ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of a meeting of Alfriston Parish Council (APC), held in the Alfriston War Memorial Hall on Monday 22nd January 2024 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

 Cllr S Daw

**In attendance:**

Mrs Suzanna Dry – Parish Clerk

There were 18 members of the public present.

**127. Chairman’s Welcome**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2024 and welcomed the new Clerk, Suzanna Dry. Cllr Monteath-Wilson reminded everyone that the meetings are recorded and this is used only to aid minute taking. The Clerk is not a qualified Clerk but will be studying towards this, so shouldn’t affect our General Power of Competence. Cllr Monteath-Wilson asked the Clerk to introduce herself to the meeting. The Clerk thanked everyone for their applause, and advised she currently holds the ‘Introduction to Local Council Administration’ certificate and the ‘Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration’ certificate. She has already enrolled to start CILCA – the Certificate in Local Government Administration, on 1st February. Once this is obtained it will make her a qualified Clerk. In the meantime, the Clerk is undertaking New Clerk Training with the Society of Local Council Clerks on 12th February and has applied to become a member of the SLCC.

**128**. **Public Questions**

Susan Owen pointed out she has sent an e-mail to the Council regarding flooding issues. The Chair advised all Cllrs have seen the e-mail and the questions asked will be addressed in item 142, with Cllr Harris’ report.

**129. Apologies for absence**

None received.

**130. Update from Maria Caulfield**

In the absence of Maria Caulfield the Clerk read out a summary of her report. (**Appendix A.)**

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

Cllr Shing read his report to the meeting, full details of which will be appended to the minutes. (Ap**pendix B).**

Cllr Rabagliati informed the meeting that the Parish Council have bought four “Alfriston Businesses Open as Usual” signs to use when the road is closed. And hopes that the signs to be provided by the Emergency Traffic Management Plan will still be provided, in addition to the ones provided by the Parish Council.

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

Cllr Greaves read his report to the meeting, full details of which will be appended to the minutes. (**Appendix C).**

**133. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Watkins declared an interest as she is a member of AEG. Cllr Daw declared an interest as she is a Churchwarden. Cllr Parkinson and Cllr Rabagliati declared an interest as they are both bay holders in the Dene car park.

**134. Minutes**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson proposed and Cllr Daw seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the APC meeting held on 20th November 2023, and the amended minutes of the APC meeting held on 18th September 2023 were a true and accurate record. **RESOLVED** that the Chair duly sign the minutes as an accurate record.

**135**. **Chair to Comment on Outcome of Complaint to Monitoring Officer.**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson informed the meeting that the investigation of a complaint made by the previous Clerk, had now been concluded and as it was found there was no breach of conduct, no further action would be taken. The Monitoring Officer advised this was a confidential matter and could not be discussed further.

**136. Finance**

136.1 To approve the Statement of Finances: January 2024

Cllr. Harris proposed that the Statement of Finances for January 2024 be approved. Seconded by Cllr Watkins. **RESOLVED** that Cllr Watkins sign the invoices for payment. (Appendix D).

136.2 To confirm sight and approval of Mid Year Report 2023

Cllr. Parkinson noted that spending is in line overall, however one budget line is out by eight times the budget figure. This is due to water leaks at the allotments, as mentioned in the January 2023 minutes. The problem was sorted but we need to monitor this going forwards. Cllr Daw confirmed she would refer to this under item number 140. Cllr Watkins proposed that the Mid Year Report be approved. Seconded by Cllr Parkinson. **RESOLVED** that the Mid Year Report be approved. (Appendix E).

136.3 To confirm sight and approval of Quarter 3 Report 2023/24

Cllr Watkins proposed and Cllr Parkinson seconded that the Quarter 3 Report 2023/4 had been received by all Councillors and approved.  **RESOLVED** that the Quarter 3 Report 2023/4 be approved. (Appendix F).

136.4 To confirm sight and approval of the Interim Internal Audit Report 2023

Cllr Daw proposed and Cllr Parkinson seconded that the Interim Internal Audit Report 2023 had been received by all Councillors and approved. **RESOLVED** that the Interim Internal Audit Report 2023 be approved. (Appendix G).

It was notedthere was one recommendation from the report, which would be discussed under item number 138.

136.5 To approve the Budget for 2024/5

Clerk informed the meeting that the proposed budget was agreed by the Finance Committee on 15th January 2024. All Cllrs then received the proposed budget along with a report (Appendix H). Cllr Harris proposed and Cllr Watkins seconded the budget for approval. **RESOLVED** that the Council Budget for 2024/5 be approved.

136.6 To approve the Precept for 2024/5

Clerk advised that the precept demand required for 2024/5 is £56,736.00. This produces a D Band Council Tax for Alfriston Parish Council of £128.04. The figure for 2023/4 was £126.09, there will therefore be an increase of £1.95. This represents an increase of 2.6% and is well below the rate of inflation. The Finance Committee agreed the precept at the meeting on 15th January and the Clerk recommends that APC adopt it at the meeting tonight. Cllr Harris proposed and Cllr Watkins seconded the precept for 2024/5 at £56,736.00. **RESOLVED** that the precept for 2024/5 be approved. Clerk to send precept paperwork to Wealden. Action 1.

