



FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Lorna Thwaites
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www.fletching-pc.org

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Monday 17th May 2021

Members of the Public in Attendance: 5

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Rothery (Chair), Greenish (Vice-Chair), Collum, Minch, Borton, Hannay, Shaw, Borton, Constantinou.

District Cllr Galley and Lorna Thwaites, Clerk and RFO. This meeting was recorded.

1. INTRODUCTION & WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN was RECEIVED: COVID regulations were explained.

2. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE RECEIVED: None Received.

3. THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING of 20th MAY 2019 were APPROVED.

4. THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT was RECEIVED: Parish Council working group allocation and individual Councillor responsibilities were explained; a report on the income and expenses of Fletching Parish Council during 2020-21 was provided and it was noted that the budget resulted in a small surplus at the year-end; grants were awarded by Fletching Parish Council to Fletching Primary School, Fletching Recreation Ground, Tonbridge and District Samaritans and benches for Cherry Tree Cottages and Piltdown Pond were purchased with S137 funding; a breakdown of income and expenditure was provided.

5. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST 2 YEARS were RECEIVED: the Precept for Fletching has not been increased by Fletching Parish Council due to the current climate and the impact of the COVID pandemic; the COVID volunteer support programme co-ordinated by members of Fletching Parish Council and local volunteers offered support to more than 70 parishioners; the Parish Council supported Fletching Primary School whilst under threat of closure and Members of the Council acknowledged the hard work of the School Governors, teaching and support staff and the local community in keeping the school open; Fletching Village Stores was registered by the Parish Council as a community asset; the Parish Council have become the Sole Trustee of Recreation Ground (previously the Custodian Trustee) and are now running the facility as a Committee of the Parish Council with representative members from the main users groups; there is an ongoing project to register Parish Council land; a new grounds maintenance contractor, Countrymans Contractors has been appointed for a 3 year term; an ongoing project to renew Fingerposts has resulted in 4 posts almost now complete and thanks were given to a local resident who is personally financing the restoration of a fallen post; in 2020 the Parish Council achieved the Silver Gilt award for the Parish in Bloom competition; quotes and grants are being sought for the restoration of the Pump House; Fletching Parish Council have been working to resolve drainage problems at Splaynes Green with the assistance of Cllr Galley and East Sussex Highways; 63 planning applications have been commented on by Fletching Parish Council over the last 12 months and the Council Members have visited 33 sites (the number visited was limited by COVID regulations); the application for the Electric Vehicle Forecourt and Solar Farm on land South of Copwood, was objected to by Fletching Parish Council - it strongly opposed the proposed location of a greenfield site on the West of Uckfield, an area understood by the Parish Council, not for development; despite attending and objecting to the planning application at WDC Planning Committee North, the application was approved; Wealden District Council have started to prepare its Local Plan; Fletching has responded to the Direction of Travel consultation; there is pressure on all areas to deliver new housing; Fletching Parish Council believes any new development in the Parish should be at entry level enabling people to get on the housing ladder; Fletching Parish Council is currently assessing the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish.



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6. A REPORT FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR ROY GALLEY was RECEIVED:

Councillor Galley commended Fletching Parish Council for the work it undertakes and the professionalism it employs; County Council elections were held resulting in a Conservative majority at County Hall; issues arising from the election campaign - housing development and the resulting intrusion into the rural landscape, and the state of the roads; the Great British Spring Clean is underway and this year's registration for the Garden Waste Collection has now started; Wealden District Council is still awarding COVID grants but at much lower levels now; there is a new small 'Welcome Back' fund available.

A question was asked regarding the quality of the design of new housing - Cllr Galley advised that a Wealden Design Guide is used.

