

HASOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of **HASOCKS PARISH COUNCIL** held on
12 April 2016 at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks

PRESENT:

Cllrs	Ian Weir	Chairman
	Kate Bailey	Jane Baker
	Leslie Campbell	Ian Credland
	Justine Fisher	Judith Foot
	Peter Gibbons	Sue Hatton
	Bill Hatton	Nick Owens
	Darryl Sinclair	Carol Wise

In attendance:

- Cllr Gordon Marples - Mid Sussex District Council
- Cllr Andy Petch – West Sussex County Council
- Jo Whitcombe – Parish Clerk
- 6 Members of the Public

APOLOGIES

Cllr Frances Gaudencio
 Cllr Victoria Standfast

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ian Credland agenda item 8.1
 Cllr Carol Wise agenda item 8.1
 Cllr Nick Owens agenda item 8.1

MINUTES

The Chairman advised that following a request from a member of the public at the Council meeting held on 8 March 2016, the Mid Sussex District Council cleansing contractor SERCO had undertaken a litter pick in New Road whilst it was shut.

16/269 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 March 2016.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Referring to agenda item 8.1 Kate Sexton read out her report that is attached as Appendix Number 1.

Referring to agenda item 8.1 Graham Hollebon, Chair of Board of Directors, Mackie Avenue Residents Management Company Ltd, read out his report that is attached as Appendix Number 2.

MINUTES

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – 3 March 2016

- 16/270** **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group meeting held on the 3 March 2016

Planning Committee – 14 March 2016

- 16/271** **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 14 March 2016

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – 17 March 2016

Cllr Peter Gibbons asked for clarification on the minutes with regard to land ownership queries. He asked whether the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had directed the owners of site 13 to contact the Mackie Avenue Residents Management Company (MARMC). Cllr Ian Credland stated that he had sent an email to the owners of Site 13 at the beginning of the year asking them to contact the MARMC and gave them the relevant contact details.

- 16/272** **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group meeting held on the 17 March 2016.

Policy, Resources and Communications Committee – 15 March 2016

RECOMMEND to Council that a new staffing committee be formalised consisting of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Chairman of the Policy Resource & Communications (PR&C) Committee.

- 16/273** **RESOLVED** to set up a Staffing Committee consisting of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Chairman of the PR&C Committee.

RECOMMEND to Council that Cllr Kate Bailey be appointed on to the PR&C Committee.

- 16/274** **RESOLVED** that Cllr Kate Bailey be appointed on to the PR&C Committee.

- 16/275** **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Policy, Resources and Communications Committee meeting held in 15 March 2016.

8.05pm Cllr Kate Bailey entered the room.

Skate Park Sub Committee meeting held on 21 March 2016.

- 16/276** **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Skate Park Sub Committee meeting held on 21 March 2016.

FINANCE

To approve the Financial Report and authorise the list of cheques for March 2016.

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- 16/277** **RESOLVED** to approve the Financial Report and authorise two Councillors to sign the cheques as per the list presented to Council.

REPORTS

Police Report – No Police report had been received. It was noted that PCSO Joel Havicon will be taking over from PCSO Sarah Macknamara. The Clerk had met with the Chairman of the Hassocks Neighbourhood Watch and the provisional date of the next Police Panel meeting is Thursday 2 June 2016 in the Parish Centre Chamber.

District Councillors' Report - Cllr Gordon Marples told the Group that SERCO, the District Council's cleansing contractor had in fact carried out two litter picks whilst New Road was shut. He advised that MSDC officers are struggling to accommodate the outstanding sports fixtures as the sports fields are so wet and that a new Customer Relationship Management system had been introduced which will facilitate an improvement in communications once it had bedded in. Cllr Ian Weir gave some feedback that if an MSDC officer instigates a call then it comes up as no caller ID so could be mistaken as a 'cold call' and would not be answered.

County Councillor's Report – Cllr Andy Petch reported that there would be a full WSCC meeting on Friday 15 April 2016 and a new Chief Executive Officer would be appointed. He said that the Parking Group had met on 30 March 2016 and he hoped that WSCC would be in a position to go out to Public Consultation in the next two months. He also advised the Group that there was a new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) procedure which was available on the County Council's website. Members of the public could make an application themselves. However only one TRO per County Local Committee (CLC) would be considered annually. This does not include new developments. He is hopeful that the Parking Working Group recommendations, subject to consultation would be treated as a whole.

