

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting of Henfield Parish Council held on Tuesday 6th June 2023 at 7.00pm in The Henfield Hall.

Present: Cllr J Jones (Chairman), M Eastwood, G Perry, N Farrell, D Grossmith, D Jemmett, R Kendall, S Leader, A May, M Morgan, R Shaw and C Simmonds.

In attendance: Mr K Wright (Clerk), Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager) and five members of the public.

MINUTES

1. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Cllr Simmonds declared a personal interest in items 8 and 9.

Cllr Jones declared a personal interest in items 8 and 9, as a trustee of the Clarkes Mead Trust (due to being the Council's representative on the Trust). She explained that, having taken advice from the West Sussex Association of Local Councils, she would stand down from chairing those two items. She would not join the discussion or vote on the motions, although would not be required to leave the room. Cllr Morgan, as the senior Councillor, had agreed to Chair the meeting for these two items. He is no longer treasurer of the Clarkes Mead Trust. This was all agreed by Council.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Cllr Goodyear.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 9th MAY 2023**

Approved; signed and dated by the Chairman.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

a) Parish Council Vacancies.

As agreed at the previous meeting, the two vacancies have been advertised with a deadline for applications of 23rd June. The situation was confirmed to the three applicants, one of whom has now withdrawn their application. Two further application forms have been requested from members of the public.

5. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman drew attention to the planned road works to replace gas mains on Nep Town Road from the junction with Broomfield Road to London Road. This is planned from 26th June for up to fifteen weeks. It appears that local businesses and residents have not been informed directly, although the information is available on local signage, WSCC and one.network websites.

Action Point: The Clerk to attempt to find out more details.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

One member of the public explained that she was at the meeting to observe an item which was relevant to the Henfield Community Partnership (HCP).

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

6. **WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT**

A report was circulated prior to the meeting. The Chairman mentioned the main headings of the report, including childhood immunisations, hosts needed for Ukrainian refugees, the

dangers of discarding e-scooters, the waste management survey and summary of volunteers week.

7. **HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT**

Cllr Eastwood reported that, as a new Horsham District Councillor, he had attended several sessions of training in May and that a new cabinet and leader at Horsham District Council (HDC) have been elected. He is sitting on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as Licensing and Planning South with Cllr Potts. He is also sitting on the Joint Commons Committee, alongside Cllr Potts and Cllr Noel. Discussion on the Local Plan is starting again; there will be meetings with developers and site visits. He mentioned a recent Horsham Matters report that found that there has been a dramatic increase in the usage of food banks in the District, from 381 food parcels in 2021 to 2,400 in January to March 2023 alone. 900 of these were for children. It was noted that the majority of users are working, but on low incomes, and that access to support, isolation and mental health problems are also a concern for these residents. Eighteen more weekly food bank sessions have been introduced and there is a mobile food bank visiting smaller villages. Cllr Eastwood had assisted with resolving an issue which the Planning Department had with the cladding on the new scout building and is currently working with HCP to agree a location for the electric vehicle charging points in the Coopers Way car park; installation work had been halted as the chosen location would have blocked access to the electricity supply for the monthly market. It was noted that there had been no advance notice or detailed consultation about this work. Cllr Eastwood has also begun work on a Playing Field Strategy for Henfield and has invited members of the Recreation and Open Spaces Committee to work with him and HDC to anchor some agreement for the current playing fields as well as potential green spaces to be made available in new planned developments.

An email from the Head of Economic Development at HDC was circulated prior to the meeting, explaining the current situation with regards to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPS) in that she strongly encourages that the majority of the £115,000 funding allocated is spent on the Leisure Centre project to create a mezzanine floor above the Kids Club. The email also explained that the funding is for capital allocation only, must be complementary to local businesses, not in competition, and must have a safeguarding focus for 10 to 15 year-olds. There would be no support for a High Street location as this would result in loss of retail or commercial property. Cllr Eastwood stressed the importance of securing this funding, commenting that the next nine months would need to see a detailed design and the following 12 months to focus on delivery. Due to the amount of the grant, full Council will be asked to make a decision at the July meeting, when firm costings are expected to be available. A full response to HDC can then be sent. A member of the public pointed out that as joint signatories to the original application, HCP would also need to have an input. There may be some residual funding for other projects such as the Henfield Club for 16 to 19 year-olds. Cllr Morgan asked why the funding was to be spent on the Leisure Centre rather than the Youth Club which is struggling financially, also questioning whether the new facility was wanted and would be used by that age group, as he had thought the request had been for a High Street location. He added that HDC have not been able to prevent the loss of retail outlets in the High Street and that there are already several businesses located there, such as fitness and pilates studios, which probably do not contribute much to footfall. Cllr Eastwood explained that the working group had scored all the potential locations against agreed criteria and the Leisure Centre had scored the highest, especially as they have DBS-checked staff and are already open after school and in the holidays. He added that the Leisure Centre project supports local businesses and fits the economic strategy for Henfield better.

Cllr Farrell responded that she felt disappointed and deflated with the decision from HDC. Extensive research had been carried out by the Children and Young People Committee (CYP) over the past year, speaking to children of all year groups at Steyning Grammar School, at the two successful proof-of-concept events at the Henfield Club and at Goodness Café, at the skate park and taking advice from Sussex Police and Sussex Clubs for Young People, all of whom recommend and support a drop-in High Street location for an after-school facility for secondary aged children, who get off the school bus in the High Street and many of whom go home to empty houses. She believes this is not the case for children who attend St Peter's

Primary School, who are already catered for and attend the very well-run and supported Kids Club at the Leisure Centre. At a meeting with HDC in November 2022, there was no mention that commercial property could not be used, and the Committee had also been led to believe that the funding could be used for running costs and staffing, not just for capital spend. She questioned whether HDC's position is correct, as the government prospectus implies that a mix of revenue and capital spend is acceptable. She reiterated that the CYP Committee fully support the Leisure Centre and would like to support the lowering of the ceiling in the current Kids Club. However, she did not believe that a separate upstairs room would be popular and did not think that the Leisure Centre had any research or evidence to suggest that it would be used by the older age group, particularly as it seems that they will have to charge for entry. She added that as far as the CYP Committee were concerned, a final recommendation had not been agreed, only that the CYP Committee would support paying half of a structural survey cost in order to obtain a quotation from the Leisure Centre for further consideration. Despite this the Leisure Centre seem to have the impression that the funding is secured and have informed their staff that it is going ahead. She stated that at no time had she confirmed via minutes or otherwise that the funding would be spent in the High Street, only that it is her personal opinion that the preferred location for this age group is the High Street and she hopes that the Committee will continue to strive towards this goal.

Cllr Simmonds commented that he was surprised at the apparent decision taken as the Committee have been focused on being the voice of young people and supporting a High Street location as requested by them. Cllr Eastwood explained that a working group had been set up including members of the CYP Committee, HCP and himself and that the working group can only make recommendations to the Committee and full Council. He added that he had been called to meet with HDC as they had concerns that the progress report sent on the 28th April did not seem to have a clear focus. Cllr Leader commented that there appear to have been some procedural problems and misunderstandings, since what Cllr Eastwood presented had left the CYP Committee feeling uninformed and disconnected. To enable the meeting to move on and cover the rest of the agenda the Chairman suggested that there needs to be a separate meeting of the members of both the CYP Committee and the UKSPF Working Group to agree a way forward. It was also noted by Council that the CYP Committee do have a budget for premises rental and staffing costs, so a High Street project is still possible in the future, although any project other than the Leisure Centre seems to be incompatible with the guidelines set out by HDC.

8. **MOTION: TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF £20K TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE CLARKES MEAD TRUST, SUBJECT TO THE DELIVERY OF A WATERTIGHT BUILDING AT THE HENFIELD SCOUT COMMUNITY CENTRE AND THE GARFIELD WESTON FUNDING BEING AGREED AND THE LOAN NOTE ISSUE HAVING BEEN APPROVED**

