

# ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

Mrs Suzanna Dry CILCA

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

6<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## **Draft Minutes of a meeting of Alfriston Parish Council (APC), held in the Alfriston War Memorial Hall on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 8.00pm**

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### **Present:**

Cllr D Monteath-Wilson (Chair)   Cllr A Harris  
Cllr J Watkins (Vice Chair)   Cllr N Parkinson  
Cllr R Embry   Cllr J Spring  
Cllr S Daw

### **In attendance:**

Mrs Suzanna Dry – Parish Clerk & RFO

There were approximately 5 members of the public present.

### **16. Chair's Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the monthly meeting and advised that we now have a dedicated PCSO, Issac Wood. The Clerk and Chair will be meeting him on The Tye tomorrow morning, any Cllrs that are free are welcome to come along. We will ask if he can arrange a 'meet and greet' in the village, as well as inviting him to attend future Parish Council meetings. With regard to APC's mailbox in the hall, the Chair will ask the AWMH Committee to re-consider APC's request for an external mailbox.

### **17. Public Questions**

A question was asked as to where we are with re-instating the village post box. The Clerk replied that a date had not yet been confirmed for the work to start from the project managers. The last update received was a month ago and the Clerk will contact the project managers for an update.

**Action Point 1.**

### **18. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Stephen Shing, ESCC.

### **19. Update from MP**

There was no report for the meeting. This has since been received and is attached to the minutes.

[Appendix A.](#)

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

Cllr Shing had sent through his report and the Clerk read this out. A copy is attached, [Appendix B.](#)

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

Cllr Greaves presented his report to the meeting. A copy is attached to the minutes. [Appendix C.](#)

## **22 . Declaration of interest**

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

## **23. Minutes**

Cllr Harris proposed and Cllr Daw seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the **Annual Parish meeting** held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025, were a true and accurate record. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair duly sign the minutes as an accurate record.

Cllr Embry proposed and Cllr Watkins seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the **Finance** meeting held on 22nd April 2025, were a true and accurate record. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair duly sign the minutes as an accurate record.

Cllr Embry proposed and Cllr Watkins seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the **Personnel** meeting held on 22nd April 2025, were a true and accurate record. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair duly sign the minutes as an accurate record.

Cllr Harris proposed and Cllr Spring seconded a motion that the unadopted minutes of the **APC monthly** meeting held on 28th April 2025, were a true and accurate record. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chair duly sign the minutes as an accurate record.

## **24. Finance**

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

## **25. Report on VE Day Celebrations – Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

Cllr Daw reported that due to the cold weather the event was held inside the War Memorial Hall. It was very successful with a lot of people attending. Approximately £200 was made from the cake sale held by Alfriston Women's Group. Cllr Daw confirmed the village bunting and poppies are now kindly being stored by Emmett & White. The Chair and Cllrs thanked Cllr Daw for organising the event. The Alfriston Women's Group have since confirmed that the final figure made from the cake sale was £286.90, which will be used to help fund their programme of meetings and activities.

## **26. Consultation on East Sussex Freight & Rail Strategies**

Cllr Parkinson commented that he would like rail freight to be prioritised over road freight. Cllr Spring also agreed with this in order to get freight off the B roads. Cllrs all **AGREED** with this. The Clerk was asked to log these comments with the consultation. **Action Point 2.** The Clerk confirmed that the consultations have been put on the website and sent out via Mailchimp for residents to comment on.

## **27. SLCC National Conference – October 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>**

Cllrs **AGREED** unanimously for the Clerk to attend the Society for Local Council Clerk's National Conference on 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> October. With the cost of £450.00 being funded from the training\courses budget.

## **28. Report on Highways & Twittens – Cllr Embry**

Cllr Embry reported that the re-scheduled road works will commence on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June and run until 14<sup>th</sup> June. APC's Customer Services Manager for ESCC Highways will be leaving at the end of May. It is hoped a replacement will be in post by June. The Clerk confirmed that the e-mail is a generic one and any queries in the meantime will be picked up by the department. It does however

mean that the next SLR (Strengthening Local Relationships) meeting with Highways scheduled for June has now been cancelled. Once a new Customer Services Manager is in place we will look to reinstate this.

