

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING FRANT PARISH COUNCIL, HELD ONLINE VIA ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY 17th JUNE 2020 AT 6.30PM

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

County and District Cllr Standley
District Cllr Obbard
Mrs R. Karim – Clerk

1. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Howell and Wallis. It was noted that Cllrs Crookshank and Park may not be able to login to the meeting owing to poor Broadband in their area.

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 20th May 2020 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were **approved**. Cllr Rutherford signed the Minutes.

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

- With reference to the new light for Rushlye Close, the Clerk explained that a wooden pole would no longer be feasible because of the proposed position of the light. A painted steel pole was required instead. This was **agreed**.
- Cllr Best said he would look at the fingerposts in Eridge and revert to the Clerk. Cllr Rutherford drew Cllr Standley's attention to a fingerpost in Partridge Lane in Wadhurst that needed refurbishment, with a view to informing Wadhurst Parish Council.
- Broadband in the Parish - on agenda to discuss.
- The Clerk noted that the deadline had passed for the consultation on Wealden District Council's (WDC) Statement of Community Involvement. However, it was noted that the Statement reflected statutory and national guidance on engaging communities and that there was therefore little to comment on.
- The Clerk confirmed she had submitted comments about the planning application at Strawberry Close; it was noted this had now been approved.
- The Clerk said she had received the invoice for the refurbishment work carried out in the village hall in Bells Yew Green and it was just £60 more than the amount that had been approved by the Parish Council to contribute. It was **agreed** to add this extra amount.

5. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes

None.

6. To receive reports from County and District Councillors

County

Cllr Standley said that a lot of work was being carried out to support the recovery phase during the Covid-19 pandemic, utilising a variety of funds from central government. He noted that the pandemic had cost the County Council some £50 million to date, of which £26 million had been reimbursed by the government; the County Council was now lobbying government for the remaining £24 million.

Turning to schools, Cllr Standley said that around 8,000 children were now back in school and noted that Frant Primary School had experienced a comparatively high level of children returning to the classroom.

District

Cllr Obbard said he had been working with Cllr Best to resolve the problem of anti-social behaviour and parking at Eridge Rocks by trying to engage with Sussex Wildlife Trust.

With reference to planning matters, Cllr Obbard noted that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council had approved the application for a block of apartments at the rear of 4 Strawberry Close. He noted that Members at WDC are keen to protect the AONB but in the absence of an up to date Local Plan and shortfalls in meeting the 5-year land supply, this was proving difficult. He noted that both Planning and Environmental Health Officers were now carrying out site visits where it was safe to do so.

Cllr Obbard praised WDC's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and said that approximately £36.5 million had been given out in grants, with a further £2.6 million on a discretionary basis. He noted also that 41 homeless people had been looked after during the pandemic, a figure which was now in decline.

(Cllr Park joined the meeting at 6.55pm)

Cllr Standley referred to the discretionary grants and noted they were likely to have been under-subscribed by the application deadline. He said that consideration would now be given to widening the scope of the grants to facilitate a greater take-up of the funds available.

Cllr Standley noted that the application by Inspired Homes for a 'retirement village' in the Parish had been approved, but only by one vote.

7. To consider the Internal Audit report of 1st June 2020

Councillors reviewed the Internal Audit report with no comment.

8. To review internal financial control procedures and governance

Internal procedures were noted and no alterations were considered necessary.

9. To approve Section 1 of the Annual Return: Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

Section 1 of the AGAR was noted and **approved**. Cllr Rutherford signed the Statement.

10. To approve Section 2 of the Annual Return: Accounting Statement for 2019/20

Section 2 of the AGAR was noted and **approved**. Cllr Rutherford signed the Statement.

11. To discuss the Community Fibre Partnership Initiative

Cllr Park updated the Council, noting that all the data required by Open Reach had now been submitted to the administrators of the Government Voucher Scheme. Within the month, Cllr Park will know whether there will be any deficit between what is owed to Open Reach and what will be received in the way of vouchers. Cllr Park noted that that if there was a deficit, the majority of households affected, as well as UKPN, a user of the Frant Lakes site, had suggested they would be willing to make up the shortfall. It was noted that the Clerk had spoken to another Parish Council who had entered into a legal entity with Open Reach and they said they had not encountered any issues with this arrangement. Cllr Rutherford thanked Cllr Park for all her work on this to date.

12. Highways and Lighting

Nothing to report.

(Cllr Standley left the meeting at 7.05pm)

13. Finance

13.1 To approve the accounts payable

The accounts were noted and **approved**.

13.2 To approve the bank reconciliation

The bank reconciliation was noted and **approved**.