Cllr Jane Baker asked Cllr Petch to investigate revised signage for Underhill Lane to make drivers aware of the limitations of this road. It currently has a national speed limit which is not appropriate and would like to explore a 'Quiet Lanes' designation.

Cllr Peter Gibbons reminded the Group that a TRO had already been authorised to repaint the yellow zig zag lines outside of Downlands School which had still not been done.

There have also been two recent incidents in Grand Avenue and there is a study looking at the feasibility of allocating an additional 'Lolly Pop' person to this road and it was pointed out that the double yellow lines on the carriageway outside Martin's had worn away so 'no parking' at this site could not be enforced. Cllr Petch said he would follow these enquiries up.

Cllr Petch advised the Group that at the last meeting of the CLC a cycling scheme was discussed to provide a cycle route between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint. Cllr Ian Weir said that he had contacted the owners of Proper

Coffee to see whether there was an interest to work with Hassocks Parish Council on this matter and that he and the Vice Chairman had already been in contact with the Chairman of Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council with a view to working more closely together on a range of issues.

Cllr Petch informed the Group that the next round of Operation Watershed had opened up.

Rail Matters –

Cllr Leslie Campbell told the Group that there was a meeting of the Hassocks Amenity Association Rail Group planned for 22 April 2016 and he would report back to the May Council Meeting on 3 May 2016. Cllr Peter Gibbons advised that there had been 680 trains cancelled at Hassocks since the January 2016 timetable.

Reports from Councillors on meetings of outside bodies where the Council is represented

Cllr Justine Fisher reported that she had organised some Youth Meetings to 'fact find' what could be done in Hassocks. She had met with officers from WSCC and Affinity Sutton to find out about the Young Ambassador Scheme which had been carried out in Hurstpierpoint and about piloting a Streetmate Scheme in Hassocks. She wanted to understand what funding would be required and said that more engagement needed to be undertaken with our young people to understand what sort of activities were needed.

Cllrs Nick Owens, Ian Credland and Carol Wise left the room.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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

Cllr Ian Weir introduced this item saying that the Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan is at a critical stage and that the Community was relying on Hassocks Parish Council to defend the work undertaken to date. This agenda item is to discuss maintaining the integrity of the Neighbourhood Plan and the strategic gap between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint. If there is no Neighbourhood Plan then Developers would try to push through their schemes. He asked Cllr Bill Hatton to take the Group through his report.

Cllr Bill Hatton said that the Ham Fields Site is a special case. During the inquiry in to 97 units a year ago, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) offered no support at the time so the residents and Parish Council worked together to defend the Parish Councils decision to object to the application and defend the Gap Policy. Thanks also to local residents working hard on proving air quality objections and the linkage to the appeal decision taken re College Lane, Hurstpierpoint, where the Secretary of State stressed the importance of the gap between Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks, the Inspector dismissed the appeal.

This was a unique victory for local people but since then a legal challenge has been partially successful and the High Court has sent the appeal back for re-determination and the inquiry has been re-opened. We now have a choice to make the best possible effort to support the previous recommendation. At present no date has been set for the re-opened inquiry. The Neighbourhood Plan process has since moved on following an enormous amount of public consultation where the Ham Field site came as a low priority. The Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Group is currently reviewing the responses to the Regulation 14 Consultation and should MSDC accept that we have complied with the necessary guidelines and subject to the Parish Council deciding to move forward, the Neighbourhood Plan will proceed to the Regulation 16 stage when an independent Inspector will become involved.

It is essential to get across to the Inspector the status of our Neighbourhood Plan and Cllr Hatton felt strongly that professional representation was now essential to achieve this. He went on to say that he personally felt that should other sites be considered for development, such as Friars Oak Field, there would be the same support given as that of the Ham Field site.

Cllr Gordon Marples said that the reinvestigation would be taken by a different inspector and Gleeson's would definitely employ a Barrister.

Cllr Ian Weir told the Group that Dale Mayhew had a lot of experience defending the Gap when he worked with Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common (HPP&SC) Parish Council on its Neighbourhood Plan. He had appeared as an expert witness for HPP&SC Parish Council and would consider to do so for Hassocks Parish Council and there was not a conflict of interest in this appointment.