7. GUEST SPEAKERS

i. A report was RECEIVED from James Adler, the Chief Executive, Conservators of Ashdown Forest: he has been in the role for 3 months; the Forest was very busy before COVID (1.5m visits) and is now much busier but numbers are not yet known; the infrastructure is creaking with potholes and damaged tracks; there is a huge potential with volunteers and ways in which it can be improved but there is a significant funding gap; Fletching School has recently made two visits to the Forest Education Centre; approx. £7k is raised each year from donations; costs are in the region of £300k per year for the amenities; the Forest needs establishing as self-funding; there is a legacy scheme running and a new Funding Foundation has recently been launched; the matter of signs not being very visible in car parks was raised although Mr Adler reported that signage is very controversial on the park; a question was raised over putting up gates and charges - Mr Adler replied that the land is common land however there are licences for horse riders and dog walking companies.

ii. A report was RECEIVED from Gemma White, Headteacher, Fletching Primary School: thanks were given for the generous Grant Award received and for the community support; the school budget remains tight; Fletching Primary is a small school with an admission number of 15 which makes funding difficult; grants have supported the playground refurbishment, which has provided children with a fantastic place to play and books have been bought for the library; the school has benefited from awards from trusts in the village and Schools House Trust; Fletching Primary School is now in the Bluebell Federation with Chailey St Peters, bringing many benefits such as shared leadership; SEN provision; shared lesson planning and children can work on joint projects; to-date the Federation been very effective in improving provision; future aspirations include becoming a multi-academy trust; providing more opportunities for the local community; a pre-school at Chailey St Peters for families of schools in the Federation; free parent and child groups; local GP talks for families and discussions are being held regarding a community library. Fletching Primary School is a Church of England School and it has very close links with the Church; Christian ethos is the golden thread that runs through the school; there is good support and provision for children with SEN (10%) and 30% of pupils are on the SEN register; 49% didn't join at the start of school year; the school has recently seen a change in demographics - there are now double the number of families living in deprivation and more children from ethnic minority backgrounds; the school now supports families both within and outside of the Parish; the Garden Trail is the school's biggest fundraiser.

Children attending the school are from from Buxted, Uckfield and Burgess Hill; increased marketing activity hopes to attract more children into Reception.

A question was raised regarding other schools that might join the Federation - Ms White advised it is still early days in the discussions; schools wishing to federate must be needing to appoint a headteacher; the hope is to have one more join over the next 2 years.



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8. PARISH OBJECTIVES 2021-22

- To continue as an efficient and effective Parish Council with trained, knowledgeable and qualified Councillors and Clerk.
- To effectively manage Fletching Recreation Ground; the Cricket Club is keen to enhance the facilities and are looking to have a fundraising initiative; possible improvements to the Pavilion are being considered.
- To provide a well-run Burial Ground for the Parish; there are currently problems with badgers entering the burial ground; work is being undertaken to stop badgers digging up graves (approx. spend of £10k).
- To continue the restoration of Fingerposts in the Parish.
- To preserve the historical Pump House and Pump.
- To continue to support local community groups, charities and the residents of the Parish of Fletching.

9. QUESTIONS FOR THE ELECTORATE

i. Siting of a flagpole at Cherry Tree Cottages: a flagpole was sited on the side of the village hall but it is no longer in existence; the church flagpole was used to mark the death of HRH Prince Philip; the Council is considering siting a Parish Council flagpole on East Sussex County Council land in front of number 1 and 2 Cherry Cottages; costs include a license and ground works which are in the region of £800. A suggestion was made over sharing the Church flagpole.

ii. Development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Fletching: the aim would be to consult and involve people from the Parish to develop a Plan; the Council believes that a Neighbourhood Plan would put the Parish in a stronger position over the location for any new housing development; it was noted that a lot of work and effort is involved in creating a Neighbourhood Plan.

iii. Parking issues on Fletching High Street: proceedings are in place to remove illegally parked cars in the village hall car park; parking by customers of the Griffin is a source of frustration; the Parish Council proposed holding a consultation to establish preferred parking measures; parking is an ongoing issue as there is no easy solution to the parking problems; a suggestion of working with local businesses and parishioners to attend a consultation meeting was made; concerns were raised by members of the public over the bottle neck caused by two cars parking opposite each other on the High Street; it was suggested that the Parish Council put a request in the Parish Magazine to ask people to not park on pavements.

iv. Restoration of the Pump House: Cllr Minch advised the wood is rotting and the floor is overgrown; work is needed to maintain it for the future; the Council has recently received quotes for its restoration; plans are to apply for grants, but parishioner approval and support is required; members of public in attendance agreed with the restoration work.

10. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC: no further questions were raised but thanks were given to the Parish Council for giving up their time and doing such a fantastic job.

11. THE MEETING CLOSED AT 20.22