

# FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

## THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FRANT PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT FRANT MEMORIAL HALL ON WEDNESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2019 AT 7.30PM

**Present:** Cllr Rutherford - Chairman  
Cllrs Park, Wallis, Crookshank, Luther

Cllr Keith Obbard  
Mrs Rosie Karim – Clerk

Mr John Bee

**1. To receive apologies.**

Apologies were received from County Cllr Bob Standley and Cllrs Howell and Macdonald-Brown. The 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 18<sup>th</sup> September 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 said that she had received confirmation that ESCC will match fund the repair of two fingerposts and she has asked JakkUK to commence work. Completed.
- Cllr Rutherford said he had approached a company about tendering for the work around the green in Frant but that they had declined to submit.
- The Clerk confirmed that a meeting had been set up with Barclays Bank for 1 November with a view to the Council switching accounts for online banking.
- Cllr Park confirmed she had circulated the AONB report to councillors for comments.
- The Clerk said she had located the original documents relating to the ownership/gifting of the green in Frant and she and Cllr Park had noted the conditions contained therein re: the Council's new policy for the green.
- It was agreed to allow more time for councillors to consider the draft strategy for the green (distinct from the policy), produced by FOFGS.
- Cllr Park said she had sent Mrs Kinley information about the parish-wide survey and website launch for insert into Parish News.
- Draft Parish survey – it was agreed to discuss this further down in the agenda.
- The Clerk said she had not yet had an update from Cllr Standley about the feasibility study for new lighting in Rushlye Close.
- The Clerk confirmed that the plant growth over the phone box in Bells Yew Green was due to be removed during the upcoming weekend.
- The Clerk confirmed that Wealden District Council had agreed to an extension in time for the application for the new green in Eridge to 6<sup>th</sup> December.

**5. Public forum – time limit 15 minutes.**

Mr. Bee, representing the Eridge Estate, circulated a plan of the Fern Close (Phase II) development, annotated with some minor amendments to reflect the repositioning of some of the units near the A267. He noted these were the

subject of a Non-Material Amendment application with Wealden District Council and he expected a response within 28 days. He went on to note that work was likely to commence on site in November and certainly by the end of the year.

*(Mr. Bee left the meeting at 7.40pm)*

## **6. To receive reports from County and District Councillors.**

### **County**

Cllr Rutherford read out a report from Cllr Standley, submitted prior to the meeting:

- The County Council has declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to becoming carbon neutral as soon as possible, but by 2050 at the latest. An action plan will be developed and the districts and boroughs have agreed to work with the County Council to share good practice.
- All waste collected by the districts and boroughs is now handled by the County Council as the disposal authority. Under the Kier contract they were responsible for the disposal of recyclate. This amounts to some 50,000 tonnes a year.
- While the County Council would have preferred a Government settlement over a 3-year period, as this would have enabled the Council to plan ahead, the one-off funding is welcome, as it will allow for a balanced budget for 2021.
- Cllr Standley attended the recent official start of the construction of new buildings at Uplands Community College, to be completed by September 2021. It is part of the Priority School Building programme funded by the DFE and also includes Uckfield, Claverham, Willingdon and Chailey.

Cllr Crookshank queried if there was an update re: the new pedestrian crossing and whether the Parish Council could commission its own feasibility study. Cllr Rutherford said that Cllr Standley could respond at the next meeting; however, he noted that while the Parish Council could undertake its own study, ultimately Highways would need to endorse it.

Cllr Park suggested that if works were beginning on site at Fern Close Phase II, it may be an opportunity to install any necessary cabling/infrastructure for the new crossing. Clerk to refer to Mr. Bee. **Action: Clerk**

### **District**

Cllr Obbard updated the Council, as follows:

- The bin collections dates have gone live on My Alerts and there has been just under 50% take-up of the brown bin scheme, so it considered viable. To date, about half the number of bins being missed compared to previously have been reported;
- The Community Grants scheme is still operating until November;
- There is no update yet from the Local Plan Inspector and there are thus concerns as to why and what this might mean for the Plan itself and the schedule for Stage 2 of the process;
- Reminder that the Parish Conference is currently taking bookings;
- Cllr Obbard recounted a visit to meet the forest rangers at Ashdown Forest, noting that only four rangers (as well as volunteers) are responsible for the management of some 6000 acres. The Forest attracts a million visitors a year but runs at a shortfall in funding of about £60,000 a year. This is partly because of reduced County funding and also because funding from English Nature is ring-fenced for habitat management of the wildlife and cannot be used for core costs (staff, etc); and
- Wealden District Council is planning to submit its representations concerning Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's consultation re: their Draft Local Plan.

