

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

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THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT BELLS YEW GREEN VILLAGE HALL ON 19 OCTOBER 2022 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllrs Howell (Chair), Crookshank, Steadman, Macdonald-Brown, Best, Park
District Cllr K. Obbard
County Cllr G. Taylor

Representatives from Rotherfield Parish Council
Ms S. Boorman
Mr G Bannerman
Mr. P. Payne

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

None.

2. Receive apologies

Apologies were received from County Cllr B. Standley and Cllr Rutherford.

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 20 July 2022 as a true and accurate record

The Minutes were **approved**.

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

This item was carried forward to the next Full Council Meeting.

6. Public Forum (15-minutes - time limit to be extended at the discretion of the Chairman)

The Council received representations from members of Eridge village and Rotherfield Parish Council regarding the safety of the A26 in Eridge. There is great concern regarding pedestrians being able to safely cross the A26. A petition to make the road safer to cross has been signed by over 400 people. Of several possibilities, the two considered most important are a pedestrian crossing and reduced speed limits. The pedestrian crossing has been ruled out because of the very high cost. Rotherfield Parish Council asked Frant Parish Council to contribute to the costs of official speed logging and a feasibility study. Rotherfield Parish Council agreed to provide a detailed costing.

Ms Boorman asked the Council to consider allowing her family to plant an oak tree along the side of Shernfold Park Farm. It was agreed to put this on a future agenda.

Mr. Payne asked the Council to update the website to reflect the current chair. He handed in a petition asking for a public meeting to view the proposed designs for a village sign.

Cllr Howell gave an update regarding the recent meeting about proposals for housing development to the north of Frant, which would require access to/from the A267. None of the attendees at that

meeting had been in favour of the development. The residents of Church Lane said they were unaware of any problems exiting on to the A267, as had been asserted at the meeting.

7. Receive reports from County and District Councillors

Cllr Howell said that reports had been circulated prior to the meeting (see Appendices 1 – 4). No questions were put forward.

8. Village Sign

8.1 Confirmation that parish councils do not have a statutory duty to consult

In response to assertions made by Mr Payne at a previous Full Council Meeting whereby he said he had spoken to Wealden DC and they had said that the Parish Council is required to consult about the village sign, Cllr Howell said that the Director of Legal, Governance and Strategic Projects at Wealden DC had confirmed in writing that the Parish Council is not required by law to consult the public on decisions it makes, including about the village sign, as it is an autonomous body. Further, the Democratic Services Manager at Wealden DC also confirmed the above in writing and said she had spoken to Mr Payne but that she had *not* said to him that the Parish Council needed to consult parishioners about the village sign or other projects.

8.2 Discuss whether or not to carry out a public consultation exercise and discuss next steps

It was agreed that a village sign at this time was not appropriate and would be held in obedience. The Parish Council will focus on the pedestrian crossing in Frant and improving road safety in Eridge for the foreseeable future.

9. The Albert Well

The report obtained shows that the well needs repair and restoration. It was agreed to seek quotes for the work identified and then determine next steps.

10. Highways

10.1 Discuss speed surveys

Discussed at item 6.

10.2 Summary of the recent SLR meeting

Cllr Macdonald-Brown gave a summary of the points made at the SLR meeting with Highways, which will now be considered by East Sussex.

11. Finance

11.1 Approve the accounts payable

Approved.

11.2 Approve the bank reconciliation

The bank reconciliation was not presented.

11.3 New bank account for CIL funds

Approved.

11.4 Consider contributing to the cost of replacement windows in Frant Memorial Hall

The Parish Council agreed to contribute to the project in principle. However, as at item 8.2 above, the Parish Council agreed to wait until it knows exactly what funds it has remaining, following work for the pedestrian crossing in Frant.

11.5 To note Annual Return Section 3

The Annual Return Section 3 was reviewed and the External Auditor's comments were duly noted by the Parish Council.

12 Green Spaces

12.1. Select an option for urban grass cuts proposed by ESCC

The Parish Council agreed to continue to select option 2: Parish Councils may fund an additional four cuts to be carried out by ESCC, totalling six cuts (two standard and four extra) over the course of the year. This would cost the Parish Council a total of £234 for the year.

