

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

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THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT ERIDGE VILLAGE HALL ON 18th OCTOBER 2023 AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllrs Crookshank (Chair), Macdonald-Brown, Miles, Best, Davies
Ms Rosie Barnes (Clerk & RFO)

County Cllr Bob Standley, District Cllr Johanna Howell, District Cllr Jessika Hulbert

Mr John Bee (Eridge Estate)
Mr Julian Black (Kember Loudon Williams)
Three members of the public

1. Enquire whether anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting
None.

2. Receive apologies
Cllrs Park, Steadman, Rutherford and District Cllr Glynn-Ives.

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 20th September 2023 as a true and accurate record
The Minutes were approved and duly **adopted**.

5. To determine matters arising from the previous Minutes for updating and noting
None.

6. To confirm co-option of new councillor
Cllr Crookshank introduced Mrs Sarah Davies to the Parish Council and thanked her for volunteering to become a Parish Councillor. It was agreed unanimously to co-opt Mrs Davies onto the Parish Council with immediate effect and Cllr Crookshank extended a welcome to her. Mrs Davies joined the meeting.

7. Public Forum (time limit to be extended only at the discretion of the Chairman)
Mr Payne asked about progress on a replacement bench for the green in Frant. The Clerk said she was researching the cost of replacements and would follow this up at the next meeting.

DCllr Howell raised the issue of parking on the green in Frant and it was agreed to discuss this further at item 12.2.

8. Receive reports from County and District Councillors
Cllr Crookshank said that reports from CCllr Standley and DCllr Howell had been circulated prior to the meeting (see Appendices 1 and 2). DCllr Hulbert said she had emailed her report just before the meeting (see Appendix 3).

Cllr Standley said that East Sussex County Council (ESCC) was keen to recruit foster carers and asked that an entry to that end be placed on the Parish Council website and in Parish News. **ACTION: CLERK**

Cllr Standley noted that a recent Corporate Peer Challenge report had been very positive about the County Council noting that it was '*well run and well managed*'.

DCllr Hulbert introduced herself and said she was looking forward to attending Parish Council meetings when she could.

9. To discuss pedestrian crossing and other traffic-calming measures

Cllr Crookshank said that the project to introduce a pedestrian crossing in Frant had been on and off the agenda for the last ten years or so and it was now time to consider whether it would be implemented. He thanked Cllr Standley for all his efforts in liaising with Highways.

Cllr Crookshank said there were three options, the first being the pedestrian crossing and associated streetlights at some £250k+, which would take approximately 18 months to deliver; the second option was to relocate and possibly increase the size of the existing refuge island in the middle of the road – this could take the same amount of time or longer and potentially cost the same as the crossing; the third option was to install a speed camera – this option was unlikely to be agreed by Highways/ESCC given that no fatalities had occurred in this location. Cllr Standley noted that there was also the option to move the refuge island to near the bus-stop but this had the same constraints as option two.

The Clerk gave a summary of the potential funds available to the Parish Council, including approximately £76k CIL monies, £120k from the Eridge Estate, £50k match-funding from ESCC and possibly some funds from the general reserves (although this would be a last resort). DCllr Howell noted that further CIL funds would also be coming forward from the Inspired Villages development in Bells Yew Green but it was unknown when.

Cllr Best said the Parish Council should seek a fixed contract for the delivery of the crossing to avoid escalating costs. This was **agreed**.

Mr Bee said that the Eridge Estate was keen to assist and suggested that the Parish Council appoint Kember Loudon Williams to carry out a preliminary review of the existing planning permission and s106 agreement and contact Monson Engineering for a quotation. Mr Black said he was very happy to help get the project off the ground. Mr Bee anticipated that this initial work would cost no more than £20k. Cllr Crookshank suggested that this was funded from the community match funding or the developer contribution and this was **agreed**. It was also **agreed** that the Clerk and Mr Black would liaise about next steps.

ACTION: CLERK

The Clerk reiterated comments she had made at previous meetings, noting that the Parish Council did not have the General Power of Competence (GPOC) and thus did not have the power to deliver the crossing itself. She said that the Parish Council would need to be clear about how and by whom the crossing (including the design phase) would be carried out as well as how the Parish Council could contribute its different sets of funds toward it. Cllr Standley said he would liaise with colleagues at ESCC about the GPOC. DCllr Howell said she had spoken to Chris Bending at Wealden DC in the past and he had confirmed that they would not be willing to front the project.

