

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FRANT PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT BELLS YEW GREEN VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 20th NOVEMBER 2019 AT 7.30PM

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

Cllr Bob Standley
Cllr Keith Obbard
Mrs Rosie Karim – Clerk

Mrs Giny Best
Two members of the public

1. To receive apologies

No apologies were received.

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 23rd October 2019 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were **approved**.

(Cllr Park arrived at the meeting at 7.35pm)

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

- The Clerk said she had corresponded with Mr Bee at the Eridge Estate about the possibility of coordinating the installation of the necessary infrastructure for the new pedestrian crossing with the works on site.
- The Clerk said that Mr Huskisson had produced a draft tender brief for the consultancy work related to the green in Frant and it was on the agenda for discussion. The Clerk noted that the issue of how to deter parking on the green was included in the brief.
- The Clerk confirmed she had submitted the Council's representations on the Draft Local Plan to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- With respect to proposed streetlighting in Rushlye Close, the Clerk confirmed she had emailed Cllr Standley and that it was on the agenda for discussion. Referring to the planting that was growing over the existing streetlight in the Close, the Clerk noted that the column appeared to be embedded in the hedge, presumably owned by the house behind. It was agreed that Cllr Wallis would liaise with Mr McGregor-Gould about this. **Action: SW**
- Cllr Rutherford updated Cllr Standley about the recent accident at the junction of the A267 and the turning to Wadhurst and about correspondence he had received from a property nearby about the dangers of this intersection. Cllr Standley agreed to investigate. **Action: BS**

5. Public forum – time limit 15 minutes

One resident from Eridge addressed the Council, explaining local residents' concerns about the proposed community green (the subject of a current planning application), including the removal of part of the hedge, concerns about noise, car movements, parking and anti-social behaviour that might arise, the perceived lack of consultation and the future maintenance of the green. Mrs Best assured them that she had deposited leaflets by hand to all local

residents on two occasions; she also said the information had been placed in a Parish News edition and an Eridge newsletter and she had personally spoken to a number of local residents to explain the proposals.

Cllr Best suggested that the green could be secured via a similar system of solar gates to those that operate at the RSPB site at Broadwater Warren. He also acknowledged the current problem of anti-social behaviour at Eridge Rocks and agreed to speak with the Sussex Wildlife Trust about this. **Action: AB**

Cllr Rutherford added that the green would be subsumed into the Council's existing grounds maintenance programme.

Cllr Best said he was also aware of the current problem of traffic into and out of Warren Lane, particularly when cars were parked down one side of the Lane. He said he would liaise with Strutt and Parker about the possibility of installing bollards. **Action: AB**

Turning to the green itself, Cllr Best noted that establishing this area for the benefit of the community was a one-off opportunity; it amounted to a gift of the land from the Eridge Estate with a 100-year lease at a peppercorn rent and would provide a community asset for generations to come. Local residents could help shape how the green was maintained - as a wildflower meadow, cut to lawn, etc. He also pointed out that, tactically, in planning terms, it ensured that the road could not be widened in the future, potentially prohibiting future development in the fields beyond because of poor access. Cllr Howell noted that, given the constraints on the wider area (Conservation Area and AONB), applications for future building would be strongly resisted.

Cllr Rutherford concluded that it was very unlikely that people would make a car journey to visit the green, but rather would visit on foot. It was intended that it would be used by local residents and by church-goers.

Cllr Best offered to meet with local residents to discuss the proposals further. **Action: AB**

6. To receive reports from County and District Councillors

County

Cllr Standley noted he was in purdah because of the upcoming election and was this restricted as to what he could report. However, he noted that with respect to 90% of the County Council's performance indicators, the County Council was in the 'green'. He also said that the County Council had been shortlisted for a national award for the work it does with helping young people to pursue their careers.

(The two residents left the meeting at 7.55pm)

District

Cllr Howell gave the following report:

- Complaints to Wealden DC have fallen significantly; indeed, the Council has received letters of congratulations.
- The Health and Safety Review 2018/2019 secured a high performance throughout, for which Wealden should be congratulated.
- Wealden DC have agreed a pay award of 2.5% which is incorporated in the 2020/21 budget.
- Wealden DC also agreed the modelling of a council tax increase of £5 for Band D for 2020/21 and beyond for resource planning purposes and begin work on savings proposals to mitigate any negative impact arising from national changes to the funding system for local government.
- Domestic Abuse and Modern Slavery : Wealden DC have pledged to becoming a modern, slavery free community and are setting out policies to see this through.

