

HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of **HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL** held on 8 March 2016 at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks

PRESENT: Cllrs Ian Weir Chairman
 Kate Bailey Jane Baker
 Leslie Campbell Ian Credland
 Judith Foot Peter Gibbons
 Bill Hatton Nick Owens
 Darryl Sinclair Victoria Standfast
 Carol Wise

In attendance: Cllr Gordon Marples - Mid Sussex District Council
 Jo Whitcombe – Parish Clerk
 Sian Phillips – Member of the public
 David Jermyn – Member of the public

APOLOGIES

Cllr Sue Hatton
 Cllr Frances Gaudencio
 Cllr Justine Fisher - Unwell
 WSCC Cllr Andy Petch

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Darryl Sinclair declared a personal interest in agenda item 9.3 as she is the Chairman of the Light Up Hassocks Committee.

MINUTES

16/236 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 February 2016.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Sian Phillips spoke about three issues.

She had attended the Flooding presentation on 25 February 2016 at the Parish Council offices and was surprised to hear that a Voluntary Group had applied for a grant from West Sussex County Council's (WSCC) Scheme, Operation Watershed. As a resident this was the first that she had heard about this initiative. She felt that WSCC should consult more closely with residents regarding flooding issues in the village and in particular speak to land owners who could give specific feedback on problems experienced.

A cycle hire facility on the west side of the railway station had been sited causing an obstruction and Sian asked if it was going to stay at this location? It was also in a bad state of repair. Again there was no consultation on this. The Chairman advised that this would be discussed under agenda item 7.4.

She also asked whether there could be a litter pick along New Road whilst it was closed. The Chairman replied that the Council would look in to this.

David Jermyn raised concerns regarding the closure of New Road but understood that this was for a relatively short period of time. Generally more drivers are using Underhill Lane and asked whether the Council would consider additional passing spaces and undertake repairs to the carriageway. He said that there was generally limited availability for parking in the Lane but the three parking spaces installed by the telephone box at the Westmeston end were working well. He also stated that his property was regularly struck by cars. The Chairman advised that this was a WSCC issue and that Hassocks Parish Council would raise this with County officers.

MINUTES

Skate Park Sub Committee – 8 February 2016

Cllr Peter Gibbons advised that a representative from a company who builds skate parks will be attending the next meeting.

- 16/237** **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Skate Park Sub Committee meeting held on 8 February 2016.

Planning – 22 February 2016

- 16/238** **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the Planning meeting held on 22 February 2016.

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – 3 March 2016

- 16/239** **RESOLVED** to defer this to the Hassocks Parish Council meeting on 12 April 2016.

FINANCE

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

- 16/240** **RESOLVED** to approve the Financial Report and authorise two Councillors to sign the cheques as per the list presented to Council.

REPORTS

Police Report – The Chairman read out the Crime Figures report received from PCSO Macknamara. Some Members felt that there appeared to be more incidents noted on this month's report. Cllr Jane Baker confirmed that this point was also made at a recent Neighbourhood Watch meeting that she had attended.

District Councillors' Report - Cllr Gordon Marples advised that a 2% rise in Council Tax had been agreed by Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) as reported to the February 2016 Council meeting. He said that residents in receipt of Council Tax Benefit would be exempt from paying this. There will be a £5,00 increase to the Garden Wheelie Bin service.

He felt it was important to remind residents that MSDC awarded grants totalling £300,000 this year to local groups ranging from the Citizens Advice Bureau to a Scouts Group in need of a new tent.

Cllr Marples told Members that there would be a District Plan Committee meeting held on Thursday 10 March where the redevelopment of the Martlets Shopping Centre in Burgess Hill would be considered. The planning application was recommended for approval.

Claire Tester, Head of Economic Promotion and Planning at MSDC will be leaving in April after the District Plan has been submitted. He said this would be a sad loss for the District Council.

County Councillor's Report – Cllr Andy Petch had sent his apologies as was attending the West Sussex County Local Committee meeting and would send his report to the Clerk.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gordon Marples for coming to the meeting.

Rail Matters – Cllr Peter Gibbons told Members that during the months of January and February 2016, there were 391 train cancellations for Hassocks of which 271 were cancelled outright or diverted. The remaining cancelled services did not stop at Hassocks as were running late. As a Member of the Hassocks Amenity Association Rail Group (HAARG) he had attended a local Southern/Gatwick Express forum meeting, organised by Govia Thameslink Railway, where he reported his findings. He also raised concerns regarding the proposed changes to the opening hours of the ticket office as it is likely to be open for two hours in the morning with the introduction of a Station Host to re-educate people on how to use the ticket machines. As discussed at the February Council meeting, Cllr Gibbons reminded Members that these machines do not offer all types of tickets and are a poor substitute for a member of staff manning the ticket office. This proposal needs more thought and additional ticket machines will be required.

Cllr Gibbons also responded to Sian Phillips question re the poorly sited cycle hire facility on the west side of the station. This is a Brompton Bike Dock and the Rail Group has reported that this has been placed in an unsuitable location.

Cllr Judith Foot asked whether the HAARG had written a proposal on Hassocks requirements which could be used as a model by the train operator. Cllr Gibbons said that he did not think a proposal would be considered as the Council had still not received a response to the letter sent to the Office of Rail, by the Locum Clerk in January 2016, regarding non-stopping trains.

On another matter, Cllr Gibbons advised the Group that the bus service number 33 will no longer run through the village on Mondays to Fridays but will continue on Saturdays. He feared that this was a case of 'use it or lose it' as bus companies only have to give six weeks' notice to stop a service.

Highway Matters

Cllr Jane Baker gave an update on the recent issues regarding the closure of New Road and the South East Water work at Stonepound crossroads. When New Road was closed Cllr Baker felt that no consideration had been given to the usage of Underhill Lane and Lodge Lane potentially being used as unofficial diversion routes. She had asked West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) to review what could be done to minimise additional traffic using these roads.

