

Cllr P Seeley (Chair), Cllr M Keller (PC Chair)  
Cllr P Hill (EDFPC)  
Cllr S Shing (ESCC)  
Ian Johnson – Traffic and Safety Manager (ESCC)  
Thomas Lee (Highway Steward) (ESCC)  
Cat Ford (ESCC Customer Services)  
Katrina Larkin - Parish Clerk



## **STRENGTHENING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS**

### **East Dean & Friston Parish Council Liaison Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 2.00 pm By remote means (Zoom platform and phone)**

#### **Minutes**

1. **Apologies for absence:** - None
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2019:** - Previously agreed
3. **Matters arising:**
  - a) **Friston build-out** – Mr Heasman would shortly send the parish an update following the easing of the lockdown
  - b) **Gulley problems at A259/Upper Street junction** – the Highway Steward reported that the vegetation encroaching on the site was the subject of enforcement action
  - c) **Blocked drain** – on the south side of the A259 below Upper Street a blocked drain was causing water to come up through the footway where tarmac had recently been laid. **ACTION:TL to investigate**
  - d) **Sign and safety barrier on Footpath 24** – the missing footpath sign and safety barrier had not yet been replaced by the Rights of Way team. **ACTION: CF to investigate**
  - e) **30 mph speed limit** – this topic had been referred to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, but it was noted that the NPSG was currently in abeyance due to the lockdown. There had been recent complaints about speeding from residents living on Friston Hill.
  - f) **Pedestrian safety in Birling Gap Road** – the parish council thanked ESCC for the new 'pedestrians in road' sign.
  - g) **Request bus stop at Downsview Lane** – IJ advised that it would be the responsibility of Brighton & Hove buses to reinstate the stop in a better location (which would be the old location, rather than those more recently investigated) as advised by Highways. **ACTION: KL to contact the bus company**
  - h) **Tactile paving on N side of A259** – the Highway Steward had requested a price for correcting the drainage problem caused by carriageway work

- i) **Junction of Gilberts Drive/A259** – the road markings had worn away, but the Highway Steward reported that repainting had been ordered and should be done within 28 days. Fresh markings would also be done in Old Willingdon Road, Lower Street and Upper Street.
- j) **Hedge Trimming at Exceat Bridge** – an overgrown hedge was causing a hazard by obscuring the view of westbound traffic with no right of way. **ACTION: CF to get an update.**

#### 4. Birling Gap Overwhelmed

A report had been circulated. The attraction of Birling Gap as a honeypot site had reached extremes during the lockdown and was causing severe disruption to life in the village, from the A259 down to The Meads. Part of the problem was the sheer weight of numbers, but there was also evidence of illegal driving (speeding and 'donuts'), use of vehicles which were not of street standard, and disruption continuing into the night. A seventeen year old had died 10 weeks previously. The parish council at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020 had considered extensive complaints and evidence of a public campaign, led by the Gilbert Estate, to combat this. They agreed that a package of short-term and long term measures was required, e.g. a police clampdown in the short term and traffic calming in the long term.

IJ stated that the problem was within the remit of ESCC's Strategic Economic Infrastructure Team, who were aware of both strands of the problem (i.e. the speeding/racing and the phenomenal amount of parking). Parish councillors stated that a third strand seriously affecting elderly residents was the amount of noise generated. It was noted that the police Crackdown website should be the first port of call, with details of cars and their number plates provided. **ACTION: MK to publicise this on the parish council website** so that residents could send in reports without compromising their safety. Cllr Shing advised that details should also be sent to Hailsham police station.

Members asked whether a 40 mph speed limit could be imposed on the whole road from the A259 to The Meads, based on the fact that where a road crossed open land and could be accessed by animals the conditions made a speed limit appropriate. IJ advised that although this could be considered, a decision would be based primarily on the level of frontage development, and even in ideal circumstances it would take at least a year to complete due process. A speed limit was unlikely to deter the activity which was already illegal. The Strategic Economic Infrastructure Team was currently dealing with a very high volume of requests from towns to impose social distancing measures, so that all requests were liable to be delayed. If the parish were willing to commit to Community Match funding this might extend the possibilities for action.

Members asked whether speed bumps could be installed within the 30 mph zone. IJ advised that this could not be done without lighting and/or copious signage which would be inappropriate within the National Park and contravene the Dark Skies policy. The same would apply to build-outs or chicanes. Again, Community Match funding could extend the possibilities, but would be extremely expensive.

