Minutes of the Meeting of Friston Parish Council held in the Village hall on **Monday 2nd September 2024 at 7pm**

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| **Councillors present:** | **Also present:** |
| Cllr Michael Mahony | Jess Palmer (Parish Clerk) |
| Cllr Mary Shipman | 14 members of the public |
| Cllr Paul Carlaw |  |
| Cllr Carole Slack |  |
| Cllr Wendy Ireland |  |

**MINUTES**

Cllr Mahony led a 1 min silence in memory of Martin Cotter, a resident who has recently passed away.

**82/24 Apologies for absence** – to receive and approve any apologies received

None received

**83/24 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

None declared.

**84/24 Minutes of the previous meetings**

It was unanimously resolved to accept the minutes of both meetings

Proposed: Cllr P. Carlaw, Seconded: Cllr M Shipman

**85/25 Open Forum**

A member of public identified herself as a member of the Friston History Society. She requested acknowledgement of a request to place a storage cupboard in the Village Hall. Cllr M. Mahony confirmed that this will be addressed under item 94 and deferred a response until later in the meeting.

A lengthy discussion took place about how the energy projects are severely impacting the mental health and wellbeing of residents in the village. Several members of the public expressed feelings of helplessness and aguish in the face of the proposed development and that National Grid are not doing enough to monitor and support those who are feeling despair at the impending construction. Cllr M. Mahony noted that it is obvious that villagers are suffering and that Cllr C. Slack has been appointed wellbeing lead for the Parish Council. He continued that the Parish Council have called into question the validity of a wellbeing survey carried out by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) but have not received any reply.

Several members of the public stated a belief that Martin Cotters’ death is linked to the impending construction of the substation. Cllr M. Mahony called for a considered response due to the rawness of the situation. He relayed that Mr Cotter’s family must give permission before any such link can be brought to the attention of National Grid or the media. He stated that he has noted the community’s worrisome wellbeing issues and has raised concerns with the County Council and District Council.

A member of the public identified herself as District Cllr S. Whitelock and signposted residents to a wellbeing booklet she has written and is circulating. She suggested monthly meetings for residents to come together and discuss their concerns and stated that she is open to suggestions about how East Suffolk Council can help to address the community’s concerns.

Cllr M. Mahony called for a comprehensive, unbiased survey of the population in the village for their mental wellbeing. District Cllr S. Whitelock Sarah agreed this was possible and that she shares concerns about the DESNZ survey.

**86/24 County Councillor Reports**

The Clerk noted that Cllr A. Reid sent his apologies.

**Action:** Cllr M. Mahony requested the Clerk confirm how many consecutive meetings Cllr A. Redi has not been in attendance and request his presence in October.

**87/24 District Councillor Reports**

Cllr S. Whitelock noted that her report had been sent to the Councillors in advance and welcomed any questions. Cllr M. Mahony expressed an interest in seeing the design for the substation as he has concerns regarding the noise-suppression measures, landscaping and flood-risk mitigations.

Cllr M. Shipman expressed concerns regarding the decision-making processed employed in the planned energy projects, citing the now retracted plan to bring water tanker lorries via Benhall to Sizewell C.

**88/24 County and District Councillors Energy Project updates**

An update submitted by Cllr A. Reid was delivered.

**89/24 Energy Projects**

Cllr M. Mahony delivered an update on his and Cllr Shipman’s activities relating to energy projects including attendance at 7 meetings in August. He noted an interest among neighbouring Parish Councils to form a collective in order to share news and create a more constructive dialogue with the energy companies and developers.

Cllr M. Shipman shared news that the developers plan to leave a low-loader parked for 15mintues at a time in Grove Road for unloading during the construction phase of the substation.

Cllr M. Mahony confirmed that the timetable of the planning process remains unchanged and that not much progress will be made before the end of the year. A statutory consultation is likely for Lion Link early in 2025.

**90/24 Friston Watercourse**

Cllr M. Shipman delivered an update after her meeting with Scottish Power.

Friston Parish Council are requesting constant maintenance of the pipe and that development is done sensitively.

SPR have proposed taking responsibility for part of the watercourse in Friston and would like the Parish Council’s support. A discussion took place about the details of the proposal.

Cllr P. Carlaw stated there is an established flooding problem in the village due to the longstanding lack of maintenance.

**Action:** Cllr M. Shipman will write to SPR requesting amendments to their proposal, namely that they take on responsibility for maintaining the full watercourse for the full lifespan of the SPR energy projects, the overgrown watercourse is cleared and dug out to 400m depth, the watercourse is not made any wider, and more detailed plans are submitted for the portion proposed underneath Grove Road.

**91/24 Name Change for National Grid Connection Hub / Substation**

Cllr M. Mahony relayed views from villagers that the name of the ‘Friston substation’ should be changed due to the negative association to the village.

**Action:** Cllr M. Mahony will take action.

**92/24 Reports from other meetings**

None delivered.

**93/24 Grant Funding Opportunities**

The Clerk delivered document with up-to-date details on available grant funding. She highlighted ‘field to fork’ and ‘warm spaces’ as prospects. The Councillors demonstrated an interest in a ‘warm spaces’ project and discussed ideas for a collaboration with other organisations within the village.

**94/24 Village Hall**

Cllr P. Carlaw reported that the toilet ceiling decoration has been completed. He noted that currently there are two regular hirers, with around £45 per month regular income, the rest coming from ad-hoc bookings.

Cllr P. Carlaw relayed feedback from hirers that better lighting is needed in the hall. He also mentioned that upgrading the insulation would be favourable. **Action:** The Clerk will research if any grant funding is available for these projects.

Cllr C. Slack mentioned the benefit of a 3 year plan so that the Parish Council can efficiently apply for and spend grant funding. **Action:** Cllr C. Slack will conduct some research and begin to draft a 3 year plan.

The History Club’s request to place a storage cupboard for artefacts was discussed. **Action:** Cllr P. Carlaw will liaise with the club to find a suitable space.

Cllr P. Carlaw noted that the Village Hall Committee have not met since April. **It was** **unanimously resolved** to abolish the Village Hall Committee and for all matters relating to the Village Hall to be discuss by the full Council.

**95/24 Community Events Update**

Cllr W. Ireland relayed plans for a village calendar to raise funds for the Village Hall. A community group will fund it themselves. She also shared ideas for a village brunch.

**96/24 Additional Parish Councillors**

Cllr M. Mahony noted an application from one person and appealed to members of the audience to fill the remaining spaces.

**97/24 Planning Matters**

A discussion took place of planning application REF: DC/24/3022/FULL

**It was** **unanimously agreed** that the council have no comments, subject to neighbour consultation.

**Action:** The Clerk will draft a response before the deadline of 23rd September 2024.

**98/24 Expenditure approval and payment policy**

A discussion took place around the Council’s current payment approval procedures. **Action:** The Clerk and Cllr M. Mahony will work to draft a new policy in line with the new NALC financial regulations.

**99/24 Correspondence**

None received.

**100/24 Village Green**

Cllr P. Carlaw relayed that a member of the public has been in touch regarding some overgrown and fast-spreading vegetation on the Village Green. Cllr M. Mahony noted that on inspection he can see there is a problem all along the boundary of the Village Green – it has become overgrown but we must be mindful that this type of vegetation is a good habitat for wildlife.

Cllr P. Carlaw reported that he has sought advice from contractors who have advised that the problem is an incredibly invasive and fast growing plant known as ‘Mile-a-minute.’ Their recommendations are to clear the area completely, removing the plant at the root. A member of the public identified herself as the resident affected and expressed a wish to have the site cleared.

The Council received 3 quotes to clear the site and **it was** **resolved by majority** to approve a quote of £200 from P. Donnelly to eradicate the Mile-a-minute, remove the bushes and level the ground to the fence. (Cllr C. Slack voted against the resolution.)

Cllr P. Carlaw noted feedback from the contractor that the trees on the green are making cutting the grass difficult and one tree on the Aldebrugh road is starting to push out into the public foothpath. He proposed a solution of taking off the lower branches ( up to 7ft /2m) so that machinery can get underneath and to prune back the one encroaching onto the footpath. **Action:** Cllr P. Carlaw will obtain quotes in order to create a proposal for the next meeting.

Cllr P. Carlaw noted that the annual inspection of the play equipment will be carried out in September we will expect a report in time for October meeting.

**101/24 Footpaths**

Cllr W. Ireland delivered a report on village footpaths – there has been a problem that some have not been accessible due to overgrown vegetation.

**Action:** Cllr W. Ireland will liaise with the land agent for Blackheath Estates and request the farmers reinstate the footpaths.

**102/24 Highways**

Cllr P. Carlaw delivered an update regarding the speed reduction measures planned for the entryways of the village. Cllr M. Mahony thanked Cllr Carlaw for his work and perseverance in this matter.

**It was unanimously resolved** to pay the invoice once it arrives, in advance of the work being carried out.

**103/24 Allotments**

Cllr P. Carlaw relayed that the annual grass cut has been completed and that allotment 6 has been licensed. **It was unanimously resolved** to accept the licencing.

**104/24 Accounts**

The Clerk delivered a brief update on finances – AGAR & banking access.

**105/24 Start Time of Parish Meetings**

Cllr M. Mahony noted a number of comments from both Councillors and members of the public requesting an earlier start time to the meetings.

**It was unanimously resolved** to set the time of Parish Council meetings to 6pm going forward.

**Action:** The Clerk will change meeting time on website. The Clerk will propose meeting dates for 2025 from Jan – Dec. Mondays at 6pm, checking for Bank Holidays.

The meeting closed at 21:05

**The next meeting of the Parish Council is on Monday 14th October at 6pm**

Jess Palmer

Parish Clerk