

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF FRANT PARISH COUNCIL, HELD ONLINE VIA 'ZOOM' ON WEDNESDAY 17TH MARCH 2021 AT 7.30PM

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

County and District Cllr Standley
District Cllr Obbard
Ms. R. Barnes – Clerk

1. To enquire whether anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting

The Clerk said the meeting would be recorded in audio. As soon as the draft Minutes were issued, the audio recording would be deleted.

2. To receive apologies

No apologies were received. Cllr Rutherford noted the resignation of Cllr Wallis from the Parish Council.

3. To receive declarations of interests on items on the Agenda and changes to the Register of Interests

Cllr Steadman declared an interest in the planning application at Burnbrae, Frant (WD/2021/0285/F) and said he would leave the meeting before the application was considered.

4. Approve the Minutes of the meeting on 17th February 2021 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were **approved**.

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

- Cllr Luther gave an update about bereavement services available locally, including from Hospice in the Weald and the At a Loss charity. She suggested she liaise with Wealden District Council about reinvigorating the in-person surgeries it runs with St. Wilfred's Hopsice in its Hailsham offices, once lockdown restrictions were eased. It was **agreed** that Cllr Luther would summarise her findings and submit them to the Clerk for posting on the website. **Action: AFL**

Cllr Luther also suggested the Parish Council use Henry Smith funds to purchase some manuals about child bereavement for youth leaders and teachers, produced by the At a Loss charity. A manual (at £25) could then be offered to the primary school and one to the youth leader at the church. This was **agreed**.

(Cllr Best joined the meeting at 7.39pm)

- In Cllr Wallis' absence, the Clerk agreed to follow up with the suppliers for the new lantern at Rushlye Close. **Action: Clerk**
- Pedestrian crossing and mock-up street scenes – discussed under item 14.
- The Clerk confirmed that the footfall to the Parish Council website for February had been approximately 1,200 'hits'.
- Cllr Park suggested it would be a good idea to take forward the findings of the survey when considering what sort of communication platform(s) the Parish Council could make use of.
- The Clerk confirmed that Mr. McGregor-Gould was going to fix the noticeboard in the Bells Yew Green bus shelter.

- The Clerk confirmed that the tender document for the maintenance of green spaces had been sent to four companies (one of which had declined to bid) and the deadline was 1st April.
- Upgrading of bollards and sleepers around Frant green - on agenda to discuss.
- Cllrs Luther and Steadman confirmed they had met at the junction of Shernfold Park and the A267 to consider mowing patterns to enhance sightlines for drivers in this location. They had agreed that a further site visit would be required once the grass had grown longer. Cllr Rutherford noted that any amendment to the agreed schedule and pattern of mowing would be minor and could be accommodated at a later date.

6. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes

None.

7. Receive reports from County and District Councillors

County Council

Cllr Standley raised two points:

1. The return of schools to in-classroom teaching had gone smoothly and regular Covid testing was working well; and
2. The County Council has received a government grant of £480,000 for improvements to schools to be used, in particular, for installing renewable forms of heating. He noted that Ninfield school was being used as a pilot. To date, the County Council has achieved a 60% reduction in its own carbon footprint.

Cllr Standley said he would be in Purdah from 29th March, in advance of the local elections.

District Council

Cllr Standley said that, contrary to expectations, an assessment had shown that residual waste, rather than recycling waste, had increased during lockdown and a campaign may be needed to remind people to recycle efficiently.

Turning to District Cllr Obbard’s report, circulated prior to the meeting (see Appendix One), Cllr Standley noted that the £7 million Revenue Support Grant was made up of £4.5 million business rates, £2 million New Homes and £3 million in earmarked reserves. Further, he noted that there would not be a £4 million take from reserves next year; the issue was with Government determining that Councils would not benefit from the growth from business rates (in the region of £1.4 million) when they carried out their next ‘re-set’ – now postponed to next year.

Cllr Standley confirmed that the electric vehicle (EV) charging station at Uckfield had been granted planning permission. Cllr Steadman enquired as to which company EV vehicle owners would need to sign up to. Cllr Howell said it would be a ‘pay at the pump’ service with rapid charging times of under 30 minutes in most cases.

Cllr Howell requested that the County Council ask Biffa to carry out more intensive road-side litter clearing as the problem had worsened during lockdown. Cllr Park agreed and noted that there was real problem, in addition to general litter, with empty alcohol bottles and cans being discarded in Bells Yew Green, along road-side verges and ditches. Cllr Standley **agreed** to pass this proposal on but noted that much of it was down to people’s behaviour.