136.7 To approve changes to the Banking Mandate

Cllr Rabagliati proposed and Cllr Daw seconded that the previous Clerk Victoria Rutt and ex councillors Nick Beechey and Val Cooper be removed from the banking mandate. Also that the new Clerk, Suzanna Dry and Councillor Monteath-Wilson be added to the banking mandate. **RESOLVED** that the bank mandate be amended. Action 2.

**137. To Ratify the APC’s response regarding Wealden’s Car Park Proposals.**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported that the APC were not able to object to the proposals but could make a comment. As the deadline was 15th January and this did not give time for it to be discussed at a council meeting, the APC sent their response. This was read out at the meeting and is attached as (Appendix I). It was **AGREED** to ratify the response. Clerk reported information on the consultation document had been posted on the APC website and sent out to the mailing list, asking residents and businesses to send in their comments to Wealden. The Neighbourhood Watch and Alfriston Hub were also asked to put the details on their mailing list, which they kindly agreed to. Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported that a lot of residents had responded.

**138. Update on Councillor’s Reports being sent out with the Agenda.**

Clerk reported there was one recommendation made in the Interim Internal Audit Report, which reads: ‘I remind council it is required to also post any supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the information Commissioner’s Office’. Cllr Monteath Wilson felt we have to take that advice. Cllr Parkinson agreed as clearly stated in the audit. Cllr Spring felt that this should be done so the public can read it and digest it prior to meetings. Cllr Parkinson noted that this would include finance reports and any other supporting documents, which the Clerk confirmed. Cllr Monteath-Wilson advised that if amendments were made to documents at the meeting then an amended version would go out with the minutes. All Cllrs were in agreement and it was **RESOLVED** that all supporting documentation would be sent out with the agenda for future meetings. Action 3.

**139. Report on Highways & Twittens – Cllr Rabagliati**

Cllr Rabagliatti made his report to the meeting, as follows:

**Traffic Plan.**As I reported at the November meeting, The ESCC Lead Member meeting in November approved the Alfriston High Street Traffic plan, which includes 20 mph restrictions for the whole village and village buildouts and gateways.  The plan is now progressing to detailed planning by the Highways contractors, Balfour Beatty.  We have requested more information regarding their timescales but have not received a response.  APC is seeking to extend the scheme, but there has been no progress on this since the last APC meeting.

**High street closure for work on Wednesday 24th.** We have been advised by East Sussex Highways of a closure of the High Street on Wednesday for ‘targeted patch repairs’.

**Emergency Traffic Plan.** At the last APC meeting I reported that I had been contacted by Maria Caulfield in response to my request to ESCC for an emergency traffic management plan.  Despite chasing her office, I have not heard any more from her.  We have received a copy of the Emergency Plan for flooding in the village from East Sussex Highways and I note from Maria Caulfield’s update today the consultation on the East Sussex Local Transport Plan, but these does not allow for issues on the A26 or at Newhaven as originally requested.  I am chasing for this information, and I will review the East Sussex Plan in the next few days.

**Business Open Signage.** To augment the signage APC bought 4 signs in December which read ‘Alfriston businesses open as usual’ to be used when flooding impacts access to the village.  A draft letter to the Emergency Group requesting that they manage these signs has been circulated to councillors for approval, and I would propose that this now be sent. Council requested that the Clerk action this. Action 4.

**Gas Light by Market Cross.** As reported at the last meeting there was a leak in the gas supply and the lamp is no longer connected to the gas main. SGN have been unable to source a new governor suitable for re-enabling the supply, and have advised that we can either pursue the original manufacturers of the lamp for advice, or permanently disconnect the gas supply and seek other ways to light the lamp.  Now that we have a clerk again, I will liaise with Suzanna so that she can follow up on this. The Council requested that Cllr Rabagliati and the Clerk follow up options to reconnect the gas light by Market Cross. Action 5

**Locker store at Dene car park.** No update, the matter is being considered by the Wealden Car Park team.

**Deans Road manhole covers.** Last year ESH resurfaced the pavements in Deans Road.  Unfortunately, the contractors covered over 2 BT manhole covers and the work to reinstate these has not been carried out to a satisfactory standard.  Thanks to the diligence of a nearby resident, we have received a confirmation from ESH that their operations team is chasing BT to make good this work.

**Salt replenishment.** I have been advised that the salt stores have been replenished recently by Wealden.

**Blocked drains at Willows Car Park.** The culvert was cleared shortly before Christmas, after the AEG kindly pumped away the excess water.  I understand that this drain is now blocked again. I will request that this be cleared again.

**SPEEDWATCH.** Owing to the bad weather some sessions were cancelled, but we have recently started up again and our volunteers are helping to educate drivers and reduce the speed of vehicles in the village.  Having been managing the administration of Speedwatch since Vicki left in August, I would be interested to hear from anyone who wants to join the team, and also if anyone would be interested in helping to organise the scheduling of our sessions.

