

FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL

Tuesday 14th February 2023, 7.03pm in Firle Village Hall.

Members of the Public in Attendance: 1

Questions RECEIVED from the Public: None.

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

Members not in Attendance: None.

Others Present: Clerk and RFO Lorna Thwaites and Cllr Emily O'Brien (left 20.09).

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** None received.
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None received.
3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:** The minutes of the ordinary meeting of Firle Parish Council held on 10th January 2023 were RESOLVED to be a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.
4. **REPORTS:**
 - 4.1 Written reports were RECEIVED from Councillor Johnny Denis and Maria Caulfield, the MP for Lewes; Cllr O'Brien gave the following update: Cllr Denis has received a resident enquiry about groundworks started at Newelm, Firle Bostal; he is pursuing this matter; Cllr Gravett questioned the term 'invalid' used on the letter from SDNP re Newelm - Cllr O'Brien suggested the Council ring the case officer at the National Park or contact Johnny Denis; Cllr O'Brien has been focusing on the cost of living crisis and attended a cost of living summit with Lewes District Council (LDC); she has given evidence to a Parliamentary group on the cost of living crisis; there is a useful cost of living page on the LDC website; Cllr O'Brien has also been involved with planning campaigns and is co-ordinating a response on the government's planning policy consultation; she has been involved with issues south of the ward, around the underground tunnel complex at South Heighton; in Ringmer there are concerns around flooding and concerns locally around the new A27 Toucan Crossing and the recent withdrawal of the school transport between Glynde and Firle Primary School; Cllrs Denis and O'Brien have pushed hard for National Highways to meet to discuss the issues raised with the Toucan Crossing but so far this has been rejected; Cllr Barr raised a concern over the sewage works with respect to all the building development in Ringmer; Cllr O'Brien has championed this issue as well as the issue over drinking water provision. Cllr O'Brien was thanked for attending the meeting and her update.
 - 4.2 A report on the completion of the Planning Policy Consultation was RECEIVED from Cllr Hill: The consultation has now been completed and submitted by a delegation of FPC Councillors; the responses have been circulated to the full council; approx. 50% of questions were answered; the unanswered questions required planning expertise; Cllr Hill was thanked her work on this consultation.
5. **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:**
 - 5.1 Cancellation of Firle School Bus – Debra Vice-Holt: Several pieces of correspondence have been received by Firle Parish Council regarding the withdrawal of the school bus (items 5.1, 5.2, 5.3); the Council AGREED to consider and minute these items collectively; the Councillors discussed the rationale and history for the provision of free school transport from Glynde to Firle Primary School along with the concerns about the withdrawal of school transport and its impact on local children and families, the significance of this loss of transport in winter months and how a lack of transport might affect the future intake of pupils in September; the increased traffic at school times if parents/carers drive to Firle Primary School was also considered to be hazardous; the Council noted that the proposed route to school is approximately a 40 minute walk each way; the very poor section of road between Crossways and Firle Primary School was discussed and the vulnerability of pedestrians this section of the road; drains on this road have been repeatedly blocked forcing children and parent/carers into the middle of the road to avoid walking in the overflow water; the vegetation at the sides of this road have encroached onto the roadway reducing its width; a member of the public in attendance spoke about how the route has been assessed as safe by the ESCC Road Safety Team and the criteria that was used; a request has been made to ESCC to have the assessment repeated at school times (as opposed to 12pm) and for a relevant traffic count survey to be used; the member of public was aware that several appeals have been lodged as well as a stage 2 appeal; the Clerk asked to send the data collected by Firle Parish Council in a recent speed survey to the member of the public; the Council discussed their concerns about the impact on future numbers attending the school if there is no transport from Glynde; the insufficient 14 seconds crossing allowance at the Toucan Crossing

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and recent incidents experienced and reported to the Council (traffic overtaking vehicles turning into Firle, a driver continuing through a red light and the lights changing whilst a pedestrian was on the crossing). The Council RESOLVED to write a letter to Nick Skelton, Director of Communities, ESCC and Maria Caulfield MP stating its concerns with the withdrawal of the transport.