Action: BS

Referring to the recent approval of the charging station in Uckfield, Cllr Obbard said its concept was sound but considered it was perhaps not sited in the best location.

Cllr Obbard thanked Cllr Standley for the corrections on the figures in his report.

Turning to the recent Parish Cluster meeting, Cllr Obbard said that the planning team at Wealden District Council was working hard to gather opinions from the parishes. Cllr Park agreed and requested that the Local Plan be a rolling agenda item, with a view to regularly feeding back opinion to the planning team, some of which would reflect the

views expressed in the recent parish-wide survey. Cllr Park said that the recent Parish Cluster meeting had been poorly attended once again and considered it was a critical point in the life of the new Local Plan and therefore important for parishes to engage with the process. Cllr Howell said that herself, Cllr Obbard and Cllr Standley were District councillors and they were the vehicle through which the Parish Council could feed back its views to Wealden District Council.

It was **agreed** to put the Local Plan as rolling item on the agenda.

8. Discuss and review ongoing support within the Parish during the Covid-19 pandemic

No issues were raised.

9. Agree future meeting dates

The Clerk sought approval to bring forward the date of the AGM to 5th May and to not hold an Annual Parish Meeting this year, both owing to the Covid pandemic. These items were **agreed**.

10. Discuss conflicts of interest

Cllr Rutherford said it was a useful point at which to revisit why and when councillors should declare an interest and he summarised the types of interest that might apply: personal, prejudicial and/or pecuniary. He noted the Code of Conduct and Register of Interests were not on the website – the Clerk noted that she had taken down the latter to redact signatures and would post them all again.

Action: Clerk

There was discussion around when a councillor should declare an interest and it was agreed that there may be a grey area in some cases. Cllr Rutherford said there were three areas to consider: 1. how influential the councillor is on the Council; 2. the impact and significance of the interest; and 3. how direct the influence is. The Clerk noted that councillors were expected to uphold the Nolan Principles guiding public office and that it was better to err on the side of caution and declare an interest, if there was any doubt. Cllr Rutherford agreed and said it was partly to do with what a member of the public would reasonably consider was a councillor’s interest and what bias they may have.

The Clerk said the January 2021 Model Code of Conduct (SSALC) would be put on the agenda in April for adoption.

11. Finance

11.1 To approve the accounts payable

The accounts below were **approved**.

Item no.	Payee	Item	Amount
1	N.McGregor-Gould	Bus shelter, initial step repair on the green, play equipment spray clean	£300.00
2	Mastercraft Roofing	Inv no. Repair to Victoria Well	£816.00
3	Mulberry & Co.	Inv. 17104 Internal audit 2020-21	£216.00
4	ESCC	Inv no. 8005062804 Maintenance of streetlights contract 1.4.20 – 31.3.21	£1,130.40
5	Staff	Staff costs	£1,535.51

11.2 To approve the bank reconciliation

Cllr Rutherford queried various un-presented cheques and asked the Clerk to speak with IMAGO about their payment. Notwithstanding this, the bank reconciliation was **approved**. **Action: Clerk**

11.3 To consider request concerning staff payment

For personal reasons, the Clerk requested that her April salary payment be brought forward to 1st April. This was **agreed**.

12. Green Spaces

12.1 To discuss the green near Shernfold Park

Cllr Howell raised her concerns about the state of the green in this location and said that contractors' and tradesmen's vans were regularly parked on the green. Cllr Rutherford said the Village Green Policy was in place which sought the repair of any damage to the green. Cllr Luther said it was very difficult for vans, etc. to find places to park while carrying out works to houses around the green and the need to ensure access for ambulances was a key consideration.

Cllr Rutherford said he had been storing one of the 'no parking on the green' signs and he could now place this on the green at the Shernfold Park end. **Action: WR**

It was **agreed** that the Clerk would write to the various houses which had work ongoing, requesting they repair any damage. **Action: Clerk**

(Cllr Park rejoined the meeting at 8.46pm)

12.2 To receive an update about installing sleepers, etc. on the banks of the green in Frant.

Cllr Steadman referred to his summary following his on-site assessment (circulated prior to the meeting). He confirmed that the replacement of posts would extend only to those in a state of disrepair. He suggested that the replacement of the others be phased over time. He noted that the thirty new posts would be placed on the banks on either side of the road from the end of the High Street to the Bells Yew Green Road, in front of Mastigate. It was **agreed** that Cllr Steadman would seek rough quotes from three or four companies who can supply and fit the posts and sleepers and report back to the Council. The Clerk would then take forward the procurement of the works. **Action: CS**

Referring to the short explanatory videos Cllr Steadman had produced to support his proposal above, Cllr Luther queried whether councillors could film where members of the public were present. Both Cllrs Rutherford and Steadman confirmed that it was permitted to film provided the photographer was stood on public ground. Cllr Steadman confirmed they had been made purely to explain his findings and he would delete the videos shortly.

