**Minutes of the Meeting of the Council** held on Thursday 23rd April 2020 at 7.00 pm via 'Microsoft Teams' Video Conferencing.

**Members Present:**

Cllr Stephen Hand (Chairman)
Cllr Allan Brown
Cllr Rodney Jackson
Cllr Tony Lank
Cllr Malcolm Llewellyn
Cllr John Lowman
Cllr Claire Majsai
Cllr Duncan Ranger

**Also Present:** Cllr Joy Dennis (WSCC), Cllr Alison Bennett (MSDC), Sarah Groom (Clerk to the Council), Andy Beams (Interim Finance Officer)

**C19/117 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest:** The following apologies for absence were received before the meeting and accepted: Cllrs Martin Machan, David Evans, Michael Avery, Bob Sampson, Julia Shorrocks, Seth Jee and Peter Griffiths. Mid Sussex District Councillor Colin Trumble had also given his apologies.

Cllrs Hand, Lank, Lowman and Ranger declared a personal declaration of interest concerning agenda Item 7 - The Coronavirus Cancellation policy, as they are members of the Hurstpierpoint Bowling Club, a tenant of the Council.

**C19/118 Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 26th March 2020:** Members reviewed and agreed the minutes and it was:

**RESOLVED: That the Council AGREES the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 26th March 2020.**

**C19/119 Adjournment for questions from the public:** The council considered whether to adjourn the meeting in order to receive questions from members of the public in attendance. There were no members of the public present as part of the video conferencing meeting, although an invitation had been made on the published agenda for the public to join the meeting by video or telephone.

**C19/120 Reports from other authorities:** The following verbal reports were received as follows:

**C19/120.1 West Sussex County Council County (WSCC):** Cllr Joy Dennis had circulated a full written report to all members for their information. The matters expanded upon at the meeting were:

i) The works to the A2300 had now commenced;
ii) Eleven of the thirteen highway gangs were still working;
iii) The Parish Council would support the safe partially re-opening of the recycling centres. Cllr Dennis explained that there had been serious safety issues for the Serco staff at the Burgess Hill facility at the start of the closure, this had included very aggressive and anti-social behaviour. There had also been very long queues causing congestion. One issue is whether trips are classed as essential journeys and whether the Police would fine people. MSDC may also be the only Council to have stopped its green waste collection. Fly-tipping appears lower across West Sussex with a reported increase in recycling at Supermarkets. The Chairman felt fly-tipping may have increased slightly in the parish.
iv) The County's main focus was on Adult / Social Care and Supporting Families / Children Services. Staff had been seconded into these departments to support the good work being done including the Fire and Rescue Service staff supporting the ambulance service.
v) WSCC's Resilience Forum had set up the Community Hub designed to co-ordinate the response to COVID-19 through the Districts and Boroughs. It is a help-line staffed from 8am to 8pm seven days a week, currently receiving about 100 calls a day. The highest priority residents were the group to be shielded from the virus ("the Shield Group"). These people had been identified by the NHS and GPs as the most vulnerable and they should be self-isolating. The second tier group are known as Level 2. This group is being identified for support by MSDC and there is a risk that we do not know everyone in this group. An information leaflet is available, and Cllr Dennis will send this to the Clerk and Cllr Majsai for promoting through the Parish Council's own channels.

**C19/120.2 Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC):** Cllr Bennett reported that the Leader of MSDC had reinforced the importance of supporting the Shield Group and the Level 2 Group during this time (not all of whom had asked for help, perhaps because they didn't want to be seen as a burden). Cllr Hand asked how we would know if people needed help but hadn't responded or weren't on a list. The Parish Council absolutely wanted to help with this. Cllr Majsai asked Cllr Bennett if the assisted bins collection list is being used to help identify vulnerable residents. Cllr Dennis will check whether non-responses are being investigated and if the assisted bin collections list is being used.

Another key area of MSDC work is promoting grants for businesses as the number of applications could be greater.

Cllr Llewellyn asked about the burning of green waste. Cllr Bennett will investigate whether green waste collections can be re-started, although this is subject to the contractor's resources being available. MSDC has been clear that residents will be fined £100 for any nuisance burning but it requires burning to be reported as a nuisance. In reality all burning at present is a risk to anyone with breathing difficulties.

