

**DRAFT Minutes of the ordinary Firsdown Parish Council meeting held on
Thursday 11th January 2024 at 7.30 pm in Winterslow Village Hall**

Present

Cllr Simon Brown (Chairman)
Cllr Jeremy Beaven
Cllr Jim Buckley
Cllr Steve Smith
Cllr Nigel Walsh

In attendance: Catherine Purves (Clerk)

Also present: Three members of the public, Wiltshire Councillor Rich Rogers

Public Session:

Manor Farms (Winterbourne) Ltd – a representative from Manor Farms (Winterbourne) Ltd advised the meeting about a prospective planning application for a change of use from the existing pig farm to employment use, and the reasons for the application.

Wiltshire Councillor Rich Rogers gave his report:

- Southern Area Board – the next meeting is on Thursday 22nd February in Alderbury Village Hall and will have a Highways theme – Wiltshire Council Highways will be present to answer any questions. Questions should be submitted by 12th February. The meeting will also consider the Major Maintenance programme for 2024/2025.
- The next Local Highways and footpaths Improvement Group meeting will be held on Tuesday 6th February at Bourne Hill.
- Wiltshire Council's full Council will meet on 20th February to set the 2024/2025 budget with a 4.99% increase in WC Council tax, and 2.99% for social care. It is running a small surplus now, and so is in good financial shape.
- Roundbarrow Farm – no further news, he is pressing for an update.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The meeting began at 7.50 pm

1.24 To receive apologies for absence.

Resolved – to accept Cllr Stewart's apologies as she was indisposed.

2.24 To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members

a. To receive any **Declarations of Interest** in respect of matters contained in this agenda.

Resolved: to note there were none

b. To consider any **Dispensation Requests** received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

Resolved: to note none received

3.24 Minutes

Resolved: To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 6th September 2023 with the one amendment at 91.23e i.e. that the signage be placed with Bob Cooke, not Bob Hoskins.

4.24 To consider any items raised in the public session (Note no decision can be made) No items raised.

5.24 To receive reports from:

a. *The Chairman* – Cllr Brown noted that:

i. Litter picking – he had litter picked from Dunstable crossroads to the traffic lights on the A30 and had reported a large accumulation of alcohol bottles and cans to the police because of the possibility of drink driving.

b. *The Parish Clerk* – the Clerk advised the following:

i. She had attended the Society of Local Council Clerks' meeting in November, where Clerk's listened to an update on Highways matters from Highways officers. She will attend the next meeting later in January and the next LHFIC and Southern Area Board meetings in February. She will also be attending the SLCC practitioners' Conference at the end of January.

c. *The Council's representative to the Southern Area Board* – Cllr Brown advised that at the meeting held in December, the Winterslow Youth Zone group was presented with the Robbie's Endeavour Trophy, an award from Community First.

d. *Firsdawn Conservation Group* – the old noticeboard located formerly at Great Croft has been refurbished but it still needs a new cork board, and to be installed in its new location by the picnic tables. Yellow Rattle seeds have been sown on the strips next to the byway. Concerns were expressed about FPC funds being spent enhancing the woods, which are in private hands. **Resolved:** to contact the landowner's agents to request permission undertake the activities necessary to plant more bluebells plus seeds, wild garlic and wood anemones. **Action:** The Clerk and Cllr Walsh, who will supply the contact details.

6.24 Governance

a. *Draft Biodiversity policy* – after a short discussion, during which it was thought sensible to include a map of the areas covered, and mention of the Footpath and Conservation Groups, it was **Resolved:** to adopt the draft Biodiversity Policy with these additions. **Action:** The Clerk

b. *Provision of a bank debit card with a maximum spend of £500* – **Resolved:** to apply for the same, which will allow small scale purchases within the Clerk's delegated amount.

Action: The Clerk

7.24 Highway/Parish Steward/Footpath matters for consideration and action as necessary.

a. *To note any new Highways issues* - trees overhanging the road from 99 Firs Road to the A30 junction have been reported to the landowner for action.

b. *To note any new tasks for the Parish Steward:*

i. Potholes have been reported again.

ii. The drainage ditches around the Figsbury Ring access junction have been cleared and dug out.

c. *To note any new footpath matters:*

i. The ground around the lower gate to the byway/play area has been levelled and will be sown with wildflower seeds in due course.

ii. Two dog bins have been moved.

iii. The section of the byway leading to Dunstable Crossroads is still badly rutted. The Clerk was asked to report this again. **Action:** The Clerk

iv. The footway leading from 99 Firs Road to the A30 junction is narrow and muddy. It was noted that the roadside bank cannot be altered, and only the vegetation on the field side can be cut back.

d. *To note any updates from the Local Highways & Footpaths Improvement Group:*

i. Results of A30 speed limit assessment – the report had been received and circulated to all. It was noted that there are strict criteria in setting speed limits, particularly on A roads and these are set by the Department for Transport, to apply across the country. The mean speed was calculated at 58.9mph on the section of the A30 from Clearway to the start of the

dual carriageway, this includes the Firs Road junction. The assessment suggested that reducing the limit from 60mph to a 50mph was possible on this section, the costs of which would be £21,500 to include the legal framework, coloured tarmac, road signing. After a short discussion, during which it was noted that residents had been concerned about speeding and driver behaviour on the A30 for many years, and that this offered the best opportunity yet to try and address the problem, it was:

