ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

[www.alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk)

**CLERK TO THE COUNCIL**  33 Swaines Way

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**Minutes of a meeting of Alfriston Parish Council (APC)**

**held in the Alfriston War Memorial Hall on Monday 20th March 2023**

**Present:**

Cllr Beechey [Vice Chair] Cllr Monteath-Wilson

Cllr Bell Cllr Daw

Cllr Rabagliati

**In attendance:**

Mrs Victoria Rutt - Parish Clerk

24 members of the public were present.

**188.** **Chairman’s Welcome**

Cllr Beechey welcomed everyone to this Parish Council’s last meeting before the election.

**189. Public Questions**

1. Mr James Dowling asked for the names of all Cllrs present. Cllr Beechey introduced each Parish Councillor.

2. Ms Caroline Adcock asked whether Cllrs would inform residents whether they are going to stand for the upcoming elections. The Clerk explained that guidance suggests that Cllrs do not do so and they have not expressed their intentions at previous elections. Cllr Beechey asked all Cllrs if any wished to declare, they did not.

**190. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Cooper and Cllr Watkins.

**191. Report from Maria Caulfield MP**

Maria Caulfield was unable to attend but sent her apologies. Her report can be found under **Appendix B**.

**192. Report from Cllr Stephen Shing [ESCC]**

Cllr Shing reported that the Alfriston Traffic Management proposal report had been received in draft format following 131 responses received. The Exceat bridge traffic lights were put in place in March 2021 to ease congestion on the key coastal route between Seaford and Eastbourne whilst East Sussex County Council seek a permanent solution and also plan for the replacement two-lane bridge. It is unfortunate and appalling to report that in the recent weeks, the batteries were stolen from the equipment and the lights were damaged by air-gun pellets. At the end of February, one of the lights were set alight and the other thrown into a hedge. The road signs were thrown into the Cuckmere River.

ESCC lead member has approved the local transport plan and in the funding there is £150k for the Alfriston traffic proposals. There are cheaper bus fares from 1st April 2023. Cllr Shing explained that he is not standing in the District election for this ward, but of course remains our County Councillor. Cllr Beechey thanked Cllr Shing, on behalf of all residents and Councillors for representing Alfriston village and he has been a pleasure to work with.

Cllr Daw explained to Cllr Shing about a recent issue she had with the Alfriston Doctor’s surgery, an issue that she complained about as a resident and it did get resolved once she emailed to complain and copied in the Parish Council and local MP. Many residents are facing the same issues with the surgery and the service is unacceptable. Cllr Shing understood the issues and explained he is facing similar of his own at his surgery. Cllr Beechey suggested that APC write to the Surgery explaining the issues and asked whether Cllr Shing and Cllr Lunn would consider putting their names to the letter. Both agreed. Cllrs Rabagliati and Cllr Daw volunteered to draft the letter. **Action 1.**

**193. Report from Cllr Michael Lunn [WDC]**

Cllr Lunn reported that he is the District Councillor for 4 parishes. He declared that he will not be standing again for this area, and wishes the next person elected all the best. He explained that the Local Plan has been delayed due to government not agreeing the national target for housing needs. They are still awaiting a final announcement, but WDC are confident that the housing numbers will come down and local representatives will be able to decide the numbers. 8,000 homes approved over the last 4 years but not yet been built, should contribute to the land supply and housing numbers. Mr Dowling asked about number in Alfriston. Both Cllr Beechey and Cllr Lunn confirmed the 8,000 homes approved is across the District, currently no new houses have approval in Alfriston.

Cllr Lunn explained that finances are good within WDC and the Council tax bill showed a 2.99% increase. With regard to recycling and missed bins, a report received today showed 44 bins missed out of 100,000 homes which is great but there was a lot of disruption when the refuse collectors were on strike. Following up since the last meeting, the 5 broken sluice gates have been reported and it has also been raised with Maria Caulfield MP and Mr Richard Wood. EA are still awaiting permits in order to do any work, Maria Caulfield MP is escalating this. Clerk asked Cllr Lunn to send her the sluice’s location information so she can liaise with her contact within the EA. **Action 2.**

Cllr Rabagliati asked, with regards to flooding, whether reinforcing the river bank had ever been looked at? Cllr Lunn stated that the bank on the Deans Place side is part of the works planned by the Pevensey Levels Water Management Board, but this has been delayed due to permits being required and a recent animal study.