14. Green Spaces

14.1 To approve text for the website concerning ongoing management strategy for Frant green

Cllr Park said that she and Cllr Luther had examined the 1951 Trust document for the green in Frant. The document specifies that areas must be retained for use as a cricket pitch/outfields and a playground; generally, the green must be retained for recreational use by visitors and villagers. Cllr Park raised various concerns about the 'strategy' document produced by Friends of Frant Open Spaces Group (FOGS) and asked for clarification. Cllr Rutherford was clear that the Trust document had been the basis for setting out the strategy for the green in the last few years. He noted that it had been the residual and peripheral areas of the green that had been subject to the ecological survey which had then helped to inform the mowing plan. Cllr Park said that the Trust document referred to two areas (coloured brown and green on a plan of the green) as being required for the "residual enjoyment of parishioners and visitors and recreation". She said that with parts of the green now being left un-mowed, activities such as football and picnicking were not possible because of the long grass. Cllr Rutherford said there had always been a tension as to what 'enjoyment of the green' constituted; for example, some might argue that allowing the growth of important native species could also be enjoyed.

Cllr Rutherford reminded councillors that there was football pitch in Frant that could be used by local residents; although access was restricted through the gate by the school, the field could be easily accessed via the kissing gate from the churchyard. It was agreed that the football pitch as a Parish asset should be advertised on the Council's website.

Action: Clerk

It was noted that the Trust document binds the Parish Council to maintaining the cricket pitch even if the cricket club were disbanded and no matches were played.

Cllr Park noted that the 'strategy' produced by FOGS implied that the Group were working in 'partnership' with the Parish Council. It was **agreed** that the Council was not, nor would be, in any formal partnership with FOGS. Rather the Council, as Trustees of the green, allow FOGS to undertake some activities related to the green and other open spaces in the Parish. It was also **agreed** that a brief document would be set out to this end; it was **agreed** that the 'strategy' would re-drafted and re-issued. Cllr Rutherford suggested the same ought to be carried out for the green in Bells Yew Green and the new green in Eridge.

Action: DP/Clerk

Cllr Luther noted that the 2018 report by Corylus had accounted for a review of the situation on the green every three to five years. She suggested that these reviews would allow the Council to reflect on its management of the green and ensure that regular consultation could be carried out with local residents.

14.2 To discuss the current problem with littering in the Parish.

Cllr Rutherford referred to recent correspondence from a local resident about the problem of littering and overflowing bins, particularly on the green, noting that the bins were currently emptied on a fortnightly basis. The Clerk said she had reported the recent problem on the green to WDC, noting that they can carry out collections on an ad hoc basis. It was considered that the cost of employing another contractor to empty the bins in alternate weeks

would be prohibitive. It was resolved that the Clerk would investigate options, such as stickers on the bins and/or a sign. Cllr Macdonald-Brown reminded the Council that volunteers regularly undertake litter-picking in the Parish.

It was noted that the rubbish bin next to the Eridge sign and bench needed to be replaced.

Action: Clerk

15. Communications

Cllr Rutherford said he would draft the next insert for Parish News. Cllr Macdonald-Brown said that he was writing an article, also for Parish News, about the psychological effects of the recent lockdown on the elderly.

It was agreed that the Council would seek to revive the Parish survey once lockdown had been eased.

16. Planning

16.1 To consider planning and licence applications.

Cllr Park said she had been unable to access the applications online.

- **WD/2019/2013/F – Woodlands, Shernfold Park Farm, Frant, TN3 9DL**
Proposed single-storey side extension and a new one-storey garage

The application was considered and no objections were raised.

- **WD/2020/0868/F – Maitland, Down Lane, Frant, TN3 9HP**
Single-storey rear extension

The application was considered and no objections were raised.

Cllr Rutherford noted that the application to the rear of 4 Strawberry Close had been approved. Cllr Best thanked Cllr Obbard for his input in formulating an objection to this application and although the scheme had been approved, it was important to put down a marker on preserving the AONB.

The Clerk suggested that the Council write to WDC to request that a list of constraints associated with a planning application site (e.g. AONB, Conservation Area, SSSIs, etc) are distributed alongside consultation requests. This was agreed.

Action: Clerk

The Clerk noted the licensing application for an outdoor cinema in the Eridge Estate. The Council expressed its support for the application.

Action: Clerk

17. Chairman's announcements & correspondence for noting

None.

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

Cllr Best noted that the Sussex Wildlife Trust had not been helpful in seeking to address the issue of anti-social behaviour and errant parking at Eridge Rocks. He said that the RSPB and Holy Trinity Church had taken steps to respond to it, which had been encouraging. Cllr Best said he was meeting with the Trust after lockdown and suggested that Cllrs Rutherford and Crookshank also attend.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.50pm.

ACTION	BY WHOM
Identify any fingerposts in Eridge that could benefit from refurbishment and email the Clerk.	AB
Purchase a new litter bin for Eridge (next to the village sign)	Clerk
Review text and documents for the website re: the green in Frant	DP/Clerk
Write to WDC to suggest that site constraints are added to statutory and neighbour consultations for planning applications.	Clerk
To look into signage for litter bins.	Clerk
Write to WDC in support of licence application at Eridge Estate.	Clerk