

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

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MINUTES of the Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Monday 12th May 2025 in The Pavilion, Fletching Recreation Ground, Fletching (6.30 – 7.35pm).

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

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO) and Councillor R Galley (ESCC)

Members of the Public in Attendance: 0

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Abraham, W Constantinou and D Woollven

25/77. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Greenish proposed and Councillor Borton seconded that Councillor Hannay be elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for the forthcoming year.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Richard Hannay be elected Chairman of the Parish Council for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Richard Hannay signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was witnessed by the Clerk as the Proper Officer.

25/78. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Minch proposed and Councillor Hannay seconded that Councillor Greenish be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the forthcoming year.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Damian Greenish be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Damian Greenish signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was witnessed by the Clerk as the Proper Officer.

25/79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest RECEIVED in respect of items on the agenda, as required by the Members' Code of Conduct:

Minute 25/92(ii) Councillors Collum, Greenish and Hannay as the applicant was well known to them for application WD/2025/0889/F.

In accordance with the FPC Code of Conduct, the councillors did not participate or vote on the agreement of comments on this application.

25/80. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting held on 14th April 2025 were a correct record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

25/81. MATTERS ARISING

The Actions List as prepared and circulated by the Clerk was noted. An update was given as follows:

CIL Funds: the provision of a path in the burial ground was still ongoing.

Resilience Plan: this would be an item on the July agenda as Cllr Minch would not be in attendance at the June meeting.

Historical Archive: this would be transferred to the village hall once the cupboard had been sorted.

25/82. COUNCILLOR VACANCY

Cllr Hannay reported that Cllr Sally De St Croix had stood down from the Parish Council due to work pressures. He thanked her for the contribution she had made to the Council and also stated that she would remain on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It was noted that the notice of vacancy had been posted and, if no election called, the co-option process could start after 27 May 2025.

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25/83. COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND APPOINTMENTS TO WORKING GROUPS AND EXTERNAL BODIES

It was agreed that this be DEFERRED to the next meeting so as to include any new councillor.

It was, however, **AGREED** that Cllr Woollven replace Cllr Borton on the Planning Working Group with immediate effect.

25/84. STANDING ORDERS AND REGULATIONS

It was **RESOLVED** to **ADOPT** the following:

- i. Standing Orders 2025
- ii. Financial Regulations 2025
- iii. Code of Conduct 2025 – this was duly signed by those Councillors in attendance at the meeting.

25/85. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Councillor Galley reported that ESCC and Wealden DC had just launched a public consultation on the proposed boundary for the new unitary authority for East Sussex. He stated that the preferred option was to follow the existing ESCC boundary. He confirmed that the number of councillors for the new authority was not part of the consultation but suggested that if anyone had views they should be included in the consultation response. It was noted that the next notification from MHLGC would be in September.

In respect of the condition of the roads, Cllr Galley reported that he had driven around his division with the new head of highways for ESCC who had agreed that the road between Sheffield Green and the A272 through Fletching village was in need of repair. Cllr Galley has been informed that there would be considerable patching work taking place along the road in the current financial year.

In response to a query about the road safety issues raised for Shortbridge and Batts Bridge Road, Cllr Galley confirmed that he had sent them both to the ESCC Road Safety Team and was awaiting a response. He agreed to check that the team also knew about the recent accident that occurred at the junction of the A272 and Golf Club Lane.

25/86. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Councillor Coleman was not at the meeting to give an update as she was attending the Newick Parish Council meeting where the Goldbridge Farm planning application was being discussed.

