

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF FRANT PARISH COUNCIL, HELD ONLINE VIA 'ZOOM' ON WEDNESDAY 20TH JANUARY 2021 AT 7.30PM

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

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

Mrs J. Steadman – Friends of Frant Green Spaces (FOFGS)

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

The Clerk noted that the meeting would be recorded in audio.

2. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Crookshank and Wallis.

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

Cllr Steadman reiterated his standing interest in matters pertaining to FOFGS.

4. To approve the Minutes of the meeting on 16th December 2020 as a true and accurate record

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

(Cllr Best joined the meeting)

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

- Cllr Luther said she was happy to set up the trail camera again and said the surface of the green continued to deteriorate;
- The Clerk said that Reverend Brendan had responded to her query about the potential recipients of Henry Smith funds. On agenda to discuss;
- The Clerk confirmed that she had circulated the Inspired Villages presentation;
- The Clerk said the website had been updated to reflect recent advice relating to Covid-19;
- The Clerk confirmed she had instructed JakkUK to repair the fingerpost at Fairview Lane;
- The Clerk said that the various new benches had been added to the Asset Register;
- The Clerk confirmed that the road sign on Bartley Mill Road had been repaired;
- Cllr Standley said he had reported the flooding at the houses opposite Masson Joinery, in Frant. Cllr Howell said she had received further complaints;
- Quote for the maintenance of bund in Bells Yew Green - on agenda to discuss;
- The Clerk said she had asked Mr McGregor-Gould to clear the overgrown planting around the sundial in Bells Yew Green;
- Alternative ideas for addressing vehicular damage to the green in Frant – on agenda to discuss;
- The Clerk said she had instructed Treework to undertake the priority work identified in their recent assessments of trees in Frant and Bells Yew Green and that the latter would start on 1st March;
- The Clerk confirmed that she had submitted representations to Wealden DC about their Direction of Travel document;

- Consider alternative platforms for email system – ongoing;
- The Clerk confirmed she had submitted representations about the licence application at Tangier Woods.

6. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes

Mrs Steadman addressed the Council on behalf of FOFGS and tabled a Powerpoint presentation about the Group’s proposed Action Plan for 2021. Mrs Steadman said that FOFGS were disappointed with some aspects of the relationship with the Parish Council during the past year. FOFGS was now keen to agree its objectives for green spaces with the Parish Council in advance. Mrs Steadman acknowledged there was a split in the numbers of parishioners who supported the Group’s activities and those that did not, but that the Group now had a ‘presence’ in Frant.

Mrs Steadman explained the ongoing Footpath Review, which seeks to identify those footpaths that no longer appear on current plans as public rights of way. 2026 is the deadline for registering these footpaths to ensure they are correctly identified and therefore maintained as public rights of way. FOFGS purchased two historic plans and a number of volunteers had been scrutinising these to identify these footpaths. Mrs Steadman offered to loan these plans to the Parish Council and to circulate a link to the work being carried out by the Ramblers’ Association.

Other work carried out by FOFGS was listed, alongside key successes, such as the grant money received and fund-raising, the ecology work on the green and the beneficial relationship between FOFGS and Orchard Landscapes. She paid tribute to the enthusiasm, professionalism and responsiveness of Orchard Landscapes during the last three years.

Turning to future projects, Mrs Steadman said FOFGS was hoping to hold the Open Gardens event on 5th June this year and to invite the ecologist to speak to the Parish Council in July; other activities include the work to maintain the area around the Victoria Well and the 3-5 year Parish meadow project.

Mrs Steadman offered to assist the residents in Eridge in applying for Sussex Lund grant funding to help realise their aspirations for the new green on Warren Farm Lane.

Cllr Rutherford said he would liaise with Mrs Steadman shortly about preparing a partnership agreement between FOFGS and the Parish Council. He said the agreement would, in part, recognise FOFGS as a community group and be supportive of its volunteers. Referring to the ecology review scheduled for May/June this year, Cllr Rutherford said it would be a useful exercise to review the mowing pattern alongside this. Mrs Steadman noted the difficult task the Parish Council has in balancing the tensions in the community and the different pressures on the green. She agreed to let the Parish Council know when the ecology review was taking place and when the ecologist(s) would be on site.

Cllr Rutherford thanked Mrs Steadman for her presentation.