- Climate Change: Wealden DC have delegated the ability to incorporate environmental measures to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Benefits and the Director of Community and Customer Services to see if elements can contribute to the climate change action plan.
- Spending by visitors rose by 8% in Wealden last year, around £288.5 million of the tourist spending went to local businesses. The total value of tourism to the District is £368.7 million. Tourism is a very important part of Wealden's economy.
- Amendments have been made to the Code of Conduct in relation to bullying and harassment and Cllr Howell advised councillors to familiarise themselves with the Code (available on Wealden DC's website)
- The two planning committees did a tour of the builds that have been given approval so they can see how their decisions pan out; this includes looking at the lay out and quality of the materials used in the buildings and their impact on the local community.

Cllr Obbard updated the Council, as follows:

- The deadline for registering to vote in the election is 26th November and the Clerk confirmed she would add this to the website; **Action: Clerk**
- He had joined the Head of Planning and other planning officers on the annual bus tour of development sites in the district;
- He noted that consultants had been employed to produce a Climate Plan. Results to date showed that emissions arising from the Council itself were as a result of its own buildings, with just 3% coming from Council-generated traffic movements. Conversely, the district as a whole saw 47% of its emissions arising from traffic.

Cllr Standley updated the Council about the Draft Local Plan, noting that the Inspector would report after the general election, although he thought this might well happen in the new year instead.

Cllr Standley noted that the Parish Conference had been well attended and had provided a good opportunity for networking. He also noted that the District Council had been shortlisted for the Entrepreneurial Council of the Year.

7. Highways and Lighting

7.1 Lighting in Rushlye Close, Bells Yew Green

In respect to recent correspondence from East Sussex County Council about installing a standard streetlighting column in Rushlye Close, Cllr Crookshank suggested that a better alternative might be a motion sensor, solar-powered light. Councillors agreed to obtain a quote and considered that the County Council might consider using this location to trial this type of light. Cllr Standley agreed to follow this up from his end. **Action: Clerk/BS**

7.2 Pedestrian crossing across the A267

The issue of carrying out a feasibility study for the new pedestrian crossing was discussed. Cllr Best proposed that the Parish Council commission ESCC to undertake a feasibility study. This was seconded by Cllr Crookshank. Cllr Standley noted that ESCC will need to give a licence for a crossing across the highway; he said that if the Parish Council wished to undertake the feasibility study, he would keep an eye on matters at the County level. **Action: Clerk/BS**

Cllr Rutherford reminded councillors to report (to the Clerk) any streetlights that needed replacement bulbs.

(Cllrs Standley and Obbard left the meeting at 8.25pm)

8. To review conclusion of external audit for 2018-2019

The External Audit Certificate was tabled by the Clerk and its conclusions noted by the Council.

9. Green Spaces

9.1 To consider the draft tender/brief for consultancy work for Frant green

The Clerk tabled the draft tender written by Mr Huskisson for the Council. Cllr Best voiced his concern with the scale of the fees that had already been given to the Council by two sets of consultants in the first round. Both Cllrs Rutherford and Howell said that this problem of erosion around the green had been considered and agreed by the Council over two years ago and that the consultancy work was intended to set the framework for how the Council deals with the green over a period of time. Cllr Howell noted particularly that any further delay would be injurious to the green. Cllr Rutherford noted that the Council had agreed to take a more holistic approach to administering the green and the Friends of Frant Green has kick-started this process by commissioning an ecological report. Following this, Allen Scott had submitted their findings and reported on what the key issues are for the green; the new study, the subject of this draft tender, was intended to advise the Council *what measures* could be taken to address these issues; the final stage would be to carry out the proposed work in phases.

Notwithstanding this, Cllr Best suggested that it would be more cost effective to ask the contractors themselves to submit a quote as they would have a vested interest in winning the work. This approach was agreed and various councillors agreed to contact firms to ask if they were willing to submit a quote. **Action: BS/AMB/WR**

Cllr Best agreed to liaise with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to ascertain which contractor(s) they use for work around their greens. **Action: AB**

It was also agreed to proceed with sending the tender document to the two consultancy firms for revised quotes. **Action: Clerk**

9.2 To consider the reinstatement of the path across the green

The Clerk noted that it had originally been intended to consider the reinstatement of the path in the consultants' study of the green. She also said she had written to the Rights of Way Officer at Wealden DC and was awaiting a response. Various surfacing materials were discussed, such as mesh and gravel and self-binding gravel. It was agreed that the councillors (as above) would ask the same landscaping firms for their input and the Clerk would liaise with the Landscape Officer at Wealden DC for advice. **Action: Clerk/BS/AMB/WR**

10. Finance

10.1 To approve the bank reconciliation and cash book

The Clerk said she had experienced difficulty in downloading the cash book from the accounting software and said she would bring this to the next meeting.

