

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

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MINUTES of the Extraordinary Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Thursday 2nd March 2023 in the Village Hall, High Street, Fletching (6.10 – 7pm).

PRESENT: Councillors C Rothery (Chair), D Greenish (Vice-Chair), R Hannay, K Minch, A Shaw and W Constantinou.

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO)

Members of the Public in Attendance: 5

APOLOGIES: No apologies for absence were received

23/42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest RECEIVED in respect of items on the agenda, as required by the Members' Code of Conduct:

Minute 23/43 (legal costs) – Councillor Hannay as his wife was an underwriter of the cost for obtaining the legal opinion.

In accordance with the FPC Code of Conduct, the councillor did not participate in the discussion or vote on that part of the matter.

23/43. WD/2022/3319/MAO - ASHDOWN BUSINESS PARK, MARESFIELD

The Chair explained that the main reason for calling the Extraordinary meeting was due to needing to move quickly if the application went to the Wealden DC Planning Committee North on 9th March 2023. The agenda for that meeting was only published the previous day and it was noted that the application was not on the agenda but that the next meeting of PCN was due to be held on 30 March 2023.

The Chair also went through the timeline of action taken since the last Parish Council meeting which members had been notified of through emails from the Clerk. Consultation was ongoing with neighbouring parishes to garner support for the actions Fletching was taking. It was noted that objections to the planning application had been submitted by those parishes as well as WGod. It was agreed that Chailey PC also be included in the list of parishes contacted.

Call-in to Secretary of State

Members were informed that a letter had been drafted on behalf of the Parish Council requesting the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to call-in the application for his own determination. It was explained that, for tactical reasons, this would only be submitted once the application was on the agenda for a Wealden DC Planning Committee and not before.

It was RESOLVED to submit, as soon as the application is listed for determination by Wealden DC, a letter to the Secretary of State requesting that he call-in the planning application for his determination.

Legal Costs

The request for the Parish Council to meet the costs of the legal fees (£2400) for providing legal advice, drafting a letter and submitting it on behalf of the newly formed action group SABRE (Stop Ashdown Business Park Expanding) was discussed. The Chair stated that he felt that the Parish Council should support the actions taken and that it gave a good indication to the other parish councils as well as sending a strong signal to parishioners on how seriously Fletching Parish Council was taking the issue, this view was supported by other councillors. The Clerk explained that she had sought advice from ESALC (East Sussex Association of Local Councils) and the Parish Council was able to make the payment direct to the solicitors using its power under s137 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Clerk confirmed that the funds would come out of reserves. There was a request that the decision be deferred until the ordinary meeting due to be held on Monday 6 March when those councillors not present at the meeting would be in attendance, but this was not supported.

It was RESOLVED to pay the total fee of £2400 to Leigh Day Solicitors

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Delegation to Planning Group

It was explained that going forward it would make sense to delegate to the Planning Group decisions relating to the day-to-day management of the objection strategy to this application to avoid having to call additional extraordinary meetings.

It was RESOLVED that for this application only:

- a. **Decisions relating to the day-to-day management of the objection strategy be taken by the Planning Group based on a majority agreement;**
- b. **The Clerk to provide all Councillors with a weekly update on the progress of the application and any decisions taken by the Group; and**
- c. **The Group's authority on expenditure is limited in total to £1000 + VAT. Any proposed expenditure to be approved by the Clerk.**

Cluster Group of Local Councils

The Chair proposed that support be given for the formation of a cluster group of local parish council with a view to co-ordinating responses to national and local planning policy, major planning applications and similar issues relevant to the area. The cluster to be centred on Uckfield (as the local market town) and include those parishes that have a common boundary with Uckfield.

In response to a question, he explained that there was a cluster group in existence set up by Wealden DC but that was only used as a means of communicating planning policy etc to parishes by the District Council. It was agreed that Uckfield Town Council was pivotal to the group.

It was RESOLVED that Uckfield TC and the other surrounding parishes be contacted with a view to forming a Group in order to co-ordinate responses to national and local planning policy, major planning applications and similar issues relevant to the area.