for pedestrians.

6. To receive reports of County and District Councillors

County

Cllr Whetstone noted that the problem of frequency of ESCC grass cutting was widespread, given recent budget cuts.

Cllr Whetstone said he would be interested to learn the outcome of Cllr Standley's meeting concerning the supply of Broadband, noting that although a postcode might be served, not all the houses within that catchment always benefitted.

Turning to the issue of whether Eridge Village Hall could purchase the car park area outside the hall from ESCC, Cllr Whetstone said he had sent various papers to the Clerk via email, but had done so just before the meeting so she would not have yet received them. In summary, Cllr Whetstone said it was a possibility the hall could purchase the land, but that there would be a set of procedures to follow and it would not necessarily be straightforward. Cllr Best noted a recent suggestion that Highways might grant the hall a licence such that the hall could undertake the maintenance and upkeep of the car park at its own expense.

Cllr Whetstone referred to the ongoing pressures of ESCC having to find savings while still being obliged to deliver the same level of service.

Cllr Rutherford thanked Cllr Whetstone for his comments.

District

Cllr Rutherford said that Full Council had approved the Draft Local Plan which would now be the subject of an eight-week consultation period. He said that this latest version of the Plan was broadly similar to previous versions of the Plan in terms of the numbers of houses proposed for Frant and Bells Yew Green.

Cllr Rutherford tabled the published list of SHELAA* sites, noting that these were the sites that had been deemed the most favourable by Wealden DC for future housing development over the next eleven years, and also those considered to be unsuitable. Cllr Rutherford read out the list of suitable sites in Frant and Bells Yew Green and agreed to circulate the report to councillors.

Action: WR

**Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment*

Cllr Crookshank said he was very concerned about the level of houses being proposed, noting that the numbers for the Parish as a whole were heavily weighted towards Bells Yew Green. He said he was also concerned that this amounted to the further creep of development from Tunbridge Wells toward Bells Yew Green and, at some point, it was up to the Parish Council to have these concerns heard and acknowledged. Cllr Crookshank also opined whether or not, as a result of an increase in the population in the Parish, the number of Parish councillors would need to likewise increase.

(Cllr Whetstone left the meeting at 8pm)

Cllr Rutherford noted that the baseline assumptions about need which underpin the housing allocations across Wealden were being questioned in terms of their accuracy. He agreed with Cllr Crookshank, noting that the key issues for Bells Yew Green were increases in the numbers of houses in the heart of the village, the potential for urban creep from Tunbridge Wells and the impact on local infrastructure, including roads. He considered that the Neighbourhood Plan was the obvious vehicle for protecting the interests of the Parish.

Cllr Best, in referring to a recent article, said that Barratt Homes was teaming up with the RSPB to deliver housing schemes that were ecologically responsible. She suggested that this idea could be included in the Neighbourhood Plan to guide future development in the Parish.

7. Green Spaces

7.1 To consider a proposal from Frant Open Spaces Group (FOSG)

Mrs Steadman tabled a document, produced by FOSG, summarising the latest ecology report about the green in Frant, from Corylus. In referring to the summary, she said the acid grassland behind the pill box and the new heather should be left for two to three years and then managed on a three-yearly cycle.

She also highlighted a tree group, including pines, a purple beech and an oak tree opposite the pill box and near the junction of the A267 and the Bells Yew Green Road. She noted that the tree group serves as a punctuation point by the junction and provides some screening of traffic in the views south across the green. It also assists in breaking up the mass of Frant Court. Mrs Steadman said the FOSG was suggesting that, instead of removal, some crown lifting to the two larger pines and the larger birch is considered, so as to lighten up the understorey and encourage the heather. She also noted that the purple beech appears to have substantial crown die back and the cherry is a poor specimen but the oak appears to be in good condition.

Thus, she said that FOSG was recommending that Treework be invited to review the trees and prepare a quotation for crown-lifting the pine and birch and, subject to their inspection findings, the removal of the cherry and the small purple beech. Once the Treework recommendations are known, an application for arboricultural works could be submitted to WDC by FOSG. Treework could also remove the dead tree from the upper green outside The Stables and Mrs Steadman noted that a provisional date to meet with Treework had been fixed for 30th July. Mrs Steadman also proposed that the work to the pines and birch, and the cherry and beech removal (if approved) be paid for by FOSG. The removal of the dead tree would be for the Parish Council to fund.

