ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT minutes of a meeting of Alfriston Parish Council (APC), held in the Alfriston War Memorial Hall on Monday 18th September at 19.15.

**Present:**

Cllr D Monteath-Wilson (Chair) Cllr S Rabagliati

Cllr J Watkins (Vice-Chair) Cllr N Parkinson

Cllr A Harris Cllr J Spring

**In attendance:**

Mr Trevor Leggo (CEO East Sussex Association of Local Councils)

Emma Martin – Locum Clerk

There were 22 members of the public present.

**81. Chairman’s Welcome**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting and welcomed the newly elected Member to the Council, Cllr Neil Parkinson. The Chair explained to the meeting that due to the absence of a Clerk many questions asked may not be answered. Discussions had taken been held with the portfolio holders of the Tye and the Recreation Ground. Due to the workload, Cllr Parkinson would now have sole responsibility for the Tye and Cllr Daw for the Recreation Ground and the allotments. The Chair then welcomed Mr Leggo. Mr Leggo was advising Cllr Monteath-Wilson, who is a new Chair, on Council procedures. Questions have been raised regarding the appointment of a new Clerk to the Council with regard to what salary and hours should be offered. This would be discussed during a later item on the agenda.

The Chair then welcomed Emma Martin who had joined the meeting to record the minutes.

Congratulations where then extended to Cllr Spring who had recently married.

**82. Public Questions**

Mr Mark Wadlow, a resident for 33 years, asked if there was any knowledge about a prospective buyer for the Deans Place Hotel. The Chair emphasised at this stage it is only speculation. Several redundant hotels were now being used for Asylum seekers. This property could be better used as a hotel. It was reported that several interested parties were looking to purchase the hotel. Mr Leggo explained that the purchase of the hotel is a free-market situation and provided that the property had no change of use through Planning that there would be no reason for the Council to object. Mr Leggo went on to explain that under the Council’s General Power of Competence, the Council could purchase the hotel. The Council could also register the property as an Asset of Community Value through Wealden District Council. This could be considered at a future Council meeting.

Ms Elizabeth O’Neill had written to the Parish Council requesting use of the Tye for a live activity. Due to time sensitivity Ms O’Neill was asking APC for permission to use the space. There would be no need for road closures etc.

Ms Susan Owen enquired about the proposal regarding The Meadows. This item was due to be discussed under item 94 on the agenda.

Ms Jilly Byford enquired about the traffic lights that at the bottom of North Street that had now been removed. Ms Byford requested a contact to discuss the matter of traffic lights being installed incorrectly. Cllr Rabagliati provided details of the contact at East Sussex County Highways. customerservicesmanager@eastsussexhighways.com or to contact by phone 03456080193.

Mr Jon Boxall asked if the Council was aware of any developments that were planned for the old allotments by John Harmer’s farm. Council had not been officially notified and this would be investigated further when a new Clerk was appointed.

Ms Amanda Sudlow asked who should be cutting the grass in the children’s play area. Cllr Daw is in contact with the contractor. Cllr Daw was not at this evening’s meeting, however, the vice-chair agreed to contact Cllr Daw on her return.

**83. Apologies for absence**

There were apologies from Cllr Daw

**84. Update from Maria Caulfield**

Maria Caulfield MP was not in attendance at the meeting. Mr Leggo gave a brief appraisal to Council members on Ms Caulfield‘s report:

Chancellor agrees new support measures for mortgage holders

Major broadband support for rural villages and businesses

Meeting with the housing secretary

Opening of the Rampion Bridge on the A27

Improvements to local walking and cycling routes

Ms Caulfield’s report is appended to these minutes.

**85. Update from Cllr Stephen Shing – East Sussex County Council (ESCC)**

Cllr Shing reported to Council on the update on the Alfriston traffic proposals. East Sussex County Highways would be taking a vote on the outcome of the Public Referendum to the ESCC full council meeting on the 20 November for the next stage of the proposals where it would be proposed to recommend the next stage of the project.

Cllr Shing then also reported to Council that ESCC had approved the proposed use of £2,000,000 to provide help to households who support disabled family members between 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024. Funding would also be provided to households who have children with special needs.

