

# ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

Mrs Suzanna Dry

Tel: 07936 904743

E-mail: [clerk@alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk)

Alfriston War Memorial Hall

Old School House

The Tye, Alfriston, BN26 5TL

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

## **Draft Minutes of a meeting of Alfriston Parish Council (APC), held in the Alfriston War Memorial Hall on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 7.15pm**

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### **Present:**

Cllr D Monteath-Wilson (Chair) Cllr J Watkins (Vice Chair)

Cllr S Daw

Cllr J Spring

Cllr A Harris

### **In attendance:**

Mrs Suzanna Dry – Parish Clerk & RFO

There were approximately 11 members of the public present.

### **158. Chairman's Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone a happy new year. The Chair then congratulated the Clerk on obtaining her CiLCA qualification (Certificate in Local Government Administration). This will enable APC to re-gain the General Power of Competence and this will be an agenda item at the next meeting.

### **159. Public Questions**

Stephen Bickers informed Cllrs his house backs on to the allotments and he recently had to replace two garden fence panels that had blown down, this fence is his responsibility. In order to make maintaining the fence easier he put in a new gate opening on to the allotments. Mr Bickers commented he already has a gate from his garden into the allotments on his other fence and that he has an allotment plot further down.

Gerry and Paul Dawson informed Cllrs they had replaced the dilapidated fence at the end of their garden which is their responsibility. It abounds the allotments and they put in a new gate which opens up onto the allotments. There was a lot of vegetation to clear in order to put up the new fence and the gate will help with access to keep the vegetation down and maintain the fence.

### **160. Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Parkinson who is away and Wealden District Cllr Greaves, who has had to attend another meeting.

#### **161. Update from MP**

James MacCleary's report was read out and is attached to the minutes. ([Appendix A](#)).

#### **162. Update from Cllr Stephen Shing – East Sussex County Council**

Cllr Shing presented his report to the meeting a copy is attached to the minutes. ([Appendix B](#)).  
Cllr Shing thanked Cllr Rabagliati for all his work during his time as a Cllr for Alfriston Parish Council.

#### **163. Update from Cllr David Greaves - Wealden District Council**

Cllr Greaves' report was read out and a copy is attached to the minutes. ([Appendix C](#)).  
The Chair closed the meeting so that Mr Paul Wright could ask Cllr Shing what a unitary authority would mean to the tiers of local government. Cllr Shing replied in East Sussex we have five districts and boroughs and town and parish councils. Town and parish councils are very important to the community. We do not have a clear indication of how devolution is going to work yet.

#### **164. Declaration of interest**

Cllr Daw declared an interest as she is a Church Warden, trustee of Children with Cancer, the Women's Institute and a member of the Patient Participation Group. Cllr Watkins declared an interest in AEG & Heartstart.

#### **165. Minutes**

Cllr Harris proposed and Cllr Watkins seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the APC meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024, were a true and accurate record. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair duly sign the minutes as an accurate record.

Cllr Daw proposed and Cllr Watkins seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the APC Finance meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025, were a true and accurate record. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair duly sign the minutes as an accurate record.

#### **166. Finance**

To approve the Statement of Finances for December 2024 & January 2025 as attached to the Agenda. Cllr Daw proposed & Cllr Harris seconded a motion these be approved. This was unanimously **RESOLVED**.

CIL Money - Cllr Daw proposed and Cllr Harris seconded a motion that the remaining CIL money of £502.07 be used towards the cost of the Tye road edge repairs as per the Clerk's report ([Appendix D](#)) This was unanimously **RESOLVED**. **Action Point 1**.

#### **167. Councillor Vacancy**

The Chair advised that Cllr Rabagliati had resigned in December 2024. The Clerk confirmed that a Notice of Vacancy from Wealden District Council had been published on the APC website, mail list

and noticeboard. We have today heard from Wealden D.C. that there has been no request for an election and APC have permission to fill the vacancy by co-option. A notice will go out tomorrow on the website, mail list and noticeboard inviting applications for the position of Councillor. **Action Point 2.** The Clerk asked Cllrs if all will be present at the February APC meeting, Cllrs agreed they would and we know Cllr Parkinson will be back then too. Therefore we can co-opt at the February meeting. The Chair confirmed candidates will be asked to attend the February meeting and give a 2 minute presentation to Cllrs, Cllrs will then consider the applications in private and announce their decision to the meeting, as per the Co-Option Policy.

#### **168. Coffeehouse Conversations - Cllr Harris**

There was a Coffee House morning last Saturday, the 18<sup>th</sup> January, generally on the subject of the Environment, Public Transport and Rights of Way. About 15 people attended. It was hosted by Councillor Harris who gave a short presentation, covering the following points in particular:-

Flooding. The desilting and embankment works seem to have been effective in preventing flooding in Alfriston.

The EA Flood Risk Assessment – prepared in 2009 – identifies 5 dwellings at risk, and no risk to life.

There is a water level gauge at Sherman's Bridge – just north of the A27. Daily readings are available on line.

You can register for texted warnings of flood risk at [www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings](http://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings). This tends to be a bit cautious, not to say alarmist.

Climate Change is a fact and a universal problem. So far the impact locally has been limited – maximum and minimum temperatures have not changed significantly this century – though there is an undoubted perception that winters have become warmer. In the heatwave of 2023, the highest figure recorded was 29.4 c. Similarly, average rainfall has not really changed – but what has changed is the intensity of rain.

On the local environment:-

Less use of cars – there is a Volunteer Car Scheme, also Dial-a-ride, though my investigations show that it really only applies where there is no scheduled bus service.

The Arts Bus has continued to run through this winter

And action by individuals:

Zero tolerance of rubbish – even if that does involve picking up other people's

Think about solar panels and air or ground source heating – and a wilder garden.

I would like to record my thanks to Councillor Dawes, Katherine Arnold and Mark Farrer for their help at the Coffee House morning, helping it to be a relaxed and friendly occasion.

