

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

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THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT FRANT MEMORIAL HALL ON WEDNESDAY 21st JULY 2021 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllr Howell - Chairman
Cllr Crookshank – Vice-Chairman
Cllrs Park, Luther, Rutherford, Steadman

County and District Cllr Standley
District Cllr Obbard

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

None.

2. Receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Best, Macdonald-Brown and County Cllr Taylor.

3. Receive Declarations of Interests on items on the Agenda and changes to the Register of Interests

None.

4. Approve the Minutes of the meeting on 23rd June 2021 as a true and accurate record

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

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

- The Clerk confirmed that an application had been made to ESCC to conduct a feasibility study re: the junction of the A267 and the turning to Wadhurst.
- A meeting took place between Cllrs Howell, Luther, Steadman and Park to discuss the management of the green. On agenda to discuss.
- Undertake physical inspection of streetlights within the parish's ownership. Rolled forward. **Action: Cllrs**
- Ascertain if third parties are charged to dispose of green waste to a council operated waste deposit. Rolled forward. **Action: BS**
- Cllr Luther confirmed she had been liaising with the Environment Agency about the arisings from grass cuts and had forwarded information to the Clerk.
- The Clerk noted that the historic police truncheon had been added to the Asset Register.
- The Clerk said she had been corresponding with the PTA about the bonfire site. On agenda to discuss.
- Cllr Steadman said that Mr S. Bowie would be producing more detail and a plan about the proposed installation of sleepers and bollards at Frant green.
- Cllr Rutherford reiterated that he would not be installing the 'no parking' sign on the green as it required digging down, etc. It was agreed to ask Mr Bowie to install it.

6. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes

None.

7. Receive reports from County and District Councillors

A report from Cllr Obbard was circulated prior to the meeting and is attached at Appendix One. Cllr Obbard handed out brochures for the Explore Wealden initiative.

Cllr Standley said he had met with the Secretary of State for Housing to explain, in robust terms, the challenges for Wealden in meeting housing numbers. He explained this is, in large part, because some 60% of the land is protected in

Wealden, thereby forcing new housing into the Low Weald. He said he was hopeful that funds for infrastructure would be allocated in the forthcoming Planning Bill.

Cllr Standley said he had spoken with Highways about the new pedestrian crossing but sought clarification as he understood that consultants were now involved. The Clerk explained that Kember Loudon Williams was assisting the Parish Council in liaising with Highways. The Clerk said that they were waiting to hear from Highways about what the minimum requirement would be in terms of the number streetlights for the crossing, whether 'heritage' style lights, baffling or other mitigating measures could be taken and rough costs. Armed with that information, the Council would then commission the mock-up street scenes and consult through Parish News. The Council was seeking Cllr Standley's assistance in getting this information from Highways. Cllr Standley thanked the Clerk and said he would now make some enquiries.

Action: BS

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

None.

9. Consider co-option of Mrs D. Park to the Bells Yew Green ward

The Clerk confirmed that Mrs Park had resigned as councillor in the Frant ward and the position would now be advertised. She also confirmed that the vacancy in the Bells Yew Green ward had been properly advertised and Wealden DC had advised the Council was now free to co-opt.

Cllr Rutherford enquired in to how this might affect the Council's position vis-à-vis the General Power of Competence (GPC). The Clerk confirmed that while one criterion for achieving the GPC was met with the Clerk's recent CiLCA qualification, the second criterion concerning the electoral mandate was not. She explained to the Council that 8 of the total number of councillors (11) needed to be elected (even if uncontested). With Mrs Park's co-option, the number of elected councillors would be 6 (Cllr Steadman was co-opted, not elected). Thus, the Clerk suggested that the Council ensure that at least 8 councillors were in position for the next election.

Cllr Howell proposed that Mrs Park be co-opted to the Council in the Bells Yew Green ward; Cllr Crookshank seconded this and the co-option was **approved**.

10. Highways

10.1 Respond to proposed highways works associated with Little Mount Farm, Benhall Mill Road (WD/2019/1648/MAO)

Cllrs Park and Crookshank both noted that the Parish Council had said at an early stage of this development that the above proposals would very likely come forward and that it was very obvious from the outset that the road would need to be widened to allow HGVs in to the site. Cllr Park said the rural community was being urbanised on the back of this development and, already, an increase in the volume and speed of traffic was being observed. She noted further that there was a risk of a bottleneck being created near to the other exit from the golf course. Indeed, after receiving representations from the golf course about run-off from a ditch near the site, the developer's response had been to create a tunnel and plaster over it. Further, there was a proliferation of street furniture proposed which would all contribute to the urbanising affect of the development.

Cllr Howell said that the Travel Plan now included penalties should construction traffic enter and leave the site in the wrong direction.