The bank reconciliation was **approved**.

10.2 To approve the accounts payable

It was agreed to withhold the payment for the refurbishment of the fingerposts until confirmation had come through that the work had been completed. Notwithstanding this, the accounts were **approved**.

10.3 To agree amendments to the Financial Regulations to reflect changes in practice and to adopt the latest version

The Clerk tabled amendments to Section 6 of the current Financial Regulations to reflect the Council's move toward online banking. The amended Financial Regulations were **adopted**.

11. Communications

11.1 To review the draft Parish Survey

Cllr Park said she had been progressing the survey and was looking in to using Survey Monkey for online responses. Cllr Rutherford said he would like more time to review the content and would email Cllr Park with any comments.

Various collection points for completed surveys were suggested, such as Fullers in Eridge and the Forge Garage in Little Bayham. A target deadline of 31st January was considered, with a view to presenting the findings at the Annual Parish Meeting in May.

11.2 To consider producing a logo for the Parish Council

The idea of establishing a logo for the Parish Council was discussed. It was noted that it is now common for Parish Councils to have a logo. However, a number of councillors considered it was unnecessary and it was agreed to review this in a year or so.

11.3 To receive an update on the Parish Conference

Cllr Park summarised the key outcomes of the Parish Conference, including the possibility of signing up to different schemes promoted by the Woodland Trust, such as a 'tree giveaway' and the suggestion of utilising our PCSO to sticker illegally parked cars in the Parish for a day a month.

12. To discuss progress with the Eridge green planning application

Given the detailed discussion about the new green during the Public Forum, Cllr Best simply reiterated that he would follow up with local residents about their concerns.

13. To receive an update about the grant application for refurbishment of the village hall in Bells Yew Green

Cllr Crookshank suggested that the Trustees of the village hall (Cllrs Crookshank, Macdonald-Brown and Rutherford and the Clerk) declare a non-pecuniary interest in this item.

Cllr Wallis explained that she had changed the emphasis of the grant application to better reflect the requirements of the granting body. She went on to detail what items in the hall needed replacing or upgrading. She pointed out that the other two halls in the Parish were superior in terms of the quality of their facilities and the hall in Bells Yew Green needed to be able to attract a regular income stream through the hire of the premises for parties, etc. Cllr Park acknowledged the huge success of the recent craft fair organised by Cllr Wallis to raise funds for the hall.

It was agreed that a sound case had been made for a contribution from the Parish Council. Cllr Rutherford proposed an amount of £1200 be donated and this was seconded by Cllr Best.

14. Planning

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

- **WD/2019/2234/F – 9 Knowle Cottage, Wadhurst Road, Frant, TN3 9EJ**

Demolition of existing lean-to rear extension, proposed reconstruction with additional utility room.

No objections were raised to the proposals.

- **WD/2019/2203/F – Yew Cottage, Frant Road, Frant, TN3 9HB**

Removal of carport and conservatory to be replaced with a two-storey side extension and infill extension.

It was noted that this scheme had been amended, following an earlier refusal, and that the current proposals appeared to take account of the Parish Council's previous comments. It was considered that the scheme was now more in keeping and no objections were raised.

14.2 To note applications determined by Wealden District Council:

- **WD/2019/1913/F – 1 Dale Cottage, Tangier Lane, TN3 9DY**

Two-storey pitched roof side extension and new single-storey pitched roof front porch.

Approved on 11th November 2019

- **WD/2019/1851/ANR – Land between Broom Lane and the entrance to South Farm Lane, Langton Green, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 9NZ**

Application for dual-purpose sign to show the entry into South Farm and the location of Crestala Fencing.
Approved on 12th November 2019,

Both approvals were noted.

15. Horizon scanning

15.1 Frant fair

The Clerk said that the primary school had asked permission to hold a circus style fair on the field on which the bonfire is held in June or July. Councillors agreed to this and suggested that the Council could hold its fair on the same day in the school field. It was agreed to liaise with the school about this.

Action: Clerk

15.2 WWII - 75th anniversary commemorations

Cllr Rutherford asked councillors to begin thinking about ways in which the Council could mark this occasion next year.

16. Chairman's announcements & correspondence for noting

None.

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

None.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9.50pm.