

FRANT PARISH COUNCIL

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THE MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT ERIDGE VILLAGE HALL ON 20th MARCH 2024 AT 7.00PM

Present: Cllrs Crookshank (Chair), Rutherford, Best, Miles.
County Cllr B. Standley, County Cllr G. Taylor
Ms R Barnes (Clerk & RFO)

Mr J Bee
Mr I Holton
Mr P Payne
2 no. attendees

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

2. Receive apologies.

DClr J. Howell, DClr S. G-Ives, Cllrs Steadman, Park, Macdonald-Brown.

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 21 February 2024 as a true and accurate record.

The Minutes were **approved** and **adopted**.

5. To determine matters arising from the previous Minutes for updating and noting
On agenda to discuss.

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

Mr Holton raised the issue of road safety on the A26 in Eridge. He enquired whether Frant Parish Council would consider instigating a consultation with local residents about the various issues, including the blind corner at the junction of Sham Farm Road/A26, issues with pedestrians crossing the busy road and where a suitable point might be for traffic calming measures. He asked also whether the Parish Council would be willing to fund a feasibility study with East Sussex County Council.

Cllr Best suggested that the Parish Council follow up with ESCC's proposed provision of signage.

ACTION: Clerk

Cllr Best added that one refuge island might be a possibility but would have to be properly sited. Cllr Crookshank said that the Parish Council was currently committed to funding the

proposed pedestrian crossing in Frant and could not, regrettably, prioritise other projects at this time.

Mr Payne enquired whether if the delisting application for the Albert Well was successful, did the Parish Council propose to demolish it. Cllr Crookshank responded that if the Well was delisted then the Parish Council could repair and maintain it more economically, without the constraints of complying with listed building requirements.

Mr Bee raised the issued of the Heras fencing in situ at the new Fern Close development and parallel to the A267. He said he understood residents' concerns about it remaining in place but said that it was intended to ensure deer were kept away from the main road. He suggested a six foot deer fence could replace it; this would be aesthetically better than the Heras fencing. It was agreed to seek clarification from Wealden DC about whether planning permission would be needed, particularly given its location within the Conservation Area.

ACTION: Clerk

(Mr Bee left the meeting)

7. Receive reports from County and District Councillors

County

A written report was received from Cllr Standley prior to the meeting and circulated to councillors (see Appendix 1).

Cllr Standley noted that ESCC's Children's Services had received a 'good' rating following an Ofsted inspection.

Cllr Standley said there was currently an amnesty for returning library books.

Cllr Best raised the terrible state of the surface of the A267 and the A26, particularly around Spratsbrook, and suggested that the priority for Highways ought to be the A-class roads, where serious accidents were more likely to occur. Cllr Standley agreed but noted that the B-class road also take a lot of traffic. He said the focus was now on more extensive 'patching' of roads rather than localised and limited repair of single potholes, adding it was important to keep reporting problems. Cllr Taylor suggested that when reporting issues, to copy her and Cllr Standley in so they can follow up. Cllr Davies raised the long and unresolved problem on the A267 by the exit of Tangier Lane. Cllr Standley said he would go and have a look and take it forward.

ACTION: BS

District

Written reports were received from DCllr J Howell, DCllr J Hulbert and DCllr S Glynn-Ives prior to the meeting (Appendices 2, 3 and 4 respectively).

(Mr Holton and Cllr Taylor left the meeting)

8. Planning

8.1 To consider licence and planning applications received:

8.1.1. WD/2024/0284/F - Ware Grange, Bells Yew Green Road, Frant, TN3 9BD

Two-storey side extension

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=164711>

Councillors **agreed** to recommend **approval**.

8.1.2 WD/2024/0100/F – 7 George Smart Close, Frant, TN2 5FN

Conversion of existing attached garage to habitable area to create a family room. Works include new French doors to the rear, internal partitions, additional insulation to walls and as internal door.

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=164493>

Councillors **agreed** to recommend **refusal** on the grounds that the original planning permission had sought to ensure adequate on-site parking through the provision of garages; if the garages are lost to conversion, the knock-on effect will be that parking will shift to the road, already narrow and single-track. In addition, it was noted that there was a condition imposed on the original consent preventing conversion and thus the proposed would be in breach of that.

