AALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT minutes of a meeting of Alfriston Parish Council (APC), held in the Alfriston War Memorial Hall on Monday 20th November at 19.15.

**Present:**

Cllr D Monteath-Wilson (Chair) Cllr S Rabagliati

Cllr J Watkins (Vice-Chair) Cllr N Parkinson

Cllr A Harris Cllr S Daw

**In attendance:**

Paul Richards - Locum Clerk

There were 21 members of the public present.

1. **Chairman’s Welcome**

Cllr Monteath-Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting and welcomed Paul Richards as the locum Clerk who would take the minutes.

1. **Public Questions**

* Mr Price attributed many of the issues related to the recent flooding to the Environment Agency’s ill-conceived plans. The Chair advised that this matter would be discussed in greater detail during the meeting; and
* Mr Price asked when the suggested 20mph zone would be implemented. The Chair advised that this matter would be discussed in greater detail during the meeting.

1. **Update from Maria Caulfield**

Maria Caulfield MP was not in attendance at the meeting. Mr Richards gave a brief update on the content of her update full details of which will be appended to the draft Minutes. **Appendix A.**

* Her agreement that the £2.00 bus fare cap be expanded;
* Her support for Virtual ward beds;
* Her support to not scrap the Day Travelcard in London; and
* Her support for the expansion of train services to Newhaven Harbour, Glynde and Berwick train stations.

1. **Apologies for absence**

There were apologies from Cllr Spring.

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

Cllr Shing was not in attendance at the meeting. Mr Richards gave a brief update on the content of his update full details of which will be appended to the minutes. **Appendix B.**

* New Exceat Bridge proposal;
* Questions to South East Water;
* Household Support Fund;
* Planting of grass seed on County Council verges; and
* Household waste food collection proposal.

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

Cllr Greaves was not in attendance at the meeting. A report was received after the meeting. **Appendix C.**

1. **Declarations on Interest**

Cllr Daw advised that she had joined the Seaford Surgery Patient Participation Group. The Chair asked that the Locum Clerk request an updated Register of Interests Form from her.

1. **Minutes**

The Chair advised that the draft Minutes from the September meeting were inaccurate and that many amendments were required. In particular, she referred to item 92.1 (Clerk Recruitment) and that, despite the draft Minutes stating that the contracted hours for the new Clerk would be 20-25 hours per week, the vacancy advert had stated 25-30 hours per week. The prospective candidates have been advised of the error resulting in the withdrawal of one application. Other Councillors provided their amendments. It was **RESOLVED** that the draft September Minutes would be updated with the agreed amendments and re-circulated for approval before the next meeting.

1. **Finance**
   1. **Statement of Finances for November 2023.** The Finance was report was received by the Council, it was duly proposed, seconded and agreed.
   2. **Interim Audit –** it was **RESOLVED** to ratify the decision, circulated previously, to appoint Mulberry and Co to provide an interim audit.
   3. **LGS pay award –** Mr Richards was asked to update Councillors on the recent LGS pay award. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the backdated pay to the Clerk.
2. **ESCC Urban Grass Cutting Options for 2024**

The Chair referred to an email sent by the Locum Clerk that referred to three options in relation to grass cutting. Several Councillors advised that they had not seen this email. The Chair agreed that the email be re-circulated and that this matter be discussed at the next meeting.

1. **Coffeehouse Conversations**

Cllr Parkinson referred to a proposal, circulated in September 2023, to hold sessions with the public to provide an informal way for them to raise issues and concerns with their Parish Councillors. His proposal suggested a relaxed, constructive, and un-minuted discussion that would, over a longer period, cycle through all the APC portfolio topics. The sessions would aim to inform and educate both residents and provide a library of questions and answers on the APC website. Topics could include all areas of parish business plus the outside groups and working parties. The meetings could be held during the daytime and/or in the evenings. Feedback from these sessions would be reported back to APC with Cllr Parkinson happy to moderate and provide information for the meetings. Councillors agreed with the proposal. Cllr Parkinson suggested the first meeting be held in January 2024 to coincide with budget setting. Mr Richards advised Councillors on the budget setting process that would normally start in December to allow the precept request to be sent to WDC in mid-January. He reminded Councillors that it is the elected members who decide on (a) the budget and then (b) the precept required to fund the approved budget. Councillors agreed that the first meeting should be held in January and would focus on Highways. The decisions regarding the budget and precept could also be explained. The Chair thanked Cllr Parkinson for his work to date and for agreeing to establish the Coffeehouse Conversations.

