



Fittleworth Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on
17th January 2022 at 7.00pm in Sports Pavilion.**

Present: Parish Councillors: Jane Claxton (Chair), Mike Allin, David Brittain, Tony Broughton, Robin Dunstan, Sally Tanner and Chris Welfare.

In attendance: County Councillor: Janet Duncton

Also Present: Rachel Gorvin (Clerk), Celia Price (Locum Clerk), PCSO Billingham, Julie Hawkins (Fittleworth Sports and Social Club)

Members of public: 3

The Chair reminded members of the public of the requirement that they limit their participation to the Public Adjournment section of the meeting.

22-001	Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Scott who joined the meeting virtually (with no voting rights).
22-002	Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 15 th November 2021 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair. Proposed: Cllr Dunstan seconded Cllr Allin and agreed.
22-003	Crime (Appendix 1) The Chair welcomed PCSO Billingham who gave an overview of his report reminding everyone of his change in email address. Questions and comments were invited. A resident asked for further details regarding incidents on Hesworth Common. PCSO Billingham responded advising there have been no incidents since Sept/Oct and the issue has been resolved. Cllr Allin raised concerns regarding thefts from cars at Lords Piece carpark, which outside of the Fittleworth. PCSO Billingham reiterated advice to leave valuables at home. It was noted that Lord's Piece carpark is not in Fittleworth. However, a reminder for residents, highlighting general advice regarding thefts from cars could be helpful for the village magazine.
22-004	County Councillor reports (Appendix 2 – not received) County Councillor, Janet Duncton advised business as usual at the County Council. Unfortunately, the written report submitted was not readable and this will be resent for circulation to Councillors after the meeting. Questions and comments were invited. Cllr Allin noted the debris on the footpath on Lower Street is reducing the width by approximately 50% causing a Health and Safety hazard for pedestrians. This will be reported via the Love West Sussex app. Finally, Cllr Dunton tendered apologies for the February meeting.
22-005	District Councillor reports District Councillor, Alan Sutton was not present.
22-006	Public questions A resident observed that drivers often sit in their cars with the engines running, particularly in the village hall carpark. It was suggested signage is installed. The Chair

	<p>advised that the PC do not own the carpark and suggested contacting the village hall committee directly.</p> <p>The issue of speeding traffic, particularly along The Fleet was discussed. Cllr Tanner continues to work hard with the traffic committee and is always looking for Speedwatch volunteers, please contact her via the PC if interested in helping.</p> <p>Residents were assured traffic issues are very high up on the PC agenda, a proposed extension of the 30mph restriction is being pursued but this is a slow process.</p>
22-007	<p>Declarations by Council Members of personal or prejudicial interest The Chairman reminded councillors that previous declarations still stand (as defined under the Localism Act 2011).</p>
22-008	<p>Queens Platinum Jubilee Projects The Chair welcomed Julie Hawkins, from Fittleworth Sports and Social Club. Cllr Scott advised that Jason Burkinshaw has sourced 150 trees and formed a partnership with the school. Further information will follow. Julie Hawkins reported that the Sports & Social Club have met and formed a group to coordinate the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. The Locum Clerk advised that the PC insurance should cover activities assuming the PC are involved in the organisation. Cllr Tanner volunteered to join the group and keep the PC informed. Insurance for specific events can be confirmed once details are available and should be checked with the insurance company. Rachel Gorvin, the new clerk, also volunteered to attend and take notes and it was agreed to advise her when meetings were taking place.</p>
22-009	<p>Emergency Plan. It was agreed that the Clerk obtain information from CDC for review and discussion at the March or April meeting.</p>
22-010	<p>Locum Clerk Report (Appendix 3) A report was circulated prior to the meeting, the contents of which were discussed. All agreed to note the contents and recommendations which were a fair reflection. Thanks were expressed for the changes made to date particularly regarding the meetings, agendas, action list and minutes. Councillors were thanked for their co-operation and warm welcome.</p>
22-011	<p>Accounts Software A report was circulated prior to the meeting, the Locum Clerk gave an overview and the contents of the report were discussed. It was proposed that the RBS software quote be accepted, with installation to be arranged as a priority. The current year's accounts will be transferred onto the new software. Proposed Cllr Claxton, seconded Cllr Tanner and agreed.</p>
22-012	<p>Emails and Microsoft 365 The Locum Clerk answered questions on the report circulated prior to the meeting. It was resolved to accept the quote from Cloudy IT and move to Microsoft 365 as soon as possible. It was agreed Councillors must start to use their official councillor email addresses once this robust system is implemented. Proposed Cllr Claxton, seconded Cllr Broughton and agreed.</p>
22-013	<p>Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 4) The proposed Scheme of Delegation was reviewed and discussed. It was resolved to adopt the scheme with one minor amendment to correct a typo. Proposed Cllr Claxton, seconded Cllr Allin and agreed.</p>
22-014	<p>Finance a) Grants and Donations Policy Having reviewed an example policy it was agreed that this needs more work and will be looked at again at a future meeting.</p>

