



# Fittleworth Parish Council

## APPROVED Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 6.30pm

Due to the Coronavirus Government guidelines the meeting was held via Zoom

**Present:** Jane Claxton (JC) (Chair), Mike Allin (MA), David Brittain (DB), Tony Broughton (TB), Kerry Coughtrey (KC) & Lee Scott (LS), Sally Tanner (ST) & Chris Welfare (CW)

**Members of the public:** Approx. 6 including, County Councillor Janet Duncton (JD), District Councillor Alan Sutton(AS) and the Clerk

**1. Apologies for absence -** Cllr Robin Dunstan & Dr & Mrs Poole

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 21st May 2019, had previously been approved by the Parish Council at the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019, however JC asked if there were any comments or matters arising that needed to be discussed. No points were raised.

JC also explained that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2020 meeting did not take place as the nation was in lockdown at the time and the council was still learning to master video conferencing in May 2020.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes** There were none.

**4. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

JC started by thanking Chris Welfare, her predecessor as Chair, for his hard work on the Parish Council, putting council in a good position for what lay ahead in 2020/2021. JC was delighted that although Chris was stepping down as Chair, he decided to remain on the Parish Council as his knowledge and expertise has proved invaluable, in helping her navigate my first year as Chair.

The Chairman's report was made available on the website prior to the meeting. It included an outline of the work undertaken by the parish council in the last 12 months. JC highlighted the following issues from her report:

- Future Parish Council meetings

Going forward, so that the Parish Council have time to create a Parish online presence as well as other issues that need greater input, it was agreed at our Annual Parish Council Meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 that the Parish Council would trial a new approach for the next year. This will see:

- A slightly reduced number of Parish Council Meetings (we will not have meetings in July, December, February and April)
- The creation of a Finance & Resilience committee with delegated powers that will meet in the months where there is no full parish council meeting and will prepare the Annual budget for agreement at the full parish council meeting December

These arrangements will be reviewed in May 2022, to see if they have been effective and to ensure business has not been hampered by the changes.

- Planning

JC formally extended her thanks to the Planning Committee and their chair Lee Scott who

have commented on over 70 planning applications over the past year.

LS was invited to say a few words. LS commented that:

- More applications than ever before
- The Parish Council have objected to more applications than ever before but the SDNPA have refused few applications.
- The Limbourne Lane Development application went to the SDNPA Planning Committee in November 2020 and has now been formally approved. The Judicial Review Period is currently underway for a period of 6 weeks. If there is no judicial review then the planning committee understand the land will be transferred to the developer so the process of discharging conditions can begin.

MA commented that he had received complaints from residents about the length of time it is taking for planning applications to be processed.

- AS stated that there has been a significant increase in the number of planning applications during Covid as there is significant pressure to develop outside the National Park. Also planning officers continue to work from home. It is difficult to recruit good temporary planning officers. CDC are aware of the issue but no real solution available.
- JD added that the normal time to process planning applications is between 8-13 week. This is sometimes delayed due to applicants changing or adding documents or plans.

- Working Groups

A number of working groups have been set up and have non Parish Council members as chairs. JC thanked Wade Houlden (WH) (Save the Swan Working Group) and Christine Parker (CP) (Co-chair of the Traffic Working Group with Sally Tanner) for all their help together with the other volunteers involved in the working groups.

The process of the working groups are communicated to the parish via a number of ways – the magazine, E-Newsletters, NextDoor, Facebook, Sussex Local and the website.

*The Save The Swan Working Group*

JC invited Wade Houlden (WH) to give an update on recent developments with the pub. An interested party has been in discussions with the owners of The Swan. It was hoped this would proceed but since the Annual Parish Meeting it appears that both parties are currently reconsidering their position.

WH asked about the proposal to change the parking area outside the Swan. JC confirmed that the Parish Council (the Traffic Working Group) has been looking at the possibility of re-instating grass and/or additional seating around the tree in the parking area to make it appear more “villagy”. This will not affect the current number of designated parking spaces and would be done in full consultation with any new landlords of the Pub and local residents.

- Maintenance

During the year another working group was formed - the Maintenance Working Group. Led by Tony Broughton, the working group will coordinate day to day maintenance work that needs to be done within the village and use volunteers to get things done in a timely manner.

