

**Minutes of the Firsdown Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 3rd July
2024 at 7.30pm pm in Winterslow Village Hall**

Present

Cllr Simon Brown (Chairman)
Cllr Jeremy Beavan (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Jim Buckley
Cllr Nigel Walsh

In attendance: Catherine Purves (Clerk)

Also present: Community PC Kelvin Ramsey

Public Session

PC Kelvin Ramsey gave his report:

- No crime reported for Firsdown in June 2024
- Rogue traders – these are still operating in the area, and are scoping out potential victims, particularly if they are vulnerable. Please contact the police with the details, especially vehicle registration numbers.

In his absence, there was no report from Wiltshire Councillor Rich Rogers

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The meeting began at 7.37 pm

47.24 To receive apologies for absence.

Resolved: to receive apologies Cllr Stewart, who was indisposed. Cllr Smith's absence was noted.

48.24 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.

49.24 Minutes

Resolved: To approve and sign as a correct record without amendment the minutes of the Annual Firsdown Parish Council meeting held on 2nd May 2024

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

51.24 To receive reports from:

- a. *The Chairman* – Cllr Brown advised that he had attended Wiltshire Council's recent Planning Seminar, where he learnt that following a peer review, Wiltshire Council was investing £1m into the Planning Service, and actively recruiting to fill the 18 vacancies. Enforcement is being supported and expanded as well. Wiltshire Council's Local Development Plan is currently undergoing review, and will shortly be going out to consultation, following which it will be submitted to the Local Inspector with a view to being adopted an applicable from autumn 2025. Firsdown Parish is considered unsustainable in planning terms, and so only infill development is possible.
- b. *The Parish Clerk* – the Clerk advised she had attended the Planning Seminar as well.

c. The Council's representative to the Southern Area Board – Cllr Brown advised the most recent meeting in May undertook a review of the previous year's work, and renewed the priorities for 2024/2025 – Youth Engagement, Environment and supporting the Elderly and Vulnerable. The police report highlighted recent scams. The next meeting would be held on Thursday 5th September at 7.00pm in Winterslow Village Hall.

d. Firsdown Conservation Group – Cllr Walsh advised that the noticeboard is yet to be installed. The yellow rattle seeds have grown, and after a short discussion, it was

Resolved: to allocate £100.00 towards the purchase of more yellow rattle seeds. **Action:** The Clerk and Cllr Walsh.

The Clerk advised she was aware of a scything team in the area, and it was thought this traditional method of cutting grass would be helpful for the management of the B.O.A.T.

Resolved: to explore this further with Hazel Hill, the local eco-conservation charity. **Action:** The Clerk

52.24 Highway/Parish Steward/Footpath matters.

a. To note any new Highways issues – none noted.

b. To note any new tasks for the Parish Steward – the removal of grass growing in the gutters of Juniper Drive. Some of the potholes have been filled in.

c. To note any new footpath matters – Cllr Walsh advised that he and his team had been concentrating on maintaining the Circular Walk footpaths. He noted that the hedge from 99 Firs Road to the A30 junction needed cutting. This will be done in the autumn. The path to the play area, and the play area itself had been cut. The group would be looking for more volunteers in the future. Cllr Walsh also noted that the second-hand mower recently acquired needed servicing at an approximate cost of £130.00 plus VAT and parts.

Resolved: to arrange for the second-hand mower to be serviced. **Action:** The Clerk and Cllr Walsh

d. To note any updates:

i. Safety Improvements at Dunstable Crossroads – **Resolved:** to confirm Firsdown PC's contribution of £861.11, having noted that the other two participating Parish Councils - Winterslow and Pitton & Farley - have both agreed to contribute £861.11 each as well to the topographical survey including the existing invert drainage levels. **Action:** The Clerk

ii. Firs Road drainage – Cllr Brown advised that Wiltshire Council's contractor had visited the BOAT and had noted that the drainage pipe under the BOAT had collapsed, the two soakaways are full of silt, and so road water run off had backed up in the garden of 21 Firs Road. To resolve the problem, a SUD system will be created along the BOAT side of the hedge line, and several broken pipes in Firs Road will also be repaired. Wiltshire Council is already working on the design. After a short discussion it was

Resolved: to note this update, and for Firsdown PC to take on the future maintenance of the SUD, it being easy to monitor and assess when work was required.

iii. Community Speed Watch – Cllr Buckley advised the team was still active and undertaking assessment every other day.

