

**THE VILLAGES OF BIRLING GAP, CROWLINK,  
EAST DEAN AND FRISTON**

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of electors held on Friday 21 April 2023 in the Village Hall, Village Green Lane, East Dean, commencing at 5.30 pm with displays from village organisations. Business commenced at 6.30 pm**

*Meeting convened under Schedule 12, Part III of the Local Government Act 1972.*

---

**In the Chair:** Councillor Paul Seeley (Chair of the Parish Council).

**Present:** representatives of the Parish Council, the Residents' Association, the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall Trust; the Greensward Company; Badminton Club; Bowling Club; Climate Friends; Coffee for Carers; Community Watch; Fitness and Fun; Gardening Club; Hedgehog Street; Local History Group; Micheldene W.I.; Short Mat Bowls; Table Tennis; the Village Webmaster; and a number of electors of the parish (approximately 80 residents in all).

**Apologies:** Katrina Larkin (Parish Clerk)

1. **WELCOME:** The Chair of the Parish Council welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He explained that the absence of the Clerk was due to a death in her family, and that the meeting would be recorded for her to write the minutes at a later date. The recording would then be destroyed. He outlined the running order for the meeting.
2. **MINUTES:** The minutes of the last Annual Village Meeting, held on 20 May 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the Parish Council.
3. **ANNUAL VILLAGE REPORT 2023:** the Chair noted with regret that the East Dean Players had ceased to meet during the year, due to an insufficient number of volunteers, but celebrated the continuation of many other local organisations which had survived the pandemic and were able to carry on. A number of reports from them were available to view in the Annual Village Report 2023. *[Note: Copies are available on the council website in the Library section, <http://www.edfparishcouncil.org.uk/index.asp>, or can be obtained from the parish clerk, email: [clerk@edfparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@edfparishcouncil.org.uk) ].* The following oral reports were presented to the meeting:
  - **The Residents' Association** – Mrs Lesley d'Urso (Chairman) spoke about the many activities of the Association, and what it offered to its members – all for the very modest charge of £5 per year: representation; information; environmentally friendly initiatives including planting bulbs and wild flowers for the community to enjoy; picking litter; and putting on community events, such as the Summer Fete, the Summer Dance, and – special this summer – the Coronation Village Lunch.

- **The Parochial Church Council** – Steph Carter (Churchwarden of East Dean church, shortly to retire) spoke on behalf of the Rev David Baker who had only just returned from sabbatical. She outlined church activities and the warm welcome always available to all comers. There would be a Vigil for the King the night before the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, and a Big Help on Monday, responding to a call from His Majesty for the occasion to be marked by volunteering in the service of local communities. Requests for help, and offers of help, would be equally welcome.
- **The Greensward Company** – Dr David Tennant (Company Secretary) reminded the meeting that all residents could become share owners of the Greensward, and would be most welcome to join the company. The Company was currently promoting re-naturing activities. The company would also welcome new directors with expertise in corporate governance, especially managing an organisation such as a not-for-profit company.
- **The Badminton Club** – Mr Maurice Horlock (Chairman) reported that the club was extremely buoyant but that space could still be found for new members, age and inexperience being no barrier: some coaching could be provided. Table tennis was also on offer, and there were some social members, making the Club convivial and fun.
- **Climate Friends** – Mr Peter Williamson (Convenor) spoke of his family background caring for a wood in Dartmoor National Park for the past 40 years, and of his ambition to bring similar benefits to the ecology of this parish. A critical decade had begun: the global temperature was forecast to reach the tipping point of 1.5 degrees by 2035 and its reduction must have begun by 2040. Fifty residents had now registered their interest with the Climate Friends and more would be welcomed. Approaches had been made to the South Downs National Park Authority rangers, the National Trust and Forestry England, regarding appropriate local action. The SDNPA had expressed a willingness to grant £3,000 towards the cost of a mapping exercise which could (1) map and assess the current network of green and blue spaces in the Parish; (2) identify nature recovery opportunities and assess their potential benefits to people and nature; and (3) create materials to engage the wider community in nature recovery. The total cost would be £7,500 inclusive of VAT, and the parish council and others had been asked to consider providing the balance of £4,500. The group was considering re-forming as an unincorporated association which would enable it to have a bank account and receive grants in its own right. Meantime it would meet its own incidental costs and had distributed a flyer to every household and business in the parish. It planned to organise training events and would liaise with the Residents' Association's Eco-care Group to ensure that there was no duplication of effort. It would be essential to slash carbon emissions if the global temperature were to be stabilised (the burning of coal, oil and gas must cease), but ways must also be found to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere, and local action could help with this. The aim would be to make the parish a better carbon sink. Mr Williamson appealed for a parish-wide, communal effort to be made – and made now.

- **The Gardening Club** – Mr Tony Deadman (Chairman) asked if anyone present had not got a garden. No hands went up... everyone could potentially benefit from membership of this club which offered a full range of activities including social events and trips, and monthly meetings with good speakers, all geared to a gardening theme. The Club offered valuable practical support: a quarterly newsletter giving seasonal tips; 10% discount at Paradise Park; and garden compost deliveries twice a year. The annual fee of £8.50 per person could soon be recouped and the Club had over 100 members. But more would always be welcome.
  
