

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

clerk@frant-pc.gov.uk / 07903 661581 / www.frant-pc.gov.uk

THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT ERIDGE VILLAGE HALL ON 21st DECEMBER 2022 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllrs Howell (Chair), Crookshank, (Vice-Chair), Rutherford, Macdonald-Brown, Best, Park
County and District Cllr B. Standley
District Cllr K. Obbard

Three local residents
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 Cllr Steadman.

3. Receive declarations of interests on items on the agenda and changes to the Register of Interests
Cllr Macdonald-Brown declared a personal interest in planning application WD/2022/3151/F at agenda item 13.4 and said he would not participate in the discussion. Cllr Park said she was a neighbour to the applicants for WD/2022/3133/LDP.

4. Approve the Minutes of the Full Council meeting on 23rd November 2022
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 asked the Council to confirm they were happy for the two 'unsuitable for HGVs' signs to be installed at the Dundale Rd/Hawkenbury Rd junction. This was **agreed**.

6. Public Forum (time limit to be extended only at the discretion of the Chairman)
Mr Payne asked if there was any progress about the tree at Shernfold Park which appeared to be leaning at a 45 degree angle. It was **agreed** to ask Tree Works to inspect it. **ACTION: Clerk**

7. Receive reports from County and District Councillors
Cllr Howell noted that the reports from Cllrs Standley and Obbard had been circulated prior to the meeting (see Appendices 1-3).

Cllr Standley said that Highways had been very busy with the recent heavy snowfall. He said the drivers had done an excellent job in difficult conditions and had spread some 500 tonnes of salt across the district. He thanked Cllr Park for her recent detailed account of the problems with stranded cars and an ambulance trying to navigate Benhall Mill Road in the poor weather. It was agreed to check with Highways whether they refill salt pipes. **ACTION: Clerk.**

8. Green Spaces

8.1 To consider request to plant oak tree on Frant green

There was discussion around what the Council's policy was vis à vis replacing lost trees on the green, given its role as Trustee; it was suggested that, in this instance, replacing a tree that had been planted for the Queen's coronation at the time of King's coronation next year might be an option within the Council's policy. It was agreed to obtain more information first, before agreeing, about where the previous tree was planted and how long it was in situ before it was lost. **ACTION: Clerk**

8.2 Approve wording and cost of sign(s) for Queen's Canopy trees

It was **agreed** that a sign(s) was not necessary but that the trees could be photographed and documented and the information put on the website. **ACTION: Clerk/JH**

9. EV charging points network

Cllr Howell confirmed that she had put Frant as a location for charging points on Wealden DC's priority list and had spoken with the village hall in Frant. Cllr Crookshank said that a charging point in Bells Yew Green would be a real community asset.

10. Deer management programme

Cllr Macdonald-Brown said he had received complaints that a private consultancy was using heat-seeking drones to undertake a count of the local deer population and that this had been agreed by the High Weald AONB Unit; unfortunately, the drones had been seen capturing images of private gardens. He said the count would be repeated next December. Cllr Park said she had liaised with landowners who were undertaking culls, for example, at Ely Grange.

11. Policies

11.1 Review and adopt Risk Assessment and Management Policy

Cllr Park asked that the risk level for damage to/or theft of assets be increased from low to medium-risk. This was **agreed**. It was also **agreed** to add an assessment of cyber and GDPR risks.

ACTION: Clerk

11.2 Review and adopt the Asset Register

Cllr Rutherford asked that the two fingerposts at Partridge Lane and Tea Tree Lane be added to the Register. This was **agreed**. **ACTION: Clerk**. Cllr Rutherford queried whether the grit bin in the layby on the Bells Yew Green Road should be added; it was noted that it was not well used and was often full of rubbish. It was **agreed** that Cllr Rutherford would inspect it to see whether it was worth keeping and, if so, whether a lock could be put on it. **ACTION: WR**

12. Finance

12.1 Approve the accounts payable

The payments, below, were **approved**.