Lastly, Mrs Steadman noted that the cutting back of the long heather was already within the tender document with Orchard Landscapes. She said she was going to meet with Orchard Landscapes to review what should be included in their next invoice.

Cllr Crookshank said that, as a matter of principle, trees were the responsibility of the Parish Council and should remain as such. He considered that the Parish Council should fund any work to the trees. Mrs Steadman responded by explaining that the constraints imposed on the grant that FOSG had received meant that the Group were restricted as to how the money could be spent and it could not simply be donated to the Parish Council. The grant had to be used by the end of December 2018 and its provision was to assist the Parish Council in returning the green in Frant to a traditional form of management.

Cllr Rutherford agreed with Cllr Crookshank but acknowledged that there was money available to be spent and it should be used to its best advantage. Cllr Rutherford therefore suggested that the report from Treework commissioned by the Parish Council in 2016 should be revisited. Any additional costs over and above what Treework had previously outlined could be covered by the grant, subject to agreement with Wealden DC.

On another matter, Cllr Wallis noted how well the new bund around the green in Bells Yew Green was looking.

(Mrs Steadman left the meeting at 8.30pm)

8. Finance (WR)

8.1 To approve the accounts payable

The accounts to be paid were approved.

Cllr Rutherford referred to the success of the recent fair held by the Parish Council, noting that overall numbers appeared to be slightly down on the previous fair, but that there had been more children. Cllr Wallis noted that the Friends of Bells Yew Green had raised a sum of money to give to the village hall.

9. To review the Council's commemorations to mark the end of WW1

Cllr Rutherford said that a local newspaper had contacted the Clerk about whether the Parish Council was proposing to have a beacon. The idea was discussed and it was agreed to investigate the details of the original beacon in Frant. It was also agreed that the Clerk would speak with Mrs Freestone again about whether the bells were going to be rung in commemoration.

Action: Clerk/WR

Cllr Rutherford said he was hoping to hold an exhibition about the history of the Parish's involvement in WW1. Cllr Crookshank said it was important that a balance was had between commemorating this involvement and celebrating the end of the war.

Cllr Wallis suggested a commemorative plaque be installed on/in the Memorial Hall and it was agreed this was a good idea. While discussing the Memorial Hall, Cllr Wallis said she had attended the emergency meeting that had been convened to find volunteers for the various roles associated with the running and management of the hall. She said that many volunteers came forward to form a new Board of Trustees / management committee.

10. Safety in the Parish (MR)

Cllr Rowland said that so-called distraction burglaries were still prevalent; there had been a recent case in Mayfield of a man purporting to be from the Water Board and trying to gain access to a property. Cllr Rowland also noted that London drug gangs were continuing to target this area and nearby Tunbridge Wells to encourage young people to go into the drug lines.

11. Communications (DP)

In Cllr Park's absence, this item was not discussed.

12. Highways and Lighting (AMB)

Cllr Best raised the issue of the car park area outside Eridge Village Hall. She said the hall had received a quote to undertake some remedial works to the side passage, car park area and the area by the road – this was in the region of £7600 plus VAT (or £6200 plus VAT, if the works to the side passage were excluded). It was agreed that this issue should be raised at the upcoming SLR meeting with Highways.

Cllr Wallis noted that there was a patch of long grass near Bayham Road and Bartley Mill Road which was reducing visibility when in a car. Other similar areas of overgrown vegetation were also noted, including at the end of Bunny Lane, the bottom of Church Lane and around the VAS sign on the A267.

Action: Clerk

13. Planning (GB)

13.1 To note applications withdrawn by the applicant or determined by Wealden DC.

WD/2018/1020/F & 1021/LB – Chasewood Cottage, Frant Road, Frant, TN3 9HG

Side porch off of existing rear service door.

Approved on 12th July 2018.

Councillors noted the decision.

14. Horizon Scanning

None.

15. Chairman's announcements & correspondence for noting

Cllr Rutherford referred to an email from a local resident in Church Lane, in which the impact on nearby residents of a high boundary hedge at Frant Grange was raised. It was agreed that the Parish Council would write to the owners, asking them if they would reduce the height of their boundary hedge.

16. Urgent issues at the discretion of the Chairman for noting or inclusion on a future agenda

None.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9.05pm.