

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

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MINUTES of the Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Monday 6th November 2023 in the Village Hall, High Street, Fletching (7 – 8.35pm).

PRESENT: Councillors R Hannay (Chair), D Greenish (Vice-Chair), R Borton, N Collum and K Minch.

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO), Councillors Christina Coleman (WDC) and Roy Galley (ESCC).

Members of the Public in Attendance: 0

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Abraham, W Constantinou and L Snelgrove.

23/181. CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLOR

One application had been received for the casual vacancy for parish councillor. Councillors considered the application and voted unanimously to appoint the candidate.

It was **RESOLVED** that Sally De St Croix be appointed to the role of Parish Councillor.

It was noted that Sally De St Croix was unable to attend the meeting in person due to work commitments and that the Clerk would arrange to meet with her in order for the Declaration of Acceptance of Office to be signed.

23/182. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23/183. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd October 2023 were a correct record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

23/184. MATTERS ARISING

Fletching Village Speed Survey: The Clerk reported that ESCC had confirmed that the cost for a speed survey was £422 + VAT or £644 + VAT for two. Each survey would be a 7 day speed/volume survey. The two areas identified for the survey were agreed as the top of the High Street by Atheralls Farm and in Church Street/Ruston Bridge Road by the entrance to the recreation ground.

It was **AGREED** that two surveys be undertaken but that assurance be sought from ESCC that each survey recorded its own data and that an average speed between the two sites was not recorded. The precise location and timing of the surveys to be agreed with the Parish Council.

23/185. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA COLEMAN

Councillor Coleman reported that the Wealden Council Strategy (previously known as the Corporate Plan) was to be adopted at the next Full Council meeting later in the month. It was explained that the Strategy was a statement for where the administration would like to take the Council.

With regards to the Local Plan it was stated that this was still being worked on and that there was still huge pressure in respect of housing numbers but that the best way to introduce initiative policies was being explored. There would be an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 8th February 2024 where the plan would be considered. There was continued engagement with the various interest groups and members of the public could register for updates on the Council's consultation portal.

Councillor Coleman also reported that the Council had recently won a planning appeal, following a public inquiry, for a proposed large development in Uckfield. The decision included a landmark ruling relating to ancient woodland. With regards to Southern Water's consultation responses to planning applications it was noted that the Planning Portfolio Holder had sought counsel's advice and been advised that there was a Grampian condition that could be utilised to bar occupation until evidence was provided that the relevant sewage treatment plant could cope with the increased use.

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It was noted that Wealden DC had responded to the Gatwick consultation raising key environmental impact concerns especially in relation to the AONB and the Ashdown Forest and that the deadline for comments had been extended to 19 November due to issues with the website.

In response to a question Councillor Coleman confirmed that there was no further progress with the Ashdown Business Park application and that a full EEIA was awaited from the applicant.

23/186. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR GALLEY

Councillor Galley reported that ESCC had started the budget process for 2024/25 which was a tough process and a deficit was currently being projected. He confirmed that ESCC was in a better financial position than some other local authorities as it had made tough decisions over the last 10 years to reduce spend. It was noted that there was particular pressure from Children's Services particularly around SEND provision. The Fire Authority had also commenced the budget process. It was reported that there had been a lot of pressure on the service over the summer but that every incident had been dealt with and the targets were being met.

In respect of Gatwick it was noted that ESCC had also responded and was concerned about the noise, road and rail infrastructure and biodiversity concerns. It was requested that the planning application deal with those issues when it was submitted.

Councillor Galley stated that he was holding village meetings for the areas in his division and would be making arrangements for one to be held in Fletching. With regards to Highways he reported that Church Street was programmed in for works in January 2024 but that he had contacted officers to question why Ruston Bridge Road was not being done at the same time as to do one part and not the other did not make sense.

23/187. GATWICK AIRPORT EXPANSION

Information about the Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE) Aviation Town and Parish Forums was circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. It was noted that the majority of the parish councils that belonged to the forum were from West Sussex and that it was unclear what the costs or benefits to Fletching Parish Council would be given that the information could be freely acquired from the website.

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk investigate what the benefits and costs of joining the forum would be and report back to the next meeting.

23/188. WEALD TO WAVES – Gardens and Greenspaces Network

The details of the Weald to Waves project was sent to Councillors before the meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the Parish Council join the Gardens and Greenspaces Network and pledge the recreation ground, burial ground and Splaynes Green. Councillor Minch agreed to be the lead member for this project.

23/189. WORKING GROUPS / EXTERNAL GROUPS

- i. *Neighbourhood Plan*: Councillor Hannay reported that, to date, 32 responses had been received to the questionnaire details of which were circulated with the Parish Magazine. There would be a drive to encourage the younger age group in the next few weeks. It was noted that the closing date was Monday 11th December. The three prospective planning consultants had all been complimentary about the questionnaire.
- ii. *Fletching Recreation Ground Committee (FRGC)*: The Clerk updated that quotes had been received from all the respective parties for the refurbishment except the builder which was due imminently. Once this had been received the works could be commenced. It was also reported that a pitch survey had been undertaken in respect of the football pitch in order to obtain advice about drainage issues and possible funding opportunities.
- iii. *Ashdown Forest Parish Liaison Group*: The notes from the meeting were circulated to members prior to the meeting. It was noted that planning applications that came within the 400m zone were

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not necessarily being identified by the conservators. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk contact Ashdown Forest Office to ascertain where the 400m boundary extended to so that the Parish Council could ensure it notified the Conservators of any appropriate applications within the parish.

- iv. *Uckfield Cluster Community Safety Action Group*: It was noted that the notes of the meeting had not yet been received but would be circulated to councillors when they were.

