

FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL

Tuesday 13th December 2022, 7.18pm in Firle Village Hall.

Members of the Public in Attendance: 1 – Bob Baines, Estate Director, Firle Estate – left at 19.50.

Questions RECEIVED from the Public: None.

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Gravett (Chairman), Cllr Barr (Vice-Chair), Cllr Bolger and Cllr Symes.

Members not in Attendance: Cllr Hill.

Others Present: Clerk and RFO Lorna Thwaites attended the meeting remotely due to travel conditions.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies for absence were RECEIVED and ACCEPTED from Cllr Hill.
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** No declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda, as required by the Members Code of Conduct were received.
3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:** The minutes of the ordinary meeting of Firle Parish Council held on 8th November 2022 were RESOLVED to be a correct record; the Council AGREED to sign the minutes at the next meeting, as the Clerk was attending remotely.
4. **REPORTS:**
 - 4.1 Reports from Cllr Johnny Denis and Maria Caulfield, MP for Lewes were RECEIVED and NOTED.
5. **REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS AND LEGAL AGREEMENT WITH FIRLE VILLAGE HALL AND PLAYING FIELDS:**
 - 5.1 An update from FVHPFC regarding insurance, fencing and maintenance/safety inspections was RECEIVED: Fencing work is starting next week on the condition of the materials being back in stock as indicated by the fencer's supplier; post protectors are considered unnecessary as the wood is confirmed as 15- 20 year quality in the ground and post protectors offer similar life expectancy; the ordered materials cost was approx. £285+vat more than the initial quote due to it being over 30days old; the aim is for the fencing to be completed by December 23rd which is the date for the start of the insurance policy; the Council asked the Clerk to request details of the insurance policy and safety inspections.
 - 5.2 To AGREE amendments to the Firle Village Hall and Playing Fields Legal Agreement resulting from agenda item 5.1: DEFERRED to the next meeting.
 - 5.3 To AGREE any actions to be undertaken by FPC resulting from agenda item 5.1: None agreed.
6. **MATTERS ARISING:**
 - 6.1 An update from Firle Estate on the state of the pavement from the shop down to the wishing well at the bottom of the Dock, which has been covered in brambles and difficult to use was RECEIVED: Bob Baines, Estate Director, will check as he believes the work has not yet been done.
 - 6.2 Information from Firle Estate on their plans to introduce visitor parking charges was RECEIVED: The Estate has no current plans to charge for its car park in the village; the Estate is introducing car park charging at Bo Peep Car Park and Firle Beacon Car Park which is expected to be early next year.
 - 6.3 An update on the restoration of the village sign was RECEIVED: Council Members have not yet had the opportunity to look at the sign and DEFERRED this item until early in the New Year.
 - 6.4 An update on the storage of Parish Council items at The Keep was RECEIVED: The Clerk spoke to The Keep and Cllr Symes spoke to a local resident who is an employee of The Keep; there are some documents currently held there from Firle Parish Council and this can be searched online by following the link:
https://www.thekeep.info/collections/getrecord/GB179_P328.
They would be interested in letters or items from the Platinum Jubilee or other such items; the archivist that deals with Firle is Andrew Bennet; the Council could send a broad list of items it would like to store at The Keep and The Keep will then decide what they would or wouldn't like to take; the Council AGREED to review the contents of the files held at Cllr Gravett's house and compile a list of items to offer to The Keep.
 - 6.5 The state of the drains between the village hall and the Vicarage was DISCUSSED: the drain by the war memorial is broken and the part at the top of the drain has collapsed allowing the water to overflow down the street; Cllrs Gravett and Barr will mark the sites of all drains that are overflowing on a map and the Clerk will report to ESH.
 - 6.6 Water at the bottom of the junction of the A27 was DISCUSSED: Cllr Gravett reported that there doesn't seem to have been so much water since the recent work has been undertaken; Cllrs Gravett and Barr will also mark the location of this problem on a map for the Clerk to notify ESH.

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6.7 To agree for the Clerk to write to Firle Estate for an update with regard to the felling work at the Nature Reserve and when access may once again be permitted: Bob Baines, Estate Director, advised that Firle Primary School has permission to use the area for Forest School and they have undertaken a risk assessment to do so; there is also a permissive path through the area; the felling work has now stopped; the Council AGREED no further action was required on this item.

7. THE LACK OF THE FIRLE ESTATE PARISH PLAN AND ITS POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES TO FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL WAS DISCUSSED:

Firle Parish Council has not previously developed a Neighbourhood Plan on the advice that it would not be worthwhile given the nature of land ownership in Firle; Bob Baines, Estate Director, agreed that a Neighbourhood Plan would not be applicable for this reason and that Firle Estate would instead be progressing a Whole Estate Plan (WEP) for Firle and its surrounding ownership; the first draft of the plan had been submitted to SDNPA in 2020/2021 but the document was put on hold following the appointment of the Estate Director, in order that the finalised document aligned with the Estate's Strategic Review in 2022; Firle Estate remained in discussion with SDNPA over the plan and that the expectation is for the WEP to be finalised in 2024; Bob advised there would be a parish consultation in response to the question from Cllr Bolger.

