

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

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MINUTES of the Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Monday 9th March 2026 in the Village Hall, High Street, Fletching from 6.30 – 8.15pm

PRESENT: Councillors R Hannay (Chairman), R Borton, N Collum, G Garland, D Greenish, C Logan, K Minch, L Schofield and D Woollven.

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO) and Councillors C Coleman (WDC) and R Galley (ESCC).

Members of the Public in Attendance: 26

APOLOGIES: There were no apologies for absence as all councillors were present.

26/40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Minute 26/53(iii) Councillors Collum, Greenish, Hannay and Minch as the applicant was well known to them for application WD/2026/0304/F.

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

Minute 26/53(ii) Councillor Collum declared a prejudicial interest as the applicant for WD/2026/0257/F (this item was not discussed in the meeting so there was no need for Cllr Collum to leave the room).

26/41. WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL DRAFT LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

The Chairman invited Hugh Bullock, who had worked with members of the Planning Group to draft the response from the Parish Council, to address the meeting in respect of the latest regulation 18 consultation on the Draft Local Plan. He explained the consultation process for the Local Plan and stated that there would be further consultations taking place later in the year. The importance of responding to each consultation was emphasised even though it was likely to be duplication of previous comments submitted. Members of the public were encouraged to respond individually and were directed to the SABRE website for advice on how to do this particularly in respect of the Ashdown Business Park and Owlsbury Farm sites which would have a direct impact on the parish.

With regards to the Owlsbury Farm site it was queried whether ESCC would be responding to the consultation given that the transport officers were objecting to the current planning application on the site. Cllr Galley agreed to ask ESCC as he was unsure of the answer. It was also noted that there was likely to be a further consultation on the planning application as a number of changes had been made to the application since it was originally submitted.

In respect of the longevity of the plan, given the local government reorganisation taking place in 2028, it was reported that once formally adopted the plan would stay in place for the geographical area of the current Wealden district until it was replaced by the next plan which would likely at least a decade away.

Hugh Bullock also explained that there were issues for everyone attempting to access the consultation portal on the Wealden website but instructions had been issued as to how to overcome the problem. It was reported that the issues were now resolved but a question was raised by the public as to whether the consultation period could be extended accordingly.

Note: since the meeting took place Wealden District Council has extended the consultation period by one week to now end on Friday 27th March 2026.

The draft response from the Parish Council had been circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. This was approved and it was agreed that delegated authority be given to Councillors Hannay and Greenish to finalise the response before its submission to Wealden by the deadline.

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RESOLVED to give delegated authority to Councillors Hannay and Greenish to finalise the draft response to the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan Consultation prior to its submission to Wealden DC.

Note: Councillor Greenish left the meeting at 7pm after this item of business.

26/42. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting held on 9th February 2026 were a correct record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

26/43. MATTERS ARISING

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

Historical Records – these had now been received and Cllr Logan would be undertaking a review of them.

Burial Ground Access – Wealden DC had reported that a risk assessment would be taking place.

Owlsbury Farm – it was agreed that, following the latest meeting hosted by Wealden, the letter now be drafted by Cllrs Hannay and Greenish requesting a right of audience for the parish/town councils.

SLR Meeting – given the upcoming ESCC elections it was agreed that this be set for after May 7th.

26/44. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Councillor Galley's monthly update had been circulated prior to the meeting.

He stated that the elections timetable was currently set for ESCC elections in May 2026, the new Unitary Authority elections in 2027 and the Strategic Mayor elections in 2028. However, a new strategic authority was due to be set up from May 2026 with representatives from ESCC, WSCC and Brighton & Hove.

With regards to potholes Cllr Galley requested that any that had not been dealt with after 28 days be reported to him for follow up.

26/45. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Councillor Coleman informed the meeting that she would be standing as a candidate for the forthcoming ESCC elections as would Cllr Galley.

With regards to the local plan consultation she would be sharing her response with the parish council and was happy for it to be circulated more widely. It was noted that there was one further in person exhibition taking place in Frant on 12 March.

As well as there being a 0% increase in council tax for the Wealden component the council had also agreed that residents on a low income living with a terminal illness in the Wealden District Council area would no longer have to pay council tax.

In respect of Crowborough Camp the refusal in the High Court for a judicial review applied for by Crowborough Shield was noted. Cllr Coleman explained that Wealden had taken counsel's advice and would not be participating in any further requests. She also stated that the Home Office was being difficult about letting volunteers into the camp to support the asylum seekers.