9. Finance

9.1 Approve payments

The Clerk confirmed a payment to Mr N. McGregor-Gould. The payments were **approved**.

9.2 Approve the bank reconciliation

Cllr Rutherford queried the unrepresented receipt of £150. The Clerk said she believed this to be a payment from NatWest and was likely a duplicate entry, so unreconciled, but would confirm.

ACTION: Clerk

9.3 Agree to change of address on bank accounts

Agreed.

10. Highways

10.1 Consider outcome of Highways Feasibility Study in Bells Yew Green

A local resident thanked the Clerk for a copy of the study and noted that much of it had focussed on the delivery of a footpath and the associated costs. He said that the report had discounted the option for a reduction in the speed limit to 30mph but, contrary to government guidance, had not considered a reduction to 40mph.

10.2 Update from meeting with Highways to discuss pedestrian crossing

Cllr Crookshank said the meeting held at the offices of Kember Loudon Williams had been very productive. As the Parish Council does not have the General Power of Competence it cannot enter into a s278 agreement with Highways. There is thus the option for Highways to delegate its authority to carry out works on the highway to the Parish Council. However, it was recognised that the Parish Council does not have the expertise nor capacity in-house to implement as big an undertaking as a pedestrian crossing and would therefore need to hire

engineering consultants and a contractor, once a scheme and design was approved. It was noted that a combination of CIL monies, match funding from East Sussex County Council and a developer contribution would fund the crossing.

It was also agreed that the Parish Council would seek specialist legal advice to review any contract with Highways and would also take out specialist insurance for the project.

11. Update from Wealden Parish Conference

Cllr Crookshank said the following had been discussed:

- The Nolan Principles and how these apply to parish councils
- Parish councillors are deemed to be 'public servants' and therefore afforded protection from the police in cases of harassment, etc.
- Climate change and what parishes can do. It was noted that Frant had many old and/or listed buildings in which it was difficult to upgrade insulation, install solar panels, etc.
- Wealden's Draft Local Plan – a lot of upset and disbelief was voiced about the how much development was being proposed on AONB, especially by the Green Party.

12. Discuss arrangements for the Annual Meeting in May

Various options for guest speakers and it was **agreed** that Cllr Miles would invite a representative from the group who had carried out a drone survey of the local deer population.

ACTION: GM

It was also suggested that it would a good time for a presentation on the new pedestrian crossing.

13. Adopt policy: 'Discretions under the Local Government Pensions Scheme 2014' Agreed and adopted.

Cllr Miles said the bund in Bells Yew Green was starting to flourish with new planting.

Cllr Rutherford noted that the fingerpost in Bells Yew Green needed refurbishment.

ACTION: Clerk

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Appendix 1

Report from County Cllr Bob Standley

Childrens Services Ofsted Inspection

This was completed last year but the final report and public announcement has recently been published. The overall assessment was “good” with two of the 4 headings being classed as outstanding. Indeed, we were informed the overall assessment only narrowly missed being classed as “outstanding.”

Whilst the financial pressures on Children’s services remain it is heartening that the services being delivered are benefiting the most vulnerable children in the county

SEN Pressures

I have stated at previous meetings about the financial pressures on looked after children but this pressure is also increasing on the SEN sector. Last week I attended an online meeting of authorities across the country and all our concerned with the long-term challenge of increasing demands on LA’s. Parents have high expectations of the help they require for their children. The number of EHCP’s has increased significantly in recent years. Whilst new special schools have been built and also extra capacity within the maintained sector, that capacity is soon filled.

Many LA’s have made use of the Safety Valve which loans money to authorities under particular pressure there is a long term cost of such loans. ESCC are not currently in deficit as we transferred funds from mainstream to the High Needs Block (not necessarily welcomed by schools) a few years ago but from 25/26 that extra funding will have been used up.

ICAN Exhibition 4th March

This annual exhibition is an opportunity for SEN (special educational need) children to talk with and hear the wide range of careers that are available across the county.