(Mrs Steadman left the meeting at 8.15pm)

7. To receive reports from County and District Councillors

Cllr Rutherford noted that Cllrs Standley and Obbard had both submitted their written reports prior to the meeting and that these had been circulated (see appendices). Cllr Standley said the latest news about Covid-19 was encouraging as cases appeared to be coming down, but noted that there were still pockets where the number of deaths was still high, for example, in Eastbourne. He said that the County Council was not involved in the vaccine rollout but was helping the NHS with the provision of premises for vaccination clinics.

Turning to the District Council budget, Cllr Standley said that staff pay was frozen for the forthcoming year, while at County level, there was an increase in the rate of Council Tax, in part because of pressures on childcare services and adult social care.

Cllr Park said that her family had had cause to use the Covid test centre in Crowborough and she praised its efficiency. Cllr Standley said he would pass on her comments to the NHS. Cllr Park also noted that the drainage system in Benhall Mill Road was now operating well, after recent works were carried out to it; leaves still needed clearing, however, and residents were doing this where necessary.

Cllr Luther asked about when the Solar Together scheme had been rolled out. Cllr Obbard said some 76 households had signed up to the scheme, but he was unaware of any solar panels being installed, as of yet. Only half a dozen or so had added in batteries, so interest was low for this. He said the price, because of collective buying, was the incentive with Cllr Standley adding that a further incentive was the environmental benefits that could be accrued by using solar energy.

Cllr Park enquired about the provision of electric vehicle charging points and asked Cllr Obbard what type of partners were being sought for this. Cllr Obbard responded that the District Council was seeking partners that could carry out the work on its behalf and, responding to Cllr Steadman’s about vehicle owners needing to currently be a member of several systems, he said that the charging points would be relevant to all vehicles, requiring only credit card payments. Cllr Howell noted that the charging station in Uckfield was now going through the planning process.

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

The Clerk suggested that the distribution of Henry Smith funds be discussed under this item. Cllr Macdonald-Brown **agreed** to follow-up with Dial2Drive, to see if they were still operating during the pandemic. **Action: AMB**

It was **agreed** to produce vouchers, to the value of £50 each, to be spent in Frant Stores and Lambs Larder. If a particular household was experiencing acute need, it was agreed the Parish Council could use its discretion to give more than one voucher. **Action: Clerk**

9. Finance

9.1 To approve the accounts payable

The following accounts were **approved**.

Item no.	Payee	Item	Cheque No.	Amount
1	Orchard Landscapes	Inv.1486 Aug,,Sept, Oct	3153	£2,735.64
2	Staff	Salary, mileage and expenses	3151	£1,157.48
3 & 4	East Sussex Pension Fund	Staff pension contributions	3148/49	£800.44
5	HMRC	Tax and NI	3152	£42.47
6	SSALC	Data protection course for 3 no. cllrs on 29.10.2020	3150	£144.00
7	R.Karim	Chartered RTPI membership fee 2021 (reimbursement)	3155	£63.00
8	SLCC	Annual membership fee	3157	£45.00
9	Deborah Park	Royal Mail service for delivery of surveys (reimbursement)	3159	£148.01

9.2 To approve the bank reconciliation

The bank reconciliation was **approved**.

10. Highways and Lighting

10.1 To discuss the close-board fencing at Chase Farm, fronting the A267

Cllr Howell said that a close-board fence had been erected in front of the house at Chase Farm, within two metres of the highway. It was **agreed** that this should be referred to the enforcement team at Wealden DC and the owner/occupiers should be encouraged to place the fence behind a hedge, in order to maintain the rural character in this location.

Action: JH

10.2 To discuss the solar light in Rushlye Close

The Clerk noted that a newer model of the solar lantern was due to be installed to see if this rectified the problem. Councillors expressed their concern that it might not; it was **agreed** to liaise with the providers to seek reimbursement, notably for the installation fee from East Sussex Highways and to find a viable solution for the residents here.

Action: Clerk

Cllr Howell asked why a light linked to the mains had not been pursued and Cllr Rutherford confirmed it had been due to the prohibitive costs of acquiring a mains supply with UKPN.

The issue of liability was raised given the light was situated on a County-owned footpath. Cllr Standley said that, by installing a light, a need for it had been acknowledged; he said the County Council had the option of closing the footpath if it was of concern.

(Cllr Standley left the meeting at 8.46pm)

11. Green Spaces

11.1 To approve the quote for maintenance of the bund at the green in Bells Yew Green

Cllr Park said that there was flexibility in which times/days the contractor would work on the bund (e.g. to ensure it was watered regularly, etc). Cllr Rutherford said the more detailed quote gave the Parish Council more comfort about what to expect in this trial year and proposed that the quote be accepted. This was **unanimously agreed**.

