

Minutes of the Firsdown Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 3rd July 2025
at 7.30pm in Winterslow Village Hall

Present

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

In attendance: Catherine Purves (Clerk)

Also present: Wiltshire Councillor Rich Rogers, PC Kelvin Ramsey and two members of the public

Public Session

Wiltshire Councillor Rich Rogers gave his report:

- Wiltshire Council had identified a £4.8m overspend in its adult social care budget for 24/25, despite quarterly reports and regular scrutiny. Officers are investigating, and reserves will be used to cover the shortfall to create the balanced budget required.
- The permissive bridleway between Firsdown and Pitton is now open; it has been well received. The RSPB are looking for volunteers to help manage the site. Open access to Roundbarrow Farm is not possible, but regular visits will be organised in due course.

PC Kelvin Ramsey gave his report:

- Nothing of concern to report from the parish, but garden machinery continues to be stolen in the wider area.

Community speedwatch – the Chairman, Cllr Brown, accepted an invitation to attend a speedwatch session if suitable dates could be arranged.

Bespoke signs – it was Wiltshire Council's policy not to have these as far as possible, the policy is to reduce street furniture in rural areas as much as possible without compromising safety.

Wooded area – concerns were raised about non-maintained/non-managed trees

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The meeting began at 7.52 pm

46.25 To receive apologies for absence

Resolved: Cllr Jeremy Beavan's absence was noted. He has yet to sign his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

47.25 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, and no Requests for Dispensation.

48.25 Minutes

Resolved: To approve and sign as a correct record without amendment the minutes of the

Annual Firsdown Parish Council meeting held on 8th May 2025

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

50.25 To receive reports from:

- a. The Chairman* – Cllr Brown noted the Annual Meeting in May had received 58 viewings online. He had attended the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils' training webinar for Chairs, which he had found very useful.
- b. The Parish Clerk* – attended the SLCC Wilts branch meeting in May to hear a presentation on the dangers women can experience in public office both online and in real life.
- c. The Council's representative to the Southern Area Board* – Cllr Brown advised those present heard presentations from Salisbury police, Alzheimer Support in Wiltshire and Pitton Nature Trust on its involvement with the Roundbarrow Farm project. There will be an update on the youth support at the September meeting.

51.25 Finance

- a. Resolved:* To confirm the payment of a schedule of accounts for July 2025 in the sum of £1739.67
- b. Resolved:* To note the July 2025.2026 Budget Monitoring form
- c. Resolved:* To note the bank balances as of 30th June 2025 - current £551.60, deposit £44,060.84
- d. Resolved:* To note the Q1 2025/2026 Bank Rec as of 30th June 2025
- e. To consider quotes for an accounting software package* – three quotes had been sought, only two received, one quote for an upfront cost of £991.00 plus VAT and an ongoing annual fee of £203.00 plus VAT, and a second quote for an upfront cost of £770.00 plus VAT and an ongoing annual fee of £372.00 plus VAT

After a short discussion, it was

Resolved: to award the business to Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd on the basis the ongoing annual fee of £203 was much cheaper. **Action:** The Clerk

- f. Resolved:* To note the new FPC SIM only mobile contract at £10pm for 12GB data and unlimited texts and minutes. Cllr Brown has provided a used handset, this will be set up and the new number circulated. **Action:** The Clerk

g. To note an update concerning the dog bin emptying contract – two quotes had been received for the weekly emptying and relining of 5 dog bins, one for £2340.00 plus VAT, and one for £4324.32 plus VAT. These were the only two local companies to undertake this work. After a short discussion, it was:

Resolved: to award the business to idverde on the basis it was the cheaper of the two options, and the company was the existing contractor. **Action:** The Clerk

h. To reconsider the objective to replace the wooden play area fencing with a metal one – the GPC had begun to put funds into ear marked reserves 3 years ago for this purpose, but on reflection councillors felt it was not appropriate in a rural setting. After a short discussion, during which the costs and requirements of ongoing maintenance of a wooden fence were noted, it was

Resolved: to retain the wooden fence and release the earmarked funds to the general reserve. **Action:** The Clerk

52.25 Governance

- a. To review and update Standing Orders to reflect the new procurement requirements.*

Resolved: to adopt the new procurement requirements and the updated Code of Conduct requirements as recommended.

53.25 Recommendations from Internal Auditor following satisfactory 2024/2025 report To consider and resolve as follows:

- a. To install an accounting software package* – see item 51.25h above.