DB asked about litter picking in the Little Bognor and Egdean area. Previously fellow residents have volunteered but would like to see the area included in any litter picking initiative for the whole parish.

Additional items included in the report –Working Groups update, donations made by the Parish Council, Assets and maintenance, BT Phonebox and other activities.

The full report is available on the website.

## **5. Financial Statement by the Clerk**

### **External Audit 2019/20**

In the last fortnight the Parish Council has been selected at random for additional checks relating to the 2019/20 audit. A sample of 5% of Intermediate Parish Councils are randomly selected each year and additional questions or information is requested. All information has now been submitted to the external auditor.

### **Accounts 2020/21**

Copies of the Income and Expenditure for the financial year 2020-21 were made available on the website prior to the meeting. The draft accounts had been prepared by the Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer, finalised and signed off by the internal auditor on 12<sup>th</sup> May. The Annual Return will be put forward at the Parish Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June for approval, and once approved it will be submitted to the External Auditor soon after. The unaudited accounts will be available for inspection between 3<sup>rd</sup> June and 14<sup>th</sup> July and the full audited accounts will be available for inspection in due course and will be advertised in the normal way.

The financial position at the 31 March 2021 showed a balance of £25,348.49 (2019/20 - £22,232.75) in the combined accounts

### **Income**

We received £44,606.44 (2019/19 - £30,264.33) in income last year, most of which was the precept of £25,080.00 (2019/20 - £20,900.00), Grants - £12,760.92 (grants two operation Watershed projects & Grants for Hesworth Common) (2019/20 - £4,800 (Grants for Hesworth Common) and reclaimed VAT - £3,207.23 (2019/20 - £1,355.12).

It was noted that the licence from the Sports and Social Club is continuing to pay at an agreed, reduced rate. The reduced rate has now been in place for over 18 months.

The Parish Council, via the Recreation Ground Charity, is now receiving full rent from the Community Shop. All rents received are transferred to Fittleworth Parish Council to be used towards the upkeep of the Recreation Ground.

### **Expenditure**

Our Expenditure last year was £ 41,480.70 (2019/20 - £34,023.12) this was over budget (budget - £34,211.00).

Our main expenditure items were

- Recreation Ground £3,760 - The main elements are the maintenance contractor (£3,270) & Tree work (£490)
- Village maintenance £6,796 - The main elements are the maintenance contractor - £701, Tree work & felling dangerous trees -£490, Litterbin waste collection was £697, Operation watershed Little Bognor Culvert works - £4,862 (funding received to cover 100% of costs).
- Hesworth Common £3,995
- Clerk's wages £16,912.
- Maintenance of our buildings £260;
- Insurance - £2,018
- Website & parish council emails £598
- Highways Report re Limbourne Lane Development - £499

### **2020/21 & 2021/22 Precept**

At the Parish Council meeting in January 2021 it was agreed that for 2020/21 the precept would increase from £25,080 (2020/21) to £28,215 (2021/22). This is an increase of

12.5%. The 20/21 precept of £25,080 is the equivalent Council Tax Band D charge of £46.56 per annum. The £28,215 precept for 2021/22 results in the equivalent Council Tax Band D charge of £52.95 per annum.

The full report is available on the website.

## **6. Annual Donations**

A total of £961 was donated to the various clubs and societies around the village.

For the year ended 31 March 2021 under statute, the Parish Council can make a total payment for donations of £8.41 per elector (2019/20 - £8.10 per elector). Therefore, a total sum of £6,374.78 (2019/20 - £6,139.80) for s.137 payments is allowed based on the total number of electors for Fittleworth of 758 for 2020/21. WE are way within the allowed donation payments.

### ***Annual donations made in January 2020:***

Air Ambulance	£100.00
Burton & Coates PCC	£100.00
Fittleworth Over 60s club	£150.00
Fittleworth PCC (includes £50 for Village Magazine)	£300.00
Fittleworth Playgroup	£100.00
Minibus	£100.00
Petworth Nursing Home	<u>£50.00</u>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£900.00</b>
<b>COIF Annual interest paid to the Parochial Church Council</b>	<b>£61.60</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>£961.60</u></b>

JC invited comments about the current system of the Parish Council annually agreeing the donations and possible alternative ways of making donations.

KC suggested that a certain amount be set aside for local groups to pitch to the Parish Council on an annual basis.

CW thought it was a good idea.