11.2 To receive an update about alternative options for addressing the erosion around the green in Frant

Cllr Park referred to the Powerpoint presentation circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. She considered the report by Enplan was a comprehensive assessment of the erosion around the green but that the costs proposed for solutions to the erosion had been extremely large and beyond the financial scope of the Parish Council. This was **agreed**.

Cllr Park referred to the Village Green Policy, which identified the responsibilities and duties of the Parish Council in acting as Trustees of the green and also various tools it had to deal with infringements, such as enforcement measures. Cllr Park said she had spoken to Enplan who had confirmed that the vast majority of damage to the green is caused by vehicles; thus, she opined that the Parish Council should seek to manage vehicle movements where it could. She suggested a number of remedial options including: creating one-way systems, parking schemes, additional parking for non-residents, sacrificing part of the green to make way for widening (and/or one-way routes) and low-cost but maximum impact bollards in low level areas.

It was agreed that one of the key areas for concern was the volume, speed, frequency and type of vehicle movements on the road between Bells Yew Green and the A267, past the village hall and with the green on either side of it. It was agreed that intrusive schemes would meet with discontent from parts of the community, would be financially prohibitive and subject to assessments, licences and consents from Highways and the District Council. It was also

agreed that seeking one-way systems into the village from the A267 would be infeasible and would meet with local resistance. It was acknowledged that some of the issues affecting the green, such as poor surface water drainage, was beyond the remit of the Parish Council.

Cllr Luther expressed concern that the Parish Council had commissioned Enplan to carry out its assessment but was not implementing any of the solutions. Cllr Best disagreed, noting that the Parish Council had carried out due diligence and it was clear that more intrusive mitigating options were not viable. Cllr Rutherford agreed and said that the Enplan work held value as a detailed study, as well as providing other recommendations, for example, in connection with the footpath across the green.

Thus, Cllr Best proposed that simple defences be installed, similar to those that had been in place for the last 10 or so years, including sleepers and logs embedded in the banks of the green. This was **agreed unanimously** with the proviso that this work did not preclude the consideration of any other feasible options, if and when they became apparent. It was agreed that Cllr Steadman would speak with Mr Freestone about previous endeavours and Cllr Best would liaise with the Tunbridge Wells Conservators about their efforts around the Common. **Action: CS/AB**

Cllr Rutherford thanked Cllr Park for her presentation.

11.3 To discuss next steps for the new green in Eridge

Cllr Best said the lease was due to be signed shortly and it would be prudent to seek three quotations for the fencing required and to think about planting the hedges in October. He thanked FOFGS again for their offer to assist with applying for grant funding. Cllr Rutherford said it was important that the local residents in Eridge took the lead with the design of the green. **Action: AB/Clerk**

Cllr Luther said it would be important to have two partnership agreements in place - one to cover (Friends of) Eridge Green and one to cover FOFGS. This was **agreed**.

On another matter in Eridge, Cllr Rutherford said he had been sent revised plans for housing at Warren Farm and understood that the sale of a 3.5 acre field for the local residents to use as a community space had been negotiated with the developer. Cllr Obbard said he was not aware of this.

11.4 To discuss the upcoming tender process for the maintenance of green spaces in the Parish

Cllr Rutherford confirmed that the existing maintenance contract could be extended. He said that, following the ecology review, the Parish Council may decide to alter aspects of the (by then) awarded contract for the maintenance of the green and that the tender document should be capable of amendment during its lifetime. It was agreed to ask Mr Huskisson for assistance in preparing the tender document. **Action: Clerk**

12. Communications

12.1 To receive an update on the second launch of the survey of parishioners

Cllr Park said the survey was due to be delivered to residents of the Parish by Royal Mail from 8th February and that the Survey Monkey link had been updated on the website. She noted there was an additional one hundred addresses outside the TN3 9 postcode sector and she was happy to deliver the survey by hand to these households. Cllr Park noted that the expenditure broke down into the cost of the printing and cost of the Royal Mail deliveries. This was **agreed**.

13. Planning

13.1 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting held on 4th January 2021 as a true and accurate record

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

13.2 To discuss the licence application at Tangier Wood

Cllr Howell said she would be attending the hearing for this application at 2pm on 2nd February. Cllr Steadman offered to also attend and this was **agreed**.

