

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

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THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL STATUTORY MEETING HELD AT FRANT MEMORIAL HALL ON 18TH MAY 2022 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllrs Howell (Chair), Crookshank, Rutherford, Macdonald-Brown, Steadman, Park
County and District Cllr Standley
District Cllr Obbard
Mr. G. Bannerman
Mr. P. Payne
12 members of the public

Cllr Howell enquired whether anyone present intended to film, photograph and/or record the meeting. No-one declared that they would be doing so.

1. To elect a Chair

Cllr Howell said she was happy to act as Chair for the following year. Cllr Rutherford proposed that Cllr Howell be elected as Chair. Cllr Steadman seconded it and it was unanimously **agreed**.

2. To elect a Vice Chair

Cllr Rutherford proposed that Cllr Crookshank remain as Deputy Chair for the following year. Cllr Steadman seconded it and it was unanimously **agreed**.

3. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Luther and Best.

4. Receive declarations of interests on items on the agenda and changes to the Register of Interests

None.

5. Approve the Minutes of the meeting on 20th April 2022 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were **approved**.

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

Cllr Standley said he intended to shortly make enquiries about alternative crossing devices to avoid 'beeping' noises with the new pedestrian crossing. **Action: BS**

Cllr Steadman said that the idea of a native species hedge around the play equipment in Frant was unlikely to work as it would not have time to mature with people walking over it. He suggested pursuing speed limits along the road parallel to the park.

The Clerk confirmed that the replacement Bells Yew Green fingerpost was ready and would be installed soon.

The Clerk confirmed that she had written to the Reverend about the proposed dog bin in Frant but had not yet received a response.

Signed: Date:

Cllr Howell said that she would ask the owner of the Shernfold Park road to attend the next meeting to further the conversation around improvements to the road and ways to stop people parking on the green.

Action: JH

Cllr Park said she thought the Christmas tree base in Bells Yew Green had now been removed.

7. Public Forum (15-minute time limit, to be extended at the discretion of the Chairman)

Cllr Howell said that the village sign would need Advertisement Consent and that the Council would be considering three designs and the location for the sign, if the Council approved the sign in principle, later in the meeting. Mr. Payne queried why this was contrary to what Cllr Howell had reported previously that planning permission was not required. Cllr Howell said that was indeed the advice she had originally been given but had sought further advice to be certain.

Mr. Payne addressed the Council about the proposal for a village sign in Frant. He referred to the legacy of Colonel By and his links with Frant. He said that a petition in favour of the village sign with some approximately 90 signatures had been delivered to the Council at the Annual Parish Meeting. He said that as the sign was to be in commemoration of the Queen's 70-year reign, it was important that it was erected during the Queen's Platinum year; he raised concerns that the statutory 8-week period for determining applications might go over time.

Mr. Payne asserted that as many people had signed his petition as had completed the parish survey, implying that Cllr Park had suggested, at the Annual Parish Meeting, that one hundred people from Frant had responded. Cllr Park disagreed and confirmed she had said it was a figure of some 300 respondees to the survey, a large majority of whom had been from Frant. Cllr Howell acknowledged that Cllr Park would be the one to know the numbers as she had received the responses and collated them.

(Cllr Crookshank arrived at the meeting at 7.40pm)

Cllr Howell noted that the Conservation Officer was intending to come back to her with her informal view about a possible location for the sign. Highways would also be consulted during the course of any application. She noted it was on the evening's agenda for the Council to make a decision about having a sign or not.

Mr. Bannerman referred to the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting on 23rd February 2022 whereby they indicated that Cllr Crookshank felt that Colonel By should not be used in the design because of 'negative history' associated with him. Cllr Crookshank clarified his personal position, saying that it was not about negative history as such and suggested this had been taken out of context. He said it was his personal opinion that a monument to a military occupier during the time of the Empire was not appropriate in the modern day. He said he felt that Mr Payne was 'pushing at an open door' and that the Council had not said no to a village sign but, rather, the Council had a number of issues to look at, including the special character of the green and its surroundings in the AONB, the Conservation Area, and so on. Location and design was key, he argued, and as with most matters, the process and decisions needed to be carefully considered, particularly as a sign would stand in perpetuity.