13 Planning

13.1 To consider response to Wealden DC about the Neighbourhood Development plan.

Carried forward to the next Full Council meeting.

Cllr Crookshank took the Chair from Cllr Howell for the following item.

13.2 To consider licence and planning applications received and make recommendations:- WD/2022/2463/F– Brook Farm Barn, Bayham Road, Bells Yew Green

Change of use of annexe to independent accommodation

The merits of the application were discussed and it was **agreed** to approve the proposal.

Cllr Howell took the Chair from Cllr Crookshank for the following item.

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

None

At this point in the meeting, members of the public were excluded to allow the Parish Council to consider a confidential item, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 8.30pm.

Appendix 1

Report from County Cllr Bob Standley

County Report to Frant Parish Council October 2022

Apologies

I am sorry not to be attending but I am presenting one of the awards at the apprenticeship award ceremony in Eastbourne. This is the first live awards event since 2019. To recognise the importance and achievements of those taking apprenticeships is I hope you agree important

Frant Crossing

I recently met with Highways and whilst the decision on the match funding will not be made till November, I am reasonably confident Frant will be awarded a significant amount. The maximum via match funding would be £50k.

The not so good news is that it is unlikely ESCC can deliver the project before 24-25 so the suggestion is to deliver through a s278 and use an outside contractor.

Highways Contract

The award is at the final stages with the successful contractor being announced in October/November. Inevitably the costs will be in excess of the current contract which was a fixed price.

Schools Outcomes 2022

The figures recently published show a mixed picture with Early Years performing better than later years.

Early Years outcomes were above the national average at 69%. Whilst literacy was the lowest outcome it was still above national average. Mathematics outcomes were particularly good.

However, for KS 1 through to KS 4 were disappointingly below the national average. Whilst by definition 50% of authorities will be below national average it would be pleasing to be above rather than below.

School attendance has always been a problem in East Sussex, and we have run campaigns in the past to improve attendance.

Covid has led to some children and indeed parents to have the belief that non-attendance at school is ok.

The above should however not distract from the very good results from certain schools and in particular where the LA has intervened.

Police and Crime Panel

It was interesting at our recent meeting the topic was raised again re the residents wish to have visible police and I am sure we all hear those requests. However, as we heard at P and CP a majority of crime (53% in England and Wales 2021) now has a direct or indirect link to cyber-crime. Not surprisingly 69% of fraud cases involved cybercrime. Traditional volume crime, such as burglary, violent crime, has dropped by 75% since 1995. The desire is for visible policing even though the majority of crime is elsewhere.

Careers Event

Next Sussex is an online event that offers a chance for parents, teachers and students to find about future career options.

Registration for the event is free and available on the Get Career Confident website.

Cost of Living

ESCC cannot solve the Cost of Living challenges that our residents are facing but, in partnership with the Borough's and Districts and the Voluntary and Community Sector, we can identify those individuals and groups most likely to be affected and provide information, advice and practical support including:

- Back in the Summer, restarting the East Sussex Financial Inclusion Group which brings together statutory and voluntary partners to maximise access for vulnerable residents to advice and support. The Group's initial work includes using data to help target support effectively, identifying shared priorities and approaches for improving

financial inclusion, and maximising funding opportunities, including the uptake of benefits.

- Last week we “soft launched” a local cost of living support webpage on the ESCC website which brings together into one place details on sources of help and advice – Including Money and Debt advice, Energy advice, Warm Homes Insulation advice, Food, Skills, Employment and Warm Spaces advice and grant support.
- We are distributing the third phase of the Household Support fund - £1.5m for the provision of Food Vouchers for families with children eligible for Free School Meals, and a further £2.2m to the Boroughs and Districts, VCSE partners and direct to Food Banks to support individuals at risk of food and fuel poverty.
- At the end of October, a further small grants scheme will be made available through Sussex Community Foundation Crisis Fund to support voluntary sector organisations as well as organisations, including parish and town councils, wishing to offer Warm Spaces.
- Separately we are also setting up a scheme for some schools to offer after school activities as a variation on the Warm Space concept.

