

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Electors of the Parish of Fletching held at Fletching Parish Church on Tuesday 8th May 2018 at 7.00pm.

Item	Description	Responsible
1	Present: Peter Roundell (Parish Council Chairman), Liz Bennett (Parish Council Clerk), 40 members of the public.	P. Roundell
2.	Welcome. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Clerk outlined the purpose of the meeting and procedural matters.	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting held on 25th April 2017. The minutes were AGREED and signed by the Chairman.	
3.	Guest Speaker Steve Alton. of the Ashdown Conservators. The Chairman introduced the guest speaker, Steve Alton, from the Ashdown Conservators. The Conservators are facing a funding gap for the next two years whilst they change their governance arrangements. The new governance arrangement will enable them to raise more money in the long term. To help fill the gap, Fletching Parish Council, along with other neighbouring parishes have agreed to provide a grant of £300 per year for the next two years. Steve presented an interesting history of the Ashdown Forest and the work of the conservators. Some questions followed: - Who owns the forest? It is owned by East Sussex County Council. - What is the effect of carbon emissions? It is nitrogen, rather than carbon that potentially causes a problem in the forest. Heavy deposits show up clearly along the roadsides through the forest. The exact effect of this is unclear. - Do Gatwick flights cause a problem? It is thought that the emissions from airplanes are too high to cause any damage in the forest. - Can commoners rights be renewed? Many commoners still enjoy their rights for woodcutting, but they do very little grazing. Unfortunately, the rights cannot be renewed. - Are deer a problem in the forest? In large numbers they are thought to be a problem and cause a lot of damage by eating young seedlings. There are the highest number of car accidents involving deer in the country at the forest. A cull of deer has started. - Is it possible to create deer crossings? No, but signs are put up at known deer crossing points. - In the New Forest, roadside reflectors help to deter deer, could this be done in the Ashdown Forest? It is not something that has been tried here. The Chairman thanked Steve for his interesting presentation.	S. Alton

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4.	<p>Highlights of the past year. Peter Roundell, assisted by Barry Dickens provided an update on the parish council finances and their responses to planning applications.</p> <p>The Parish Council was asked about the status of the recent PCC grant application. The Clerk explained that provision had been made in the budget for this and that it would be considered at the next Parish Council meeting.</p>	P. Roundell/ B. Dickens
5	<p>Wealden District Council update. Peter Roundell provided an update on the Wealden District Local Plan, council tax and commercial investments. Some questions followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why are houses being built in the south of the district when this is likely to cause more traffic movements across the Ashdown Forest? The north of the district has more restrictions on it for building including the forest itself and AONB. Suitable alternative natural green spaces (SANGS) are being provided which are intended to provide an alternative to the Ashdown Forest for dog walkers and recreational users. - Will providing a dual carriageway on the A27 help to alleviate traffic on the forest? Wealden District Council hope that it will and are supporting this proposal. - Toll roads across the forest would help to restrict traffic and the technology is quite simple. Are these being considered? They haven't yet been considered. - Where are the occupants of the new houses being built going to work? It is not known but possibly Gatwick or at the new business park. - Is there real evidence of damage to the forest from traffic? Monitoring has taken place over the last 3 years and Natural England say that there is clear evidence of damage. East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council have both carried out traffic census which shows where the traffic is coming from. 	P. Roundell
6	<p>Public question time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Parish Council were thanked for all their hard work and support they give to residents. They work hard on local issues and projects, especially highways issues which is why there are fewer potholes in the parish compared to other areas. Barry Dickens explained that two Councillors drive around all the roads in the parish prior to the quarterly meetings with Highways. Generally, potholes are dealt with swiftly although the work is not always done to a high standard meaning that potholes can reappear. - Why are drains cleared late at night? The Parish Council is not aware of this but will raise it at their next meeting with Highways. - The signs reporting toxic waste at Woolpack Farm are a real cause for local concern, what is being done about this? The Parish Council understands that there are planning enforcement issues as well as environmental concerns at that site. The Parish Council has no powers to respond to either of these but did alert Wealden District Council who have enforcement powers and they have been in contact with the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency should be responding to this urgently. The Parish Council will ask for an update from Wealden District Council. They could also write directly to the Environment Agency and alert other authorities that could be affected by the contamination such as the Water Authority, the Forestry Commission and the National Trust. - What are the planning complications at this site? The Chairman stated that this is the responsibility of Wealden District Council and is inappropriate to discuss this at this meeting. 	
7.	Meeting closed.	