ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

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**Minutes of The Annual Parish Assembly of Alfriston Parish Council (APC)**

**held in Alfriston War Memorial Hall on Monday 25th April 2022**

**Present:**

Cllr Watkins [Chair] Cllr Rabagliati

Cllr Beechey [Vice Chair] Cllr Monteath-Wilson

Cllr Cooper Cllr Bell

Cllr Daw

**In attendance:**

Mrs Victoria Rutt - Parish Clerk

Approximately 18 members of the public

1. **Welcome by the Chairman, Cllr Jen Watkins**

Cllr. Watkins welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending the Annual Parish Assembly.

**2. Report from Maria Caulfield MP**

Maria Caulfield was unable to attend and sent her apologies. Report attached as Appendix A.

**3. Report from Cllr Stephen Shing – East Sussex County Council**

Cllr Shing thanked the Parish Council for inviting him to provide a County Report for the 2022 annual Parish Assembly. In addition, he thanked residents for contacting him with their concerns and to fellow Parish Council colleagues for a good working relationship. Cllr Shing was re-elected in May 2021 for Willingdon and South Downs division, he would like to take this opportunity to thank all those residents for their support. Since the pandemic in 2020 with the lockdown restrictions, Cllr Shing was in the group which needed to stay at home. Fortunately, Daniel and Raymond [his two sons] are key workers and could also continue working from home. The work as Councillors was initially difficult with the restrictions to assist our residents in comparison to pre-pandemic. Cllr Shing continues to resolve residents’ concerns and his usual work on local schools, tackling road surfacing, footways and potholes repairs, traffic in Alfriston, Exceat Bridge, the first phase of the Hailsham – Polegate – Eastbourne movement and access corridor, Dittons Road Roundabout and A2270/ A22 Eastbourne Road. East Sussex County Council approved the Local Growth Fund Funded packages in March 2022. A number of the schemes in the capital programme are to be funded from the Government’s Local Growth Fund. A total of over £64m of funding has been made available through various rounds of the Growth Fund to fund transport schemes in East Sussex.  Funding has been awarded for the delivery of the following packages of local transport improvements which will support the housing and employment growth in the growth corridors around Eastbourne/South Wealden and Bexhill/Hastings:

Eastbourne and South Wealden walking and cycling package and Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne Sustainable Transport Corridor.  Locally, proposals for Alfriston traffic management £200,000, Polegate Cross Road Junction Improvements £400,000, Polegate high street 20mph and footway improvements and Eastbourne Road Bus Lane design work £30,000 have been agreed.

**4. Report from Cllr Michael Lunn – Wealden District Council**

Cllr Lunn was unable to attend and sent his apologies. Report attached as Appendix B.

**5. Presentation from Friends of Alfriston Playground**

Ms Anna Franklin presented an excellent Powerpoint on the work that the Friends of Alfriston Playground group have undertaken thus far. The presentation explained the location of the playground and the requirement for improvement. In 2021, following the safety report, both the seesaw and swings were condemned and removed. The slide is very old and has rusty holes, these have been covered by the Parish Council but is only a temporary measure. The surfacing in the playground requires urgent attention.

The group received 70 responses from their consultation. Families like the location but don’t bring their children as concerned about the equipment and not all ages of children are catered for. Outdoor play is so important, the playground is a key community resource.

Children in the community were asked to submit art drawings to show what they would like in the playground. It showed children want natural elements, picnic tables and different play equipment. Alfriston Pre School, Alfriston Cricket Club and Sussex Wildlife Trust have been consulted with. The community design brief was given to 10 companies and asked to quote, 8 companies were met with at the playground.

Friends of Alfriston Playground then met as a group and agreed on the top 4. At the fete in August, feedback was obtained to see which proposal was best. The play fort was very popular. Wicksteed were asked to incorporate all the favorites and a proposal was circulated.

The proposal consists of:

* Tower and bridge for under 5’s.
* Play Fort for primary aged children.
* Log climber for advanced primary to early teens.
* Swings for all ages; will include one inclusive seat, one infant and 2 adults. [*the basket swing and wobble board will remain*]
* 3 picnic tables.

Alfriston Nature Club will be set up and the playground will become their base. They will sow and maintain a wildflower meadow with sensory planters. There will be a magnifying post for bugs and leaves to be looked at. It will be as environmentally friendly as possible.

In January 2022, APC approved the proposal. Fundraising has started and the aim is £65k. APC have ringfenced £8k. A grant funding application will be submitted in June 2022, prior to that some fundraising needs to take place to show there is community support. £1k has been raised so far and a crowdfunding page has been published widely. It can be found here: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/save-alfriston-playground>

Residents and businesses can support this project by donating raffle prizes, joining the events arranged and sending to the group letters of support from businesses/children/parents.

All Councillors expressed they’re thanks to Anna and the group for everything they have done thus far, it is excellent and really appreciated. Cllr Beechey thanked Much Ado for the support they have shown the project with arranging events.