Cllr Park told Cllr Obbard she was concerned about the speed of the refuse trucks locally. Cllr Wallis also noted that the downpipe under the bridge in Bells Yew Green was still broken; the Clerk noted that she had informed Network Rail.

Cllr Rutherford read out a District Council report from Cllr Standley:

- The Local Plan Inspector was expected to report in August and certainly by the end of September; it is therefore disappointing that a response is still being awaited;
- The District Council continues to have the highest recycling rate in the County and the smallest amount going into landfill, at less than 1%. The new Biffa contract is going well, with only around 100 missed bins out of some 70,000 a week;
- The Cabinet report shows a total of 63 Stage 1 complaints, of which only 4 were upheld and 9 partly justified. Not surprisingly, the highest number, 12, were related to planning. Lessons are being learnt from these and given that the Council received over a million website visits, 556,000 phone calls and 3000 planning applications, the relatively small number of complains shows that the District Council is performing well.
- Cabinet are considering the first stage of the budget-setting process with a recommendation for a Council Tax rise of £5 for Band D households.

## **7. To co-opt a new councillor to the Eridge ward.**

Cllr Rutherford proposed that Mr Andrew Best be co-opted onto the Parish Council as a councillor for the Eridge ward. This was **unanimously seconded and agreed**.

## **8. Green Spaces.**

### **8.1 To consider cost of urban grass cuts for the following year.**

The Clerk tabled correspondence from ESCC about options for urban grass cuts in 2020. Option 2 was considered to be the most suitable. Option 2 involves the Parish Council funding an additional four cuts, to be carried out by ESCC, totalling six cuts (two standard, four extra) over the course of the year. The cost to the Parish Council is £225 for the year.

### **8.2 To consider consultancy quote(s) related to the green in Frant.**

Cllr Rutherford explained that, in total, four companies had been approached and invited to tender for the work around the green in Frant. Two companies had declined; the Council therefore considered the remaining two tenders submitted. After much discussion it was agreed that the two quotes were not similar enough to be able to compare them on a like for like basis. It was therefore agreed to ask David Huskisson to prepare a reconciliation between the two, to allow for a better comparison to be made of the merits of each quote and thus select the better option.

**Action: Clerk**

### **8.3 To consider formulating a maintenance schedule for the green in Frant.**

The various issues concerning maintenance around the green were discussed. It was agreed to hold off on producing a schedule until the recommendations of the consultancy work were known. The problem of parking on the green was discussed and Cllr Crookshank suggested a multi-pronged approach could be effective, including wildflower planting, signs and placing stickers on cars; this would be in addition to the new policy for the green and writing to local residents. Cllr Rutherford noted that FOFGS were attempting to develop a strategy to deter parking. It was agreed that the Clerk would liaise with Cllr Howell and David Huskisson on this.

**Action: Clerk**

## **9. Finance**

### **9.1 To approve the bank reconciliation and cash book.**

The bank reconciliation was **approved**. The Clerk noted that the cash book for this month was not available but would be brought to the next meeting.

## 9.2 To approve the accounts payable

The accounts to be paid (below) were **approved**.

Payee	Item	Cheque No.	Amount
Treework	Inv 8974 Works to fell cherry at Shernfold Park entrance	3036	£288.00
East Sussex Pension Fund	October 2019 employer's contribution	3037	£238.52
IMAGO	Dial2Drive – invoice nos: 7576, 7098, 7421	3038	£366.95
SSALC	Inv no: 13180 - Training	3039	£144.00
Staff	Salary/Tax/NI/Expenses	30	£1055.42
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2092.89</b>

## 9.3 To consider spend to date against budget.

The Clerk outlined the key areas of spend. She asked that councillors begin to consider the budget for next year, in advance of the next meeting.