Cllr Howell said it was incumbent on the Council to consider why a sign, in particular, was the right way to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee. Cllr Crookshank said that while there was support for a sign, he had personally held conversations with people who did not want a sign in the village and this all needed to be weighed up by the Council. Cllr Crookshank referred to the case of Bells Yew Green in recent times, whereby a village sign had been rejected in favour of a sun dial.

Signed: Date:

Mr. Payne responded in a somewhat aggressive manner and Cllr Howell told him she would not be bullied by him.

Cllr Howell closed the public forum after the allotted time.

8. Receive reports from County and District Councillors

County

Cllr Standley said a number of Ukrainian guests had been welcomed in the district and children had been allocated places.

Cllr Standley said that £1.1 million had been allocated for free school meal vouchers for eligible families during the upcoming half-term holiday and the summer break.

Cllr Standley said there was no update yet from Highways about the Parish Council's match-funding application for the pedestrian crossing in Frant.

District

Cllr Obbard noted he had submitted his report to the Council prior to the meeting (see Appendix One). Cllr Obbard noted that Wealden District Council had welcomed a new leader, Ms. Ann Newton, and there had also been some reshuffling of portfolio holders.

Cllr Obbard noted that the bin strike had been extended to 11th June. Cllr Howell said that recycling waste could be taken to the recycling centre in Jarvis Brook, Crowborough.

Cllr Standley said the 5-year land supply will go, but only for those councils with a Local Plan.

Cllr Howell said she had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee where a presentation was given from the mediation company that Wealden District Council uses and that if councillors were aware of issues with residents, that this should be first port of call.

Cllr Howell said that there was help and information from Wealden District Council for those receiving guests from Ukraine.

Cllr Macdonald-Brown asked about the adequacy of the water supply for new housing developments. Cllr Howell responded that SE Water and Southern Water are both statutory consultees and both always conclude that they will provide an adequate supply.

9. Approve Section 1 of the Annual Return: Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

Section 1 of the Annual Return: Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 was **approved**.

10. Approve Section 2 of the Annual Return: Accounting Statement for 2021/22

Section 2 of the Annual Return: Accounting Statement for 2021/22 was **approved**.

11. Consider approval of the installation of a village sign in Frant

Cllr Rutherford endorsed the idea of a permanent commemorative structure to mark the Queen's Jubilee. However, he said that, in his opinion, he did not believe a village sign was the right way to do this. He noted that at the end of WW1, Frant had decided not to install a war memorial, but rather to build something that had utility – the village hall was ultimately decided on. He noted further that the concept of a village sign came about from a Daily Mail initiative in the 1920s and thus, the history of village signs was less than one hundred years' old.

Signed: Date:

Cllr Macdonald-Brown noted that a stone seat, donated by Burslems, had been installed to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee. Cllr Steadman said that it was a 'Marmite' issue and noted the diverse opinions at the time the information sign for the green was proposed. Cllr Park said that she was not personally opposed to it; however, she agreed with Cllr Crookshank that celebrating an imperialist from the Victorian era was not a suitable option as an emblem for future generations of the Parish, especially given that there were so many other options.

At this point, Mr. Payne began to interrupt, as earlier in the meeting, and was addressing the Council in a belligerent manner. Cllr Howell told him he was not allowed to speak during the meeting and outside of the public forum and instructed him to stop. Mr. Payne did not stop but instead got up from the seating area and walked directly to within a foot or so of Cllr Howell and the Clerk. He proceeded to raise his voice and speak in an aggressive manner, gesticulating and pointing his finger at them both. Cllr Howell asked him repeatedly to stop; he did not and she said she would close the meeting if he persisted. He eventually returned to his seat.