- 5.2 Withdrawal of School Transport (Firle Primary School) – Jo Miles, Head of Admissions and Transport, ESCC: Minuted in agenda item 5.1.
 - 5.3 School bus: Minuted in agenda item 5.1.
 - 5.4 Thank you letter from FVHPFC - RECEIVED and NOTED: Cllr Barr advised that the play area is being officially opened on Saturday 18th February and that the Parish Council should have received an invite; the Clerk was asked to contact FVHPFC about the invite which had not yet been received.
 - 5.5 South Downs National Park East Sussex Meeting: Cllr Barr will email the Clerk by 27th Feb if he is able to attend.
 - 5.6 Summer Road Safety Virtual Meeting: No attendance was agreed.
 - 5.7 Update regarding Customer Service Managers: RECEIVED and NOTED.
 - 5.8 Coronation Arrangements – ESALC: RECEIVED and NOTED; the Clerk also advised the Council that she had been contacted by FVHPFC regarding arrangements for the Coronation celebrations; the Council are keen to support the planning of local celebrations; the Clerk was asked to contact FVHPFC and request the date of their next meeting.
 - 5.9 Local Elections – 4 May 2023 – Next Steps – Kim Bryce, Electoral Services Lead: RECEIVED and NOTED.
 - 5.10 Rural verges as wildlife corridors – trial of early season reduction in grass cutting: The Council RESOLVED to be included in this trial.
 - 5.11 Wick Street Sewage Overflow: Cllr Hill has forwarded the letter received from Maria Caulfield MP to the correspondent; no further actions by the Parish Council were agreed at this stage; Cllr Hill requested to put the item on the agenda for the May meeting.
 - 5.12 Enquiry: The Clerk was asked to forward this enquiry to film a music video, to Firle Estate.
- 6. SUB LEASE OF PLAYING FIELDS TO FIRLE CRICKET CLUB:**
- 6.1 An update from Firle Cricket Club with regards to the signing of the Sublease with Firle Cricket Club was RECEIVED: The Clerk has not received a response to her email to Firle Cricket Club.
 - 6.2 To AGREE any further actions required regarding the Lease and Sublease of the Playing Fields: None agreed.
- 7. HIGHWAYS:**
- 7.1 The latest correspondence from A27 East of Lewes Improvement Scheme regarding the removal of the traffic island was RECEIVED: the Council AGREED to contact Maria Caulfield, MP again; Cllr Barr AGREED to speak to farmers in Firle to see if they have experienced safety issues and have any concerns; the Clerk was asked to create and promote a log to record any safety issues experienced.
 - 7.2 An update on the drains and potholes in the Parish reported to ESH was RECEIVED: the Council NOTED the work that has been undertaken and the Clerk was asked to thank ESH; Cllr Hill AGREED to report a further drain that is blocked.
 - 7.3 To RESOLVE to undertake repairs to the bus stop at Heighton Street: Cllr Barr advised new weatherboarding is required and he will send details to the Clerk so quotes can be requested.
 - 7.4 To RESOLVE to request ESCC to undertake a parking review of Firle Top, Firle Beacon Car Park - Cllr Hill. RESOLVED.
 - 7.5 To RESOLVE to request improved signage to highlight the use of Wick Street as a shared highway, to improve road safety for all users – Cllr Barr: the Council NOTED that the Road Safety team has already agreed to install signs; the Clerk was asked to follow up this work and share the Council's concerns as cyclists aren't expecting cars to be using Wick Street even though it is now a shared road.
- 8. MATTERS ARISING:**
- 8.1 Firle Estate has undertaken work and improved the state of the pavement from the shop down to the wishing well at the bottom of the Dock, which was covered in brambles and difficult to use.
 - 8.2 The Clerk advised that despite enquiries, she has received no response on who is responsible for the 2 large LDC wheelie bins in the Village Car Park; the Clerk was asked to contact Lewes District Council again.
- 9. FINANCE & ADMIN:**

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- 9.1 Payments to be made in February were AUTHORISED and the bank reconciliation was SIGNED; The Council discussed interest rates and RESOLVED to move £10k from the Treasurers Account to the deposit account; it was AGREED that Cllr Gravett would make this transfer.
- 9.2 Cllr Barr was APPOINTED to check the bank statements and reconciliations for the period 01 April 2022 – 01 Feb 2023 over the course of the meeting; Cllr Barr confirmed he found all accounts in order.
- 9.3 The final budget for 2023-2024 was AGREED.
- 9.4 The Council RESOLVED to appoint Mulberry and Co as the auditor for the 2022-2023 Internal Audit.
- 9.5 The meeting dates 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 were RECEIVED.

10. GRANT APPLICATIONS:

- 10.1 A grant application from Lewes District Citizen Advice was RECEIVED: The Council AGREED to make an award of £100.

11. REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS AND LEGAL AGREEMENT WITH FIRLE VILLAGE HALL AND PLAYING FIELDS:

- 11.1 The amended Legal Agreement was ADOPTED, and the Council AGREED to invite members of FVHPFC to the next meeting of the Parish Council to sign the agreement.
- 11.2 The post installation inspection report was RECEIVED: The Council raised several questions over areas of the report where issues had been identified; the Clerk was asked to contact FVHPFC to enquire as to what actions have been taken resulting from the inspection report; Cllr Barr advised the Council that the play area was being officially opened on Saturday 18th February and the Clerk was asked to contact FVHPFC for further details.

12. 20sPLENTY CAMPAIGN:

- 12.1 An update on the interest of the Firle Community Association (FCA) was RECEIVED from Cllr Hill: The FCA sent out a survey on energy costs, the need for help with rising energy costs and the need for a warm space in the village; a question on traffic problems/issues in the village was added; 42 responses were received with 38% of respondents highlighting the area of concern is between the A27 and Firle Primary School; responses received suggested a footpath between the A27 and the school; 34% suggested reducing the speed limit around the school and 10% wanted a village wide reduction in speed limit; the FCA have not yet had a further meeting to discuss the results of their survey; the Council AGREED to put the possibility of a new footpath on the agenda for next month.

13. PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

- 13.1 SDNP/23/00316/LIS Location: Old Vicarage The Street Firle East Sussex BN8 6NR Proposal: Proposal to repair tiled roof. Lime repairs required to ridge and hips, and in addition dormer ridge, valleys and cheeks (deadline 27th Feb 23). FPC AGREED to SUPPORT with no additional comments.
- 13.2 SDNP/23/00474/LDP Location: The Workshop Heighton Street Firle Lewes East Sussex BN8 6NZ Proposal: Construction of car storage building in relation to SDNP/19/04328/FUL (deadline 7th March). FPC AGREED to remain NEUTRAL with no additional comments.

14. TO PROPOSE AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL: No additional items proposed.

15. TO RECEIVE THE TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL: Tuesday 14th March, 7pm Firle Village Hall.

16. THE MEETING CLOSED AT 21.29.