- **The Local History Group** – Mrs Linda Keller (Treasurer) recalled that the Group had been founded in 2000 with just 11 members, but now numbered 119. Monthly meetings were held on the fourth Tuesday of each month except August and December, and each time there would be a speaker on a theme of local interest. Topics were extremely varied : reminiscence of the Eastbourne lifeboat; Victorian street furniture; 350 years of Sussex weather; wartime in Eastbourne, local light houses, the former Newhaven seaplane station, and (to come in January 2024) a talk from Mike Keller on the local heroes whose names appeared on Brighton and Hove buses. Visitors could also drop in on meetings for £4 a time, and meetings could be accessed on Zoom or YouTube. The Group had now produced sixty six booklets on topics of local historical interest which were available for sale (and always on the stall at the Village Fete). Full membership was £8 per year. The Group currently needed a Secretary, and anyone interested would be most welcome.
  
- **Micheldene W.I.** – Mrs Angela Fowler (President) outlined the very varied programme of speakers, activities and events organised by the Micheldene W.I. Upcoming attractions included a Coronation event (focusing on puddings); talks on antiques, our natural heritage, and wardrobe maintenance; meetings for special interest groups some of whom worked on joint projects (e.g. crafting a tablecloth), while others went on walks, discussed books (five separate groups here), held monthly suppers with partners and friends, tried genealogy, or went out to local cafes, theatres, and exhibitions. Membership was an excellent route into the community, and all were very welcome.
  
- **Fitness and Fun** – Mrs Frances Mace spoke generally about how fortunate the village was to have six clubs devoted to physical activities (Badminton, Bowls, Short Mat Bowls, Table Tennis, Fitness and Yoga). She encouraged residents to make use of these opportunities. In particular, Short Mat Bowls (meeting twice weekly on Monday and Friday afternoons) would welcome new members and anyone able to help with the handling of the heavy mats; Fitness and Fun would also provide a genial workout, but its members were mostly in their sixties or older. All the clubs and societies depended on the work of people helping in the background, and without them the activities could cease. It was extremely sad to see this happening to the Players after seventy successful years. Mrs Mace appealed to the younger generation to step up and ensure that the good work could carry on.

- **Parish Council** – Councillor Paul Seeley (Chair) spoke on the following matters:
  - **Local elections** would be held on 4 May 2023. Two of the current councillors, Cllr Mike Keller and Cllr Simon Thorogood were standing down, and thanks were due to them for their service to the community (*there was a warm round of applause*). There were nine places to be filled on the parish council, and despite extensive advertising and some signs of wider interest, only seven candidates had come forward. These would be declared elected unopposed, leaving two seats to be filled by co-option. If this were done within 35 days of the date of the election, no further formal notices would be required, so nominations would be very welcome, straight away.
  - **Staff changes** were also in progress. The Administrative Officer, Debbie Picknell, left at the end of March, and the Parish Clerk, Katrina Larkin would leave at the end of May, but would then transfer to the post of Deputy Clerk. It was hoped that a new clerk could soon be appointed. A candidate had been offered the post, subject to references.
  - **Downlands Estate Management** – representatives of the council, the Residents' Association and the Roads Company had begun to hold round table meetings to focus on the management of the local roads which were in a poor state (e.g. potholes, maintenance of gullies). The Roads Company had suffered the loss of its Secretary but had recruited new members and was being reinvigorated.
  - **Local Council Award Scheme** – a resident had criticised the parish council for not applying for one of these awards which acted as a form of accreditation for local councils. Accordingly the council had put in an application for the Foundation Award, and the Accreditation Panel had responded that they were 'very happy with the overall standard of the application' but requested a few more pieces of evidence, which would be supplied.
  - **Speeding on local roads** – a lot of work had been done towards getting a reduction in speed limits in Upper Street, Lower Street and the Went Way, and the Estate roads (where no public money was available) were also under discussion. A feasibility study would be required by East Sussex Highways, but had been deferred due to the change in their chosen contractor (Balfour Beattie would take over from the end of May 2023). At the same time the parish council was pressing for the Public Spaces Protection Order imposed by Eastbourne Borough Council on the coast road within their boundary, to be replicated by Wealden District Council on this side of the parish boundary.
  - **Water harvesting at the cricket pavilion** – it was a pleasure to announce the successful completion of this project put forward by the Cricket Club and carried out with financial support from the parish council and the England Cricket Board. Thanks were also due to Mr Mark Pankhurst who had overseen the work. Rainwater was now stored in a new tank behind the pavilion, which would both help the Club to keep going through summer droughts and also help the parish to work sustainably and be economical in its use of resources.