25/87. WORKING GROUPS / EXTERNAL GROUPS

- i. *Neighbourhood Plan*: Cllr Hannay reported that the consultation had gone live and an open event had taken place the previous week. There was not a high attendance at the event but all households had received a leaflet about the consultation. It was noted that the closing date was the end of May.
- ii. *Fletching Recreation Ground Committee (FRGC)*: The Clerk reported that the cricket and stoolball seasons had started well and that there were still children's party bookings being made.
- iii. *Village Hall Committee of Management*: Cllr Hannay explained that the Parish Council had been approached by the Chairman of the Village Hall Committee asking if the Parish Council would consider becoming a sole trustee for the charity. It was noted that the Parish Council is currently the custodian trustee for the charity. Cllr Hannay stated that he, the Clerk along with Cllr Minch, as the Parish Council appointment on the Village Hall Committee, had attended an informal meeting of prospective trustees where it was agreed that the recruitment of a new caretaker should be the priority at this point. A further update would be given at the next meeting.

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25/88. CORRESPONDENCE / CONSULTATIONS RECEIVED

Batts Bridge Road – Safety Crisis and Reckless Driving: It was noted that the correspondence had been passed on to Cllr Galley as it was a Highways issue and that he had passed it to the ESCC Road Safety team and was awaiting a response.

25/89. FINANCE AND ASSETS

- i. The Asset Register for Fletching Parish Council was **AGREED**.
- ii. The Risk Management Document for Fletching Parish Council was **AGREED**.
- iii. The Direct Debits made to other bodies were **AGREED**.
- iv. The banking arrangements were confirmed for the forthcoming year. It was **AGREED** that Councillors Hannay and Collum should continue as authorised signatories.
- v. The budget outturn for 2024/25 and precept for 2025/26 were noted.
- vi. The arrangements for insurance cover and the payment of the premium were **AGREED**.
- vii. The invoices and payments for May 2025 were **AUTHORISED** and the Council's current financial position and bank reconciliation were noted.

25/90. BURIAL GROUND

- i. The following requests were **APPROVED**:
 - a. Grant of Burial Rights – A Knipe
 - b. Erection of a monument – t/l Roy Bellingham

25/91. ENFORCEMENT – PLANNING AND DRAINAGE

There were no enforcement or drainage issues reported.

25/92. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - RECEIVED

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

i. **WD/2025/0738/F Roselands, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XL**

Proposed internal loft conversion including formation of a rooflight on rear roof slope.

The Parish Council has NO COMMENTS to make on this application.

ii. **WD/2025/0889/F Achers Cottage, North Hall Lane, Fletching TN22 3SA**

Two storey rear extension to replace existing single storey extension.

The property is a detached 5 bedroom house set in its own garden and a few metres back from North Hall Lane. The location is rural surrounded by farmland and woods and is within the High Weald National Landscape. It is not listed. There is a single storey rear extension used as a kitchen/breakfast room. The extension also includes a utility room and wc which was granted planning permission in 2004.

The proposal is to demolish the single storey extension to the rear of the property and replace it with a two storey extension on a larger footprint. The materials and fenestration will match the existing.

The works being to the rear of the property would not be visible from North Hall Lane and there are no other houses in the vicinity that would be affected.

The Parish Council SUPPORTS this application.

iii. **WD/2025/0914/MFA Land south of Copwood Farm and to the west of A22 Uckfield bypass**

Variation of conditions 3, 5, 28 & 31 of WD/2021/2001/MFA.

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The site is located on an area of agricultural land adjacent to the A22 south of Copwood Farm and close to the Bellbrook Industrial Estate west of Uckfield. Planning consent was granted in 2021 for a solar farm and solar electric forecourt comprising 24 solar electric charging points, energy storage, hub building containing various facilities such as wc and some retail. The consent was granted subject to a large number of conditions some of which have been discharged. All pre-commencement conditions have been discharged and the permission has been implemented through the installation of the proposed construction access.

The proposed amendment seeks to vary conditions 3, 5, 28 and 31 of the planning consent. The Applicant is pioneering the use of new battery technology away from lithium-based battery technology to Vanadium Redox Flow Batteries (VFB) which significantly minimises the potential for battery fires. The batteries also have a longer life span – 25 years as opposed to 8-10 years. However, more batteries are required to store similar amounts of energy as the lithium batteries. This new battery technology is being tested on this site and is backed by a significant grant from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero.