Finance

The above reports highlight that the pressures on demand led services are taking up an increasing share of the budget (75%) and reduces the amount for other requirement such as highways. Having said that I am still pushing for extra funds to be made available for the next financial year to add to current budgets.

Campaign calling for more Foster Carers

A campaign to encourage more people to consider fostering for their local authority was highlighted at East Sussex County Council’s Full Council meeting on 6 February.

The fostering recruitment film, entitled ‘Any of Us’, was also shown at the meeting.

The film was produced last year by a partnership of over 80 councils and children’s trusts to promote in-house fostering and aims to show that ‘any of us’ could foster and make a positive difference to a child’s life.

For more information on fostering with East Sussex County Council and to view the film 'Any of Us', visit the council's website. Online information sessions about the fostering process are available, as well as in person pop-up events across the county. If you or you know someone who may be interested, please call 01323 464129.

Call for volunteers to support people preparing for later life.

East Sussex County Council's Life Transitions Service (I am not keen on title) is looking for volunteers who can build friendly and trusting relationships and who want to play a part in improving lives. The pilot project aims to help people prepare for significant changes that occur in later life such as retiring, moving home, and changes to health and mobility. Volunteers will need to complete an interactive training programme before they can meet clients in person or online and will receive ongoing support. They will be asked to commit to being a Life Transitions Service volunteer for at least six months and agree to dedicate around half a day a week to the role.

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer can find out more information about the role by emailing LifeTransitions@eastsussex.gov.uk or calling 07724 287034.

Amnesty for missing library books begins.

Residents are being urged to check their homes for overdue books as the East Sussex Library Service launches its annual amnesty. In a bid to recover some of the missing titles, the service will waive fines until the end of March. Books can be returned to any East Sussex library during opening hours – alternatively, most libraries have drop boxes for out of hours returns.

Details of East Sussex libraries, information about renewing books and access to online library services can be found on the council's website.

Bowl Water Meeting SE Water

I attended the presentation two weeks ago at Bowl re SE Water proposals to link the Bowl Treatment works with Cottage Hill and through to Best Beech. This has been mentioned at the various public meetings but was confirmed and will strengthen resilience as it links the Kent system with that in Sussex and will allow transfer between the 2 currently unlinked parts of SE Water.

RWS March 24

Appendix 2

Report for Frant Parish Council Monday 20th March 2024 - Cllr Jessika Hulbert

Consultation on Local Plan: ("Regulation 18")

The first steps in consulting residents, community groups and businesses across Wealden was launched at 5pm on Friday 15th March 2024, and will end at 5pm on Friday 10th May 2024.

The draft Local Plan contains a wealth of information and proposals, ranging from possible development sites, sites Wealden does not think appropriate, as well as approaches to ensuring the quality and types of housing, promoting climate change and net zero, protecting the natural environment and habitats, promoting employment, flooding, infrastructure etc.

I would like to encourage everyone in Wealden to take part, and of course to inform us what you disagree with, but also what you support and like about the plan.

You can register to be informed about the start of the consultation at <https://consult.wealden.gov.uk/kse>

There will be several opportunities for you to engage and comment, including an online, virtual exhibition, which will provide information about the key aspects of the plan and opportunities to comment and 9 face-to-face exhibitions across the district.

23rd March, 10am - 4pm: Hailsham Community Hall
25th March, 2pm – 8pm: Maresfield Village Hall
26th March, 2pm – 8pm: Polegate Community Centre
13th April, 10am – 4pm: Uckfield Civic Centre
17th April, 2pm – 8pm: Heathfield Community Centre
20th April, 10am – 4pm: Crowborough Community Centre
22nd April, 2pm – 8pm: East Hoathly Village Hall
23rd April, 2pm – 8pm: Frant Memorial Hall
4th May, 10am – 4pm: Horam Village Hall

The draft Plan is the outcome of enormous amounts of work by both Council officers and councillors, seeking to balance the top-down pressures from Government, alongside local needs for appropriate housing, protecting our natural environment and considering the limits of local infrastructure. This plan is not perfect and a 'work in progress', that we hope can be improved and worked on with the benefit of local community input.