- **New village sign** – the project to install a new village sign, commissioned by the parish council to mark the entrance to the village from the south, and to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee, was nearing completion. The design had been created and made by a local artist and would be unveiled at the Art Exhibition over the first May Bank Holiday. Cllr Keller was to be thanked for organising this, along with all the council's other Jubilee celebrations.
- **Donations** – the council had contributed to the Warm Spaces initiative run by the Village Hall Trust and the Parochial Church Council, over the winter. It would also contribute to the Residents' Association's expenses in mounting the Coronation Village Lunch. The council would not be lighting the beacon to mark the Coronation, having been specifically asked not to do so by Buckingham Palace. There was a desire not to overshadow the events of the Platinum Jubilee, held within the last year. However, parishes had been requested to light beacons in June 2024, to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings.
- **Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group** – Cllr Michael Bustard (Chairman) spoke about the progress of the project to create a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish. The Steering Group had been on a steep learning curve, scoping the technicalities of preparing a Plan. The Plan should act as a voice for the community and be prepared in consultation with the community. The steps proposed were detailed in the Annual Village Report 2023, pages 19 to 21 [*distributed at the Annual Village Meeting and available on the council website [www.edfparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.edfparishcouncil.org.uk) in the Online Library section*]. The Plan would have two main elements: (1) policies for the development and use of land, which would become statutory; and (2) wider aspirations, which would not become statutory but could be included in an Appendix to the Plan, covering environmental improvements; speed/highway management actions; broadband; and community projects. There was a grey area where some of these aspirations could become mandatory to the extent that they could be tied to new development. The South Downs National Park Authority would need to give detailed advice on this. In favour of proceeding, it could be said that the community would have a say on future land use, subject to bringing sites forward for development and/or specifying areas that should be protected as green spaces. It would also allow the community to express some aspirations, and might even result in some financial support. The drawbacks would be that the Plan would not be the answer to every question, but would nevertheless take a lot of preparation time from a lot of people. The Steering Group would very much welcome volunteers, either to fill a remaining space on the Group, or to contribute thoughts on individual topics for consideration by the Group. The next step would be to update the existing Village Design Statement, strengthening it where possible. The community would be consulted on it again prior to submission to the planning authority. A consultant would be employed due to the technical nature of the project. The project was currently on pause due to the local elections and staff changes, but there would be substantial continuity. [*Note: There were no comments or*

*objections from the floor, and the proposals were deemed to be satisfactory for the Steering Group to carry on as proposed]*

*The Chair thanked all these contributors, and moved to the next item on the agenda.*

## 5. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The following were discussed:

- **Antisocial driving** – Mr John Dann stated that antisocial driving had begun again in Gilberts Drive with the onset of the new season, and was worse than ever. He appealed for a 20 mph speed limit to be imposed there, and for noise cameras to be installed at each end. The Chair in response agreed to try to get Gilberts Drive included in a 20 mph zone, and to press for the continuation of a Public Spaces Protection Order on the Wealden side of the Eastbourne boundary. It would be a great help if all complaints could be made individually to Operation Crackdown <https://reports.operationcrackdown.org/asdprs/>. to ensure that the Sussex Police were aware of the scale of the problem. Often it would not be possible to give all the details for a full report, but a note of the time and place of the incident could allow the vehicle to be traced through the ANPR cameras.
- **Village Design Statement** – Mr Ian Haydock objected that the South Downs National Park Authority had been able to ignore some stipulations of the old VDS, including the limit of a 30% increase on the size of extensions, and the rules about not building too close to boundaries. He was sceptical that a new VDS would work any better. The Chair in response agreed that a VDS could be challenged during the planning process, and it would be the planning authority, not the parish council, that made the final decision in each case. Enforcement had been weak, due to a lack of resources. But he urged the community not to lose heart: the new Plan would be stronger, and there were government proposals to penalise retrospective applications in future in the form of double fees throughout the application process. Mrs d'Urso, Chair of the Residents' Association and Deputy Chair of the Steering Group, added that the new VDS would be stronger than the old one through being formally designated as part of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Carbon Impact Report** – Mr Don Holloway, on behalf of Climate Friends, referred to the Minute of the parish council's discussion of the local Carbon Impact Report [*Minute C.704, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023*] and requested further information both on the full report and on the actions being taken by the parish council to 'put its own house in order'. The Chair in response drew attention to the water harvesting begun at the recreation ground, and the work on reducing speed limits, to name but two actions. He added that the council was a democratic body, and as such was obliged - and thought it right - to act democratically not autocratically.
- **Bee Keeping** – a member of the Gardening Club spoke in favour of bee keeping as a means of promoting the regeneration of biodiversity. Residents with large gardens

were requested to consider offering to host hives (provided that would not upset neighbours). Hives and equipment could be provided free of charge. For anyone interested, a talk would be forthcoming and anyone would be welcome to hear it.

*There being no further questions, the Chair drew the Q&A Session to a close.*

**6. CONCLUSION:** Councillor Seeley thanked everyone for coming, and formally closed the meeting.

*There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.00 pm.*

Signed: ..... (Chair of the meeting) Date: .....