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

Allotments - I'm happy to say the rubble is well on it's way to being removed from the allotments thank you Councillor Spring for your offer of help with this. The Clerk and I realised the new allotment signs saying Allotments holders only have still not arrived so the Clerk will be looking into this. **Action Point 3.** I am concerned that weeds which caused so much damage to the old fence which has now been replaced (at no cost to PC) are now growing back and because all the bins and other obstacles blocking the pathway it is very difficult for the owners of the fence to keep it clear. Especially as this part of the allotment is covered in stinging nettles and is in a very sad state, this should be accessible and not allowed to regrow and cause damage to the fence.

There are now only 3 allotments up for rent and our new allotment holders are working very hard and there is a massive improvement, thank you.

Playground - thank you to Anna Franklin for your e mail regarding the twisted wood that runs across the top of the Fort, the Clerk has reported this to Wickstead but we have our inspection in June, we never know the date just some time in June. It has been suggested a monthly call goes out on the Friends of Alfriston Playground face book page asking if anyone has any issues to raise re the playground this would get the message out to the community.

Recreation Ground - the cricket season has begun and they are always looking for new players. Thank you to the cricket team for painting the outside of the Pavillon and I think the inside has had a clean as well. I'm suggesting that when the season is finished then the Pavilion should be inspected by the portfolio holder.

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

We have recently received notice from East Sussex County Council of the changes in bus services following a grant received by them of £41.4 million. I have read through the proposals, and as far as I can tell there is not change to any of the bus services servicing Alfriston – either improvements or cuts. Full details of the proposals affecting other parts of Wealden District can be found on the East Sussex C.C. website at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roads-transport/public/bus-service-improvement-plan/bus-service-changes>. Cuckmere Buses have published the new Summer timetable on their website which is easily accessible and distributed leaflets locally.

### **31. Report on Environment & Countryside**

I have been notified by Southern Water of two incidents since our last meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March, both relating to what they define as “genuine storm overflow releases that are likely to have impacted water quality at Seaford”. These took place on 15<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April after rainfall of just over ½” and approximately ¾” respectively. I find it somewhat alarming that in this fairly dry period, the drainage system cannot cope with a fairly small amount of rain.

On weather statistics,, we have had 1 ½ inches of rain this month, compared with 2 ½ last year, and in the six weeks since the last APC meeting, 2 ½ inches have fallen, compared with 4 inches for the same period last year. Rain has fallen on 8 days, compared with 25 last year.

River Bank downstream from the White Bridge. We received late notice on 15<sup>th</sup> April from the Water Management Alliance of the closure of the footpath from 16<sup>th</sup> April for up to 21days to allow for spreading more topsoil and re-seeding. In fact the footpath reopened after only a few days after the work had been completed. There are however notices asking the public to keep off the top of the bank and walk along the bottom to allow the seed to germinate and take. The lower ground currently is quite firm. In spite of the late notification, I would to record that Revai Kinsella of the Water Management Alliance does an excellent job in keeping information flowing and in responding

rapidly to enquiries. Cllr Parkinson mentioned there are two big piles of spoil on the footpath near White Bridge, Cllr Harris will look into this.

Nothing to report on Public Rights of Way – I did come across a small tree blocking the path near the campsite – but was able to pull it to one side!

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

Update on Emergency Plan - Cllr Parkinson reported that feedback received had been very positive. We need to get the emergency telephone number set up, which alerts all Cllrs and AEG. Cllr Spring offered to provide a dedicated emergency number at no cost. This would remain cost free whilst Cllr Spring continues to run his company, if and when he leaves the cost would then be around £10.00 per month. The Chair and Cllr Parkinson will liaise with AEG. All agreed that APC need to have control of the telephone line as it is part of the Emergency Plan. Cllr Parkinson reported that Tansleys had quoted approximately £70.00 to print 500 leaflets of the Emergency Plan. Cllrs **AGREED** to this cost. **Action Point 4.** Points to consider going forwards are purchasing yellow APC tabards and whether we should look at investing in a generator.

