

THE VILLAGES OF BIRLING GAP, CROWLINK, EAST DEAN AND FRISTON

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of electors held on Friday 15th May 2026 in the Village Hall, Village Green Lane, East Dean, commencing at 5.30 pm with displays from village organisations. Business commenced at 6.30 pm.

Meeting convened under Schedule 12, Part III of the Local Government Act 1972.

In the Chair: Councillor Michael Bustard (Chair of the Parish Council).

Present: representatives of the Parish Council, the Residents' Association, the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall Trust; the Roads Company; village clubs and societies (many of whom mounted displays); and approximately 40 other residents.

In attendance: Phil Burgess (Parish Clerk) took the minutes.

- 1. WELCOME:** The Chair of the Parish Council welcomed all to the meeting and announced the format of the evening.
- 2. ANNUAL VILLAGE REPORT 2026:** A number of village organisations had published written reports of their activities in the past year, and these are available to view in the on the council website on the link below or can be obtained from the parish clerk, email: clerk@eastdeanfriston-pc.gov.uk.
- 3. PRESENTATIONS BY THE PARISH COUNCIL.** "PowerPoint" Presentations were given by:
 - Cllr Michael Bustard
 - The purpose of the Annual Village Meeting
 - Key council achievements in the past year
 - Developments and proposals as recommended in the Neighbourhood Plan
 - A request for resident assistance on Community Speedwatch and a forthcoming comprehensive open spaces and health and fitness consultation.
 - Clerk to the Council Phil Burgess on Speeding and Road Safety and the new 20 mph limit in the village
 - Cllr Phillip Hill on the renovation and maintenance of Friston Pond. *Full presentations on the following link*
[Annual Village Meeting | East Dean & Friston Parish Council](#)

4. VERBAL PRESENTATIONS BY VILLAGE GROUPS. *Details available on the link in item 3.*

- Residents' Association by Chair Yvonne Petzal.
- PCC by Gail Huggett – church warden.
- East Dean Greensward Ltd by Jonathan Timberlake

5. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: *Responses in italics*

- Traffic Issues. Mike Tann requested double yellow lines on Michel Dene Rd near the Elven Lane junction to prevent parking creating a pinch point and blind spot. Warning signs were also proposed on Summerdown Lane and Elven Lane *Clerk to investigate & liaise with EDDR.*
- Jonathan Timberlake and Tim Pontin raised the issue of the Tourism Strategy and parking at Birling Gap from the Neighbourhood Plan and requested it be prioritised. *Note: Birling gap parking and pedestrian transit already the subject of council meetings with NT and Beachy Head Chaplaincy. NP Priorities will be assessed by council*
- The parlous state of mobile signals in the village was highlighted by Sue Duncan. *The Clerk advised that the companies concerned had been approached but would not upgrade/install masts. Broadband for the area is however expected.*
- Mark Pankhurst complained about the high speeds along Gilbert's Drive past The Fridays. Speed limits and bumps were suggested. Parking on the verges there was also an issue. *To be investigated.*
- Richard Baldwin of CSW remarked that Police response to speeding issues is very data driven and they would respond if provided with the relevant information. *Note police presence evident on the Beachy Head Rd stretch and noticed occasionally on Gilbert's Drive.*
- Tim Pontin requested a quarterly newsletter in addition to the regular mailout. *To be considered by council*
- A resident requested a review of the mowing of the triangle at the top of Micheldene and potential for planting of fruit trees. *To be considered*
- Paul Seeley announced the intention of the Village Hall Trust to replace notice boards around the village with enclosed boards to remove the need for lamination.

The council would consider and investigate all contributions by residents

6. CONCLUSION: Councillor Bustard thanked everyone for coming and formally closed the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.05 pm.

Signed: (Chair of the meeting) Date:

Parochial Church Council

We have two historic churches in the village of East Dean and Friston which have been in continuous use as places of Christian worship since at least the 11th century and probably earlier.

Both churches offer Sunday morning services with East Dean starting at 9.30am with common worship, including an all age service once a month. There is also the Lighthouse Club at all other services where children can go out during the service for Bible based stories and craft activities.

Friston services start at 11.00am and offer a more traditional book of common prayer service.

We offer coffee mornings twice a month with coffee & co on the first Friday of each month for chat and friendship and carer's coffee on the third Monday aimed particularly at those who are caring for loved ones. Both of these are free of charge and open to all.