1. **Report on Highways and Twittens**

Cllr Rabagliati thanked the AEG team (Steve, David and Guy) who have all done so much for the village during these recent weeks where the weather had been so awful. Their tireless efforts have been really helpful for the whole community. Councillors joined him in thanking the AEG team.

* 1. **High Street Traffic Management Plan.** He advised that he had attended the Lead Member Meeting at the ESCC Offices where the ESCC Traffic Management Plan was presented to the Lead Member. He reported that the scheme was approved to progress to the next step, which is detailed planning of the scheme. Unfortunately, he was not given the opportunity to ask questions at the meeting but will be following up to discover the timelines for the implementation. It was, however, recognised that the process had already taken a long time. Now that the plan is approved, the next step is to decide exactly what is needed to add to the measures in the ESCC scheme for 20 mph and build-outs at either end of the village and, more importantly, how it is proposed to fund them. A meeting of the Traffic Calming Committee will be arranged for January to drive this forward.
  2. **Flooding issues and development of an Emergency Traffic Management Plan**. The flooding and subsequent closure of North Street on 3rd November 2023, together with an incident at Newhaven bridge, resulted in a traffic diverting through the village with unmanageably high traffic levels on Winton Street. Cllr Rabagliati is in communication with East Sussex Highways and Maria Caulfield MP and trying to discuss the development of a proper Emergency Traffic Management Plan that can be brought into play in situations such as this. Diverting traffic through the village is not an acceptable solution. Despite a positive initial response from Maria Caulfield, he has not heard more from her. He will provide an update on this at the next meeting.
  3. **Blocked road drains around the village.** At last Friday’s SLR meeting with East Sussex Highways, the blocked drains outside Deans Place, Willows Car Park, and on various roads around the village were referred to. Cllr Rabagliati was at an on-site meeting with the 2 ESCC Highways Stewards where the blocked drains were inspected. The drains outside Deans Place are already on the system and will be scheduled for jetting imminently. The drains on North Street by the Willows carpark will have to wait for the water levels to subside before they can be cleaned. It is likely that cleaning these will expose issues ‘downstream’.
  4. **Gas lamp in the village square.** In October a gas leak was reported in the village square and it was discovered to be coming from the connection to the gas street light by Market Cross. Cllr Rabagliati spoke the SGN engineers at the site, who told him that it would not be possible to reconnect the supply that evening, and they were proposing to fill the hole in and terminate the supply. He spoke to a member of their management team who explained that, as there was no meter installed, the supply could not be reconnected. Cllr Rabagliati requested that the hole be left in place pending further investigation. The lamp was gifted in 1988 by British Gas to commemorate the arrival of gas in the village, and the lamp had been lit ever since. No records appeared to exist as to who paid for the gas over the years, and SGN now require a meter to be in place before they can reconnect the supply. He went to The Keep in Lewes last week to search APC records of that time hoping to be able to prove that the gas supply was also gifted in perpetuity. This was not the case, however, and it seems that ADAPTT, the then trade and tourism organisation agreed to pay for the gas. No records of payments seem to exist, however, and ADAPTT itself ceased to exist in the early 2000’s. As the situation stands at the moment, the gas supply is terminated, and APC now have to decide how to proceed with regards to the lamp. Options are:

1) do nothing and leave the lamp as it is, unlit.

2) Attempt to negotiate a fixed rate for the supply of gas, or

3) request the installation of a meter, and supply of gas. There would be a cost to this, of course.