	<p>b) Bank Mandate It was resolved to update the bank mandate as soon as possible. The outgoing clerk will be removed, the new clerk and chair will be added and the address amended. It is hoped that the PC can use the village shop as a postal address and if agreed this will also be updated on the mandate. Proposed Cllr Claxton, seconded Cllr Allin and agreed.</p> <p>c) On-Line Banking All agreed that the ability to carry out online banking is a priority and it was requested that the Clerk investigate. On-line banking must have the option for a payment requestor and at least one authoriser.</p> <p>d) Payments The list of payments totalling £4902.10 was agreed in accordance with Financial Regulations. The requirement for multiple quotes was noted.</p>
22-015	<p>Planning Cllr Scott circulated a report prior to the meeting, the contents of which were noted.</p> <p><u>a) Planning Committee Minutes</u> The minutes for the planning committee held on 2nd December were received and noted.</p> <p><u>c) Planning Committee Recommendations</u> The quote to review Crayfern drainage report for Limbourne Lane by Baker Associates totalling £325.00 + VAT was agreed. Proposed Cllr Allin, seconded Cllr Brittain and agreed.</p>
22-016	<p>Action List The updated action list was circulated prior to the meeting and outstanding items were reviewed. It was agreed to discuss The Swan at the next Planning Committee meeting.</p>
22-017	<p>Working Groups The Chair thanked Councillor Allin and Councillor Tanner for their comprehensive written reports which were circulated prior to the meeting and were very helpful and informative whilst also saving valuable meeting time.</p> <p>a) Community Hub Working Group Cllr Scott continues work with the architect.</p> <p>b) Communications Working Group Nothing to report</p> <p>c) Save The Swan Working Group Nothing to report</p> <p>d) Maintenance Working Group Cllr Claxton reported that a safety inspection of the Millennium Arch has been carried out and is perfectly sound. There are some recommendations for maintenance and a quote is being obtained for discussion at a future meeting.</p> <p>e) Highways & Traffic Working Group (Appendix) A report from Cllr Tanner was circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>f) Hesworth Common Management Committee (Appendix) A written report from Cllr Allin was circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Allin highlighted minor amendments, including numbers of trees that have been collected and planted, some of which are being 'brought on' in pots and a greenhouse until they are robust enough to plant out.</p> <p>g) Birchwood Walks Included in Cllr Allin's written report.</p> <p>h) Footpaths Nothing to report</p> <p>i) Village Hall & Outside Bodies Nothing to report other than to note the vacancy for a Chair remains.</p> <p>j) Flood Resilience Working Group Cllr Scott reported that the first meeting took place 4th December and drainage plans have been requested from Southern Water.</p>

22-018	Sports Pavilion The design brief and architect's plans are in progress.
22-019	Chair's Announcements None
22-020	Matters Raised by Councillors Cllr Brittain requested that correspondence and councillor meeting attendance be included in all future agendas and that Health and Safety reporting is also included. All agreed and the Locum Clerk apologised for the oversight. Cllr Brittain also confirmed he is able to attend the WSALC police briefing. The Clerk will forward joining details once received from WSALC.
22-021	Date of next meetings: Monday 21 st February in the Sports Pavilion at 7pm

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 9:17 pm

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 1

Fittleworth Parish Council Update for December 2021.

Introduction.

I would like to start by wishing everyone a Happy New Year. I hope you all had a good and safe Christmas!

With the festivities over, we move into the less frenetic time of year before spring returns. It is a time many find hard to cope with, so please do keep an eye out for each other and don't be afraid to ask if they are OK!

Incidents of Note.

I am happy to say that we continue to have no further reports of the male on the common and my patrols will continue as I am able.

However, we have had the re-emergence of the issue of items being stolen from parked cars. I would stress again to everyone, please do not leave anything of value in cars parked in rural locations, or indeed anywhere.

PCSO Activity over the next month.

Patrols of the area are back on track and I will be out and about as much as possible. If there are any community events that are planned in the next few months, please do let me know and I will attend any that I can. I will look to bring our bicycle security marking kit along.

DON'T LET THEM MAKE YOU A VICTIM OF CRIME. IF YOU SEE IT, REPORT IT!