10.2 Discuss proposed pedestrian crossing

Discussed at item 7.

10.3 Consider provision of a grit bin outside Benhall Mill Cottage

Cllr Park explained that Benhall Mill Road regularly iced over and flooded and while there had thankfully been no fatalities to date, several incidents had occurred of vehicles skidding and colliding with each other, hitting walls, etc. The Clerk noted that there would a licence fee to pay of approximately £58, in addition to the costs of the new bin and the first fill (and subsequent fills). It was noted that there had historically been a grit bin on Benhall Mill Road and Cllr Rutherford suggested finding an image of this on Google maps to avoid potentially having to pay the licence fee.

Action: DP

11. Green Spaces

11.1 Discuss the bonfire site

Cllr Howell noted correspondence between the Clerk and the PTA about the build-up of debris at last year's bonfire site and this year's. She noted that, historically, the bonfire had always been built about a week before the event and cleared up immediately after. Cllr Rutherford enquired whether the Parish Council could come to an agreement with the PTA over liability, much like how it has with the Allotment Society and the Cricket Club. Cllr Luther expressed some reservation about how this would work in practice and it was agreed the Clerk would liaise with the Council's insurers about a way forward.

Action: Clerk

11.2 Consider resident's request to incorporate additional land for grass cutting in Frant

The Council considered this request to incorporate the grass verge which runs from Firs, The Green to the driveway to Home Farm Court and concluded that as it is part of the green, it could be included in the grass cutting schedule undertaken by Orchard Landscapes. **Approved.**

11.3 Consider Open Spaces 'Grant a Green' campaign

It was agreed that as the green in Frant was already a registered green in its own right, it did not need to be included in this campaign. However, the new green in Eridge, the meadow and the Parish field might be contenders and it was agreed to investigate further.

Action: Clerk

11.4 Receive update from recent meeting of councillors to discuss the green in Frant

Cllr Howell summarised the meeting and said that a compromise had been found whereby an area up to the path, but not beyond, is cut. Cllr Park said that the compromise reached allowed for maintaining ecological diversity and had the benefit of protecting children from running into the road. Cllr Howell noted that parish councils would be seeing a push over time to be increasingly encouraged to dedicate areas to improving biodiversity.

Cllr Luther said that she was seeking a fair and equitable mowing pattern, reflecting the ecologist's suggestion for rotation; she suggested allowing the borders to flourish and to cut and leave the arisings rather than collect them; in turn, she said this would address the increasing emissions burden that the present system had resulted in and associated, not insignificant costs of disposing of the arisings off-site, in accordance with EA requirements. Cllr Steadman explained the issue of the nature of the soil and went on to say that rotation would not work in an area like Frant.

The Clerk and Cllr Rutherford suggested that any decision be delayed until the latest ecological report was received and, in any case, any alterations to the mowing pattern would occur in next year's schedule.

It was **agreed** to invite the ecologist to attend the Full Council meeting in September.

11.5 Discuss parking on the green

Cllr Howell said she had been approached by the owner of Shernfold Park Farm Road, raising his concerns about the ongoing parking on the green and resultant damage. It was **agreed** that a meeting would be held on site with the owner and Cllrs Steadman, Luther and Howell.

Action: JH

11.6 Discuss trespassing of cows onto Parish field

It was noted that the landowner owned the fence but that his tenant was responsible for maintaining it and he had undertaken a temporary fix. It was agreed that the Council would write to the landowner as a courtesy to say that it would carry out a repair to the gate and install stock fencing on the Council's 'side'. It was agreed to ask Mr Bowie for a quote for this.

Action: Clerk/CS

12. Finance

12.1 Approve the accounts payable

The accounts, as follows, were **approved**.

Item no.	Payee	Item	Amount
1	IMAGO	Dial2Drive (Henry Smith) April and June 2021	£186.89
2	Fraser Murdoch	Inv 075 Maintenance of BYG green: June	£75.00
3	N. McGregor-Gould	June cleans: play equip & bus shelters; repaint all bus shelters; reinstate swings	£1,663.00
4	Treework	Inv 1351 Series of works according to visual inspection	£2,448.00
5	R. Karim	July 2021 salary August 2021 salary	£1,176.26 £1,176.26
6	R.Karim	Expenses and mileage	£103.22
7	ES Pension Fund	Employer's contribution July 21.6%	£296.94
8	ES Pension Fund	Employee's contribution July 5.8% - deducted from salary	£79.73
9	HMRC	Tax and NI February – July inclusive	£331.07

12.2 Approve the bank reconciliation

The bank reconciliation (see below) was **approved**.