Item no.	Payee	Item	Amount
1.	Orchard Landscapes	Inv 1582 Grounds maintenance Jul-Nov 22	£5,910.00
2.	Orchard Landscapes	Inv 1583 Removal of cuttings via grab lorry	£1,093.80
3.	N. McGregor-Gould	General maintenance	£423.47
4.	Imago	Dial2Drive Nov 22	£93.41

5.	Cotswold Co.	Office furniture	£573.00
----	--------------	------------------	---------

12.2 Approve the bank reconciliation

The bank reconciliation was **approved**.

12.3 Review proposed budget and determine precept for 2023/24

There was discussion around the level of the proposed precept. Cllr Rutherford expressed concern at the increase but it was acknowledged that for many consecutive years the precept had not increased at all, or only marginally, and that the likely increasing cost of the proposed pedestrian crossing was a key issue. A precept of £110,300 was **agreed** with all councillors in favour, bar Cllr Rutherford who abstained from the vote.

13. Planning

Cllr Crookshank chaired this section of the meeting.

13.1 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting on 1st August

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

13.2 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting on 5th September

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

13.3 To approve the Minutes of the Planning Meeting on 3rd October

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

13.4 To consider licence and planning applications received and make recommendations: WD/2022/3151/F – Mill Cottage, Benhall Mill Road, Bells Yew Green, TN3 9AE

Demolition of existing dwelling, garage and associated buildings and erection of replacement dwelling and garage.

It was noted that the proposed new house would be of a very modern design and would not reflect the local vernacular. However, it was also noted that the existing property (to be demolished) had not contributed to its setting and that given the location of the proposed as relatively well-screened, it was **agreed** to recommend **approval**.

WD/2022/3133/LDP – Windmill Farm Cottage, Benhall Mill Road, Bells Yew Green, TN2 5JW

Laying a hardstanding 8.75m x 19.00m and stationing of a 6.75m x 17.00m caravan as ancillary accommodation.

It was **agreed** to recommend **approval**.

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

Cllr Howell wished everyone a Merry Christmas and New Year.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Appendix One

County Report to Frant Parish Council December 2022

Highways

The coming of Winter

Thanks to Debby for her full account of the conditions in her patch and for those who sought to assist those in difficulties.

Whilst the signage can be looked at, I am not convinced drivers will take notice. I am also not sure of the practicalities of temporary signs of snow and ice and the logistics of opening and closing such signs.

The snow on Sunday 11th was predicted and snow plans were put into operation but that does mean everything was plain sailing.

The fact that the snow was preceded by rain meant gritters could not be utilised till the rain stopped as any grit would be washed away.

Gritters were out on the primary routes from 16.00 and once those completed the secondary routes were gritted followed by the second run on the primary at 4am. 500 tonnes of salt was deployed across the county but it is not magic dust and only starts to work when traffic passes over it.

It would seem some drivers had forgotten how to drive in the conditions and once stuck abandoned their vehicles which blocked the roads and made gritting more challenging.

Whilst in many ways it is understandable that drivers turned off the main, some blocked, roads – understandable but not wise. Ungritted roads with snow and ice do not make for an easy journey.

There is also some confusion about supply of grit bin and salt on minor roads which are available to parish councils (at a cost) but are not normally maintained by the County Council.

Finance

The Govt announced the Local Govt Settlement on Monday and ESCC working through the detail. Theoretically every local authority should have increased core spending of 3% before council tax increases. The referendum cap is 2.99% with an additional 2% for Adult and Children's social care. There is also a £2bn uplift in the Govt grant on Children's and Adult care fund in addition to the £2.3bn additional funding for schools for 23/25 and 24/25 (4.6bn in total)

RWS Dec2022

Appendix Two

District Report to Frant Parish Council December 2022

Council Tax

For District Councils the referendum limits have been set at 2.99% or £5 whichever is the highest. This would increase a Band D household by £6.07 a year or 11pence a week.