NEIL BILLINGHAM

Police Community Support Officer

**Arun and Chichester Neighbourhood Policing Team | Chichester Police Station |
Kingsham Road | Chichester | West Sussex | PO19 8AD**

Appendix 2 – not received

Celia Price CILCA, PSLCC

Locum Clerk Report for Fittleworth Parish Council

Introduction

I have been providing locum services to Fittleworth Parish Council since November 2021. This report summarises my observations, strengths and suggestions for improvement. As I have had very limited time my observations are an overview.

Observations

Whilst Fittleworth is a small Parish Council with 8 members (including one vacancy), I have been extremely impressed by the commitment, passion, enthusiasm and dedication of the councillors, all of whom have been very welcoming and an absolute pleasure to work with.

It has been particularly pleasing and refreshing to work with a council that are keen to make sure they are compliant with current legislation and advice and are open to ideas and suggestions.

Strengths

All councillors are committed and passionate about the village and community. Cllr Claxton is a good, strong chair and leads the council well. Cllr Allin, Cllr Scott, Cllr Brittain, Cllr Tanner and Cllr Broughton are particularly involved.

The Planning Committee, led by Cllr Scott (supported by Cllr Brittain) are knowledgeable about planning matters and are committed to making sure the residents views are considered. Keeping up to date with CDC applications and decisions is well managed. It is clear Cllr Scott has a great relationship with both CDC and SDNPA.

The Hesworth Common committee led by Cllr Allin (supported by Cllr Welfare) do an amazing job. The time, dedication and hard work required is huge. Again, the relationship with other bodies including SDNPA and local volunteer groups is to be commended.

Cllr Tanner's leadership of the traffic group has resulted in some fantastic research and initiatives. The Speed Watch group is effective and it will be great achievement to get the SiD in place.

The Parish Council as a whole are proactive and enthusiastic providing a great service to residents.

Suggested Areas for Improvements

The most obvious issue is that the meetings are too long! Improvements have already been made by making adjustments to the agenda and format of supporting papers, as well as making the minutes more concise. However, further improvements could be made by producing more effective and timely reports and supporting papers ahead of the meeting. Clarification of committee roles and terms of reference will also benefit full council.

The committee structure is confusing and could be clarified with clear terms of reference and understanding of committees and working groups. The Hesworth Common Group would particularly benefit from a more defined remit. It should be clear what the roles and responsibilities are including finance and budget management which currently do not comply with financial regulations but this can easily be rectified by ensuring policies reflect that workings of the group rather than the adoption of generic regulations without customisation.

In my opinion, the accounts system is overly complicated. Councillors would benefit from a clearer set of reports which would also be more transparent for residents. I would recommend a bespoke Parish Council finance package such as Rialtas (see separate agenda item and supporting paper). In addition, a review of the bank account and options for on-line banking should be given priority.

The IT systems would benefit from an upgrade. Councillors must look at using council specific email addresses and to facilitate this a user-friendly option needs to be available. The current system is time consuming and ineffective (see separate agenda item and supporting paper recommending Microsoft 365). The Council should also consider the need for a new laptop, definitely, within the next 2 years. The structure of files and storage also needs a review.

Recommendations and Priorities

- Update the bank mandate and review banking arrangements (this should be started ASAP as banks are well known not to act quickly)
- Rialtas or similar package to be investigated, ideally transferring the current year accounts onto the new system
- Move to Microsoft 365
- Review of Committee Structure and Terms of Reference
- Review Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Policies

Conclusion

The most important thing for a Parish Council is to have enthusiastic and committed councillors, which Fittleworth has without question. The governance points I have raised can only improve the effectiveness of the Council and I once again thank you for being so open and welcoming.

Finally, I look forward to working with your new clerk for a handover period and cannot stress enough the importance of ongoing training and development for any clerk. Whilst it is recommended that a clerk be in place for 6 months before starting CiLCA (for very good reason), there are lots of other learning opportunities and courses run by SLCC and WSALC which will be hugely beneficial and will be a good basis for the CiLCA course.

With thanks and best wishes

Celia

Scheme of Delegation

THE POWER TO DELEGATE

The power to delegate functions by local councils is set out in the Local Government Act 1972 S.101 as follows:

Local Government Act 1972 S. 101 Arrangements for discharge of function by local authorities

(1) Subject to any express provision contained in this Act or any Act passed after this Act, a local authority may arrange for the discharge of any of their functions: (a) by a Committee, a sub-Committee or an officer of the authority, or (b) by any other local authority

(2) Where by virtue of this section any functions of a local authority may be discharged by a committee of theirs, then, unless the local authority otherwise direct, the committee may arrange for the discharge of any of those functions by a sub-committee of the authority, then unless the local authority or the committee otherwise direct, the sub-committee may arrange for the discharge of any of those functions by an officer of the authority.

