

FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL: Tuesday 2nd September 2025, 7.06pm, Firle Village Hall. **Members in Attendance:** Cllr Hill (Chair), Cllr Barr (Vice Chair), Cllr Bolger, Cllr Lance, Cllr Symes.

Members not in Attendance: None. **Others Present:** Lorna Thwaites, Clerk and RFO, Cllr Lucy Agace.

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

1. **APOLOGIES for ABSENCE:** None received.
2. **A DECLARATION OF AN INTEREST** was made by Cllr Barr for item 11.1: Cllr Barr works for the campsite operator Woodfire; **NO REQUESTS FOR A DISPENSATION WITH RESPECT TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA** were made.
3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:** The minutes of the ordinary meeting of Firle Parish Council held on 8th July 2025 were RESOLVED to be a correct record and were signed by the Chair.
4. **FINANCE/ADMIN:**
 - 4.1 September payments were AUTHORISED, and the bank reconciliation was RECEIVED and SIGNED.
 - 4.2 The notification of Exempt Status from the external auditor was RECEIVED.
 - 4.3 Details of the NALC 2025/26 Pay Award were RECEIVED and the Council RESOLVED to ACCEPT.
 - 4.4 The revised Standing Orders based on the NALC model orders 2025 were ADOPTED.
 - 4.5 The revised Financial Regulations based on the NALC model regulations 2025 were ADOPTED.
5. **THE LEGAL AGREEMENT WITH FIRLE VILLAGE HALL AND PLAYING FIELDS:** The Council queried that the Tennis Courts are not included in the agreement and asked that this be discussed by the FVHPFC at their next meeting; the Clerk will send the agreement to the Hall Secretary asking that it be added to their agenda for discussion and also to supply the tennis club's insurance arrangements.
6. **GRANT AWARDS/S137.** None received.
7. **REPORT(S):**
 - 7.1 A verbal report was RECEIVED from Cllr Lucy Agace: the planning committee is looking to make stricter guidelines for large developments during the pre-app stage – particularly with regards to sewage and foul water; Neil Collins, the new Head of Development Management aims to make improvements to the planning system and have a better quality of information from developers for when things come to committee; the Local Plan has been held up due to the Transport Consultation but the November deadline should be met; members of Firle Parish Council raised questions: the relevance of the Local Plan with regards to Government taking heed of it? Cllr Agace advised that officers leading the development of local plans don't give specifics regarding central government; they are currently working out the deliverable number of houses (approx. 700 per year); a question was raised regarding lack of information on waste water provided in planning applications making it hard for consultees to comment effectively; Cllr Agace advised of Grampion Conditions - planning conditions attached to a decision notice meaning development can't start until off site works have been completed; these conditions are currently being looked at with regards to foul and surface water drainage - information supplied with planning applications is often generic and not site specific and these are elements outside of LDC's control; LDC planning department are increasingly overloaded with no new planners being appointed.
 - 7.2 A brief verbal report of the Q&A session with James MacCleary MP was RECEIVED: The session was well received; approximately 30 people attended and a variety of questions were taken, which included: rent capping and water supply; the new reservoir; Firle Primary School facing a threat of closure; the possibility of lobbying for a bus from Newhaven and Ringmer to Firle; the planning bill and a bill that allows councils to sell allotments and development on greenfield sites.
8. **MATTERS ARISING:**
 - 8.1 No further plans proposed for the car park were received and no actions agreed; the Council NOTED that Firle Estate have advised them of a traffic count camera being erected in the village car park to record the traffic movements or numbers in and out of the car park and provide data of peak periods.
 - 8.2 The Council NOTED that the wall by the memorial does not belong to Firle Estate; the Council AGREED to proceed with a temporary repair with Paul Hollingdale, to a maximum spend of £200 to be taken from reserves.
 - 8.3 Details of the LDC aim to improve recycling and their proposed move to fortnightly refuse (black sack waste) collections from November 2025 were NOTED.
 - 8.4 No further information has been identified regarding funding for parish councils to install electric vehicle charging points; the Council AGREED to defer this item for the time being.

