



LAUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held at the Laughton Parish Small Hall Wednesday 19th November 2025 at 7.30PM

Present:

Councillors Jane Alford, Alison Wilson, Sally Huggett and Kay Syrad were present.

The Clerk was also present together with 6 members of the public and 2 PCSOs. PCSO Liz McDonagh introduced herself as the PCSO allocated to Laughton. She talked about rural crime issues and underlined the importance of reporting crimes and suspicious events. She stated that if a crime was in progress or it is an emergency it should be reported via 999, crimes and suspicious events can also be reported via 101 or online via www.sussexpolice.uk. Our PCSO can also be contacted via the clerk at clerk@laughton-pc.gov.uk but this should not be used for urgent contact.

Anit-social parking on Pound Lane and outside the Village Stores was discussed. At times the road is blocked and the Refuse Collection vehicles are unable to access. The Clerk undertook to chase East Sussex Highways regarding the faded road markings.

Residents expressed concern about the planning application to be discussed and made comments that have been noted.

1. Election of Chair for meeting

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Councillor Syrad as Chair for the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Steve Whiting.

3. To accept the minutes from the meeting held on 15th October 2025.

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15th October 2025 were **AGREED** and duly signed.

4. Declarations of interest. To receive notices of declarations personal and prejudicial, in respect of items on this agenda.

Councillor Wilson declared an interest with regard to Agenda Item 9

5. Members to agree confidential items on the agenda for the exclusion of the press and members of the public – Agenda Item 11.11

Duly Resolved that agenda item 11.11 would be subject to an exclusion of press and members of the public.

6. East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council reports

A verbal report was received from Councillor Wilson, as Wealden District Councillor. She drew attention to the dedicated section on the Wealden District Council website which provides factual and up to date information about Crowborough Army Camp:

Councillor Wilson made Members aware of the Motion passed that day in Wealden District Council's Full Cabinet Meeting: The text of the motion which was passed unanimously in relation to Crowborough was the following:

The Council supports the Council's Executive in:

- a) exercising the powers available to the Council to oppose the Home Office plan to use Crowborough Army Training Camp for the accommodation of asylum seekers, provided that this is done lawfully and with due and full regard to the potential cost and risk to the Council of any action which might be taken; and*
- b) calling on the active participation and collaboration of partner organisations to join Wealden District Council in opposing the plans.*

Full Council approved funding of nearly £1.2 million over the next 5 years for the Wilder Wealden project - a partnership working with Sussex Wildlife Trust to undertake a range of measures to protect and enhance the natural environment. Just over a year ago, the Council joined the Wilder Ouse project, working with a range of landowners, local interest groups, councils, statutory bodies and volunteers to deliver nature-based solutions across the Ouse catchment and within the district (**readers may be interested to learn that two of the Wilder Ouse projects are in Laughton, providing leaky dams and scrapes to help prevent flooding, butterfly banks and new hedge planting**). The Wilder Wealden project will expand this work across the whole district, with the expertise of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, helping to restore biodiversity, to address environmental challenges and, where appropriate, to create opportunities for public engagement in nature recovery. In addition, the Council has committed to work with the Knepp Wildlife Foundation to become a formal partner of the Weald to Waves Initiative, a project to create a 100 mile nature corridor across Sussex.

Councillor Wilson drew attention to the bird flu outbreak - there is information on both the Wealden and East Sussex websites about this and to the Community Led Infrastructure Fund (an opportunity for communities to improve local infrastructure such as village halls and outdoor areas, in line with the priorities in the council's strategy).

7. Working Groups – to receive reports and agree further actions for Full Council at the next meeting.

7.1 No reports for this meeting

8. Planning applications approved, refused, referred, withdrawn or appeals (to note)

8.1 Application No. WD/2024/1947/F

BRICKHURST POTTERY, BRICKHURST LANE, LAUGHTON BN8 6DD

Extensions and alterations including new pitched roof.

Wealden District Council has decided to **REFUSE** the above application on 7th October 2025.

8.2 Application No. WD/2025/1795/LB

LAUGHTON PLACE, THE OLD CASTLE, COW LANE, LAUGHTON, BN8 6DA

Replace oil fired heating with air source heat pump system; installation of ventilation with heat recovery; sub-dividing the ground floor to provide a bathroom including removing the ceiling bulkhead; reopening a blocked up window; relining the chimney flues and installing new fire place / wood burning stove; relocating kitchen; replacing top floor ceiling at slightly lower level and insulating above it; associated alterations to lighting and small power; installation of an electric car charger; conservation repairs and some replacements to terracotta.

Wealden District Council has decided to **APPROVE** the above application on 30 October 2025.

8.3 Application No. WD/2025/1798/F

LAUGHTON PLACE, THE OLD CASTLE, COW LANE, LAUGHTON, BN8 6DA

Installation of air source heat pumps; installation of electric car charger; reopening a blocked up opening and installing a new window

Wealden District Council has decided to **APPROVE** the above application on 30 October 2025.

8.4 Application No. WD/2025/1999/F

LITTLE CLEAVER FARM, MILL LANE, LAUGHTON, BN8 6AJ

Single storey and double storey side extensions in place of existing structures and new porch
Wealden District Council has decided to **APPROVE** the above application on 5 November 2025.

9. Other planning matters – to discuss or note any other planning matters brought to the attention of the Parish Council.

Application Number WD/2025/2473/PIP

LAND IN CHURCH LANE, LAUGHTON, BN8 6AH

Development of parcel of land to provide 1 x 4 bedroom dwelling, 4 x 3 bedroom dwelling and 2 x 2 bedroom dwellings, off road parking and landscaping.

Councillor Wilson left the meeting

Members discussed the application and **RESOLVED** to reply stating that they **OBJECTED** to the application.

Councillor Wilson returned to the meeting.

10. Financial Matters – Authorisation of payments of accounts –To approve accounts for payment – (a schedule of receipts & payments was presented at the meeting)

10.1 To approve revised payment list for October 2025 to accommodate late payments and Christmas Lights expenditure

RESOLVED to defer this item and agree via email following receipt of copies of payment details.

10.2 November 2025 Payments – To approve

RESOLVED to approve payments

10.4 November 2025 Direct Debits – To approve

RESOLVED to approve Direct Debits

10.5 To approve a Direct Debit card to be in Clerk's name to enable payment of items purchased.

RESOLVED to approve a direct debit card in the Clerk's name and to review and amend the Council's Financial Regulations to reflect this change and to bring this revised policy to a future meeting (January 2026).

10.6 CIL payment – to note payment and propose transfer to deposit account.

The CIL payment of £ 20,706 was **NOTED** and it was **RESOLVED** to transfer these funds into the Parish Council's Deposit Account.

11. Items For Decision and Allocation of Resources

11.1 Budget and Precept Setting

Councillors discussed the budget for 2026/7 and **RESOLVED** to carry forward further discussion to the next Full Council meeting.

- 11.2 **Urban Grass Cutting Schedule 2026 – to agree number of cuts for verges**
- Councillors **RESOLVED** to have the standard 2 cuts carried out East Sussex County Council at no cost to the Parish Council.
- 11.3 **To discuss renewal of ACV for Roebuck, Laughton**
- Councillors **RESOLVED** to apply to renew the ACV on the Roebuck, Laughton.
- 11.4 **To approve the playground repairs at Pelham Field to include fence repairs and removal of defective play equipment.**
- Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the repairs to the playground fencing and defective play equipment and to agree quotes via delegated decision so as to to delay safety works unduly.
- 11.5 **2026 Meeting dates – to discuss October meeting date**
- Councillors **NOTED** that the October 2026 meeting date remains unconfirmed due to Parish Hall availability and the date may need moving or another meeting venue sourcing.
- 11.6 **To agree actions relating to the Consultation on Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategies**
- Councillors **RESOLVED** to agree the wording for survey completion via Delegated Decision.
- 11.7 **To receive an update, allocate a budget and agree actions relating to the 2025 Christmas Market.**
- Councillors were made aware that plans are progressing well and that the event is fully booked with 12 tables attending. Mince pies and mulled wine will be available and it was **RESOLVED** to allocate funds of £500 towards event costs.
- 11.8 **Tree Warden Update**
- It was **NOTED** that the Tree Warden, Sue Redshaw has stepped down and Councillors wished to extend their thanks for her for the hard work completed. It was **NOTED** that **Carla Harford** has been appointed as Tree Warden moving forwards.
- 11.9 **Tommy placement on Village Green**
- Councillors extended their thanks to Joe Light for his placement of the Tommy on the Village Green.
- 11.10 **Litter Picking**
- Councillors extended their thanks to Julie Russell, Rosemary Cook and other volunteers for the recent litter picking undertaken within the Parish.
- 11.11 **Review Clerk's Salary (item considered as confidential within the terms of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960).**
- After the Clerk left the Meeting Councillors **RESOLVED** to increase the salary to SCP 28 with effect from **?????**. The Clerk then returned to the meeting.

12. REPORTS (by leave) NOT FOR DECISION

- 12.1 **Clerk's Highways Report**

Following attendance to an event organised by East Sussex Highways and Balfour Beatty the Clerk updated Councillors on the matters discussed.

The next Full Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 17th December 2025 at 7:30pm

Clerk's Report

Key Facts

- Highways look after 2,097 miles of road, 100,000 drains and 314 miles of ditches.
- The replacement value of our current infrastructure is £4,170,000,000.
- There are 46 hectares of verges, 37,500 streetlights, 43,695 road signs, 910 grit bins, 514 bridges and 2 tunnels.

They have limited funding and have experienced a huge increase in costs (materials and staffing). They have a difficult balancing act between safety, asset protection and resident expectations. They state that those working on their social media sites have been limited to 1 hour at a time because of the abuse being received and we were made aware that all Highways Stewards now wear body cams due to the abuse that they are receiving.

They are aspiring to 3-5 year maintenance plan but this is difficult with a budget that is set annually.

They have invested in new technology which enables them to overlay flooding data with reports of pot holes and other issues so they can identify hotspots.

Local Government Reform – Dept of Transport funding will go via the new Mayor but they anticipate that Highways boundaries will remain in place – Balfour Beatty have the East Sussex contract, Brighton & Hove work in house and West Sussex has 2 contractors, Balfour Beatty's current contract has 5 more years to run with a 7 year extension clause.

They need our help with diversion routes as we have detailed local knowledge – the diversion route must be a road of the same category, i.e. A road to A road hence some of long routes. Further discussion needs to take place between PCs and Highways but they can't help satnavs sending people down unsuitable route – they know this is an issue and they know it can be communicated better.

Defect Reporting

We need to do it and we need to encourage residents to self report – they can't fix it if they don't know about it. They prefer we signpost to the Highway website and not to Fix my Street as they get better information from their own site and there is also a reference number issued on their site which enables easy access and reporting back. If residents don't want to report online they can do it via phone call - there are 9 people in the call centre. They don't take reports via social media. They also have Stewards who conduct driven and walking inspections but the above figures explain why most defect issues are dealt with reactively – they simply don't have the resources to have someone driving around the County looking for issues outside the inspection timetable.

They acknowledge that the message we get back when reporting needs changing - when the defect is shown as Closed it doesn't mean it is fixed, it means that it has been triaged for action but they acknowledge that this auto-message needs rewording. We can search on progress using their portal and the reference number issued when reported.

3516 issues were reported last month (of which 736 were pot holes and 374 were tree issues) and they investigate every report.

It is not OK to say 'there is a pot hole in South Street' there is more than one South Street in East Sussex and South Street might be 5 miles long – we need to encourage people to provide more information –WhatThreeWords - or use a landmark – i.e. outside the pub in the northbound carriageway.

They take a risk-based approach on fixing pot holes –

- If it deeper than 100mm and/or bigger than 300mm it is Cat 1 and is sorted in 2 hours
- If it is deeper that 60mm and/or bigger than 300mm it is Cat 2 and is sorted in 5 days
- If it is deeper that 40mm and/or bigger than 300mm it is Cat 3 and is sorted in 28 days
- Anything outside this becomes an Observation issue.

The backlog for repairs on the day of the meeting was 19 potholes and they cost £105 on average to repair.

They acknowledge that pothole repairs are contentious and introduced a new working method in June to include a change in sub contractors to work towards right first time and fixing adjacent pot holes while they are there.

A parish council can pay for their own road repair – in conjunction with Highways. We can also talk to Highways about additional provision (at our cost) – ditch digging, more mowing.

There is a 3 year gully maintenance programme but cleaning gullies is becoming increasingly problematic due to cars parking where they need to work – people just move the cones and carry on parking.

If there is flooding that is a risk to property or the highway it is made safe in 2 hours. Otherwise it is 5 days for standing water issues.

Grates

- Missing – repair within 2 hrs
- Damaged – 5 days
- Rocking - 28 days

However, this is only for their grates and ironwork. If it belongs to a Utility Company they have to stop work and issue a S81 notice BUT there is no statutory time frame for the utility company to resolve the issue and Highways cant force action – they are as frustrated as we are about this.

Repairs

If a repair is a Cat1 they will fix the road without a closure or diversion notice as the repair often takes less time than getting a diversion order or TRO.

Traffic Lights can stay up during repairs with no work being done – this is often because concrete is curing beneath the surface and explains the comments of 'the lights were there but no-one was working'.

They actively seek to work on busiest route outside 'normal' hours.

Some things take longer than 28 days because investigation shows that the problem is more complex or the job is bigger than expected – for example, when a pot hole is found to be a void. They acknowledge that in these cases they can communicate better.

Verge erosion is not a defect that they can deal with unless it is causing a blocked gully – we discussed our country lanes and how road side edges are becoming a huge issue due to volume of traffic and use by unsuitable vehicles but

this is outside their control and scope. They said that permanent signage to say 'route unsuitable for heavy vehicles' or 'Narrow lane with passing places' – are solutions that they can't offer. But maybe this is something a Parish Council can look towards funding – however, the issue is behavioural and a sign won't stop people using an unsuitable route.

Roads in Winter

The Highways priority in winter is road safety.

They use 10,000 tonnes of rock salt from 5 depots and grit 21 primary routes which is 42% of the network – they have 21 gritter with 3 spares and 42 qualified drivers. The vehicles are parked up over summer as it is not cost effective to make them multi-purpose

There is an optimum time to grit and they acknowledge that they don't always get it right – mainly due to weather forecasting.

They want to work far more closely with parish councils as we are their local eyes and ears and more meetings will take place to see how this can be done, They are looking at SLR meetings and how effective they are as some clerks are not having the good experience that we are having.