



**ANNUAL HENFIELD PARISH MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 1st MARCH 2021 AT 7.00pm
VIA ZOOM CONFERENCING, LIVE STREAMED TO FACEBOOK**

Present: Cllrs M Eastwood (Chairman), E Goodyear, A Rickard, M Morgan, C Simmonds, A Sharp, J Jones, G Perry, J Potts and A Donoghue.

In attendance: Mr K Wright (Clerk), Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager), Mrs B Samrah (Parish Administrator) Cllr L Barnard (West Sussex County Council-WSCC) and 18 members of the public.

MINUTES

1. WELCOME BY CHAIRMAN OF HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public and summarised the agenda for the evening. He then explained that questions will be welcomed at the end of the session, and that the Zoom chat box could be used for this purpose. The Chairman then briefly reviewed last year's meeting.

2. COVID 19 RESPONSE

The Chairman explained the response to the first lockdown was to call together some of our community leaders and implement a plan. The Henfield Haven was converted into the Henfield Helpline and became a distribution centre for food and medicines. Parish Council resources were diverted to support these efforts and volunteers delivered a Helpline leaflet to every home. The Parish Office moved from face-to-face meetings and enquiries to Zoom meetings and more use of phone and email.

250 volunteers came forward and during the lockdowns many of them have provided lifeline support to 500 people who have needed to self-isolate. The High Street shops also stepped up to the challenge and were able to keep local supply lines open and worked hard to achieve social distancing. He asked that the High Street is remembered when things go back to something normal. Community spirit shone through during this crisis and he commented it was great to see the children's messages to the older folks isolated at home or in our care homes. Thanks to a team effort the impact of COVID has been limited in the community.

The Chairman went on to explain that same spirit has been applied to the vaccination programme, where Storrington Medical Centre were one of the first in

West Sussex to start vaccinating. This included our residents. Thanks have been extended to them and now to Henfield Medical Centre, which has also worked hard to bring the vaccines into the village. To date 4,373 residents registered at Henfield Medical Centre have received the vaccine. Henfield Medical Centre has been responsible for vaccinating 4,020 people from Steyning and Henfield over a period of 12 days, delivering an average of 335 doses per day. Parish Councillors have been helping to book hundreds of appointments and volunteers and the Friends of the Medical Centre have been marshalling the vaccination efforts and providing transport, allowing the Medical Centre staff to concentrate on the clinical aspects of their work.

3. PLANNING ISSUES

The Chairman explained that both the Neighbourhood Plan and Horsham Local Plan have been delayed due to COVID. It is hoped that the Neighbourhood Plan will go to referendum on the 6th of May 2021. If these sites are delivered, along with the additional ones from the Local Plan, there is likely to be a further 370 homes in the Parish in the period up to 2036. He reminded everyone to vote.

The site decisions from Horsham's Local Plan are expected in the next few weeks. It was notable that 42% of all the letters received about the Horsham Local Plan Strategic Sites were about Mayfield and only 36 of the 1,744 comments received were in favour of the site. The Chairman thanked all that sent a letter or email.

The Chairman then explained that the Government issued a White Paper entitled 'Planning for the Future,' which the Parish Council along with many others felt shifted the decision on sites too far in favour of the developer and in fact significantly reduced the role of local communities and Parish Councils in decision making. Supported by our MP and the District Council, the Parish Council pushed back with sound logical arguments and this appears to have forced a rethink to take place.

Finally, the Chairman commented that Fairfax, who lost their appeal against the refusal to develop land at Sandy Lane, are back and mounting a further appeal. He asked all to note that getting the Neighbourhood Plan made is important because it will give protection against these kind of speculative developers as well as bringing investment through CIL funds into the parish.

4. ACHIEVEMENTS

The Chairman listed the following achievements in the last year.

- A successful Save the Haven campaign allowed it to reopen on 17th July thanks to the generosity of our community and the commitment of the staff, volunteers, customers and their carers. The Haven won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (MBE).
- The Public Conveniences were given a long overdue refurbishment and the bus shelter repainted. Sadly, in response to some vandalism the Parish Council will be installing a new shutter and CCTV.