Charles Clarke (CC), as a current recipient on behalf of Fittleworth PCC, although appreciates receiving the funds annually he would be very happy to pitch for funds.

Clare, a local resident, fully supported the change in approach. It is a more balanced and transparent way of allocating funds and allows for new groups to apply for donations.

This will be explored further at the June Parish Council Meeting.

## **7. Sports Pavilion revamp update**

LS explained that T2 Architects had agreed to do undertake some pro bono work and draw up some initial ideas for revamping the Sports Pavilion as the current design is old fashioned and the Sports & Social Club are struggling to attract new members. The initial plans were provided just before the meeting and will be shared with the Sports & Social Club first. The main idea is to replace the high maintenance flat roof with a pitched roof that can incorporate additional function areas.

Julie Hawkins (JH), from the Sports & Social Club, commented that the club needs to look to the future, encourage new membership and create a community hub. She added that a change is as good as a rest and the scheme needs to be viable.

## **8. Flood Survey Update**

LS reported that there had been significant concern raised by residents about the impact of the Limbourne Lane Development on flooding in the village. An initial flood survey was carried out in 2020 and the Parish Council recently commissioned another flood survey from another consultant with wider scope. This has now been received by the Parish Council.

Residents must remember that landowners, including developers, have a responsibility to ensure that any work undertaken in the curtilage of their property must not affect flooding down stream.

The Parish Council will review the new Flood survey and work with the planning authorities to try and build in greater resilience to flooding in the future.

## **9. SDNPA Traffic Calming Pilot Scheme Update**

ST, as joint chair of the Traffic Working Group, reported that after months of delays a meeting with the consultants for the scheme and representatives from the SDNPA and the Parish Council and Traffic Working Group took place in early May. All areas of the Parish were covered, including Hallelujah Corner, Lower Street and The Fleet. It was a very busy day for vehicle flow, so the consultants and the SDNPA representatives saw first hand the extent of the lorry and speeding vehicle issues.

The consultants will put forward a number of suggestions but only ONE idea will be actioned. The suggestions will be presented to the community to see which has the most support. Although only one suggestion will be paid for by the Pilot Scheme, the other options, depending on support and financing, could also be introduced in the Parish.

Christine Parker, the other joint chair of the Traffic Working Group, stated that Tripp Hill is also included in the consultation. The history of the reduction in the size of pavements in Lower Street was also raised. The Traffic Working Group would like to make the parish more attractive and incorporate more grass verges as well as mitigate traffic.

The Traffic Working Group are fully aware of the motorbike speed and noise issue. Representatives from the working group have met with the MP/ Police and other local parishes regularly.

The developers for the Limbourne Lane site will be contributing £4,000 towards traffic calming measures along The Fleet to help reduce speed.

Graham Martin (GM) commented that lorries are still going far too fast along The Fleet, even after the 30mph and 40mph signs have been changed to include a yellow back squares. GM asked if a speed sign showing the actual driving speed can be installed. ST will mention this idea to the consultants to see if it is an idea they would recommend.

Clare, a local resident, mentioned that living on Lower Street, her whole house shakes at all times due to lorry traffic speeding along Lower Street. she suggested that a log of companies and vehicle registration numbers be set up and even a 48hour period of filming all traffic. AS suggested ST speak to members of the Operation Crackdown Team.

ST finished by saying that Fittleworth Speed watch will be resuming soon. A speed gun is to be purchased giving the team more flexibility. The speed gun has been totally funded by donations from the parish. ST thanked all those who have donated.

GM mentioned that Duncton now have a permanent camera at the south end of the Village.

AS said that one of the new County Councillors, Tom Richardson for Rother Valley District, who started the South Downs Safer Roads Task Force and is a retired Traffic policeman, would know who to contact in getting Operation Downsway to set up data collection points and more police speed camera in the parish at weekends.

**10. Public Questions and Discussion**

Lower Street – Road damage

WH asked if any further work is to be done along Lower Street where the road keeps collapsing and the spring re-appearing. The clerk had previously reported the issue via Love West Sussex, and Southern Water did visit the site a few weeks ago. As the issue has not be resolved the clerk will take more photos and contact WSCC Highways to follow up.

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked all present for their participation and closed the meeting at 7.47 pm.

APPROVED AT THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING on :--

SIGNED .....

DATED:.....