Resolved: to contribute 50% (£10,750.00) of the funding required to support the implementation of this proposal. **Action:** The Clerk

e. *Site meeting at Dunstable Crossroads* – representatives from Firsdawn, Winterslow and Pitton & Farley Parish Councils had met in November 2023, and it was noted that there was no possibility of a speed limit reduction at this location because it did not meet the DfT criteria and could not be enforced. Traffic lights or a roundabout could not be installed due to the lack of required space, but the crossroads' appearance could be altered which would help notify drivers of changes ahead and to modify their driving accordingly. Coloured tarmac and additional signs and lines could be used, but a topographical survey by LHFIFG would point to further solutions.

Resolved: to support the undertaking of a topographical survey, noting that it was hoped costs would be split three ways between the parish councils concerned.

f. *To note any updates from the Community Speed Watch Team*

i. There have been delays in the processing of applicants to join the CSW Team

ii. More volunteers are needed.

iii. More than 450 volunteer hours were recorded in 2023.

Resolved: to note. **Action:** The Clerk as necessary

8.24 Finance

a. **Resolved:** To note the new salary scales for 2023/2024

b. **Resolved:** To confirm the payment of a schedule of accounts for January 2024 in the sum of £2145.62 including plus additional payments of £543.56 for play area sign, £91.65 for councillors' expenses.

c. **Resolved:** To note the 2023.2024 Budget Monitoring form for January 2024, with the observation that expenditure exceeded the budget by £2k, which had been covered from the reserves.

d. **Resolved:** To note the bank balance as at 31st December 2023 stood at £26,043.20

e. **Resolved:** To note the Q3 2023.2024 December 2023 bank reconciliation.

f. **Resolved:** To agree expenditure of £200 for the Conservation Group noticeboard pin board.

g. **Resolved:** To agree a donation of £500.00 towards Winterslow Youth Group **Action:** The Clerk

h. **Resolved:** To agree a donation of £500.00 towards Pitton Community Shop **Action:** The Clerk

i. **Resolved:** To reduce the amount of grant funding requested of £5000 from Pitton Community Shop to £2500, and to consider this reduced amount for the 2025/2026 budget, pending the outcome of the proposed share option scheme, and a financial commitment by Pitton & Farley Parish Council. **Action:** The Clerk

j. *To consider and agree the draft budget recommendations for 2024/2025* - The Clerk and Chairman presented the draft budget for 2024/2025 which had previously been circulated to all councillors, and which the FPC considered. After some discussion it was:

Resolved: To agree exceptionally a budget of £27,725.25 for 2024/2025, to include the 50% contribution of £10,750 to LHFIFG for the implementation of the speed reduction on the A30 (a one-off payment), and to earmark reserves of £5000 for the eventual replacement of the play area fencing, £557 for smaller LHFIFG projects, £1500 for the A30 speed assessment and £1666 towards the Local Government election costs in May 2025.

k. *To consider and agree the precept recommendation for 2024/2025* - Wiltshire Council had advised the FPC that the estimated tax base figure for 2024/2025 would be 277.66 (previous year 279.09). Having agreed the budget, the FPC considered the precept, and it was:

Resolved: to agree an increase of £9075.00 on the previous year to £27,725 for 2024/2025. The annual cost to a Band D household would be £99.85 (£9.99 per month) an increase of £33.02 on the whole year. **Action:** Clerk to inform Wiltshire Council.

9.24 New Issues raised for consideration and action as necessary.

None noted.

10.24 To review other ongoing matters.

- a. Bank mandate – the Clerk confirmed that BACS payments must now be released by two signatories, and that Cllr Simon Brown needed to be added to the list of BACS payment signatories.
- b. Roundbarrow Farm – new right of way. No further news.
- d. Pitton Community Shop – it was noted that Pitton Village Hall had given formal permission to the Community Shop that it may build on Hall land. A website and business plan are now available, and a share option scheme is to be opened soon.
- e. Provision of a recycling bin – this was in progress; the bin had been provided and the wrap was being produced.

11.24 Planning

- a. To consider a response to planning applications received: None received.
- b. To confirm the response determined by email for applications received since the last meeting:
None received.
- c. To note planning decisions made by Wiltshire Council since the last meeting:
None received.

12.24 Items for the next agenda

None noted.

13.24 To note the dates and times of the next ordinary meetings of the Council.

Thursday 7th March 2024 at 7.30pm in the Meeting Room of Winterslow Village Hall

Thursday 2nd May 2024 at 7.30pm in the Meeting Room of Winterslow Village Hall

14.24 To close the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.19pm

Councillors considered the following when discharging their duties: Equal Opportunities (Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Marital Status, and any Disability), Crime & Disorder; Health & Safety; Human Rights; Biodiversity.