- The Public Library was refurbished.
- The path to the Youth Club was given time/light sensor-controlled lighting to help its users navigate in the dark.
- The Henfield Hall received a new water-tight roof, partly funded by £24,000 of S106 developer money.
- The Henfield Leisure Centre received a new floor in its main sports hall, partly funded by a further £24k of S106 developer money.
- A covered cycle rack was installed at Henfield Leisure Centre and the car park has been resurfaced.
- The Parish Council completed the works to open the extension to Henfield Cemetery which is now available for use.
- Henfield Library Car Park has been completely reconstructed.
- The Parish Council launched two Walking Trails.
- The community launched two new initiatives, the River Adur Restoration group which will work with a Biodiversity group and the Safe Routes group.
- The Parish Council launched its new much easier to use website, now has its own Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram accounts and has started to 'live stream' Council Meetings.

5. FINANCES

Cllr Goodyear used Powerpoint slides to show the latest monthly budget report and explained that this is available to view on the website. She explained the concept of the precept and noted that the total budget for this year is £298,056 which equates to 27p per day. This is allocated against three committees; Finance, Risk and Change Governance which covers staff salaries and all the cost of running the Council, including rent, insurance and legal costs. Village Amenities Committee which maintains key infrastructure such as the public conveniences, bus shelter, cemetery and street lighting. And the Recreation and Open Spaces Committee which maintains the three playing fields, children's play areas and the local climate and biodiversity action plan.

She then explained that the Parish Council also looks ahead and puts funds aside into reserves in order to be able to fund future projects and spread the cost of items such as the works officers van which will need replacing in the next three years. She also explained that all the Parish Council's accounts are rigorously monitored and audited, both on a monthly basis and with two separate formal annual audits. Six years of accounts are available for inspection by the public in the Parish Office and the previous year on the website.

The Chairman then thanked the following people:

Kevin Wright, the Parish Clerk and his team, and a particular thank you to the two new staff members Rebecca Grantham and Belinda Samrah who joined just as COVID hit and have thrown themselves into all the challenges with great energy and enthusiasm.

Parish Councillors who are all volunteers but who work together to make decisions and do what they believe to be the right things for our community.

District Councillors Mike Morgan and Josh Potts and West Sussex County Councillor Lionel Barnard for stepping up to fight Henfield's corner when needed.

MP Andrew Griffith who has proven both receptive and responsive when support has been needed, notably for Save the Haven, for fighting planning demons and in support of our Medical Centre and bringing the vaccine to Henfield.

Finally thank you to the whole community for everything the people of Henfield have endured to get us through this difficult period.

6. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION

A resident expressed concern that Community Speedwatch is not currently operating and that enthusiasm has waned. She asked whether the Parish Council could recruit 2-4 new volunteers as it is preferable that they work in pairs.

Action Point: The Clerk to make contact with the current organiser of Community Speedwatch.

A representative from the Henfield Ladybirds thanked the Councillors for their hard work and asked for an update on the two trees recently felled in the library car park. Cllr Goodyear explained that she, Cllr Jones, Cllr Morgan and the tree warden had met with the Horsham District Project Manager who, following a thorough investigation, concluded that the damage being caused to drains by the roots was too significant and that there was no other option but to remove the trees. She added that all were very disappointed but understood it was unavoidable. Cllr Morgan added his thanks to Liz Taylor for carrying out the planting in two of the three beds, assisted by funding from Horsham District Council (HDC). The Ladybirds representative offered to assist with the third and will liaise with the Parish Office. She also explained that the Ladybirds are looking for a local charity to support.

The Henfield Museum Curator asked whether the Parish Council were aware of the total number of deaths caused by the pandemic in Henfield. The Clerk responded that we are not as the current figures only show for the Horsham District, but that he will look into it further. The resident also commented that he felt Budgens could do more to assist with social distancing in the shop. The Chairman noted that they had worked very hard to prepare shopping orders for delivery to local people self-isolating.

Peter Bates then clarified that it was the 30-40 Link drivers, not Friends of Henfield Medical Centre that had assisted with patient transportation to Storrington, and that they have continued to work all through the pandemic.

The Chairman then thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

Meeting Closed at 7.33pm.