The following actions on the part of the parish council were discussed:

- a) **Do a Speedwatch survey**– IJ would send the clerk the contact details of the Speedwatch team based in Seaford. Surveys could only be done in 30-40mph zones and sites would be risk assessed. MK advised that the parish had previously tried and failed to get the required minimum of six volunteers to man the sites, but a fresh attempt could be made **ACTION: IJ.** Cllr Shing offered to help with training Speedwatch volunteers.
- b) **Check ownership of verges** – the Highway Land Information Team would be able to supply detailed information on the ownership of verges as a preliminary to considering measures to discourage unsocial parking. Where verges were part of the highway, no posts or other obstructions could be installed without licences from the highway authority. **ACTION: CF to send contact details to KL.**

#### 5. 20 mph speed limit on private estate

The relevant Department of Transport DfT circular 01/2013 and recent 2018 report into the effectiveness of 20 miles per hour (mph) road speed limits invited parish councils to meet and discuss with the relevant highways and legal officers at the traffic authority to gain an understanding of their requirements, process, consultation etc. ESCC advice would be welcome in this parish. IJ advised that very little had changed since the 20 mph proposal from the parish was last considered. For a fresh initiative, speed data would be required at several locations across the Downlands Estate, at a cost of £400 per site (with a possible discount for multiple sites). Data would be collected by black box radar attached to street furniture. IJ doubted whether most cars were speeding, as there were very few long, straight stretches on the Estate roads. Parish councillors expressed concern that that a few (including delivery drivers) were spoiling it for the many. **ACTION: KL to contact Penelope Bentley at County Hall about speed data collection.**

IJ advised that if a new speed limit were introduced it would have to be done to highway standards and include either the installation of numerous repeater signs on private verges in multiple ownerships, or 20 mph roundels on the roads. The cost would be considerable. Parish councillors asked whether it would suffice for 20 mph roundels to be painted informally. IJ advised that the 20mph signs already installed at the Estate entrances were not enforceable. Enforceable change could only be achieved by obtaining a traffic regulation Order, which was in itself an expensive process. It would not be worth embarking on this unless average speeds were higher than 24mph, which was unlikely to be the case. The alternative, traffic calming measures across the Estate, would be very costly and not good for the environment.

#### 6. Trees on Friston Hill

There was no update on future plans following the felling of a number of diseased elms. PH advised that there were still some diseased elms on the Twitten (Footpath 25). **ACTION: SS to report this to Anthony Becvar.**

#### 6. Traffic chaos associated with any roadworks or accidents on the A259

The recent felling work on Friston Hill had clearly illustrated a recurring problem. There had been no clear diversion at all for A259 traffic or traffic coming from Jevington, just a simple road closure sign (eastbound) outside Friston Church and contractors who were directing traffic through the Downlands Estate with its narrow and fragile roads, where they often travelled at dangerous

speed. A paramedic who asked a councillor for directions said the ambulance service had no prior warning. On talking to the contractor, a resident was told that he had to pay for signage to be put in place advising of the closure of the road. The resident believed the contractor paid a couple of thousand pounds to have this put in place and asked the parish council to lobby to receive this sum in compensation from the highway authority.

CF advised that the diversion had been discussed with the relevant department and it was accepted that the solution of routing cars through the Estate was not ideal, but that it was difficult to offer an alternative which local people would actually use, because it would be much longer. It had been right for contractors not to police the Estate entrances because the Estate was private property. Householders who had had walls damaged and paid for their own repairs could claim, though pay outs were not guaranteed. Councillors objected that this situation was unfair when the problems were caused by the closure of a main arterial road.

#### **7. Verge at Exceat**

The grass verge adjacent to the bridge at Exceat had grown to a dangerous level and was obscuring motorists' view of traffic on the opposite side of the bridge. The Highway Steward advised that he had reported the defect, which should be put right soon.

#### **8. AOB**

- a) **Old Forge Cottage roadside bank** - it was confirmed that the bank was included in the rural grass cutting schedule and should be strimmed by ESCC's contractor twice yearly. CF advised that it was due to be done by 22 June.
- b) **Complaint about the verge at Friston Pond** – Cllr Shing reported that he had received a complaint that the verge needed attention. It was not clear whether the site in question was highway land. If not, the work should be done by the responsible land owner.

#### **9. Date, time and location of next Meeting** – to be confirmed

*There being no further business the meeting closed at 15.03 pm*