Homes for Ukraine

1235 known Ukrainian arrivals out of a possible 1,581

Staying with **533** Hosts out of 649 registered

Our support to enable our Ukrainian Guests lead fulfilling, independent and integrated lives whilst they are in East Sussex is based upon providing funding for three key Pillars:

- Learning English as a second language
- Access to employment
- Safe and secure accommodation

In terms of accommodation, over 1,000 Guests will reach the six month point of their stay between now and Christmas

- To support the maintenance of accommodation our focus has been to incentivise Hosts to continue to provide accommodation to their guests through a financial incentive (£1,000 if they remain for >12 months). This is by far the most desirable and cost-effective option.
- If the Guest has to find alternative accommodation, we will fund a number of support measures including paying for the deposit and first month’s rent and act as the rent guarantor for up to six months if required.
- Whilst the availability of housing within the County is a challenge, these measures put our Ukrainian guests on a level playing field with other refugee groups, such as people from Syria and Afghanistan, who receive similar levels of support albeit by a different means.

Bob October 2022

Appendix 2

Report from District Cllr Bob Standley

District Report to Frant Parish Council October 2022

Local Plan

The draft local plan is expected to be published late 22 or early 23. There is still uncertainty re housing numbers but with the constraints we know Wealden has and the latest information from DLUC suggests the numbers will be lower than the previous government target of 1215 a year.

Streatfield House

Planning Committee North has approved the WDC application to build 20 council owned affordable homes and importantly carbon zero. The new building replaces a sheltered housing building which was energy inefficient and also contained a number of hard to let bed-sit units.

Customer Services

A report went to Cabinet on last Wednesday has some interesting stats

Website visits 1.215million

My Wealden Transactions 84,649

Customer calls handled 112,853

Benefits dept received 9,777 calls. Planning received 70,554 emails and determined 2222 planning applications

There were 66 planning appeals of which 43 dismissed and 3 withdrawn.

In terms of complaints the majority are settled at stage one but of the 17 that were referred to the ombudsman none were upheld.

Cost Of Living Pressures

WDC have set aside 250k to be available if required to help the most vulnerable given the rapid rise in inflation and interest rates.

To assist resident awareness of benefits they may be able to apply for a “Benefits Take Up day” was held in Hailsham which was well attended.

Finance

Ist Qtr. forecasting shows the council slightly ahead of its budget of an 80k surplus (predicted 125k) but this is only the first qtr.

The Council Tax rebate of £150 to Bands A to D has been processed. This is funded by HMG to help cover higher energy costs.

Bob Oct 2022

Appendix 3

Report from District Cllr Johanna Howell

Further to the other reports I thought that I would update the council on the meeting I attended at The Ab a couple of weeks ago. There was a large local turn out which I think surprised Mr Elliott. He said that there was local concern around the exit from Church Lane and the traffic through Frant. Several of the residents from Church Lane questioned his basis for concern since they were unaware of any problem and that this was just an excuse to build on the fields behind the church, many found his arguments disingenuous and frankly preposterous. The Headmistress was there and asked him why he had not consulted the school before putting them on his leaflet, again he looked uncomfortable. Finally I stood forward, said who I was and said I had been in touch with Chris Bending who was forming the local plan for Wealden, I said that this site was not and would not be in the local plan, it was in the AONB, that highways deemed the exit dangerous and that the site was not in a sustainable location and that Frant did not have a need for houses in this location.

I would like to correct a statement in Cllr Obbards report, the motion was a cross party motion with regards Southern Water following a discussion between Cllr Ann Newton and Cllr Rachael Milliard.

I went last Thursday to attend the Friends of Crowborough AGM and signed up to become a member. I was very impressed by all the fund raising and support they give to Crowborough hospital which I would urge you to support as well. They have a lot of events that I think some of our residents could be involved in and I will be asking the Friends to send details so we can put this on our website.

With regards to the Ashdown Forest, I sit on the board of Conservators and would like to forward Cllr Newton's statement on this matter, which I completely endorse.

"At a local level I am sure you would agree that our actions to date within the District are excellent with regard to the climate change agenda and there is much more to come going forwards. We have a sound climate action plan in place and through prudent management of the Councils finances, the resources necessary to deliver change at the scale required, as a Council and to help enable our communities to follow our lead.

