



# **Annual Parish Meeting**

**20<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

## **Annual Report 24-25**





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**May 2025**

### **Chairperson's Report**

That staff are our most important asset is not an understatement as they are responsible for implementing the decisions of Councillors and wisely spending the precept we collect from you, the residents.

In the knowledge that our Clerk of 8 years would be retiring from his role and with a recent decision of our Deputy Clerk to take up a new career path, succession planning has been paramount this past year.

A team of Councillors spent many hours working together in reviewing the staffing structure and in recruiting the new personnel over a period of several months. I am pleased to say that we now have a full complement of staff who are already working hard on the day-to-day activities of the Council as well as implementing the Business Plan which sets out our short, medium and long term projects.

#### **Welcome**

During the past year the Council has welcomed Francis Lea our new Grounds person, Helen Valler the new Deputy Clerk and Elaine Langridge the new Clerk.

Francis brings with him 9 years of horticultural experience working at Crawley Borough Council. He spent five of those nine years at the well-known Tilgate Park as a Parks Team Leader, where he gained a Level 3 qualification in Horticulture. You may see him in his branded uniform in Adastra Park between Tuesday and Friday. Helen previously worked at Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council for five years as Assistant Clerk, where she was responsible for the Planning Committee, management of the Cemetery and the administration of the Community Buildings bookings diary.

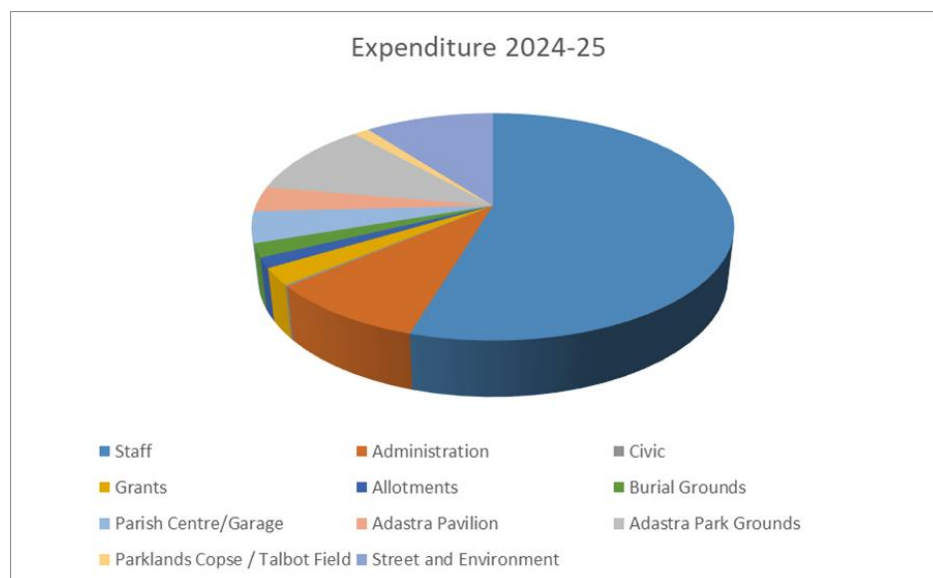
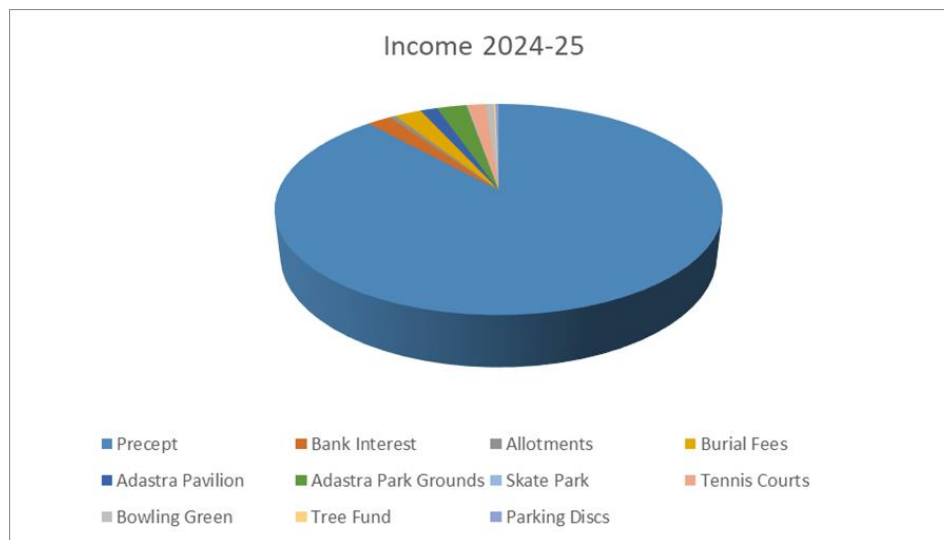
Our new Clerk Elaine, previously worked at Mid Sussex District Council for 14 years in Community Development and Planning. She was responsible for securing developer contributions to fund improvements to community buildings and recreational facilities and worked with Parish Councils and local organisations to fund a large number of capital projects and community services. She was previously employed at Havant Borough Council where she led a team of staff to deliver a wide range of community events and activities. Prior to this she worked in various arts management roles and was the Executive Director of a charity which specialised in participatory and outdoor arts.