#### **169. Update on Abbeyfield House, Sheltered Housing, North Street.**

A discussion was had on the current situation and it was agreed that the Clerk would be asked to contact local housing associations to try and facilitate interest. **Action Point 3.**

#### **170. Update on VE Day Celebrations - Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025 - Cllr Daw**

Cllr Daw confirmed the 8<sup>th</sup> May falls on a Thursday, as this has not been designated as a public holiday we need to decide which day to hold the celebrations. Cllr Daw suggested either Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May or Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May. It was **AGREED** to go with Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May and hold a Sunday Afternoon Tea on the Tye in celebration of VE Day. Cllr Daw to report back on planning for the event at the next APC meeting. **Action Point 4.**

#### **171. Update on Live Nativity**

The Clerk confirmed that the Live Nativity Committee had in the end decided not to run this event as an APC event, covered by APC Insurers. It was therefore run independently by the Live Nativity Committee and under their own public liability insurance.

#### **172. APC Laptop**

To ratify the decision to get the APC laptop assessed by Ingenio Technologies due to problems with online connection and storage functions, preventing the Clerk from carrying out her duties. Cllr Harris proposed and Cllr Watkins seconded the motion, this was unanimously **AGREED**.

#### **173. Government's Public Consultation on Local Authority Standards & Conduct**

This consultation seeks views on introducing measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime and ensure consistency of approach amongst councils investigating serious breaches of their member codes of conduct, including the introduction of the power of suspension. This consultation is open to both elected members and the general public to respond. Details can be found under Appendix B of the Agenda and have also gone out on the APC website and mail listing.

#### **174. Report on Highways & Twittens – Cllr Vacancy**

- Update on Post Box - the Clerk reported there had been no response to APC's complaint, however, a planning application has been received for a new post box to be installed at the Village Store which APC supported at the December planning meeting. This planning application has now been approved by South Downs National Park Authority.
- Update on recent SLR meeting with Highways - APC had a meeting with East Sussex County Council Highways Dept and Cllr Shing on 6<sup>th</sup> December, followed by a walk around the village to identify and report highways issues. This proved to be a very useful meeting and the minutes can be seen on the APC website.

#### **175. Report on Allotments & Recreation Ground – Cllr Daw.**

Allotments

Thank you the Allotments are looking tidy and well kept, please if you are struggling with your allotment through ill health or any reason let us know we might be able to help, but it's saves our clerk sending e mails and time is so limited. The gate situation is down for discussion.

Playground

Well used, all looking good. I'm keeping an eye on the split wood because of the very hard frost we've been having. I used the wood we cleared to block the hole in the hedge just by the playground. Do we know if there is still a playground committee if so I would be happy to attend a meeting as it's important we work as team, thank you.

Nothing to report all seems to be quiet as it's winter time.

Could I please request the car boot for the 25th August bank holiday, AEG car parking and cricket club refreshments. It was unanimously **AGREED** that the Bank Holiday Car Boot Sale would be held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August as an APC Event.

Allotment Gates - To discuss new gates that have appeared in the boundary fences. See Clerk's report ([Appendix E](#)). The Clerk read out the three options available to the council from her report with advantages and disadvantages for each. The Chair pointed out that the advice given by the Society of Local Council Clerks was not to give permission for gates, as per the Clerk's report.

After discussion Cllr Spring proposed and Cllr Harris seconded a motion to grant permission for both of the new gates on a 12 month term and on the condition that the house owner is an allotment holder. Permission would then be reviewed at the end of the 12 months. This was unanimously **RESOLVED**. The Clerk was asked to write to both house owners confirming the temporary permission and its conditions. **Action Point 5**.

#### **176. Report on Public Transport – Cllr Harris**

See Cllr Harris' comments under agenda item no. 168.

#### **177. Report on Environment & Countryside – Cllr Harris**

See Cllr Harris' comments under agenda item no. 168.

#### **178. Report on Strategic Planning – Cllr Parkinson**

Cllr Parkinson's report was attached as Appendix C on the Agenda.

ESCC Traffic Proposals - Cllr Harris will liaise with Cllr Parkinson on the wording for the village sign. **Action Point 6**. Village Gateways - The Clerk drew Cllrs and the public's attention to Cllr Parkinson's request for any design suggestions. These would need to be within Highway regulations as per Cllr Parkinson's report, otherwise we will have to go with what is offered by Highways. Any suggestions please contact Cllr Parkinson or the Clerk.

Emergency Plan – Cllr Parkinson has circulated initial drafts to Cllrs and AEG. Further input is required from Cllrs and AEG. Cllr Parkinson will arrange a meeting to take this further and report back.

#### **179. Report on Tye – Cllr Spring**

Cllr Spring reported that the Live Nativity had been a great success. With regard to APC Insurance Cllr Spring asked the council to look at other providers and their restrictions as an alternative to our

current policy. The Clerk advised our renewal date is May and she will look into other providers in April for the Council to consider. **Action Point 7.**

Tye Rd - Cllr Spring is aware there are two pot holes left to repair, there is money for this and he will look to get this carried out when the weather improves.

Tye Footpath - There are two volunteers on the gritting team in addition to Cllr Spring, this is working well and they are using the weather forecasts as well as physical inspections to see when gritting is required. The Chair expressed her thanks and asked Cllr Spring to pass this on to the team.

Tye Outdoor Activity Event - Cllrs agreed this would be a good idea, Cllr Spring to follow up with potential sponsors and report back.

## **180. Report from Planning Committee – Cllr Watkins**

180.1 Applications considered by APC Planning Committee since last meeting:

**Ref. No: SDNP/24/04384/LDE** The Bakehouse, Whiteway, BN26 5TS **No comment.**  
Confirmation of the commencement of works, consisting of: Phase 1 works completed – refurbishment of the existing cottage (formally known as Burnt Cottage); Phase 2 works – proposed two extension and associated landscaping works, these have not been completed.