We are just starting a monthly lunch for those who have been recently bereaved.

Details of all these can be found in the parish magazine.

We held another successful holiday club during the Easter holidays for primary school age children.

Looking to the future, I am sure some of you will be aware that our Rector, Rev David Baker, will be leaving us on 31st May following 17 years of service in the villages, taking early retirement on medical grounds. We will be having a farewell event on Friday 29th May in the village hall from 7-9pm, open to anyone whose life he may have touched. David's last service will be on Sunday 31st May at 10.30am at East Dean church, the later start time as it is a joint Benefice service.

Following David's retirement, the churches enter what is known in the Church of England as an interregnum, which is the process of advertising and appointing a new Rector. During this period services and activities will continue as usual, and we hope to see you at some of them.

Gail Huggett

Church wardens East Dean Church.

East Dean & Friston Residents' Association

Village AGM 15th May 2026

What is the Residents' Association?

And

What does it do?

We are the Voice of the Residents

We are a community organisation made up of residents who have chosen to join and pay a small subscription. Supporting community projects such as the Annual Village Fete, making donations support other community groups. Diverse Groups such as the Cricket Club, The Table Tennis Club, the Greensward and to put on events. This year our Fete theme is Trains, Planes and Automobiles and all are welcome on 18th July on the Greensward. The RA has also provided benches and a New Picnic Table on the Greensward.

We support the work of the Parish Council, and this year supported the Parish Council in delivering the Neighbourhood Plan. An enormous piece of work successfully delivered. We will continue to Support the Parish Council in the ongoing implementation of the Plan.

The RA is also heavily involved in Ecological Projects let by our resident expert Johanthan Timberlake, covering a wide range of subjects an encouraging active participation in Pond creation, Toad Patrol, Litter Picking, Trees, Wild Flowers. The RA financially supports the Greensward Company as it of itself has no income.

For new arrivals in the area, we have a Welcome Pack and rely on residents to let us know when new neighbours arrive so that we can drop in a Welcome Pack and a word of welcome.

The EDRFA website is kept up to date with all of our project and events, and we now have a new Email address for residents to get in touch – CHAIR@EDFRA.ORG.UK. We have slips with the new address on our table for you to pick up, thank you Tim for organising these for us. Our old address will be around for 12 to 18 months, and any contact made on the old address is automatically forwarded to the new address.

This is our main link with Residents' where questions can be raised about all sorts, and information sought. It is the link from which the Committee hear from Residents so is a very important link.

We are always open to new members and there are joining slips on our table, if you would like to join, please take one, and if you are already a member and know of someone who might like to join, please take one for them.

Above all the Residents Association is the voice of the residents and your Honorary Committee work hard to make sure that voice is listened to, heard and supported. Thank you.

Yvonne Petzal

Chair@EDFRA.org.uk

Micheldene WI

We are a friendly and welcoming group that meet on the third Thursday of the month at East Dean and Friston Village Hall at 19.00 for 19.30.

Our monthly meetings are varied - an interesting speaker or an activity evening, quiz, music and themed evenings and the all - important Christmas Party are very popular. We also offer an additional range of activities that vary according to the interests of the members and are a great way to get to know members in smaller groups. These include the Walking Group, Book Clubs, Gardeners' Group, Craft Group, Family History Group, and the Supper Club.

Periodically we take trips to theatres, exhibitions, gardens, craft fairs and local places of interest. We have a full programme of events planned for the coming year and are always looking to try new things, welcoming suggestions from members, new and old alike.

We are a registered charity and raise a significant amount of money each year for local charities, as well as helping in practical ways to support the local Women's Refuge and Baby Basics.

Come and meet a group of diverse and interesting women who would love to welcome you at one of our meetings or email us on wimicheldene@gmail.com to discover more.

Table Tennis

We now have four tables and a thriving club with players of all abilities so, if you've never played before or have played for years, do come along and whatever age you are. We meet in the village hall on the second and fourth Thursday of the month 7.30-9.00pm. from September to May. But it doesn't stop there as we then retire to the Tiger for a chat and the odd drink or two!

Table tennis is a great way to keep fit, have fun and get to know others who live in the village. Why would you want to miss out and it only costs £5 a session (although sadly it doesn't include your drinks at the Tiger)

So come along and try us out on our last evening of the season on 28th May or join us at the start of the new season on Thursday 10th September. If you need further information, give me a call on 07968 222732

Steph Carter

Bereavement Lunch

We are planning to run regular lunches for men and women who have been widowed, live alone and find weekends difficult.

Our first lunch will be on Saturday 30th May at 12.30 and held at the back of East Dean church.

If you would like to join us, please get in touch with us to book your place by Wednesday 27th May and give us any dietary requirement you may have.

Come and enjoy a relaxing time, chatting and with laughter and possibly a few tears and you will be warmly welcomed.

There is no cost but donations to cover the cost of the food would be appreciated.

Steph Carter 07968 222732

Gail Hugget 07835 247218

Carers Coffee

We continue to meet on the third Monday of the month in East Dean church (10.00-12.00) and is for anyone who cares for a loved one whether at home or if their loved one has had to go into a home. We also have some who have been through this difficult time and have useful information to share if needed. We are mainly though a self-help group where we can share our problems and anguish with one another and share laughter together, knowing we will never be judged for how we feel.

If you are a carer do come along with or without the one you care for.

Steph Carter (07968 222732)

Vegetable Fruit and Flower Show

Did you know that the Village Show, otherwise known as East Dean & Friston Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Show, dates back to 1906, there are no records between 1914 and 1947 (when it was restarted by the Cricket Club to raise funds) and the oldest copy of a Schedule on file is dated 1977, what an amazing achievement for any village such as ours.

The Village Show has been held in the Bardolf Hall at Birling Manor, The Recreation Ground and the Old Village Hall, including the Gardens of the Grange Residential Home, now of course as always on the August Bank Holiday Monday it is held in the Village Hall.

Here we are in 2026 some 79 years later. Last year the number of residents entering the Show was 50 with a total of 297 actual entries for all classes, plus 11 residents who had never entered the Show before.

The Village Show is organised by a committee of 7 who must raise funds each year by seeking sponsorship from local businesses, selling advertising in the Schedule and on the day, admission charges and the sale of tea, homemade cake and scones.

There are over 100 different Classes, including those for Children which are open to non-residents, whilst all other classes are only open to residents and ex-residents of East Dean & Friston; these include Fruit, Vegetables, Flowers and Flower Arranging, Pot Plants, Home Produce, Crafts and Photographs.

The new Schedule each year is gratefully delivered to all properties in the June issue of the Parish Magazine, with the closing date for entries the Thursday before the Show.

Each Class is awarded a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place with prize money and there are 20 or more Trophies to be won, together with the prestigious Banksian Medal, an RHS award for the highest number of points in the horticultural classes.

If anyone has never attended our Village Show, please do so this August Bank Holiday Monday and sample the atmosphere of a traditional Village Show, even better why not enter one or more of the Classes on offer.

Cheryl Veitch

East Dean Village Market

East Dean village market has just celebrated its 23rd birthday, I have had the pleasure of running the market for six years.

The market celebrates local makers, bakers, crafters, creators and producers, we support small businesses and people turning their hobby into more

The inside market has a range of food and craft stalls, up to 22 can be found within the hall and a further 2 inside the foyer, the village hall car park has up to 6 stalls, during the summer months the green triangle has 7 stalls and the Horsefield walk way 10-15 stalls at any one time; during the winter months you can find all outside stalls within the hall car park and the Wealden car park.

East Dean village market cafe is a lively and bustling pop-up cafe held while the market is open and caters for all our visitors, customers and stall holders. Freshly cooked breakfasts, brunches and light lunches and home made cakes and pastries

The market is blessed with some supportive residents who repeatedly visit, support and shop at our small business stalls, we are very fortunate to have repeating visitors from all over the world and tourists who discover the market from their hop on hop off bus trip

The Market is so much more than a shopping experience, its a community for our stall holders and for our regular visiting customers, a lifeline to many, a social day out, a support network

The market has grown significantly over the last six years, pre covid the market was close to closure due to lack of support, during Covid the market was the life line for local residents providing fresh fruit, veg, meats, fish, breads, cleaning fluids, pastries and other essential stalls.

Post covid the market has created a magically festive christmas market that brings crowds in from all over Sussex, increasing our footfall and footfall of all the surrounding businesses, unfortunately the summer events are no longer financially viable to organise, which is a shame because the increase in footfall and sales for the local businesses as well as the market was a great opportunity.

The weekly market has increased in size, the market now hires adjoining fields to ensure there is sufficient safe parking for everyone's customers and places cones along the road side to ensure the buses and any emergency vehicle have safe access and a clear route

East Dean village market would love to see more local residents joining us and visiting the market, so many people who live in East Dean dont know the market exists!

Without the support of our local residents the market will become financially not viable to exist, which would be a huge shame

Winter time is hard financially for the market and the stall holders, the summer months and any big events keep the market going and pay the bills on the "red" days

We keep going and we keep trying because the market means so much to so many people, for so many different reasons

Thank you - Miranda

East Dean Greensward Limited

East Dean Greensward Limited (EDGL) is the Company that owns and manages the Greensward on the Downlands Estate. It is a company with a single asset, and no shareholders, only members. We have six Directors who meet two or three times a year. The purpose of EDGL is to ensure the continuing amenity value of the Greensward for the enjoyment of all residents, and to protect it against future development. Any householder in the parish can become a member of EDGL at no cost.

We are now trying to make the southern end of the Greensward more shady, family-friendly, and more widely used. To this end we have planted a number of saplings of native tree species, some donated by the South Downs National Park Authority, and also many spring bulbs among them. As you may have noticed, we now have a wooden picnic bench, bought with funds kindly donated by the Residents' Association. We hope this sees much use by families and younger people in particular. Meanwhile, the Parish Council have replaced the old dog waste bin with one that is multi-use – it can be used for both dog waste and general litter.

We are continuing to manage a section of the upper northern end of the Greensward as a no-mow area, left unmown for the spring and summer before an autumn tidy-up. This is to give wildflower species already present a chance to flower and seed, and also to provide a valuable source of nectar and pollen for insects. Such species as cowslip, dog violet and pyramidal orchid are now increasing in number. There is no fence or any restriction on access.

During the recent Neighbourhood Plan consultation, a number of residents, including our younger ones, suggested additional uses for the Greensward as an important and safe public green area. We are open to any suggestions for events that could be held here, in addition to the Annual Village Fete of course, which this year is on Saturday July 18th.

If you have any suggestions for events or activities, or any other thoughts on management and use, please contact us. Your views on wildflowers, tree planting, benches, etc. are very welcome. The Greensward pages on the Residents' Association website <https://edfra.org.uk/the-greensward-company/> have further information on procedures and history and the form for becoming a member. For all enquiries, please contact our Secretary at greenswardeastdean@gmail.com.

Jonathan Timberlake

East Dean & Friston Gardening Club

The Gardening Club is a friendly and informative organisation, affiliated to the RHS, for those amongst us who enjoy either working in the garden, pottering in the greenhouse or visiting gardens and who welcome broadening their knowledge of the varied aspects of having a garden, however big or small.

Whilst we hold regular monthly meetings in the East Dean Village Hall on the second Tuesday of each month (except August) commencing at 2.00pm and enjoy listening to a speaker for about an hour, usually accompanied by slides depicting their specialist subject, we now have a regularly updated website to view, keeping everyone up to date.

Our website www.edfgardeningclub.org has much to offer. It sets out the benefits of becoming a gardening club member – free attendance at our monthly meetings, followed by free refreshments, the ability to purchase garden supplies such as top soil, bark chippings, mushroom compost etc etc twice a year (for residents of East Dean and Friston) and have the order delivered to your home address without further charge.

There is also an entitlement to join other members on an optional day out, by luxury coach, a couple of times a year, if you wish, to visit a noteworthy garden or country estate. Our visits cover Kent, Sussex, Surrey and South East London and prices include the return coach fare and admission charges. There is one pick up point only and that is at the Village Hall.

The club produces its own newsletter, circulated to all members on a quarterly basis. This is produced in house, usually runs to six pages in colour and keeps members up to date with both past news and forthcoming events.

Our membership year runs from the first of January to the end of December and the annual subscription is £10.00 per person. Our current membership is now over 140. If you would like to enrol as a member then please visit www.edfgardeningclub.org click on the box marked “JOIN” complete the details and click on “SEND ENQUIRY” to receive your membership application form.

Frances Stevens
Secretary

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