The Ward Budgets were continuing for a further year and Cllr Coleman had received a number of requests already even though the new year had not yet started.

26/46. PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

The following application was discussed. See Minute 26/XX(i) below

WD/2026/0215/F Oak Meadow, Bell Lane, Fletching TN22 3PD

26/47. LAWFUL DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

The following application had been received by Wealden DC.

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WD/2026/0395/LDP Woolpack Barn (corrected to Wilderlands Farm), Bell Lane, Fletching TN22 3YB

Proposed livestock watering pond is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture and directly supports the ongoing grazing of livestock on the holding.

Wealden DC had been informed by the Parish Council and the local residents that the address of the application was incorrect as it should be Wilderlands Farm as Woolpack Barn was a residential property that had no relationship to the site. The Planning Officer had also been notified of the planning and enforcement history of the site. Cllr Coleman reported that the planning officer had confirmed to her that they were aware of the history of the site and the incorrect site address.

Note: Cllr Galley left the meeting at 7.30pm prior to the following items of business.

26/48. WORKING GROUPS / EXTERNAL GROUPS

- i. *Neighbourhood Plan:* Cllr Hannay reported that the final draft of the plan should be available for circulation in approximately 10 days.
- ii. *Fletching Recreation Ground Committee (FRGC):* the Clerk reported that she was working with the Cricket Club to apply for a grant from Wealden DC's Sports Infrastructure Fund to renew the nets and provide a new wicket cover for the pitch.

26/49. CORRESPONDENCE / CONSULTATIONS RECEIVED

Electrical Safety First Campaign: a letter had been received from the campaign, that the Parish Council had previously supported, requesting that a letter be sent to the local MP asking them to ask the Minister to regulate 'influencers' by using the Product Regulation and Metrology Act.

Councillors **AGREED** that the letter be sent and noted that the campaign was particularly pertinent given the Glasgow city centre fire that had been caused by exploding lithium batteries in a vape shop.

26/50. FINANCE AND ASSETS

- i. The invoices and payments for March 2026 were **AUTHORISED** and the Council's current financial position and bank reconciliation were noted.

26/51. BURIAL GROUND

- i. The following items were **NOTED:**
 - a. Burial – Mary Butterfield.
 - b. Ashes Interment – Anne Scott
 - c. Ashes Interment – Ella Mitchell
 - d. Burial – Pauline Laxton

26/52. ENFORCEMENT – PLANNING AND DRAINAGE

- i. *Pitdown Car Wash:* Cllr Coleman explained that the issue was with the Environment Agency (EA) as the body responsible for enforcing the situation. She stated it had been a frustrating experience dealing with the EA but that they were monitoring the site.

26/53. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - RECEIVED

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

- i. **WD/2026/0215/F Oak Meadow, Bell Lane, Fletching TN22 3PD**

Change of use of part of the land from agriculture to mixed agriculture/equestrian and erection of two low profile equestrian buildings with association hardstanding, access improvements and landscaping.

There is a good site description in the Planning Statement lodged by the applicants in support of the application. In summary:

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- *it comprises about 10 acres of grassland with a direct but relatively steep (unmade-up) access from Bell Lane*
- *It is opposite the car park entrance to Sheffield Forest*
- *It is in a rural setting defined by small field parcels, woodland blocks and dispersed farmsteads*
- *It is within the High Weald National Landscape (AONB)*

WLP Saved Policy DC12 covers equestrian development.

“Applications for small scale stables or loose boxes principally for domestic and private purposes will be permitted where the following criteria are met:-

(1) appropriate siting, scale and design in keeping with the locality, with adequate pasture to support the horses. Particular regard will be had to the potential impact, including the cumulative effect, of proposals within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

(2) proposals should not be sited in prominent or isolated locations.”

The proposal is for the erection of two single-storey buildings in traditional style comprising an open horse shelter (for no more than three ponies and two horses) and a separate hay/secure store. Associated works are a hardstanding access/parking/turning area; a soakaway and below-ground drainage system and a rainwater harvesting butt.

It is accepted that the development is small-scale and will be for private and domestic purposes only. It is also accepted that there is sufficient pasture within the field to support the horses. However, the Parish Council does have concerns that the development will have an adverse impact on the AONB by intruding a built form into an otherwise open, prominent and isolated rural location. As such, the Parish Council takes the view that the proposal will have an adverse impact on the AONB.