Local Plan

The announcement from Michael Gove, Sec of State for Levelling UP Housing and Communities that the housing numbers would no longer be mandatory was both welcome and a vindication of the lobbying we have been doing over the last 2 years. When enacted, after a consultation, it will enable WDC to resist many applications given the constraints we believe we have. Planning Inspectors will need to take heed of these constraints.

Performance Report 2nd Qtr

The majority of targets have been met.

Once again WDC retirement living service has been judged outstanding following an independent assessment which is an excellent achievement.

Finance

The forecast is for a deficit of 200K. This compares with a budgeted surplus of 80K. The differences are detailed in the report and include reduction in planning applications and increased agency staff given the difficulty in recruiting staff.

Waste Vehicles

Proposal to acquiring HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) to fuel waste vehicles from now to the contract end in 2026. This will save 90% in whole life and direct carbon emissions.

RWS DEC 2022

Appendix Three

Report for Frant Parish Council 21st Dec. 2022

District Wide

New Local Plan

The recent announcement by Housing & Communities Secretary of State, Michael Gove, regarding changes to the National Planning system has had a mixed reception.

The Council is pleased that there seems to be acknowledgement that things need changing and that changes have been suggested, but of course with all these things the Devil is in the Detail.

There is an admission that in the past Planning Inspectors have overridden sensible local decisions on the instruction of Ministers, so it would be good if that changes.

There is quite a lot of the detail that he put in his letter to MP's that has been left out of the Ministerial Statement, so I for one will believe it when I see it in Black & White.

The effect of this Ministerial Statement is to delay the publication and consultation of the WDC new Local Plan even further.

There is no way that the Council can now publish and consult on the Plan before the Local Elections in May, so it has been delayed at least until early Summer.

In recognition of this situation the Minister has announced that where Local Authorities are well advanced in their Plan Making, they will be given some transitional arrangements for two years with a 4 year housing land supply requirement instead of 5 years.

This will be a help to Wealden as our current position is about 3.6 years.

There are numerous other suggestions in the statement, including the ability to vary the rate of planning fees locally which would be useful.

The WDC has improved their online booking system for Social Housing tenants as a way of improving the service they give and saving officer time and costs at the same time.

The system allows the tenants to book a Video Call with housing officers. It can be accessed through the WDC website.

An application has been made by WDC to the Rural England Prosperity Fund for a £800,000 grant to support tourism and local initiatives such as Carbon Zero projects, active travel, and nature improvements such as green spaces and wildflower verges.

If the grant application is successful, the money would begin to be available from April 2023 for rural businesses and community organisations.

The annual 'Street Learning' courses are now available through local community centres such as Eastbourne College, Uckfield College, Uckfield Civic Centre and online.

The courses include numerous educational and well-being courses such as cooking, painting, languages, as well as maths, English and accountancy.

The courses are free to Wealden residents over 19 and are being run by the WDC in partnership with the Colleges, ACRES, (<https://www.acreslearning.org.uk/>) ESCC Libraries and Job Centre Plus.

Visit www.wealden.gov.uk/streetlearning

Electric Vehicle Charging points

I attended the webinar put on by WDC and Connected Kerb, the company contracted to provide the EV charging points in Wealden Carparks.

More details at <https://www.connectedkerb.com/wealden>

There will be 11 carparks throughout Wealden to have EV charge points in the first tranche, they are hoping to start installing early in the New Year.

I can answer some questions, but if you want more detailed information about the EV Charging point roll-out then contact Thomas Hood at the Council

thomas.hood@wealden.gov.uk

And Finally - Is it all Muck & Magic?

I had a very interesting morning touring the ESCC Incinerator in Newhaven last week (or as they like to call it an Energy from Waste Facility) and the biggest Compost Heap in Wealden (otherwise known as the Whitesmith In-Vessel Composting Facility).

I am happy to tell you all about them verbally if you wish.

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

