

# **FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of **FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING** held on **Tuesday 18 May 2021 at 7.00pm** at Firle Village Hall.

**Present:** Cllr Richard Gravett (Chairman), Cllr Andrew Barr (Vice Chairman), Cllr Liz Hill, Cllr Edgar Symes, Andy Beams (Locum Parish Clerk)

**1. Election of Chairman**

Cllr Gravett was proposed by Cllr Barr, seconded by Cllr Symes and elected unanimously. The Chairman's declaration of acceptance of office was signed.

**2. Election of Vice-Chairman**

Cllr Barr was proposed by Cllr Gravett, seconded by Cllr Symes and elected unanimously.

**3. Apologies for absence**

None.

**4. Declarations of interest**

None.

**5. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2021 were agreed as a true record.

**Due to the corona virus restrictions reducing capacity in the hall, there were no members of the public able to be present. The council had already agreed to limit the meeting to statutory requirements only and defer any other discussions to the next meeting when members of the public should be able to attend.**

**6. Statutory arrangements**

**6.1 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

Both documents were updated in March 2021 to reflect the NALC model versions and needed no further changes at this time.

**RESOLVED:** The council adopted the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as proposed.

**6.2 Complaints Policy**

The policy was updated, reviewed and agreed by council in March 2021 and needed no further changes at this time.

**RESOLVED:** The council adopted the Complaints Policy as proposed.

**6.3 Freedom of Information Policy**

The policy was updated, reviewed and agreed by council in March 2021 and needed no further changes at this time.

**RESOLVED:** The council adopted the Freedom of Information Policy as proposed.

**6.4 Policy for dealing with the press and media**

Members discussed the need to adopt a policy relating to communicating with the press and media. It was agreed that the Locum Clerk will draft a policy for consideration at the next meeting.

**6.5 Council and staff subscriptions to other bodies**

Members were reminded that this related to the council's membership of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC) and the Clerk's membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

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Following the split of SSALC at the end of March 2021, ESALC now operated independently of the previous support mechanism, and there had been little information provided as to the service arrangements it offered moving forward regarding training and advice.

Members agreed that the support of SSALC in the past had been extremely useful and were concerned at the change in arrangements for ESALC. It was agreed to defer renewing the membership arrangements until the next meeting to allow time for ESALC to provide more detail, and members were aware of training opportunities available via other sources.

Members agreed to defer the SLCC subscription for the Clerk until a permanent appointment was made.

## 6.6 Insurance arrangements

The Locum Clerk confirmed that the council's existing insurance with BHIB was due for renewal on 1 June 2021. Indicative quotes had been obtained from two other companies, with one suggesting a nominal saving dependant on further scrutiny of the insurance requirements.

The Locum Clerk was asked to check whether the playground equipment was included on the existing schedule, and Members agreed that a more comprehensive review of insurance arrangements would be carried out during the year.

**RESOLVED:** Subject to the Locum Clerk's investigation of the playground equipment insurance, to renew the insurance with BHIB.

## 6.7 General Power of Competence (GPC)

The Locum Clerk explained that a council can only act within the powers given to it by statute, primarily through the Local Government Act 1972 and associated legislation. A council with the GPC can act with a wider range of powers and effectively do anything that it would be legal for an individual to do.

The council now meets the criteria to adopt the GPC in that (a) at least two-thirds of its Members are elected (rather than co-opted) and (b) it has a CiLCA qualified Clerk.

**RESOLVED:** The council confirmed it met the eligibility criteria for GPC and resolved to adopt it.

## 6.8 Meeting schedule

Members discussed arrangements for ongoing council meetings and agreed to follow the format of holding Council meetings on the second Tuesday of every other month, with informal working group meetings on the alternate months.

**RESOLVED:** Members agreed council meeting dates for the remainder of the civic year as follows: 13 July 2021, 14 September 2021, 9 November 2021, 11 January 2022, 8 March 2022, 10 May 2022 (Annual Meeting).

## 7. Finance

### 7.1 Payments

**RESOLVED:** The council approved payment of the following invoices:

Payee	Reason	Amount
Melanie Davis	Cleaning and repair of noticeboards	£100.00
A Beams	Locum Clerk April 2021	£312.50
BHIB (subject to item 6.7)	Insurance renewal	£673.20

Cllr Gravett was authorised to make the payments via online banking. The insurance renewal payment will be made once the questions raised have been answered.

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## **7.2 Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement**

This had been circulated prior to the meeting and Members were reminded of the reasons for the full completion of the external audit process for the year ending 31 March 2021.

**RESOLVED:** Council approved the Annual Governance Statement (subject to internal audit).

## **7.3 Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2020/21**

This had been circulated prior to the meeting and Members were reminded of the reasons for the full completion of the external audit process for the year ending 31 March 2021.

**RESOLVED:** Council approved the Accounting Statements 2020/21 (subject to internal audit).

## **7.4 Period for the notice of public rights**

The Locum Clerk informed Members this was a statutory period of 30 consecutive working days (which must include the first 10 working days of July) when electors may request copies of the councils accounts for review.

**RESOLVED:** Council approved the 30-day period as Monday 14 June to Friday 23 July inclusive (subject to internal audit).

## **8. To note any items for information or inclusion on future agendas**

Members discussed the need to progress a recruitment process for a permanent Clerk and the Locum Clerk agreed to circulate details of the job advert, job description and person specification from a similar sized local council who had recently recruited a new Clerk. This would be added to the next agenda to agree a way forward.

Cllr Symes informed Members that a meeting had been arranged with the MP for Friday to discuss the various issues of concern.

Cllr Barr reported a blocked drain outside the brewery on Firle Estate land and asked the Locum Clerk to report this to the estate office.

Cllr Gravett circulated a draft letter intended to go to all residents to ascertain preferred communication methods for the council to use and requested feedback from other councillors.

The Chairman's report which had been compiled by Cllrs Barr and Gravett for the previous year was circulated for comment and feedback prior to publication.

Members acknowledged that Alistair Deighton was leaving his role as Firle Estate Manager at the beginning of July and recorded their thanks for his help and support during his tenure.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50 pm.