As discussed under item 1, Cllr Morgan took over as Chair for this and the following item. A report was circulated prior to the meeting. A member of the public explained that the building would be watertight by July as the windows, doors and external cladding will be complete by then. The contractors are very obliging and have agreed to wait for payment if necessary. Further funding of £85,000 has been received, including a £50,000 loan which the member of the public has offered his own home as security against if necessary. He added that the building is intended for community use and that scout groups will pay to hire it, like any other user. The Centre could generate £50,000 p/a income once operational. The Clerk stated that it is still unclear when the £30,000 funding would be paid by Garfield Weston and added that the £50,000 grant from Rampion is still being pursued. He added that the £20,000 already allocated to the project would be funded by £15,000 from General Reserves and £5,000 from Community Buildings Reserve. It was confirmed that the five conditions from Rampion have now been met and the Trust are hopeful that they will revert to approving the application which had been granted before criteria were changed. Cllr Eastwood commented that there is a policy already in place to allow the release of funds at this stage, subject to the usual due diligence process and documentary evidence being supplied. However, it was felt that the motion should be worded more strongly, to include written assurance from the trustees.

Therefore the wording of the motion was slightly altered and it was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Morgan, **SECONDED** by Cllr Eastwood and **VOTED 10 IN FAVOUR WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS** to approve payment of £20,000 to the trustees of the Clarkes Mead Trust, subject to **formal written confirmation from the trustees** of a watertight building at the Henfield Scout Community Centre and **written confirmation from the trustees** that the Garfield Weston funding has been agreed and the loan note issue approved.

9. **MOTION: TO CONSIDER THE ALLOCATION OF AN ADDITIONAL £10K TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE CLARKES MEAD TRUST FROM THE COMMUNITY BUILDINGS RESERVE IN RESPECT OF THE HENFIELD SCOUT COMMUNITY CENTRE, WITH THE FUNDS NOT BEING RELEASED UNTIL WE HAVE CONFIRMATION THAT FUNDING TO MEET THE FIT-OUT COSTS ARE IN PLACE**

Following discussion under the previous item and with highlighted agreed amendment, it was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Morgan, **SECONDED** by Cllr Eastwood and **VOTED TEN IN FAVOUR WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS** to allocate an additional £10,000 to the trustees of the Clarkes Mead Trust from the Community Buildings Reserve in respect of the Henfield Scout Community Centre, with the funds not being released until receipt of **written confirmation from the trustees of the Clarkes Mead Trust** that funding to meet the fit out costs are in place.

It was recommended by Cllr Shaw that Council should expect to see professional project management in place for future projects.

Three members of the public left the meeting at 8.07pm.

10. **MOTION: REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT TO PROCEED WITH EXPLORATORY WORK RE THE POTENTIAL CREATION OF A LEASE FROM HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL TO HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE TANYARD BARN AND TO FACILITATE THE FUNDING OF A RESTORATION AND EXTENSION PROJECT**

A report was circulated prior to the meeting. A member of the Henfield Shedders explained that they are concerned that they do not have a long-term home for their group and many potential locations have proved unsuitable. They now propose a project to restore and extend the Tanyard Barn to its original footprint and create a working building to be used as a workshop and shared storage space with the Conservation Group and Works Officers. Further use for educational purposes and outreach work would also be considered. The project seems to exactly match the criteria for up to £75,000 funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund. HDC own the Tanyard Barn and are not eligible to apply for this funding, but the Parish Council would be eligible if HDC granted a lease. It is believed that HDC are likely to be supportive of the proposal as it would deal with the issue of a dilapidated building and they may be amenable to granting a long-term lease for a nominal rent. Cllr Morgan advised that the land is currently subject to a covenant, designating it as open space, that there may be difficulty with obtaining vehicular access, that mains drainage would need to be installed and that there can be difficulties in splitting a sub lease if there are multiple users. There may also be some noise concerns as the building is in a quiet conservation area and there will be legal costs associated with obtaining a lease. He added that he would not advise the Parish Council to take on a lease without planning permission being granted first. It was all agreed that planning permission should be obtained first, then a lease arranged and after that an application for funds made. Cllr Shaw added that he would assume that the Plans Advisory Committee would not comment on any potential application that they receive for this project. Cllr Perry commented that the motion is to approve exploratory work and that no commitment is needed at this stage.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to proceed with exploratory work re the potential creation of a lease from HDC to Henfield Parish Council for the Tanyard Barn and to facilitate the funding of a restoration and extension project.

11. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

(A) Finance, Risk & Change Governance

(a) Summary of £25,086.27 Expenditure from 1st May – 31st May 2023.
Noted by Council.

(b) Select Expenditure as the Monthly Random Audit Checks – May.
Cllr May selected LGPS.

(c) External Audit Update.

The Clerk confirmed that all of the documents for the External Audit have been submitted, including additional information such as minutes, asset register and bank statements, as the income and expenditure of the Council are both over £200,000. A report from the External Auditor is expected by September.

(B) Plans Advisory

Cllr Shaw reported that there had been some discussion on whether to agree to a without prejudice meeting with a developer in public or private in relation to a Neighbourhood Plan allocated site off Furners Lane. There is a Council policy in place that allows for a private meeting within strict guidelines; this is considered normal practice and a useful opportunity to ask questions and make requests relating to agreed priorities for the village, such as infrastructure requirements. Cllr May commented that, in the interest of openness and transparency, there was no good reason to exclude the public from such a meeting. It had been agreed to move forward with a private meeting at the last meeting of this Committee, and to also review the policy. However, as there had not been a vote the Chairman suggested that the Committee revisit the discussion at their next meeting.

Cllr Eastwood reminded the Committee that it would be appropriate to request that any contentious planning applications such as that at Southview Terrace should be decided by Committee at HDC, rather than by a delegated officer.

(C) Recreation & Open Spaces

Cllr Perry reported that the Committee were meeting the next day, but invited questions. There were none.

(D) Village Amenities

Cllr Morgan invited questions on recent minutes and noted that there had been a useful meeting with Sainsbury's, who had confirmed that there are currently access difficulties with taking deliveries at the rear of the store, but that this would be resolved in around four weeks.

(E) Children & Young People

Cllr Farrell reported that a bus has been booked to take young people to the Horsham Jobs Fair, that there is an upcoming meeting to discuss plans for the Skate Jam in July and that the Committee has received a grant of £600 from Sussex Police towards materials for the graffiti wall. She also reported that she has been approached by Cowfold Parish Council for advice and to share ideas for work with young people. She also confirmed that Sussex Clubs for Young People were unable to assist the Council with the recruitment of a Youth Coordinator, so the Committee will be pursuing that themselves. Cllr Simmonds reported that the BP Guild have donated £400 from the proceeds of the Coronation event to the Committee.

(F) Museum

Cllr Morgan invited questions on recent minutes. There were none.

(G) Joint Commons

Cllr Eastwood reported on a successful meeting with an HDC ranger, who has been allocated to assist with Henfield Commons. The Committee plan to meet in July.

12. **REPORTS FROM MEMBERS REPRESENTING COUNCIL ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

Cllr Jemmett reported that the Youth Club are in serious financial difficulty due to legal bills for the update to their constitution and energy bills. They are opening a café soon and are hoping for donations of outdoor bins and seating. The Chairman suggested they bring a proposal for support to Council.

Cllr Leader reminded council about the HCP/HDC event promoting the clubs and societies in the village on the 24th of June in the Henfield Hall and encouraged all to attend. Cllr Farrell will attend to represent the Council.

13. **PCSO & POLICE ACTIVITIES**

The Clerk commented that the Parish Office receives regular visits from the PCSO. He is currently investigating an assault that took place on Cagefoot Lane and has some leads following a social media appeal with a CCTV image.

The Chairman had attended a South Horsham District Police forum where there was discussion on neighbourhood policing including increasing police presence and the possibility of sharing office space at locations such as parish offices and fire stations, as an alternative to having a police station. Cllr Farrell commented that our PCSO has asked to use a proposed High Street location for young people as a base to have discussions and offer advice to them.

14. **ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Simmonds reported that the BP Guild would like to hold an annual fun day on the Rothery to involve the Parish Council and other village organisations. Next year this may be to commemorate the D-Day anniversary. There was general support for the suggestion.

Cllr Leader asked whether Councillors would be interested in attending an outdoor social event over the summer. The Chairman suggested she circulate some suggested dates.

15. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 4th July 2023.

Meeting Closed at 8.57pm.