# Full Council and Policy, Resources and Communication Committee

## Our Business Plan

I am pleased to report that much of our Business Plan for 24/25 has been achieved through the various committees.

With regard to the Council's financial position: The Parish Council was holding circa £273,500 in General Reserves at the end of the financial year which provides a contingency fund to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances. In addition, there is £259,402 set aside in Earmarked Reserves for ongoing renewals and maintenance of assets and a range of planned projects and such as the footpath improvements and Adastra Park drainage works. We had a good audit report, where it was found that the systems and internal procedures that are in place are well established and followed.





Over the last financial year more than four thousand enquiries have been dealt with by telephone, in person and email. These cover a wide range of issues including dealing with matters relating to Parish Council owned assets, Adastra Park sports & pavilion bookings, burial ground, parking discs, the issuing of over 350 foodbank vouchers and signposting to appropriate organisations.

We have also in the last year focused on improving communications with our community. We continue to publish regular articles in Hassocks Life to update residents on our activities. As an example, our March 2025 article is below. We also use the circular noticeboard adjacent to Hassocks Hardware and the window of the Parish Office to publish news items and display posters.



Parish Clerk: Ian Cumberworth  
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### Memorial Stones in the Garden of Remembrance

Some of you may have noticed when walking through Adastra Park, that some new memorial stones are now displayed near the Lych Gate in the Garden of Remembrance.



These stones carry the names of the fallen from World War One, World War Two and the Falkland War. The stones were recovered from the now disused Royal British Legion building in Woodland Road in Hassocks. There are three War Memorials in the Keymer/Hassocks Parish. One in the grounds of St Cosmas & St Damien Church in Keymer, and now the two sets in the Adastra Park Garden of Remembrance. As with all War Memorials, there are a number of anomalies in the actual names and spelling, of some of the fallen, but we believe that we now have a reasonably definitive list. It is proposed that we re-dedicate the stones in a ceremony on the 8th of May 2025, that being the 80th anniversary of VE day, commemorating the end of the Second World War. The ceremony will be in the Adastra Park Garden of Remembrance at 11am, and all are welcome.

### Reporting overgrown trees and hedges to West Sussex County Council

If you notice overgrown hedges or trees around the village that are encroaching onto roads or pavements, please report the problem to West Sussex County Council through the website, [www.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk) or by phone: 01243 642105. And, of course, if you have a front garden with a hedge, bushes or trees which might obstruct pedestrians or traffic then as it is finally Spring it is a great time to prune and cut back excess growth. Check of course that you are not disturbing any nesting birds.

### Village Traffic Calming and Speed Limits – Consultation



In the January edition we mentioned that the Council is keen to explore measures which could be introduced to help make Hassocks roads calmer and safer for ALL, and as part of this has set up a working group to explore the viability of 20 mph speed limits in various locations. In the coming months we will be seeking the opinions of Hassocks residents to ensure that any scheme we propose has broad community support. We hope to conduct this consultation in the spring and will publish the details on our web site <https://www.hassocks-pc.gov.uk/> and Facebook pages.

### Village Parking

Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) are responsible for managing and operating vehicle parking in the area and, as has been widely reported, they are reviewing the various schemes that operate on roads and in their car parks. They are currently consulting with Parish Councils to seek their views. Our view is that the current parking arrangements generally work well in Hassocks. The importance of free parking to the health of the High Street businesses cannot be underestimated. There are some minor improvements which could be considered. For example, the Parish Council whilst open to splitting the Dale Avenue Car Park into Long Term and Short Term (4 hour max) areas is not in favour of new charges particularly as this would affect visitor numbers and tourists. Visitors could easily migrate to the local Garden Centre / Visitor Attraction where free parking is available. The current Parking Discs work well in the Orion Car Park and these should be retained and potentially used in the short-term section of the Dale Avenue Car Park even if the method of implementation changes. Above all, any management system in the Car Parks must be simple and easy for all types of users including those who find parking technology challenging ...and must not result in any additional technology costs that MSDC then passes on to users.

### Staff Changes

In January we welcomed a new member of staff, Helen Valler, as our Deputy Clerk. Helen has previously worked at Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council. At the end of March, our Clerk, Ian Cumberworth is retiring after 9 years. At the same time we will be welcoming our new Parish Clerk, Elaine Clarke.