**C19/120.3 Mid Sussex Association of Local Councils & West Sussex Association of Local Councils:** There were no MSALC or WSALC updates from Cllr Jackson as no meetings had been held. The Clerk was receiving regular updates from the National and Sussex Associations of Local Councils.

**C19/121 Committee and Working Group minutes:** The committee chairs introduced each set of minutes, which the Council was asked to receive and adopt, and where appropriate, consider the recommendations:

**C19/121.1 Village Centre Advisory Group (2 April 2020) Meeting postponed.**

**C19/121.2 Estates & Facilities Management Committee (2 April 2020) Meeting cancelled.** Although the Committee meeting had been cancelled, Cllr Brown explained that two informal meetings had been held, of which the notes had been circulated to councillors. He wished to record his thanks to Nick Sinclair, Facilities Manager, for the smooth hand-over prior to his last day on 17 April. Hurst Meadows was being very well used during the lock-down and due to the excellent weather, the ground conditions were very dry. Some work had been put on hold initially but may be able to be progressed with safe working practices such as the path across Hovel Field. The Maintenance Officer has improved the gate to St George's Lane at St George's Green by fitting a spring closing mechanism and removing the latch so people don't have to keep touching it. Opening up the Marchants Close access had raised a few issues and two emailed complaints had been received from residents. Steps are being taken to address the issues including extra signage. It is expected that Bovis will resume their work to construct the "Bramble Park" development week commencing 27 April. Cllr Lank enquired whether dog waste bags could be provided at the site, however, as some dog waste is put in bags and still left behind by owners, it was not felt this would help change the irresponsible dog owners' behaviour. Bags are still available from the pet shop.

Cllr Llewellyn gave a verbal update on the Council's other property. Twice weekly checks are being made of every site. The Cemetery Manager and Maintenance Officer are completing their checklists and there have been no concerns. Reducing the heating temperatures and turning off the hot water at Court Bushes will help reduce some operating costs. Greenscene will be undertaking some work at Hurstpierpoint Village Green and some non-urgent tree work will be completed by two of our tree work contractors.

**C19/121.3 Finance & Governance Committee (9 April 2020) Meeting cancelled.** Although the Committee meeting had been cancelled Cllr Llewellyn gave a verbal update on the work being undertaken to help minimise our financial risks. This includes the year end accruals to be discussed later on the agenda and monitoring the commitments that have already been made for 2020/2021 such as the Christmas Lights and the Village Green works. Cllr Llewellyn also asked councillors to note the spending on upgrading all councillors to the Microsoft Office 365 Business Package to allow us to hold the Teams meetings, at a cost of £53 per month which was not previously budgeted for.

**C19/121.4 Strategic Policy and Resources Panel (Held on 30 March & 6, 14, 20 April 2020)** The Chairman explained that the Panel had been meeting weekly since 16 March to agree the Council's response to the virus as well as the impact of it on the Parish Council. Minutes of these meetings had been circulated. A second

information leaflet had been completed and distributed to all homes in the parish by a group of young people organised by Cllr Majsai and her husband. Cllr Shorrocks had also assisted in the distribution and all parties were formally thanked. The Panel meetings have been useful sessions and would continue weekly as it had effectively become the emergency response group. Any ideas on how we can further assist our residents were welcomed and the Mid Sussex District Council and West Sussex County Council updates on their responses to the virus had been very helpful.

**C19/121.5 Planning & Environment Committee (16 April 2020)** In the absence of Cllr Machan, Cllr Lank explained the process used to enable Committee members to submit responses on the planning applications. Cllr Shorrocks had made some very useful observations on the process but it was hoped that a 'Teams' meeting can be held for the next Committee meeting on 7 May 2020. There were no recommendations for Council to consider.

**C19/122 Revised Allotment Documents:** Members considered the revised documents that had been discussed by the Estates and Facilities Management Committee on 5th March 2020 for the Albourne Road site as follows:

i) A new Tenancy Agreement,
ii) Revised Rules & Regulations on Erection of Sheds, Greenhouses and Other Structures; and
iii) the Allotment Protocol between the Council and Hurstpierpoint Allotment Association.

It was agreed Clause 8 of the Protocol would be amended by the Assistant Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Council. The three documents are now recommended to the Council for approval and adoption. (Minute Reference Minute FM.19/26.8 Allotments.)

**RECOMMENDATION: Council AGREES and ADOPTS the revised:**

**i) Allotment Tenancy Agreement;**
**ii) Rules & Regulations on Erection of Sheds, Greenhouses and Other Structures; and**
**iii) Allotment Protocol between the Council and Hurstpierpoint Allotment Association**.

The Chairman noted that Clause 8 of the Protocol document had not yet been amended as discussed and agreed. Subject to that amendment and an updated version control on the documents, it was:

**RESOLVED: That the Council AGREES and ADOPTS the revised:**

**iv) Allotment Tenancy Agreement;**
**v) Rules & Regulations on Erection of Sheds, Greenhouses and Other Structures; and**
**vi) Allotment Protocol between the Council and Hurstpierpoint Allotment Association, subject to the amendment of Clause 8**.

**C19/123 Coronavirus Cancellation Policy:** Members considered the Council's policy approach to charging its hirers and tenants for use of the buildings over the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, as set out in the Briefing Note. The matter had been discussed at the Strategic Policy & Resources Panel meetings and the Policy summarised the need for a sympathetic and clear approach to be taken by the Council for the benefit of its hirers and tenants, and it was:

**RESOLVED: That the Council AGREES and ADOPTS the Coronavirus Cancellation Policy as follows:**

**i) Ad hoc hirers will be refunded/not be charged for any bookings after 16 March 2020 when the Government strongly advised against social gatherings.**
**ii) Regular or affiliate hirers will be refunded/not be charged for any cancellations made after 6pm on 16 March.**
**iii) Regular or associate hirers that made use of the buildings after 16 March will be charged until 20 March or when they stopped, whichever is the later.**
**iv) In principle, hirers that make use of storage facilities year-round will still be charged for the use of the buildings or containers retained for storage purposes.**
**v) Confidential discussions are held with each Lessee and Licensee to ascertain their precise position with regards to the terms of their agreement and any particular support they may require from the Parish Council to support them through this difficult time.**
**vi) Any particular claims of hardship will be considered with sympathy and understanding and grants will be considered to support any at risk groups and brought back to Council for approval. It should be noted that Pre-Schools receive Government funding for free childcare places and receipt of these grants will be considered when assessing individual cases.**

**C19/124 2019/2020 Accruals:** Members considered a Briefing Note setting out the year end accruals for the 2019/2020 financial year. Accruals can be income or expenditure items that relate to the last financial year. A budget from 2019/2020 is journaled into the 2020/2021 budget to allow the items to be paid/received. In a few cases the expected amount has been recorded as an estimate. There are also a few remaining queries for Court Bushes Community Hub. The Interim Finance Officer was thanked for all his hard work that had gone in to identifying and listing the items. Members noted the list of accruals which will be subject to inspection by the internal auditor on 6 May 2020, and it was:

**RESOLVED: That the Council AGREES the 2019/2020 Accruals.**

**C19/125 Year End: April 2019 to March 2020 Finances:** Members considered a Briefing Note on the provisional year end figures for the 2019/2020 financial year. The figures were provided for information, as they will be subject to the internal audit by Mulberry & Co on 6 May 2020 and an external audit later in the year by Moore UK. Members reviewed the draft annual return, bank and investment reconciliations, balance sheet, itemised and summary income and expenditure sheets, the ear marked reserves and their reconciliations. The final year end figures will be presented to a future meeting of the Council following the internal audit for approval and onward submission to the external auditor. In response to questions the Interim Finance Officer explained that the CCLA investment is for longer than a 12 month term, so in line with accounting requirements, it is recorded as an asset on the asset register and not on the balance sheet as cash in the bank. Further consideration will be given to securing a better return on this investment. Increasing the general reserve in line with good practice will need to be considered following unexpected expenditure last year, such as the new Cemetery wall. The Interim Finance Officer was thanked for all his hard work that had gone into preparing all the year end paperwork and it was:

**RESOLVED: That the Council NOTES the provisional 2019/2020 year end figures.**

**C19/126 Information items, correspondence received and requests:**

**C19/126.1** Cllr Brown felt it was time for the Council to consider a third information leaflet in response to the coronavirus and it was agreed that suggestions for content be sent to the Clerk.

**C19/126.2** The Chairman was pleased how the 'Teams' video conferencing meeting had worked for most councillors and thanked the Clerk for arranging the meeting. The Clerk would ensure as many councillors as possible could access future meetings.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.34 pm.

Chairman