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

Update on repair to Tye Rd - Hailsham Roadways have been asked to quote to repair the sunken area and last pothole on The Tye. Yellow Lines - currently waiting for a replacement sachet to mix with the paint before work can commence. Water Fountain - approximate costs to set this up are in the region of £733.00 per qtr due to legionella testing, making it not viable to pursue. All **AGREED**.

Sustainability Event on The Tye - Looking possibly at holding this on 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026. Don't need a decision from APC yet, just for information at this stage.

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

34.1 Applications considered by APC Planning Committee since the last meeting.

**Ref. No: SDNP/24/02440/FUL - Appeal re:** Former Allotment Site, North St.

APC logged a new comment on the Appeal, endorsing the Historic Buildings Officer's report.

**Ref. No: SDNP/25/00989/FUL - The Tudor House, High St., BN26 5SY.** **No objection**  
Internal & external alterations. APC logged their concern at a loss of retail space.

**Ref. No: SDNP/25/01585/FUL & 01586/LIS - Ye Olde Smuggler's Inne.** **No objection**  
Upper floor guest room & access from courtyard.

**Ref. No: SDNP/25/01512/HUS - Danny Cottage, Winton St. BN26 5UJ.** **No objection**  
Erection of single storey garden room.

**Ref. No: SDNP/25/01501/CND - Pyewacket, 19 Deans Rd, BN26 5XJ** **No objection**  
Change of condition 3 (materials).

34.2. Applications notified or awaiting decision from SDNPA

**Ref. No: SDNP/25/01006/LIS - Winton Barn, Winton St, BN26 5UJ.** **Approved**  
Internal alterations.

34.3 Enforcement updates from SDNPA - Sunnyvale, France Hill.

SDNPA advised an unauthorised sand school had been constructed, SDNPA report this has now been removed and will be returned to grassland.

### **35. Reports from Outside Bodies**

35.1 Heartstart - Nothing to report.

35.2 Alfriston Emergency Group - No report.

35.3 Flood Forum - Nothing to report.

35.4 Neighbourhood Watch - No report.

35.5 Twinning Committee - Report read out at the meeting (as attached to the Agenda).

35.6 St Andrew's Church - Cllr Daw advised it was Christian's last day on Sunday, there was a lovely send off for him that took place in the church . He will be missed greatly.

35.7 Clergy House - No report.

35.8 Alfriston War Memorial Hall - No report.

35.9 Speedwatch - No report, currently on hold.

35.10 Events - No report.

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

Wedding Catering Van – 19<sup>th</sup> July (details attached to the Agenda). APC **AGREED** to the catering van but not the request for a gazebo on The Glebe. The Clerk was asked to reply accordingly. **Action Point 5.**

Southdowns Music Festival - 15-20<sup>th</sup> July (details attached to the Agenda). APC **AGREED** to the mobile bar being parked on The Tye from 15-21<sup>st</sup> July. The Clerk was asked to reply accordingly and ensure a copy of the Public Liability Insurance and Risk Assessment is received for the event. **Action Point 6.**

Councillor Resignation - Cllr Daw announced to the meeting that she is resigning as a Councillor, as she is leaving the village. The Chair thanked Cllr Daw for all her work over the years both to APC and the village. The Chair went on to say Cllr Daw had been one of the most hard working councillors she has known, has a great practical and rational response to issues, consideration of others and sense of humour, which will be greatly missed. Cllr Daw thanked her fellow councillors, it has been an interesting and wonderful time. The Chair confirmed there will now be a vacancy on the Parish Council, hopefully we can go to co-option if there is no request for an election, as elections cost a great deal of money. The Clerk asked Cllr Daw to put her resignation in writing to the Chair with the Clerk copied in, and then Wealden District Council will be informed. **Action Point 7.**

**37. Public Questions**

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.23pm and opened the floor to public questions. The meeting was then re-opened at 9.33pm.