Mr Geoff Watkins asked Cllr Lunn about Council Tax bills showing an increase for APC when APC had said the precept has not gone up. Clerk to query this. **Action 3.**

*\*Since the meeting, the Clerk liaised with WDC about this and received the following response; ‘It’s because of the change in tax base. In 2022/23 the tax base for Alfriston was 446.5  and this has reduced to 438.2 in 2023/24. The tax base can change for a number of reasons, going up for new housing developments, reductions in people being eligible for discounts, or reducing because of demolitions or because of an increase in the take up of council tax discount such as single person discount etc’*\*

Mr Dowling asked about dredging the river, which he thought was supposed to be done every 3 years. Cllr Beechey explained that dredging has not happened regularly since about 25 years ago, but very occasional desilting has taken place. Cllr Beechey said he has never understood EA’s argument that dredging does not alleviate flood issues, given logic suggests that a deeper and wider channel shoud be able to hold more water. Mr Dowling asked what policies are in place and what do APC do? Cllr Beechey explained that APC do not have a lot of say or any power to do anything but the District is a stakeholder and we have the Cuckmere Flood Forum and APC feeds into them. An unknown resident asked Cllr Lunn what communication has happened between APC and the EA. Cllr Lunn explained there has been excellent and constant communication between all the groups. Cllr Beechey thanked Cllr Lunn, on behalf of Cllrs and parishioners for everything he has done whilst representing the parish over the last 4 years.

**194. Declaration of interests**

Cllr Daw declared that she is a Church Warden for St Andrews.

**195. Minutes**

Clerk explained that some minor amendments had been made to the unadopted minutes and the amended ones have been uploaded to the website and are in the official folder. The incorrect date was changed and a resident’s surname corrected, Cllr Lunn stated planning enforcement was £1 million, not £7 million and finally the AWMH has been booked for the King’s Coronation but no charge has been made for this booking.

Cllr Rabagaliti proposed and Cllr Bell seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the APC meeting held on the 20th February 2023 were a true and accurate record.

**MOTION CARRIED.**  Cllr Beechey duly signed the minutes.

**196. Finance**

196.1 To approve the Statement of Finances: March 2023

Cllr Bell proposed and Cllr Daw seconded a motion to approve the Statement of Finances for March 2023. [**Appendix A**]. **MOTION CARRIED.** Cllr. Daw signed the invoices.

The Clerk explained that the end of year report will be sent out in early April to Cllrs, this will not be the final picture for 2022/23 though as the playground invoice has come out this month, which includes VAT which will be reclaimed. At the May 2023 meeting, the final end of year picture will be clear and exact figures known. Clerk has worked out it will be a little over £1,000 that is left. The Clerk thanked all Cllrs for following the budget carefully and explained it shows how tight the budget is and how the new Council need to be careful going into the 2023/23 budget. Cllr Beechey thanked the Clerk for keeping good control of the budget.

**197. To consider grass cutting report and award contact to start April 2023**

Cllr Beechey explained that APC went out again to tender and 5 companies returned. The 5 prices, for the 18 cuts per annum for the Tye and Recreation ground, ex-VAT, for 2023 were; £2640, £2880, £4860, £7020 and £13,769. The report from the Clerk did not disclose the company names, it did however include the equipment used by each company and a reference. Cllr Bell explained that after reading all the information, he would propose that APC proceed with company 2 due to the excellent reference and their experience with cutting a cricket green. This was seconded by Cllr Rabagliati. Clerk confirmed that company 2 is Barcombe Landscapes and their 2023 price was £2880. Clerk will liaise with them to award contact. **Action 4.**

**198. Report on Highways and Twittens – Cllr Rabagliati**

Cllr Rabagliati reported on the traffic plan consultation**.** Today APCreceived the ESCC report on the Alfriston Traffic Management proposal consultation. This is quite a lengthy document which has to be commented upon prior to final publication, which will hopefully be very soon, so that the plans can be progressed. Cllr Rabagliati spoke recently with coordinators of the former ‘Conserve Alfriston’ organisation, who still hold some funds they had donated to them at the time of the traffic light trial in 2018.  They have said that they are willing for this money to be put to toward the fund for resurfacing the High Street, should this improvement happen.  Cllr Rabagliati believes that this would be a fantastic start to fund raising for this project and would hope that APC might be able to raise more funds for this from public donation, as well as from longer term finance that has already been discussed.