54.25 New Issues raised for consideration and action as necessary

a. Concerns about road safety in the parish – concerns had been raised about the speed at which cars entered and leave Firs Road at the Winterslow end, just at the junction of the footpath and pavement where the 30mph limit starts, because of preconceived risks to pedestrians.

After a short discussion during which it was noted the Community Speedwatch Group is a successful deterrent, and that 30mph reminder stickers had been purchased for residents' use, it was

Resolved: to contact Wiltshire Council about its policy on additional signage, and to request the neighbouring resident to cut back the overhanging hedge. **Action:** The Clerk, Cllr Buckley and Cllr Brown

b. Purchase of a second wholly owned FPC Speed Indicator Devices, to be solar powered – after a short discussion, during which it was noted that the SIDs complement the Community Speedwatch Group's efforts to reduce speeding in the village, it was

Resolved: to agree in principle to the purchase a second SID, to be battery powered, but to discuss the matter further at the November meeting.

c. Conversion of the existing wholly owned FPC SID from battery to solar power – Cllr Brown advised the solar mounting would add too much weight to be carried by the lamppost on which the SID was hung. A new pole would be required at both SID locations, as well as 2 new solar panels and conversion of the wholly owned FPC SID. Based on quotes obtained, this would cost over £2000, and councillors agreed this would not be cost effective.

Resolved: to increase the frequency of the battery changes to 3 times per month rather than twice a month, which would provide the same level of additional functionality at zero cost.

Action: The Clerk & Cllr Brown.

d. Resolved: to note a report from Wiltshire Council Independent Remuneration Panel concerning Parish Councillor allowances.

55.25 Highway/Parish Steward/Footpath matters.

a. To note any new Highways issues – none noted. Cllr Brown advised the A30 from the Pheasant lights to Lopcombe Corner was due to be resurfaced, and Firs Road is to be assessed for further repairs, before March 2026

b. To note any new tasks for the Parish Steward – nothing to report.

c. To note any new footpath matters – A request had been received for a bench to be located on the new permissive bridleway at its junction with PIFA43. **Resolved:** to forward this request to Pitton & Farley Parish Council with the offer to share the net cost

d. To note any updates, particularly from the most recent Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group, June 2025:

i. Signing & lining improvements at the junction of the A30 London Road and Old Malthouse Lane (in conjunction with Pitton & Farley Parish Council)- the Traffic Officer will look at the possibility of widening the road here, and improvements to the signing and lining as well.

ii. Dunstable Crossroads safety improvements – design work for long term solution is progressing, cost estimates for short term lining and signing works to be provided. No change.

iii. Dropped kerb at Firs Road/A30 junction – still awaiting advice from Legal Services concerning the land ownership. The scheme has been allocated to the traffic engineering team to progress once confirmation has been received.

iv. Amendments to the B.O.A.T. designation – meeting between Traffic and Rights of Way to be arranged, and cost estimates/timeframe to be provided to FPC. No change.

v. A30 London Road/Firs Road junction speed reduction project – awaiting legal consultation dates from Wiltshire Council's Traffic Department. The works pack will be prepared, ready to pass to M Group as soon as possible after the consultation period ends.

56.25 Planning

- a. To consider a response to planning applications received: None received*
- 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 notified, but the FPC has been advised that PL/2024/05307 change of use at Summerlug Farm had been referred to Wiltshire Council's Strategic Planning Committee for determination.*

57.25 To review and note other ongoing matters

- a. Bank card – card issued and activated. Item closed.
- c. Possibility of the FPC buying the woodland at the northwestern end of Firs Road from the Christie-Miller Estate – no further news.
- d. Roundbarrow Farm/Permissive bridleway – this was formally opened on 23rd May 2025. It has been confirmed that the RSPB is responsible for its maintenance. Item closed.

58.25 Items for the next agenda

- a. To adopt updated GDPR and Data Protection policies
- b. To adopt a Document Retention Policy
- c. To resolve to work towards obtaining a Cyber Essential Certificate
- d. Benches on footpath
- e. Information lectern at junction of the permissive bridleway and the BOAT in Firsdawn parish, or at the junction with PIFA 43.
- f. Dog fouling

59.25 To note the date and time of the next ordinary meetings of the Council

Thursday 11th September 2025 – Cllr Walsh gave his apologies

Thursday 6th November 2025

All at 7.30pm in the Meeting Room of Winterslow Village Hall

60.25 To close the meeting

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

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.