

FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL: Tuesday 5th May 2026, 7pm, Firle Village Hall.

Members in Attendance: Cllr Hill (Chair), Cllr Barr (Vice-Chair) Cllr James, Cllr Lance, Cllr Symes.

Members not in Attendance: 0 **Others Present:** Lorna Thwaites, Clerk and RFO.

Members of the Public in Attendance: 0 **Questions Received from the Public:** None.

1. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR:

1.1 Cllr Liz Hill was ELECTED as the Chair for Firle Parish Council for the forthcoming year.

1.2 The Chair SIGNED the Declaration of Office form.

2. ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIR. Cllr Barr was ELECTED.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: None received.

4. NO DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS RECEIVED AND NO REQUESTS FOR A DISPENSATION WITH RESPECT TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA, as required by the Members Code of Conduct.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: The minutes of the ordinary meeting of Firle Parish Council held on 14th April 2026 were RESOLVED to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

6. COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS:

6.1 No committees or working groups were agreed.

6.2 No individual areas of responsibility were agreed.

7. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES:

7.1 Councillor appointments to outside bodies: Cllr Barr represents FPC on Firle Village Hall & Playing Fields Committee (FVHPFC).

8. THE ELIGIBILITY OF THE COUNCIL WITH REGARDS TO MEETING THE CRITERIA FOR THE EXERCISE OF THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE was CONFIRMED.

9. POLICES REVIEWED AND ORDERS, REGULATIONS AND POLICIES ADOPTED:

9.1 Standing Orders

9.2 Financial Regulations

9.3 Members Code of Conduct

9.4 Freedom of Information Policy

9.5 Complaints Procedure

9.6 Co-option Policy

9.7 Document Retention Scheme

9.8 Grant Awarding Policy

9.9 Risk Management Policy

9.10 Scheme of Delegation

9.11 Social Media Policy

9.12 Planning Protocol.

10. THE ARRANGEMENTS AND LEGAL AGREEMENT WITH FIRLE VILLAGE HALL AND PLAYING FIELDS were CONFIRMED.

11. INSURANCE COVER:

11.1 The Council RESOLVED to renew the insurance cover with Clear Councils by 01 June 2026 and to pay the annual premium.

12. FINANCE:

12.1 The Council RESOLVED to pay the following subscriptions, regular payments, and direct debits to other bodies: Subscriptions - ESALC/NALC/LDALC/SLCC and CPRE; Direct Debits - Team 4 (payroll); ICO data protection; Standing Orders - ESPF Pension payments and Clerk's salary.

12.2 Banking arrangements for the year were CONFIRMED and no changes to nominated signatories were agreed.

12.3 Payments to be made in May were AUTHORISED and to the bank reconciliation was RECEIVED and SIGNED.

12.4 The Council RESOLVED to pay the Clerk for the additional 4 hours worked to complete the annual audit and 10 hours unused annual leave.

12.5 The Clerk's leave request was AGREED.

12.6 The Risk Assessment for 2026 – 2027 was AGREED.

12.7 The Asset Register was AGREED with the Village Sign, Fingerpost by the school and the Butter Cross to be added; Cllrs Hill and Barr will confirm the condition of assets at the next meeting; Cllr Barr will draft a letter

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to Mr K Watson, thanking him for maintaining the verge around the Butter Cross; It was NOTED that the gate at the top between Place Farm and Chalky Road is closed annually when Firle Bonfire is held.

12.8 The Council were NOTIFIED of the CIL Payment received of £565.45 for 2026/7.

13. GRANT AWARDS: None received.

14. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR):

14.1 The Internal Audit Report from Mulberry LAS was RECEIVED and the Council NOTED the following from the report: Our testing did not identify any procedural errors requiring reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we observe any material weaknesses in internal controls that would pose a risk to public funds. In fact, the processes and procures together with own built in compensating controls are robust, strictly followed and in many respects a model of good practice.

14.2 The Certificate of Exemption was SIGNED.

14.3 The Clerk and Chair SIGNED the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/6.

14.4 The Council RECEIVED AGAR Form 2, Section 1 and the Clerk and Chair SIGNED the form.

14.5 The Council RECEIVED AGAR Form 2, Section 2 and the Chair SIGNED the form, which had been signed by the Clerk before being presented to the Council for approval.