**140. Report on Allotments and Recreation Ground - Cllr Daw**

Allotments - Cllr Daw reported that she and the Clerk met at the allotments on Friday 19th January 2024 and will look into getting the plots numbered for ease of reference. Cllr Daw to approach the Band of Brothers voluntary organisation to dig up and clean up allotments that have been left untouched and make ready to be leased out again. Water – historically this has been a huge drain on finances when water is turned on and leaks have occurred. Once water is turned back on in March, Cllr Daw to check water meter each day for first week and then weekly. Council instructed the Clerk to check old water readings to see what the readings should be – Action 6. Allotment renewals due to go out end of January, Cllr Daw will up date on this at next meeting.

Playground – Cllr Daw read out the update provided by Anna Franklin, the Chair of Friends of Alfriston Playground. (Appendix J). The repairs to playground equipment provided by Wicksteed and under warranty, have been logged with them and followed up by the Clerk. Cllr Daw to contact Anna Franklin to discuss issue with dogs getting into playground through gap in the fencing. Laminated signs – some of the original plastic signs were broken and presented a danger, these have been replaced with laminated signs which can be replaced quickly and easily when damaged. Fence - Ivy and fencing coming away from the wall by the residential property adjoining the playground, Clerk to find out who is responsible for this part of the fencing in order to get repairs underway. Action 7. Other fencing between the playground and recreation ground, this has been repaired several times but is being pulled down by children. Cllr Monteath-Wilson suggested a letter is sent out to Cuckmere Times and to the school asking parents to ensure children respect the fence. Cllr Daw and Clerk to draft a letter for councillors to agree. Action 8. A request has been received for an Under 11 Football Club to train weekly on the recreation ground. Cllr Daw liasing with the football club and cricket Club and will report back at the next meeting.

**141. Report on Public Transport – Cllr Harris**

Cllr Harris made his report to the meeting as below:

Flexibus

Journeys can be made:

* To and from within a zone
* To and from key destinations outside a zone (other transport links,towns,hospitals and so on).

Flexibus operates exclusively for places not served by a regular service. You can’t book a FlexiBus journey to travel along an existing public transport route. If a bus or train already goes from A to B you cannot book a FlexiBus – the app or staff will advise you of the services you can use instead.

Operating Times

Services run 7am to 7pm, Moday to Saturday (not Sundays or Bank Holidays).

To book call: 01273 078203 (6.30am to 7.30pm, Monday to Saturday)

Online: via the Ride Pingo app.

Car Charging points in Willows Car Park. Installed in July by ‘Connected Kerb’- but not connected yet. They will let me know. They will stand being flooded.

Eastbourne Arts Bus. Operated by Cuckmere Buses, using volunteers. It was a great success last year when it was introduced, and Cuckmere Buess hope and plan to run it again this year. They are in need of volunteer drivers though, who they would train. It only requires category D1 on your licence, which many people will have almost by default.

**142. Report on Rights of Way and Countryside – Cllr Harris.**

Cllr Harris made his report to the meeting which addressed the questions raised in Susan Owens e-mail to Councillors.

1. The meeting with Maria Caulfield, EA and various others.

Maria Caulfield announced publicly on 16th November 2023 that she would be hosting a meeting with the EA, the Parish Council, local businesses and other interested parties. I have emailed her several times since, and on the 15th January, got the following reply:-

Thanks Adrian,

We have been dealing with the acute issues of the flooding with the Environment Agency who have now issued the permits to dredge the river in Alfriston. We are organising the follow up meeting to this shortly and will send out invites but the priority was to get the dredging permits so work can start this spring. With all good wishes. Maria.

The bit about dredging permits is something of a red herring, as on the 13th November and 1th November Maria Caulfield announced that the EA permits had in fact already been granted. I will keep pushing for this meeting.

1. The APC’s current approach to flooding

The APC does not have an individual policy for dealing with flooding issues. I firmly believe that coordinated pressure by all the affected parties has to be the most effective approach, and that the meeting promised by Maria Caulfield will provide the strongest contact with the EA.

1. Survey of local farmers and businesses

The APC could set this up by circulating a questionnaire but there is an element of ‘be careful what you wish for’. The current adopted report and policy by the Environment Agency relating to the Lower Cuckmere contains the following:- Number of properties at risk: currently 5. Future (2100) 5.

The issues in this sub-area

There are a small number of businesses and homes at risk from the 1% annual probability fluvial flood event. Flooding in Alfriston and Westdean has relatively low impact but poor drainage means flood waters linger for up to three weeks. Traffic and emergency access may be severely disrupted if the A259 or North Street and the High Street through Alfriston became flooded.

Key Messages

Although flooding is an issue in this part of the catchment, there is no direct threat to human life and we do not expect this to increase significantly in the future. There are a number of existing flood risk management assets protecting build-up areas, which will continue to be maintained. Actions in other areas of the catchment such as reducing run-off in the upper catchment will help to reduce the impact of future changes to the flooding regime of the Cuckmere.

I think this can be read as a coded message that the EA think their money is better spent elsewhere.

4, 5 and 6.

In her message of 16th November, Maria Caulfield also stated ‘ I am also chasing to allow the sluice gates to once again be repaired as the recent repair has failed again and so the water is not flowing property.