(Cllrs Howell and Obbard left the meeting at 9.47pm)

13.3 To consider planning and listed building applications:

WD/2020/2338/MFA – Land at Fern Close, Frant, TN3 9DB

Minor material amendment to application WD/2016/1519/MAJ. Variation of condition no. 32, in order to make alterations across the site including the re-siting and redesign of house nos. 8 and 9 to incorporate a partial basement.

Cllr Park suggested the work proposed was not ‘minor’ given the scope of the re-design and questioned whether it was sensible to be developing subterranean sections given the propensity to flooding in this area and the incline of the site. She noted it was an archaeological notification area and the Clerk said that Archaeology may have been re-consulted as a result. Cllr Park noted also that plot 8 was benefitting from the addition of a second-floor, as well as the new basements to this plot and plot 9. Cllr Steadman agreed, noting that paths across the green spaces on the site had been taken out.

Cllr Rutherford agreed with the above and said the design had been quite altered; as such, the style was no longer in keeping with its surroundings (e.g. the Abergavenny PH and others houses nearby). He cited the introduction of concertina doors and that the garages were now not linked to individual properties, as had been in the approved scheme.

It was **unanimously agreed** to object to the proposed amendment to WD/2016/1519/MAJ on the grounds that the changes would be unsympathetic to the adjacent Conservation Area, it constituted over-development of the site and the approved style and plan of the agreed scheme was being detrimentally compromised.

WD/2020/2362/F – 1 Cokers Down Cottages, Bells Yew Green, TN3

Proposed conversion of existing stables to guest accommodation.

Cllr Rutherford noted that the Parish Council had supported the original scheme. No objections were raised to the current application and it was **unanimously agreed** to support it.

WD/2020/2600/F – Stone Farm, Bayham Road, Frant, TN2 5HU

Rear extension to existing garage to form home office and change of use of land to residential.

Concern was raised about the fact that the garage with extension would be a discrete building, separate from the main house, and would be surrounded by a considerably enlarged residential curtilage. In time, this could lend itself to further applications for a new house in its own plot. The Council accepted the extension itself in principle, but queried why the boundary of the existing residential curtilage could not simply be extended to enclose the extension/garage alone and closely follow the line of the building. Thus, the Council **unanimously agreed** to object to the proposal on the basis that the extent of the new residential curtilage was both unnecessary and unreasonable.

14. Chairman’s announcements & correspondence for noting

Cllr Rutherford said he was aware of informal proposals to build 4 – 6 houses at Strawberry Hill Farm and the scheme was being partly justified because 4 – 5 fewer houses were proposed to be built at Warren Farm. He said he welcomed the developer to come and speak to councillors but that the Parish Council would not be saying at that point whether it supported the scheme or not.

The Clerk asked the Parish Council to consider the further detail received from the local resident in Bells Yew Green, requesting access across the green to install a septic tank. Clarification included that no digging would be required

and no underground pipework or cabling would be installed. The gap in the hedge and any damage to the green would be made good. The Council **unanimously agreed** to the work and asked that the applicant let the Parish Council know when the work has been completed so that a councillor(s) can go the green and check that any repairs have been carried out.

The Clerk said there were informal proposals to start a Farmers' Market in Frant and that the Abergavenny Arms had, informally, offered their car park for this. Cllr Luther said it would be useful to understand the scale of the proposed market, in order to determine if there would be any knock-on impact on parking in the village. Cllr Rutherford said a Farmers' Market was beyond the remit of the Parish Council but that it would consider proposals and support them where it could.

Cllr Steadman enquired about the offer a design for a village sign from a local resident/architect. Cllr Rutherford said he had tried to contact him but had not yet had a chance to discuss it. **Action: WR**

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

None.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10pm.

Report to Frant Parish Council January 2021 – WDC & ESCC

Covid (WDC/ESCC)

No surprise that Covid is still the focus of attention although other services are being maintained. The number of cases in Wealden increased significantly but thankfully the cases now appear to be on a downward trend. This applies to most of East Sussex although Eastbourne is still at a high level.

The vaccine is being delivered as quickly as possible. This is not an ESCC responsibility. It is important that those having the jab are aware that it takes 2-3 weeks to take affect.

Schools (ESCC)

Closing schools is a significant move but given the data there was no other option. Schools are still open for vulnerable children and those of key workers – the definition of the latter is quite wide.

DfE did not collect data on attendance till w/c 11th so figures are only just being made available. There was media speculation that attendance was high and figures of 50% mentioned. Eligible pupils were at a larger number than earlier lockdowns, as rightly not having access to IT is now considered a reason to attend school.

