

FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL

Draft minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of **FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL** held on

Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 7.30pm.

The meeting was held virtually under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present: Cllr Richard Gravett (Chairman), Cllr Andrew Barr (Vice Chairman), Cllr Liz Hill, Cllr Edgar Symes, 8 members of the public, Andy Beams (Locum Parish Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

None.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Barr declared an interest in item 7 as the tenant of the field proposed as the site of the temporary car park.

Cllrs Liz Hill and Edgar Symes declared an interest in item 5.1 as neighbours of the property for the planning application.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021 were agreed as a true record. It was noted that no formal resolution had been made regarding the Millennium Woodland planting plan, and this item is to be placed on the next agenda for agreement.

4. Adjournment for questions from the public

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to invite questions from the public on items other than in relation to car parking, where attendees would be invited to comment. There were no other questions from members of the public.

5. Planning:

5.1 Applications for comment

Application Number	Address	Detail
SDNP/21/00787/HOUS	Firle Cottage, The Street, Firle, BN8 6NS	Replacement extension, interior renovations, external studio outbuildings, swimming pool and garden walls.

Councillors discussed the application, and while there were no issues over the house aspects, there were concerns regarding the studio in respect of sufficient sound proofing. Councillors also stressed that all alterations should comply with the requirements of being within a conservation area.

RESOLVED: Council agreed to recommend to the Planning Officer that sufficient sound proofing and noise mitigation is included in the plans, and that all alterations are in keeping with a property within a conservation area.

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5.2 Works underway at the Ram Inn

Cllr Barr explained that an informal meeting with the landlord of the Ram Inn had taken place, where the plans for extending the beach area outside the pub had been discussed. The subsequent work that had begun was not what had been understood to be happening, particularly with the digging up of the tarmac, although it was acknowledged that the required permissions needed were not for the Parish Council to give.

The landlord was invited to respond, and she explained that the plans had now changed following a meeting with Firle Estate. There would be no sleepers added to the front of the pub, with only those at the side being replaced along with a new fence. She stressed that all future works will be within the boundary of the pub and will be discussed and agreed in advance.

The councillors thanked the landlord for clarifying the situation and wished her well with the re-opening.

6. Finance

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

Payee	Reason	Amount
Wicksteed Leisure	Playground inspection	£96.00
A Beams	Locum Clerk March 21 & website set up fee	£544.41

Cllr Gravett emphasised the need to sort out the bank mandate and signatories, and the Locum Clerk offered to obtain the necessary forms for completion.

7. Additional car parking

Cllr Gravett explained that this issue had been discussed many times over several years and tended to divide opinion in the village. He invited members of the public to share their views, starting with the results of a survey carried out by the Firle Community Association (FCA).

Claire Levi, a member of the FCA, shared the findings of the survey, which asked the question *'Do you support the proposal to offer an overflow car park (accessed from the main car park) at weekends and public holidays for a trial period?'* The survey received 50 responses, with 74% of respondents in favour. Further comments collected from the survey showed the reservations people had, which included ensuring the trial period was clearly defined, providing more litter and dog waste bins, improving the surface of the car park, the placement of a height barrier and clear signage.

The survey also produced suggestions for consideration after the trial, including a resident only parking zone, introducing payment for parking, an alternate location for a car park for the village and encouraging the pub to take more responsibility for parking for their customers.

Cllr Gravett thanked the FCA for completing the survey and sharing the results and felt this was a good example of how the Parish Council and FCA can work together to engage with the whole village.

Other members of the public were invited to share their views.

These included views in favour of progressing the trial, citing the compelling survey findings but needing to make it clear it was a trial only, and emphasising the need for clear signage.

Others expressed views against extending car parking, feeling it would only lead to more cars coming to the village, and the associated problems of people walking in the roads. It was suggested that more should be done to encourage people to come by public transport or cycling.

There was general agreement that only through having a trial period would any evidence be provided as to how successful it had been, and that monitoring the number of cars using the car park would be vital in assessing this.

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The landlord of the pub pointed out that the pub already has its own car park, which has been extended but there is no room for further extension.

Cllr Gravett thanked those present for sharing their views and asked councillors for their opinions.

