

**Minutes of the Annual Firsdown Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 2nd
May 2024 at 7.45pm pm in Winterslow Village Hall**

Present

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

In attendance: Catherine Purves (Clerk)

Also present: Wiltshire Councillor Rich Rogers

Public Session:

Wiltshire Councillor Rich Rogers gave his report:

- The Wiltshire Council CEO, Terence Herbert was moving to Surrey County Council.
- As the new Portfolio Holder for Highways, he had been learning about the priorities for the Major Maintenance Programme, and he noted that two additional Bob cats had been purchased to help with reactive repairs.
- An additional £4.5m had been added to the Highways budget for additional schemes, including £1m for the Lynham Road reconstruction. However, resources are a problem, with staffing numbers 20% under requirement levels. He has requested that the resurfacing of Firs Road and the A30 at the traffic lights both be made a priority.
- The Dunstable Road improvements and the downgrading of the BOAT status were progressing.
- The next Area Board meeting will be the Board's priority setting meeting.
- The Time & Talents event at Winterslow was well attended, as was the Area Board's similar initiative at Downton.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The meeting began at 7.50 pm

28.24 To elect the Chairman of the Council and to receive the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Resolved: to elect Cllr Simon Brown as Chairman for 2024/2025. Cllr Brown signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office

29.24 To elect the Vice Chairman and to receive the Vice Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Having agreed to his nomination prior to the meeting, it was:

Resolved: elect Cllr Beavan as Chairman for 2024/2025.

30.24 To receive apologies for absence.

Resolved: to receive apologies from Cllr Beavan and Cllr Stewart, both of whom were indisposed.

31.24 To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members

- a. To receive any **Declarations of Interest** in respect of matters contained in this agenda.
- b. To consider any **Dispensation Requests** received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

Resolved: to note there were no Declarations of Interest, or requests for dispensations

Councillors were reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure their Register of Interests is up to date.

32.24 Minutes

Resolved: To approve and sign as a correct record without amendment the minutes of the ordinary Parish Council meeting held on 8th March 2024

33.24 Governance

a. To review the and approve the following governance documents:

i. Internal Control Policy, ii Risk Assessment, iii Effectiveness of Internal Audit Policy, vi Asset Register, noting any alteration required.

b. Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The documents had been previously circulated and examined. It was noted that new model Financial Regulations were due to be released imminently, and so in the circumstances it was: **Resolved:** to confirm all current documents, and to review the new financial Regulations and the Asset Register later in the year. **Action:** The Clerk

34.24 To appoint an Internal Auditor for 2024/2025.

Noting that Auditing Solutions Ltd were withdrawing from the market, it was:

Resolved: to obtain a quote from the current auditor for 2024/2025.

Action: The Clerk

35.24 To appoint representatives to the under mentioned bodies as required:

a) Wiltshire Council's Southern Area Board

Resolved: to appoint Cllr Brown

b) Wiltshire Council's Local Highways & Footpaths Improvement Group

Resolved: to appoint Cllr Brown

Wiltshire Association of Local Councils

c) **Resolved:** to defer to the September meeting, and for the access password to the National Association of Local Council website to be circulated to all councillors. **Action:** The Clerk

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

37.24 To receive reports from:

a. The Chairman – Cllr Brown advised that the Community Police Office PC Harry Murphy had been transferred to Wiltshire Police's Rural Crime Unit, his replacement is PC Kelvin Ramsey.

b. The Parish Clerk – the Clerk advised she had attended both the Society of Local Council Clerks' meeting in March, where there was a presentation on the future of Internal Audit of the Parish Council sector, and the recent Local Highways & Footpaths Improvement Group.

c. The Council's representative to the Southern Area Board – Cllr Brown advised the next meeting would be held on Thursday 23rd May at 7.00pm in Winterbourne Earls village hall.

38.24 Finance

a. **Resolved:** To note the Q4 2023/2024 bank reconciliation as of 31st March 2024

b. **Resolved:** To confirm the payment of a schedule of accounts for May 2024 in the sum of £4895.83

c. **Resolved:** To note the 2024.2025 Budget Monitoring form.

d. **Resolved:** To note the bank balance as of 30th April 2024 stood at £33,709.21, including the half year precept of £13,862.50

39.24 To complete and sign the Annual Governance & Accounting Return for 2023/2024

- a. **Resolved:** To redact the signatures on the AGAR documents uploaded to the FPC website, to protect signatories from “specific & identifiable threats” of identity theft, and because of GDPR concerns.
- b. **Resolved:** To note and accept the Internal Audit Report for 2023/2024 and any recommendations from the Internal Auditor.
- c. **Resolved:** To approve and sign the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/2024
- d. **Resolved:** To approve and sign the Annual Accounting Statement for 2023/2024
- e. **Resolved:** To resolve to certify that Firsdown Parish Council is exempt from a Limited Assurance Review by the External Auditor, as it meets the qualifying criteria.
- f. **Resolved:** To approve the dates for the period of the Public Right of Inspection of Accounts for 2023/2024 – Monday 3rd June 2024 to Friday 12th July 2024, noting that the notice will be displayed on Wednesday 29th May 2024.