Council Tax rises:

You will no doubt be aware that council tax will increase this year, as the costs of delivering services continue to rise and Government support for local authorities remains insufficient. Some of the "big ticket" items, such as adult and children's social care are not the responsibility of the District Council, however, other areas, such as responding to increasing homelessness, especially of families, are our responsibility. The Council recently agreed a conservative budget *(with a small C) to avoid unnecessary expenditure, control spending, and well manage reserves. This means the Wealden Districts share of council tax will rise by 2.99%.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme:

Alongside increases in council tax we are continuing to support financially vulnerable council taxpayers. They can continue to benefit from an enhanced CTRS. Under the new scheme, agreed by the Council recently, a single person could receive a 100% reduction if their earnings are up to £103.82 per week. For a couple with no children this is £152.32pw; for a couple or single parent with one child this is £214.90pw; and for a couple or single parent with two or more children this is £272.25. We are very aware that, whilst residents pay may have gone up, living costs have risen even more. Further details are on the Council website.

Grants for Rural Businesses:

Wealden has won £500,000 to provide grants to support a range of rural businesses, including the purchase of equipment and machinery, adaptation of premises, the creation or expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses and farm diversification outside of agriculture. The fund closes on December 31, 2024, or when all funds are allocated. More information about the grant scheme and details of how to apply can be found at:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/support/grants/ruralbusinessgrants

Wealden's website is: www.wealden.gov.uk

And finally, I would like to remind you all about the Wealden Lottery. In its infancy, it has just had its first anniversary and with just shy of 1000 regular ticket purchasers, has already helped many local businesses and charities. You can support a particular business of interest or help someone in your area sign up so they can also benefit.

<https://www.wealdencommunitylottery.co.uk>

Cllr Jessika Hulbert,
Chair of Wealden District Council
Ward Member for Witherham
cldr.jessika.hulbert@wealden.gov.uk

Appendix 3

District Council Report – Johanna Howell – March 2024

Firstly I would like to congratulate Jessika Hulbert on being our new chairman of the council and am looking forward to working with her.

The council has announced that Residents on low incomes are entitled to have their Council Tax reduced – sometimes to zero.

As of 1 April 2024, residents can earn more compared to last year and still receive help with their Council Tax.

Under the enhanced scheme, a single person could receive a 100% reduction in their Council Tax if their earnings are up to £103.82 a week; a couple with no children could earn up to £153.32 a week; a couple or lone parent with one child could earn up to £214.90 and a couple/lone parent with two or more children could earn up to £275.25.

There was a meeting at Bewl with South East Water to explain about the plans for new water infrastructure which lead to more resilience in the system. The section that will affect Wadhurst will start in April and will last 16 months. They are building a more sustainable system, which will benefit us in the north of the district.

As you know the Local Plan is the big topic of the moment and I hope you will all read and contribute to it. The North Parish Cluster is on the 27th March at 3.30 and it is a good place to ask officers questions and hear other views.

Wealden Community Lottery is celebrating its first anniversary with an event in Hailsham, which will have 50 attendees. Please spread the word this is a good way to get extra funding for our local community groups.

Many apologies for the lateness of this report.

Appendix 4

District Councillor report – Frant & Wadhurst Sarah Glynn-Ives March 2024

Dark Skies

Wadhurst Park was the setting for a meeting last weekend for Parish councils and representatives from ‘Wild About’ groups to come together to discuss ‘Dark Skies’. Held by David Field from Nature Recovery Network with invaluable input from Samantha Nicolas from the High Weald National Landscape team, enthusiastic discussion was had on how to reduce light pollution in the area with a goal of gaining certification for a Dark Sky Community by the International Dark Skies Association (IDA).

I encourage all residents interested in protecting our Dark Skies to comment on Chapter 6 Natural Environment Policy NE10 (Light pollution and Dark Skies) in the draft Local Plan Regulation 18 document.