Cllr Hill thanked the Firle Estate and Cllr Barr for making the field available as a location for the additional car park if that decision was progressed. She stated her concerns over access for emergency vehicles and stated that as it was a temporary solution, the car park could be closed if/when needed.

Cllr Symes echoed the calls for clear signage and monitoring the impact of providing the additional car parking.

Cllr Barr shared his view that the problem stems from the formation of the South Downs National Park (SDNPA) when the fear of additional visitors was first raised but the concerns were ignored by the SDNPA. He proposed that the council proceed with the trial, but placed bollards on the side of the road to manage the traffic.

Cllr Gravett shared his view that it was clear why people wanted to come to the village, and he had received lots of correspondence over residents' concerns with parking. While he didn't like the idea of the additional car park, he agreed something needed to be done, and that monitoring the results would help determine if the additional car park should be used again in the future.

RESOLVED: The council agreed to go ahead with the trial of a temporary car park in Ram Field, with the councillors to meet to agree how this would be monitored. A number of members of the public present offered to help with signage and bollards as required.

8. Internal audit

The Locum Clerk had circulated a copy of the issues identified by the internal audit completed in December 2020 and completed an action plan illustrating progress. Most issues were now fully addressed, with many resolved by the more transparent nature of the new website and the updated policies adopted by the council. All others were progressing, and evidence will be able to be shown to the internal auditor that the council have responded positively to the reported issues.

9. Budget 2021-22 and reserves

The Locum Clerk explained that one of the internal audit issues related to the lack of a breakdown of reserve balances held. On further inspection of the budget set for 2021-22 and details of planned spending, it was apparent that the council had effectively set money aside for various items, without ever clearly identifying these amounts.

The Locum Clerk had drawn up an alternate presentation of the agreed budget, with all the same income and expenditure figures, but including a breakdown of the councils general and earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED: Councillors approved the alternate presentation of the budget, including breakdowns of reserve funds and authorised the Locum Clerk to publish this information on the website.

10. Council policies

The Locum Clerk had circulated draft policies for Risk Management and a Scheme of Delegation for consideration, to add the council's updated register of policies and procedures. The lack of a Risk Management policy and risk register had been highlighted in the internal audit, and the adoption of the policy would allow a register to be completed.

RESOLVED: The Risk Management Policy and Scheme of Delegation were adopted by the council.

11. Meeting with MP

There had been attempts to arrange a meeting with the MP for some time, without being able to agree a mutually convenient date and time. It was suggested that the 13 April would be a good time, as the councillors are scheduled to meet informally on that date anyway. The Locum Clerk was asked to suggest that date and inform councillors of the response.

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12. Motions for future meetings

The Locum Clerk had circulated a suggested form for completing where councillors had agenda items for discussion, which focussed on the resolution they were aiming for, who else would need to be consulted prior to a decision being made, and how any costs involved would be paid for.

It was confirmed that within the Local Government Act, the Clerk is responsible for deciding what goes on an agenda, but the Locum Clerk stressed there were very few reasons not to include something for a decision, such as where the Parish Council did not have the legal powers or authority to make that decision, although these items could still be discussed if that was beneficial.

RESOLVED: It was agreed to use the form and councillors were encouraged to fill them in and circulate to each other as well as the Clerk when they thought of an item for inclusion.

13. To note any items for information or inclusion on future agendas

Cllr Hill stated she had offered to chase up LDC regarding additional bins, as the Locum Clerk had received no response to date. The Locum Clerk agreed to forward the latest email on the subject to Cllr Hill.

Cllr Gravett reported that he had received email correspondence seeking permission for a lean-to to be added to the shed on the Village Hall playing field. The request had arrived too late for inclusion on the agenda for the meeting, and a formal decision to be made. Cllr Gravett agreed to speak with the chairman of the Village Hall Playing Field Committee.

Cllr Hill asked what progress had been made on obtaining quotes of the playground works. Cllr Barr confirmed he had not received a response but would chase up again.

As per item 3, the Millennium Woodland planting scheme will be on the next agenda.

14. To confirm date of next meeting

The date for the Annual Meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 18th May commencing at 7pm. Cllr Gravett will forward contact details for booking the Village Hall to the Locum Clerk, as the date falls beyond the period when virtual meetings of Parish Councils are allowed to take place.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.20 pm.