Cllr Park sought clarification about what the Council was taking forward from the recent work carried out by Enplan concerning erosion around the green. Cllr Rutherford said the work had been a useful baseline study into the extent of the erosion, what was causing it and the effect it was having. Cllr Luther said it was important to address the key problem areas identified in the Enplan report. It was **agreed** that the options for addressing the erosion were beyond the financial scope of the Parish Council and thus the work proposed above was something that could usefully be done now to mitigate the effects of erosion, where possible.

13. Communications

13.1 To receive an update about the recent meeting of the Hastings to Tonbridge Line Steering Group

Cllr Luther said the meeting had been well attended, with representatives present from the district and county councils, High Weald AONB and Network Rail. The purpose of the meeting had been to give an update on how the line is being managed and efforts to bring people back to using rail. Cllr Luther said she had been in touch with the

primary school about how they could get involved in related educational activities. She also suggested introducing an initiative to the railway station in Bells Yew Green whereby poetry is displayed inside the station. Cllr Steadman said he had a contact involved in the Tunbridge Wells Poetry Festival that could help with this.

14. Highways and Lighting

The Clerk said she had spoken to Mr. Black from Kember Loudon Williams about producing a street scene 'mock-up' of the new pedestrian crossing for the purposes of consultation. Mr Black had forwarded examples of street scenes elsewhere, produced by a local architect and it was **agreed** to liaise with him through Mr. Black. It was **agreed** also that a day and night representation of the crossing would be beneficial. The Clerk relayed correspondence from Highways about the possibility of using 'heritage' style lights and said that Mr. Black had offered to liaise with Highways on our behalf. Councillors were grateful for this and **agreed** that the Clerk provide Mr. Black with the feasibility assessment from Highways.

Action: Clerk

(Cllrs Standley and Howell left the meeting at 9.17pm)

15. Planning

15.1 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 8th March 2021 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were **approved**.

15.2 To consider planning and listed building applications:

WD/2021/0489/PO – Land at Court Lodge, Bayham Road, Bells Yew Green, TN3 9BN

Discharge of Section 106 agreement dated 26.9.19 attached to WD/2018/1007/F (conversion of rural building, the subject of a Certificate of Lawful Use as a single dwelling WD/2017/2521/LDE) to provide 5 no. dwellings, being 4x3 bed units and 1x2 bed unit, parking and access to Bayham Road.

The Council noted the application but declined to comment.

WD/2021/0400/F – 2 Fairview Cottages, Fairview Lane, Broadwater Forest, Eridge Green, TN3 9LU

Demolition of existing single-storey extension and erection of replacement single-storey extension with internal alterations.

The Council considered that the cottage had been extended previously and the site was well hidden. No objections were thus raised and it was **agreed** to support the application.

WD/2021/0002/F – Knowle Grange Health Spa, Wadhurst Road, Frant, TN3 9EJ

Expansion of health club and spa facilities including demolition of existing barn and construction of new gym building together with alterations to the parking layout. Alterations to existing health club building, including extensions and the addition of a pitched roof. Construction of pool changing rooms. Change of use of greenhouse to be incorporated into the health club facilities. Use of site for a maximum of 150 no. members.

The Council considered that this was an established business and the proposals were clearly to ensure its longevity. The Council **agreed** to support the application.

WD/2021/0166/MRM – Land at Little Mount Farm, Benhall Mill Road, TN2 5JW

Reserved matters pursuant to outline permission WD/2019/1648/MAO (outline application for the demolition of the existing buildings on site and the erection of a continuing care retirement community of up to 146 no. units of accommodation (C2) and community facilities, including restaurant, café, shop, hairdressers, spa, cinema and GP facility, with access, infrastructure, open space, landscaping and associated works (all matters reserved except for access) -phase 1 comprising the erection of 63 no. units of accommodation (C2), communal facilities, energy centre, maintenance building and other ancillary structures, parking, landscaping, SUDS and other associated works.

Cllr Park said the issue around the movement of goods and services in and out of the site appeared logical in the application but, in practice, it was considered that there would be deleterious impact on the local D rural road network, located also within the AONB. The egress is proposed almost opposite the golf course/club; the area has historically been used as an overspill area of parking for the club and there is a telegraph pole in this location. Already, it is difficult for vehicles to pass one another and the egress is on a blind bend. It was concluded that the result would be chaotic and there was no guarantee that vehicles related to the development, especially HGVs, would avoid the rural roads nearby and exit instead towards Forest Road. Further, Cllr Park noted that the proposal included allowing 50 vehicles to park within the site during construction, but only in Phase 1.