**38. Date of next meeting** – The next meeting will be held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025 in the AWMH at 7:15pm

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.36pm

Please see Appendices attached below and/or on the website

James MacCleary MP report May 2025

#### **A259 Ministerial meeting**

Traffic in Newhaven has become unbearable recently and I have had enough. The town is brought to a complete standstill, I have sought to work with East Sussex County Council to address residents' concerns but have been met with resistance to take any steps to alleviate pressure on the roads. During Oral Questions to the Department of Transport recently, I secured a commitment from the Minister to meet with me to see how the government can work with us to bring this traffic crisis to an end.

#### **Assisted Dying**

The biggest debate that has been taking place in the chamber recently, is that on Kim Leadbeater's bill on Assisted Dying. Hundreds of constituents have written to me with their very personal stories from both sides of the debate. Whilst I have been a long-term supporter of people's right to choose, I remain committed to reviewing the amendments as and when they are proposed and voted on to ensure this bill is fit for purpose.

#### **Exceat Bridge**

I recently attended the County Council cabinet meeting, where they agreed to proceed with a new plan to spend a further £11m to build the new bridge on top of the original commitment. It is baffling that the project has already spent nearly £5m without anything to show residents and I remain deeply concerned about how this project's costs have spiralled out of control. A simpler scheme that retained traffic lights did have its merits, as it would have lessened the financial cost and allowed for better investment in provisions for pedestrians and cyclists whilst also addressing speeding concerns.

#### **UK-EU Summit**

I recently represented my party in the opposition day debate on the UK-EU Summit. We discussed at length, the impact Brexit has had on our local fisherman, farmers, import and export businesses. I remain of the view that closer ties, through a customs union would provide a route to economic growth that our country so desperately needs. A youth mobility scheme is also in the best interests of our young people, as we should at a minimum be seeking to give our children the same opportunities that I was able to enjoy as young person. I will be scrutinising the detail of the government's "reset" as it emerges.

#### **Broadband and Fibre Optic rollout**

Thank you to the many constituents and local parish councils that have written to me about fibre optic rollout in their local areas. I have written to both the relevant minister and the BDUK, the agency responsible for bringing reliable broadband and mobile network coverage to rural areas, seeking reassurances that our part of Sussex will not be left behind. The current rollout plans leave our area with a patchwork of coverage that often excludes our rural villages, hampering our local businesses and residents from accessing the high-speed internet that we rely on in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



#### **Votes**

I have voted on many bills and amendments over the past weeks, including various amendments to the Data Bill as it goes through parliamentary 'ping pong' between the Lords and the Commons and have supported a motion that would tackle sewage and pollution of our waterways.

#### **Summer Tour**

I have recently met with Rodmell Parish Council as well as the Chair of Westmeston and am looking forward to visiting as many of our Town, Parish Councils and Meetings over the summer recess as possible.



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



Good evening everyone,

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to provide county councillor report to you.

Let's rewind back to May, 24 years ago 2001. At that time, we were in the midst of the foot-and-mouth outbreak, and the county council election was postponed until June.

Coincidentally, this year our county council election has also been postponed, this time due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

East Sussex County Council, along with its five district and borough councils, Brighton and Hove, and West Sussex, has agreed to form a new Mayoral Unitary Authority.

The Interim plans were submitted to central government on 20 March, and responses were received on 7 May. The details are currently under discussion and will soon be published on our council websites.

The LGR resident engagement began this past Monday, 12 May, and will run for six weeks. I encourage you all to take part and have your say.

The LGR white paper is not mentioned about the town and parish councils, therefore town and parish will continue to it service to our local community. In my opinion towns and parishes will play a more important role in the future.

Now, turning to the long-discussed proposal for a new two-lane Exceat Bridge.