Parish Centre, Adastra Park, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 8QH  
Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays 10am to 2pm, Fridays 10am–12noon, closed on Wednesdays

## Grants

There are two opportunities during each year (February & September) when local groups or local branches of charities can apply to us for grant funding up to a limited amount. In 2024/25 we were pleased to give grants to the following groups:

Adastra Stoolball  
Age Concern  
Angels Knitting Group  
St Catherine's Hospice  
Hassocks Community Vegetable patch  
Air Ambulance Kent, Surrey Sussex  
4 Sight Vision  
St Peter & St James' Hospice

### Village Car Parks

In March 2025 the Parish Council were consulted by Mid Sussex District Council on proposed changes to the parking charges in the Orion and Dale Avenue Car Parks. We submitted a substantial response challenging their suggested new parking regime, where at the present time, up to 3 hours parking is free for holders of parking discs. A final decision will be made by MSDC in September 2025 on the introduction of a charging scheme.

## **Grounds and Environment Committee**

### Adastra Park Drainage

The drainage works which were due in Adastra Park have been delayed partly because of weather conditions and partly because engaging the commitment of contractors to do the work has proved to be a lengthy procedure. Having reviewed the process, we produced a detailed project plan for implementing drainage in Adastra Park. As part of this we have commissioned extensive drainage mapping of the park as there is a lack of definitive records of main drains. The mapping work will be completed during May 2025, and the information gathered will inform future works.





## Garden of Remembrance

These gardens are well used by people of all ages but have not been very accessible. Improvements have been made to the path to make it accessible to those using wheelchairs.

Following the sad closure of the Hassocks branch of the British Legion, the council initiated the removal of the Memorial stones from the premises. The stones were successfully restored and moved to the Garden of Remembrance where they are a focal point near the entrance to the gardens. A new sign displaying information about the gardens, its history and benefactor are now also in this area of the Lych Gate.



Our volunteer group continue to help maintain the Garden of Remembrance. This year they have been keeping the gardens tidy, pruning, weeding, edging the paths, beds and borders, litter picking and sweeping. Last summer several rose borders were cleared of old and deceased roses and daffodils. These borders were then seeded with grass seed and the daffodils replanted elsewhere in the garden.

More recently the group have planted petunias in the garden in the shape of 'VE' to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE day in 2025. On the Anniversary of VE day in May, Fr Alex of St Cosmas and Damian Church gave a blessing at the Garden's refurbished memorial stones, to remember those from Hassocks Clayton and Keymer who gave their lives during World Wars I and II and the Falkland War. This commemoration was well attended by Hassocks Councillors, staff and members of the community.



## Allotments

Rob Yates has now settled into his role as Chair of Hassocks Allotment Holders Association (HAHA). Demand for allotments continues to be high. As of May 2025, there were 65 people on the waiting list. This year we have, in conjunction with Rob, explored potential opportunities for more land which might be suitable for allotment use and hope to actively continue our search in the coming year.

## Parklands Allotments

In March 2025 we replaced the gates at the allotments. The old gates were rusty and difficult to operate. These new gates provide more security and have been very well received by plot holders. Parklands Allotments again participated in the NGS Open Gardens scheme in June 2024. Allotment holders worked hard to prepare for this event and the allotments received many positive comments.



## Talbot Field

We own the area of Talbot field between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint, but it is managed as a charitable trust and maintained by The Woodland Flora and Fauna Group. The group have installed bat and bird boxes in the trees and regularly monitors the habitat.

The Council is very appreciative of the work carried out by the Group to protect and develop Talbot Field as a valuable nature reserve.



### Public Rights of Way

We are blessed with having numerous footpaths winding through Hassocks Clayton and Keymer some connecting to other settlements. These all need to be reviewed for their condition to make walking a safe experience.

### PROW 8C Belmont Lane through Clayton Wickham – Burgess Hill

The northern section of this footpath from the former golf course north towards Burgess Hill was upgraded in summer 2024 as part of developer contributions for the Bellway development

### Street Trees

West Sussex County Council must be given credit for maintaining the numerous grass verges of Hassocks. These, with an abundance and variety of trees are part of the unique charm of this area. Our commitment to enhancing our green environment is indicated by financially contributing to tree planting each year and once all locations are approved by West Sussex County Council the trees are planted during the winter.

In the last year the Parish Council funded 21 street trees in verges on various roads in Hassocks, kindly supported by additional donations from residents.





### Floral Planters & Floral displays.

The council continues with the provision and maintenance of the lamp post baskets and hanging baskets throughout the High Street and on Keymer Parade. We also fund the planters on Orion Parade.



### Flood Working Group.

The County Council which is the Strategic Flood Authority consulted on its strategic plans for flood management in 2025 to which we responded, but although Hassocks was mentioned as still being a priority, we are still awaiting some tangible projects for works.

However, although we suspended the Flood Action Group pending future proposals or information from West Sussex County Council, we continue to keep the lines of communication open.

We have also progressed on an Operation Watershed proposal (seeking funding) for flood mitigation at Downsview Road where at least one property is at very high risk and for which the Parish Council agreed to seek contractors to implement and manage the project. This has been no easy task and our work on this continues.

## 20mph Speed Limit Working Group

Speeding vehicles on roads as well as traffic congestion in the main shopping street and outside the schools, led to the Council setting up a speed working Group to examine a variety of ways of calming traffic.

The Group (which includes Councillors and representatives from Hassocks Community Organisation and Hassocks and Ditchling Green Group) met with Officers of West Sussex County Council to request traffic speed data and to ascertain their support and guidance for 20-mile speed limits in the village, as per the below map.

During March & April a public consultation was held to obtain the required evidence of public support for the scheme. There was overwhelming support from our residents. Thank you to everyone who responded. This month we formally applied to West Sussex Highways for the scheme to be considered. We have to be realistic about the fact that any implementation is in the gift of WSCC due to resource pressures. However, we have offered to contribute a limited financial amount to the cost of works if approved.



## Parish Office Premises

The Parish Council worked with The Windmills Junior School to implement an art project to promote an environmental theme. A local artist was commissioned by the school and in June 2024 their mosaic artwork of trees, birds and butterflies was completed on the outside of our office building where it will remain as an adornment to be enjoyed by visitors and passers - by.



## Planning Committee

The Planning Committee meets every three weeks which totals 17 meetings a year. During the last year we have dealt with around 150 Planning Applications.

The committee considers applications from Mid Sussex District Council and the South Downs National Park who are the statutory planning authorities. In addition to considering planning applications, the committee is also consulted on street naming, temporary road closure applications, licensing related matters and various planning related consultations.

The majority of applications have been for extensions to existing properties, but applications considered also include tree work on trees with Tree Preservation Orders or in Conservation Areas, and for new dwellings and larger scale developments.

We are not the planning authority, we can only comment, but our area has been the object of increasing pressure from developers, and it is still important for our voice to be heard. We also must be aware of government changes to planning laws regarding flooding and environmental issues.

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### In Memoriam

Leslie Campbell, who was a Parish Councillor for many years, sadly passed away in March 2025. He had been a keen walker, promoting and publishing walking routes not just in Hassocks, but surrounding areas and villages. Throughout his tenure as a Councillor, he was a member of the Planning Committee, he monitored and reported on the conditions of footpaths and Public Rights of Way, and he was Council representative on the Rail Group. I thank him posthumously for all that he contributed to Hassocks.

### Thank you

To all our volunteers working in the Garden of Remembrance, The Woodland Flora & Fauna Group for their work in Talbot field and to Penny Wadsworth who promotes the hanging basket scheme with the village traders. Also, to The Monday Group and all community groups with whom we work in partnership. A thank you to our outgoing Deputy Clerk, Tracy Forte, for all her work implementing projects around the park & village. Tracy continues to work at the Parish Council but has changed her role and now works one day a week. The councillors thank Jane Barker, our Office Administrator for her flexibility while the staff changes have taken place.

### Thanks, and Goodbye

At the end of March, we said goodbye to the Clerk Ian Cumberworth and I thank him for his hard work for Councillors and the Community over the 8 years he was with us. He achieved much in improving systems which were in need of overhaul, overseeing the implementation of many aspects of the Business Plan and leaving the Council in a strong financial position. We all wish Ian well in his new projects and interests

I also want to put on record my thanks to Kirsty Lord our West Sussex County Councillor, who has recently stepped down. Kirsty attended many Council meetings and working groups, gave regular reports on the finances and initiatives of WSCC which affected us and who worked with WSCC officers on our behalf and on behalf of the community. This included assistance with flooding issues, potholes, road resurfacing and speed limits. She has also discussed with me our Council's projects for the future, where West Sussex County Council involvement is crucial.

## **Conclusion**

The year has seen us deal with significant change and challenges but has also presented us with great opportunities for the future.

I am grateful for the hard work and collaboration of Parish Councillors who have given numerous hours of unpaid time through attending committees and working groups and who outside of these, have been extending or strengthening our partnerships and have been proactively committed to achieving our goals.

It has been a satisfying year for me personally, to work with my colleagues, staff and community members in contributing to maintaining Hassocks as a great place to live, work and enjoy!

Frances Gaudencio

Chairperson

Hassocks Parish Council