(3) Any arrangements made by a local authority or committee under this section for the discharge of any functions by a committee, subcommittee, officer or local authority shall not prevent the authority or committee by whom the arrangements are made from exercising those functions.

(4) Two or more local authorities may discharge any of their functions jointly and, where arrangements are in force for them to do so, they may also arrange for the discharge of those functions by a joint committee of theirs or by an officer of one of them and subsection (2) above shall apply in relation to those functions as it applies in relation to the functions of the individual authorities.

(5) A local authority's functions with respect to issuing a precept for a rate or borrowing money shall be discharged only by the authority.

The aim of this document is to clarify the manner in which Fittleworth Parish Council has delegated its powers and the authority to spend.

DELEGATION TO OFFICERS

The following matters are delegated to the Council's Officers to make decisions on behalf of the Council. These decisions must be exercised in accordance with the law, the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and any approved policy framework and budget.

The Council may at any time, following resolution, revoke any delegated authority.

Officers may decide not to exercise delegated responsibilities and may instead make a recommendation to a Committee or the Council. Similarly where Officers have no delegated power to make a decision they report the matter to Committee or the Council for a decision.

Responsible Finance Officer

The Responsible Finance Officer to the Council shall be responsible for the Parish Council's accounting procedures in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations in force at any given time.

Proper Officer

The Clerk shall be the Proper Officer of the Council and as such is specifically authorised to:

- To receive Declarations of Acceptance of Office
- To receive and record notices disclosing personal and prejudicial interests
- To grant dispensations
- To receive and retain plans and documents
- To sign notices or other documents on behalf of the Council
- To receive copies of by-laws made by the local authority
- To certify copies of by-laws made by the Council
- To sign summonses to attend meetings of the Council
- To arrange insurance

In addition, the Clerk has the delegated authority to undertake the following matters on behalf of the Council:

- The day to day administration of services, together with routine inspection and control
- Day to day supervision and control of all staff employed by the Council
- The day to day administration and oversight for organised events and activities
- Authorisation of routine expenditure within the agreed budget
- Emergency expenditure up to £1,000 outside the agreed budget
- Matters specifically delegated by Council or Committee

During the Covid Pandemic urgent decisions required in the event between scheduled meetings of the council are delegated to the clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the council.

COUNCIL

The following matters are reserved to the Council for decision, notwithstanding that the appropriate Committee(s) may make recommendations for the Council's consideration:

- Approval of the budget
- Setting the precept
- Approval of the Annual Return and Audit of Accounts
- Agreement to write off bad debts
- Approval by resolution, before payment, of any grant or single commitment in excess of £5,000.
- Authorisation as to terms and purpose for any application for Borrowing Approval and subsequent arrangements for the loan.
- Approval of any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (eg hire purchase or leasing of tangible assets)
- Approval of purchase, acquisition by other means, sale, lease or disposal of tangible moveable property over £1,000.
- Approval of purchase, acquisition by other means, lease, sale or disposal of real property (interests in land).
- Approval of the virement of unspent and available amounts to other budget headings or reserves
- Approval of changes in earmarked reserves as part of the budgetary process
- Making, amending or revoking Standing Orders, Financial Regulations or this Scheme of Delegation
- Making, amending or revoking by-laws
- Making of orders under any statutory powers
- Matters of principle or policy
- Appointment of Standing Committees
- Appointing Council Representatives to outside bodies
- All other matters which must, by law, be reserved to the full Council

COMMITTEES

The following matters are delegated to the Council's Committees to make decisions on behalf of the Council. They must be exercised in accordance with the law, the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and any approved policy framework and budget.

The Council may at any time, following resolution, revoke any delegated authority.

Committees may decide not to exercise delegated responsibilities and may instead make a recommendation to the Council. Similarly, where a Committee has no delegated power to make a decision it makes a recommendation to Council.

All Committees are authorised to:

- Elect a chairman from within the membership of that Committee
- Approve the Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee
- Spend money from budget headings under that Committee's remit up to the limit of the budget and/or named reserve
- Make recommendations on the budget requirement for the Committee for the coming Financial Year.
- Delegate any of their functions to a Sub Committee or officer of the Council.

WORKING GROUPS

Working Groups may be formed by resolution of the Council or a Committee at any time. The work of such a group will be decided upon at the time it is formed by means of a minute detailing the terms of reference. Each group will report back with recommendations.