The consultation period has now opened: Wealden (Regulation 18) Local Plan Consultation - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council and the online portal to give feedback can be found here: Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan - Details - Keyplan (wealden.gov.uk)

The screenshot shows the 'Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan' consultation page. The 'PROPOSAL' tab is active, displaying a list of policies on the left and the details of Policy NE10 on the right. The policy text for NE10 is as follows:

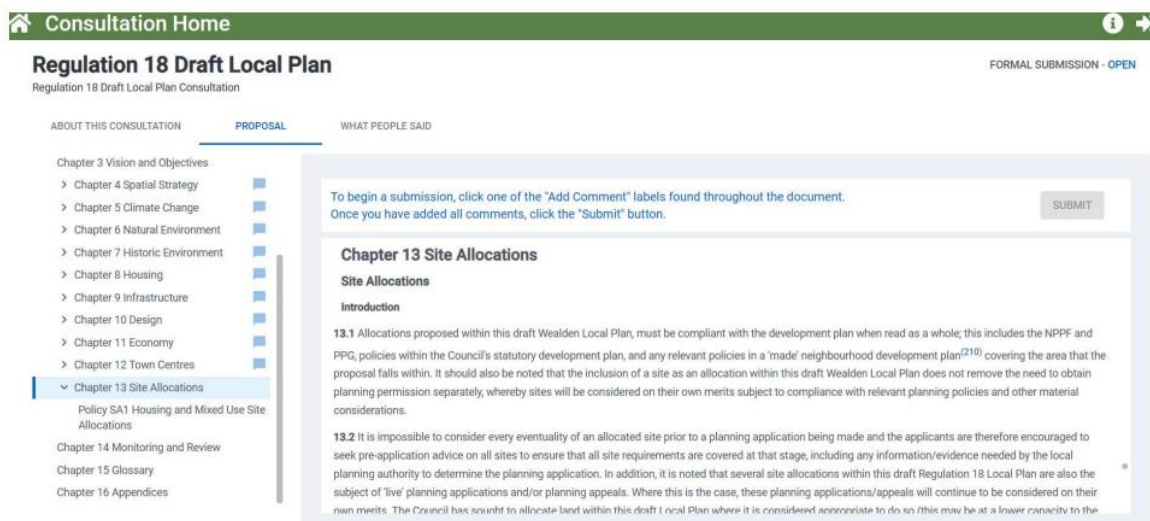
Policy NE10: Light Pollution and Dark Skies

- All proposals should have regard to relevant guidance on lighting within developments to ensure any negative impacts on the natural and built environment are avoided and mitigated.
- All proposals, regardless of scale and location, must clearly demonstrate that all opportunities to reduce light pollution have been taken, and should have due regard to the following:
 - All opportunities to avoid the installation of lighting schemes have been investigated and taken wherever possible;
 - Having fully addressed (a), that the lighting scheme is necessary and appropriate for its intended use/purpose and that any adverse impacts are avoided in the first instance, or if that is not achievable, are mitigated as far as possible;
 - The design of the lighting scheme has fully considered the light source and intensity being used, the luminaire design, height, and angle, including any baffles and cut-off shields where required;