After years of planning applications and consultations, East Sussex County Council has finally approved the construction of the new bridge, with an estimated cost of £22 million. This is partly funded by transferring £11 million from the Bus Improvements Fund.

The original project would have required 22 weeks of road closures and faced considerable objections. The new plan reduces that significantly, requiring just 19 days of road closures.

This week, a Public Inquiry was held regarding the Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) needed to acquire land for the bridge.

On Tuesday, the inquiry began with the four councils presenting their witnesses. On Wednesday, two objectors to the CPO and Side Road Orders attended, with one raising their concerns directly to the Inspector.

On Thursday, closing statements were made, after which the Inspector carried out a site visit.

The Inspector will now review all the evidence and prepare a report for the Secretary of State for Transport. A decision is not expected until the autumn.

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If all goes to plan, construction is expected to begin in early 2026.

However, I must express my concern: the £22 million budget and 19 days of road closures are already high and long. In my experience, the county council has struggled to deliver large projects on time and within budget.

It will be a significant challenge for the council to complete the Exceat Bridge project on schedule and within the allocated budget, especially ahead of the transition to the new Mayoral Unitary Authority.

On other County Council matters:

The A22 Corridor Active Travel Proposals – covering Polegate, Stone Cross, and Eastbourne – have been developed to support the A22 Major Road Network junction improvements. This wider project, which involves five large roundabouts in the area, is progressing, albeit slowly.

The Alfriston 20mph scheme is scheduled to begin on 22 June.

The Polegate High Street 20mph scheme is progressing well, with an update meeting scheduled for June.

As for issues such as overgrown hedges, grass cutting, and potholes, over the last year I believe we done well in our areas.

Thank you.

**Report –Alfriston PC - Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

**1. Local Government Reorganisation**

The government wants to reorganise local government so that everyone in East Sussex gets their services from just one council. This could mean East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council, would be replaced by a single authority.

Other options could also be considered if they attract wide public support and government backing. Local Government Reorganisation is set to be the most radical shake-up of local government in decades and people are being encouraged to have their say.

With a new council expected to be elected in 2027 and start work in 2028, the county council and district and borough councils are working on plans and asking residents for their views.

Wealden council leader Councillor James Partridge said, "Acting on the government's request, we have worked with our colleagues in councils in East Sussex to draw up an initial plan for a single local authority for East Sussex that could provide best quality and value for all its 550,000 residents.

"We now need to know what local residents, businesses and the voluntary sector think about this so that we can make a plan which will deliver the greatest benefits to our communities. Final, detailed proposals have to be submitted to the government in September."

The consultation is now available to complete online

at [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EastSussexLGR/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EastSussexLGR/) until Monday 23 June.

In the interim plan, East Sussex County Council and the five district and borough councils have set out what they believe any new local authority would have to achieve including:

- Improving outcomes for residents and communities
- Making best use of resources now and for the future
- Enhance local democracy, local identity, transparency, accessibility, local decision making and accountability
- Support and drive decision making and public service reform at both Sussex and local level
- Provide a stronger and unified voice to help attract investment and tackle priorities

More information about Local Government Reorganisation in East Sussex can be found

at [www.eastsussexcouncils.org](http://www.eastsussexcouncils.org)

**2. The creation of dedicated ward budgets for councillors to spend on supporting improvements within their communities has been approved by Wealden District Council.**

Each of the 45 councillors will be allocated £10,000 to fund projects and initiatives that directly benefit their wards. The funding, totalling £450,000, will come from General Fund reserves and represents a cost-effective mechanism for addressing local priorities identified by residents and councillors alike.

Councillor ward budgets have been successfully used by councils across the country to support grassroots initiatives that may otherwise lack financial backing. This approach strengthens community engagement and empowers local representatives to drive meaningful change.

Councillors will be able to collaborate within their wards, combining their allocations where appropriate, and will assist community groups in submitting funding applications. They will also be responsible for ensuring that funds are used in accordance with approved projects.