8. SUB LEASE OF PLAYING FIELDS TO FIRLE CRICKET CLUB

8.1 An update on the Sublease with Firle Cricket Club was RECEIVED: relevant members of Firle Cricket Club and Firle Parish Council met with Firle Estate; Bob Baines, Estate Director explained the terms of the sublease; Firle Cricket Club will put the sublease on the agenda for the Cricket Club AGM on Friday 16th December; the Council AGREED that it will aim to have the sublease signed before the next ordinary meeting of Firle Parish Council in January.

8.2 To RESOLVE to adopt the Sublease for Firle Cricket Club. DEFERRED

9. FINANCE

9.1 Payments to be made in December were AUTHORISED and the bank reconciliation RECEIVED; with the Clerk being present remotely, the Council AGREED to sign the documents at the next meeting.

9.2 The Parish Council discussed the draft budget for 2023-2024 and RESOLVED to set the Precept at £11,000.

9.3 The Council RESOLVED to accept the Clerk's salary and pension payment schedule until March 2023 and to AUTHORISE payments to be made each month.

10. LOCAL ELECTIONS 2023

10.1 An overview of the Elections in 2023 was RECEIVED and the following dates NOTED:

District, Town and Parish Elections - 4 May 2023

Notice of Election to be published by 4pm 27 March 2023

Deadline for delivery of nomination papers by 4pm 4 April 2023

Publication of Statement of nominated persons by 4pm 5 April 2023

Deadline for receiving applications for registration by 4pm 17 April 2023

Nomination Papers must be delivered by hand by 4pm on 4 April 2023 – to the Elections Office, Southover House

All present councillors resign on Tuesday 9 May 2023 and the new council comes into office on that day

10.2 Details regarding Casual Vacancies as of Wednesday 9th November 2022 and the six-month rule was RECEIVED and NOTED by the Council.

11. HIGHWAYS:

11.1 An update from Cllr Denis on the question raised over opening the public toilets at the Ram Inn had not been received: Cllr Barr AGREED to speak with Cllr Denis.

11.2 An update on the removal of the traffic island was RECEIVED from Maria Caulfield MP who has contacted Tom Beasley but is waiting on a response; the Council AGREED to keep this item on the agenda for January.

11.3 An update on the overflowing sewer by Gibraltar Farm was RECEIVED from Bob Baines, Estate Director: Following an inspection of its sewer by Southern Water' engineers the Estate has received correspondence from Southern Water dated 11th November stating it intends to repair its sewer; *"Southern Water are proposing to relay 30m of 150mm pipe (between TQ 47021 07620 and TQ 4703807538), due to a collapse in the existing pipe that is causing a blockage." End of May 2024.*

11.4 An update on the work undertaken by ESH further to the signage review and the request for warning signs for pedestrians in the road, along the Bostal Road was RECEIVED from the Road Safety Team, ESCC: East

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Sussex Highways (ESH) have not yet responded about the verge marker posts; ESCC are happy to proceed with the original request of Firle Parish Council to "install pedestrian warning signs to drivers on the Bostal and on the Street from Crossways to the school"; the Road Safety team are proposing to install Pedestrian warning signs with a distance plate showing half a mile, in two locations - one where the shared cycle path ends at the junction with the A27, and one at the eastern end of Wick Street just after vehicles turn in from the A27 and the cycle path continues eastwards (when it opens); Firle Parish Council AGREED with the installation locations of the pedestrian warning signs; the Road Safety team advised that one of the School Children warning signs along Firle Bostal is missing its 'School' plate below it and they will report to ESH.

11.5 No further updates on the shields to the lights on the A27 at the Firle Junction were received: The Council believes shields have now been installed and no further action is required.

12. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

12.1 The email response to Draft Minutes of 8th November from Bob Baines, Estate Director, Firle Estate was RECEIVED, and all points NOTED.

12.2 The Notification of External Auditor Appointment as being PKF Littlejohn LLP was RECEIVED and NOTED.

12.3 Blocked/collapsed drain on Bostal Road outside 42b: The Council AGREED to report to ESH and Cllrs Gravett and Barr would mark the location on a map and send to the Clerk.

13. GRANT AWARDS:

13.1 The Council RESOLVED to make a grant award of £100 for the Village Hall Christmas Hamper; the Council also AGREED to pay this grant award by 14 Dec 2022 even though it wasn't on the payment schedule.

14. 20's PLENTY CAMPAIGN:

14.1 Actions further to the Resolution of Firle Parish Council to support the 20sPlenty Campaign in East Sussex were DISCUSSED: The Council AGREED to put this item on the agenda for January to discuss how to progress.

15. POLICIES:

15.1 The Council RESOLVED to amend the Standing Orders to read 'Meetings shall not exceed a period of 2.5 hours'.

16. PLANNING APPLICATIONS: None RECEIVED.

17. HR MATTERS:

17.1 The Council AGREED the Clerk's leave over the Christmas period.

18. NO ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL were proposed.

19. THE TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL WAS RECEIVED as Tuesday 10th January 2023, 7pm Firle Village Hall.

20. THE MEETING CLOSED at 20.57.