40.24 New Issues raised for consideration and action as necessary.

- a. *Possible installation of a baby/toddler specific swing* – councillors noted that the previous swing had reached the end of its life, the mechanisms had worn out, and it did not meet current safety standards. The birds nest swing which replaced it was more inclusive, catering for a wider age range of children and for those without full abilities – its attraction was its versatility. Providing the child is over 12 months old, the swing is safe to use. If the toddler is wearing a safety harness, this can be clipped to the basket, for an additional safety precaution. There was no space available to install an additional swing, and that funds had already been spent to improve accessibility, it was:

Resolved: not to change the swing, funds had been spent to improve accessibility, and there was no space for an additional swing

41.24 Highway/Parish Steward/Footpath matters.

- a. *To note any new Highways issues* – none noted.
- b. *To note any new tasks for the Parish Steward* – none noted.
- c. *To note any new footpath matters:* - vehicle vandalism of the Byway Open to All Traffic – also see 41.24diii below. Cllr Walsh advised that the mower needs servicing, and it was:
Resolved: to allocate up to £250.00 for this. **Action:** The Clerk and Cllr Walsh.
- d. *To note any updates from the Local Highways and Footpaths Group meeting held on 23rd April 2024*
 - i. *Safety Improvements at Dunstable Crossroads* – to consider a 11% contribution towards the cost of a topographical survey (including survey of invert drainage levels) total cost £7750.00 plus VAT. FPC contribution £861.11, subject to Winterslow and Pitton & Farley Parish Councils agreeing to their contribution in the sum of £861.11 each.
Cllr Brown noted that although the safety mirror had been installed as a low-cost measure to try to improve the accident statistics at the crossroads, it was clear that it had not had the desired effect, and accidents were still happening. Wiltshire Council had accepted that further measures were needed. A topographical survey was required to assess the layout formally, which would help inform what measures would be possible. Mindful of the possible impact of any works on ground water flooding to Pitton further down the valley, the existing invert drainage levels would be included in the survey. After a short discussion, it was:
Resolved: to contribute £861.11 towards the survey, on the basis that Winterslow and Pitton & Farley Parish Councils also agreed their contributions of the same amount each.
 - ii. *Installation of a dropped kerb at Firs Road/A30 junction* – the Wiltshire Council Traffic Officer is still awaiting advice from Legal Services concerning the land ownership about the best way to claim the land as public highways as no registered owner is recorded, nor has anyone come forward identifying themselves as the landowner.
 - iii. *Proposed downgrading of status of Byway Open to All Traffic to a restricted Byway/Bridleway* – councillors were aware of the vandalism by the play area, and that the stock fencing near the Pitton Road had been demolished. This had been raised at the LHFIG

meeting, which had agreed to explore the possible downgrading of the BOAT status, ideally to the same as the agreed right of Way from Firsdown to Pitton. **Resolved:** to request formally that this project be progressed. **Action:** The Clerk

iv. Update on A30/London Road speed reduction project – the speed review undertaken in the autumn had indicated that the stretch of road between the Firs Road junction and the Pheasant traffic lights could be reduced to 50mph. The LHFIG had decided the project was outside its funding remit and would be actioned by Highways because of the road's status as an A road. Costings are being obtained. The Internal Auditor had suggested that the proposed FPC payment of the capital works would be double taxation, as it is the statutory responsibility of Wiltshire Council to implement and pay for this, not the FPC. Wiltshire Council's contribution will be in kind, ie the officer time spent on designing and organising the scheme. The Clerk advised she had requested an opinion from both the the National Association of Local Councils, and the Society of Local Council Clerks, their response was awaited.

Resolved: to note and to discuss the matter further at the next meeting.

42.24 Planning

a. To consider a response to planning applications received: None.

b. To consider a response to applications notified between the publication date of the agenda and the date of the meeting, if necessary: None.

c. To confirm the response determined by email for applications received since the last meeting:

PL/2024/01415 – demolish existing garage and conservatory, replace with single storey side and rear extension. Enlarge existing dormer, alterations to fenestration, render to front of property at 13 Great Croft, Firsdown. **Resolved:** to confirm the response – no objection

d. To note planning decisions made by Wiltshire Council since the last meeting: None received.

43.24 To review other ongoing matters.

a. Bank mandate – ongoing, the Clerk advised this can now be done online.

b. Roundbarrow Farm – the Clerk advised that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds had been appointed by Wiltshire Council as the long-term manager of the Farm, it was already operating under a temporary licence whilst a long-term lease was being arranged. The proposed Right of Way between Firsdown and Pitton was progressing. A community orchard is proposed in Pitton.

c. Pitton Community Shop – two public meetings had been held in late April to update the community about progress, and to launch its Pioneering Share Scheme. £31,000 was required to unlock further grant funding, and it was understood that a third of the total had already been raised.

d. Provision of recycling bins – the Clerk confirmed that a (free) first tier waste removal licence was required, and Cllr Brown confirmed he had obtained this. The project can now be progressed.

Resolved: to note these updates

44.24 Items for the next agenda

- New model Financial Regulations
- Update on A30/London Road speed reduction project.
- Artwork and costings for recycling bin

45.24 To note the date and time of the next ordinary meetings of the Council.

Thursday 4th July 2024 at 7.30 pm in Winterslow Village Hall

46.24 To close the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.12pm

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.