Within Wealden, this scheme will enable members to seek out opportunities quickly and easily to direct funds where they are most needed in their individual wards, places and communities they know best.

Over the next two months, a scheme will be designed to distribute the funding, including agreeing criteria for awarding funds, with the anticipated start date during July 2025.

**For further information please contact:**

Laurence Woolven

Chief Financial officer

Wealden District Council

Email:

[Laurence.woolven@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Laurence.woolven@wealden.gov.uk)

Annemarie Field

Senior Media and Communications officer

Wealden District Council

Tel: 07985 812076

Email: [Annemarie.field@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Annemarie.field@wealden.gov.uk)



### **3. Wealden District Council's Infrastructure and Community Spaces Grants programme has allocated funding to support 12 impactful projects across the district.**

The funding programme was made available through the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund.

This initiative aims to enhance local infrastructure, improve community spaces, and create more accessible, sustainable environments for residents and visitors alike.

A total of £42,878.86 has been allocated in the second round of the programme to support various projects. These include East Dean and Friston Cricket Club's addition of picnic benches and parasols to a value of £1,254.

The funding programme was made available through the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund. The England-wide initiative is a new £110million, two-year capital fund from the Department for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs, complementary to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund – run by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It has enabled councils to support projects in rural areas of the district.

### **4. A survey undertaken by Wealden District Council's waste contractor, Biffa, has revealed that 91% of all residents surveyed are satisfied with their waste and recycling collections.**

- The aim of the survey was to help Biffa, the council's joint waste partner and Wealden District Council understand the levels of satisfaction with the service and to gain a better picture of how residents dispose of their waste.
- When shown a list of household waste items 94% of respondents are correctly choosing to recycle paper, aluminium cans, cardboard and glass bottles/jars in the recycling bin.
- However, the survey also highlighted some areas for improvement. Most residents are getting it right; however, some are still putting plastic items such as plastic pots, tubs and trays in the rubbish bin instead of recycling them. The survey also showed that items such as textiles and black plastic bags are incorrectly being placed in the recycling bin.
- Whilst textiles can be recycled at some recycling points and at the Household Waste and Recycling Sites in the district, black bags cannot be recycled and must be put
- Statistically Wealden recycles more of its waste than any other authority in East Sussex.
- New Simpler Recycling rules for households are being introduced next April.

#### **For further information please contact:**

Chris Bone

Head of Waste and Customer Services

Wealden District Council

Email: [Chris.bone@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.bone@wealden.gov.uk)

Sian Killeen

Media and Communications officer

Or

Wealden District Council

Tel: 07970233321 Email: [Sian.killeen@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Sian.killeen@wealden.gov.uk)

### **5. BT Launches National Campaign for Digital Landline Switch**

BT has launched a new campaign to raise awareness of the UK's move from analogue to digital landlines – and to spotlight the help available for customers who may need extra support.

With the full switch to digital landlines due by January 2027, BT is ramping up the rollout of Digital Voice – its new home phone service delivered over broadband, offering crystal-clear calls and built-in protection against scam and nuisance calls. Almost three million customers across the UK have already made the switch to Digital Voice, helping to future-proof their communications and ensure they're ready for a more connected, digital future.

The new campaign is designed to reassure customers that, for most, switching to a digital landline is simple – whilst also helping those with additional needs, or their loved ones, to understand what support is available to them and how they can make the move with confidence.

Publicity is highlighting how Digital Voice features like Enhanced Call Protect – which blocks over 17,000 scam calls every day – can offer extra peace of mind, particularly for older or more vulnerable people.

For most people, it's as easy as plugging your phone into your broadband router, and you're good to go. BT is supporting its customers through the change.

Recognising that some customers may require additional support, BT's latest regional rollout is focused on ensuring help is available for those who need it most. From late-spring, vulnerable

customers will begin making the switch to Digital Voice, supported by free in-home visits from engineers and battery backup units to keep them connected during power cuts.

