

# East Lavington Annual Parish Meeting

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting Of THE PARISH OF EAST LAVINGTON held on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 18.15pm in The 6<sup>th</sup> Form Cafe, Hollington Centre, Seaford College, Lavington Park

**Present:** Charles Britton, Barry Gosden, William Yates, Patrick Limpus and Simon Longman  
**In Attendance:** Amy Harte (Clerk), Cllr John Cross (District Councillor), Ann Dennig, Clive Lightfoot.

**Apologies:** Cllr Tom Richardson (County Councillor)

- 1. Opening**  
Charles Britton opened the meeting at 18.18
- 2. Minutes of the previous meeting**  
The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were approved. They were duly signed as a correct record by C. Britton.
- 3. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Annual Meeting 2023**  
No matters arising.
- 4. Chairman's Report**  
A copy of C. Britton's report is attached as Annex A
- 5. Parish Council Finance Report**  
A copy of the finance report is attached as Annex B
- 6. District Councillor's Report:  
Fittleworth Ward; District Councillors Report**

Chichester District Council (CDC) submitted its Local Plan to the inspectorate in May, this is a major achievement for the Council. The current Local Plan is out of date and therefore it means the District Council is likely to lose planning applications at appeal because it does not have a five-year housing supply. Hopefully, the inspectorate will approve this document and therefore the plan will be adopted in the next few months. The South Downs National Park (SDNP), while its Local Plan is not out of date, its shelf life is coming to an end. Consequently, the national park is already in the process of writing a new plan, this is well underway, and all the parish councils will have been contacted. Some will need to respond to their queries and others will already have neighbourhood plans and village design statements in place.

Planning is a strange and complicated process, which I can't say I still understand, a year after being on the planning committee of both CDC and SDNP. The powers of both planning committees are limited. I think its worth mentioning the limits of the committee here as it's a misconception as to how much power it has. For example, if the many statutory consultees, such as Highways, Southern Water state that a planning application is fine, they have no objection, then the planning committee cannot turn the application down. This could be despite local protests, or the local parish objecting by send in reports and sometimes images of sewage flowing by the site, or the highway junction has massive cues morning, noon, and night. These would not be considered at the planning committee

# East Lavington Annual Parish Meeting

as the statutory consultees have said they have capacity, to turn the application down would mean the applicant would simply go to appeal and win. If we did turn an application down on these grounds, we would simply waste public funds.

The planning committee also must follow the advice of its planning officers. These officers have to follow the planning policies and planning law, and so once again if the committee went against the advice of the planning officers, we would have to have good evidence, or a point raised at committee that would undermine the officers' recommendations. Of course, the committee often challenges officer's opinions, and can and do go against their views. The committee also has to be mindful that if we loss too many appeals or defer then the planning committee can be 'designated'. This means the Secretary of State appoints someone else to take over the planning committee, but the planning authority still has do the work, but receives none of the income. Chichester District Council is very close to this happening. In short, most of the time a planning committee is totally constrained by government policy and has very limit powers.

John Cross  
Fittleworth Ward  
Chichester District Council

Cllr Cross explained that across the park 6300 new homes are required, most of the obvious brownfield sites have been identified so they are looking elsewhere. However, he felt that it was unlikely that any new homes would be planned for East Lavington Parish.

7. **County Councillor's Report:**  
No report presented – Cllr Richardson sent his apologies.
8. **Question Time**  
None
9. **Conclusion of the Meeting**  
The meeting closed at 18.46

**These minutes are an accurate record of the meeting.**

Signed .....

**Chairman, East Lavington Parish Council**

## Annex A

**East Lavington Annual Parish Meeting  
Chairman's Annual Report  
Monday 20th May 2024**

I am going start with us, your parish council...and give us a pat on the back. At a time when some town and parish councils experience turnover with councillors and with clerks, ELPC still has the same team that was created in the local elections of 2019 and again in 2023. Actually, two of us go back a bit further than that. And that's just the councillors; our parish clerk Amy Harte has been with us for nine years,

# East Lavington

## Annual Parish Meeting

having joined us as a locum in April 2015!

I should also say that we have received great support from our County Councillor Tom Richardson (Rother Valley Division) and from John Cross District Councillor for Fittleworth Ward. Both of them attend our regular meetings whenever they can and keep us up to date with reports and other information in between times.

East Lavington is a small parish and it lies wholly in the rural area of the South Downs National Park. It is not generally possible to build a new house in the rural area, but it is possible, in principle, to replace or extend an existing house. However, the National Park is our local planning authority, and it is the policies of their local plan that we must follow. These policies are very tightly worded. This is not surprising, since the first purpose of national parks is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

As usual, planning has been a significant part of our council activities. Since last May we have been invited to comment on seven new applications. Five of them have now been determined, though one of them is now subject to an appeal. Two others are still in progress, and we still have five in progress from the previous two years!

The South Downs local plan was adopted in July 2019. Many of its planning policies are noticeably more prescriptive and restrictive than those of the old Chichester local plan. Perhaps not surprisingly, since then we have noticed that some applicants and architects no longer so readily accept the advice, comments and recommendations of planning officers. The responses are sometimes ignored, sometimes challenged. We have seen examples of planning officers being told that they have misunderstood the detail of a policy, or that they are using the wrong policy in their determination of an application. To our knowledge none of these challenges have yet been successful; arguing with a planning officer is not as a rule good idea!

Moving on...

Public Rights of Way... 'PROWS'... are important for us, since we have an extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways in the parish. The County Council are responsible for clearing surface vegetation on these routes, but the side and overhanging vegetation are the responsibility of the landowner. Some are good at clearing while some are less so, and need reminding from time to time. Councillor Gosden acts as a volunteer inspector and inspects an agreed area each year and keeps us updated on the routes and the stiles, gates, finger posts and markers.

Staying with the County Council, the condition of the roads is a major problem for all the local parish councils. Heavy and persistent rain has caused havoc with the road surfaces, with some really deep and damaging potholes. Not surprisingly repairing the road surfaces has posed a real problem for the Highways Department.

Now for some good news! At the end of last year, a little later than expected, all of East Lavington was connected to fast, FTTP broadband...and what a difference that has made. Councillor Longman and his Graffham colleague Mark Stewart led our Community Fibre Partnership scheme and we are grateful for all their hard work. Andrew Griffith, our MP has very recently acknowledged their efforts in a recent letter to residents.

That's enough from me for the moment, except to thank my fellow councillors and Amy our parish clerk for their hard work and support over the last year. I will now ask Amy to go through our financial report for you.

### Annex B

# East Lavington Annual Parish Meeting

## East Lavington Parish Council Finance Report 20th May 2024

The 2023/24 financial year ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and the final accounts have been prepared.

### East Lavington Parish Council Financial Report 2023-2024 East Lavington Parish Council

Balance b/fwd at 1/4/23	£3,743
Receipts	£3600
Expenditure	-£5252
Balance c/fwd	£2091

**Income - Precept** £3,600

#### **Expenditure**

Clerk Salary and expenses	£3058
Insurance	£214
Fingerpost repair	£1470

The internal audit has been completed and following a meeting to review the internal auditor's comments and complete the audit form the Annual Return will be published on the website.

**Amy Harte, Clerk & RFO to East Lavington Parish Council**  
**20<sup>th</sup> May 2024**