**Ref. No: SDNP/24/04542/DCOND** The Old Vicarage, West Street, BN26 5UY. **No objection**  
Discharge of Condition 3 (Materials) for SDNP/24/01901/HOUS and SDNP/24/01902/LIS.

**Ref. No: SDNP/24/04522/NMA** Timbers Sloe Lane Alfriston East Sussex BN26 5UU **No objection**  
Non-Material Amendment to SDNP/22/02413/HOUS.

180.2 Applications notified or awaiting decision from SDNPA

**Ref. No: SDNP/24/03402/HOUS** – Ticehurst, West St, BN26 5UX – **Approved.**

**Ref. No: SDNP/24/02440/FUL** – Former Allotments, North St. - **Awaiting Decision.**  
SDNPA working with applicant on alterations to the application taking into account ESCC Highways objection.

180.3 Enforcement updates from SDNPA - None.

## **181. Reports from Outside Bodies**

154.1 Heartstart

Cllr Wakins reported that Eastbourne Community First Responders will carry out a defib familiarisation session at the beginning of March. Sussex Heart Charity have also offered sessions if required. We really need a Community First Responder here in the village – if anyone would like to volunteer this would be most welcome.

154.2 Alfriston Emergency Group - No report.

154.3 Flood Forum - No report.

154.4 Neighbourhood Watch - No report.

154.5 Twinning Committee - report sent out with the Agenda and read out at the meeting.

154.6 St Andrew's Church

Cllr Daw reported that the flowers in the church are lovely at the moment. Sunday services are very busy. For anyone that knew Hilary Jay, her funeral will be held on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan at 12.15pm. Before Covid there was a volunteer car service which was very valuable to the village, it would be lovely if this could be re-instated. The Chair suggested putting an article in Cuckmere News, Cllr Daw volunteered to do this. **Action Point 8.**

154.7 Clergy House - No report.

154.8 Alfriston War Memorial Hall - No report.

154.9 Speedwatch - The Chair noted that Speedwatch is in abeyance for the winter. Hannah Parkinson was temporarily coordinating this and now looking for a new coordinator.

154.10 Events - Cllr Daw requested the August Bank Holiday Dog Show & Blessing of the Animals on The Tye is held on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August, as well as the Car Boot Sale on the Recreation Ground on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August. **AGREED.**

**182. Correspondence to The Clerk – Asking for permission from the council.**

MacMillan Cancer Support – South Coast Mighty Hike, Sat 7<sup>th</sup> June – details attached to the Agenda. The organisers will be reminding Marshalls and participants to be respectful of the community and environment. Cllrs were happy with the event.

**183. Public Questions**

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.10pm and opened the floor to public questions.

**184. Date of next meeting** – The next meeting will be held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025 in the AWMH at 7:15pm.

Please see Appendices attached below and/or on the website

## [Appendix A - MP's Report by James MacCleary](#)

### Christmas and New Year in Sussex

I hope everyone in our part of Sussex had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. It was a quieter period politically, but I had the chance to enjoy some fantastic local events, including carol concerts in several parts of our constituency. Thank you to everyone who helped organise local celebrations, ensuring we ended the year on a high note.

### Local Government Reorganisation

Significant changes are on the horizon with the government's push for local government reorganisation. This could mean the abolition of all district and borough councils, with a move to a single unitary authority for East Sussex. There has also been a bid from Brighton and Hove, West Sussex and East Sussex Councils to form a "strategic authority". Such a shift would have far-reaching implications, particularly for our town and parish councils, which play a crucial role in supporting our rural communities and understanding the issues affecting people's lives day to day. Local government reform must empower communities, not undermine them. I will continue to argue for a thoughtful, inclusive process that prioritizes the voices of residents.

### May Elections Debate

The Conservative leadership of East Sussex County Council has proposed postponing May's County Council elections, citing the ongoing reorganisation. However, I strongly oppose this undemocratic move, which would deny residents their right to hold the council accountable. After losing their majority, the Conservatives are clinging to power by avoiding the judgment of voters. I've spoken out on this issue, urging the minister to reject the proposal and allow elections to proceed as planned. The people of East Sussex deserve a say in who represents them, especially during this period of major change. Suspending elections risks undermining trust in local democracy. I have written to the government to make this case.

### National Insurance Contribution Rise

The proposed national insurance rise has serious implications for individuals, businesses, and essential services. I recently spoke in the House of Commons to highlight the economic risks of this policy, particularly for sectors like healthcare and social care. For example, local GP practices in our area could face significant additional costs, with one practice estimating an increase of £60,000 a year. This threatens vital services and places further strain on our overstretched NHS.

I called for exemptions for groups such as GPs, dentists, and local councils, who cannot absorb these additional costs without cutting essential services. Social care providers, like St. Peter and St. James Hospice, are already under immense financial pressure, and this rise could push some to the brink. I will continue to press the government to reconsider this policy and protect the vital services our community depends on.

### Lewes Local Plan

The next stage of the Lewes Local Plan is now underway, and this is a critical moment for our district. The Local Plan will determine where and how future development takes place, from new housing to business growth. It's essential that the plan reflects the needs and aspirations of our communities while protecting our beautiful green spaces.



I urge residents to participate in the upcoming consultations and drop-in events, which provide an opportunity to share your views and shape the future of our area. This is your chance to have a say in decisions that will affect our district for decades to come. Let's work together to ensure sustainable, community-led development.

You can find the consultation events here: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/Lewes-Local-Plan>

#### Opposition to Booking System for Waste Sites

A petition launched by Lewes Liberal Democrats against East Sussex County Council's proposal to introduce a booking system for waste recycling sites has now been signed by over 2,000 residents. Many locals are concerned that the new system will make waste disposal more difficult, particularly for those without internet access or in urgent need of disposal.