23/190. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- i. *Wealden District Council – Members Allowances and Remuneration Panel 2024/5*: Councillors confirmed they had no comments or questions to put to the Independent Remuneration Panel. The Clerk to respond back to Wealden accordingly.
- ii. *ESCC Highways – Urban Grass Cutting Options 2024*: Each year ESCC Highways offers Parish Councils options in respect of the Urban Grass Cutting Service. Option 1 – standard two cuts per year (no cost); Option 2 – Extra cuts (up to 4 cuts per year at an additional cost of £551); and Option 3 - Self delivery – the parish council take on the responsibility and carry out at a minimum 2 cuts per year (£276 paid to the parish council).

It was **RESOLVED** that Option 1 – standard cuts was the preferred option. The Clerk to respond to ESCC accordingly.

- iii. *Working Group Against Over Development*: This item was taken as urgent business given the timing of any response to be given. The letter, received by the Parish Clerk, had been circulated to all councillors. It was noted that WGod was raising concern about the proposed Wealden Strategy not addressing overdevelopment. Councillor Coleman explained that the Strategy, as a vision document, was not the right place to address the issue of overdevelopment which would be dealt with through the Local Plan. The Parish Council supported the vision and **AGREED** that no further action was required.

23/191. FINANCE AND ASSETS

- i. The invoices and payments for November 2023 were **AUTHORISED** and the Council's current financial position and bank reconciliation were noted.

It was noted that the national pay award for 2023/24 for the Clerk had now been approved and would be back-dated to April 2023.

In respect of the invoice for JAKK Country Furniture Designs Ltd. It was reported that this was higher than expected due to the bollards at Splaynes Green being replaced like for like as opposed to a reduced number that had originally been approved. This had been due to a miscommunication with the supplier. The Parish Council confirmed it was very happy with the works that had been carried out.

23/192. BURIAL GROUND

- i. There were no applications for permits since the last meeting.

23/193. ENFORCEMENT – PLANNING AND DRAINAGE

- i. *Flitteridge Farm*: The Clerk reported that communications were still ongoing in respect of the remaining mobile home on the site. With regard to the concrete plinth the enforcement officer was waiting for a response from the owner and would be visiting the site the following week. It was confirmed that he had been sent photos of the works taking place.

23/194. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - RECEIVED

It was **RESOLVED** to make the comments as set out after each application in respect of the following:

- i. **WD/2023/2514/FA Site. Adj. to Hawthorn Cottages, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XL**
Variation of condition 11 of WD/2020/1130/F construction of detached dwelling house with garage including vehicular access from rear of Hawthorn Cottages.

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The building is currently in the course of construction. Overall, the design changes are relatively minor and generally improve the design of the house. The Council SUPPORTS the application.

23/195. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - DECISIONS

Planning decisions RECEIVED from Wealden District Council since the last meeting:

Applications Approved

i. **WD/2019/2503/F Trading Boundaries Ltd, Sheffield Park TN22 3RB**

Change of use, conversion and extension of existing courtyard buildings from existing retail use to 12 no. B&B rooms, one of which to be used for staff accommodation. Use of part of the former dairy building to wedding ceremony room / function space. (APPROVED 28 September 2023)

Applications Refused

i. **WD/2023/2033/LB 17 The Courtyard, South Pavilion, Sheffield Park TN22 3QW**

Proposed windows and doors replacement. (REFUSED 9 October 2023)

ii. **WD/2023/2074/F North Hall Barn, North Hall Lane, Fletching TN22 3SA**

Erection of single storey, oak-framed orangery and alterations to fenestrations. (REFUSED 29 September 2023)

Response to Parish Council: Whilst the Parish comments are noted, both national and local adopted policy and supplementary guidance seek to support proposals whereby the character of the existing property and landscape are maintained, if not enhanced. The siting of a highly glazed structure to the front elevation is not supported within policies as it would dominate the front elevation and ultimately detract from the original character and appearance of its former agricultural nature and rural setting in the protected landscape of the AONB and is without sound justification.

Applications Withdrawn

i. **WD/2023/2000/LB Churchgate House, High Street, Fletching TN22 3SS**

Replacement timber windows. (WITHDRAWN 9 October 2023)

ii. **WD/2023/2060/F Land at Northall CPC, North Hall Lane, Fletching TN22 3SA**

Erection of single dwelling. (WITHDRAWN 9 October 2023)

23/196. PLANNING – Unsuitable design of new development at Acorn Garage, Splaynes Green

The unsuitability of the design of the new properties being built on the site of Acorn Garage was raised. It was accepted that the dwellings were being built as per the approved design but it was felt that the Parish Council's disappointment with the design, as raised at the application stage, should be sent to the Director of Place at Wealden District Council as now that the properties were being constructed the unsuitability of the design in a rural location was evident. It was **AGREED** that Councillor Greenish draft a letter setting out the views of councillors which would then be approved at the next meeting.

Note: Councillors Coleman and Galley left meeting at 8.20pm prior to the following item.

23/197. SPLAYNES GREEN PHONEBOX

The Councillors took into consideration the views received in respect of the phone box. Those withstanding, it was **AGREED** that investigations take place into the cost and process of removing the phone box particularly given the health and safety concerns about the current angle of the box.

23/198. ITEMS FOR THE PARISH MAGAZINE

It was agreed that the following items be included for the next edition of the Parish Magazine:

- Splaynes Green Phone Box

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- Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire – reminder to complete
- War memorial cleaning

23/199. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Agenda items to include:

- Gatwick Airport expansion – whether to join CAGNE Parish Forum
- Resilience Plan
- Letter to WDC about the design of the new dwellings at the old Acorn Garage site
- Splaynes Green Phone Box

It was requested that Councillors contact the Clerk with any other items they wish to be considered at the next meeting.

23/200. TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Monday 4th December 2023 at 7pm in the Village Hall