

Minutes of a meeting of Chelsham and Farleigh Parish Council held on 3rd April 2023 in Farleigh Hall, Farleigh Court Road at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr Jan Moore (in the Chair)

Cllr Lesley Brown Cllr Neil Chambers Cllr Peter Cairns Cllr Jeremy Pursehouse
Cllr Barbara Lincoln

In attendance: Samantha Head (Clerk)

And 2 parishioners

The meeting commenced at 7.01pm

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest by Councillors of personal pecuniary interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interests, and whether the member regards the interest to be prejudicial under the terms of the new Code of Conduct. Anyone with prejudicial interest must, unless an exemption applies, or a dispensation has been issues, withdraw from the meeting.

0032/0423 Cllr Jeremy Pursehouse declared an interest in item 11 - Grant request - Warlingham Events. He took no part in the discussion or agreement for this item.

3. Public participation

- A parishioner spoke to item 8 - AONB and expressed her amazement that virtually nothing in Warlingham and Chelsham & Farleigh had been included as an area in the recent consultation. Crewes Valley in Warlingham would have been a good candidate area.

At this point in the meeting, item 14, Worms Heath, was brought forward to enable the chairman of Warlingham PC to speak to the item before he had to leave the meeting early. The original order of agenda items is maintained here for ease of reference with the published agenda.

4. To approve and sign the minutes of the previous council meeting held on 6th March 2023

0033/0423 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2023. They were duly signed by the Chair.

5. Matters arising (for information only)

None

6. Reports:

a) County Councillor

No report

b) District Councillor

Cllr Pursehouse reported that he had some updates regarding planning applications TA/2023/188 and Beech Farm Road. He would give these updates under items 17 and 13 respectively.

7. Future of Farleigh Common

Cllr Pursehouse has spoken to Alex Berry and a meeting between TDC, Merton College and the PC has been arranged for 11th May (around 11:00).

The suggestion of a Commons Council has been turned down by the PC as it is not viable.

There is a possible solution to removing the hay from the common and this would reduce the maintenance costs greatly.

8. AONB

Cllr Chambers noted that the consultation launched on 7th March and runs for 14 weeks until 13th June. It was noted that nothing in Chelsham and Farleigh parish had been included in the proposed extension of the AONB. He noted that he had been to Woldingham, Banstead Woods (Chipstead Valley), Happy Valley, Farthing Downs and Caterham Woods to take photographs of each. A suggested response would be to prepare and submit a comparison of these areas, including the photographs and short statements for each, an overall statement and arguments as to why Chelsham and Farleigh should be included. It was further noted that there were errors in the Chelsham and Farleigh reasoning for not being included such as that there being villages in Chelsham and Farleigh. Also mentioned was the fact that farms in Chelsham and Farleigh had been assessed as not being 'neat enough'.

Cllr Pursehouse gave details of a TDC meeting scheduled for 6th April when TDC would be appointing landscape consultants to challenge why certain areas have been excluded. The view being to include the whole of Chelsham and Farleigh parish.

0034/0423 Cllr Chambers would send some initial information to Cllr Pursehouse and Lidia Harrison at TDC for the 6th April meeting.

0035/0423 Cllr Chambers would circulate a proposed response ahead of the PC's May meeting, for discussion, potential agreement and subsequent submission.

9. Trees - Chelsham Road / Chelsham Common Road

Cllrs Moore and Cairns and the Clerk met the tree surgeon from Lanacre Professional Treecare to look at several trees located on parish land. A silver birch is leaning out across Chelsham Common Road and needs to be felled. This is high priority. There is a sycamore located by Hogarth which has severe basal decay and needs to be felled, leaving a low stump. There are three oak trees on Chelsham Road which have several low hanging branches which need to be removed to allow high sided vehicles to pass safely under them and one ivy covered ash which is leaning over the road which needs to be reduced to just above the main branch break. In all cases the logs would be left in the woodland and the brash would be chipped into the woodland. The quotes for these would be £250, £675 and £525 respectively, exclusive of Vat.

0036/0423 Members agreed that all the above work was needed and agreed for it to go ahead but requested that the tree surgeon was approached to see if a small discount could be obtained for carrying out all the work.

- Limpsfield Road

The Clerk noted that SCC had granted permission for the work and one-lane road closure. This had been arranged for 4th April. The cost of the road licence had still to be confirmed.

10. Annual Parish Meeting - 18th May 2023

Cllr Moore confirmed that the meeting had been moved from 11th May to 18th May. Timings 19:00 for 19:30.

Cliff Thurlow had confirmed that he would be able to attend. The Chairman requested that questions that could be sent to Cliff in advance of the meeting would be welcome. Former Cllr Nancy Marsh had offered to make some refreshments for the meeting. Cllr Moore would purchase tea, coffee, wine, etc.

11. Grant request - Warlingham Events - £250.00

A grant request had been received from Warlingham Events for the Coronation celebrations. The monies requested would be used to pay for security and first aid at the event.

Members had read the grant request form.

0037/0423 Members agreed to a grant of £300.00.