Cllr Howell asked Councillors whether they approved a village sign for Frant and it was voted 4 to 1 in favour, with 1 abstention.

Cllr Rutherford proposed that after Mr Payne's poor behaviour at the meeting, the Council instead use a different architect to design the sign. This was **agreed**.

12. Finance

12.1 Approve the insurance quotation for 2022/23

The Clerk said that the quotation had not been received in time and would therefore be considered at the next meeting.

12.2 Approve the accounts payable

The Clerk noted three additional payments: £198 Mulberry & Co., £31.20 Laser Repro and £145.20, also to Laser Repro. All the payments were **approved**.

12.3 Approve the bank reconciliation

The bank reconciliation was **approved**.

12.4 Note recent CIL payment

The payment was noted.

13. Update from Annual Parish Meeting

Cllr Crookshank said that the Meeting had been positive with 21 people in attendance. Various questions had been raised and Cllrs Park and Macdonald both gave presentations. Cllr Standley had given an update on County matters.

Cllr Park suggested that the location of the meeting be rotated around the other village halls to encourage attendance from those in the rest of the Parish. This was **agreed**.

(Cllr Standley left the meeting at 8.40pm)

Signed: Date:

14. Green Spaces

14.1 Update on installation of bollards around green and new fence along parish field boundary

The Clerk said that the work to install a fence was due to start on 30th May. There was no update on the bollards, but Cllr Steadman said he would speak with Mr Bowie. **Action: CS**

14.2 Consider quotation for historic building survey for Albert Memorial Well

It was **agreed** to commission an inspection and report for the Well. **Action: Clerk**

15. Communications

15.1 Consider response to High Weald AONB Unit's Management Plan

It was **agreed** that councillors would consider the Plan and feed comments through to the Clerk.

Action: Cllrs

15.2 Update on preparations for the Jubilee

Cllr Howell said arrangements were ongoing, noting that leaflets had been distributed and posters put up. She said there was a final meeting in The George at 7pm on 19th May. Cllr Park said that there would be a bouncy castle in the grounds of the village hall in Bells Yew Green, with a dedicated team supervising it on the day.

16. Planning

16.1 Wealden Local Plan – rolling item

Cllr Park said there was due to be a North Cluster meeting.

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

WD/2022/0122/FR – Land associated with 3 Rock Cottages, Down Lane, TN3 9HP

Retrospective application for studio for non-commercial use primarily for fitness and leisure activities

Concerns were raised about the lack of detail in the plans, notably dimensions and proposed materials. The Council noted that the development was already well underway and the photographs showed the scale of the building. Cllrs expressed concerns about the impact this building would have on the character of the AONB and the countryside and felt it is difficult to justify this harm for a non-essential development such as this. It was **agreed to object**.

WD/2022/0559/F – Plot 2, Land adj to Hargate House, St. Mark's Road, TN2 5LU

Phased development comprising the creation of a new vehicular access (Phase 1) and erection of a single residential dwelling associated landscaping and infrastructure (Phase 2)

The Council considered that the proposed redesign did not reflect the Sussex vernacular and would be harmful to the character of the AONB. It was **agreed to object**.

WD/2022/0774/F – 8 Down Lane Cottage, Down Lane, TN3 9HW

New porch and single-storey side and rear extensions

The Council did not raise any concerns and **agreed to support** the application.

17. Chairman's announcements & correspondence for noting

None.

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

None.

Signed: Date:

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 8:50pm.

