

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 21 May 2019 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
2 Mid Sussex DC ward Members
The Clerk and 5 members of staff
22 Members of the public

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Joy Dennis (WSCC) and Cllr Colin Trumble (MSDC).

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 22 May 2018: The Minutes were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Annual Report of the Council 2018/19: The Chairman Stephen Hand presented the Annual Report for the Year 2018/19. The Council had another busy year, with important projects taken forward, in particular:

- Opening the new Court Bushes Community Hub at Willow Way. In partnership with MSDC as landlords, the Parish Council had just secured a long lease on the building, following its refurbishment, and it would shortly be accepting its first community users.
- Establishing the Hurst Meadows parkland areas as a valuable parish amenity. All 50 Ac of the meadows and ancient woodland had now been acquired. Special thanks were noted for members of the Hurst Meadows Advisory Board for their commitment and diligence.
- Installing new 'Gateways' around Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common
- Developing a Community Highway Scheme to manage traffic speeds and parking in Cuckfield Road, which had now been lodged with the Highway Authority WSCC for consideration.
- Supporting Community initiatives in Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common
- Completing the replacement of all of the 137 street lights that owned by the Council with more energy efficient ones

For the coming year it was expected that new play equipment would be installed at the Reeds Lane Recreation Ground in Sayers Common, and that further investigations would be made into providing a network of cyclepaths around the Parish, including a connection from Sayers Common, through to Hassocks. It was also intended that encouragement would be given to WSCC to continue to improve broadband speeds in rural areas.

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, Rodney Jackson and Bob Sampson, and to John Lowman as Chairman of the Policy Working Group. The Chairman noted with sadness the loss of Councillor Amanda Geel in December and said that the community would particularly miss her energy and enthusiasm for many aspects of the environment. The Council thanked retiring members Rosemary Burns and Steve Whitehead for their years of dedicated service, and welcomed new members to the Council. Special thanks were also noted for members Claire Majsai for arranging the popular Hurst Meadows 'walkabouts' and to Malcolm Llewellyn for chairing the Court Bushes Working Group, which had been responsible for delivering the new Community Hub.

During the year the Council had said farewell to assistant clerk Charlotte Kempson, following 9 years in the Parish Office, and welcomed new assistant clerks Helen Valler and Barbara Scorer. Nick Sinclair had been promoted to Facilities Manager and Hamish Raby had joined the team as new Maintenance Officer. The Chairman advised that the Clerk Stephen Hoyles would be retiring later in the year following nearly 11 years in the post, and thanks were offered to him for his service.

4. Financial Report of the Council: The Clerk to the Council presented the audited Annual Accounts for the Year 2017/18, the unaudited Accounts for the Year 2018/19, and the revenue and capital expenditure budget for 2019/20. In 2018/19 the Council had a surplus of £18,000, taking the total funds to £257,000. The General Fund was about £88,000 and the remainder as earmarked reserves, mainly for the ongoing maintenance of Hurst Meadows. 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 £73,800. Further sums were due in the new financial year. For 2019/20 the Council had increased the Council Tax by 5% 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. The slightly higher increase was to pay for the expected running costs of the Court Bushes Community Hub.

5. Court Bushes Community Hub. Councillor Malcolm Llewellyn introduced this project to the meeting. The building reverted to landlords Mid Sussex District Council following the vacating by the former Ex-servicemen's Club in 2017. The Parish Council then worked with MSDC to design and implement a refurbished building as a new community centre. MSDC had invested considerable funds, including those coming from a fire damage insurance claim, and the Parish Council was investing nearly £50,000 in completing and furnishing the building and its surrounding grounds.

The centre offered three zones: a large function room, a smaller club lounge, and a nursery dedicated to a pre-school group. Each zone had its own entrance, kitchen facilities and toilets, such that three different groups or activities could take place simultaneously. A number of local groups were now committed to taking sessions at the Hub, including the Melting Pot café, dementia café, youth club, food bank, as well as a wide range of other activity and meeting groups.

The Parish Council had now signed the lease with MSDC, an Open Day was being planned for Saturday 1 June 2019, and a new website www.hurstpierpointvillagehalls.org was available. In due course it was intended to form an Advisory Group of regular users, to give advice and suggestions on the day to day running of the Hub.

A question from meeting was raised about the future of the Ex-servicemen's Club, and it was explained that they had been offered use of the Club Lounge area, including some dedicated storage for their drinks, and their response was still awaited.

6. Community Initiatives: Cllr Clair Majsai introduced this topic, explaining that the Parish Council had carried out a number of activities during the year, including:

- Grant support to community organisations (Hurst Players, St Lawrence Fair, Hurst Festival)
- Grant to Sayers Common Village Society for tree planting
- Health & wellbeing – new NHS local plan, ante-natal care, walkabouts, grants to charities (St Catherines, Cancervive, Victim Support, etc)
- 'Dementia Awareness' Initiative
- Working Group on Sayers Common Reeds Lane play area
- Working Group on Cycle Path network
- Public walkabouts around Hurst Meadows.

7. Hurst Meadows: Council Vice-chairman presented the Council's progress in acquiring the meadows and woodland and making it available to the local community. All the 50 Ac of meadowland and ancient woodland 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 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. The indigenous Sussex apple orchard of 40 local species had been planted in early 2019 and special thanks were made to local resident Martin Sadler for his expertise and time and effort in bringing this about. It was noted that the orchard had been temporarily fenced while the saplings established. Public 'walkabouts' had taken place on New Years Day 2019, and again on Easter Monday, at which a large number of families and children attended, and were shown the extent of the Meadows.

8. Village Centre: The Chairman advised the meeting that the volunteer trustees of the Hurstpierpoint Village Centre Association had been responsible for its day to day running for many years, but were now finding the obligations of compliance and regulations to be very demanding. There was also the challenge of finding suitable

successors to join the trustees, as older members retired. For this reason the trustees had approached the Parish Council in 2018 requesting that the Council took over the charity and become its sole trustee. The matter had been discussed in detail over many months, and the Council were very keen to see the facility continue in its present form, and agreed to take on the role. The Charities Commission had been informed and Action in Rural Sussex had advised on the process. The registered Charity would continue in its current form, including its financial resources, but the Council would be the trustee and responsible for the day-to-day operation.

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

(1) There were continuing problems with HGVs in College Lane, and could signs be added? The Chairman advised that this was the responsibility of West Sussex County Council as Highway Authority, and the matter had been discussed on many occasions. However, it was thought that additional signs would not alleviate the problem.

(2) St Georges footpath can be very muddy during the winter, particularly around St Georges Green and also the entrance into the Meadows, so could some surfacing be added? The Chairman confirmed that the matter would be investigated.

(3) The reinstatement of utilities work in Cuckfield road, after the welcome resurfacing, was sometimes very poor.

(4) The road junction around Chalkers Lane and Cuckfield Road had damage to the road edge. The Chairman advised that the WSCC 'Love West Sussex' website was a useful means of reporting road damage.

(5) Were new carparking areas being found, and could the hammerhead at the top of Brown Twins Road have restricted parking? The Chairman advised that no new carparks were planned, but that better and more efficient use of existing on-street parking was being arranged, for example in South Avenue. The matter of the hammerhead had been considered but was not thought to justify restricted parking.

(6) The timing of the traffic lights at Stonepound Crossroads was against east-west traffic and presented a problem.

10. 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 9.15 pm.

Chairman