12. Handyman - tasks to be agreed

Further to the PC appointing a handyman, the following tasks were suggested:

Repainting bus shelter, repair and repaint the noticeboard on Farleigh Common and replace the perspex. Members also suggested the fence between Henley Wood and parish land needed to be replaced or repaired and the Farleigh sign needed a new post as it was rotten at the base.

0038/0423 Members agreed to request quotes for all of the above from the handyman.

13. General review - from Beech Farm Road to Fairchildes

Cllr Chambers noted that there were lots of planning issues along this stretch of road, many of which had not been resolved. The numbers of issues and / or applications was increasing in number.

Cllr Pusehouse noted that the caravans on Beech Farm Road had had an application submitted by the site occupant and was due to be determined soon. Following that, an enforcement order would be issued and it is anticipated that it would go to appeal. The injunction is still in place.

Milbury Cottage - the information received confirmed that this application goes beyond the scope of a change of use for a camping and caravan site.

Cllr Pursehouse reassured members that TDC was following up on all concerns.

Members suggested that many of these issues should be raised with Cliff Thurlow at the Annual Parish Meeting.

14. Worms Heath

The origin of the name for Worms Heath came about because the word for snake was unknown. It has long been a habitat for wildlife.

Recently, there has been a lot of activity on the site and many HGV vehicle movements in to and out of the field.

After speaking to the farmer, he confirmed that he had removed the huge amount of Japanese Knotweed from the field. It was believed that he was moving soil to infill and reseed to return the field to grazing pasture for his cattle. The suggested 'renovation' would result in the building up of the bridlepath with chalk and fencing erected either side of the path.

Concerns were raised about the movement of soil from outside the local area.

0038/0423 Members resolved to request a meeting with the farmer to ask for clarification on the current works and pose questions / concerns from the PC. Cllr Cairns agreed to arrange and Cllr Moore would accompany him to the meeting. Members were asked to send their questions to Cllr Cairns in advance of the meeting (date to be advised).

15. Financial Risk Assessment

The Clerk had prepared a draft Financial Risk Assessment which she had circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. The Parish Council is funded through public money and has a responsibility to ensure that the correct procedures are followed in spending those funds and also ensuring the risks are considered and well managed. Overall, the PC is managing this well but there are some improvements that could be made. The Clerk had listed these in the right-hand column under 'revision' or 'suggested revision' with the suggestion that these can be actioned, in order of priority. Over the coming weeks and months.

0039/0423 Members approved the suggested revisions in the draft Financial Risk Assessment.

16. Banking - proposal to move Parish Council account to Unity Trust Bank

The Clerk had suggested the move of the Parish Council's bank account to Unity Trust Bank. UTB is specifically set up for community groups and local authorities and allows for easy dual authorisation processes. This would strengthen the PC's safeguarding against fraud.

The Clerk further suggested that the PC also sets up a savings account to separate out the council's day-to-day spending from its reserves. The current interest rate is 4.25%. The current account would cost £6 a month.

0040/0423 Members approved the move from Lloyds Bank to Unity Trust Bank and the opening of a dedicated savings account.

17. Planning - to determine the Parish Council's position on Appendix A:

TA/2023/188 Milbury Cottage, Beech Farm Road, Warlingham CR6 9QJ

Change of use to camping and caravan site. (Certificate of Lawfulness for a Proposed Use or Development)

Details of the proposed clamping site had already been sent to Cliff Thurlow. It was noted that it was anticipated that there would also be an application for solar panels in the adjacent field.

0041/0423 Comment: The parish council objects in the strongest possible terms to this application, in the AGLV Green Belt on Beech Farm Road, which is a rural area with wide views across the landscape, which would experience considerable harm from such development within it. Green Belt attaches high priority to protecting the openness, permanence and character of the countryside, and we see no special circumstances in this application for overriding Green Belt legislation.

Further to this objection, we wish to add the following comments and observations.

Milberry Cottage is a detached house with equestrian use on 8.34 acres, with 3 stables, a horse menage and paddocks in the AGLV and Green Belt. The proposal is a 'change of use' of the land from horse paddocks to a commercial caravan and camping site.

The application form requests a 'permanent' change, but we have concerns about this because 'Wanderlust Camping Club', who provide certification, only do so for a year and it could be withdrawn at any time. The Wanderlust Camping Club website states that it is a fully formed camping club authorised by Natural England to 'certificate' camp sites without the need for planning permission. Apparently, the club and its certified sites adhere to the exempted camping legislation under paragraph 5 of the First Schedule of Caravan Sites and Control Development Act 1960. The club says that it holds certificates for both caravans and camping. It claims to be able to issue licenses for up to 5 caravans, shepherd huts or pods and a number of camping pitches/glamping tents depending on the size of the site concerned.

However, the owners are already advertising their shepherd huts and bell tents on their website and facebook before this LDC has been decided. <https://www.milberrygreen.co.uk/> and Facebook search 'Milberry Green Meadows'.