In practice this means the following changes are needed to the previously submitted planning design:

All of the amendments are contained in the southern field of the site which relates to the solar array and existing storage system. There are no changes proposed to the solar forecourt in the northern field.

The number of batteries has increased from 4 to 90 because of the new technology. These have been relocated to the eastern boundary of the southern field, ie immediately adjoining the A22.

The orientation of the solar panels is to be amended to improve efficiency and effectiveness and reduce the amount of space they occupy. The alignment will change from north-south alignment to an east-west alignment. The angle will be much steeper. By doing this the solar panels require less space but remain below the 3m height requirement as previously approved.

Revised soft landscaping plans have been submitted for approval as a result of the changes proposed.

Comments

- 1 The repositioning of the battery storage facility to the eastern boundary along the A22 is more appropriate than the previous location and will be better screened than before thus minimising any effect on the wider landscape.*
- 2 A Noise Assessment has been submitted as part of this application. No noise assessment was previously submitted. The conclusions are that the proposed amendments 'will not have an adverse effect on noise'. Clearly 90 batteries will produce more noise than the 4 previously proposed. We are concerned that the continuous noise produced will be a nuisance to those living within earshot (the nearest houses are 300m away) especially at night when the overall noise levels are reduced. It is also well documented that noise has an adverse impact on wildlife.*
- 3 We note that the battery modules will be housed in secure weather-proof enclosures providing protection for all battery components and allowing thermal management. We would like to see similar appropriate mitigation conditions for dampening the amount of noise emanating from the 90 batteries.*
- 4 A Glint and Glare assessment has been introduced with the application. It concludes no significant impacts are predicted upon road safety, residential amenity or aviation activity. We have no comments to add to this.*
- 5 Once operational the larger number of batteries will attract more maintenance trips to the development than previously envisaged. It is concluded by the applicant that the development would have a negligible impact on the highway network. We would point out that the cumulative effect of developments in the area, such as those proposed at Owlsbury and the*

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Ashdown Business Park extension, will have a significant cumulative impact on highways with the increased amount of traffic.

The Parish Council SUPPORTS the application but would like to see conditions attached to cover the following:

- Because of the increased noise there should be mitigation to dampen the noise levels. No sound should leave the boundary of the site. This could take the form of screening around the batteries similar to the weather proofing that is being proposed.*
- As the technology is new, we suggest a monitoring and reporting regime is established to ensure there are no adverse effects on the environment.*
- With regard to the soft landscaping plans we recommend that a bond is considered to ensure the landscaping is properly maintained for the duration of the solar farm, forecourt and associated facilities. This will ensure the general environment is protected as much as possible in this essentially rural location.*

25/93. PLANNING APPLICATION – NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY

It was **RESOLVED** to make the comments as set out in the Appendix to these minutes in respect of the following application made to Lewes District Council:

i. LW/25/0148 Land at Goldbridge Farm, Goldbridge Road, Newick BN8 4QP

Phased outline application for up to 250 new homes (including 40% affordable), access, landscaping, open space and other associated infrastructure with all matters reserved except site access.

The Parish Council OBJECTS to this application. See Appendix to the minutes for the full comments.

25/94. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - DECISIONS

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

Applications Approved

i. WD/2025/0104/F Alexandra Cottage, Batts Bridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XP

Erection of a rear extension. (APPROVED 28 April 2025)

Applications Refused – none since the last meeting

Applications Withdrawn – none since the last meeting

25/95. ITEMS FOR THE PARISH MAGAZINE

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

- Parish in Bloom judging to take place soon
- Neighbourhood Plan update
- Councillor Vacancy
- Book Exchange

25/96. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

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

25/97. TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Parish Council is due to be held on Monday 9th June 2025 at 6.30pm in the Pavilion (this may be in the West End at the Church dependent upon sports fixtures).