Similar systems in other regions have been unpopular, and residents fear it could lead to increased fly-tipping. Additionally, the council's consultation process has been criticised for not reflecting community concerns.

The petition remains open, and support continues to grow for keeping the current walk-in system. You can view the petition and add your support here: <https://www.leweslibdems.org.uk/tipbooking>

#### Looking Ahead

In the next month we have several key votes in Westminster, and in my diary I have several events on an environmental theme. Two Lib Dem sponsored bills will be voted on which I am supporting, the Climate and Nature bill and the "sunshine" bill which looks to include solar panels on new build houses. I have also secured a meeting with the Chief Executive of Southern Water where I'll be raising the sewage dumping scandal around our seas and rivers.

As we begin 2025, I remain committed to working hard for all the communities in our part of Sussex. There are many challenges ahead, but by working together, we can continue to make progress and tackle the issues that matter most. If your parish has any concerns or projects that need my support, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I look forward to engaging with you and making a real difference in the year ahead.

[Appendix B - Report from Cllr Stephen Shing – East Sussex County Council](#)

East Sussex County Councillor Shing  
Report to East Dean Parish Council  
Parish Meeting January 2025



Happy New Year

#### DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Government's English Devolution White Paper was released on 16 December 2024 and represents wide ranging and ambitious reform and reorganisation of local government structures in all two tier areas and public services more widely. It also strengthens the previous Government's direction of travel to Mayoral Combined Authority based local devolution. The White Paper is expected to be turned into legislation early in 2025.

The Government has requested that the Leaders of those Councils who wish to join the DPP write with a clear commitment to devolution and reorganisation aims, confirming their intention to join the programme by 10 January 2025.

If the Government accepts the initial proposal, it will consult people in East Sussex for their views before the end of March. The election of a mayor for Sussex could take place in May 2026.

In future, the Government also wants everyone, including people in East Sussex, to be served by just one local council (a system known as 'unitary government'). This would replace the present two-tier system made up of East Sussex County Council and five boroughs or districts (Eastbourne, Lewes, Hastings, Rother and Wealden). All partners in the county are continuing to discuss how this might be arranged. Any new council in East Sussex would work closely with the Sussex mayoral combined authority.

It's important to stress that there are no immediate changes to how your local councils operate or the services they provide.

The English Devolution White Paper makes 4 fundamental changes to the previous approach:

- ❖ Introduction of Mayoral Combined Authorities to all areas of England and associated move to unitary government replacing two tier local government where it exists.
  - ❖ Clarity about the powers available and the conditions for accessing them replaces a deal based negotiation.
  - ❖ Greater clarity about the size of the units of governance (unitary councils of at least 500,000 population with few exceptions and Mayoral Combined Authorities with minimum of 1.5m population).
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- ❖ Clarity about the role of a Mayor in relation to current local government responsibilities for Strategic Planning and Housing and also, in time, for wider public services including Police, Fire and Rescue, Probation, skills and employment support, environment and climate change, business support and health and health inequalities.

In the White Paper the Government sets out in detail a proposed list of areas of competence where Strategic Authorities should have a mandate to act strategically to drive growth and provide support on shaping public services. These include:

- ❖ Transport and local infrastructure
- ❖ Skills and employment support
- ❖ Housing and Strategic Planning
- ❖ Economic development and regeneration
- ❖ Environment and climate change
- ❖ Health, wellbeing and public service reform
- ❖ Public safety

The Government has asked for a response by 10th January 2025 giving a clear commitment to devolution and reorganisation, including a request from those Council's whose election is to be postponed. Following receipt of the response the Government will take a decision, as to whether to postpone the election for a year to May 2026. A formal invitation to submit reorganisation proposals will be issued to all authorities in January.

#### Next Steps

The Devolution Priority Programme is aimed at places ready to come together under the geographical criteria set out in the White Paper and wishing to progress towards a Mayoral Strategic Authority at an accelerated timescale. Joining the programme will have a number of clear benefits for residents and businesses of the County, these include:

Having a Mayor elected by 2026, which is the earliest point.

Having access to the Mayoral strategic authority level of the framework (as set out in the White Paper)

Taking a seat at the Council of the Nations and the Regions, Mayoral council to feed into national policy making

Starting the clock on getting to Established status, which requires a Mayor being in place for 18 months, which if reached unlocks the single settlement

Backing from government, including Ministerial support and engagement to meet timescales for May 2026 and capacity funding to start flowing the year before the election.

In January the Government will also launch consultations on mayoral devolution with a view to Ministers taking a decision on whether statutory tests have been met and start the legislative process work to establish a Combined County Authority. It is anticipated that a consultation will run for 6 to 8 weeks.

In March 2025 areas will submit indicative reorganisation plans.

The results of the devolution consultation will be assessed in the Spring 2025 following which a Ministerial decision will be taken as to whether to proceed with a Mayoral

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Combined County Authority (MCCA). The Spending Review will then confirm future mayoral investment funds for new mayoral areas.

In the Autumn 2025 areas will submit new unitary proposals. At this time relevant legislation will be laid before Parliament in relation to MCCA areas.

At the end of 2025 and in early 2026 Ministers will consider unitary proposals and delivery phasing with statutory consultations being undertaken on the first tranche of proposals.

In March notice of mayoral elections will be given for a Mayoral election in May 2026. Timelines for the remainder of the reorganisation process will be subject to the proposals received. It is anticipated that elections for a shadow authority will be in May 2027 with new unitaries going live in 2028, at which point MCCA's would be converted to Mayoral Combined Authorities.

## PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT

On 18 December 2024, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution announced the publication of the 2025-26 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS). This follows a policy statement published on 28 November 2024

Overall, there has been a £1.9bn increase in Grant Funding to Local Government. What is the potential impact on East Sussex County Council (ESCC). The below sets out the main announcements impacting on ESCC's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP): Additional Social Care Funding £ 8.9 m, New Children's Social Care Prevention Grant £1.5 m, Repurposed Services Grant £ 0.5 m, Total of £9.9 m. Please Note this is not the total national settlement allocation. But It is the total of the main announcements which impact upon ESCC's MTFP.

