

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 22 May 2018 at 7.30 pm at the Village Centre, Trinity Road, Hurstpierpoint

Present:

Stephen Hand (Chairman of Council)
Allan Brown (Vice-chairman of council)
9 other Parish Councillors
3 Mid Sussex DC ward Members
The Clerk and 3 members of staff
28 Members of the public

1. Introduction by the Chairman: The Chairman welcomed those present and introduced the Parish and District councillors, and Parish Council staff attending the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 23 May 2017: The Minutes were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Annual Report of the Council 2017/18: The Chairman Stephen Hand presented the Annual Report for the Year 2017/18. The Council had another busy year, with important projects taken forward, in particular:

- Replacing all of the 137 street lights that owned by the Council with more energy efficient ones,
- Establishing the 50 Ac 'Hurst Meadows' parkland areas as a valuable parish amenity. The second area of land had recently been acquired and access points and signs installed. The remaining area of ancient woodland was expected to be transferred to the Council in the next couple of months.

There were a number of other ongoing projects, including:

- Working with WSCC to manage traffic speeds and parking in Cuckfield Road, and parking arrangements in South Avenue.
- Installing village gateways in Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common.
- Upgrading the play equipment in the Reeds Lane Recreation Ground.
- Working with WSCC to define suitable cyclepaths through the Parish.
- Establishing Hurstpierpoint as a 'Dementia Friendly' village.

The most significant project for the coming year was establishing a new Community Hub at Court Bushes, working in conjunction with the building owners Mid Sussex District Council, with the intention that the Parish Council would take over the day-to-day operation, working with local groups. Much work remained to be done, but the Council was hopeful of a positive outcome.

The Chairman thanked Hurstpierpoint Society for their diligence and hard work in completing the review of Conservation Areas in Hurstpierpoint and, together with MSDC had produced a new document which would now contribute to the planning process.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to all Councillors and staff, but with special regard to the Vice-chairman Allan Brown and the Committee Chairmen Martin Machan and Bob Sampson, and to John Lowman as Chairman of the Policy Working Group. During the year two councillors resigned, and particular thanks were noted for Judith Marsh from Sayers Common, and new members Peter Griffiths and Claire Majsai were welcomed. Staff members Cliff Everest and Roberta Taylor had both retired, and special thanks were noted for their committed service, for over 13 years in the case of Roberta. New staff member Nick Sinclair had been welcomed onto the team.

4. Financial Report of the Council: The Clerk to the Council presented the audited Annual Accounts for the Year 2016/17, the unaudited Accounts for the Year 2017/18, and the revenue and capital expenditure budget for 2018/19. In 2017/18 the Council had a surplus of £71,000, taking the total funds to £240,000. The Council's policy was to ensure that revenue income and expenditure were generally in balance year on year, but that one-off or capital expenditure could be met from grants, borrowing or developer contributions in the form of s106 funds. In the year the Council had received developer contributions in respect the Hurst Meadows project, intended for preparatory works and for the ongoing maintenance, of £187,000. Further sums were due in the new financial year. For 2018/19 the Council had increased the Council Tax by 2% for a typical Band D property which, together with other income from rents, allotments and cemetery fees, was expected to meet the ongoing day-to-day operations and maintenance requirements.

5. Hurst Meadows: Council Vice-chairman presented the current stage of the project. Over 50 Ac of meadowland had now been transferred to the Council, secured freehold and covenanted against future development, for the benefit of the whole community, and this was now substantially open to the public. The public were encouraged to visit the site and enjoy the excellent views to the north and west of the village. The remaining parcel of land comprised the woodland from Marchants Close up to Tilleys Copse by Fairfield Recreation Ground, and it was expected that this would be transferred to the Council within the next two or three months. Some of this woodland was very dense, undulating and boggy and would not be appropriate for general public access. The northern section around Tilleys Copse was more accessible.

A graphic designer had been appointed to produce schematic maps and illustrations for the parkland, which would be used in improved signs and other material to enable the public to access and understand the area.

The maintenance and conservation of the parkland was monitored by the Hurst Meadows Advisory Board, which included representatives from local groups, residents and specialists, and gave very valuable insight to the management. An indigenous Sussex apple orchard was planned for planting in the autumn, probably in the Highfield Drive section of the Meadows. It was hoped that a special opening of the Meadows would take place in autumn 2018, with a focus on children enjoying the countryside, and possibly a picnic event.

6. District Plan issues: The Council Chairman presented the current situation regarding the Mid Sussex District Plan:

- The District Plan had been adopted March 2018
- The Parish Neighbourhood Plan was still in force
- Recent notable planning applications which had been refused permission due to the strength of the Neighbourhood Plan included: Hurst Wickham Barn, College Lane 10 houses; Reeds Lane, Sayers Common 28 houses; and Pakyns Garden, Albourne Road 12 houses.
- However, across District after 2024, the District Plan required an increase in housebuilding rates, leading to a further 2500 houses in the period 2024-31. MSDC are currently assessing all potential sites, including in our Parish. The Parish Council will continue to argue to protect our countryside and local gaps between villages, retain the character of our villages, and push for improved infrastructure.

District councillor John Wilkinson presented on the work by Mid Sussex District Council leading to the adoption of the District Plan for the period 2014-31. He noted that, notwithstanding the District and Neighbourhood Plans, planning applications would still be lodged and had to be judged on their merits against the policies in the Plans. It was also noted that the District Plan provided for permissions to be granted for up to 9 houses on the edge of built-up areas, contiguous with the boundary of the existing built-up area, which could lead to new applications across the District.

7. Court Bushes Community Hub: The Clerk presented the current progress on establishing a new Hub in Hurstpierpoint. The building on the edge of the Court Bushes Recreation Ground was about 30 years old and was the former Ex-servicemens' Club. The Club had been through some changes and the building had been taken over by the landowner Mid Sussex District Council. The building had had some fire damage and was now boarded up and not in use. For a number of years the local community, including the Parish Council had been pressing for a community building in the north Hurstpierpoint area, and this presented an excellent opportunity. The Parish Council were now working with MSDC and key local groups, including the Point Church, the Ex-servicemens' Club, Clarion Housing and others to agree a refurbishment plan for the building. The intention was for the Parish Council to take over the operation of the building under a long lease from the landowner MSDC.

It was intended that it would be multi-use space for use by local people, including a community café, youth group, help-point, food bank, and hopefully a pre-school or toddler group. It would also be available for hire to private individuals and groups on an ad-hoc basis, to contribute to the running costs. Planning was currently under way and it was hoped that the building might be open for use by the end of 2018. It was expected that the cost of restoration of the building to its former state would be met by the fire insurance settlement, and that the refurbishment to a new layout would be met from s106 funds and other grants.

District Cllr Colin Trumble advised the meeting that MSDC were setting up a steering group of users, plus the District and Parish Councils, to guide the design and implementation process. Cllr John Wilkinson advised the meeting that he had for a long time pushed for an all-weather football pitch and changing rooms on the site, and would continue to do so, but recognised that this would be a later phase of development. In answer to a question from the meeting, it was noted that s106 developer funds were not sufficient to pay for a new pitch.

8. Open forum for the public: The Chairman took open questions from the meeting and the following matters were raised:

- (1) A resident asked who decided the allocation of s106 funds and was advised that the District Council held the monies but sought advice from the Parish Council.
- (2) A question was raised about CiL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and the meeting was advised that this was currently under review by Government and in the meantime s106 would apply.
- (3) A resident asked about the policy of street-naming, saying that the principle of using full names of historic figures from the village should be continued. It was noted that these full names were not universally popular with residents and developers.
- (4) A resident from Sayers Common asked whether a bus shelter could be provided on the northbound side, and was advised that this was being investigated but that a suitable location was not yet secured.
- (5) A question was raised about controlling HGV traffic in the High Street, and was advised that there were very few opportunities to police the matter.
- (6) A Sayers Common resident noted the considerable vegetation growth across the footways at the northern end of the village.
- (7) A resident, also a teacher for Downlands College, has consulted young people about needs in the village and the suggestion of public drinking fountains had been raised.
- (8) A Parish Councillor raised the matter of Quiet Lanes, noting that the aim appeared in the Neighbourhood Plan but that the matter rested with the Highway Authority.
- (9) With reference to the Court Bushes Community Hub, a resident suggested that much improved lighting and access was necessary to make the facility more welcoming and safer.
- (10) A suggestion was made for warning signs on the St Georges footpath as it crossed the extended Highfield Drive road into the new development.
- (11) A resident and member of the voluntary litter-picking team advised the meeting of their work and invited other to join the team.

9. Closing remarks by the Chairman:

The Chairman thanked all those attending and noted that he was pleased to see public participation in many aspects of the local community. The meeting applauded. The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Chairman