Date: 19/07/2021	Frant Parish Council	Page 1
Time: 16:34	Bank Reconciliation Statement as at 19/07/2021 for Cashbook 1 - Current Bank A/c	User: CLERK

<u>Bank Statement Account Name (s)</u>	<u>Statement Date</u>	<u>Page No</u>	<u>Balances</u>
Current A/c	05/05/2021		72.18
Business Reserve	05/05/2021		146,915.01
			<u>146,987.19</u>
<u>Unpresented Cheques (Minus)</u>		<u>Amount</u>	
01/04/2021 BACS SSALC		144.00	
			<u>144.00</u>
			146,843.19
<u>Receipts not Banked/Cleared (Plus)</u>			
		0.00	
			<u>0.00</u>
			146,843.19
		Balance per Cash Book is :-	146,843.19
		Difference is :-	0.00

12.3 Consider purchase of cyber insurance

It was **agreed** to investigate the product further to ascertain how it would operate alongside the Council's website and email provider. **Action: Clerk**

12.4 Consider quote for replacement piece of play equipment

The Clerk said that the 'log walk' was under guarantee and there was thus no charge. She confirmed that the bulk of the cost quoted (£495 + VAT) could be avoided by asking a local contractor to install it. The cost of sending the log walk would be approximately £40. It was agreed to source a suitable contractor with the necessary insurance. **Action: Clerk**

13. Communications

13.1 Review councillor training

Cllr Crookshank said he had attended a training session online about planning and that it had been very worthwhile. Councillors **agreed** to revisit the list of courses offered and to select one or two they felt would be of benefit to them.

Action: All

13.2 Discuss CiLCA qualification and General Power of Competence

Discussed at item 9 above.

13.3 Discuss use of social media platforms by the Parish Council

Cllr Howell said she had raised this to stimulate a discussion about improving communication between the Council and its parishioners. Cllr Park queried how it would be used; if Facebook/Twitter and Whatsapp were used, for example, this would require the Council being active in putting out regular information, while relying on the website was more passive. Cllr Rutherford considered whether the Council had enough information to disseminate on a regular and meaningful basis and noted that neighbouring councils used different platforms but they were not updated very often. Cllr Steadman suggested a system of alerts, akin to the 'Wealden Alerts' system, but it was noted that there were potential GDPR issues in maintaining a database.

It was agreed, however, to write a piece for the website, describing what the parish council, the county council and the district do and distinguishing between their remits.

Action: Clerk

13.4 Discuss current email provision and GDPR requirements

The Clerk reminded councillors that they must only use the Council's email system. It was **agreed** that Cllr Steadman would assist the Clerk in ironing out various 'glitches'.

Action: Clerk

13.5 Update on FTTP installation in rural Bells Yew Green

Cllr Park said the process was almost complete and the voucher scheme was starting to be taken up. One resident had taken on the cost of installing their own cabling underground.

13.6 Discuss the Parish Plan

Cllr Park confirmed that the results of the survey would be displayed in the village halls in the forthcoming week and that the Council should now evaluate the results to establish who could do what and the way forward, particularly with linking into the developing Wealden Local Plan.

Cllr Howell cautioned going down the Neighbourhood Plan route, noting that the costs would be prohibitive and such plans were likely to become redundant and/or be replaced. Cllr Luther added that the Council needed to be sure it had the capacity to deal with the various issues that would arise in such a Plan. It was agreed that the working group for developing a Parish (or Neighbourhood) Plan should comprise mostly of non-councillors, with the Council overseeing it. Cllr Obbard noted that Withyham Parish Council was producing a Parish Plan and that one of their councillors may be willing to speak to the Council. Cllr Park suggested she might speak with them.

14. Planning

14.1 Wealden Local Plan – rolling item

None.

14.2 Approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting on 7th July 2021 as a true and accurate record

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

(Cllr Standley left the meeting)

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

WD/2021/1370/F – The Gate House, The Green, Frant, TN3 9DL

Erection of new garage and storage area

Cllr Steadman raised an objection, noting that the applicant appeared to be relying on the existing hedge to conceal the proposed building; if the hedge were ever removed, Cllr Steadman argued that the building would be readily visible on the edges of the green.

The majority voted in favour of the proposals and asked that no exterior lighting is installed and any damage to the green arising from the construction process (notably from contractors' vehicles) be fully rectified by the applicant.

WD/2021/1235/F – 1, 2, 5 Nobles Wood, Bells Yew Green, TN3 9EA

Installation of electric garage door

Councillors expressed their frustration at the lack of clarity in the plans and their difficulty in deciphering exactly what was being proposed. It was concluded that the applicant was seeking the installation of electric garage doors to nos 1, 2 and 5, similar to those already in place at 3, 4 and 6. No objections were raised but it was **agreed** to write to Wealden DC about the quality of the application.

15. Chairman's announcements & correspondence for noting

None.

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

Cllr Howell asked the Council to approve an additional payment toward the legal fees for the creation of the green in Eridge and this was **agreed**.