Referendum Principles as expected (3% Council Tax plus 2% ASC Precept). The government will require LAs to adjust the presentation of the ASC precept on council tax bills from 2025-26, so that they show a single line for the council tax increase set by social care authorities.

The impact of the Provisional Local Government Settlement has seen a small increase in funding for Adults and Children's Social Care. However, this is not at a level sufficient to address the underlying service pressures county council are face. Whilst updating the Medium term financial plan MTFP, the 25/26 deficit, after savings, will remain and reserves are likely to be required to present a balanced budget. In addition there is £21m to county highways to repairs potholes.

Council Tax.

### East Sussex County Council Receives £21 Million for Road Repairs in 2025/26

On 20 December, the Government announced a £1.6 billion funding allocation for local authorities to address road maintenance and repair needs for the 2025/26 period. East Sussex County Council is set to receive £21 million as part of this national initiative.

The funding will allow the Council to identify roads in most need of repair and deliver immediate fixes to improve road conditions, benefiting communities and raising living standards across the region. This investment is crucial in maintaining safe and accessible roads for residents and visitors alike, as well as supporting local economies by improving transportation infrastructure.

Daniel said "While the allocation of £21 million in funding is a much-needed and welcome boost, there are still systemic issues within the County Highway's approach to pothole repairs that need urgent attention.

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A significant concern is that the current repair system appears to be reactive rather than proactive. Potholes are being repaired repeatedly in the same areas, suggesting that the quality of repairs or the materials used may not be sufficient for long-term durability. This approach not only wastes resources but also causes ongoing disruption to road users."

The County Highway Department will be arranging a meeting with the Parish Council to discuss the next steps for traffic management in the area.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Stephen. Although your councillor has recently resigned, he has worked diligently on traffic and highway matters. As agreed at our SLR meeting, he had committed to providing a traffic diversion management plan, which I will take up with County Highway later.

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## [Appendix C - Report from Cllr David Greaves, Wealden District Council.](#)

### Report – Alfriston PC - Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025

#### **1) Work commences at Wealden Community Sports Hub**

Work on the new Wealden Community Sports Hub has been marked with a ground-breaking ceremony. The new Community Sports Hub is located on the outskirts of Hailsham and has received a grant of £3.5m from the Premier League, The FA and Government's Football Foundation. Construction on the new Hub – by Sunninghill Contractors – is expected to be completed in 2026. The Hub will provide new facilities in the district and offer high-quality sports and community facilities which can be used all year-round.

The site will be operated on a not-for-profit basis by the charity, Leisure United and managed by The National Football Trust. Leisure United currently operates 18 sites across the country. It will be a new partnership arrangement involving the council and any surplus income generated from the facility will be reinvested into local grassroots sports.

The state-of-the art Hub will consist of two floodlit full size 3G pitches, four dual use floodlit netball/tennis courts and two padel tennis courts plus other community facilities such as a café and meeting space, skate park, a children's play area and a perimeter pathway around the site - that will provide opportunities for all residents to participate in sports, health and wellbeing, and leisure activities.

Throughout the process, the council has engaged with a range of partners including sport's governing bodies, local sports clubs and a public consultation event was held to help shape and inform the facilities at the site.

#### **2) Emergency Planning**

The Emergency Planning team at WDC – and at East Sussex County Council – was alerted to an unexploded bomb found on farmland at Blackboys back in late November. Bomb disposal experts were called to the scene and a controlled explosion took place.

#### **3) Household Support Fund**

The 6<sup>th</sup> round of the Household Support Fund is now live and open to applications.

The Household Support Fund is provided by the DWP to ESCC who have allocated an amount to Wealden. It is a financial assistance program designed to help residents of the Wealden District Council area who are struggling with the cost of living. The fund provides support for essential needs such as food, energy, and water bills.

## **Here are some key details about the fund: the criteria is listed on the webpage Household Support Fund - Wealden District Council - Wealden District Council**

In summary applicants must be:

- over 18 years old
- resident within the Wealden District Council Local Authority area.
- getting either Universal Credit (that also includes the Housing Costs element), Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction (or getting a SEMI exemption and would otherwise get Council Tax Reduction).

SEMI, otherwise known as SMI, or Severely Mentally Impaired, for council tax purposes refers to a condition where an individual has a severe impairment of their intellectual or social functioning that appears to be permanent. This can include conditions such as dementia, severe learning difficulties, or the after-effects of a stroke

- If someone is diagnosed as SMI, they can be disregarded for council tax purposes, which can lead to discounts or exemptions from paying council tax.
- To qualify for an SMI the individual must be certified by a medical professional and be eligible for certain benefits

Claims must be made online here; <https://wealden.grantapproval.co.uk/> . If any resident is unable to make an application online and they do not have anyone to help them, please ask them to contact the Benefits department through 01323 443322 and we will make the application with them / for them.

Only one application can be paid during the lifetime of the scheme and only one application per household.

There are two payment amounts as follows:

- £175 for eligible claims that are Pension Age, but not eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment
- £125 for all other eligible claims

Payments will be made by BACS within 14 days of a successful claim.

The scheme will close on 31st March 2025 or when the funds have been exhausted. All claims will be treated on a first come, first served basis of when the application is submitted.

