

**MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 24 May 2016 at 7.30 pm at the Village Centre, Trinity Road, Hurstpierpoint**

**Present:**

Stephen Hand (Chairman of Council)  
Allan Brown (Vice-chairman of council )  
10 other Parish Councillors  
Peter Griffiths (WSSC ward Member)  
John Wilkinson (MSDC ward Member)  
The Clerk, three Assistant Clerks, and Maintenance Officer  
25 Members of the public

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

**2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 26 May 2015:** The Minutes were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**3. Annual Report of the Council 2015/16:** The Chairman Stephen Hand presented the Annual Report for the Year 2015/16. He stressed that the Council had made some strides in engaging with residents, but that further work was required in involving residents, particularly in the planning of large projects and initiatives. Steps were already being taken, for example in the increased dialogue with local High Street traders and with the Parkland Advisory Board which was being currently formed for Hurst Meadows. Current projects included the major extension and renewal of the playground in South Avenue Recreation Ground and the replacement of 119 aging streetlights around the Parish. The Council had also recently requested Mid Sussex District Council to extend the permitted waiting time from 2 to 3 hours at Trinity Road carpark, and were currently investigating the possibility of additional off-street parking at the eastern end of Hurstpierpoint, as requested by the traders, although no satisfactory solution had yet been identified.

The Neighbourhood Plan, which was made in early 2015, had been an important element in rejecting an unwanted development of 120 houses at Sayers Common, and 110 houses between Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks. The Government's Secretary of State for planning had cited the Neighbourhood Plan in rejecting the appeals of the developers.

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Rosemary Burns on her BEM New Years honour for contributions to the community and noted that her absence at this meeting was due to her being at Buckingham Palace to receive the honour. It was also noted that two councillors, Ceri O'Connell and John Wilkinson had resigned during the year, and particular thanks were offered to Cllr Wilkinson for his 11 years of service to the Council, including as Chairman and Vice-chairman. Two new councillors had been co-opted in the year and were welcomed: Pam Mitchell and Martin Machan. Special thanks were made for Vice-chairman Alan Brown, the standing committee chairmen Bob Sampson and Judith Marsh, and Working Group chairmen Tony Lank and John Lowman, Councillor Steve Whitehead for his liaison with the High Street Traders group, and the Parish Clerk and team.

The Chairman introduced councillor Pam Mitchell who had together with staff member Roberta Taylor arranged new afternoon cream tea events for elderly people. These had been planned to reach those who might not otherwise attend many social events, and groups of up to 20 had met in peoples' homes on 12 occasions. The events were a considerable success due to the diligence of Roberta and a bunch of flowers was presented with the thanks of the people concerned. The meeting applauded Roberta.

**4. Financial Report of the Council:** The Clerk to the Council presented the audited Annual Accounts for the Year 2014/15, the unaudited Accounts for the Year 2015/16, and the revenue and capital expenditure budget for 2016/17. In 2014/15 the Council had a modest surplus of £11,000. In 2015/16 the expected large capital expenditure on the South Avenue Playground and new parkland did not come forward as quickly as expected, and the actual expenditure and receipt of development contribution s106 funds was therefore much less than budgeted. However, the High Street scheme had been completed in the year and funding received. The overall effect was again a small surplus in the Year of £11,000, and funds held at the year-end were £95,000. For 2016/17 the planned budget showed considerable income from s106 funds, and corresponding expenditure on the parkland enabling works, the South Avenue Playground, and the streetlight replacement scheme. This latter scheme was to be funded by a 20-year loan from the Public works Loan board, and it had been demonstrated that the repayments would be less than the savings in energy efficiency and maintenance, so proving an economic case. The Council Tax precept for 2016/17 was an increase of 2.9% which equated to less than 1.5% per household, which was about £60 per year for a typical home, for all the Parish Council services. There were no questions from the meeting.

---

**5. Community Life Parish Plan 2016-21:** The Chairman introduced Councillor Bob Sampson who presented the Council's work on the Parish Plan. A questionnaire had been distributed in December 2015 and over 400 responses from around the Parish had been received. The majority of those responding were from Hurstpierpoint and in the 56+ age group. From the survey the Council had learned that, whilst current methods of communication were working well, there was need to continue to develop new systems. The website had been recently upgraded and a Twitter account was running, but further social media work would be beneficial. The idea of councillor 'surgeries' to enable face-to-face meetings had also been suggested.

The Plan identified the need to reach out to those people, of whatever age, who were isolated and further work was required in this area. The suggestion of a youth council, to help engage younger people into community life, would also be explored. The Parish was generally a low-crime area, but there were still concerns about the possible effects of the current major reorganisation of Sussex Police, including the loss of designated PCSO's. The Plan identified the need to work with the Police in raising awareness of the effects of online and other fraud.

It was widely acknowledged that there was need for affordable housing for local people. Whilst the new developments provided for an element of affordable housing through the system of housing association allocations in the planning process, the Parish Council were keen to explore directly providing local housing for rent. The Council was empowered to undertake such schemes, but there would inevitably be a cost to the Council Tax payer in providing funding.

The Plan had identified the opportunities to encourage local businesses, particularly the High Street retailers, although the role of the Parish Council was limited. Nevertheless, the Council were exploring options and the recently-formed High Street Economy Working Group was already taking new initiatives. The matter of carparking was also noted and the Council was currently investigating the matter.

The results of the survey had shown some strong interest in the new parkland and green spaces in general, and the need to conserve and preserve natural spaces. There was also support for the concept of a 'heritage trail' connecting 'quiet lanes', footpaths and routes through the new parkland areas. The trail would connect and identify places of local and historic interest around the parish. The interest in the environment also extended to energy saving and the support for wider use of solar panels, although the Council had little power in this respect.

Finally, residents were encouraged to participate in taking forward these suggestions, as the Parish Council alone did not have all the resources or all the expertise that was needed. Councillor Sampson invited the meeting to inspect the display at the back of the hall and to discuss the topics with individual councillors after the meeting.

**6. High Street Economy:** Vice-chairman Allan Brown presented the Council's current initiatives with the High Street Traders group, to encourage more trade in the centre in the village. In particular, the funding of shopping bags for new residents, which contained literature about the community and were being distributed by the shops. The Council was also facilitating the sale of the MSDC parking discs through the local shops, as well as making free discs available to new residents.

The existing Christmas lights were constrained by the layout of the High Street and the permissions required from property-owners, so it was thought that a more comprehensive display on the Village Garden (which is owned by the Council) would be desirable, and was being explored.

The Traders group was arranging HM Queen Elizabeth's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations on 12 June 2016, with the High Street being closed to traffic and a range of activities on the Village Garden.

Finally, as mentioned in the Parish Plan, the Heritage Trail scheme was being investigated as a means of attracting visitors to the village and which should include routes through the High Street.

**7. Hurst Meadows Parkland:** The Clerk reminded the meeting that, as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, negotiations had taken place with landowners and developers to secure nearly 60 acres of meadowland and woodland on the northern side of Hurstpierpoint, around Highfield Drive and Little Park. These parkland areas were intended as informal recreation space, as conservation areas for natural habitats, and as a buffer against future development. The land would be covenanted against future building in perpetuity. This land was being transferred in stages with the first section of 9 acres north of Highfield Drive expected shortly. The land transfer included commuted sums of about £400,000 from the developers to the Parish Council, to enable and then maintain the parkland areas.

The land and funds would be owned by the Council but to ensure that the parkland was provided and maintained appropriately, a Parkland Advisory Board was being formed, comprising members of the public, councillors and representatives of special interest

---

groups. A number of applications had been received from the public and it was hoped that the inaugural meeting would take place mid-July.

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

(1) High Street traffic : A resident expressed considerable concern about the traffic in the High Street and felt that the brief article in the recent Council newsletter did not properly represent the situation. The traffic system does not work satisfactorily. Others said that the traffic situation depended very much on traffic volumes and it could be congested at certain times. Another resident was supportive of the scheme but felt that there were some ‘mis-designs’ and wondered whether the design consultants would be accountable. A resident expressed the view that the drop in trade had coincided with the new road layout. Others said that the scheme was now working and problems only occurred when drivers parked or proceeded without consideration.

The Chairman advised that different views prevailed about the degree of success of the new layout and that some were in support of the revisions. The Council had asked WSCC to undertake a post-scheme review to identify and potential adjustments that could be made to the scheme to address some of the concerns. A report was awaited from an independent highway engineer and the Council would consider any suggestions made. The Clerk explained the options that had been considered in 2011/12 and presented to the public, and advised the meeting that there would not be wholesale changes to the layout as a result of the review.

(2) Parking enforcement: A resident raised the comment in the Parish Plan about the possible introduction of more parking enforcement and asked whether the Parish Council could pay MSDC for more resources. Cllr Wilkinson (MSDC) advised that they were very constrained by recruitment difficulties and it was unlikely that more resources could be found.

(3) Crime and safety: A resident noted from the Parish Plan that 71% of residents responded that they felt safe but that the possibility of Community Wardens was being raised, and questioned the need. Another regretted the loss of a dedicated PCSO. The Chairman agreed that the PCSO change was regrettable and advised that the Council had requested a meeting with the recently re-elected Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex to discuss the matter.

(4) Cuckfield Road: A resident asked when the very poor road surface was to be addressed. Peter Griffiths (WSCC) advised that it was being investigated by the Highways Authority, and the matter of parking management was also to be considered. Another resident suggested that an improved road surface might actually encourage greater speed, which was undesirable.

(5) College Lane: a resident expressed concern about the congestion caused by large vehicles and asked whether the issues were being addressed. The Clerk advised that a survey of residents 3 or 4 years previously had rejected any suggestion of parking management to improve traffic flow, but the matter of large vehicle access was identified in the Neighbourhood Plan, and would be considered in due course. One possibility was the use of physical width restrictors, but the required technical approvals were uncertain.

(6) St Georges Lane: A resident expressed concern about recent roadworks that had destroyed some spring flowers. It was not known who had been responsible for the excavations.

(7) Hurst Meadows: A resident thanked the Council for the proposed parkland scheme.

(8) A resident thanked the Council for its hard work and the meeting applauded.

### **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 closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman

\*\*\*\*\*

---