53.24 Finance

a. Resolved: To confirm the payment of a schedule of accounts for July 2024 in the sum of £3806.5, plus an additional £16.65 to the Clerk for mileage, total £3823.16

b. Resolved: To note the 2023.2024 Budget Monitoring form for July 2024

c. Resolved: To note the bank balance stood at £32848.68 as of 30th June 2024

d. To consider advice re proposed expenditure of £6330 on the A30/London Road speed limit reduction project and decide whether to proceed.

Following receipt of the Internal Auditor's comments, the Clerk had contacted both the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks for further advice. This had been received and circulated to all councillors. Essentially,

- The Internal Auditor advises "No", because of the implications of double taxation.
- NALC seems to advise "Yes", it is traffic calming and the FPC has the power to contribute to such a scheme. It has ignored the possible issue of double taxation.

- SLCC takes a more pragmatic approach, and is somewhere in the middle, acknowledging the issue of double taxation (which apparently has generated fierce debate elsewhere across the country), but noting that many schemes which would benefit the community wouldn't happen if the town and parish council sector didn't contribute financially.

After a short discussion, during which it was noted that Wiltshire Council had removed its statutory costs from the quote, which had reduced the sum required from £10,100 to £6,330 (which included a contingency figure of £2,000) it was

Resolved: to fund the project to a maximum of £6330 on the basis that this would be covering signage, white lining, surfacing and traffic control which would all contribute to traffic calming along this particular stretch of the A30, and because this was the best opportunity in decades to effect change to the speed limit on the A30. **Action:** The Clerk

54.24 New Issues raised for consideration and action as necessary - None noted

55.24 To review other ongoing matters.

a. *Bank mandate* – The Clerk advised that the appropriate form had been completed online, and authorised by the appropriate signatories, yet despite doing this twice, Lloyds had still not enabled Cllr Brown to authorise online payments. Councillors expressed their dissatisfaction and after a short discussion

Resolved: To retry transferring the Parish Council account to Unity Trust bank, and to open a deposit account with the bank as well. **Action:** The Clerk

b. *Roundbarrow Farm* – the Clerk advised Wiltshire Council hoped to install the proposed Right of Way between Firsdow and Pitton later in the summer.

c. *Pitton Community Shop* – the Pioneering Share Scheme to raise £31,000 had been successful, and the Shop was now able to progress with the creation of the lease with Pitton Village Hall, and to submit a planning application for the proposed works.

d. *Provision of recycling bins* – Cllr Brown confirmed that the bin had been wrapped, and following some small adjustments, it would soon be installed by the Great Croft post box and noticeboard.

Resolved: to note these updates

56.24 Planning

a. To consider a response to planning applications received:

PI/2024/05302 – change of use of certain agricultural buildings to commercial use on land at Summerlug, Winterbourne Earls. **Resolved:** no objection. **Action:** The Clerk

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

c. To confirm the response determined by email for applications received since the last meeting: None received.

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

57.24 Items for the next agenda – there were none

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

Wednesday 4th September at 7.30pm in the Meeting Room of Winterslow Village Hall.

Noting that the meeting would be inquorate on the 4th September, it was

Resolved: to rearrange for Thursday September 19th instead. **Action:** The Clerk

Wednesday 6th November at 7.30pm in the Meeting Room of Winterslow Village Hall

59.24 To close the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

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.