

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

A meeting of the **Parish Council** will be held on **Tuesday 12 April 2016 at 7.30 pm** in the Council Chamber, Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks.

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES**
 - 1.1 To Accept Apologies for Absence.
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
 - 2.1 Disclosure by Councillors of personal interests in matters on the agenda, and whether the Councillor regards their interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
3. **MINUTES**
 - 3.1 To accept the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8 March 2016.
4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Up to fifteen minutes will be available to allow for the public to make representations, answer questions or give evidence **in respect of any item of business included in the agenda**, in accordance with Standing Orders.*
5. **MINUTES**

To accept the following Minutes

 - 5.1 **Neighbourhood Plan Working Group** – 3 March 2016
 - 5.2 **Planning Committee** – 14 March 2016
 - 5.3 **Neighbourhood Plan Working Group** – 17 March 2016
 - 5.4 **Policy, Resources and Communications Committee** – 15 March 2016
 - 5.5 **Skate Park Sub Committee** – 21 March 2016
6. **FINANCE**
 - 6.1 To approve the Financial Report and authorise the list of cheques for March 2016.
7. **REPORTS**
 - 7.1 Police Report
 - 7.2 District Councillors' Report
 - 7.3 County Councillor Report
 - 7.4 Rail Matters (oral report, Leslie Campbell)
 - 7.5 Report from Councillors on meetings of outside bodies where the Council is represented
8. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**
 - 8.1 Land at London Road Hassocks – Appeal/D3830/W/14/2226987 (report attached)
 - 8.2 Parklands Copse
9. **CLERK'S REPORT**
 - 9.1 Internal Audit/Payroll (report attached)
 - 9.2 Street Trees (report attached)
 - 9.3 Skatepark Funding (report attached)
10. Urgent Matters at the discretion of the Chairman for noting and/or inclusion on a future agenda

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

To: Council

Agenda Item 8.1

Date: 12 April 2016

Contact for this report: Parish Clerk

Subject: Land at London Road Hassocks – Appeal/D3830/W/14/2226987

Land at London Road Hassocks – App/D3830/W/14/2226987.

Parish Council Representation at the Re-Opened Local Inquiry.

The following report has been written by Councillor Bill Hatton.

As Members will recall a local inquiry was held into the refusal of Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) to permit the development of 97 homes on the above site (also called Land at the Ham) on March 31 2015. By that time MSDC had withdrawn all their reasons for refusal so it was left to the Parish Council and local residents to oppose the proposal at the inquiry.

The Inspector agreed with the objections of the Parish Council and local residents in respect of the effect of the development on the Local Gap between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint and on the Stonepound Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and dismissed the appeal on the 2 July 2015.

The Appellants, Messrs. Gleeson, subsequently mounted a High Court Challenge which was partially successful and the Court has ordered that the appeal be re-determined. A letter dated 24 March 2016, has now been received from the Planning Inspectorate stating that the inquiry is to be re-opened. No date has been given for the re-opened inquiry.

This letter states that the Inspector will consider any relevant evidence previously submitted, unless it is expressly withdrawn by its originator. It goes on to invite the parties who took part in the inquiry to send further representations, including statements of case and copies of any documents to which they intend to refer, covering any material change in circumstances which may have taken place in the intervening period. These should include any changes to the development plan position and new or altered material considerations which may have arisen since the original appeal decision was issued.

The parties are also invited to comment on the specific issue upon which the appeal was quashed.

The letter states that representations should be with the Inspectorate within 21 days of the 24 March 2016 and that if no representations are received by that date it will be assumed that the parties do not intend to make any.

There has been a fundamental change in the development plan position in the past year and there are compelling reasons why the Parish Council should play as full a role as possible in the re-opened inquiry.

Before turning to these it may be helpful to emphasize two points. Firstly, the fact that the inquiry has been re-opened does not necessarily mean that the Inspector will reach a different overall decision. Secondly, the Inspector's decision was overturned solely on the grounds of her conclusions in respect of the air quality evidence of Mr. Brewer, a local resident. Her conclusions on the importance of preserving the Local Gap were not set aside by the Court but it will still be necessary to argue this matter again at the re-opened inquiry.

It is essential for the Council to appear at the inquiry for the following reasons.

- 1 In the year that has elapsed since the inquiry the Neighbourhood Plan has been transformed from a series of background papers to a Regulation 14 Consultation Plan. It is now a material planning consideration to which weight must be given in the determination of planning applications. Furthermore

there is every likelihood that it will be converted to a Regulation 16 Plan and be submitted for public examination before the re-opened inquiry takes place. This would give it even more weight.

- 2 Since the inquiry in March 2015 very extensive consultation has been held with the community on housing site suitability and site preferences. The sites selected in the Regulation 14 Plan reflect this. The Ham Field site was amongst the least preferred, 14 out of the 15 sites which were the subject of the consultation.
- 3 The Regulation 14 Plan allocates sufficient housing land to meet the objectively assessed need for new homes. A decision to allow this appeal would therefore undermine not only the credibility of the Plan in terms of housing need but would also be contrary to the wishes of the community obtained after wide ranging consultation.
- 4 If the appeal were to be allowed the Council would be forced to review the preferred housing allocations and consider the removal of one of the selected sites from the Plan. This would inevitably delay the progress of the Plan and could possibly negate the whole process with developers submitting applications for all the original sites.

There is therefore a huge amount of new evidence to be submitted to the re-convened inquiry on the behalf of the Council. It will also be necessary to repeat and reinforce the arguments related to the Gap between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint which remain in force after the High Court Decision.

At the March 2015 inquiry the Council was represented by Bill Hatton. It is suggested that, as the integrity of the Neighbourhood Plan is now at stake, and that, as pointed out above, so much has now been invested in the Plan, we should be represented professionally at the re-convened inquiry.

Dale Mayhew has agreed to represent the Council and to draft the necessary representations which, as stated above, have to be produced at very short notice. The estimated cost of this work is £4,000

RECOMMENDATION.

The Council is requested to agree that Dale Mayhew of Messrs. Dowsett Mayhew, be retained to act for the Council in the matter of the Re-Opened Inquiry in to the development of Land at London Road, Hassocks and £4,000 be allocated for this work.

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

To: Council

Agenda Item 9.1

Date: 12 April 2016

Contact for this report: Parish Clerk

Subject: Internal Audit and Payroll

1. Members will be aware that internal audit is a key component of the system of internal control all local councils must demonstrate is in place. The purpose of internal audit is to review and report to the council whether its systems of financial and other internal controls over its activities and operating procedures are effective. Internal audit is an on-going function reporting to the council at least once a year. It is, however, a function that should not only be carried out once each financial year; nor should it be carried out only at the completion of each financial year-end. It is good practice for internal audit to be undertaken regularly throughout the financial year to test the continuing existence and adequacy of internal controls.
2. Hassocks Parish Council needs to appoint a new internal auditor. The Clerk has researched the options available via SSALC and undertaken some discussions with other Parish Councils. It is clear that from these conversations that Mr Mulberry is highly thought of within the sector and was the recommendation of the parishes contacted.
3. Mr Mulberry's proposal is outlined below:

He offers an internal audit service that follows the guidelines detailed in Governance and Accountability, a Practitioners Guide. Generally he attends site two to three times per annum to conduct a review on council systems as follows:

- Autumn visit – focus on policies and procedures (Financial regulations, standing orders, risk assessments, internal policy documentations)
- Autumn/winter visit – review of key control documents and processes, namely, bank reconciliation, budget reporting and payment authorisations.
- Spring visit – focus on financial aspects and proper preparation of annual accounts for external auditor submission.

On the conclusion of each visit provide a written report in .pdf format for distribution to council that details findings and any recommendations. At the end of the year amalgamate all reports into one end of year document. All reports and engagement letters are stored on a secure website to which the Clerk will have a password access to for whenever council needs access to them.

4. Generally the reports would take the following format
 - Introduction to local council internal audit
 - Basic information about the council and the systems it employs
 - Summary findings
 - Recommendations
 - Independence questionnaire
 - Inherent risk assessment
 - Audit plan
 - Workings

5. Mr Mulberry has been undertaking Local Authority internal audits for ten years and has been a registered statutory auditor for circa 15 years. He provides financial and audit training for council Clerks and Councillors together with ad hoc consultancy advice on VAT and other financial matters. In addition to this he is the Company Secretary and accountant to the Sussex and Surrey Associations of Local Councils.
6. Mr Mulberry's fees are based on an hourly rate (currently discounted for SSALC members) of £50,00 per hour plus VAT and charges £0.45p per mile for travel but not travel time. An estimated total of 8 hours work over the course of the year will be required for Hassocks Parish Council.
7. In terms of the payroll Mr Mulberry charges £30.00 per calendar month as a fixed fee payable in quarterly instalments, plus £1.75 per employee per month for provision of electronic payslips and reporting. He will process the Parish Council payroll, issue payslips, report to HMRC, calculate PAYE and National Insurance due and calculate pensions. He will then provide the council with a written report each month detailing the payroll costs and provide council with the relevant information so that it may be entered into the council records
8. Members will be aware that the current budget for Audit is £600 and the new system of auditing is being introduced in the current financial year. Once the full details of this are known it will be necessary to revise the audit budget in the autumn.
9. **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:** it is recommended that Mark Mulberry be appointed as the Council Internal Auditor and to undertake Payroll on the terms outlined above.

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

To: Council

Agenda Item 9.2

Date: 12 April 2016

Contact for this report: Parish Clerk

Subject: Street Trees

1. At the meeting of the Environment Committee held on Monday 14 September 2015 there was an agenda item reported on Tree Planting.
2. For members information minute number 4 stated that Phil Mead reported that 26 trees were due for planting in 2015/16 at a cost of £3900. That would leave only £750 in the budget remaining from £10,000 set aside for tree planting by the Council for the three years from 2013/14. The tree planting scheme had proved very popular with residents and it was hoped that it could continue so that areas of the village which had not benefitted could be planted. It was agreed that when the budgets for the 2016/17 were considered a proposal should be made to the Parish Council for a further £10,000 to be set aside from the reserves for a further three year street tree planting.
3. **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: RESOLVE** that Hassocks Parish Council transfer £10,000 from General Reserves to the Street Tree budget to allow additional tree planting to be undertaken until 31 March 2019.

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

To: Council

Agenda Item 9.3

Date: 12 April 2016

Contact for this report: Parish Clerk

Subject: Skatepark Funding

10. A meeting of the Skatepark Sub Committee was held on Monday 21 March 2016 and a copy of the minutes have been previously circulated.
 11. At the meeting concept designs were discussed in some detail and the issue of funding was raised. In order for the Clerk to explore opportunities for external funding it is necessary for the Parish Council to consider the level of capital contribution they wish to make towards the project. It should be noted that the likely cost of the specification considered by the Sub Committee is likely to be in the region of up to £100,000 but this could be implemented on a phased basis.
 12. To enable the Clerk to undertake negotiations with external funding bodies, confirmation of the Parish Councils decision on its level of funding is required. Council is therefore recommended to consider an overall capital contribution in the region of £50,000 (to be funded from the General Reserve), subject to final design, tendering process and phasing. The decision needs only to be 'in principle' at this stage dependent on the outcome of the process outlined.
4. **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:** it is recommended that a capital contribution of up to £50,000, is agreed in principle subject to the outcome of the process contained within the report