



Fittleworth Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on
Monday 18th November 2024 at 7.00pm in Sports Pavilion.

Present: Parish Councillors: Jane Claxton (Chair), Mike Allin, Tony Broughton, Wade Houlden, Lee Scott, Sally Tanner, Kevin MacKenzie, and Clive Murray.

In attendance: District Councillor: John Cross (left at Item 6)

Also Present: Rachel Gorvin (Clerk)

Members of public: 1

The Chair welcomed the member of the public present and reminded them of the requirement that they limit their participation to the Public Adjournment section of the meeting.

24-110	Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received and accepted from County Councillor Janet Duncton and Cllr Robin Dunstan.
24-111	Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 21 st October 2024 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair. Proposed: Cllr Broughton, seconded Cllr Murray and agreed by the meeting.
24-112	Crime – Cllr MacKenzie reported no Police/Parish meeting this month. Cllr Allin reported that last night, 17 th November, wing mirrors were smashed in School Lane and a wheelie bin taken and rubbish spread along the road. The fence around the play area is still being damaged regularly. Cllr Claxton will put something in the Parish Magazine update about it. The Clerk will put a link on Next-door for reporting ASB and damage, as it helps the Police see a pattern of behaviour if reported and will contact the local PCSO.
24-113	County Councillor reports. Cllr Duncton submitted a report before the meeting. Cllr Allin noted that Cllr Duncton was going to find out when School Lane was going to be resurfaced but no further update received. Cllr Allin believed that Tripp Hill was going to be resurfaced in 2021 but hasn't been. The Clerk will contact WSCC Highways. Loose drain cover on Tripp Hill by Station Masters house – The Clerk to report online. Cllr Houlden has contacted Cllr Duncton about the water from a spring on Lower Street – WSCC have filled in the pothole, however it will form again because the cause of the water has not been addressed. Someone else from WSCC is coming out to look. WSCC riparian rights survey – Cllr Allin will complete. He would like to know who at Worthing Homes is responsible for the ditches at Hawkins Field – The Clerk will try to find out.
24-114	District Councillor reports – Cllr Cross submitted a Report prior to the meeting. The CDC Draft local plan is out for consultation, with no sites for new homes in Fittleworth. Cllr Scott noted that SDNPA have published the possible new housing sites put forward that have passed the initial appraisal, but not the sites that were put forward but not

	<p>selected. CHAR document usually published annually. Cllr Scott asked when the Reg 19 will be published. Cllr Cross to find the deadline.</p> <p>Cllr Cross advised that last year CDC amended Council Tax allowances so that 2nd homes pay double Council Tax, which will uplift our tax base. The Clerk had spoken to CDC for a provisional tax base as most of the new homes on Hawkins Field are now occupied.</p> <p>Cllr Cross asked for the monthly Agenda to be sent to him in future.</p> <p>Cllr Allin asked about the enforcement process over the incorrect attenuation tank in Birch Court – Cllr Scott was able to advise that he has spoken to the enforcement Officer at CDC and CDC are pursuing Legal action but currently waiting for a court date.</p> <p>Councillor Allin asked how many Fittleworth villagers were living on Hawkins Field – are the affordable housing occupied by Fittleworth people. The S106 is worded to allow for others to be eligible for the housing if there was insufficient demand from those with a strong Fittleworth connection. Cllr Allin say then they shouldn't think about building more affordable housing if those homes were not occupied by people with a strong Fittleworth connection. The Clerk to contact Worthing Home to see if this information is in the public domain.</p>
<p>24-115</p>	<p>Public questions –</p> <p>Mr Bullock from Manderley on The Fleet asked if he could raise a couple of issues.</p> <p>1 – He lives on house next to the Recreation Ground so can see what's going on. There is signage regarding dogs – one says no dogs on Sports Field. Smaller sign says no dog fouling on recreation ground. 2 incidents in last few weeks he has witnessed. 1 man let the dog off lead, it ran onto field, played with ball, fouled on the pitch, he cleared it up. Then 7pm different person with 2 large dogs, both fouled on pitch, owner retrieved dogs and scooped up the dog waste. Mr Bullock thinks it disrespectful. You could say the owners was responsible and picked up, but would you want to put a blanket down for a picnic? Some people don't pick up at all. People are ignoring the signage.</p> <p>Cllr Claxton responded that the PC are aware of the issue and try to do something about it, but it's difficult to police. We don't have anyone patrolling. The PC will take this topic away to discuss and, in the meantime, Cllr Claxton will use her Village magazine article to highlight the problem.</p> <p>(It should be noted that the Parish council have no powers of enforcement for dog fouling offences).</p> <p>CDC provided the signs but said you should have no dogs on the recreation ground. Other people have seen it happening.</p> <p>2 – Trees that border his property – understands some blew down in 1987 storm. Wanted to know how many and wants to know what the decision made at the time was regarding replacements. He get leaves on his property, and concerned about the height of the trees, and worried they will come down on his house. He understands from internet that trees within 10 metres of the property shouldn't be more than 20ft. Cllr Allin agreed that there are some big trees, some of them are covered by TPO's.</p> <p>Damage from the fallen trees would be covered by PC insurance. Cllr Allin noted that most of the trees that were lost in the 1987 storm were on the roadside rather than this area.</p> <p>Cllr Claxton said that the trees are surveyed every 3 years, and any tree work identified is done and the PC puts funding into the budget to pay for tree work.</p> <p>Cllr Allin said the trees were there when Mr Bullock purchased the house, and he believes the house has been extended towards the trees.</p> <p>Mr Bullock asked if there was TPO on a tree, does it mean you can't reduce the size as such? Cllr Claxton advised that the Tree survey identifies what needs doing and the PC gets the work done.</p> <p>Cllr Allin said that some branches along that side have in fact had been cut back for the electricity lines.</p> <p>Mr Bullock said he wants the PC to maintain the trees, and Cllr MacKenzie responded that the PC does.</p> <p>Mr Bullock wants 20-30ft cut off the top and if a tree fell on his house, would we pay?</p>