Should you have any queries regarding the scheme, please feel free to contact Catherine Lacey, Revenues and Benefits Manager or

**Liane Tew**

Head of Digital, Revenues & Benefits [liane.tew@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:liane.tew@wealden.gov.uk)

Community Services, Wealden District Council

Council Offices | Vicarage Lane | Hailsham | East Sussex | BN27 2AX

**[View your Council Tax & Benefits - 'My Revenues & Benefits'](#)**

<http://www.wealden.gov.uk>

#### **4) Residents encouraged to comment on new Climate Green Paper**

Resident feedback from a climate change survey has been used to create a Climate Green Paper. In late 2024 Wealden District Council hosted a survey and three research reports which examined how climate change is likely to impact Wealden, how greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced and explored options for renewable energy.

The key themes below were identified from the survey and have been vital to the creation of the paper:

- Renewable Energy:**  
 Residents support renewable energy and low-carbon heating options. This reinforces the approach in the Climate Green Paper to promote local solar, wind, and accessible heating solutions.
- Sustainable Transport:**  
 Interest in alternatives like public transport, cycling, and electric vehicles supports the approach in the Climate Green Paper to enhance sustainable mobility and reduce reliance on private vehicles.
- Biodiversity and Green Spaces:**  
 The strong focus on green infrastructure and tree planting aligns with the commitment to enhance local biodiversity and protect natural habitats.
- Community Engagement:**  
 Many people felt unaware of local initiatives, highlighting the need for accessible education and promotion of community-led actions within the Climate Green Paper.
- Waste Reduction:**  
 Support for recycling and resource efficiency aligns with the Climate Green Paper's focus on reducing waste and promoting a circular economy.
- Affordable Climate Solutions:**  
 Cost concerns indicate the importance of funding and support, which are central to making climate actions accessible to all.
- Health and Lifestyle:**  
 Support for small lifestyle changes reinforces the approach of promoting manageable actions to collectively reduce emissions whilst respecting individual preferences.

Feedback from this consultation on the Climate Green Paper will be used to formulate a new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Wealden in 2025.

The draft paper is now live and can be viewed on [Wealden's Climate Green Paper | Let's Talk Wealden](#).

**For further information please contact:**

Nichola Watters  
 Head of Planning Policy,  
 Climate Change and Economy  
 Wealden District Council

Email:  
[Nichola.watters@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Nichola.watters@wealden.gov.uk)

Sian Killean

Media and  
 Communications  
 officer

Wealden District  
 Council

Tel: 07970 233231

Email:  
[Sian.killean@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Sian.killean@wealden.gov.uk)

## **5) Engagement Playground consultation goes live on Wealden's community platform**

Younger residents of Wealden are being asked to complete surveys about a new playground park which will be located at the new sports hub in the north of Hailsham, near Hellingly.

Work is underway at the Community Sports Hub which, when complete, will feature and a new playground park.

Wealden District Council – which is providing the sports hub – has launched two different surveys on its community engagement platform, Let's Talk Wealden - one for under 12s and primary school children and one for teenagers.

The council wants to know what play equipment, games, and activities younger residents would like in the new playground area of the sports park, and for teenagers to give their views on what would make them use and spend time at the park.

The surveys will take around five to ten minutes and are available to fill out until Christmas. Please use the links below to fill out the surveys.

Primary school and under 12s can visit [We want your ideas for a new play park! | Let's Talk Wealden](#) and teenagers can access the survey at [Park Life for Teens | Let's Talk Wealden](#)

Residents can keep up to date with the new sports hub and other projects by following [Wealden Community Sports Hub | Let's Talk Wealden](#)

**For further information please contact:**

Sarah Garner

Head of People and Organisational  
Development

Wealden District Council

Email: [Sarah.garner@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.garner@wealden.gov.uk)

Or Sian Killean

Media and Communications officer

Wealden District Council

Tel: 07970 233231

Email: [Sian.killean@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Sian.killean@wealden.gov.uk)

**8) Wealden DC apologises for early collection of January Council tax and Business rates**

An automated scheduling error meant that direct debits for Council Tax and Business Rates were taken on 27<sup>th</sup> December rather than on 1<sup>st</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup>) January. 17,594 Council Tax payers and 324 Business rate payers have been affected. Clearly this had the potential to cause financial issues for people at the most expensive time of the year.

Residents who opt to pay their Council Tax or NDR bill by direct debit can do so on either the 1st, 15th or 25th of each month. Where these dates fall on either a weekend or a bank holiday, the deduction date should occur on the next working day, i.e. a later date. Wednesday 1st January 2025 was a bank holiday and, accordingly the next working day was Thursday 2nd January. However, the direct debits were deducted from residents' bank accounts on Friday 27th December instead.

The error was brought to the Council's attention in the morning of the 24th December. A resident rang the Council to query a pending direct debit for the 27th, which was showing when they had viewed their bank account, as this was usually taken on the 1st of each month. The Council contacted BACS and the bank, but were advised at 11.03am, on the 24th December, that the direct debit payments could not be stopped.

Timing was very difficult - a refund would have taken up to 10 working days to process - WDC would probably have had to be contacted in addition to the Bank. A request for a refund could have been made through the payer's bank under the Direct Debit Guarantee <https://www.directdebit.co.uk/direct-debit-guarantee/> but as the Christmas holidays arrived as this problem was uncovered it would have been difficult to action this.

If a Direct Debit was collected in error on 27<sup>th</sup> December and has not been refunded, then the January Council Tax instalment has been paid. If in doubt residents should call the WDC Council Tax team to check on **01323 443 385**.



If the January DDR was cancelled then the January instalment will still be due and payable. Contact the Council Tax team through 01323 443 385 or the customer services team on 01323 443322 - they can take a payment. Alternatively payment can be made through the following methods:

<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/make-a-payment/>

<https://www.wealden.gov.uk/make-a-payment/other-ways-to-pay/>

Credit ratings will not be affected as a result of this error as WDC do not report Council Tax payments to the Credit Bureaux and WDC informed all banks on 24th December of their error.

Any charges incurred because of the Direct Debit being taken early will be refunded by WDC. However, proof of the charges are required and must be submitted to [localtax@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:localtax@wealden.gov.uk) as a screenshot via e-mail. Please title the e-mail 'DD error' as this will enable WDC to prioritise this correspondence.