(Mr Bee and Mr Black left the meeting at 8.05pm)

10. Planning

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

10.1.1 WD/2023/2208/F – Woodside, Down Lane, Frant, TN3 9HW

Conversion of the former stables building, to the south of Woodside, to form a new detached residential dwelling. Construction of a rear extension. Internal alterations and adjustments to fenestration. Associated landscaping works.

It was **agreed to recommend refusal** on the following grounds:

- Located outside the development boundary;
- Unsustainable location; reliance of future occupiers on the car and increased pressure on this single-track, rural lane;
- Harm to the character of the surrounding AONB arising from the additional building, hard-standing/parking area, access and splays requiring that vegetation be cut back, potential for proliferation of domestic paraphernalia;
- No evidence of a re-use of the building for business purposes first being sought has been submitted (Saved Policy DC8 refers).

11. Finance

11.1 Review of budget and year to date spend

Noted and **agreed**.

11.2 Approve the accounts payable

Approved.

11.3 Approve the bank reconciliation

Approved.

12. Green Spaces

12.1 To agree ESCC option for urban grass cuts for 2024

It was **agreed** to continue with option 2.

12.2 Parking problem at Frant green

DCllr Howell said that the residents near to the entrance to Sherfold Park had still be parking on the green, despite the new bollard and chain. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact Mr Sheridan about this.

ACTION: CLERK

DCllr Howell also said that residents / contractors were also persistently parking on other parts of the green.

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

Cllr Best asked the Clerk to contact Orchard Landscapes about checking how the grass was progressing at the new green in Eridge and also when they were able to install the new hedge.

ACTION: CLERK

Appendix 1

County Councillor report to Frant Parish Council October 2023 Council Monitoring

The monitoring report for the 1st quarter was considered by Cabinet and also debated at Full Council last week. 88% of the targets have been met.

As previously reported the pressures on Childrens Services budget remains and in fact has worsened in the reporting quarter. Last year the dept was overspent by £11m and the forecast is for this to increase to £15m. The pressure is mainly from increased LAC in numbers and costs. External residential placements have increased and whilst this is a demand led service there are concerns re the increased pressures.

In qtr. 1 there were additional 26 LAC that needed placements in external accommodation. In addition, 2 children required secure accommodation at £1m a year each.

The rise in interest rates on the council's cash balances and contingency budgets will largely mitigate the above costs in the current year.

Corporate Peer Challenge

This took place in June but the full report has just been received. The feedback was very positive with ESCC being described as a "well run and well managed authority", "Loyal, proud and dedicated staff" "does what it says and does it well". The full report is online.

Climate Change Emissions Update to Cabinet

Reducing carbon emissions clearly gets harder as the programme moves forward and the low hanging fruit has been harvested. The council has reduced emissions by 32% in the period 2019-20 to 22-23.

Foster Carers

There are concerns that as foster carers retire that they are not being replaced. The latest in a number of films promoting foster cares has been launched entitle "Any of Us". If you are aware of any considering being a foster carer, please encourage them to contact East Sussex to learn more details.

RWS October 2023

Appendix 2

Wealden Report October 2023 – Cllr Johanna Howell

Southern Water – Sewage issues

As you will recall there have been many concerns regarding Southern Water. There have been many calls to object to new housing until such time that Infrastructure can support such growth. This is not a new subject and one which was addressed by the former administration. The new administration has requested and sought further legal advice from King's Counsel.

AONB Management Plan consultation

As you will already be aware the AONB Management Plan is up for a further consultation. I would encourage as many people to formally respond to the consultation as possible. One area which I would encourage the Parish Council and other stakeholders who have any interest in protecting the High Weald AONB, is to call upon the new administration of WDC to formally adopt the management plan as a formal policy within the emerging local plan. This would assist the emerging local plan significantly if the objectives of the management plan were to be incorporated within the emerging local plan.

<https://highweald.org/aonb-management-plan/management-plan-public-consultation-2023/>

Environmental Framework for Licensing

The Council's declaration of a climate emergency and the new Council plan requires all Council actions to be reviewed. The proposal is to develop an environmental framework to guide future licensing policies and applicants for licences.