4) investigate an alternate means to light the lamp.

All of these would require periodic maintenance of the lamp, of course. A last alternative would be to remove the lamp altogether. Cllr Rabagliati suggested that APC seek to establish costings of the various options and put this item on the agenda to discuss in January.

* 1. **Bollards along the High Street.** Over the last year or so, seven of the bollards along the High Street have been hit and damaged by passing vehicles. Some had been left in situ., while others have been removed and the holes filled in. After applying continuous pressure to East Sussex Highways, 5 of the bollards were replaced last month, leaving 2 to be replaced, one outside Clifton House and the other on the corner of West Street. Cllr Rabagliati had been promised that these will be replaced by ESH and, at the meeting with the Highways stewards, he clarified their locations. At the SLR meeting last week he was advised by ESH that it is no longer policy to supply and fit new bollards as these are seen as an obstruction to the highway. He found this policy surprising and suggests that APC apply pressure to increase the number of bollards along the length of the High Street to protect pedestrians from the increasingly aggressive driving that we are seeing through the village. He will raise this subject again at the next Traffic Calming Committee meeting.
  2. **Beachy Head Marathon.** At the beginning of October, a large number of signs were placed along the High Street suggesting that there was to be a road closure of the High Street to allow the Beachy Head Marathon runners to come through the village. The signage was not of the normal standard and investigations with WDC and ESH established that there was only to be a closure of Star Lane, and that the signage indicating a High Street closure was incorrect. Normally APC and other stakeholders are consulted in advance about road closures, but on this occasion the Eastbourne Borough Council Events organisers rushed the plans through without any consultation, and advertised closures that they did not have permission for. APC made objections about this as such closures have a negative impact on village life and trade. Last year, APC received a number of complaints about the management of the event in the village. However, on the day, the marathon proceeded well and there was little or no disruption.
  3. **South Wealden Focus Group**. On 1st December Cllr Rabagliati will be attending a Zoom meeting hosted by Wealden to discuss traffic issues. Some of the main themes will be roads issues – namely speeding, obstructive parking, noise problems and e-scooters – as well as a discussion about local policing and the future funding of Sussex Police. He will be making representations at that meeting about enforcement of parking regulations in Wealden.

After the September meeting he contacted Wealden to suggest the idea of a delivery drop/collection point in the village. Wealden commented that they are looking at such schemes and will respond in due course.

**Village road signs.** Wealden have installed new road name signs around North Street, West Street and Waterloo Square. He understands that a further new sign is being considered to show where North Street turns into High Street.

**Christmas Tree lighting event, 2nd December**. APC had received the road closure order for this so the event can proceed as planned.

**Traffic incident.** He had attempted to contact the police about the traffic incident in the village on 12th October where a car impacted buildings in the lower High Street and then mounted the pavement outside Chevan hairdressers and caused substantial damage, finally coming to a stop outside the Star. He had yet to receive a response.

Cllr Watkins advised that she had received complaints about cyclists riding too fast down the Kings Ride on the South Downs Way. She agreed to forward the email to Cllr Rabagliati. The Chair thanked Cllr Rabagliati for his comprehensive report.

1. **Reports of Allotments and Recreation Ground**
   1. **Update on the playground issues.** Cllr Daw reported that she had inspected the playground with the Chair of the Friends of the Playground and will report issues and reports of faulty equipment back to the Locum Clerk. Warning notices have been placed on the faulty equipment and fences. She had met the Tree Warden and they had examined the shared fencing adjacent to the playground. Parts of the fence are broken and need to be replaced. Cllr Daw will contact the Locum Clerk to establish if the neighbour or APC are responsible for this fence. They had also inspected the APC playground and found that it was in need of repair. Cllr Daw will contact the Locum Clerk to arrange the necessary quotes. Updates on these repairs will be provide at the next meeting.
   2. **Recreation ground.** A water butt, donated to APC, had disappeared. Cllr Daw will investigate its whereabouts.
   3. **Allotments.** A complaint was received in relation to overgrown trees. The Tree Warden had assessed the trees and found no issues with them. No further action is planned. The water to the allotments had now been switched off for the winter.