Cllr Crookshank said there was already a noticeable resurgence in the number of HGVs attempting to manoeuvre the local roads and it was unlikely to be a coincidence that this was because the Inspired Villages development had started. He noted a recent HGV had passed by with two shipping containers on it, attesting to the size of vehicles attempting to navigate these rural roads. He considered that the assurances given by the developers at the application stage were not being adhered to.

Cllr Best added that with the access located within the AONB, the principle was therefore straightforward that any proposal that would harm the AONB should be refused.

Cllr Park offered to approach the Golf Club and its committee to ensure they were aware of the proposals and their right to respond.

The Council therefore **agreed** to object to the proposal on the grounds that its size and scale was inappropriate in the AONB and would result in undue harm to its character, contrary to policy.

(Cllr Steadman left the meeting at 9.33pm)

WD/2021/0285/F – Burnbrae, Frant, TN3 9DY

Demolition of detached flat roofed garage. Construction of new pitched roof garage.

Discussion was had around the various images from neighbouring vantage points included in the application. It was noted that the proposal was in a confined residential area and on the border with a neighbouring property. It was agreed that the height and scale of the proposal pitched roof would be intrusive and overbearing. On this basis, it was **agreed** to object to the proposal.

16. Chairman’s announcements & correspondence for noting

Cllr Rutherford said he had received correspondence from a local resident about the need to refurbish various lamp posts within the parish. He said he had responded, confirming that works were due to be carried out later in the year.

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

None.

List of Actions

Action	By Whom
Summarise the findings about local bereavement support and submit them to the Clerk for posting on the website.	AFL
Liaise with the suppliers for an update about the new lantern in Rushlye Close.	Clerk
Pass on request for Biffa to carry out more intensive roadside clearing to deal with the increase in litter.	BS
Post Code of Conduct policy and Register of Interests on the website.	Clerk
Write to the various houses around Frant green with ongoing work being carried out, requesting they repair any damage.	Clerk
Obtain rough quotes from three or four companies who can supply and fit the posts and sleepers around Frant green.	CS
Put up 'no parking on the green' sign on the green at the Shernfold Park end.	WR
Speak with Kember Loudon Williams about commissioning street scene drawings for the new pedestrian crossing and liaising with Highways.	Clerk

Appendix One

Report from Cllr Obbard

All the Town and Parish Councils continue to get a fortnightly Covid Pandemic update from David Plank at the WDC Customer Services, keeping Parish Clerks up to date on the latest situation. The Wealden D C website has details at;
<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/press-and-media/coronavirus-covid-19-latest/community-support/>
The phone number to call is the usual one; 01323 443322

Consultations Update

There is a new survey “Has COVID changed Us?” on the WDC website for people to record the changes that COVID has had to their lifestyles, and the impact on climate change issues. It is now open and runs till 29th March
Can be found at www.wealden.gov.uk/lifestyleimpact

Council Business

At the meeting of the Full Council of the WDC on 24th February the Financial Statements and Accounts for last year were confirmed and accepted.
Budget and Medium Term Financial statements for the forthcoming year were presented and approved.

As agreed by the Cabinet earlier, the Council Tax rates for the coming year, and the Budget were accepted by the full council.
It was agreed not to raise the WDC share of the Council tax, and also not to increase the salaries for Council employees or the Member’s allowances.

The WDC share of the Council Tax amounts to about £13m. There will also be about £7m of income from various Revenue Support Grants, and to balance the budget in the General Fund the Council will need to draw about £4m from its reserves.

The Housing Revenue Account (Council Housing) was expected to generate a small loss of £250,000 on it’s approximately £16m turnover.
About £7m has been allocated to the new build programme, and routine maintenance of the properties will amount to about £4.6m in the coming year.

North Weald Parish Cluster

The next meeting of the North Weald Planning Cluster will be on Tuesday 16th March to take place on Teams from 2pm – 3pm.
If there are any planning issues, especially about the new Local Plan, but for any other issues too, then please bring them to the meeting, or email Chris Bending in advance
chris.bending@wealden.gov.uk

If you have any specific questions or requests, I am contactable by phone or email and I will do my best to deal with them for you.
Keep safe, follow the Covid-19 advice, and I look forward to a time when we can meet in person,

Cllr Keith Obbard, Wealden District Member for Withyham Ward.