

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

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MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Tuesday 30th May 2023 in the Village Hall, High Street, Fletching (7 - 8pm).

PRESENT: Councillors R Hannay (Chairman), D Greenish (Vice-Chairman), A Abraham, N Collum, W Constantinou.

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO) and Councillors C Coleman (WDC) and R Galley (ESCC).

Members of the Public in Attendance: 10

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Minch and L Snelgove

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Councillor Richard Hannay welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the parish councillors and the clerk. The working groups and councillor responsibilities were reported to the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 17 MAY 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last annual parish meeting held on 17th May 2022 were a correct record and were duly signed by the Chair.

3. REPORT FROM THE EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCILLOR ROY GALLEY

Councillor Galley gave a brief overview of some of the other duties of the County Council other than highways.

Economic and Environment Issues

- Broadband upgraded in areas of East Sussex
- Carbon emissions (that ESCC can influence) reduced by 34% and are lowest of any county council in England
- Waste – 43% is recycled, 1.3% goes to landfill and the rest is incinerated
- Bus Services - £41m grant from government to improve bus services, new Flexibus initiative being rolled out

Children's Services

- School admissions – schools are funded by government which is passed to schools through ESCC
- Primary school numbers are declining and secondary places are increasing
- Looked after children – number has increased slightly
- 532 children are on a child protection plan
- Severe educational needs has increased by 53% since 2018
- 3 new special schools opened with 2 more planned

Adult Social Services

- Highest spend area in the county council
- Number of elderly receiving care in 2022 was 5865
- 11,070 Ukrainians guests being supported in East Sussex.

Councillor Galley also reported that top of his list of roads to try and get repaired was Ruston Bridge Road from Denniker Farm Shop to the High Street in Fletching and that he had taken the Leader of ESCC to view the state of the road.

4. REPORT FROM THE WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA COLEMAN

Councillor Coleman explained the new makeup of Wealden District Council following the local elections held earlier in the month. It was noted that an alliance had been formed between the Liberal Democrats

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and the Green Party and that the Leadership of the Council would alternate between the Liberal Democrats and Greens each year as would the Chair of the Council. Councillor Coleman explained that she had been elected Chair of Wealden District Council for 2023-24 and that her chosen charities were the Sussex Wildlife Trust and Chestnut Tree House. She also had a theme for the year which was 'Nature Recovery in a time of Climate and Biodiversity Crisis' and she would be visiting schools etc to promote it.

Councillor Coleman also gave an update on the two motions passed at the first meeting of the Wealden District Council since the election which related to a condition survey of all the roads in Wealden being requested of ESCC and keeping Uckfield Leisure centre open whilst alternative provision was investigated.

In response to a question regarding the leisure centre Councillor Galley explained that ESCC owned the building but Wealden ran the leisure centre.

With regards to the Local Plan it was explained that the new alliance was looking at all its options and talking to experts to identify the best solution for the way forward. It was hoped that more information would be publicly available in a couple of weeks.

Councillor Galley was thanked for his time as the District Councillor for Fletching over the past 16 years.

Councillor Galley left the meeting at 7.25pm to attend the Annual Parish Meeting in Maresfield.

5. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk and RFO, Gabriella Paterson-Griggs, gave a presentation on the income and expenditure for the 2022/23 financial year. She explained that the majority of the Parish Council's income was received from the precept. It was also reported that there was a small income received from the Burial Ground and match funding for the fingerposts from ESCC.

In respect of expenditure for the year it was stated that there had been a small underspend compared with the budget. Grants were given to Fletching School, Wealden CAB, Samaritans, Fletching Recreation Ground, the Fletching Parochial Church Council and The Royal British Legion. The seeking of legal advice in relation to the Ashdown Business Park expansion application had also been funded.

A breakdown of the income and expenditure was provided as well as information in respect of the Parish Reserves.

The Clerk also explained that the Council had again resolved to increase the precept for the forthcoming year by 3.2%. This was due to the continued increased costs for contracts etc.

6. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST YEAR

Chris Rothery, as the outgoing Chairman, gave the highlights of the past year as follows:

- The coming together of the Parish in its objections to the proposed expansion of the Ashdown Business Park in the neighbouring parish of Maresfield.
- Working closely together with the neighbouring parishes with further collaboration planned in the future.
- The Platinum Jubilee celebrations with the beacon lighting, fireworks and street party which was repeated for the King's Coronation.
- The Recreation Ground pavilion water leak which has led to the potential to refurbish to a higher spec.
- All the fingerposts had been renovated across the Parish with match-funding from ESCC but there was a damaged one that needed a new finger at Rocks Road.
- Work was ongoing to restore the phone box at Splaynes Green.
- The Parking Working Group had commissioned a feasibility study from ESCC and the Parish was looking towards producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Planning Applications

Councillor Chris Rothery explained that the Parish Council had been consulted on 38 planning applications and had submitted comments to the District Council on all the applications received. The

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applications included new builds, house extensions, garage extensions and swimming pools. He also reported that the Parish Council is represented at meetings with Wealden District Council where the Parish views on the Local Plan and proposed SHELAA sites were reflected.

7. PARISH OBJECTIVES 2023-24

The Parish objectives for 2023-24 were reported as:

- To continue as an efficient and effective Parish Council with trained knowledgeable councillors and a qualified clerk.
- To update parishioners as to the developments of the Wealden District Local Plan and associated planning implications.
- To work towards having a parking solution agreed for Fletching High Street.
- To effectively manage Fletching Recreation Ground.
- To provide a well-run Burial Ground for the Parish.
- To complete the restoration of the fingerposts in the Parish.
- To continue to support local community groups, charities and the residents of Fletching Parish.
- To work towards producing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish within 4 years.
- To support Speedwatch and the ongoing work to get the speed limit reduced on the A272.
- To co-opt to the two vacancies on the Parish Council.

8. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Speeding in Fletching High Street – it was queried whether a speed survey could be undertaken at the top end of the High Street where cars regularly travelled over the speed limit. It was explained that the Speedwatch group was short of volunteers so priority had to be given to focusing on crisis points. It was noted that there was due to be a speed survey undertaken outside the school but one resident considered that there was not an issue outside the school due to the sharp bend in the road.

Waste Bins – it was asked whether any further work had been undertaken to look at replacing the waste bins in the high street to ones that were more aesthetically suited to the High Street. It was reported that nothing further had been done at this time but it was a consideration for the future.

9. CLOSE OF MEETING

A presentation was made to Chris Rothery in recognition of his time on the Parish Council since 2014 as both a councillor and the Chairman and also to his wife, Alex, for the support she had given the Parish Council over that time.

Councillor Hannay thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8pm