

MINUTES OF FALMER PARISH COUNCIL

Tuesday March 24th 2025, 7.30pm

PRESENT. Chair Melanie Cutress (MC) Andy Pearce (AP) Martin Gapper (MG) Annie Heining AH
APOLOGIES Helen Herbert (HH)

11 villagers attended.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING. were signed as a true record of that meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. None

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR To be addressed as the meeting progresses.

MATTERS ARISING:

1. Stadium Issues

Jill Burt was concerned that stewards were not stopping drivers coming into the village on Match days.

2. Village Maintenance

- Falmer pond. The funding was available until December 2027. The funding came from a Heritage lottery award for a joint enterprise from BHCC, SDNP and the RSPB. The overall scheme was called 'From the Downs to the sea'. Of this bid Falmer pond restoration had been awarded £360,000 for capital works e.g. Dredging the pond, drains repaired and 50,00 for environmental work to restore wildlife. Total £410,000. A project team had been set up led by BHCC officers but including 2 SDNP officers and Matt Thompsett as chair of Friends of Falmer pond and Melanie Cutress as Chair of Falmer PC.
- This team had started work and a company had been employed to carry out a tree survey to decide which trees were to be removed. This was to keep maximum water in the pond as trees at the water's edge drank up gallons of water in dry spells. Trees would be removed in the winter of 2025/26. Also, a company had been employed to carry out an archaeology survey. Both these surveys were requirements of the heritage lottery award.
- This main work of pond dredging and repair would be carried out in 2026.
- Potholes. Falmer PC continually reports potholes. Repair is the responsibility of ESCC highways, who are responsible for all roads in Falmer except for the A27 which is Highways England. The work is contracted out by ESCC to Balfour Beatty. Potholes can be reported on ESCC highways website, but they must be a certain depth and width to be repaired. When you apply you get a reference number, the Highways steward then visits to check and decides whether it fits the criteria for repair or not. You will hear back from the Highways steward with the decision.
- The road outside Falmer farm shop has been an area of concern for over two years and has been reported many times. However, it still does not fit the repair criteria. Recent work there by Balfour Beatty 29th Jan -31st Jan saw core holes being drilled to test the subsurface to determine the condition of the road and the extent of any larger work that may be required. .
- Cyclist Dismount signage at the footbridge. The Highway steward had inspected the pavement signage and concluded it was well worn but wasn't in need of immediate repair and therefore would be monitored.

- The Ridge Rd street sign would be replaced.
- East street passageway had been inspected and would need specialist repairs and ESCC were seeking quotes. In the meanwhile, barriers were a health and safety measure.
- Camper van summer issue. MC had applied via the ESCC parking controls website for new signage. This was to include parking controls in the months of June July and August. This would not be considered by ESCC until their next review in March 2026.

3. PLANNING

- Bennetts field Student halls of residences for 555 bedrooms. Planning application LW/22/0175. No sign of any work beginning.
- Polowood Shoot SDNP/22/05978/LDC. Decision pending
- St Marys Farmhouse Application SDNP/24/01562/LDE Dr Kent. Application for a Certificate of lawful use for the existing and continuous use of a barn as two separate residential properties for over 10 years. Decision pending
- 61 Park St Ms Caroline Hawes SDNP/24/04220/LIS. Planning permission given.

FINANCE

- The accounts were accepted by all councillors and could proceed to audit.
- Veronica Lenihan had stood down as our finance officer due to ill health. AP had found a new finance officer Annette Brown who was willing to take on the role.

ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD.

- Our MP James MacCleary will be doing a tour of the Lewes constituency villages in the summer and would be visiting Falmer to meet villagers and answer questions on Monday August 18th 7pm in the village hall.

DEVOLUTION

- In December 2024 the government had published a white paper proposing to move power out of Westminster and back to local communities. This is called **devolution**.
- Council leaders of East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove have written to government expressing their interest in taking devolution forward through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority with the first election of a mayor in May 2026. Population size of this area is 1.7 million.
- Proposals for reorganisation of our existing councils have also been put forward by ESCC. Their plan is developing a proposal for a single tier of local government in East Sussex with a unitary council to replace ESCC and the 5 districts of Lewes, Eastbourne, Hastings, Rother and Wealden, combining their service.
- AP continued to explain more clearly how the proposals might work but it is still not particularly clear.

SDNP.

- The SDNP was consulting on their strategic plan for the next five years. Local plans must be reviewed every five years.
- HH had attended a meeting that concluded that the park did not do a lot. But the park needed to be maintained, and visitors were welcomed although they did not always treat the area well e.g. litter. The park area is massive and stretches from Winchester to Eastbourne and has a large population unlike many national parks.

- The SDNP had just run a consultation asking people views on what should happen in the next 5 years, for priorities including housing developments and where this should be, farming, cycling, parking, etc. Also how to protect the landscape, climate change impact, conserving heritage.
- **AOB.**
- Request from Rosemary Warton for the pavement area at Mill Street/Knights gate to be cleared up and made safe.
- Bus shelter had been vandalised
- Programme for Court Farm barn requested
- Post box for Falmer south requested
- Request for the pick-up truck near the church to park differently.

Next meeting Tuesday May 20th 2025