The figures for ESCC are at around 12-15%. There are some higher than the average and the highest attendance being 40%.

Before the PM's announcement there were calls for a 2-week fire break in schools, but this was never likely to be sufficient given the expected rise in cases and the "closure" until after the Feb half term at the earliest seems a sensible step. Some debate on whether teachers should be vaccinated early in the process to get pupils back in schools although not all groups can be a priority.

Early Years

There has been concern that nurseries were financially challenged as many parents kept their children at home. HMG has agreed that state funded places will be funded even if the child does not attend. In addition, the nurse census, that is taken in Jan, and fixes state funding of places will this year allow later amendments.

Waste Collection (WDC)

Biffa had performed excellently and in recent months the small number of missed bins means that 99.95% of bins are collected each week.

If Covid cases amongst staff increase, then that will put pressure on service levels and if required garden Waste would be services to be affected first as it was last year.

Direction of Travel Planning Consultation (WDC)

The consultation ended on the 18th of January. Response had been low until the last 7 days and responses are now around the 1000.

**SHELAA (Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment)
(WDC)**

Given a couple of e-mails I have received a reminder that the SHELAA details landowners of that land wish to be considered for development. Inclusion in the SHELAA does not mean planning permission will be granted but only that WDC will then assess the site.

Budget (ESCC)

The recommendation is that the CT will increase by 1.99%. Authorities, with ASC responsibilities, have been allowed to add a further 3% which can be taken over 2 years. To lessen the affect on households the proposal is this to be taken as 1.5% each of 2 years. The proposed increase is £1 a week.

Budget (WDC)

The proposal is for a zero increase and for staff pay to be restricted to those earning under 24K in line with Govt guidance although LA's do not have to follow that guidance.

Drainage

I am aware of more drainage issues which I have reported, and today's storm will have exacerbated the problem.

RWS Jan 2020

Appendix Two

Report from District Councillor Keith Obbard

Report for Frant Parish Council 20th Jan. 2021

All the Town and Parish Councils are getting 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

A reminder about WDC Consultations;

The consultation on the future of Leisure Services in Wealden is ongoing & runs to 10th February;

<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/news/working-towards-a-more-active-future/>

The first stage consultation on the Wealden Local Plan, "Direction of Travel Consultation" has now closed, and the comments are being considered.

Dustbin collections

In spite of the difficulties posed by the Covid pandemic the latest report on the Waste collection services provided to the Council by Biffa show a good level of service, with missed bins running at around 55 per week, which is a collection rate of 99.9% so that is something to be pleased about. The clearance of litter from the main trunk roads is ongoing, and some of these get very bad and it is a struggle to keep on top of it.

Although fly-tipping was worse in the first lock-down, it seems to have settled back to a more usual level. Sussex Police assisted by doing spot checks on waste carriers on the Ashdown Forest back in the Summer.

Climate Action Plan

The take-up of the Solar-Together (PV solar panels) scheme has been a little disappointing, so far 76 households have signed up, but there should be more to come.

The Electric Vehicle charging point plan is progressing slowly. No partners have been signed up as yet, but it is hoped that we will see some charging points installed in the Spring of this year.

The WDC has applied to the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) for funding to support a project to encourage renewable energy generation on Wealden Industrial Estates. The Council bid has been shortlisted, and the decisions are expected soon.

Looking ahead to the Spring.

The ESCC elections are still scheduled for 6th May 2021, and the Wealden Electoral Services are working towards that date, although it is quite possible they will be delayed to later in the year.

The sooner this decision is made the better, as the Council is already committing resources to organise a Covid-19 safe environment for the elections to take place.

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.

List of Actions

Action	By Whom
Speak with Dial2Drive to see if they are still active during the pandemic.	AMB
Organise vouchers using Henry Smith funds.	Clerk
Report new close-board fence at Chase Farm to Enforcement.	JH
Liaise with Tofco about reimbursements and next steps re: light in Rushlye Close.	Clerk
Speak with Mr Freestone about history of use of sleepers, etc along banks of Frant green.	CS
Speak with Tunbridge Wells Conservators about their work in preventing erosion around the Common.	AB
Liaise with Mr Huskisson about drafting tender document for maintenance of the green contract.	Clerk
Begin process of seeking three quotes for work to create Eridge Green (fencing, etc).	AB/Clerk
Speak to local resident about village sign.	WR