Cllr Allin responded that if the top was cut out, the tree would expand sideways and destabilise the tree. The PC spends a lot of money on trees to keep them safe. Cutting into a tree makes it vulnerable to disease.
Cllr Claxton showed Mr Bullock how much money the PC has spent on trees in recent years, and the PC take it very seriously.

Tree works by area (to 31.10.2024)				
	24-25	23-24	22-23	21-22
Village	75	240	1150	
BWW	886	1158	350	180
Hesworth	4720	1065	2195	4210
The Triangle	0	150		2575
Recreation Ground	0	1390		618
	5681	4003	3695	7583

The Clerk was asked to write to Mr Bullock with the minutes of this discussion.

24-116 **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). Potential conflict of interest with the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

24-117 **Finance**

a) Review and acceptance of 2023/24 External Auditors Certificate and Notice of Conclusion of Audit. The Councillors have reviewed the documents and the resolution to accept the 2023/24 External Auditors Certificate and Notice of Conclusion of Audit was proposed by Cllr Murray and seconded By Cllr Scott and agreed by the meeting.

b) Budget Report – The 2025/26 Budget Report was presented by the Clerk and some points were clarified. 3 options were presented and discussed. It was noted that all 3 options still don't allow for everything the Council would like to provide for. The External Auditor has noted that the amount held in General Reserves is on the low side and recommended that it should be increased. There was some discussion around how much the General Reserve needs to be, (best practice is considered to be between 25 and 100%). The Internal Auditor has suggested the PC adopt a General Reserve policy to inform the budget decision making. Cllr Allin doesn't like to see the precept increasing so much every year. Cllr Scott had circulated a table that showed, compared to other similar nearby parishes, the FPC precept is on the low side. Cllr Scott said all prices have gone up.

All 3 options allow for an increase in the General Reserve. The Clerk reminded the Cllrs of the % impact of the 3 options on Band D properties.

Option 1 is an overall increase in Band D of 9.67%, this budget is the revision following discussion at the October meeting. (equivalent to 14p per week/£7.17 per year, for a Band D property).

Option 2 is the same precept as Option 1 except for a reduction in movement of the SID around the village - this reduces the impact to 4.97%. (equivalent to 7p per week/£3.54 per year, for a Band D property).

Option 3 reduces the movement of the SID but increases the General Reserve and Maintenance accounts and changes the impact on a Band D property to 12.97%. (equivalent to 17p per week/£9.03 per year, for a Band D property). If this option was agreed the PC could review the cost codes and reallocate funds to the SID if the reduction in movements around the village were problematic.