The Parish Council also notes that East Sussex County Council has objected to the application, due to insufficient information. In particular, they require (a) tracking drawings to demonstrate the largest vehicle entering and leaving the site and (b) further detail of the size of the proposed parking space. The Parish Council does not consider that these are matters that can properly be dealt with via a condition.

*It follows that the Parish Council **OBJECTS** to the application.*

In the event that WDC is nevertheless minded to grant consent, the Parish Council considers that, given the isolation of the site and that there would no associated dwelling, a condition should be imposed that, in the event that the land should cease to be used for or no longer be required for use for equestrian purposes, the buildings and other works should be removed and the land restored to agriculture.

ii. **WD/2026/0257/F Clinton Lodge, High Street, Fletching TN22 3ST**

The erection of a pair of iron railings attached to the steps up to the principal (street) entrance of the house.

*The Parish Council has **NO COMMENTS** on the application and is content for the matter to be determined on the basis of advice from the WDC Heritage Officer.*

iii. **WD/2026/0304/F South Bungalow, Down Street, Piltown TN22 3XU**

Removal of existing conservatory, erection of single storey side extension with partial pitched and partial flat roof. New small window to front elevation. New window to rear elevation.

The site comprises a detached bungalow at South Bungalow, Down Street, Piltown. The proposal involves the removal of an existing conservatory (the planning history of which is unclear) and its replacement with a larger single-storey extension accommodating a garden room and bedroom. The application also includes minor fenestration changes (a small new window to the front elevation and an additional window to the rear).

The submitted plans show that the extension will be finished in brickwork and roof tiles to match the existing dwelling, with a combination of pitched and flat roof forms. The enlarged footprint

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appears modest relative to the overall plot and the design approach remains in keeping with the host property's character and scale.

The Parish Council notes that the replacement of the conservatory with a more coherent extension represents an improvement to the building's overall appearance. The proposal is considered to have no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity, local character or the surrounding area.

*The Parish Council **SUPPORTS** the application.*

iv. **WD/2026/0333/LB Sheffield Park House, Sheffield Park TN22 3QZ**

Replacement of 2 x mineral felt flat roofs and 1 x balcony covering.

*The Parish Council has **NO COMMENTS** on the application and is content for the matter to be determined on the basis of advice from the WDC Heritage Officer but would like to emphasise the importance of good ventilation.*

26/54. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - DECISIONS

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

Applications Approved

i. **WD/2025/2636/F Woodland House, Batts Bridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XR**

Installation of 1.9m high automatic solid hardwood entrance gates, a matching pedestrian gate and minor repositioning of existing fence post. (APPROVED – 6 February 2026)

Applications Refused

i. **WD/2025/2726/F Byerly, Bell Lane, Fletching TN22 3YB**

Detached garage with two dormers and velux windows to facilitate home office on first floor, with external staircase access. (REFUSED 5 February 2026)

WDC Response to the Parish Council

The Parish Council's comments are noted. However, the development proposed is not for an annex, but for a garage building with a home office at first floor, and therefore criterion (4) within Policy DC19 regarding annexes is not applicable to this application.

ii. **WD/2025/2815/F Piltdown Antiques, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XL**

Demolition of former shop and construction of two residential flats. (REFUSED 19 February 2026)

Applications Withdrawn – none since the last meeting

Note: Cllr Coleman left the meeting at 7.49pm before the following items of business

26/55. PARISH / BRITAIN IN BLOOM 2026

The Clerk explained that she had attended two Zoom meetings with the judges for the Britain in Bloom competition and that the judging would take place late July/early August – the exact date would be sent through. It was noted that a working group of those who helped support the annual parish in bloom entry would be set up to go through the criteria etc and put together the schedule for the day.

Note: Since the meeting the provisional judging date has been set for Tuesday 28th July 2026.

26/56. PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

A draft communications plan for the parish council had been prepared by Councillor Logan and was circulated to councillors prior to the meeting. Councillors considered the document to be excellent and thanked Cllr Logan for pulling it all together.

It was agreed to **ADOPT** the communications plan and to undertake to promote the items listed in the monthly planner. Cllr Logan to work with the Clerk to agree the various mechanisms and areas to be publicised.

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26/57. ITEMS FOR THE PARISH MAGAZINE

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

- Explanation of precept increase

26/58. 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.

26/59. TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Parish Council is due to be held on Monday 13th April 2026 at 6.30pm in the Village Hall.

The Annual Meeting of the Parish is due to take place on Thursday 21st May 2026 at 7pm in the Village Hall and would be attended by Pippa Reece, General Manager of Sheffield Park Garden.