**86. Update from Cllr Greaves – Wealden District Council (WDC)**

Cllr Greaves reported to Council that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Wealden District Council had met with the Chief Executive Officer of South East Water and had discussed recent failures regarding emergency flooding, network customer resilience, infrastructure upgrades and business planning and governance. South East Water had stated that the two major incidents that had caused this to be raised with them were related and the representative apologised for the sub standard level of service over the last few years and that issues such as the investment programmes and the impact of that and that the capacity of the infrastructure were detailed by South East Water and WDC sought assurance that this would improve.

A resident’s survey was currently underway by WDC to see how residents feel about their local area. A company called Opinion Research Services has been commissioned by WDC to evaluate the Council’s performance. The survey would be conducted by telephone interview. The survey will take place between the 6 September and the 25 October.

The Wealden District Council Waste Collection team fleet is now running on hydrogenated vegetable oil instead of diesel that will save CO2 emissions by 90 %.

Last week a meeting had taken place with 3 Parish Cllrs (Long Man Parish and Cuckmere Valley) and two other WDC Cllrs and 2 Officers. This was to discuss problems regarding the Cuckmere River and the visited the Wye bridge and observed the problems there. Certain works were imminent and other works were due in the New Year. There was a major issue to property owners and to farmers who may have problems accessing homes when flooding occurs in certain areas where there are retailers and hotels and pubs etc. There was considerable frustration regarding the Environmental Agencies delays for required permits for works to be carried out. Cllr Greaves explained that the main trigger point was the amount of flooding that occurs at Milton Street, and this should encourage the Environment Agency to provide works urgently or this could cause seriously flooding in all areas around. Cllr Greaves stressed that if Milton Street should be flooded, he would need to be made aware so that he could make WDC aware to notify the Environment Agency.

Parish residents need to check that they may have a right to vote. This can be enabled online or with the Electoral Team at WDC. It was also reported that 2 fly tipping cases had been reported successfully.

There was then a conversation on scam calls, the Chair advised that it was up to individuals to deal with this.

Cllr Rabagliati questioned Cllr Greaves about illegal parking around the village. There is currently no current enforcement in place. Cllr Rabagliati asked Cllr Greaves to request that Parking should be decriminalised by Wealden District Council. Mr Leggo advised that there is no current enforcement in place for Alfriston. Cllr Greaves agreed to take this issue forward.

**87. Declarations on Interest:**

Cllr Neil Parkinson rents a space in the local car park and his wife rents half an allotment plot. Locally, he is the secretary of the local ramblers, footpath warden for East Dean and Friston, and volunteers for the Brighton Music Festival. He is a member of various national charities.

**88 Minutes:**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17 July 2023 were proposed, seconded and agreed as a true record.

**89 Finance**

89.1 Finance report: The Finance was report was received by the Council, it was duly proposed, seconded and agreed.

89.2 Banking Mandate: Mr Leggo advised Council that Banking Mandate forms would need to be competed and returned to the bank to agree new signatories. Cllrs and the Clerk who are no longer associated with the Council were still valid signatories to the Council’s bank account.

89.3 Notice of Conclusion of Audit: It was noted by Council that the Conclusion of Audit had been completed.

**90 To ratify decision to approve the Co-Option Policy:** This was approved by Council.

**91 Alfriston Forum:** The Chair had circulated the minutes of the Forum to all Cllrs. The Chair informed the meeting that all Council minutes were published online and, on the parish notice board. Cllr Parkinson, who had attended the Parish Meeting reported that there was a desire for electors to meet Cllrs on a more informal basis perhaps in ‘coffeehouse’ style meetings that discussed a different portfolio at each session. Mr Leggo suggested the idea of a Cllr surgery on a Saturday morning, however, initially supported by parishoners, support for these informal meetings can often decline. Cllr Spring proposed that as part of the Strategic Plan, workshops could be arranged for local residents, that would not be Council led, so ideas for priorities for the village could be discussed.

**91.1** The Chair asked Cllr Parkinson to draw up a proposal for the informal meetings for consideration by Councillors at the next meeting, and for Cllr Spring and Cllr Parkinson to liase on the idea of the Strategy Workshop.