It was agreed that the budget setting for 25/26 had been subjected to a robust process of examination and it was resolved to agree to Option 3 of the 2025/26 Budget Report. Proposed by Cllr MacKenzie and seconded by Cllr Broughton and all Cllrs voted in favour, except Cllr Allin who decided to abstain.

It was also noted that the programme of moving the SID throughout the village had been effective in reducing traffic speeds throughout the village and there had been positive feedback in this regard from villagers and the Speedwatch group and although we could look at the effectiveness of the different locations, there was general agreement that this should be maintained, and that budgetary provision should be made for it.

c) Hesworth Common Management Committee – Cllr Murray apologised that the 2025 plan was not ready to be reviewed by Full Council and this item was therefore deferred to the January meeting.

d) Payments - The list of payments totaling £4081.71 was agreed in accordance with Financial Regulations. Proposed by Cllr MacKenzie, seconded by Cllr Tanner and agreed by the meeting.

Inv Date	Payee	Description	Amount
31/10/2024	Grasstex Ltd	Grass cutting October	367.87
30/09/2024	Grasstex Ltd	Grass cutting and leafing Sept	502.80
30/10/2024	WSCC	Payroll October	1,420.74
22/10/2024	WSCC	Payroll Admin	57.38
24/10/2024	Ben Tavener	Overgrown veg cutback and removal	80.00
01/11/2024	Cloudy IT Group	Oct licence and support fees	107.52
31/10/2024	DS Electrical	Install new defib	96.00
13/11/2024	Rachel Gorvin	Stationary and gate lock	30.96
14/11/2024	Mulberry LA Services Ltd	Interim Audit	324.78
13/11/2024	Fittleworth Village Hall	Room Hire	42.00
13/11/2024	Clive Murray	Hand tools, Tarpaulin and gloves	369.66
13/11/2024	Mill Farm Trees	Tree shelters	582.00
18/11/2024	Worthing Volunteers	Volunteer expenses Apr 23 - Oct 24	100.00

e) Financial Reports – The detailed receipts and payments report, and the Ear marked reserves were reviewed, and it was noted the Council are currently on track to finish the year without a significant overspend.

24-118	<p>Parish Clerk Report - The Clerk's report had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Public Consultation on Remote meetings and proxy voting – The Clerk was asked to prepare a response for circulation to Cllrs before the submission in December.</p> <p>Cars parked on pavement in Lower Street – Cllr Claxton will raise in the Parish magazine the difficulty it causes pavement users. The vehicle parked in Sandy Lane – the Clerk had previously reported that CDC were unable to assist and was waiting for an ownership enquiry response from the DVLA.</p> <p>Tripp Hill finger post – The Clerk was asked to check who owned the land it is on.</p> <p>Swings on Hesworth Common – being considered by HCMC.</p> <p>Correspondence received about Bowling Club – the Clerk was asked to respond to resident.</p> <p>Notice Board repairs – these were deferred whilst a new location for the board was considered.</p> <p>Sandrock Oak – Cllr Murray is seeking another quote to fell this tree. The Clerk was instructed to ask the owners of Sandrock if they would consider contributing to the cost. The Clerk was asked to contact Edward Hamilton and ask him to put something in writing about the condition of the arch and whether an engineering survey was required.</p>
24-119	<p>Bowling Club.</p> <p>Co-ordinator for repairs – Cllr Houlden volunteered to co-ordinate repair quotes assisted by Cllrs MacKenzie and Tanner and the Clerk.</p>
24-120	<p>Rother Valley Way Active Travel Route – Cllrs Murray and Mackenzie went to a meeting, there were about 18 people there, including representatives of Watersfield and Coldwaltham Parish Councils. There is an existing project to link Midhurst to Petersfield along the old railway line, this project is quite well progressed but still in planning stage. The Rother Valley Way Active Travel Group is seeking to link Pulborough to Midhurst in the same way, including a link to The Centurian Way. In the SDNP local plan, the land is allocated for this use.</p> <p>Cllrs Murray and Mackenzie will continue to attend meetings when possible and report back to FPC.</p>
24-121	<p>Grounds Maintenance Contract</p> <p>The Clerk has obtained 2 quotes for the revised Grounds Maintenance Specification, and these were considered by the meeting. It was resolved to accept the Quote from company B. Proposed by Cllr MacKenzie and seconded by Cllr Murray and agreed by the meeting.</p>
24-122	<p>Planning</p> <p>Cllr Scott circulated a report prior to the meeting, the contents of which were noted. It was noted that The Sandy Meadow Farm application, outside the parish but commented on, had been refused.</p> <p>2 listed building consents at The Swan have been refused although the work has been completed. Some other small applications in progress.</p> <p>a) <u>Planning Committee Minutes</u></p> <p>The minutes for the planning committee held on 10th October and 7th November were received and noted.</p> <p>b) <u>Planning Committee Recommendations</u> – Consultee Comments have been submitted online.</p>
24-123	<p>Working Groups</p> <p>a) Community Hub Working Group – the group has been waiting to hear back from the VHT about meeting with CDCT to discuss possibilities of how a new legal entity might operate, but Cllr Houlden reported that the general feeling of the VHT is that they are no longer interested in a joint project. Cllr Claxton asked if he could feedback to the VHT that the Community Hub Project arose from the Parish Council proposal in 2021 to improve the Sports Pavilion because the roof needs replacing, and the VHT were concerned about the impact on parking, and in order to resolve the parking issues, the Community Hub project evolved. Therefore,</p>