Actions

Make enquiries about alternative crossing devices to avoid 'beeping' noise` with the new pedestrian crossing.	BS
Invite the owner of Shernfold Park (road) t the next meeting to further the conversation around improvements to the road and ways to stop people parking on the green.	JH
Liaise with Mr Bowie about installation and repair of bollards in Frant.	CS
Provide feedback to the Clerk about the High Weald AONB Management Plan consultation. Deadline for comments 30th June.	All Cllrs
Engage historic building specialists to inspect Albert Well	Clerk

Signed: Date:

Appendix One

District Cllr's Obbard's Report

District Wide

Local Plan

The Council Leader Bob Standley and Cllr Ann Newton have had a meeting with the new Housing Minister Mr Stuart Andrew to lobby him about changing the standard method for calculating housing numbers and the calculation of the 5 year housing land supply in an attempt to bring down the obligation on Wealden to build so many houses.

Obviously the lobbying of Secretary of State Mr Michael Gove has had no visible effect as yet.

Until this position is clear the preparation of the new Wealden Local Plan is effectively put on hold, as we have no idea what numbers we can put into the plan.

A large proportion of Councils across the Country are now in a similar position as Wealden, without an up-to-date Local Plan.

Any other preparatory work that can be continued is still ongoing.

Covid

We recently had an update about the Covid Grants.

The Test & Trace Scheme closed at the end of March.

From Oct 2020 to March 2022 Wealden D C has paid out 557 personal grants amounting to £278,500.

A total of £59.389m in standard business grants and a further £9.095m of discretionary grants were paid to Wealden businesses in the period.

Household Support Fund

This is a Government Grant that comes to Wealden via the ESCC for distribution to low income households who are in receipt of certain benefits already. Wealden has been allocated about £300,000 for Wealden residents, and this will be split 50:50 between Pensioners and Universal Credit claimants.

Tax Refund

The Government scheme to give a £150 rebate of Council Tax to help with rising energy costs is underway. Residents living in Council Tax band A-D properties are eligible, and if you pay by Direct Debit the Council will pay you automatically sometime in May or June. Anyone who pays their Council Tax by cash or cheque will need to apply for the refund, but the simplest thing to do it to sign up for a direct debit as soon as possible. There may be a discretionary refund for people living in Properties in band E – H.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The Council has now confirmed the tender for installing the EV charging points has been awarded to a company called Connected Kerb who will initially be installing in 11 of the bigger Wealden Car Parks. Connected Kerb are also the approved installer in Kent and some other Sussex Districts.

Nationwide

The WDC website has a page dedicated to the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis;

<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/ukrainian-refugee-crisis/>

Signed: Date:

It carries the government information on what they are doing and also where residents can find out ways that they can donate or help. As well as a link to the housing team if anyone wishes to offer accommodation for the refugee resettlement scheme.

The visa applications are still going rather slowly, there is a government helpline on 0808 164 8810

The East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service will be the agency carrying out the home checks and the ESCC website has information about a welcome pack here;
Welcoming Ukrainian guests to East Sussex | East Sussex County Council

There is also information about applying for school places.
The payments to refugees and to hosts will be handled by the WDC.
There have been about 100 refugees settled with hosts in Wealden so far, and the numbers are now beginning to ramp up with about 500 expected to arrive.

Frant Parish Planning Issues.

The application for a hotel at the High Rocks Inn has been renewed, with a much smaller proposal this time.

Bin Lorry Dispute

The strike commenced on Monday 2nd May and the latest news is that the Green Waste collections have been suspended, but the recycling bins are being collected whenever the staff are available and the general rubbish bins have been collected as normal most days.
The clinical waste, dog bins and street litter bins are all being collected as normal.

Bulky domestic waste collection has also usually been running as normal.

The advice is to put your bins out as normal, and if they are not emptied leave them out for three days as they will try to catch up, but if after three days they are still not collected, then to bring them back in until the next routine collection day.
The WDC website is updated daily with the latest situation.

Waste collection and street cleansing industrial action update - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council

If there is anything specific you wish me to follow up, I will do my best to do so. You can email or phone on the contacts below.

Cllr Keith Obbard

Wealden District Member for Withyham Ward.
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07941 578 427

Signed: Date: