

FAWKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Fawkham Parish Council** meeting held at **Fawkham and Hartley Church Centre, Ash Road, Hartley**, on **Thursday 4th January 2024** at **19.30pm** to transact the following business.

Grace Champion
Clerk to Fawkham Parish Council

Members of the Parish Council:

Cllr Laura Evans (Chair), Cllr James Cherry (Vice Chair), Cllr David Mansfield, Cllr Lucie Sleeman and Cllr Will Johnstone

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

Noted: Cllr L Sleeman (family commitments).

2. Declarations of Interest for items relating to the Agenda:

Councillors to make any declarations that may be required by virtue of the Parish Council's adopted Code of Conduct.

Noted: Cllr W Johnstone declared an interest in planning item 23/03181/FUL (Chimmens Solar Farm) as he had been consulted as a neighbouring property.

Noted: Cllr J Cherry declared an interest in planning item SE/23/03562/PAE (Montana House) as a neighbouring property.

Noted: Cllr L Evans declared an interest in a planning enforcement case due to it being a neighbouring property.

3. Public Session

Parish Council meetings are open to the public. In accordance with the Standing Orders, thirty minutes are allocated for members of the public to raise any matters and partake in discussions. There are no further opportunities for members of the public to speak during the Parish Council meeting. The Council may enter closed session at the end of the meeting to discuss a confidential item, members of the public still present will be asked to leave.

Noted: 18 members of public were in attendance, including from Fawkham, Farningham and Horton Kirby and West Kingsdown Parishes. Also in attendance were Dst Cllr White from F, HK&SD ward and Dst Cllr Lindhop from Ash cum Ridley. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and queried if all were in attendance for the planning application in relation to Chimmens Solar Farm, this was the case. The Chair noted that planning item would be discussed in due course under section 4 of the agenda.

Noted: Apologies were received from Dst Cllr L Harrison, Dst Cllr E Bullford and Dst Cllr S Malone.

4. Planning Applications:

To agree the Parish Council's responses to the following planning applications:

- (1) **SE/23/03562/PAE** – Montana House Valley Road Fawkham, Kent DA3 8NL

Prior notification of a single storey rear extension which extends 4.72 m beyond the rear wall of the original dwelling house with a maximum height of 3.50 m and eaves height of 2.80 m

Consultation deadline: 4 January 2024

Noted: A summary of the application was given by the Chair. This was then followed by a brief discussion between the Councillors. It was noted that there are two properties immediately opposite the site.

Resolved: All were in agreement to respond relying on SDC to ensure it complies with the requirements for PDR, especially as the cumulative extension would appear to exceed the 50% which would be permitted under the Green Belt SPD. It was also suggested and agreed that FPC note on the planning form that only one adjoining premises has been listed on the form, whereas there are also premises to the front and to north, and that the proposed extension appears to abut the boundary with the field behind and so perhaps the owners of these should also be notified.

(2) **23/01927/FUL** - Gay Dawn Farm Pennis Lane Fawkham Kent DA3 8LY

Demolition of one barn and the part-demolition and conversion of three barns to form nine self-contained dwellings with associated parking, private gardens and landscaping.

Consultation deadline: 7 January 2024

Noted: The Chair gave a brief summary of the application and that re-consultation was taking place due to technical reports being submitted. As the site is less than 10 dwellings, KCC will not assess the flood risk report. It was noted that 5 further letters of objection had been received from the public.

Resolved: After this discussion, all Councillors agreed that their previous views and comments still stand. It was also agreed that FPC would respond the SDC noting the content of the noise report and highlight that FPC would not wish to see a condition which would result in an adverse impact on the employment use of the wider site. The floodlighting report was also discussed and it was agreed that FPC would like to see the suggested condition applied.

(3) **23/03181/FUL** - Chimmens Solar Farm Land At Speedgate Farm Mussenden Lane Horton Kirby Kent

Construction and operation of a solar farm with all associated works, equipment necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains. New Access Track.

Consultation deadline: 12 January 2024

Noted: The Chair started by informing the public that this was located in HK/SD Parish with Fawkham Parish consulted as a neighbouring parish and that the sub-station was located within Fawkham's boundary. The Chair also noted that the validation of this item by SDC just before Christmas with the deadline then also coinciding with the local plan consultation deadline was not ideal or welcome.

The Chair gave a brief summary of the site and the size difference and expected electricity production in comparison to the Horton Wood solar farm planning application granted last year. The Chair then noted that for this application to be approved the applicant would need to show very special circumstances which outweighed it being inappropriate development in the Green Belt and quoted from paragraph 156 of the NPPF. The Chair opened up the discussion to the public asking for them say which Parish they were from and give their thoughts. The majority of the members of public in attendance gave their views which consisted of the following:

- Renewable energy and the need for it. There is an adverse side. "If we keep going down the solar route where will we grow our crops?"
- Our Carbon footprint will change due to having to import more crops.
- The Chair of Saxon Place Residents, HK said "there are other companies to come" due to them having a sub station to go to to rent.
- A resident from Farningham said "We have lost enough acreage already through the other solar farm when that is built". He also noted that more solar farms are expected in HK/SD in 2-4 years time, although he did not state the source of this information.
- It was noted that there must be capacity available nearby on the national grid to be able to locate a solar farm.

- “How much more agricultural land are we going to lose?”

Noted: Cllr D Mansfield at this point noted SDC’s planning portal and the importance of making your views known by using the portal.

- One resident noted that with this application and the solar farm already granted this was “423 acres of solar farm” with “just 378m between the two sites”.
- Another said the combined solar farms would make this “the third biggest in the world” and then went on to question the “health affects this will have on residents”.
- One resident noted the combined electricity output would be “over 50MW and sites of this size, with both combined, would have to be approved by Government.”
- Another queried the length of the lease period and what would happen after the lease finishes.

Noted: The Chair responded to this query noting it is hard to say what will happen in 40 years time but that the land should retain its green belt status.

- One resident queried why the UK is not considering more wind farms as they take up less space.
- The heat reflection off of the solar panels was queried.
- At this point the landowner introduced himself and confirmed the panels work in ambient temperatures up to 40 degrees. He also responded to the developments being very close together saying they could not be classed as one site just as you would not class two houses close together as one house. The landowner advised that the majority of the land in question has not been used for growing food for human consumption for 15 years, but to grow crops for animals.
- Another resident said she lives in a rural area for a reason and that the aesthetics does play a part in her objection.

Noted: The Chair then thanked everyone for their comments and suggested the Councillors began their discussion with a view to vote. The Chair noted that the land is agricultural land of the best and most versatile grade, and why lower grade land is not being used instead, and queried some of the parameters of the search for alternative sites. The Chair then noted that the construction would last for around 12 months, with access through ancient woodland, and that a key element of ancient woodland is the soil. The Chair noted “10 lorries a day going to the site for a year”. She also noted that the 15m buffer suggested is the minimum required by law and The Woodland Trust suggest a buffer of 30-50m. The Chair then spoke about the impact the proposal would have on biodiversity with 5-7 skylark territories being lost, and badgers on site with only the main setts being protected. The Chair also noted there was no mention of a community fund from the project, as had been included with Horton Wood’s application. The Chair then asked each Councillor for their views. Cllr Cherry advised that he was in favour of the application due to the need for renewable energy. Cllr Mansfield advised he was against the application due to the fact that this is green belt land and a large solar farm has already been granted. The Chair then advised that in principle she agreed with the need for renewable energy but did not feel this was an appropriate location with it being BMV agricultural land in the Green Belt, and in view of the impact on ancient woodland and biodiversity.

Resolved: It was agreed FPC would object to the application, with votes 2 to 1 in favour of objecting.

- (4) **SE/23/03593/DETAIL** - Former Depot North Of Salts Farm, Fawkham Road Fawkham, Kent DA3 7BJ

Details pursuant to condition 10 (sustainable surface water drainage scheme) of 22/01550/MMA
Consultation deadline: 19 January 2024

Noted: The Chair noted that concrete soakaways had now been proposed and Councillors were disappointed that the changes previously allowed to the ecological management under 22/01550/MMA, which resulted in a far smaller area for ecology/landscaping, resulted in insufficient space now being available for the originally proposed nature-based SUDS of ponds/swales. **Resolved:** To submit the above comment to SDC.

5. Planning Decisions:

To note planning decisions received from Sevenoaks District Council:

- 23/02962/FUL - Land North Of Speedgate Hill Fawkham Kent. *Replacement of the existing single operator 15m monopole etc.* **GRANTED**
- 23/02449/DETAIL – Salts Farm, Fawkham Road, Fawkham Kent DA3 7BJ. *Approval of details pursuant of condition 10 (details of sustainable surface water drainage scheme) of 22/01550/MMA.* **REFUSED**
- 23/03049/DETAIL – Salts Farm, Fawkham Road, Fawkham Kent DA3 7BJ. *Approval of details pursuant of condition 2 (samples/materials) of 22/03424/REM.* **GRANTED**

All decisions were noted.

6. Approve Minutes:

Proposed: To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 30th November 2023, as attached.

Resolved: It was proposed through the Chair that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Johnstone and Cllr Cherry.

7. Matters Arising:

Matters arising relating to the Minutes, not on this agenda.

- **Noted:** The Chair noted that the Christmas Tree lights switch on event had taken place. All leftover selections boxes were taken to the Community Cupboard by Dst Cllr Harrison.
- **Noted:** Electricity cupboard on Village Green. No quote received as of yet for two new outdoor sockets.
- **Noted:** Scudders Hill sign has now been replaced.
- **Noted:** The clerk noted that a quote of £125.00 had been received from grounds maintenance in relation to tidying under the Christmas tree. All were in agreement to go ahead with this quote.
- **Noted:** Baldwin's Green – The Chair confirmed that KCC had now cleared the gullies and reset the crooked bollards. The remaining work is awaited later in the spring.
- **Noted:** Artificial lights at Brandshatch –Dst Cllr Harrison confirmed the lights still seem to be the same and will go back to Brandshatch on this again.
- **Noted:** School Footway – The Clerk confirmed that she had still not heard anything further.
- **Noted:** Flytipping in field next to Wilmay Copse – update is awaited from Dst Cllr Harrison as to what was sent to the landowner in August 2022 and whether action will now be taken by SDC.
- **Noted:** The PC's interest in KCC's Making Space for Nature project had been registered and the Chair planned to attend a seminar for PC's on 16/1.

8. Neighbourhood Plan - to receive an update on progress and timeline for the next steps

Noted: The Chair noted that the plan continues to be amended following the consultation and that the Steering Group hope to have a revised document by the end of January with the aim of the document being signed off by FPC in either February/March. Following this it will then be submitted to SDC.

9. Local Plan – update: to consider and agree FPC’s response to the Regulation 18 consultation on SDC’s Plan 2040

Noted: The Chair gave a brief summary on the local plan documentation and SDC’s housing target of 10,680 by 2040. The Chair also noted where to find this information online. The three development options were summarised along with the ideas behind them i.e. focus development on more sustainable locations. It was noted that SDC could chose respond requesting to set a lower housing target, with our District being 93% Green Belt and 60% AONB. One member of public felt the “type of housing being built is not helping the younger generation”. The Chair responded noting that each individual policy of the Local Plan, including those on Affordable Housing and Housing Mix, can be commented on online.

Resolved: Following the discussion of the options put forward by SDC, the Councillors gave their views on which option they preferred. Cllr D Mansfield confirmed he was for Option 2. The Chair noted this option is greenbelt/AONB and the increase in traffic already without these developments. All agreed improvements would have to be made to Junction 3 of M25 to be able to cope with the traffic. It was suggested that Option 1 with more dispersed sites would be more favourable from a traffic perspective. Cllr J Cherry confirmed he was in favour of Option 2 noting the importance of SDC meeting targets for younger generations to have somewhere to live. All voted and Option 2 was agreed by majority. FPC’s view of the preferred Option (2) and comments on various Policies within the Plan will be submitted by the Clerk.

10. Finance Approval

(a) Expenditure and Income - details to be tabled. Approval of cheques and payments Including (b) update on online banking access for Cllr Mansfield and Cllr Sleeman

Payment list summary 4 January 2024				
Date	Payee/For	Budget taken from	Invoice Ref.	Amount
04/01/23	Parish of Fawkham and Hartley Hall Hire December	Hall Hire	88	£17.50
04/01/23	Parish of Fawkham and Hartley Hall Hire January	Hall Hire	89	£18.50
04/01/23	RH Gardening Services 3 Sites (April) Grounds Maintenance INV 042	Grounds Maintenance	90	£210.00
04/01/23	RH Gardening Services Small Grains Inv 48	Grounds Maintenance	91	£125.00
04/01/23	RH Gardening Services 3 Sites (September) Grounds Maintenance INV 071	Grounds Maintenance	92	£210.00
04/01/23	RH Gardening Services 3 Sites (August) Grounds Maintenance INV 070	Grounds Maintenance	93	£210.00