Like many others that Cllr Rabagliati has spoken to around the village, he is appalled at the condition of many of our roads and the poor quality of repairs that ESH have made.  Specifically these include:

* Blocked drain and poor state of the pavement outside Deans Place.  This has been reported and we are awaiting an update.
* The pothole repair opposite the former Chestnuts Tea rooms is breaking up already, largely because of the poor quality repair that was done a few weeks ago. There is no update.
* Loose kerb stones by the Tye twytten section. Again, poor quality repairs, which did not last even a week. This has been inspected today and is on a 5 day turnaround.
* Blocked drains by Willows car park.  These have been reported and re-reported. This has been placed on a 28 day turnaround.
* Potholes in West Street and road out of the village, northbound. I will send photographs so that these can be reported.

Cllr Rabagliati happened to speak with the landowner responsible for the flint wall along the road to north of village. He told Cllr Rabagliati that some years ago he offered to cede some land to ESCC so that they could make improvements, but that they had declined.  He is currently considering removing the wall and replacing with fencing. Cllr Beechey commented that much of the damage to the wall has been caused over the years by vehicles driving through high flood water, causing a bow wave. Replacing the wall would likely be a waste of money given this will continue to happen.

This morning, Cllr Rabagliati attended a webinar organised by the Carbon Literacy Project, concerning their initiative to raise levels of ‘Carbon literacy’ among local authorities and Parish councils.  This movement is about becoming aware and pledging to reduce carbon emission at a local level.  He found this very interesting, and would like to register interest in learning more, with a view to APC becoming a Carbon Literate Organisation.

**199. Report on Allotments – Cllr Cooper**

No update.

**200. Report on Public Transport – Cllr Monteath-Wilson**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported that Cuckmere Buses were offering cheap travel from 1st April 2023.

**201. Report on Rights of Way and Countryside – Cllr Monteath-Wilson**

201.1 Update on Dukes Green

Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported that ESCC Rights of Way officers were liaised with and were aware of the concerns but were unable to attend a site visit, but did send email confirmation that they are content that no breaches have occurred. Cllr Monteath-Wilson and the Clerk met with the owner of Burnt House, Ms McBride, and owners of The Bakehouse were invited but were unable to attend the meeting but were liaised with via email and phone.

Cllr Monteath-Wilson confirmed that you could access the Village Green through the access point at Burnt House. Although there is a gate it is not locked and you can walk around it and access is clear at The Bakehouse. Following the walk through with Ms McBride of the whole village green, it was noted that the area owned by the National Trust has fencing and 2 gates, one of which is locked. Clerk is going to liaise with the National Trust about this. **Action 5**.

Following the site visit and emails with ESCC, Cllr Monteath-Wilson proposes no further action is taken to move this forward and if any individual is unhappy with this, they can take further action.

Cllr Bell noted that the ROW part has been ascertained but he feels that the issue has lost sight of the legal problem which he sees as the issue of a gate and fence being put on the village green forming a boundary and creating a private area, which is not allowed. ESCC have not answered the questions that Cllr Bell has raised. He still felt APC needed to consider the legal advice from NALC.

Cllr Monteath-Wilson explained that the NALC advice did come back but it was not clear and what concerns her is if APC decide to pursue the matter, the first witness called would be ESCC who have said they have no concerns; and they are the appropriate authority. Cllr Beechey thanked Cllr Monteath-Wilson for the update and a clear agenda item will have to be put on the May 2022 agenda to decide whether this is progressed or no further action is taken by APC. **Action 6.**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported that there has been no update regarding Kings Ride surface and the tree that has fallen in Weavers Lane has been reported but no action has been taken as yet.

**202. Report on Strategic Planning – Cllr Daw**

Cllr Daw asked for permission to use the Tye and Rec for the August 2023 bank holiday weekend. The Tye would be required for both the Sunday and Monday and the Recreation ground for the Monday to provide parking and for the boot fair. All Cllrs approved this request.

Cllr Daw asked, now the amazing playground has been installed, whether Cllrs would consider installing outdoor gym equipment on the small area of land between the playground and the Pavilion, if funds/grants were looked at by the Friends of Alfriston Playground. It was agreed this would be an agenda item for May 2023. **Action 7.**

202.1 Update on King’s Coronation in May 2023

Clerk explained that the application for a street closure on the 7th May 2023 has been submitted and it is halfway through the 28 day consultation period. Clerk is not concerned as she did liaise with stakeholders i.e. Cuckmere Buses and Emergency Services prior to submission to ensure any concerns were met. The steward rota is nearly complete, there are 5 one hour slots remaining if anyone would like to volunteer.

The Alfriston Hub have created a fantastic itinerary involving both the High Street and the Tye which is going to be published widely in due course.