#### **9) A new kiosk selling refreshments will be built on the Cuckoo Trail.**

Permission for the Horam Hub was granted by Wealden District Council's councillors at a planning committee meeting recently and relates to a site at the disused railway platform of the former Horam Railway Station, which now forms part of the Cuckoo Trail.

The new kiosk is to be built as part of several improvement projects outlined in the Cuckoo Trail Masterplan, a plan recently developed in consultation with communities, local partners and stakeholders and evidenced through user research.

The application was for the erection of a brick-built 'kiosk building' with zinc roof over, incorporating an overhanging canopy, public toilets and a commercial space for light refreshments to be sold.

The design has taken cues from traditional railway buildings, such as those which might have been found at the location historically. The design has been carefully thought out to keep with the Victorian character.

The works to the Horam Hub area will commence in the next few weeks. The council will keep the trail open during the works although there will be limited times when the trail will be closed and a diversion will be put in place.

The kiosk and other improvement projects along the Cuckoo Trail are funded through the Councils allocation of the UK Governments Shared Prosperity Funding. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is part of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda which gives local authorities the opportunity to improve pride of place and increase life chances by investing in communities, supporting local businesses and people. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

#### **10) Rural Business Grants Programme**

Wealden District Council have been delivering a rural business grants programme over the last year with an allocation from the Rural England Prosperity Fund. Over £567,000 has been awarded to businesses through the scheme.

The Rural Business Grants Programme (RBGP) was available to small and medium sized businesses in Wealden, businesses were able to apply for a grant of up to 50% of the cost of capital projects. Grants were available from £2,500 up to £35,000 with the business needing to match the grant awarded.

Projects could include farm diversification projects outside of agriculture, property adaptations, creation and expansion of rural leisure and tourism businesses, new equipment, machinery and commercial vehicles. All projects need to be completed by 31 March 2025.

The total funding of £567,054 has supported 31 businesses, which has supported overall project costs of over £1.2 million in the District.

The projects that have been delivered or are to be delivered in South Downs Ward are detailed below:

- Alfriston Woodland Cabins – holiday let business with 2 woodland cabins and 2 shepherds huts. The business applied for a grant of £15,000 to purchase an additional shepherds hut to increase capacity for staying visitors. The business was turning away visitors due to lack of capacity. The project has now been delivered and bookings are being made in the shepherds hut. The grant will help with increased business growth and increased productivity.
- Rathfinny Wine Estate – wine producer – Rathfinny applied for a grant of £18,847 to purchase 20 e-bikes for their visitors. 10 to be located at the Flint Barns for staying visitors and 10 at the tasting room for day visitors to use to explore the local area and visit other attractions. Rathfinny are committed to reaching net-zero by 2030 and are keen to encourage visitors to use sustainable travel during their visit. The project has been delivered and will support job creation, increased business growth and increased productivity and net zero.

**David Greaves**

[Appendix D](#)

## **ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL**

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Report Subject: SPENDING REMAINING CIL MONEY BY MARCH 2025

By: Suzanna Dry, Clerk & RFO

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The purpose of this report is to give Councillors options on how to spend the remaining CIL money of £502.07 which needs to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 or returned to South Downs National Park Authority.

### Background

APC were granted CIL money by SDNPA the majority of this has been spent, with only £502.07 remaining. This amount needs to be spent and invoiced for by the end of March. There are a number of restrictions on how CIL money is spent. It must be used to support the development of the council's area by providing, improving, replacing operation or maintenance of infrastructure. Examples are access provision, transport improvements, recreational infrastructure.

### Analysis

APC had discussed the possibility of using CIL money towards the cost of the village gateways but as this is still some time off being implemented, this is no longer an option.

Earlier this year, CIL money was used to erect a new fence between the allotments and playground.

One area of expenditure that has been carried out recently and would be eligible is the road-edge repairs to the Tye Rd. This cost APC £23,305.79. The remaining CIL money could be used towards this cost.

#### Recommendation

That APC agree to use the remaining £502.07 towards the cost of the Tye Road Edge Repairs as carried out by Hailsham Roadways.

#### Appendix E

## ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
Report Subject: PERMISSION FOR ALLOTMENT GATES  
By: Suzanna Dry, Clerk & RFO

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The purpose of this report is to give Cllrs information and details of advice received regarding allowing private gates into Alfriston Allotments. So that Cllrs can make an informed decision at the January APC meeting.

#### Background

9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 - APC received a letter of complaint from the leaseholder of Plots 4A & 4b. The complaint was against a new gate appearing in the boundary fence from the residential property which opens up directly onto Plot 4A ([Appendix 1](#)). I responded advising that APC had not given permission for any gate and we would be contacting the house owners.

Cllr Daw has since spoken with the house owner and advised permission would have to be granted by APC for any gates.

17<sup>th</sup> December 2024 - I sought advice from the SLCC (Society for Local Council Clerks) Advice Line. Their General Advisor informed me as below and confirmed this in writing ([Appendix 2](#)).

- Allotment plot holders have rights under the tenancy agreement, allowing access onto their plot from a resident's garden would infringe on those rights and is likely to be the source of potential issues/conflict.
- Allowing the gate to remain sets a significant precedent to other residents with gardens backing on to the allotments
- Future occupants of the property will not necessarily be allotment holders, which would make access onto the allotments inappropriate.
- Allotment deeds will need to be updated to reflect new permanent access points.

- APC have the right to insist gates are removed or
- Physically block the entrance on APC side of the gate, preventing access.