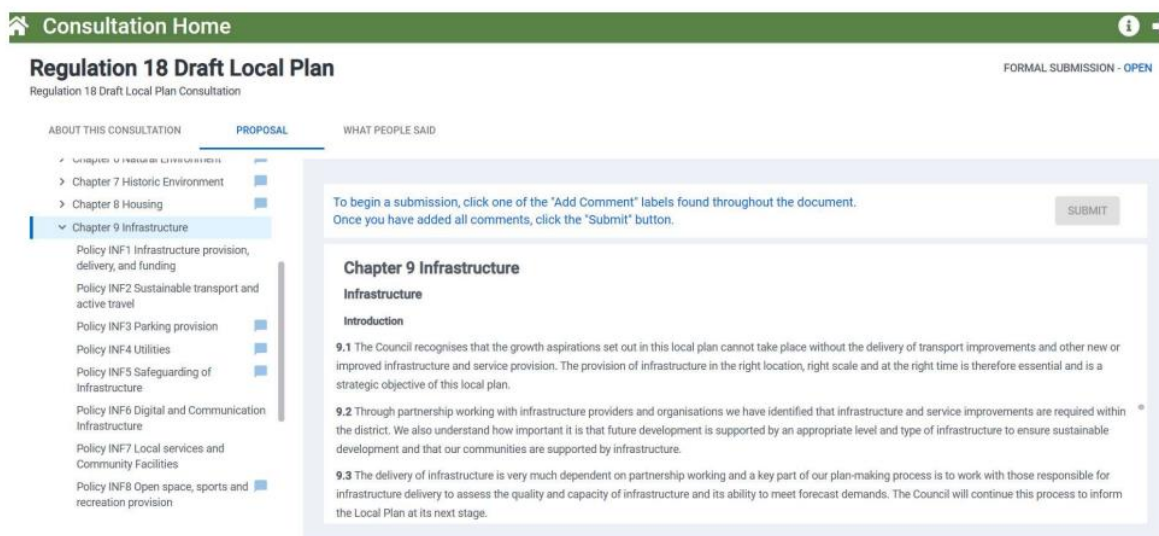
In 2016 the South Downs National Park became an International Dark Sky Reserve – Residents might like to watch their video on how they achieved this:
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/dark-night-skies/>

Draft Local Plan

Please find included in my report a copy of the Draft Wealden Local Plan Consultation – Frequently Asked Questions document. (emailed to Clerk as an attachment)



Housing unit numbers proposed for Frant are, without doubt and understandably, one of the main concerns for the ward. Question 85 in the consultation, found in Chapter 13 Site Allocations, Policy SA1, invites feedback on these allocations (see above screenshot. Website link: Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan - Keyplan (wealden.gov.uk)) Infrastructure is clearly another key issue that residents will likely wish to give feedback on:



Again, I encourage residents to read through and give feedback on all policies of interest or concern. A drop-in consultation event will take place in Frant Memorial Hall on Tuesday 23rd April, 2-8pm. Please bring your questions for council officers who will be attending.

A paper copy of the consultation documents can be viewed at Wadhurst library and a virtual exhibition can be visited anytime online. The virtual exhibition provides an opportunity to read through information and provides links to respond to the consultation. Link to virtual exhibition: <https://wealdenlp.exhibition.app/>

Duty Planning Officer service

Planning advice over the phone is once again available at Wealden District Council. The telephone number is 01892 602011 and is open Tuesdays 10am-12.30pm and Thursdays 2.30pm and 5pm. This service should not be used to request an update on any current planning application or pre-application enquiry. The service will:

- Provide general advice on planning considerations, policies, and permitted development rights
- Advise on how to apply for planning permission and our requirements for validating planning applications including fees
- Provide general details about any constraints on or surrounding a site
- Direct you to other authorities which you may need to contact, for example County Highways Authority, Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England
- Advise on how to apply for pre-application advice and what this service involves For more details please see the website: www.wealden.gov.uk/duty-planning-officer

Fortnightly Planning Podcasts

Tune in fortnightly for news and conversation on all things ‘planning’ at Wealden District Council. These podcasts are hosted by Samuel Batchelor (Development Manager), Stacey Robins (Head of Planning and Environmental Services), Kelly Sharp (Planning Policy Manager) and Nichola Watters (Head of Planning Policy, Economy & Climate Change) For more information please see the Let’s Talk Wealden website: The Fortnightly 5 Minute Planning Pulse Podcast |

Let's Talk Wealden or go directly to the Council’s YouTube channel: Wealden District Council Planning - YouTube Let’s Talk Wealden - <https://letstalk.wealden.gov.uk/>
A gentle reminder to be a part of the conversation through this interactive space. Explore key topics of planning, climate change and housing, take part in surveys and get inspired.

Council Tax

Bills have now been issued for the year 2024/2025 with the Wealden District Council element seeing a 2.99% rise across all bands (rounded to one decimal place on the bills)

Rubbish & Recycling

There may be changes to the collection day of rubbish and recycling for some residents. Those affected will receive a letter and updated collection calendar. These changes take effect pfrom week commencing Monday 15th April. 18th March, 2024

FAQs for the Draft Local Plan can be found at www.frant-pc.gov.uk