The Chair thanked Cllr Daw for her report.

1. **Report on Public Transport.**

Cllr Harris reported that public transport had been disrupted and services suspended due to the recent flooding. Compass had kept residents update with frequent updates to their website and the local Facebook page.

1. **Report on Rights of Way (PROW) and Countryside**

Due to the recent wet weather, no PROW issues have been reported. He endorsed the excellent PROW online map to be found on the ESCC website. No registration is required to view maps although details must be provided if residents wish to report an issue.

**The Cuckmere** – Embankment repairs to the south of the White Bridge have been completed however these repairs are starting to fail. He will report the issues to the Water Levels Management Board. He will suggest that a proper concrete runway for floodwater is incorporated. Limited dredging works are planned in February 2024, and he referred to two messages posted by the local MP in this regard. In one of these messages, she suggests a meeting will be called by her and the EA. He had asked to be included at this meeting.

The Chair thanked him for both reports.

1. **Report on Strategic Planning –** no update**.**
2. **Report on Tye**
   1. **General Maintenance Update –** Cllr Parkinson provide an update that included:

**General Maintenance -** There are several outstanding issues, some due to the recent weather.

* A pipe cover had been damaged near the WMH. This appears to be a standard Hepworth cover over a hall soakaway, but it’s not clear if the sluice mounting itself is damaged. He had asked Steve at AEG if they can help but they have had far bigger issues to deal with recently and this had, understandably, not progressed.
* A branch of the willow tree near the pumping station was damaged by the storm. Dan Larkin will investigate although the area had remained flooded for some time.
* The black top and base of the mine is very chipped and Cllr Parkinson proposes to repaint it when the weather allows.
* Hannah Parkinson and Cllr Parkinson have tidied around the main gate and the garden and bench area at the end of the Tye Road. In the spring, that area would benefit from a Tye Team of volunteers to care for it. He suggests that it could become a bee friendly area, or a herb garden. Suggestions and volunteers would be welcome.
  1. **The Tye Road**

Cllr Parkinson reported that maintenance and parking are clearly longstanding issues. He proposes to divide improvements into three areas: parking restrictions, potholes, and

the collapsing road edge. The last of these needs to be dealt with professionally, but

he proposes that APC address the others.

* **Parking restrictions: Yellow Lines and Signage**
  + The double yellow line had faded to almost nothing and needs repainting. Cllr Parkinson proposes that APC repaints the yellow lines in the appropriate heritage paint. The locum clerk advised that he take Highways advice on this. He has now received their approval to proceed. A plan and paint are now needed; and
  + In addition, he proposes that APC install two further No Parking signs on two bollards alongside the turning circle, using the same design as the existing one near the Wingrove. The approximate cost of this is £120; which is available in the Tye capital budget. Councillors agreed to fund both the signs and paint.
* **Potholes**
  + These appear to have been repaired by APC in previous years and Mr Beechey still had some materials. As recent maintenance had lapsed, he proposed that APC reinstate this work as much of the road surface is still viable and could save the Parish a significant amount not to resurface the whole thing. This was agreed and Cllr Parkinson was asked to organise a volunteer team.
* **Road edge**
  + This is collapsing in many places and the profile of the Tye Road, now looks higher than the Tye itself, combined with the increasing weight of cars, encourages erosion. He suggested that a proper supporting edge would be required.
  + A specification provided for the work from 2014 needs updating and he will discuss this with Councillors. He suggested a site visit.
  + Three quotes would be needed, but currently only one supplier is known. Money had been ringfenced over the last few years; the reserve is now £20k, but additional funds will likely be required.
  + Cllr Parkinson is reviewing possible grant applications and will attend a course in December on possible sources. APC will need to do its homework before applying for any grant money. It had also been suggested that individual villagers may wish to contribute to this work or engage in fundraising.
  + But first, APC need an agreed proposal and costings.