I reported to the September meeting (as did Cllr Greaves) on a site meeting I had attended earlier in the month with various interested parties, local Parish Councils and representatives of the Pevensey and Cuckmere Water Levels Management Board – who are the body who carry out the work, but who can only act once the EA have issued the necessary licences.

The Water Levels Management Board are pressing the EA, not only on the issue of licences and dredging generally, but also to have the Cuckmere ‘de-mained’, which would have the effect of handling direct control of the river to WLMB. The officers from the WLMB did add a cautionary note, however – along with direct control, the EA would also have to hand over sufficient funds – which they warned could take longer than the grant of licences.

In summary, I think the meeting proposed by Maria Caulfield is absolutely crucial. At the September site meeting, a local farmer said he had been in a constant battle with the EA for about 20 yrs and admitted that he had achieved very little. We need the clout of an MP to really put pressure on the EA and to commit to works, which may well mean a change to their adopted policy for the area, mentioned above.

7. APC coffee house meeting

Clearly a good idea, but at the moment I would have little to add to what has been said here. I would suggest that once the date of Maria Caulfield’s meeting has been fixed, details should be circulated to allow residents and businesses to express their interest in attending, and that the coffee house meeting should be possible after that.

Cllr Harris then summarised by saying the meeting with Maria Caulfield MP is absolutely crucial and he will continue to push for a date, as it is felt an MP can put pressure on the Environment Agency. Once the date for this is fixed details to be circulated to residents and businesses to express their interest in attending, and that the coffeehouse meeting should be held as soon as possible after that.

**143. Report on Strategic Planning – Cllr Spring**

The chair invited Cllr Spring to present his report. Cllr Spring was hoping to bring an update on strategic planning and apologised for not being very active over the last year and would like to explain why. Cllr Spring thanked Cllr Monteath-Wilson for bringing up the outcome of the complaint reported to the Monitoring Officer. Cllr Spring wished to refer to minute 69 from the July meeting, but was reminded by the Chair that the Monitoring Officer has advised this matter cannot be discussed. Cllr Monteath-Wilson re-confirmed that she is acting on the advice given by the Monitoring Officer. Cllr Spring was asked again if he had anything further for the meeting on strategic planning, which he did not.

**144. Report on Tye – Cllr Parkinson**

Damaged Tree on the Glebe – Cllr Parkinson reported this had now been rectified by Daniel Larkin Tree Surgery.

Damaged drain on the Glebe – Cllr Parkinson advised this had now been reported to Southern Water who are responsible for the drain.

Dog Bin Out of Order - Clerk had chased Wealden Council and Cllr Monteath-Wilson advised the bin was now back in use.

Tye Rd - the first coffeehouse conversation was held on Saturday 13th January on the Tye Rd and was a success with 25 people attending. Cllr Parkinson thanked all who came along and those that made the coffee and helped. A Tye Team is being set up and will carry out garden tasks, pothole repairs and looking at setting up a working group. Cllr Parkinson will draft a specification for repair work to the Tye road.

Yellow Lines – Cllr Parkinson has been given an estimated figure of £110.00 + Vat for supplying the Primrose Paint required for this. Cllrs **AGREED** this cost.

Signage - new ‘no parking’ signs for the bollards. Quotes for 3 different types of sign have been received, Cllr Parkinson proposed APC go with 8 Dibond signs at a cost of £90.00 plus Vat. Cllrs **AGREED** this cost. Both costs are within the Tye budget.

Coffeehouse Conversations - Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported there had been lots of positive feedback, the standard of presentation was very good and thanked Cllr Parkinson for his efforts. It was **AGREED** there would be six coffeehouse conversations per year, with the next one being held in March on Allotments. As there is no budget for this, it was **AGREED** a donation box be put out with proceeds going towards the cost of venue hire.

**145. Report from Planning Committee**

**105.1 Applications considered by APC Planning Committee since last meeting.**

**SDNP/23/05421/FUL&LIS** Saddlers House, High Street, Alfriston, BN26 5SZ – **No objections**

**SDNP/23/05339/LIS** Tile Barn Cottage, Tile Bar, Whiteway, Alfriston, BN26 5TT - **No objections**

**SDNP/24/00084/TPO** Smugglers Close, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5TG – **No objections**

**SDNP/24/00143/TCA** Mereford Grange, River Lane, Alfriston, East Sussex BN26 5SX **– No objections**

**SDNP/24/00154/PNTEL** - Rathfinny Lodge, Transmitter Mast, Whiteway, Alfriston, E. Sussex – **Object** for aesthetic reasons – original approval was for height upto 12m. Also query if it is in fact a permitted development right.

**145.2 Applications notified or awaiting decision on from SDNPA**

**APPROVED**:

 **SDNP/23/03964/HOUS** Candle Cottage, High Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5SZ

 **SDNP/23/04057/HOUS** France Hill, South Downs Way, Kings Ride, Alfriston, East Sussex

**IN PROGRESS**:

**SDNP/23/03986/FUL** Kings Ride Farm, Kings Ride, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5US

**SDNP/23/04848/HOU** Martlets, The Broadway, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5XH

**145.3 Enforcement updates – none received.**

**146. Reports from Outside bodies**

* 1. **Heartstart**

Cllr Watkins reported that the defibrillator at the school has now been changed and is suitable for children. The Cricket Club defib is now on the wall and Cllr Watkins will get the code for it. Heartstart are holding a meeting in April to familiarise people with defibrillator’s which is open to all.