Mr John Hurwood asked why Wealden District Council have not been asked for funding. The Clerk explained that a lot of companies will not fund Parish Councils so we are very limited on what applications APC can submit. Wealden District Council do not have any grants that are suitable for this project that the Parish Council is eligible to apply for. Veolia is one of the rare companies that will accept. SDNPA will also be contacted for assistance with funding.

**6. Public Questions**

No public questions.

**Appendix A**

**Report from Maria Caulfield MP**

**A27 Works**

Cllr Michael Lunn and I met recently with residents in Wilmington to discuss the current works on the A27. It was a positive meeting and a number of concerns were addressed. The speed limit at the stretch by Wilmington will be reduced to 40mph and the team are looking at the crossing issues for horse riders to improve safety. They are also adjusting the right turn to deal with the undercutting that sometimes occurs when people turn right.

**Covid-19 Boosters**

Covid-19 Spring Boosters are now available for those at most risk including:

* Those aged 75 and over
* Residents in care homes for older adults
* All those over the age of 12 who have a weakened immune system

If you are eligible the NHS will contact you directly to book.

**Community Safety Funding for East Sussex**

This funding from the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Katy Bourne, totals £445,762.88 in East Sussex including £37,264.25 in Wealden District. Wider projects include £118,131 for the Youth Offending Service and £114,948 for the Drug Intervention Programme. There is also £1,707,368 for Co-commissioning and Victims Services with funding for things such as specialist services for victims of rape, domestic abuse, fraud, and hate crime. I am sure that this funding will go a long way to keep our communities safe and provide specialist support to those who do fall victim to crime.

**New Family Hub in East Sussex**

I have welcomed the news that East Sussex will receive one of 75 new Family Hubs under plans to Level Up access to childcare, mental health services, housing advice, and employment across England. Family Hubs offer localised early help and intervention, from early years support to counselling or parenting classes, all of which can make a transformative difference in the lives of parents and carers who may not have a support network. This will ensure that vulnerable families and young people leaving care can access key support services in one place.

**Funding for Museums and Galleries**

I am encouraging museums and galleries across the constituency to bid for the £4 million in new funding to the Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund. This cash boost will support the improvement of displays, protect collections, and make museums and galleries more accessible to visitors – helping to level up people’s opportunities to participate in and enjoy our culture across the country. Applications for the new round will be open from 9 May to 1 August 2022, with funding decisions expected in autumn 2022. Information on the fund including eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dcmswolfson-museums-and-galleries-improvement-fund-2022-24>

**Appendix B**

**Report from Cllr Michael Lunn, Wealden District Council**

Firstly, apologies I cannot join you for your Parish Assembly. Unfortunately, I am staying in Bristol for business and unable to make this evening’s meeting.

The District Council is responsible for planning, housing, waste collection, licensing, environmental health, council tax collection and benefits. We also have some non-statutory responsibilities such as leisure, economic development and tourism. In addition, we have a number of assets we are responsible for including council car parks and redundant graveyards etc. We also operate the crematorium, own shops in Vicarage Field in Hailsham and have a housing company. These commercial operations generate income and help to meet the strategic aims of the District Council. Some of the services, such as building control, environmental health and licensing are provided through a shared service with other authorities and some are out sourced such as waste collection and leisure. On the other hand, unlike most other authorities, we continue to own and manage council housing of which we own over 3000 units.

All these services are provided out of a tax which represents about 10% of your Council Tax bill. The District Council has been prudently managed and been able to hold a good level of reserves and last year was able to freeze our portion of the council tax. This year we have had to increase by £5 a year for a Band D taxpayer, with uncertainties about income from central government and inflationary pressures. Over the past years, financial support from government has been reduced and councils are largely reliant on their own resources and council tax.

In the past, one of the most difficult service areas has been waste collection, which has improved immensely with our current contract with Biffa, who have done a very professional job even through the pandemic period and having to cope with staff absences. Missed bins are at a record low and recycling is very high. However, currently we do have a threat of industrial action which could last two weeks but we are trying to avoid at all costs.

Planning is always a contentious issue. Fortunately, we are protected by the South Downs National Park who acts as the planning Authority despite being in Wealden District. This protects Alfriston from the worst excesses of over development. As someone who is on the board of the South Downs National Park, I am very concerned that everything we do conserves and enhances the beautiful landscape of the area whilst maintaining economic value through tourism and contributes to a vibrant village community.

The new local plan preparation is advancing, against the background of a target for house building from government which is excessive and, in my view, unachievable. The Council have accepted the principle that development should be concentrated around existing sustainable settlements with the possibility that a new settlement might be considered. With the uncertainty about planning reforms and possible new targets from government we are waiting for an announcement before publishing a draft plan. However, the planning officers are kept very busy assembling the evidence for the new plan and assessing sites for inclusion in the plan. We are hopeful for a lower target but also changes to the rules on the 5 year housing land supply, which will give us more control over planning applications which are being submitted, particularly in the South of the district.