

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

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MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Thursday 9th May 2024 in the Village Hall, High Street, Fletching (7 – 8.10pm).

PRESENT: Councillors R Hannay (Chairman), D Greenish (Vice-Chairman), R Borton, N Collum, S De St Croix, K Minch and L Snelgrove.

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO) and Councillor C Coleman (WDC).

Members of the Public in Attendance: 8

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Abraham and Constantinou

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Councillor Richard Hannay welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the parish councillors and the clerk. The working groups and councillor responsibilities were reported to the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 30 MAY 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last annual parish meeting held on 30th May 2023 were a correct record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

3. REPORT FROM THE WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA COLEMAN

Councillor Coleman gave an update on the work that Wealden District Council has been undertaking in the past year. She reported that the Council Strategy had been approved which set out what the council was striving to achieve. She also reminded everyone that the Regulation 18 consultation on the Draft Local Plan closed the following day. It was explained that it had been a difficult task to produce the draft document get it right. Councillor Coleman also reported that Lewes District Council had been put into special measures in respect of Planning due to the number of decisions made by the council that had then been turned over on appeal being greater than 10%. This had resulted in the planning powers being removed from the council in respect of decisions on major applications and those for reserved matters.

It was noted that the Climate and Ecology Bill was being supported by Wealden District Council following a motion and that the Climate Change Strategy consultation was open until 31 May 2024. Councillor Coleman stated that she was a member of the Audit, Finance and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as a substitute on Planning Committee North. She was also representing the Council on a number of outside bodies.

Areas that the Council would be working on in the coming year were the introduction of food waste collection as legislated by the government and an active travel route (similar to the Cuckoo Trail) between Lewes and Uckfield.

In response to a question, Councillor Coleman explained that there were cultural changes that the officers at the District Council were adapting to following the new administration but that the portfolio holder for planning was very knowledgeable and was able to push back when required. She explained that the main issue was the strait jacket that central government imposed on the planning requirements.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman, Councillor Hannay, gave a presentation on the income and expenditure for the 2023/24 financial year. It was explained that the majority of the Parish Council's income was received from the precept. It was also reported that there was income received from the Burial Ground.

In respect of expenditure for the year it was stated that there had been a small overspend compared with the budget due to the Clerk being given increased hours and the increased cost of the replacement posts at Splaynes Green. Grants were given to Fletching School, Wealden CAB, Fletching Recreation Ground Charity and the Bonfire Society. Funding had also been given to Fletching Parochial Church Council and The Royal British Legion.

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A breakdown of the income and expenditure was provided as well as information in respect of the Parish Reserves.

5. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST YEAR

Councillor Hannay gave the highlights of the past year as follows:

- Planning: Ashdown Business Park – representations made; Downlands Farm – appeal dismissed; and Owlsbury – not automatically being included in the Local Plan as a development site.
- Neighbourhood Plan – Steering Group set up and first public consultation undertaken
- Recreation Ground Pavilion refurbishment in partnership with the Cricket Club
- Fingerposts: all had now been repaired or replaced as had the bollards at Splaynes Green
- Parish in Bloom: Gold Award achieved

Planning Applications

Councillor Hannay explained that the Parish Council had been consulted on 41 planning applications and had submitted comments to the District Council on all the applications received. The applications included two new builds and covered a wide range of matters including for listed buildings as well as those in the conservation area and AONB. There had been two significant appeals dismissed – Little Barkham Farm and Downlands Farm (outside the Parish boundary but, potentially, very impactful on the Parish). Councillor Hannay also thanked Hugh Bullock for the considerable support that he gives the parish in respect of planning matters.

6. PARISH OBJECTIVES 2024-25

The Parish objectives for 2024-25 were reported as:

- To continue as an efficient and effective Parish Council with trained knowledgeable councillors and a qualified clerk.
- To update parishioners as to the developments of the Wealden District Local Plan and associated planning implications and continue to engage actively with the emerging Local Plan.
- To continue development of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- To effectively manage Fletching Recreation Ground.
- To provide a well-run Burial Ground for the Parish.
- To continue to support local community groups, charities and the residents of Fletching Parish.
- To spend Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds within 5 years of receipt.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Parking issues on Fletching High Street – it was queried whether anything was going to be undertaken in respect of the parking issues in the High Street. Councillor Hannay explained that the feasibility study that had been undertaken had costed provision of additional parking alongside the recreation ground but that it was unaffordable and that there was no obvious solution given that parking enforcement would not be undertaken. It was felt that the issue was not as bad as it had been previously since new owners had taken over The Griffin.

Phone box at Splaynes Green – what was happening in respect of the phone box at Splaynes Green? It was explained that a local resident had agreed to relay the plinth that the box was on so that it would be upright – this could not be undertaken until the weather was better. Another resident had agreed, with a small working party, to finish the painting of the phone box. The Parish Council would be purchasing a replacement door and it the uses proposed at present were a book swop and a seed swop as well as displaying maps showing local walks.

Planning application in Newick – whether an application had been submitted to Lewes District Council in respect of the site between Newick and Piltown which had been the subject of a public exhibition.

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Councillor Hannay replied that he was not aware that any application had been made and also stated that the site was not identified in the Newick Neighbourhood Plan.

Community Infrastructure Levy – what items had been considered as suitable for CIL funding? It was reported that at present the Parish Council had identified five areas to date: a path in the burial ground; replacement waste bins on Fletching High Street; replacement of the handrail from the car park; replacement notice board in the burial ground; and playground equipment to replace the trim trail that had to be removed.

Code of Conduct – it was queried why the Parish Council was not able to remove a councillor from the Parish Council if they were considered to have breached the code of conduct. It was explained that there was legislation that governed when a councillor could be removed from office and that any complaints about a councillor's behaviour had to be made to the Monitoring Officer at Wealden District Council.

Local Plan process – Councillor Hannay highlighted that the questions relating to Owlsbury and the Ashdown Business Park had received high number of responses in the online consultation. It was noted that the portal was not yet up to date as the responses were moderated before being shown so the final numbers would be higher. With regards to the next steps Councillor Coleman reported that the plan would move to Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Local Plan and there would also be an examination in public carried out by the Planning Inspectorate.

8. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Parish Councillors and Clerk were thanked for everything they do for the Parish.

Councillor Hannay also thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm