

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

**Meeting of Henfield Parish Council
held on Tuesday 6th February 2024 at 7.00pm in The Henfield Hall.**

Present: Cllr E Goodyear (Chairman), J Jones, G Perry, C Simmonds, J Potts, D Jemmett, R Shaw, M Morgan, R Kendall and S Leader.

In attendance: Mr K Wright (Clerk) and Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager- OM), Cllr S Payne, (West Sussex County Council – WSCC) and two members of the public.

MINUTES

1. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

None.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Cllrs May and Grossmith.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9th JANUARY 2024**

Approved, signed and dated by the Chairman.

3. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Clerk confirmed that the precept request had been submitted to Horsham District Council (HDC) and that it has been put forward for payment in April.

4. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

A candidate for co-option, Fiona Ayres, explained that she had tried several times to become a Parish Councillor and that she believed that she had the necessary skills and experience to be of value to the Council.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

6. **MOTION: TO CONSIDER CO-OPTING UP TO TWO COUNCILLORS FROM THE APPLICATIONS RECENTLY RECEIVED**

Applications were received from five candidates for the two vacancies. The Clerk explained that each Councillor had two votes on the first round and that an absolute majority of votes was needed to co-opt. In the first round of voting Adrian Willard was successful. The candidate with the lowest number of votes was then removed from the list of four remaining and the Council voted again with one vote each. No absolute majority was achieved so the Chairman asked whether Council wished to vote again, to which they agreed. The candidate with the lowest number of votes was removed and Council voted again. Fiona Ayres was successful in achieving an absolute majority of votes.

Adrian Willard and Fiona Ayres were both duly co-opted to Council.

Action Point: The Clerk to contact the successful candidates to arrange for induction and completion of the necessary paperwork and to ask that they join the committees with vacancies until May.

Cllr Payne joined the meeting at 7.06pm

7. **WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT**

Cllr Payne reported that 3,300 residents responded to the WSCC budget consultation, the most demand for investment being in Highways and Transport. WSCC have reduced their funding gap from £45 million to £4.4 million but will still be raising Council Tax by the maximum permitted. She promoted the Wellbeing Programme and 'Be a Councillor' campaigns and confirmed that she continues to work on the reinstatement of the half-hourly number 17 bus service. She is also assisting Henfield residents with issues around the chicanes in Deer Park, care packages, flooding on the Common and at Woods Mill, traffic and parking issues at St Peter's School and transport for the ante-natal group.

Cllr Kendall asked about the financial stability of WSCC, given recent concerns around some councils being declared bankrupt. Cllr Payne replied that they spend £2 billion per year and currently have reserves of around £200 million, although most of those reserves are earmarked.

8. **HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT**

Cllr Potts reported that the next round of Green LEAP grants will be opening on the 2nd April. There are further details on the HDC website, including a video on how to apply. The budget for HDC will be voted on at the next meeting; Cabinet are recommending an increase in fees and charges such as parking. HDC have also approved a £10.8 million capital programme to include Council Tax support and achieving net zero. He was also pleased to report that HDC approved their Climate Action Strategy on 25th January.

9. **VACANCY FOR COUNCILLOR UPDATE**

The Clerk confirmed that there is one additional vacancy for a Parish Councillor, which is being advertised on the usual social media channels, BN5 and Parish Magazines. The deadline for applications is 15th March, therefore applications will be considered at the April Council meeting. He suggested, and it was agreed, that the candidates that were not successful today could put forward their applications again for this next vacancy, if they so wish.

10. **MOTION: TO REVIEW AND UPDATE THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

A draft was circulated prior to the meeting. The Chairman explained that the Finance Risk and Change Committee (FRC) had reviewed this policy and although it was considered fit for purpose, the Local Government Association guidance on using the Code of Conduct was added as a link. This guidance provides useful and practical examples on applying the Code in situations such as conflict of interest. Reference to working groups was also added.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Simmonds and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the Code of Conduct.

11. **HENFIELD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 5th MARCH 2024**

a) Annual Committee Reports & Bullet Points.

The Chairman reminded those who had not yet submitted their reports and bullet points for displays to do so as soon as possible. The presentations for the evening will be on the Community Fridge, the Year of Biodiversity, an update on the Electric Car Club and a progress report from the Youth Coordinator.

12. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

(A) **Finance, Risk & Change Governance**

Cllr Jones reported that the Committee have updated the Complaints procedure to adjust the members that will sit on the panel at various stages, in particular that any final appeal would be heard by Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council as well as one further Councillor not previously involved. Further details are available in FRC's most recent minutes.

(a) Summary of £27,126.76 Expenditure from 1st January – 31st January 2024.
Noted by Council

(b) Select Expenditure as the Monthly Random Audit Checks – January.
Cllr Simmonds selected Henfield Hall £1,920.00.

(B) Plans Advisory

(a) The Horsham Local Plan and Feedback from the Open Meeting on 1st February. Cllr Shaw reported that there were over 100 attendees at the meeting, which overall was well received. The main speakers were Steve Bailey from CPRH and Martin Kelland representing residents of New Hall Lane in Small Dole. Other attendees added comments on more specific points. The Committee have met to discuss further since this open meeting. It was felt that there are three options as follows:

1. To put forward an alternative site. This was dismissed as it was felt that there is not enough time before the 1st March deadline for representation and it was felt inappropriate without proper consultation.
2. Accept the proposed Local Plan as it is and await the outcome from the inspector.
3. Make a representation to HDC based on reasons for the previous rejections of the two sites, Sandgate Nurseries and land south of New Hall Lane in Small Dole and also to point out that Henfield is already delivering over and above the numbers agreed in the Neighbourhood Plan.

It was agreed that the third option is the most appropriate. The Committee will send a draft of their response to all Councillors for any additional comment prior to submitting to HDC. Cllr Shaw added that it is important that the Local Plan does not fail as this would leave Henfield open to speculative development.

(C) Recreation & Open Spaces

Cllr Perry reported that she was pleased to see that a water saving grant had been awarded to the Leisure Centre. She also reported that ROS are working with the Children and Young People Committee (CYP) on additional trees at the Kings Field play area; it is hoped that these will provide some shade in years to come. Work also continues on the trails and a walk for the late Malcolm Eastwood and the Year of Biodiversity.

(D) Village Amenities

Cllr Morgan reported that work continues on replacing the festive lighting for this year as well as continuing negotiations with the supplier of the failed cemetery lighting.

(E) Children & Young People

Cllr Leader reported that the Youth Coordinator had been very busy arranging skate park designs, some accessible play equipment for the Kings Field and visiting local youth hubs. She will also be visiting the Steyning Downland scheme to view their work and meet with their Youth Coordinator.

(F) Museum

Cllr Potts explained there has not been a recent meeting but invited any questions.

(G) Joint Commons

Cllr Perry reported that she is having discussions with SGN regarding gas mains work which is due to take place on the Common in September. There will be some fencing installed on the Tanyard Field in order to allow grazing of sheep. Some concern had been expressed regarding the recent works on Oreham Common, but she reassured everyone that this was being undertaken with guidance from the HDC rangers.

13. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS REPRESENTING COUNCIL ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Perry reported that she had recently attended a Cost of Living summit with HDC, which can provide useful data on numbers of residents in food poverty as well as with other issues. She had also attended a Climate Action Network meeting.

The Chairman reported that there had been a meeting with the Football Club to discuss terms for a new licence. Cllr Morgan will draw up a paper with details for Council to consider.

14. PCSO & POLICE ACTIVITIES

Nothing to report.

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

None.

16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 12th March 2024.

Meeting Closed 7.52pm.