The Clerk explained that a resident saw information about a bench commemorating the King’s Coronation. A 2 seater is £859, a 3 seater is £1059 and 4 seater is £1359. APC decided this is not something that would be looked at doing now, but something for the new Council to look into in the coming months.

The Clerk also updated on the Queen’s Green Canopy. £1500 in fundraising was achieved and 4 trees were purchased; 2 Elms and 2 London Planes. The Elms were £300 each, the London Planes were £225 each and each tree needed a planting kit which is £60 each. The first tree is being planted at a ceremony on Friday 24th March at 11:00 on the Tye, which the Lord Lieutenant will be attending. The remaining trees will be planted before the end of March 2023 so they can be mapped.

**203. Report on Tye and Recreation Ground – Cllr Beechey**

203.1 Tye Road resurfacing

Cllr Beechey reported that no update as yet on Tye Road resurfacing.

Cllr Beechey reported that, since the last meeting, the official playground opening was held which was a great success and thanked again Ms Anna Franklin and everyone involved in Friends of Alfriston Playground. An observation has been made about dogs being able to get into the gates, it is going to be looked into as to what can be installed which will pass the safety inspection and not cause entrapment issues. **Action 8.**

**204. Report from Planning Committee – Cllr Bell**

204.1 Applications considered by APC Planning Committee since last meeting

**SDNP/23/00607/HOUS** 7 Deans Road, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5XR Supported

**SDNP/23/00701/HOUS** Bramble Cottage, Weavers Lane, Alfriston, Supported

**SDNP/23/00670/HOUS** Riverbank, River Lane, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5SX Objected

**SDNP/23/00684/TPO** Trees West of Smugglers Close, Alfriston, East Sussex Supported

**SDNP/23/00817/FUL and SDNP/23/00818/LIS** Alfriston Clergy House Supported

**SDNP/23/00918/FUL** Mistila, Whiteway, Alfriston, BN26 5TP Objected

204.2 Applications notified or awaiting decision from SDNPA

**SDNP/22/05338/LDP** 4 Smugglers Close, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5TG Ongoing

**SDNP/23/00366/LIS** Winton Barn, Winton Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5UJ Granted

**SDNP/23/00138/LIS** Barn to NE of Tile Barn House, Whiteway, BN26 5TT Ongoing

204.3 Enforcement updates

Cllr Bell and Clerk have reported to SDNPA about the signage on the shop front at Swallow’s Wing, Market Square. SDNPA are making enquiries and will report back.

Cllr Bell asked to read out the following statement: “*I would like to give some background to this saga as it seems to have run away with itself. My relationship with Ms McBride was at first cordial, for example shortly after she moved into Burnt House, along with my partner and accountant, we took her as a guest to the Amex Stadium to see Brighton play. In an effort to be neighbourly I supplied her with the details of my architect, who did the drawings for her garage, copied from the original drawings he did for me. I also gave her an archaeologist’s report from Imperial College, that cost a substantial amount of money. Not long after the football game Ms McBride invited me to be her friend on Facebook, which I declined. Since that day in 2019, I have never spoken to her, met socially or had any direct or indirect contact with her.*

*I recently made a freedom of information request to the parish council to obtain all email communication from Ms McBride between the Parish Council and Councillors, almost all of which I had not been copied in on nor seen before. I have to say that I was astonished by the results. Emails containing page after page of vitriolic bile attacking my character perpetuating the same lies and bizarre claims had been sent to various Councillors over a long period of time. No one suggested that Ms McBride be asked to provide some evidence to substantiate any of her claims or allegations. Because I had not been copied into the emails, when I saw them it came as a shock to me to learn that other Councillors appeared to have accepted Ms McBride’s statements as facts. I was not given the opportunity to set the record straight, which is part of the reason for making this statement today. I sat through Caroline Adcock’s contribution at the last meeting, which had one of the largest attendances I can remember, when she repeated Ms McBride’s defamatory comments, almost word for word with nothing to substantiate what she was saying. For most of my time on the Parish Council I have been Chair of the planning committee. This role may be seen as the bottom rung of planning legislation – if a breach of planning is reported to the SDNPA it is up to them to enforce it. I did my job as Chair of Planning by bringing possible breaches to their attention. With the issues over Burnt House, I did everything the same as any other planning breach, by reporting it to SDNPA. The investigation lasted for over a year and SDNPA eventually decided that there had not been a planning breach despite overwhelming photographic evidence to the contrary. I had checked all the evidence, including the dictionary definition of ‘garage’. To this day, I am mystified that a person can build a garage, but make vehicular access impossible, and not be in breach of planning permission to build a ‘garage’. A listed wall had been demolished at the same time. It was reported, after many months, SDNPA decided that no further action was needed. I think this sends a dangerous signal to people who can take this as permission to destroy valuable and irreplaceable history. Once the decisions came down from SDNPA, the matters were closed. The first breach, I should point out, was reported to me by one of Ms McBride’s neighbours, it was not something that I instigated. She has always been fully aware of who the neighbour was and has spoken to them about their complaint. I joined the Parish Council in the hope of helping to preserve the best of Alfriston while it goes through the natural changes and challenges, that time and economics bring. I didn’t join the council to make friends or to make decisions that would please everyone and make me popular, I tend to say what I think and base my decisions on what I think is in the best interests of the village and its future”.*