15. REPORT(S):

15.1 No reports received from Local and District Councillors and the MP for Lewes.

16. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

16.1 BBC Casting Call – Community Heritage Items in Need of Restoration – ESALC: NOTED but no items.

16.2 Glorious Gravel Sportive – South Downs 30/5/2026 – H Doherty: The Council NOTED that last year there were no stewards on the field gates and gates were left open; the Clerk will respond raising the issues of last year and to request that gates are closed with stewards manning the gates; SDNP and Mr T. Monnington to be copied in.

16.3 Q&A at Firle – H.Spearman: The Council AGREED they would prefer an October date and the Clerk will co-ordinate.

16.4 Payroll Services Fee Adjustment – Team4 Payroll Services: ACCEPTED.

16.5 Litter Bin Audit – LDC: The Council NOTED that the charge is £51.08 per week for 8 bins; however bins 1005 and 1006 are on Firle Estate land and by their visitor car park; the Firle Cricket Club bin is wooden and is in need of replacing; the Council RESOLVED to investigate the cost of a replacement bin at the Cricket Club; the Council discussed seeking sponsors for the bins to help with costs; the Clerk will investigate other options for emptying the bins.

17. MATTERS ARISING:

17.1 The response of Firle Estate regarding bird nesting cups was RECEIVED: Cllr Hill supplied a list of potential properties for nesting cups to Firle Estate as requested; some cups are now sited on private houses – funded by individual property owners.

17.2 The Council did not need to allocate funding of £1000 from reserves for projects resulting in the improvement of the ecology or biodiversity of the village environment at this current time; the Council NOTED that CIL funding can be used for ecology projects; Firle Estate and property owners have paid for nesting cups and Firle Estate are installing on tenant properties;

17.3 No further reports or updates on Fly Tipping received.

18. HIGHWAYS:

18.1 The blocked drain by Redwood Cottage, Wick Street: No email update received from ESH but the Council believes ESH have visited and investigated the drain.

18.2 The blocked drain 42B, The Bostal: Cllr Lance has received an email advising ESH would repair it; to be checked when sufficient rain next falls.

19. PLANNING APPLICATIONS: Comments AGREED:

19.1 **SDNP/26/01421/TCA Location:** Firle Cottage, The Street, Firle, East Sussex, BN8 6NS

Proposal: T1 Willow: Remove & replace with feature tree to enhance village character, i.e. Cercis siliquastrum (Judas tree) T2 Holly: Remove & replace with feature tree to enhance village character, i.e. Malus teringo scarlett (Scarlet

Crab Apple) T3 Yew: Crown lift to 2m, thin crown (<20%), Prune to rebalance crown retaining natural form (<2m) T4 Ash: Remove & replace with feature tree to enhance village character, i.e. Malus teringo scarlett (Scarlet Crab Apple) G1: Mixed Broadleaves, Remove & replace with feature tree to enhance village character, i.e. Amelanchier Limarckii (Snowy Mespilus). Comments by 14th May.

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Comments AGREED: NEUTRAL with a request that the Lilac be trimmed and retained; trees should not be removed during bird nesting season.

19.2 **SDNP/26/01502/LIS Location:** 32 Petland Cottages, The Street, Firle, East Sussex, BN8 6NU **Proposal:** External and Internal Alterations. (Comments by 27th May). Comments AGREED: NEUTRAL; The Council couldn't see any evidence of a bat survey being undertaken and would like this to be considered; the Council would like to request that the insecticide used for death watch beetle is bat friendly.

19.3 **SDNP/26/01619/FUL & 01620 LIS Location:** Shire House, The Street, Firle, East Sussex, BN8 6LP **Proposal:** Conversion and change of use of curtilage listed barn from storage to ancillary office space (comments by 27 May). Comments AGREED: NEUTRAL with no comments.

20. **ITEMS AGREED FOR THE PARISH MAGAZINE:** Projects for biodiversity / nature in the village; brief summary of the Chair's speech.
21. **AGENDA ITEMS PROPOSED FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL:** To request householders to cut back overgrown or overhanging vegetation.
22. **THE TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL:** 9th June, 7pm Firle Village Hall.
23. **THE MEETING CLOSED** at 21.16.