We also work very hard on the protection and enhancement of our environment even with some of the difficult decisions which have to be made. As we have made clear, our new local plan will have the strongest possible protections for our environment and heritage assets, with polices to deliver biodiversity net gain, protect our most valued landscapes and ecologically sensitive sites to name a few.

We have taken a clear and principled stance on issues related to foul drainage and the discharges into our rivers and coastline. Through positive, but challenging dialogue we are leading the conversation with Southern Water, bringing in new planning powers and developing new processes to encourage Southern Water to deliver on their promises.

We have a strong track record of support for our local businesses and help and house those in need. We understand the pressure of government housing targets on our community and have publicly made clear our lobbying efforts to government to reduce this pressure and deliver a sustainable level of housing growth for our community, together with the necessary infrastructure investment. We are already lobbying the new Ministerial team at DLUHC on this issue.

With regard to the Retained EU Law Bill, I am meeting with the Sussex Wildlife Trust soon and am also supporting the Conservators of the Ashdown Forest in their lobbying of Government on that as well as Investment Zones, ELMS and fracking and have already made contact with Huw Merriman MP.

Government has been clear that fracking will only proceed with local agreement and although WDC would only be a consultee, under this administration, support would not be provided.

We are not seeking an Investment Zone in Wealden. We are focused on the things we can do locally to conserve the environment and nature, while ensuring that Wealden is a good place for our residents to live and work. So as a Council we will focus on the needs of Wealden, this is what our residents would expect us to do as a responsible local authority whilst continuing to lobby Government as detailed above”.

On other matters Cllr Standley and I are meeting with our MP’s and other Cllrs with regards to the on going development at Bewl, which we are deeply concerned about.

Appendix 4

Report from District Cllr Keith Obbard

Report for Frant Parish Council 19 October. 2022

District Wide

The Council has earmarked a sum of £250,000 to help to ease the cost of living crisis for residents in need of extra help throughout the District.

The money has been set aside as it is likely that there will be an increase in the number of residents seeking housing and other benefits.

Although there are not many homeless people in the Wealden District, the Council has an obligation to help them get their lives back on track, and also to help people who are in danger of becoming homeless.

So to help with this the WDC Housing Options Team is working with an organisation called Beam (<https://beam.org/about>) who crowdfund to raise money for education and training, and support homeless people to find jobs and homes and re-build their lives.

Tourism should be getting a boost from the new Wealden Vineyard Guide for 2022/23. This has been produced in collaboration with the Locate East Sussex organisation.

There are about 16 vineyards in Wealden District, and it is one of the fastest growing sectors of horticulture in the UK.

The guides will be distributed around the South East. Copies are available from the Council.

Planning Issues.

Two recent planning applications for large housing estates, one on the edge of Willingdon for 700 homes and one on the edge of Hailsham for 200 homes that were refused by the Planning Committee last year (contrary to officer's advice) have been the subject of Appeals that have been allowed.

The Appeal Inspector has awarded costs to the developers, and this is causing consternation for the Members and officers, as the budget for this is rapidly being swallowed up.

Better news is the agreement between the WDC officers and Southern Water to work together on bringing better and more useful and timely information about the sewage infrastructure that is existing and what will be needed and when that will be done to meet the requirements arising from new planning applications that are brought to the Planning Committees.

Once the new working arrangements have been seen to work successfully, Southern Water have said they will roll the scheme out across the whole of their area.

This is a direct result from the Green Party initiated All Party Motion passed at the Full Council last July.

Voter Registration

The Annual updating of the Electoral Register is now underway.

Residents are encouraged to check that they are registered to vote, and that their details are up-to-date.

You can check you are on the register by using the government website www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

People who have recently moved are particularly urged to make sure they are registered.

At the **recent District Council Bye-Election** in Maresfield Ward, the Green Party candidate, Mr Ian Tysh, was elected with a large majority, which brings the Green Group on the Council up to four Members.

The next scheduled District Elections are in May 2023.
(And who knows, - we may soon have a snap General Election!)

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.

Cllr.keith.obbard@wealden.gov.uk 07941 578 427