**205. Reports from Outside Bodies**

*205.1 Heartstart*: no report.

*205.2 Alfriston Emergency Group*: Mr Steve Woodgate reported that AEG acted with the recent heavy rain and will provide further information to Clerk about the sluices, to assist her when she liaises with the EA.

*205.3 Flood Forum* – no report.

*205.4 Neighbourhood Watch* – no report.

*205.5 Twinning Committee* – no report.

*205.6 St Andrew’s Church* – Cllr Daw reported that a lovely service was held for Mother’s Day. On Sunday 26th March the clocks spring forward. On Tuesday 28th March there is a coffee morning and on Friday 31st there is the school’s Easter service. Cllr Daw recently went on a webinar with the Diocese which covered working with the community for the King’s Coronation. On the Sunday, St Andrew’s will be serving tea and cake for everyone and they are trying to think of a small Coronation gift for each child, but matters are in the early stages of agreeing the plan.

*205.7 Clergy House* – Ms Holly Jones sent in the following report. *‘After another busy winter of conservation work in the house and garden we are almost ready for reopening on Friday 31st March.  Due to resources, we are opening just the two days again this year, and these will be Fridays and Saturdays with last day of the open season being the 28th October.  We are currently recruiting for Saturday house guide volunteers, if anyone would like to find out more about the role, please contact us at* [*alfriston@nationaltrust.org.uk*](mailto:alfriston@nationaltrust.org.uk)*’***.**

*205.8 Cuckmere Buses* – no report.

*205.9 AWMH* – Mr Adrian Butcher reported that everything is ticking along. AWMH have sadly received some expensive gas bills. Pleased to say the Alfriston Hub is working well and there are currently 60 members. The first Hub meeting was for the King’s Coronation, which saw 35 people attend who were motivated and keen.

*205.10 Speedwatch* – Clerk updated that she has had some interest from new members so an online training session will be held in due course. If anyone is interested, please let the Clerk know so they can be added into the upcoming training. Clerk thanked all current members for all their hard work and particularly Mr Stephen Rabagliati and Mr Bill Rendall who captured 26 vehicles in one session at Whiteway.

**206. Correspondence to the Clerk**

The Clerk had no correspondence to raise at the meeting but did want to take the opportunity to thank all the residents who liaise with her, it is appreciated. The Clerk has recently celebrated her 6th year working as the Alfriston Clerk and she wished to thank the current Cllrs for all their support and hard work over the past 4 year term. The Clerk stated it has been a pleasure to work with the outgoing Council and looks forward to seeing who she will be working with in May 2023. Cllr Beechey thanked the Clerk on behalf of all the Cllrs for everything she has done for this Council over the past 4 year term.

The Clerk did raise one letter which should have been raised under Finance. WDC are increasing the charge of emptying litter and dog waste bins by £25 per bin. Clerk has requested a breakdown of the bins currently charged for so this can be reviewed.

**207. Public Questions**

1. Mr Geoff Watkins asked about the grass cutting. As it is just the Tye and Recreation ground, what has happened to the other areas. Cllr Beechey explained that the verges have been handed back to ESH due to the quotes received at previous tender. This it there will be fewer cuts, but they will not come under APC’s responsibility. The remaining areas are the allotment paths and the playground. APC decided it would be better value for money to engage a small scale contractor to do those areas.

2. Ms Caroline Adcock asked how many cuts the verges will now receive. The Clerk confirmed ESH will do 6 cuts, they used to receive 8 cuts so not a large reduction. The reduction in potential cost to APC is significant.

3. Mr Mark Farrar asked where the trees for the Queen’s Green Canopy are being planted. The Clerk confirmed the 4 locations are 1 on the Tye, 1 on the Recreation ground and 2 on the triangle of grass at the bottom of Kings Ride/Deans Road.