The Chair thanked Cllr Parkinson for working on these projects and thanked him for his report.

1. **Report from Planning Committee**
   1. **Applications considered by APC Planning Committee since last meeting**

* SDNP/23/03964/HOUS Candle Cottage, High Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5SZ (now approved);
* SDNP/23/03986/FUL Kings Ride Farm, Kings Ride, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5US (awaiting decision by WDC);
* SDNP/23/04057/HOUS France Hill, South Downs Way, Kings Ride, Alfriston, East Sussex (awaiting decision by WDC).
  1. **Applications notified or awaiting decision on from SDNPA**
* SDNP/23/02387/LIS 3 Waterloo Square, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5UD
* SDNP/23/02557/HOUS and LIS 9 North Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5UG
* SDNP/23/02643/LIS 7 West Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5UX
* SDNP/23/01305/FUL Saddlers House, High Street, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5SZ
* SDNP/23/02324/HOUS Pailin House, 6 Kings Ride, Alfriston, East Sussex, BN26 5XP
  1. **Enforcement updates** – one enforcement case (Highways) is pending decision.

1. **Reports from Outside bodies**
   1. **Heartstart –** Cllr Watkins advised that more volunteers were required**.**
   2. **Alfriston Emergency Group** – Mr Woodgate reported that the Team had been very busy, due to the recent flooding, with vehicle recoveries, pumping, website updates and communication with emergency services and the EA. All Councillors expressed their thanks and appreciation to the Team for their hard work in supporting the community**.**
   3. **Flood Forum –** Mr Hurwood advised that the planned meeting had been postponed and would be rescheduled. He met with EA at the car park and recommended that WDC provide a permanent stand and ramp for the pump. The Locum Clerk was asked to write to WDC accordingly**.**
   4. **Neighbourhood Watch –** no update**.**
   5. **Twinning Committee –** no update**.**
   6. **St Andrew’s Church –** Cllr Daw reported that the Remembrance Service was well attended and that the Harvest Service had provided many food parcels. The Church is currently collecting toys for families in need. A St Andrew’s Day lunch will be served on 30th November 2023. Christmas plans include a concert in the Church on 10th December 2023 and the Christingle Service at 3:30pm on 24th December 2023**.**
   7. **Clergy House** – no update**.**
   8. **Cuckmere Buses –** Mr Price reported that the floods had prevented a bus service for the last two weeks. AEG had been informed and the priority was to get the children to school. He also advised that the 59 bus service would soon cease for the winter season. It is not known if the service will resume in 2024**.**
   9. **Alfriston War memorial Hall –** no update**.**
   10. **Speedwatch –** Cllr Rabagliati thanked the existing team for their efforts in the recent bad weather but called for more volunteers to join the scheme. The Chair thanked him for picking up the responsibility to organise the Team on such short notice.
   11. **Events –** the Chair suggested that a new outside body report to APC each month. The ‘events’ were an important part of the parish and Councillors agreed that this subject be included for future meetings. Ms Hudson will post notice of activities and report to APC as and when required. Councillors agreed to her request for an A Board in the Square in advance of the event on 2nd December 2023. Advance warning signs will be erected and the necessary road closure permissions obtained**.**
2. **Correspondence to The Clerk – Mr Richards reported on:**

* **Rope Walk** – information from Land Registry advised that Rope Walk is not a public highway/road and is part owned by Diana Kelly’s property. No motor vehicles should use this as a road;
* **The Tye** – two requests to use the Tye (a) The Rude mechanical Theatre Co (14th July 2024) and (b) Nativity event (2nd December 2023). These were both approved by the Councillors.

Cllr Parkinson reported that he had been asked by Ms Sansom for affordability information from ESALC. The Chair advised that she had asked the Clerk to contact ESALC to provide the necessary information to Ms Sansom directly.

1. **Public Questions**

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

1. **Date of next meeting.**

The meeting re-started at 20:58. The Chair advised that the next meeting will be held on Monday 22nd January 2024 in the AWMH at 19:15.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 21:01.