## 9.4 To agree renewal costs for electricity supply to streetlighting.

In advance of the renewal date of the contract with Haven Power, the Clerk said she had investigated other suppliers to see if a better deal could be achieved. She confirmed that Haven Power still represented the best value for money and it was **agreed** to renew the contract with them.

## 10. Communications.

### 10.1 To consider a response to the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Draft Local Plan.

The Draft Local Plan was discussed at length, with the worsening problem of increasing and unsustainable pressure on the local road network from new development cited as a key issue (Dundale Road, Kippings Cross, Bayham Road, Eridge Road and so on). The Plan was considered to be short-sighted in terms of how housing was to be developed; the proposed 1000 houses at the south end of town at Ramslye was identified as an example of this. Other concerns related to the extent of green belt release, the ongoing advance of development toward Frant, the lack of coordination between Wealden DC and Tunbridge Wells BC and the lack of a coherent provision of infrastructure (schools, doctors' surgeries, etc) to support new development nor the serious provision of alternative forms of transport.

The Clerk noted that the deadline for representations had been extended from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 15<sup>th</sup> November.

**Action: Clerk**

## 11. Planning.

### 11.1 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 7th October 2019.

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

### 11.2 To consider licence and planning applications received and make recommendations:

- **WD/2019/1488/FR & 1489/FR - St Mark's Recreation Ground, Frant Road, TN2 5LS**

Retention of containers previously approved under ref: WD/2019/1012/FR & 1013/FR.

No objections raised.

• **WD/2019/1845/F – Adamswell Campsite, Broom Lane, Broadwater Forest, TN3 9JL**

Replacement of aged abseiling tower with a new, purpose-built activity tower.

No objections raised.

• **WD/2019/2077/F – Frant Place, Wadhurst Road, Frant, TN3 9EJ**

Proposed replacement outbuilding

Concerns were raised about the scale of the proposed replacement building, given it is sited within the AONB and within the curtilage of a listed building. It was agreed that the proposal constituted over-development and would be harmful to its surroundings.

**11.3 To note applications determined by Wealden District Council:**

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

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

Refused on 17th October 2019.

Councillors noted the decision.

**12. Highways and Lighting.**

**12.1 Lighting in Rushlye Close, Bells Yew Green.**

Councillors expressed their frustration at the length of time it was taking for ESCC to carry out the feasibility assessment, particularly as it had been submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> August and the winter months were now setting in. It was agreed to write to Cllr Standley to request clarification on a timetable from ESCC by the next meeting; it was agreed that if no firm indication was forthcoming, the Council would take measures to enable some form of lighting in the street, to try to militate against the possibility of someone in the road having an accident. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Wallis noted that the plant overgrowth was still obscuring the existing lamppost on Rushlye Close and it was **agreed** to ask Mr McGregor-Gould to remove it. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Rutherford reminded councillors to report any broken streetlight with its unique number to the Clerk.

**13. Horizon scanning.**

The draft survey for residents of the Parish was tabled by Cllr Park. Cllr Rutherford thanked Cllr Park for producing the survey and various amendments were suggested. Cllr Park said she would re-draft the document and 'dummy run' it with a small sample for further comment. **Action: DP**

Cllr Rutherford noted there had been an accident at the Wadhurst turning two weeks prior; he also said he had received correspondence from concerned neighbouring residents about this and the speed of traffic in both directions near this junction. He said he would raise the issue with Cllr Standley. **Action: WR**

Cllr Park updated councillors on efforts to install and improve viable Broadband services in parts of the Parish. She said she was now liaising with the CEO of Open Reach and hoped to receive some costings from them shortly.

Cllr Wallis informed councillors that some 200 tonnes of refuse had been dumped in Station Yard in Bells Yew Green and the police and Environment Agency were involved.

Cllr Wallis said the Bells Yew Green Village Hall Committee was applying for a grant for improvements to the hall. On behalf of the Committee, Cllr Wallis asked the Parish Council whether it would be willing to also contribute to the cost of these works. Councillors agreed in principle to contribute to the overall costs.

**14. Chairman’s announcements & correspondence for noting.**

None.

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

None.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9.40pm.