Rollout is scheduled for vulnerable customers during **Autumn 2025** for South East England.

BT is working closely with local authorities, telecare providers and community organisations to deliver the right support, in the right places, at the right time.

For those without broadband, BT will provide a dedicated landline service, requiring no new equipment or engineer visit. This will ensure these customers can continue using their landline in the same way they do today until 2030.

For most households, the switch to Digital Voice is as easy as plugging a phone into the broadband router instead of the wall socket. Over 99% of handsets already work with Digital Voice.

All customers will receive at least four weeks' notice before any change. Those who feel they need extra support are encouraged to register via [BT's Additional Needs webform](#). To learn more or request support for yourself or a loved one, visit [bt.com/connected-together](https://bt.com/connected-together) or call BT's customer care team.

## **6. Healthy Heart Grants – Heart Research UK**

Healthy Heart Grants of up to £15,000 are available for community projects aimed at supporting adults to reduce their risk of coronary heart disease, helping them to live healthier, happier and longer lives. The grants are available to charities and community interest companies across the UK.

The application windows for 2025 in England are:

- England North: 7 May to 4 June
- England South: 16 July to 13 August

[Link: Healthy Heart Grants - Heart Research UK](#)

## **7. Postal Votes (information from WDC)**

This is just to give you advance notice that the Electoral Services Team will be sending emails to 15,300 postal voters over the next few months. The email will be sent via the Gov.UK Notify account. If any constituents contact you about this and are worried, please reassure them that the email is genuine or encourage them to contact the Electoral Services Team (01892 602407 or [elections@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:elections@wealden.gov.uk)).

The implementation of the Elections Act 2022 means that a postal vote arrangement cannot last longer than three years. 2025 is a transitional year for the Postal Vote Renewal Process and the majority of our postal voters will fall into the Renewal Process this year. Overall, we have 22,700 postal voters (we have email addresses for approx. 15,000) to contact before the end of January 2026. If these electors want to continue to vote by post, they will need to reapply by 31 January 2026.

To try and 'flatten the peaks' and reduce the number of letters and forms that will need to be sent, returned and manually processed, the Team are hoping that the email will encourage voters to reapply early and online.

The emails will be sent in batches by Ward – the first batch (Arlington Ward) will be sent over the weekend of 10/11 May 2025.

### **Heather Blanshard | Electoral Services Manager**

Electoral Services for Wealden District Council

Phone: 01892 602416 Mob: 07985 811907

Email: [heather.blanshard@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:heather.blanshard@wealden.gov.uk)

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

## **8. Councils Given New Powers to Tackle Fly-Tipping Vehicles**

**The** Government has **announced** new powers for councils aimed at tackling the persistent problem of fly-tipping across England's streets, lanes and rural areas. Under the latest measures, local authorities will be able to seize and destroy vehicles involved in waste crime without requiring a conviction, helping to deter illegal dumping and keep communities cleaner.

This change is part of a broader crackdown on environmental crime and follows calls from councils and campaigners for stronger enforcement tools. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) highlighted that waste crime costs the economy an estimated £1 billion per year, placing a significant burden on taxpayers and local services.

Under the new rules, councils can immediately crush or permanently remove vehicles suspected of involvement in fly-tipping, streamlining the process and reducing the resources previously needed to take enforcement action.

Environment Minister Robbie Moore stated that the measures would empower councils to take decisive action against repeat offenders and organised criminal activity linked to illegal waste disposal.

The Government has also committed to supporting councils with guidance on using these new powers effectively. These changes build on other initiatives to tackle waste crime, including increased fines for fly-tipping and further investment in enforcement resources.

**For further information please contact:**

Laurence Woolven  
Chief Financial officer  
Wealden District Council  
Email: [Laurence.woolven@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Laurence.woolven@wealden.gov.uk)

Or

Annemarie Field  
Senior Media and Communications officer  
Wealden District Council  
Tel: 07985 812076  
Email: [Annemarie.field@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:Annemarie.field@wealden.gov.uk)

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