**92. Clerk Recruitment:** Mr Leggo gave an oral report to Council regarding the appointment of a new Clerk. Mr Leggo explained that the agenda tonight was extensive and the community clearly had high expectations. Mr Leggo explained that experienced clerks were not readily available. Council would need to offer an attractive recruitment and retention package to recruit a new clerk. It was explained to Council that a Town or Parish clerk should be working towards the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA) qualification to enable Council to have General Power of Competence (GPC) which enables Council to act in the interest of their communities and in their own financial interests to generate efficiencies and secure value for money outcomes. GPC for APC was still in place until April 2024. Therefore, a qualified clerk would need to be recruited in order for APC not to lose GPC.

92.1 Councillors discussed the hours and appropriate rate to be advertised for a new Clerk. Many were in favour of retaining current hours and Cllr Parkinson referred to his concern that the Council has a “duty of care” to the new Clerk – if hours are to be reduced then we should identify how the workload could be lessened. Cllr Spring was in favour of reduced hours and suggested that, for example, an automated phone system could route calls away from the Clerk that were not relevant.

Cllr Parkinson also asked whether the proposals for a locum clerk and the new clerk could be afforded within this year’s budget.

It was resolved that an advertisement be placed for a qualified clerk or an applicant who would like the opportunity to obtain the CILCA qualification be approved with £22 per hour for an unqualified clerk and £26 per hour when qualification was completed. The post would be advertised as 20 – 25 hours per week.

92.2 Hours and rates of salary subject to 92.1 (CILCA qualification) would be discussed with a prospective candidate for the post of clerk.

**93. Department for Levelling up and Housing Communities (DLUHC) consultation on the Local Plan and for Council to agree which Cllr would respond to the consultation:** Mr Leggo informed council that SALC has a planning consultant (Mr Steve Tilbury) who has prepared guidance for parish council’s so a model response could be used that could be made available to the Cllr that Council select to make the response.

93.1 It was resolved by Council that Cllr Spring will respond to the DLUHC consultation on the Local Plan.

**94. Report on Highways and Twittens:** Council received and oral report from Cllr Rabagliati who reported that he had received communication from Mr A Keer from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) regarding the traffic calming plan for Wealden would be presented to lead Member for Transport and Environment at the next meeting ESCC meeting on 20th November, which Cllr Rabagliati hoped to attend. The meeting would recommend the next steps for the project. Cllr Rabagliati recommended that a meeting of Councils Traffic Calming Committee be arranged as soon after the County Council’s meeting for Council to hear the outcome. Cllr Rabagliati reported that the pothole opposite Chestnuts had now been repaired to a better level of quality. However, there still remained problems with bollards in the High Street. A response was awaited from ESCC. An advice notice had also been produced advising residents who had experienced near misses of traffic mounting pavements as to who to contact in the event of this. Recommendations had also been received in connection with Waterloo Square road name signs with modifications which would need planning consent. Regarding the concern over large vehicles driving through the village due to Sat Navigation. Cllr Rabagliati had contacted Maria Caulfield MP but was awaiting a response. A request had been made to residents that if they were expecting a delivery, could they request smaller vehicles to deliver such deliveries. Alternatively, Council could investigate a locker store in one of the village car parks to enable courier drivers to leave parcels and for residents to leave unwanted items to be collected from. Cllr Rabagliati was asked to progress this idea.

A resident had also quested support from the Council to support a wild flower verge along the high path heading out from the village starting at Dean car park, heading north. The correspondence would be forwarded to all Cllrs, however any decision would be made by East Sussex County Council’s Highways.

Plans for road closures to enable the Christmas Tree lighting in the village were due to enter the formal consultation

**95. Reports of Allotments:** No report .

**96. Report on Public Transport:** Cllr Harris gave an update. There was now a new shuttle bus service introduced on 15th September called the Sussex Art Shuttle that would run between various art galleries between Eastbourne and Lewes and would prove beneficial for any resident who wished to travel to and from these destinations. The service would be scheduled to run on weekends and Fridays. Details could be found on Google “Sussex Art Shuttle”.

It was also reported that Compass Travel had recently changed their bus timetable but had not revised this change at bus stops. Cllr Harris had discussed this with the Managing Director of Compass had received a reply who had offered apologies. ESCC impose changes to timetables.

**97. Report on Rights of Way ad Countryside:**

The sign at Kings Drive directing to the South Downs Way had now been repaired.