Cllr Rutherford said the Trustee details for the hall in Bells Yew Green would need to be updated with The Charity Commission.

Action: Clerk

Cllrs Howell and Luther said they would shortly be arranging a litter pick should other councillors wish to join in.

Cllr Park said she had been approached by Mrs Kinley about a village fair. It was **agreed** to discuss this in September.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9.20 pm.

Action	By Whom
Liaise with Highways about getting costs on lighting options for the new pedestrian crossing.	BS
Identify images on google maps of the original grit bin on Benhall Mill Road.	DP
Undertake physical inspection of streetlights within the parish's ownership.	All
Ascertain if third parties are charged to dispose of green waste to a council-operated waste deposit.	BS
Convene meeting between Cllrs Luther, Howell and Steadman and the owner of Shernfold Park Farm Road about erosion on the green.	JH
Write to Mr Elliot about fixing the gate and installing stock fencing on the parish field to deter cows from trespassing.	Clerk
Liaise with Mr Bowie re stock fencing for parish field.	CS
Identify a contractor to install the 'log walk' into the play area in Frant.	Clerk
Liaise with BHIB Insurance re: bonfire site and a possible legal agreement.	Clerk
Ascertain whether the new green in Eridge, meadow and parish field could be contenders for the Open Spaces 'Grant a Green' campaign.	Clerk
Obtain more information about cyber insurance and how this would work alongside the Council's current web/email hosts.	Clerk
Draft information for website about the remits of county, district and parish councils.	Clerk
Convene meeting to investigate issues/problems with email system.	Clerk/CS
Revisit list of training courses and consider enrolling.	All
Update details on Charity Commission website.	Clerk

APPENDIX ONE

Cllr Keith Obbard – District Council Report July 2021

District Wide

The need for support for vulnerable people due to the Covid restrictions is lessening now that more people have been vaccinated and the restrictions are gradually being lifted, but the WDC continues to offer support when and where it is required.

The Council meetings and Offices are gradually being returned to a “new normal” state of affairs when there will be more remote meetings and fewer people in the office than before the pandemic. Plans for the refurbished Council Offices in Hailsham are being re-considered in the light of the “new normal” conditions that will be in the future.

As part of the agenda for recovery from the Covid Pandemic, WDC is attempting to promote the tourist industry in Wealden and part of this effort is the launch of a new guide and website under the banner “Explore Wealden” see; Welcome to Wealden - Wealden (explorewealden.co.uk)

This has drawn together information about lots of tourist attractions throughout Wealden and nearby, and the aim is to bring visitors and their money into the District to help local businesses and increase employment. The guide features Bowles Outdoor Centre, Bayham Abbey, the Busi Jacobsohn Wine Estate, Spa Valley Railway, Wildwood Vineyard and the Ashdown Forest of Course to name a few.

Planning Issues.

There have been quite a lot of planning applications throughout Wealden District over the last couple of months, and there have been several in Frant too.

The majority are fairly uncontroversial but the problem of developments within the AONB is a common one across the whole District.

As a general principle I have opposed developments that damage the AONB and our precious Countryside.

The linked applications regarding Warren Farm and Strawberry Farm are stalled at the moment while the Planning officers obtain a report from an independent source regarding the cost and viability of the restorative development of Warren Farm.

The enforcement team are aware of the “forestry building” that has appeared in the woods on Broadwater Forest, and as it hasn't been the subject of a prior notification request to the WDC it is technically in breach of planning regulations and the owners have been requested either to remove it or apply for planning permission for a forestry building retrospectively.

As far as I'm aware neither of these things have yet happened.

Other matters.

Boundary Commission.

There is now the first stages of a Boundary Commission review into the Parliamentary Boundaries, and Wealden will be one that is likely to see significant changes.

The initial proposal is to create two new Constituencies.

To the West the Constituency would be called “East Grinstead & Uckfield” and would encompass East Grinstead, Forest Row, Hartfield, out West as far as Balcombe, Newick, most of central Uckfield, Chailey, Isfield, Plumpton and down as far as Ditchling and Westmeston.

The Eastern Constituency is proposed to be called "Hailsham & Crowborough" and would include Groombridge, Eridge, Frant, Wadhurst, most of Crowborough, Mayfield, Buxted, Heathfield, Halland, Golden Cross, Rushlake Green, and most of Hailsham.

The map can be seen on the BCE website here;

<https://www.bcereviews.org.uk/node/6488?postcode=TN62FZ>

The closing date for this part of the consultation is 2nd August.

No doubt there will be more people upset by the proposed changes than welcoming them, but if there is anything that is really bugging you on the boundary changes let me know and I can incorporate it into my comments.

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.

Cllr Keith Obbard,
Wealden District Member for Withyham Ward.