04/01/23	RH Gardening Services Small Grains Inv 47	Grounds Maintenance	94	£125.00
04/01/23	RH Village Hall Inv 0003	Grounds Maintenance	95	£200.00
04/01/23	RH Gardening Services Small Grains Inv 074	Grounds Maintenance	96	£250.00
04/01/23	SDC Dog Waste Emptying	Dog Waste	97	£28.08
04/01/23	Clerk HMRC Tax & NI payment	Clerk Salary	98	£159.60
04/01/23	Clerk Salary - G. Champion - Including 2 weeks paid holiday	Clerk Salary	99	£638.27
04/01/23	KALC Planning Training CLERK	Training	100	£60.00
	Total			£2251.95

Resolved: It was agreed to approve the payments listed in the schedule above. Signed by the Chair and Cllr D Mansfield.

11. Maintenance Contract: review of amended pricing from RH Gardening Services.

Resolved: The amended pricing was reviewed by all. The Clerk queried the new leaf collection on the school footway if they were to be blown or collected and it was agreed that these should be collected at the same time as the village hall car park leaf clearance in November. The Clerk noted that she had spoken to the contractor about the litter in the hall car park and having one monthly invoice to which he agreed. All were in agreement to approve the new pricing and confirm this with RH Gardening Services.

12. Yearly Budget & Precept: Proposal - to consider and agree the budget for 2024/25 and to agree the resulting precept figures.

Resolved: The budget figures were discussed. The figures amounted to £22,355 and it was agreed that this would be increased slightly to £24,000 to allow further reserve to be built up in the account. With the precept being set at £24,000 this results in Band D figure staying broadly the same (a slight decrease 0.2%) which is positive in relation to increases by other neighbouring parishes. All agreed to set the precept to £24,000. Clerk to notify SDC.

Noted: Cllr J Cherry quickly left the meeting to get water from his car, and the meeting was adjourned. During this time Cllr D Mansfield provided the public in attendance on an update of Fawkham Village Hall.

Noted: Cllr J Cherry returned to the meeting. The Chair then restarted the meeting.

13. Highways Improvement Plan:

Proposed: to consider and agree a HIP for the forthcoming year for submission to KCC

Resolved: A recap of the last HIP submitted by FPC was given by the Chair. FPC's last submitted a HIP in September 2022. The Chair noted the items that were on the last HIP and any feedback that had been given on those items. The Chair informed the PC that she has notified KCC Cllr D Brazier of KCC's lack of response to the last submitted HIP. Cllr D Brazier has asked FPC to keep him informed when the new HIP is submitted. The Chair informed the PC that she and the Clerk has an

online meeting with KCC's Community Engagement Officer for this area next week and that they planned to raise the following items:

1. School Footway - highways safety team to check safety of the footway and any update on this;
2. School Wig Wags – an ongoing issue first raised 2.5 years ago;
3. Junction of Speedgate/Valley Rd – mirror to improve safety, would this be approved if FPC would fund it?
4. “Moguls” ie undulating carriageway way edge on east of Valley Rd between Court Lodge and Malabar – is this an improvement or maintenance issue?

Resolved: All were in agreement that the suggestions should be added to the HIP and discussed at the meeting to try and get things moved forward. No other suggestions were made.

14. Chair and Councillors reports: to note any items not listed on the agenda.

Noted: The Clerk noted the outcome of the Children's Centre consultation. It appeared WK CC would be closing but David Brazier had advised that the NAG centre would be retained due to lack of public transport.

Noted: The Chair noted that she attended Hartley Parish Council's December meeting after receiving an invitation from their Chair. The Chair noted that key topics were the Local Plan and their budget/precept figure which was up by 16%.

Noted: The Chair also noted that Dst Cllr Malone has suggested a catch up meeting with the Chair so she is able to pass on issues to him.

15. Open Forum for Councillors to raise matters to be placed on the next agenda:

Members are asked to consider agenda items for the next meeting. The details of the agenda item will be sent to the Clerk by the Thursday (one week) before the published meeting. Late details cannot guarantee inclusion on the proposed agenda.

None.

16. Date of Next Meeting:

To note the next Parish Council Meeting is being held on **1st February 2024** at a location to be confirmed.

17. Confidential Item - Planning/Planning Enforcement: Proposal: to review, update and agree actions for cases.

Resolved: The Council resolved to hear the item in a confidential session due to the nature of the content. Cases were discussed and actions agreed.

Meeting closed: 21:20