* 1. **Alfriston Emergency Group**

Steve Woodgate reported that 8-10 cars had been pulled from the floods after ignoring signs. The new gritter is in operation, to do roadways. AEG have concerns re the electrical charging points in Willows car park and asked for reassurance from the company installing them that they will be safe when under water. Cllr Harris will follow this up. Willow drain - AEG to send photos of damaged flaps for APC to lobby Wealden to get them repaired. Biggest issue AEG have is cars driving through the road closed signs. Body camera’s will be used by AEG to record any abuse from members of the public.

* 1. **Flood Forum**

John Hurwood reported that this is a national organisation, set up to provide a forum for all organisations to communicate together. Locally the Environment Agency does attend and have paid for the pump in the Willows car park which is very effective. Next meeting is in April. Environment Agency is now a former shadow of itself due to cuts. Cllr Harris and John Hurwood liaising on flooding issues.

* 1. **Neighbourhood Watch**

No report.

* 1. **Twinning Committee**

Clerk summarised the report received from Wendy Little (Appendix K).

**146.6. St Andrews Church**

Cllr Daw reported the Christmas events were wonderful and very well attended. Several musical events are planned. Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported that the advert for a musical director has now gone out and will update at the next meeting.

* 1. **Clergy House**

Clerk summarised the report received from Holly Jones (Appendix L ).

* 1. **Cuckmere Buses**

Clerk read the report received from Richard Price – The Sussex Art Shuttle service 39, this service will resume at Easter subject to funding. It has been a popular and successful new venture. Lift share \ car share – The Ministry of Transport and some of the County Councils including E. Sussex are promoting this at https:/liftshare.com/uk/community/eastsussexcarshare. At the last meeting of Climate Change Conversations there was full support to join the lift share app: https:/liftshare.com/uk/frequently-asked-questions and to promote the idea through Facebook and Whats App groups.

* 1. **Alfriston War Memorial Hall**

Adrian Butcher reported the Pantomime is being held on Friday 26th & Saturday 27th January by Alfriston Players. Money from the raffle will be donated to the hall. Call out for prizes – please drop in to Adrian Butcher or Cllr Daw. Friday 23rd February is Quiz and Curry night, there is a new quiz master, posters are up and tickets on sale.

**146.10 Speedwatch**

Cllr Rabagliatti asked for volunteers to join the team or help organise the sessions.

**146.11 Events**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson reported that Gayle Hudson had agreed to come to meetings and report on forthcoming events as and when required.

1. **Correspondence**

The Clerk reported that Royal Mail had been contacted to get an update on the current situation with the post box in the Village Store. Since the works scheduled for November last year had been postponed due to the asbestos licence not being received in time, Royal Mail have advised the work is being re-scheduled but cannot give a date yet. Clerk will continue to chase. Action 9.

80th Anniversary of D Day - Cllr Daw reported she has spoken to Chris Goodchild and they would like to ask permission to have an afternoon tea on 6th June for everyone aged 80 upwards from all villages around. The W.I. are happy to make cakes and if the event starts at 2.00pm older children from the school could help wait on tables. There will be no cost to APC, only cost will be hall hire and a raffle will be held to help cover this. Council **AGREED.**

Clerk had received a request from Neil Kirby of UK Ultra for a running event on 26th May 2024 to pass through the village and have an aid station at The Old Chapel Centre. Marshall’s will be on duty to direct the runners and it is expected they will be very spread out by the time they reach Alfriston. Council **AGREED.** Clerk to advise Neil Kirby. Action 10.

1. **Public Questions**

The meeting was adjourned at 20:45 by the Chair before Public Questions commenced.

1. **Date of next meeting.**

Monday 19th February 2024 in the AWMH at 19:15.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 21:29.

**Appendices, as referred to in the minutes, attached below.**

**ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**ATTACHMENTS TO THE DRAFT MINUTES HELD ON MONDAY 22ND JAN 2024**

***APPENDIX A - Maria Caulfield’s Report***

Update for Alfriston Parish Council Jan 2024

Please accept my apologies that I am unable to join you at your upcoming meeting. I do however have the following updates for the parish.

Launch of East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) I am pleased to share exciting news regarding the commencement of the consultation phase for the draft East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), which began this week. I invite you to contribute your views to this important statutory document that outlines the transport policy and strategy framework for the area.

The LTP4 Strategy, Implementation Plan, and supporting documents are available on the County Council’s consultation hub [http:eastsussex.gov.uk/DraftLTP4](http://eastsussex.gov.uk/DraftLTP4) from November 27, 2023, to February 25, 2024. I encourage you to review these documents and share your views.

Please take the time to share your views on the LTP4 Strategy and its implementation plan. Your input will help shape the future of transportation in our area.

For any questions or to arrange a meeting with officers, please contact the Council via email at LocalTransportPlan@eastsussex.gov.uk or call the ESCC Switchboard on 0345 608 0190.