- 8.5 The Council AGREED to write to Firle Village School to ask if there are currently children attending the school from other areas and whether there is interest to attract pupils from other areas and if so, whether the school would support the council in lobbying for a bus service from Newhaven and Ringmer.
- 8.6 An update on the application of sludge to the nearby fields was RECEIVED: Between 12th and 14th August an application of biosolids (sludge) was made, which had a very distinctive and powerful smell; it was spread during a particularly hot period with no warning and residents were prevented from opening their windows; it impacted residents in the centre and west of the village; concerns were raised about pollutants in the sludge such as micro plastics and forever chemicals which would build up in the field and would pass into ground water or pass into the food chain; the Council discussed other applications in the locality; the contractor has spoken to Cllr Barr and has suggested that a representative from Southern Water attend a parish council meeting which the Council AGREED they would welcome; the Council discussed the process between the farmer and Firle Estate regarding notifying local residents; the Council AGREED to write two letters, one to Firle Estate and one to the farmer explaining the issues with the sludge spreading, lack of notice, the weather conditions and it being on a field within close residential proximity; the intentions of the farmer regarding further sludge spreading are to be requested a long with a request that it isn't put on fields close to the village; Firle Estate will be asked to let the parish know when spreading is planned in the future.

9. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

- 9.1 The new ESCC working practice for temporary road safety posters was NOTED; the Council AGREED to request Pass Wide and Slow for horses and Think Children, slow down (4 posters of each).
- 9.2 Village Car Park – B.Baines: Discussed under item 8.1.
- 9.3 Restoration – M.Axwell: NOTED.
- 9.4 Safe Space Sussex Growth Campaign – Sussex PCC: NOTED and no further action agreed.
- 9.5 Community Pitch Funding – Cllr Denis: NOTED.
- 9.6 Invitation to Climate and Nature Partnership Event – B.Mabey: No councillors are available to attend.
- 9.7 Road Closure Application – J.Richards: NOTED.
- 9.8 Southdowns National Park – V.Rowlands: Ms Rowlands will attend the October meeting at 7pm.
- 9.9 Continuum Visit – FVHPFC Secretary: A site visit was made; the Clerk was asked to send the survey to the Village Hall Secretary.

10. HIGHWAYS:

- 10.1 Repairs to the pothole outside the village hall are now complete.
- 10.2 Foliage has been cleared from 30mph signs around the village; the 'Pedestrians' warning sign needs cleaning.
- 10.3 The Council RESOLVED that Cllr Barr would trim back foliage covering up the village sign at the entrance to the village at Crossways.

11. PLANNING: Applications Received:

- 11.1 **SDNP/25/03339/LDE Proposal:** Use of land as campsite intermittently since 2015 **Location:** Land adjacent to Heighton Street, Firle, East Sussex (comments by 15th September). Comments AGREED: The Council AGREED a NEUTRAL response but would like to have information on the quantity of water being used by the campsite; the Council understand that a substantial amount of water per week at peak times is being used from Bugs Bottom reservoir and pumping station; the Council has concerns that the campsite adds a significant demand for local water supplies which is used by local farms and residents and any further increase in use may be of concern; the Council also raises its concerns regarding the waste water resulting from the campsite.
- 11.2 **SDNP/25/03333/FUL Proposal:** Replacement of existing wall and roof cladding, installation of 2no WC's and soil treatment plant **Location:** Firle Estate Off Heighton Street, Firle, East Sussex (comments by 16th September). Comments AGREED: NEUTRAL with no comments.
- 11.3 **SDNP/25/03417/TCA Proposal:** G1- Beech Hedge- Remove 6m section to widen existing field access and install new gates **Location:** 53 Crossways, Wick Street, Firle, East Sussex, BN8 6LG (comments by 3rd September). Comments AGREED: Neutral. The Council understands the work has been already done; they believe the location map to be inaccurate and doesn't correspond to where the gate is located.

12. PROJECTS:

12.1 Assets of Community Value

- 12.1.1 To RECEIVE an update on the nomination of the Millennium Woods and the Allotments as an Asset of Community Value: DEFERED.

13. **TO AGREE ITEMS FOR THE PARISH MAGAZINE.** Biosolid spreading; repairs to the memorial wall; grant award to FVHPFC for VJ Day 80 fireworks; repairs to the pothole outside the village hall; the chair of the SDNP board attendance at the next meeting; overview of the meeting with James McCleary.
14. **THE TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF FIRLE PARISH COUNCIL:** 7th October, 7pm Firle Village Hall.
15. **THE MEETING CLOSED** at 21.34.