Cllr Harris also reported that the ESCC Public Rights of Way Map was very informative for ramblers etc. and that all features were referenced on the map. However, you do need to register to have access to the map.

Cllr Harris also reiterated about the Pevensey Levels Management Board meeting. The ultimate aim for the Environment Agency should be to surrender direct responsibility for that part of the river and responsibility to passed to the River Management Board who represent locally.

**98. Strategic Planning:** Council received an oral report from Cllr Spring. It was proposed that the Strategic Plan would commence in October and Cllr Spring reiterated that he would be organising workshops for local residents to attend.

**99. Tye and Recreation Ground:** Council received an oral report from the Chair that was received in the absence of Cllr Daw on matters relating the Tye and Recreation ground. Members were apprised regarding matters relating to this. A report was read out by the Chair and matters on issues would be discussed at a future meeting. The Chair asked the Clerk to contact Dan Larkin, Tree Warden to look at matters raised in the report.

**100. Report from Planning Committee:** Cllr Watkins gave an oral report.

100.1 **SDNP/23/03577/HOUS – Byeways, The Broadway, Alfriston, BN26 5XH**

The committee had raised no Objections to this application, however, would like to suggest consideration be considered in regard to the Dark Skies Policy.

100.2 **Applications approved by South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA)**

**SDNP/23/02387/LIS** 3 Waterloo Square, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5UD

**SDNP/23/02557/HOUS and LIS** 9 North Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5UG

**SDNP/23/02643/LIS** 7 West Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5UX

**SDNP/23/02324/HOUS** Pailin House, 6 Kings Ride, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5XP

100.3 Enforcement updates – Cllr Watkins would be giving an update on this at the next meeting of Council.

**101. Reports from Outside Bodies**

101.1 Heartstart – A defibrillator had recently been donated to the Cricket club together with a box so this will be considered a public defibrillator.

101.2 Alfriston Emergency Group – No report

101.3 Flood Forum – no report

101.4 Neighbourhood Watch – no report

101.5 Twinning Committee – no report

101.6 St Andrew’s Church - In the absence of Cllr Daw, Cllr Watkins reported that the Church had held some wonderful weddings this year and the Harvest Festival was on 9th October. All food would be donated to local foodbanks. A VIVACE concert was being held on 14th October and it was reported that the Bank Holiday Animal service as well as the dog show were both successful.

101.7 Clergy House – no report

101.8 Cuckmere Buses – no report, however Council had received an update from Cllr Harris earlier in the meeting

101.9 Alfriston War Memorial Hall – no report

101.10 Speedwatch - It was reported by Cllr Rabagliati that there were 10 new members on the Speedwatch team. New members were also welcomed on the team. Online training was available For any new prospective members.

Mr Leggo then apprised Council about the ‘National Risk Register’ and would send details on to the Council.

**102. Correspondence to The Clerk**

1. Best named village in the UK – Alfriston: Correspondence had been received from the Eastbourne Herald/Sussex Express who had seen information from a travel writer from the Telegraph newspaper who has named Alfriston as the best village in the Country and would like a comment from the Parish Council.

2. It was resolved the Alfriston Hub would contact the Eastbourne Herald/Sussex Express to make comment.

3. The Chair informed Council that following the recent by-election there was only one nomination. This however had still incurred costs to the Council despite not needing to employ staff and the use of the Memorial Hall.

4. Christmas Tree lighting event 2nd December 2023– a request had been made to Council by a resident to have a pre-event on the Tye prior to the Christmas Tree lighting. The event was to hold a live interactive nativity on the Tye between 3 and 4pm with the event finishing in St Andrews Church. The Church has approved this event and no road closures would be needed. Any props used would be removed straight after the event.

5. It was resolved that Council approve the live interactive nativity pre-event on the Tye prior to the Christmas tree lighting event on 22nd December 2023.

6. A request had been received from the Events and Fund-Raising administrator for the RBLI for an event being held in Eridge. The request was for Council to download and display posters for the Parish Council notice boards. This request was not agreed by Council.

**102. Public Questions**

There was a discussion regarding how actions are minuted.

One parishioner stated that she valued having a contactable clerk and did not want a technological solution that made contacting the clerk more difficult.

**103. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is being held on Monday 16th October 2023 in the AWMH at 19:15.

Signed: Cllr Diana Monteath-Wilson [Chair]