‘Excellent’ Rating on Local Bathing Waters I am delighted at the recent announcement from the Environment Agency, confirming the Excellent quality rating for the bathing waters in the Lewes Constituency, specifically Birling Gap and Seaford. The Environment Agency assesses over 400 bathing waters across the country annually, categorising them as Excellent, Good, Sufficient, or Poor based on water quality. This year's results, reflecting a 96% compliance with minimum standards, with almost 90% achieving the highest ratings of Excellent or Good, underscore the continuous efforts needed to enhance bathing water quality. Government initiatives, such as the 'Plan for Water,' which involves a substantial investment of approximately £1.6 billion addresses issues like sewage discharges, nutrient pollution reduction, and water supply augmentation. I acknowledge the progress made since the 1990s, highlighting that increased regulation and sustained investments have significantly improved coastal bathing waters across England.

New Planning Policy Update

I approve of the recently released updated National Planning Policy Framework by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the governments planning policies for England and how these should be applied by local planning authorities.

The revised framework updates a number of planning policies, the most important to the local area include changes to the housing targets and local plans.

Local planning authorities use a system called the Standard Method to calculate housing need in the area. There has been concern that this produces a number that is too high for areas such as Lewes and Wealden. The government have responded to this concern by making clear in the framework that the number produced by the Standard Method is a starting point and is advisory, meaning that mandatory housing targets have been abolished.

The government also want to ensure that local authorities have up-to-date local plans and will punish authorities who drag their feet and don’t produce them on time.

Lewes District Council has not had an up-to-date local plan since 2021, and this has caused a raft of speculative development in the area, some of which have been approved which may not have been if a local plan had been in place.

 Encouraging local bids for £1 Million Defibrillator Fund I am delighted to encourage local organisations to apply for the £1 million Community Automated External Defibrillators Fund, an initiative aimed at increasing the presence of AEDs in critical public locations to save lives. Through collective efforts with groups like the British Heart Foundation, the government committed to placing a defibrillator in every state-funded school last year. Defibrillation is crucial in treating cardiac arrest, and the DHSC's £1 million fund will contribute to deploying an additional 2000 publicly accessible defibrillators nationwide, furthering our mission to make defibrillators readily available in life-threatening situations. Organisations can apply for funding at <https://www.defibgrant.co.uk/>

---- END ----

**APPENDIX B – CLLR SHING’S REPORT (ESCC)**

LAUNCH OF EAST SUSSEX LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 4

County Council have Launched the local transport plan 4 for public consultation, as a panel member , i special request council inform all the parishes and town councils, I believe you already aware of this. The local transport plan 4 public consultation ending 27 February.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Since the Lead Member meeting there has been a handover meeting from county old Highways Contractor (Jacobs) to council new Highways Contractor (Balfour Beatty Living Places/BBLP). BBLP are undertaking a design review of the scheme (which they do for all of our existing schemes) and will then provide us with a new programme setting out delivery of the Traffic Regulation Orders etc and the likely construction times etc.

I am pleased been informed that county highways have delivered an update letter to local residents.

FLOODING ON THE ROAD AND POTHOLES

Flooding sign - business as usual

A resident suggested to me that a business as usual sign to put up during road closed for flooding on access road to the village, one on the road up from Seaford and at Drusillas roundabout. I contacted county highways with his request, first reply was no. I have made further request to management level and will report back to you at next meeting.

THE FOOTPATH BETWEEN DRUSILLA AND WINSTON STREET

As reported at the last meeting, I am continuing working to clear this footpath.

COUNTY COUNCIL TAX

I reported to you at the last meeting that county council over spent around £16m, most to adult social care, with high demand since covid and minimum wages cost, with the lack of government funding to address the pressure in social care.

Instead government asked county council to use the reserve to balance the budget.

Therefore the 16 February (tomorrow) cabinet report suggested that the council tax will be increasing to it maximum at 2.99% and adult social care 2% to remain the same level of service. It will be the remaining the same level of service as the last year.

If county council can and able to balance the deficit and provide the same level of service for 24/25 from increased council tax. It would be increased to 9.09%, it is not a option for county council.

I am now even more concerned about the further years the deficit will be around £60m, if government have no new funding to county council. County council could cut public service further or go burst.

ROAD GULLY FLOODING

Due to the recent wet weather, some form of flooding was experienced on most roads. This created a lot of reports and work for County Highways to clear, which of course resulted in some delayed action.  I have reported a number of flooding roads and blocked gullies in our area to county highways for clearance.

**APPENDIX C – CLLR GREAVES REPORT (WDC)**

**Report – Alfriston PC - Monday 22nd January 2024**

1. Changes for Postal and Proxy Voters

A result of the Elections Act 2022 new regulations require electors wishing to vote by post to have to reapply every 3 years.

If a voter holds a postal vote before 31st October 2023 that facility will expire on 31st January 2026.

Proxy voting has also changed with the maximum number of people for whom one can act as proxy will be 2.