The following are areas where guidance could be issued:

- a. Event Organisers: Events could be planned to be net zero in carbon emissions, by having travel plans that promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport and by reducing energy use and the use of renewable energy. To compensate for carbon production, a means of offsetting by carbon capture could be provided. Events and persons attending should be facilitated to be sustainable in the use of materials by reducing consumption, re-using or recycling materials. Food and refreshments could be provided, which minimises carbon production. Single use plastics could be discouraged, reduced, or not used.
- b. Taxis: the use of electric, hybrid and less polluting vehicles could be promoted, in that hierarchy. Taxi sharing by passengers to be encouraged.
- c. Animal welfare: any activity involving animals should carefully consider their welfare. In many cases animals should not be exposed to any harm or risk e.g. not giving "pets as prizes".

The Council plans to consult on these matters but no link has been issued yet.

Johanna Howell (Cllr), Frant and Wadhurst

Appendix 3

Frant Parish District Councillor Report 18 October 2023

Water Issues

There is ongoing scrutiny of SE Water and Southern Waters performance in the recent past and representatives of South-East Water were questioned on 11* September at a meeting of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Chief Executive, David Hinton, and 2 of his senior colleagues duly appeared. They apologised for the recent cut-offs and were franker than we had expected them to be. The main point that emerged was that the company, the regulator (OFWAT) and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs ('DEFRA') have for far too long failed to plan properly for the challenging effects of population growth and climate change. A good example of this is that DEFRA's current guidelines require water companies to prepare emergency plans for dealing with up to 15,000 households having their water cut off, but double that number were cut off last December. As Mr Hinton told the Committee, the core problem is "not a failure of infrastructure but a lack of it". They are working on a system that Parish's across Wealden can sign up to that will help to alert the water companies in the event of future outages. I will keep you updated on this as soon as I have anything to report.

Local Plan — Work continues with this. As yet we do not have a set date (likely late 2023/early 2024) for when a draft plan will come out for consultation (lasting a minimum of 6 weeks). Strategic drop-in sessions are expected to be organised across the District. For more information about the Local Plan please see Wealden's website:

<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/wealden-local-plan/>

(last updated March 2023)

Wealden Community Spaces Grants Programme was launched on Friday 29* September. The council is inviting Not-for-Profit organisations and town and parish councils to apply for grants between £1000 and £5000 for projects that will help benefit the residents of the Wealden district and improve/enhance community green spaces. Closing dates for applications is Friday 27a October, so not much time left, but I thought I would still add it here.

Waste Collection Vehicles powered by Hydrogenated Vegetable oil.

A relatively small but nonetheless welcome innovation prompted by the changing climate came to fruition in August. All 33 waste collection and street cleansing vehicles used in Wealden are now powered by hydrogenated vegetable oil instead of diesel. This is predicted to reduce their carbon emissions by 90%. This was a change initiated by the previous Council.

I have held two Community Forums recently, one in Groombridge and one in Blackham (There was a lively discussion about a range of issues for almost the whole of both meetings; I'd hoped to discuss other topics too but they will have to wait for future meetings, as the purpose of the forums is for people to raise their concerns, not for me to tell residents what I want you to hear. The next ones will be held in Withyham and Frant, possibly in the new year. Please let me know if there are local

topics you would like to include in such a meeting. They are open to all residents of Withyham ward, I will let the Clerk know dates as soon as possible.

Water:

And finally, Council has obtained advice from an expert planning barrister about what we can (and can't) do through the planning system to deal with Southern Water's frequent illegal flooding of our district with untreated sewage. We can't refuse planning permission on this basis, but where the evidence shows that Southern Water's systems are currently unable to deal with outflows from a new development, the planning officers will be recommending to the planning committees that they impose conditions barring occupation of some or all of the new homes until the problems have been dealt with to the satisfaction of the Council. This will be a major improvement on what the Council has up to now thought it could do.

I continue to enjoy learning all there is to learn at Council, am on the Licensing and Planning Committees, which are keeping me very busy. If anyone would like to contact me to talk about any local issues do please contact me.

With best wishes

Cllr Jessika Hulbert

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Wealden District Councillor

Ward Councillor representing Withyham, Blackham, Balls Green, Frant, Groombridge, Mark Cross