Old Gates Opening onto the Allotments - I spoke with APC's previous Clerk, who advised there are 3 old gates opening into the allotments from adjoining residential gardens. Although APC have not given permission for these, they have been in situ for over 20 years. Advice was taken from SLCC on these and due to the length of time these gates have been in place, as no action was taken when they were first inserted, they have now become a right of way and we cannot do anything about them. This has been confirmed by the SLCC National Legal Advisor ([Appendix 3](#))

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 - Cllr Daw and myself conducted an inspection of the new gate and when on site found another new gate had appeared on a different fence opening up from a residential property onto Plot 29. No request for permission has been received for this gate either.

Having requested feedback from other Wealden Clerk's no other councils have given permission for private gates into allotments. I also raised this point at a recent Clerk's Forum at SLCC and again no Council's had given permission for private gates.

### Analysis

Existence of 3 Old Gates - Due to the length of time elapsed, nothing can be done about these now.

Appearance of 2 New Gates - the options of APC are:

#### **1. Refuse Permission for both gates**

This option gives the most protection to the allotments.  
Prevents unauthorised access/inappropriate access from non-plot holders.  
Ensures plot holders rights are not infringed upon – addresses complaint already made.  
Prevents any future issues/conflict.  
Allotment deeds will not need to be updated.

#### Disadvantages:

House owners will have to access allotments via public gates.  
House owners to be told to remove gates and re-install fence panel.  
If not complied with APC to physically block gates.

#### **2. Grant Permission for both gates**

Allows new gates already in situ to remain.  
House owners can access allotments thru private gate rather than using public gate.

#### Disadvantages:

Sets a precedence for other house owners to put in private gates.  
Infringes on plot holders rights – does not address complaint received.  
Future issues/conflict.  
After 12 years house owner can claim rights to retain gate forever.  
After 20 years it becomes a right of way across council land.  
Inappropriate access onto allotments when house owner is no longer an allotment holder  
Deeds would need to be changed, showing new access points.  
No other council's have granted permission for private gates in allotments.

#### **3. Grant Permission for both gates on a 12 month term**

Would allow new gates to remain for 12 months.  
On the condition that home owner remains an allotment holder.

After 12 months permission is reviewed and either granted for another 12 months or revoked.  
As only a temporary permission, deeds would not need to be changed.  
Would stop the clock running to claim rights of access.

Disadvantages:

Infringes on plot holders rights - people gaining access across their plot  
Issues/complaints - does not address current complaint from plot holder  
Sets a precedence for other house owners to put in private gates.

Recommendation

Taking into account advice received and to ensure the allotments have the greatest protection going forwards, I would recommend that APC refuse permission for the new gates.

[Appendix 1](#)

**Sent:** 09 December 2024 16:29

**To:** [clerk@alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk)

**Subject:** Alfriston Allotments 4A & 4B

Dear Suzanna

I have been renting allotment plots 4A & 4B for around 19 years. My plots are in the top right hand corner and back onto the garden of Willow Cottage, the last house in The Boundary Road before the childrens playground.

I understand new people are in this property and have been cutting back overgrowing shrubs and trees in their garden during the summer months..

Over the years there has been a rusty bit of fencing and shrubs and trees creating a boundary line to the allotment..

I hadn't been to the allotment for two or three weeks prior to this Sunday 8th December and discovered the owners have now erected a new fence along the boundary.

To do this they have cut down trees and shrubs, which I can make out mostly are within their boundary, and some on the allotment side to enable erection of the new fence.

My concern is that they have installed a gate giving access directly onto my allotments. They have cleared away and disposed of part of the shrubbery on my allotment including some mint and comfrey plants I had planted to benefit wildlife.

I am not happy with this access intruding directly onto my allotment and can only surmise they have fitted the gate because, either they have an allotment plot somewhere close by, or have applied for one.

I would appreciate hearing your understanding of the situation and whether the Parish Council consider it appropriate for me to have to tolerate people intruding in this way.

I attach photo of new gate access.

[Appendix 2](#)

Received: 23.12.24

To: [Clerk@alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:Clerk@alfristonparishcouncil.org.uk)

From: Society of Local Council Clerks, Advice Team

Subject: Allotment Gates without Permission – Alfriston Parish Council

Good morning Suzanna

Thank you for your message and follow up telephone call.

I am happy to confirm the advice that I gave you last Tuesday on the subject of the garden gate suddenly being installed with immediate access onto the allotments that you own and manage. In summary:

- Allotment plot holders have rights under the annual tenancy agreement they hold with the council and a resident of the community suddenly having immediate foot access onto their plot from the residents garden would infringe those rights and is likely to be the source of future potential issues and/or conflict
- Permitting the gate to remain also sets a significant precedent to other residents with gardens backing onto the allotments.
- It should be remembered that no individual or resident of a property will always have an allotment plot and whilst this person is a plot holder, they will not be one for ever and future occupants of that property will not necessarily be plot holders which would make access onto the allotments inappropriate.
- I know you are concerned about adjustments to the deeds reflecting access points to the allotments and this is something that would need to be amended too

In relation to the other gates that have been installed by residents before, I will refer that topic on to Roger Taylor, the National Legal Advisor to check whether there are restrictions on what action the council can now take with these gates having been installed some years ago.

Kind regards

Neil Hitch

SLCC General Advisor

[Appendix 3](#)

**From:** Roger Taylor

**Sent:** 23 December 2024 12:01

**To** SLCC Advice

**Subject:** Re: ALLOTMENT GATES WITHOUT PERMISSION - ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Neil,

Thank you for your email.

You are correct in that if the gate remains in the fence for sufficient length of time, the houseowner may be able to claim rights to retain the gate and also over the Council's land if they have been using it as a right of way. The time limits are either 12 or 20 years depending upon the right claimed.

The Council can grant a right for the houseowner to access the Council's land through the gate for specified purposes. Consent stops the time limit running or physically block the entrance on the Council side of the gate preventing access. It is possible to apply to the Court for an order but this is slow and expensive.

The Council should not demand that the use of the gate cease and then take no action as this does not stop time running against the Council.

Regards

Roger Taylor SLCC National Legal Adviser