1. Wealden Parking Charges

WDC is ‘looking’ at its policy regarding parking enforcement. WDC is one of the few authorities in the country not to have a Civil Parking Enforcement scheme. At present parking enforcement is the responsibility of Sussex Police but they do not view this as a policing priority. In other areas of East Sussex ESCC deal with on-street parking enforcement – and have ‘pay and display’ systems in place.

I have received a letter from a local resident regarding the imposition of fees for parking permits in the Dean car park with effect from 1st April.

1. WDC has obtained £28k funding for work to support the purchase of trees and protection measures. Any Parish Council will be able to apply for funding for fruit trees to create a community orchard.
2. Wealden councillors have passed a motion to investigate river damage in Wealden’s rivers and waterways. The concern is with river damage and preservation and for silt run-off in developments close to rivers – and to work with the EA to reduce silt run-off into rivers. The council want to demand more of the EA in order to protect waterways. Apparently 30% of the rivers and water bodies in WDC area are in poor or bad condition. Only Arlington Reservoir is rated ‘good’ by the EA.
3. The Daily Mail exposed a situation (uncovered by the Taxpayers’ Alliance) regarding WDC paying staff members’ domestic energy bills for staff who are working from home. The figure (obtained through a FOI request) is £245,644 since 2019 (over £126,000 in the past year).

The WDC website (Ask the Leader Q&A) <https://letstalk.wealden.gov.uk/ask-the-leader> responded to a question raised about this matter. The response certainly hasn’t convinced me that this is an appropriate use of Council Tax Payers’ funds.

1. There are apparently fewer empty homes (i.e. empty for more than 6 months) within WDC despite the total rising in England (572 in October down from 641 the year before).
2. At the recent Full Council meeting on 22nd November WDC agreed to allocate an additional £5.2m (up from £8m) to a Sports Hub complex near Horsebridge. There are lots of questions about the likely total costs for the project (which are unknown).
3. Apparently Wealden is the 2nd least violent area in England and Wales, according to a new study of crime data ! (156.4 violent crimes per 10,000 residents)
4. Electric car charging points are being installed in various WDC car parks

10) An Annual Budget Consultation has been held (statutory requirement) and residents and businesses were urged to have their say. The consultation closed on 12th January and the results will be reviewed before the council sets its budget in February.

The consultation was for the 2024/25 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the next five years, the council’s General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets.

The council is also consulting on the increase of its share of Council Tax by 2.99%, which equates to £6.23 for a band D property for the year 2024/25, to agree General Fund Revenue, 2024/25 budget proposals, estimates for 2025-2029 and the General Fund Capital Programme.

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the council to estimate General Fund Revenue expenditure and income for the forthcoming year from all sources, together with contributions from reserves, to determine a net budget requirement to be met by government grant, Business Rates and Council Tax.

Residents in Wealden were able to access the consultation by visiting the Let’s Talk Wealden engagement hub:

<https://letstalk.wealden.gov.uk/wealden-district-council-budget-2024-25-and-mtfs-2024-29-consultation>

11) Fund to Boost Rural Business

Funding has been made available to provide match-funded grants of up to £50,000 to help to create jobs, improve productivity and adopt new technology.

Small and medium businesses can apply for financial support for projects including the purchase of equipment and machinery, adaptation of premises, the creation or expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses and farm diversification outside of agriculture.

Match funded grants of between £2,500 and £50,000 will be available in communities with a population of under 30,000

The fund closes on 31st December 2024 or when all funds have been allocated.

More information about the grant scheme and details of how to apply can be found at:

[www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/support/grants/ruralbusinessgrants](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/support/grants/ruralbusinessgrants)

**For further information please contact:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Nichola Watters Head of planning policy, economic and climate change Wealden District CouncilNichola.watters@wealden.gov.uk  | Or | Sian KilleanMedia and Communications officerWealden District CouncilTel: 07970 233231Email: Sian.killean@wealden.gov.uk |

12) From 1st January’24 households no longer have to pay to dispose of small-scale DIY waste at Council recycling centres. Fees have been abolished but the quantity that can be disposed of cannot exceed 2 x 50 ltr rubble sacks

13) The A27 between Beddingham and Firle - overnight resurfacing (8.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m.) There will be temporary traffic lights:

* Weds 24th Jan
* Thurs 25th Jan
* Fri 26th Jan
* Sat 27th Jan
* Sun 28th Jan

David Greaves

22nd Jan 20224

**APPENDIX D – STATEMENT OF FINANCES JANUARY 20224**



**APPENDIX E – MID YEAR REPORT 2023**



**APPENDIX F - QUARTER 3 REPORT 2023/4**



**APPENDIX F – CONT’D Q3 BANK RECONCILIATION**



**APPENDIX G - INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

See Appendices file 2 – as this is a separate pdf file.