4. Mr Dowling asked about the process of proposing items during the meetings. Cllr Beechey explained that some standing items always allow items to be proposed (such as Minutes), however if the Council does have to make a decision on something, this needs to come under a clear agenda item so all residents can see it on the agenda and attend if appropriate.

5. The Clerk explained that parishioners will see there is no meeting in April 2023 as the period of election purdah commences on the 27th March and lasts until the day of the election, 4th May 2023. The Clerk has been informed that there is a ‘draft Manifesto’ going around the village encouraging people to sign up to stand for the Parish Council under this manifesto. Councillors when they are elected read and sign up to the Code of Conduct. This is the official document, the manifesto does have the points on there just worded incorrectly and the code goes into more detail. If the Code of Conduct is breached in anyway, this can be reported by anyone to the Monitoring Officer at Wealden District Council. A Notice of Election has gone out officially today. The deadline for return of nominations to the Wealden District Councils is 16:00 on 4th April 2023. The Statement of Persons Nominated will be published on the 5th April at 16:00. The election, if required, will be held on the 4th May and the new Council will commence on the 9th May 2023. The first meeting of the new Council will be on Monday 22nd May 2023, which will be the meeting where the Chairman and Vice are appointed and the portfolios are assigned.

**208. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next APC meeting is Monday 22nd May 2023 in the Alfriston War Memorial Hall at 19:15. *Please note there is no meeting in April 2023 due to election purdah.*

Signed: Mrs Victoria Rutt [Clerk and RFO]

**APPENDIX A**

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**APPENDIX B**

**Report from Maria Caulfield MP**

**Alfriston Traffic Management Scheme**

I have received the attached response from East Sussex County Council to the contact I had with them where I highlighted my support for the scheme and highlighted the point, raised to me by constituents, that Winton Street should be included in the 20mph limits in the village. I look forward to hearing about the progress of the scheme when the consultation responses have been reviewed.

**RIS3 on hold impacting A27**

I have contacted the parish council this week with an update on the RIS3 programme. Last week I was informed that the RIS3 programme is on hold for the foreseeable future which means plans to dual the road have been pushed back. I know some will welcome this news, while others will be frustrated. As there will be a delay before any future announcements, I will continue to keep you informed of any updates as they become available. However, please do contact me with any comments or feedback on this issue as they are helpful in my conversations with ministers.

**New Cost of living payments from Spring 2023**

Millions of the lowest-income households across the UK will get up to £1,350 from the Government in 2023/4 to help with the cost of living. This includes a £900 low-income payment, a £150 disability payment and a £300 pensioner payment. More information on these payments such as eligibility and when they will be paid out can be found here: <https://www.mariacaulfield.co.uk/news/maria-caulfield-mp-lewes-welcomes-new-cost-living-payments-spring-2023>.

**Replacing Class 313 Trains**

As you may well know, some services along the coast between Brighton and Lewes, and are operated by Class 313 carriages. They are the oldest trains run by Southern Rail, dating from the 1970s with no toilet facilities or air conditioning. Many of you have told me about the need for better, more modern trains with more facilities on these well used routes and I have been lobbying for improvements for local passengers with GTR. I am therefore pleased to say, with the introduction of the Summer 2023 timetable from Sunday 21 May, Southern Rail are planning to entirely retire the Class 313.  This will mean replacing all  Class 313s on the Brighton to Lewes route, so that customers will have a more modern train, with a second member of staff on board.

**£440,000 in extra funding for South Downs National Park**

I have welcomed the news that £440,000 in extra funding is being invested into South Downs National Park as part of £4.4 million in extra funding from the Conservative Government.

This is to protect and conserve our natural environment and widen access to our scenic beauty spots, supporting tourism and growing the economy. The extra investment will support services for visitors, including education and visitor centres, ranger services, new trails, residential programmes, and provide more opportunities for people to enjoy National Parks.

**Vulnerable Residents in East Sussex to Benefit from Household Support Fund**

I know many families in the Lewes constituency are struggling to make ends meet in the face of rising prices caused by global economic pressures including Putin’s illegal invasion of Ukraine. That is why I am delighted that the Conservative Government has allocated a further £7,793,568  to East Sussex County Council through the Household Support Fund, doubling down on our Conservative commitment to help the most vulnerable families with rising costs. This fund is a lifeline for local residents, and this extension will ensure this vital support is available for families who are struggling for another year.