Cllr Peter Gibbons spoke to oppose this recommendation as he felt it was an inappropriate use of public money serving a small section of the Community. He asked whether similar sums of money would be spent on other areas of the village. Cllr Peter Gibbons expressed concerns as he believed Dale Mayhew had acted on behalf of the Ham Fields Action Group and there was a conflict of interest. If this resolution were to be agreed he felt it would leave the Parish Council open to further legal costs in the event of the planning application being granted. He said that the Parish Council did not have the funds available for expensive legal battles. He asked for a recorded vote on this recommendation.

Cllr Justine Fisher said this was a special case and when the community voted, the Ham Fields site was democratically not considered for housing. There is a narrow gap between the two villages who each have a unique character. She would support the instruction of Dowsett Mayhew to represent the Parish Council at an inquiry.

Cllr Sue Hatton a member of the NPWG advised that Dale Mayhew had never shown any bias at any working group meetings and he was not there to tell the Group what to say.

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Cllr Bill Hatton said that the NPWG and Hassocks Parish Council have looked at the integrity of the Neighbourhood Plan dispassionately and there were bound to be strong feelings at a local level. These feelings are perfectly legitimate, that is why the system provides for an independent Inspector to consider and weigh the views of all participants in an unbiased way.

Cllr Ian Weir said that decisions taken at the NPWG meetings had been taken with complete impartiality and people had removed themselves as appropriate. It is a significantly large enough group to negate any bias.

16/278 RESOLVED 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.

There was a Recorded vote and the outcome was:

FOR	Cllr Kate Bailey
FOR	Cllr Jane Baker
FOR	Cllr Leslie Campbell
FOR	Cllr Justine Fisher
FOR	Cllr Judith Foot
FOR	Cllr Bill Hatton
FOR	Cllr Sue Hatton
FOR	Cllr Darryl Sinclair
FOR	Cllr Ian Weir

AGAINST Cllr Peter Gibbons

2 members of the public left the meeting.

Clls Nick Owens, Ian Credland and Carol Wise re-entered the room.

8.2 Parklands Copse

The Chairman reminded Members that the official opening of the Parklands Copse footpath would be on Saturday 16 April at 10.30am. There will be refreshments available in the Scout Hut together with a display showing how the project has progressed. This is a good news story for Hassocks Parish Council.

Cllr Gordon Marples left the meeting.

CLERK'S REPORT

9.1 Internal Audit/Payroll

The Clerk took the Group through the report and advised that an Internal Auditor needed to be appointed due to the previous auditor retiring and that the Council's current system of pay roll needed to be updated.

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16/279 **RESOLVED** to agree that Mark Mulberry be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor and to undertake the provision of the Payroll for Hassocks Parish Council.

9.2 Street Trees

Councillors felt it was important to continue with this initiative as it had proven to be very popular with residents.

16/280 **RESOLVED** to agree to transfer £10,000 from General Reserves to the Street Tree budget to allow additional tree planting to be undertaken until 31 March 2019.

9.3 Skatepark Funding

Cllr Peter Gibbons gave an overview of the report and a general discussion ensued about whether the Skatepark appealed to all ages and if it was limited to a minority interest. Cllr Peter Gibbons assured Members that all age ranges were being considered and the Skatepark Working Group was incorporating the provision of other equipment as part of this project.

Cllr Justine Fisher was concerned about the amount of money in the recommendation and wanted assurances that there would be money available for other youth initiatives that could reach a wider audience.

Cllr Ian Credland reminded the Group that when this initiative was previously discussed the figure of £100,000 was considered so there was adequate Reserves to spend on other projects.

Cllr Bill Hatton thought that the Skatepark Working Group had been realistic and practical in its approach and the area of the Skatepark was used intensively.

Cllr Jane Baker reminded the Group that the request to improve the Skatepark facilities had come from young people who had remained committed to this project throughout.

A general discussion was had regarding Youth Initiatives in the village and it was agreed that it would be useful to add an additional item to the Council agenda to allow Cllr Justine Fisher to update Members on her work on Youth Initiatives.

Cllr Ian Credland reminded the Group that a tender exercise would need to be reported to Council as part of the decision making process.

16/281 **RESOLVED** to agree in principle that a capital contribution of up to £50,000 be funded from the General Reserve subject to a final design and tendering process and **AGREED** to introduce a Youth Initiative agenda item to the Council meetings.

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URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

There were none.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....

Appendix 1

Kate Sexton, start by saying I'm pleased that the parish council are supporting the neighbourhood plan.

I would like to refer you to an agenda item that asks the parish council to consider paying Dale Mayhew to represent the parish council at the reopened inquiry into Ham Fields. The estimated cost is thought to be £4000. A report has been written by Bill Hatton to help you make a decision. In this report Bill Hatton states the reasons for Dale Mayhew appearance at the inquiry and these include,

Number 1 where he states that

'...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...

Number 2 continues '...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'...

Number 3 goes on to say '... 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.'

These reasons for not developing land could apply to any site on the neighbourhood plan, where a site has not been designated for development and where there is a developer interest or planning application. I would like to ask the parish council if the same attention and rigour is being given to all sites on the emerging Neighbourhood plan that have not been designated as sites for development? I would specifically like to ask about FOF where a planning application is presently with District Council.

Has the parish council / neighbourhood plan committee kept the district council up-to-date on everything that would impact on the planning decision for FOF? As you know this is an area that has been designated as a LGS on the emerging plan.

I think it only fair and equitable that the points that I have highlighted from Bill Hatton's report are put in a letter to the District Council in defence of FOF. It will cost nothing other than some time and commitment. This should be done in a timely manner, in fact ASAP, as a decision on these fields could be made at any time.

Appendix 2

Objection to the proposal to spend £4,000 of public funds defending Ham Fields against development.

It is perhaps no surprise to learn of this proposal given the apparent underlying agenda that is evident throughout the NP process i.e. to protect at all costs Ham Fields.

The case made by HPC to spend this money is largely predicated on the damage that permission to develop this site would do to the NP.

To be clear the NP still has to pass independent scrutiny and is of course subject to a referendum in the village. To behave as though it is already a done deal does little to enhance whatever reputation for transparency and objectivity the NP process still has.

Secondly, this sets a precedent – a dangerous and potentially very expensive one.

And finally, this proposal, particularly if passed, further reinforces what at best might be described as a blurring, at worst a plain conflict of interest in two connected areas - firstly a Chair of the NPWG who has such an active and prominent role in the Protect Ham Fields action group and secondly Dowsett Mayhew, appointed by HPC as professional and objective advisors operating on behalf of and in the best interest of the entire village, whilst at the same time, acting "for and on behalf" of the Protect Ham Fields group.

There is something evidently inappropriate and disproportionate in the response of HPC to any proposal to develop Ham Fields and, coupled with the recent and surprising revelation with regards to Dowsett Mayhew, for these reasons Councillors should vote against the proposal.

Appendix 2 continued

This is an inappropriate use of public money and only helps a small section of the community, not the whole community, who didn't all vote against the development of Ham Fields.

2. If such a proposal to give public money to fight a planning application such as Ham Fields were to be granted, the Parish Council must (to be even handed), be prepared to hand out similar sums of money to fight planning applications elsewhere in the Parish.
3. The Parish Council has to be seen to be acting in a transparent manner. The NPWG clearly have not acted in a transparent manner when I discover that three out of seven councillors, including the Chair of NPWG have written personal letters of objection to this application and in so doing have allowed their personal interests over-ride the interests of the Parish as a whole. None of these three members can be considered as acting in the interests of Hassocks as a whole.
4. Now that we know that Dowsett Mayhew are (or at least were) acting on behalf of the Ham Fields Action Group, it may be considered that the advice they were offering is not unbiased advice, which is what the Parish Council should be paying them to do - a clear conflict of interest here. There are members of the NPWG that knew this was the case, yet they chose not to inform the Parish Council about this. Neither the Chairman or the Clerk were aware until I advised them. At the very least this should have been minuted either on the NPWG minutes or the full concil meeting minutes.
5. Were a decision to grant Dowsett Mayhew £4,000 to pay for representation against a planning inquiry, this could leave the Parish Council open to legal costs, in the event of the planning application to be granted, given that MSDC are merely handling the correspondence and so far not representing a view either way.
6. Any attempts at putting representations forward have mostly been dismissed by those on the NPWG in a rather patronising way and without bothering to properly understand the issues at stake, according to the NPWG minutes which have been read with interest.