**APPENDIX H - BUDGET 2024/5**



**APPENDIX H - CONT’D - BUDGET & PRECEPT REPORT**



**APPENDIX I - APC E-MAIL RESPONSE TO WEALDEN CAR PARK PROPOSALS**

From: Clerk@alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk

To: chris.bone@wealden.gov.uk; carparking@wealden.gov.uk

Dear Chris,

Thank you for sending through Wealden District’s proposed car parking charges for the Dene Car Park in Alfriston.  Alfriston Parish Council have some serious concerns on the outcome of these proposed changes, as follows:

1. Unexpected Cost  -  the introduction of charges for the non-designated bay permits at £100 for business and £75 for residents is an unexpected cost, as these permits have always been issued free of charge.  This will be an unbudgeted for cost and at a time of particular hardship when we are dealing with the effects of months of flooding in the village – it feels like a tax on residents who don’t have any off street parking and a further burden to businesses already struggling.   If the charge was able to be paid by monthly  by direct debit, this would make a big difference.
2. Push Cars onto Residential Roads  -  As a Parish Council, we are concerned that this will put great pressure on parking in the surrounding residential roads and result in illegal parking.   As there is no parking enforcement in place, this is a major concern.
3. 40% Increase in Designated Bay Permits  -  The proposed increase in charges from £144.00 to £200.00 for a designated bay represents a 40% jump in price, which does seem excessive.
4. Significant Increase in Car Parking Revenue  -  It is proposed that these changes will bring in an extra £11,535.00 p.a. in income.  We request that serious consideration is given to using this money to fund a part time traffic warden, to enforce parking regulations in the village.

In summary, Alfriston Parish Council consider that these changes do not make any recognition of the issues we face in Alfriston in their current form.

Kind Regards

Suzanna

Mrs Suzanna Dry

Clerk and RFO

***Please note that I work flexible part time hours.***

**APPENDIX J - UPDATE BY THE CHAIR OF ALFRISTON PLAYGROUND**

Report for APC meeting, Jan 2024, Friends of Alfriston Playground by Anna Franklin.

The playground and its book library continue to be enjoyed by the community.  We look forward to an update in the APC meeting on the 22nd Jan 2024 on the APC's maintenance of the playground, and on when and how the issues that have been outstanding since August 2023 will be resolved. In particular, the fallen wooden boundary fence, the repair of the wire mesh boundary fence and the blocking up of the hole which dogs have been accessing the playground through, the wobbly seating logs, missing caps flagged by RoSPA, cracked bug magnifying post, and the replacement of the broken recently installed laminated card 'no dog' sign with a permanent plastic one.  We are particularly keen that Wicksteed, as the playground provider, repairs the issues under guarantee and hope that the APC has now heard back from Wicksteed on this. We are glad that the Clerk has now been appointed and hope that maintenance can now be conducted swiftly to ensure the safety of the children in our community.  We are also grateful that the APC have committed to a playground maintenance budget (as specified in the application submitted by the APC for funding from the Veolia Environmental Trust) and hope that this will also enable the maintenance required to be conducted swiftly.  Thank you to Cllr Daw, the Clerk and the APC for looking after the playground which the community worked so hard to renovate and which brings many benefits to local children and their families.

**APPENDIX K - ALFRISTON & CUCKMERE VALLEY TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

Received from Wendy Little

Alfriston and Cuckmere Valley Twinning Association

January's not usually a month to make you think of fun, but the group had two lovely social events, with maybe a few more delicious baked goods than we should have eaten! At the start of the month was our French style epiphany "Fête des Rois", with wonderful traditional "galettes" cooked by our own members. Then later in the month our secretary and treasurer held a "Coffee and Croissants" morning - with delicious home-baked croissants and friendly conversation, it was certainly the best breakfast I've had so far this year! The Annual General Meeting comes next, and as usual, we plan to deal with the business quickly and efficiently so we can get on with the important tasks of drinking tea and meeting people! We look forward to seeing you there.

ACVTA Annual General Meeting

Sunday 24th March 2024 4:30pm - 6pm

The Old Chapel Centre, Alfriston.

Non-members welcome. Enjoy a chat and tea or coffee afterwards!

We're looking forward to 2024, as we're busy planning the biennial official visit of our French Twinning friends in June. Of course, we regularly have other visits in between the official ones, but it is such fun arranging the events and seeing the groups together. New members are always welcome, and there is no need to speak French, or to have a huge house!

**APPENDIX L - CLERGY HOUSE**

Received from Holly Jones

"This week has been the first since October that the garden hasn't been flooded which is great it has allowed the garden team to finally have chance to prune the apple trees.  I would like to thank the AEG for their recent hard work with the village flooding.  Unfortunately the gardeners sheds have been badly affected by the flooding and we will need to purchase some replacement equipment.  The house is currently put to bed and conservation work is being carried out.  We open again for the season on Friday 29th March.  Recently we have been working on creating a management plan for the area of reedbed and woodland just to the south of the Clergy House garden. With some light touch work in the next few years we are looking to ensure the reedbed is well managed for species such as reed warbler and a range of dragonflies. We are also having some discussions with the Environment Agency about the redundant dam on the eastern end of the drainage channel and whether, by re-instating this, we could positively manage water levels to ensure quicker drainage at times of flood and hold back some water to help in times of drought. We are also looking at some minor work to create more diversity within the woodland and ensure it is not encroaching on the reedbed. This will involve some tree work over the next few weeks where we will be removing some failing trees. As we finalise the plan, we are happy to share more information, receive any comments or answer any questions.  Thank you".