There is a lack of information within this application, since there is no mention of how many caravans, shepherd huts or bell tents will be on site. The website and other camping sites advertising Milberry Cottage as a campsite, show that it has two shepherd huts and 15 bell tents. <https://www.campsites.co.uk/search/campsites-in-surrey/warlingham/milberry-green-meadows>

No information is provided on how waste or litter is to be controlled. There will be an increased risk of wildfire spreading to the countryside since barbecues and camp fires are offered.

The site is currently accessed via an agricultural farm gate with limited visibility leading onto the public highway, Beech Farm Road, which is a relatively narrow, unrestricted, unlit, hedge-lined country lane. The access point is on a bend. This makes Beech Farm Road unsuitable for venue access. We have concerns over highway safety, in particular as regards access, and the fact that the site does not benefit from good connections for pedestrians and cyclists, and would be a car dependant site, therefore introducing more traffic into a rural area.

We also have concerns whether there is adequate parking on site for so-called glamping.

There appear to be a games room, communal showers and toilets that do not have permission.

While Natural England have issued Wanderlust a certificate for glamping sites, these envisage that they are only used for 42 consecutive days, or no more than 60 days in a year, but according to the website www.milberrygreen.co.uk/ the shepherd huts can be booked all year round and bell tents are March to October.

Nor is this just a campsite, as the location is also being advertised as the venue for weddings with up to 40 people attending. It is unclear where this many people would park, there being no local public transport, and there are clear issues surrounding the level of noise and disturbance such activities would cause to a tranquil area surrounded by farm fields where sheep graze and wildlife inhabit.

These questions are important given the location of the site in Green Belt and AGLV countryside. There is not enough information on how the scheme would help preserve the Green Belt. The council has concerns regarding the impact of the development over the course of a full year at such an environmentally sensitive location.

The site has very open views to the south, which will impact on public footpath 14, and attempts to development this open field with activities such as those detailed here, along associated urbanizing paraphernalia, will clearly harm the surrounding area as an amenity for many others, including importantly wildlife since this is otherwise a remote dark-skies location.

The council has two other concerns:

In the planning application 2010/833 'Formation of menage for private use', condition 4 stated that the menage was permitted for private recreational use only, and yet the Milberry website is advertising for other liveries, individuals and freelance teachers to hire

it. This is an open breach, and we request immediate enforcement and/or withdrawal of permission.

The applicants are also advertising a 'Milberry Green Day' for festival goers with six live music acts on two stages and alcohol. We believe that this sort of behaviour raises concerns that should lead to a refusal of the present application and stricter measures to safeguard and control this area.

We therefore request discussions with a view to expediting an article 4 directive on land along Beech Farm Road to protect it from any further inappropriate development or abuse.

TA/2022/1664 17 East Parkside, Chelsham, Warlingham CR6 9PY

Erection of single storey rear extension.

0042/0423 Comment: The Parish Council draws the officer's attention to the fact that this is an extension to the rear of the property with no apparent previous history of planning applications, which would project 4.5m from the existing structure.

TA/2023/263/TPO 6 East Parkside, Warlingham CR6 9PZ

Blue) - Lawson Cypress our ref 771 - Raise crown by up to 3m, removing deadwood to limit growth near the buildings within the demise of 6 East Parkside and injuries caused by falling deadwood. Yellow) - Norway Spruce our ref 772 - Raise crown by up to 3m, removing deadwood to limit growth near the buildings within the demise of 6 East Parkside and injuries caused by falling deadwood.

0043/0423 Comment: There are no available documents with this application. A previous application to fell a TPO at this property was granted by a tree officer although the spruce concerned was healthy and it was not damaging the property concerned despite its roots having apparently reached a patio, but a request by the parish council for a replant was not applied (2020/1972/TPO). A recommendation to seek expert advice from Natural England regarding possible harm to wildlife (bats and birds) was then made by the officer concerned, but such evidence was not provided as part of this past application before it was granted. The parish council has expressed more than once its concern at the number of TPOs felled instead of having their crowns reduced or being otherwise pruned or replaced at Great Park and, indeed, more widely in the parish. The parish council feels that felling or removing TPOs ought normally to be an option of last resort. It has increasingly felt that its position and opinions have not been regarded in such matters locally and, given the lack of documents herewith or attention to its previous comments in respect of this property, the council feels disabled to respond further as a statutory consultee for 2023/263/TPO.

TA/2022/870 Land Rear of 1 Heathfield Cottages, Warlingham CR6 9PB

Demolition and removal of an existing bungalow, mobile home and storage containers. Erection of a replacement bungalow with associated landscaping.

Members noted that the Parish Council had previously considered this application and was unsure why it had been listed again. The council had previously expressed no objections to the proposals.

0044/0423 Comment: The Parish Council supports this application as we feel it will improve the look of the area.

18. Finance**Payment of invoices:**

Samantha Head	Salary	£ 380.80
HMRC	PAYE / NI	£ 285.60*
Vision ICT	Website hosting 2023/24	£ 161.25
Vision ICT	Email account hosting 23/24	£ 172.80

*This includes the £71.40 authorised at the January meeting but not yet paid.

0045/0423 Members approved the payment. The invoices were checked and initialled by Cllr Moore.

19. Matters for reporting or inclusion in a Future Agenda

None

The meeting closed at 9.03pm