Cllr Baker had also pointed out to the WSSCC Highways Department that there were several places on Underhill Lane where there were large potholes and areas where the road had slipped into an adjacent field. They were marked with cones.

On Monday 29 February 2016 emergency work was being undertaken by South East Water at Stonepound Crossroads which coincided with the closure of New Road. For some of the day there were also emergency traffic lights sited in Pyecombe and adjacent to Tates Garden Centre.

This resulted in the local highway network being put under severe pressure with traffic queuing from Stonepound to Pyecombe, back to Burgess Hill and right through the village centre going towards Ditchling. Excessive traffic using Underhill Lane as a cut through has caused damage to the carriageway, banks and hedges and driver disputes had occurred.

It was felt that WSSCC offered very little support during the initial set up of the New Road closure and Sussex Police could not assist as this was deemed not an emergency.

After numerous calls from Councillor Baker and the Parish Council Office Staff WSSCC replaced damaged cones and placed access only signage at the entrance to Underhill Lane at the junction with Clayton Hill, which was upgraded to Residents Only signage the following day. Assurances have been given that the damaged verges will be repaired. The carriageway was also reinstated at Stonepound crossroads.

16/241 RESOLVED that the Clerk be asked to send a letter to WSSCC stating Hassocks Parish Council Members concerns regarding the New Road Contract implementation and the need for careful management of future projects which might affect Stonepound Crossroads and Clayton Village.

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

Cllr Les Campbell reported that he had attended a meeting of the Burgess Hill Green Circle Network Group on 10 February 2016. Whilst no agenda items were directly related to Hassocks it was a very interesting meeting.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

There was nothing to report.

CLERK'S REPORTTaxi Licensing Policy Consultation

Members supported the introduction of an English Language Proficiency Test and asked whether compulsory driving tests are in place for Taxi Drivers.

- 16/242 RESOLVED** to support the introduction on an English Language Proficiency Test as approved by Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) and that the Clerk contact MSDC regarding compulsory driving tests for Taxi Drivers.

Adastra Park Community Pavilion

Members agreed the recommendations to paint the toilets and the officials changing room and to the necessary works required to the external air conditioning unit.

Members debated at length the recommendations to undertake a deep clean in the pavilion, replace the flooring in the main hall and to explore setting up a cleaning contract.

Cllr Ian Credland was concerned that it was proposed to spend a considerable amount of money on the Pavilion and user groups must agree to leave the space in a clean and tidy condition after a booking. He felt that a total review of the Pavilion Hire Agreement and charges was necessary to offset any additional costs incurred by the Council.

The Clerk advised that she had started to meet with the user groups and was working with the Acting Assistant Clerk to review the total operation. She felt that the poor state of cleanliness in the Pavilion had built up over a period of time and the Groundsman did not have capacity to clean the building along with his other duties. The carpet tiles in the main hall were no longer fit for purpose.

The Clerk went on to say that the Council needed to improve the conditions in the Pavilion in order to (a) instruct users on how they will leave the space after a booking and (b) to facilitate increasing the bookings in order to build up the income stream. Cllr Peter Gibbons asked whether the Parish Council would be liable for Corporation Tax if a profit was made on the Pavilion. Cllr Nick Owens advised no as the Council was not a limited company. The Clerk said that additional income could be placed into a sinking fund for ongoing running costs.

- 16/243 RESOLVED** to accept the quote of £350 from Peirpoint Décor to paint the toilets and the officials changing room.

- 16/244 RESOLVED** to accept the cost of decommissioning the air conditioning unit, lay a new concrete slab and recommission the unit at a cost of up to £635 plus VAT.

- 16/245** **RESOLVED** to accept the total cost of £405 to deep clean the Pavilion.
- 16/246** **RESOLVED** that an additional cleaning resource is required for the Pavilion and **AGREED** that the Clerk explore a cleaning contract and associated costs.
- 16/247** **RESOLVED** to replace the floor covering in the main hall and **AGREED** that the Clerk would explore options and costs.

Hassocks Christmas Lights

Members considered the report and The Chairman pointed out that there was a mistake in paragraph 2. The figure of £3840 plus VAT should read £3840 inclusive of VAT. This would make a difference to the amount required to transfer in the officer recommendation.

Members required clarification on paragraph 4 regarding the sustainability of the community event if the Light Up Hassocks Committee (LUHC) was not responsible for the Christmas Lights. The Chairman explained that if the Parish Council took over the contract for the Lights this would alleviate the pressure on the LUHC to raise the money to pay for the lights thus allowing the Committee to concentrate on the community event.

A discussion ensued around Hassocks Parish Council putting an additional amount of money in to the Christmas Lights budget to improve the display. It was agreed that the Clerk would look at the existing contract and make a recommendation to Council at a future meeting. Cllr Nick Owens asked whether the LUHC could be asked to make a donation towards the lights if funds allowed.

Cllr Jane Baker said she was concerned that if the Parish Council was to take on the responsibility of the Christmas Lights then more pressure would be put on the office staff who were already working at capacity. The Chairman advised that the Clerk had been asked to review the current staffing allocation and Members had previously identified that an additional staffing resource will be required.

- 16/248** **RESOLVED** that Hassocks Parish Council would take on the responsibility for the Village Christmas Lights and transfer £1500 from the General Reserve in to the Christmas Lights budget.

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

There were none.

8.50 pm Councillor Gordon Marples and Sian Phillips left the meeting.

TO CONSIDER UNDER THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 WHETHER TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL MATTER TO BE DISCUSSED WOULD BE PREJUDICIAL IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

The meeting closed at 09.20pm.

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....