before the Parish Council progress with a refurbishment project for the pavilion, could we have an indication that they won't raise the parking issue again. Cllr Claxton has found the proposal for the pavilion drawn up by T2 which now needs to be revisited. The flat roof to be surveyed in 2025. Cllr Houlden apologised for time and money spent over last 3 years on the Community Hub Project when there was not universal support amongst the VHT. Cllr Claxton responded that now we have clarification from the VHT she will speak to Clare de Bathe about possible funding for Sports pavilion improvements. The Clerk to let the Sports and Social Club know the change in circumstances.

- b) Communications Working Group** – The new member of the group has been doing some updates which is much appreciated.
- c) The Swan Working Group** – The pub's official reopening is on 2nd Dec with a soft launch from 28th November. Cllr Houlden confirmed a new wooden bar installed. They will be serving food 7 days a week. A signed agreement for siting the pub sign on the Millennium Arch has been received from Res non Verba.
- d) Maintenance Working Group** – a report was circulated prior to the meeting. Playground pales regularly being kicked out and repaired.
- e) Speed watch Co-Ordinator** – nothing this month.
- f) Hesworth Common Management Committee** – Following the visit to BWW and a land registry search, it was suggested that the owners of Badgers should be contacted regarding the enclosed rose garden in front of the property as it is part of the parish owned Hesworth Common land. Cllr MacKenzie to draft some words about land registry for Clerk. There is a volunteer day for tree planting on 1st Dec, mainly around the edges of the common and area D but also some infilling existing copse. Waiting for 1st frost to cut and collect heather seed. A contractor was engaged to clear the ditch on the northern side of Hesworth Lane.
- g) Birchwalks Wood**– notes from the walk around will be discussed at the next BWW meeting. If necessary, Cllrs Allin and Broughton will personally pay for a sign to go on the back of the gate. HCMC have met with a WSFRS Fire Officer who is sending a report in January, this includes BWW and the report will be shared with BWWMG.
- h) Tree Warden** – Cllr Allin, in his capacity as Tree warden, has met with the owner of The Old Forge, and the owner will get Andrew Gale out to do a survey. There will be some trees in the Conservation area that will need permission, but outside of that area he won't need permission for tree works. Cllr Allin feels if the Sandrock Oak were to fall, it would not go onto the fence. It was agreed that going forward the HCMC should be involved with discussion with the tree surgeon about tree removal at Hesworth.
- i) Footpaths** – nothing to report
- j) Village Hall & Outside Bodies** – Cllr Houlden reported that a new entrance to the car park (where the PC noticeboard stands) has been discussed but not agreed. The issue with the electricity supply to the light at the entrance to the car park has been resolved, but the light is not working.
- k) Flood Resilience Working Group** – Cllr Allin will fill in the WS Ripirian ditch survey. Birch Court attenuation tank – CDC are pursuing legal action against the developer. The Clerk will try to find a contact from the Managing Agent at Hawkins field for ditch maintenance.

24-124

Sports Pavilion – see Community Hub update

24-125	Correspondence – all discussed
24-126	Chair’s Announcements None
24-127	Matters Raised by Councillors
24-128	Date of next meetings: Monday 20 th January 2025.

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 21:37

Signed:

Date: