



Annual Report of the Council 2011

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**Presented at the Annual Parish Meeting
7.30 pm Tuesday 17 May 2011
Village Centre, Hurstpierpoint**

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MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 18 May 2010 at 7.30 pm at the Village Centre, Trinity Road, Hurstpierpoint

Present:

Mr John Lowman (Chairman of Council)

7 Parish Councillors

1 District Councillor

1 County Councillor

Sgt Simon Alexander (Sussex Police)

The Clerk, Deputy Clerk, the two Assistant Clerks and the Parish Maintenance Officer

38 Members of the public

Apologies were received from 3 Parish Councillors.

1. Introduction by the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed those present and introduced the councillors attending the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19 May 2009

The Minutes were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Annual Report of the Council 2009/10

The Chairman presented the Annual Report for the Year 2009/10. He laid particular stress on the forthcoming process of strategic planning in Mid Sussex, its impact on the Parish and the prospect of significant planning application being likely in the next few months.

4. Financial Report of the Council

The Clerk to the Council presented the audited Annual Accounts for the Year 2008/09 and the provisional draft Accounts for the Year 2009/10, and took questions from the Meeting.

5. Sussex Police - a review of operations

Sgt Simon Alexander presented a review of operations in the Parish for the Year 2009/10. It was reported that there were 1976 reported crimes in the District in the year to April 2010 and the clear-up rate was in the range 25 to 30%. The reported crimes were down 20% on the previous year, although there had been a slight increase in house burglaries, up to 70 in the year. There had been a recent very rapid rise in metal theft, including lead from roofs, but the Police were closely following the situation. Sgt Alexander took questions from the Meeting.

6. Parish Plan - "We want your views..."

The meeting received a presentation from the Clerk on the consultation process for the new Parish Plan to run for the period 2011-16. Reference was made to the recent questionnaire "21 Questions" which was sent to every household in the Parish, and a good number had already been returned. Also, a fuller questionnaire, "We want your views" had been issued to around 30 local groups and organisations. It was intended to review the responses and issue a proposed Plan at the end of 2010. In response to a question the Clerk agreed that any future Plan would benefit from an annual review and update, although it was agreed that the formal questionnaire process should only take place every few years.

7. Open forum for the public

The Chairman took open questions from the meeting. Matters raised included progress on the High Street improvements in Hurstpierpoint, time limits on the District Council Trinity Road carpark, the introduction of cycleways, streetlights on Wickham Hill, a request for a 30 mph "flashing" sign in Sayers common, and the concerns about lack of places in the Reception class at St Lawrence Primary School.

8. 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 9.08 pm.

Chairman

2. Chairman's Report (2010 text follows)

The last year has once again proved to be most challenging.

Our Clerk, Stephen Hoyles, has now fully established himself in his role. He has been very active in all those major issues affecting the Parish and, with the support of Jo Kearns, has ensured that the day-to-day activities are undertaken in an efficient manner.

Roberta Taylor, after a period of illness, returned to work in a new capacity as Assistant Clerk and we wish her a continued full recovery. Charlotte Kempson has also been appointed as Assistant Clerk and is providing valuable office support and Malcolm Ulhorn and Richard Lechmere continue to provide maintenance work on all land and property owned by the Parish Council.

My thanks go to all those in the office, my Vice Chairman, John Wilkinson, and all Councillors for their hard work and support throughout the year. Also to the two Councillors who retired during year, John Grant on health grounds after many years as a diligent and hardworking Planning Chairman and Alex Sampson due to other commitments. They have been replaced by Matthew Stokes for Hurstpierpoint and Malcolm Heather for Sayers Common.

I would also like to thank Peter Griffiths, our County Councillor, who continues to work extremely hard on the Parish's behalf, and our District Councillors, Suzanna Kemp, Gina Field and Jack Callaghan, who have ensured that the Parish's voice has been heard at District level.

Unfortunately, Gina Field has had to resign for health reasons and good wishes go to her for a speedy recovery. I am pleased, however, to welcome our recently elected District Councillor, Anna Defilippo, and would like to congratulate her on her success at the recent elections.

The Community Partnership provided the groundwork for the Hurstpierpoint Transportation Plan and engineering design proposals are currently being processed by West Sussex County Council. We are advised that budget provision for implementation remains, at the present time, in the works programme for 2011. The Partnership has also been heavily involved in pursuing a Community Building project. Through the hard work of Michael Olszewski and Norman Cheesmur all the necessary funding was put in place but unfortunately planning permission for a site in Willow Way was refused. The Partnership is now reviewing all options open to them to provide these much needed worthwhile facilities.

Hurst Society, with the District Council, has been very busy carrying out an appraisal of the three conservation areas in Hurstpierpoint. Proposals have been put forward for enhancing these areas including some minor boundary changes. Once adopted, these proposals will form planning policy and practice to preserve and enhance their unique characteristics. We are grateful to the Society for their professional approach in the work undertaken by them.

The Hurst Festival, the St Lawrence Fair and the Danny fireworks display were once again highly successful events. All those involved are to be congratulated as are the many people who are involved with groups and organisations that work to make this Parish such an attractive and friendly place to live.

In the second half of this evening's meeting you will hear from Stephen on the subject of the revised Parish Plan. We need your views to establish the key areas that we should focus on over the coming five years.

One matter of serious concern continues to be the development threat to the Parish.

The District Council's Core Strategy proposals have been put on hold and they will now not be finalised until 2011. As a direct result of this deferment and in the absence of a clear strategic policy, there is an ever increasing exposure from developers keen to build on our surrounding countryside.

In addition, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which seeks to address the shortfall of housing sites over the next 5 years is a current document sitting within the District Council which, amongst others, outlines two significant sites in Hurstpierpoint which the Planners consider suitable for development. These are the land immediately to the north of Little Park Farm for 250 dwellings and land at Highfield Drive for 50 dwellings.

Whilst the Parish Council accepts that some modest increase in homes is both necessary and desirable to maintain the wellbeing and vibrancy of the Parish, we consider these proposals to be unsustainable in size and location and would impact detrimentally on the surrounding countryside and rural nature of the village.

It will remain extremely important therefore for us to continue to work closely with our County and District Councillors to ensure that the voice of the Parish is properly heard and our local interests protected.

John Lowman – Chairman of Council

3. Reports of the Chairmen of the Committees

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

I was delighted to be asked to Chair the Community Affairs Committee over the last twelve months. A thank you to my predecessor, Greg Driver, for his hard work.

Particular thanks must also go to Matthew Stokes, Vice-Chairman, and Roberta Taylor, Assistant Clerk, who is responsible for much of the Committee's administration.

The Committee has been fairly busy over the year. Some of the projects and issues we have been considering are:

Grants and Donations - The Committee invites applications from community groups for grants and donations. These are made twice yearly, with the objective of providing funding to local organisations, which are often run on a largely voluntary basis, for the benefit of the Parish. Such donations are always greatly received.

St. Lawrence 700 - The Committee is working with local groups including Hurst Society and St. Lawrence Fair Committee to establish a permanent commemoration in the form of a piece of sculpture, designed and constructed by a local artist, for the 700th anniversary of the granting of the Fair's Royal Charter. There will be public consultation on the final designs in due course.

Policing - The Committee has been working closely with our local policing team. Through the Neighbourhood Panel, the Committee has an opportunity to take an active involvement in addressing the policing issues that matter to the community. We have a new PCSO, Danny McLeod, who the Committee is looking forward to working with in the future. There will be a full report on policing at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Christmas Lights - Following on from the introduction of the lights in 2009, this year we were able to offer an increased display. The lights, which are part funded by the Council, have been warmly welcomed by the village, and have become a focal point of our High Street at Christmas time.

Environment Day - In conjunction with Action in Rural Sussex (AIRS), the Committee organised the 'Environment Day' in March. This free event involved a number of presentations and stalls from local

businesses and community groups on subjects ranging from renewable energy and waste to beekeeping and local produce. The event was well attended and the Committee is already looking at organising similar events in the future.

Village Market - As a result of the popularity of a similar event in Hassocks, The HKD Transition Group approached the Council about running a monthly market in the village. The Committee discussed this, and agreed to a six month trial. The first market will take place in July. Full details will be published shortly.

Hurst Directory - The Committee was asked to consider whether they wanted to consider supporting this familiar publication. With a number of similar publications now available, and the decrease in advertising revenue available, it was decided that it was no longer in the Council's interest to continue supporting the Directory.

John Porter – Committee Chairman

SERVICES COMMITTEE (2010 text follows)

2009-10 has been a yet another very productive year for H&SC PC. The toilet facilities in Hurstpierpoint are now in ownership of the Parish Council and have undergone much needed improvement. A local project manager led the project which saw both Trinity Road and Pitt Lane toilets being completely refurbished.

The permissive footpath around St. George's Chapel has been altered so that it no longer runs through Chapel land. A new gate has been installed in the flint wall and the new entrance to the permissive footpath links through the future cemetery ground round into the Millennium Garden. In addition to this, a handrail was installed by the steps on the eastern side of the St. George's future cemetery ground.

Following on from the Arboricultural Survey we instructed last year, we have undertaken the first stage of works on some of the 171 trees identified in the ownership of the council. This was in accordance of our proactive plan to enable us to ensure all our trees are safe and healthy.

We are delighted to report that the prolonged issue of certain 24 hour burning street lights within the parish was finally resolved this year. This matter was settled shortly after tendering and changing our street light electrical contracted supplier.

Along with these large projects we continually endeavour to improve our parish with small improvements. Such projects include the recent refurbishment of the dovecote in the village garden; as well as the installation of the smart rustic fence on the eastern side of the garden, which helps protect the rose bed bank; refreshing the play area in South Avenue recreation ground; and new dog bins including larger capacity dog bins where demands call for it. We have also made the decision to have a contingency plan which will see a provision of salt grit located within the parish, as and when the parish council sees fit to call upon in the event of snow and freezing weather.

I would like to acknowledge the good work of both Malcolm Uhlhorn, our maintenance officer and Richard Lechmere, our cemetery officer. We thank them for their valued contribution in ensuring our parish continues to be the beautiful and much loved community we all enjoy sharing.

Rebecca Hair – Committee Chairman

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (2010 text follows)

Planning Applications: The Committee considered 136 planning applications during the year. We supported or recommended for approval 124 of these (Some with conditions), objected to 9 and provided no comment to 3.

Three controversial issues were:-

- i) The Willow Tree Hub which the Council supported in principle;
- ii) The Article 4 Directive for the Danny Parkland; and
- iii) The change of use to a restaurant (Fish and Chip).

Of those considered by the Parish Council, the Planning Authority agreed with 89% of these recommendations.

Housing and Core Strategy: The Core Strategy has been put on hold until after the General Election. Following discussions with Mid-Sussex District Council, Burgess Hill Town Council and Hassocks Parish Council the most likely option is to locate the bulk of the new housing north of the A2300 link road. The Parish Council has also been concerned about the Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessment (SHLAA) and the number of houses suggested for various sites. The Parish Council accepts that some modest levels of development will be necessary in our Parish up to the year 2026 but it should be to meet the needs of local people (Those with family connections or work locally).

South Downs National Park: The National Park came into existence on 1st April 2010. The new National Park Authority (NPA) will work with the existing South Downs Joint Committee until 1st April 2011 when it will take full control. The NPA is the planning Authority for the Park area but could delegate some of the planning decisions back to the existing Planning Authorities. Some of the land south of the main built up area of Hurstpierpoint Village is in the Park. The expected increase in the number of visitors to the area should provide additional custom for local businesses and traders.

Landscape and Biodiversity Study: The survey is continuing.

Rodney Jackson – Acting Chairman

4. List of Councillors and Officers of the Council

Councillors:

1. Mr John Lowman (Chairman)
2. Mr Michael Avery
3. Mr Roy Dagger
4. Mr Greg Driver
5. Miss Rebecca Hair
6. Mr Malcolm Heather (joined Council 15 April 2010)
7. Mr Rodney Jackson
8. Mr David Jeanes (joined Council 17 June 2010)
9. Mr John Porter
10. Mr Shaun Revell
11. Mr Bob Sampson
12. Mrs Helen Sell
13. Mrs Julia Shorrocks
14. Mr Matthew Stokes
15. Mr John Wilkinson (Vice-Chairman)

Council Officers:

Mr Stephen Hoyles – Clerk to the Council
Mrs Jo Kearns - Deputy Clerk to the Council
Mrs Roberta Taylor (Assistant Clerk)
Mrs Charlotte Kempson (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Cliff Everest (Parish Maintenance Officer)
Mr Richard Lechmere (Cemetery Officer)

Communication:

All Councillors and Officers can be contacted through the Parish Office:

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