Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 16 December 2021 at 7.30 pm at Court Bushes Community Hub.

Members Present:

Cllr Malcolm Llewellyn (Chairman)	Cllr David Evans	Cllr John Lowman
Cllr Allan Brown (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Rodney Jackson	Cllr Claire Majsai
Cllr Michael Avery	Cllr Seth Jee	Cllr Duncan Ranger
Cllr Helen Bedford	Cllr Tony Lank	Cllr Bob Sampson
		Cllr Julia Shorrocks

Also Present: Cllr Alison Bennett & Cllr Colin Trumble (MSDC), and Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Council.

C21/22.092 To receive and record apologies for absence. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Martin Machan, and it was:

> **RESOLVED: That the Council ACCEPTS the apologies of absence from Cllr Martin Machan.**

Cllr Joy Dennis (WSCC) also sent her apologies.

C21/22.093 To receive and record declarations of interest. Cllr Jee declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a petitioner for a separate Sayers Common Parish Council, although this did not relate to a specific item on the agenda.

C21/22.094 To receive and accept the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council: Members received the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021, and it was:

> **RESOLVED: That the Council AGREES the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 25 November 2021.**

C21/22.095 To consider whether to adjourn the Meeting in accordance with Standing Orders to receive questions from members of the public in attendance: There was one member of the public in attendance who did not wish to speak, so no adjournment was required.

C21/22.096 To receive verbal reports from Representatives of other Authorities: The following reports were received:

C21/22.096.1 West Sussex County Council County (WSCC): In the absence of Cllr Dennis there were three questions posed. Cllr Evans queried whether the teaching of diversity and inclusion was mandatory on the St Lawrence Primary School curriculum. Cllr Jee enquired as to the level of funds in the Operation Watershed scheme. Cllr Jee also asked whether all was being done to draw people's attention to the severe covid situation in West Sussex. Cllr Bennett (MSDC) had investigated the position and had been advised that the NHS were responsible for the mobile testing units and surge testing was no longer national policy. Although a mobile testing unit had been placed in Haywards Heath, Cllr Bennet had explained that levels were higher in the south of Mid Sussex.

C21/22.096.2 Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC): Cllr Trumble reported 500 new homes had been approved for Hassocks. The 200 new homes to the south west of Burgess Hill are officially in the parish but this could change if the Local Government Boundary Review England made a case against it. Legal action was to be taken against the owners for planning infringements at 145 High Street, Hurstpierpoint. It was proposed parking charges would increase for the first time since 2012 in town centres and consultation is underway. There are no proposed changes for the villages parking discs scheme. Cllr Trumble has met residents of Bramble Park and was concerned about their ongoing issues

with drainage. Further meetings are planned to resolve the issues with Bovis. The extra Section 106 funding required for the Court Bushes external decking had been agreed in full by MSDC's Cabinet Member. The Chairman thanked Cllr Trumble and MSDC wholeheartedly for assisting with this unforeseen increase in costs.

Cllr Jackson outlined a project for re-wilding in Mid Sussex and further information would be provided for the Parish Council's consideration. Cllr Bennett stressed the need to engage with residents on the re-wilding projects to ensure you have their support. MSDC staff had now been trained to tackle illegal fly-tipping enforcement. The leisure centres had started to see footfall returning and were back to 68% of previous income levels.

Cllr Bennett confirmed that the site selection for the Local Development Plan consultation being managed by the Planning Inspectorate was now open. The Chairman highlighted the site at the Old Brickworks in Sayers Common and that the developers are already engaging with the community. Cllr Majsai wished to explore ways that the three tiers of local government could work better together on issues such as sustainability and for example, the youth offer, so there were was consistency and cohesiveness.

The Chairman questioned the issue raised by Cllr Trumble that the LGBRE review of the size of MSDC could influence the District's ward boundaries as it had been confirmed in a stakeholder session run by the LGBRE that this was not the case. Eitherway, the decision would be known in February 2022.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Bennett, Cllr Jackson and Cllr Trumble for their reports. Cllr Trumble and Cllr Bennett left the meeting.

C21/22.096.3 West Sussex Association of Local Councils / Mid Sussex Association of Local Councils: Cllr Brown and Cllr Jackson confirmed there were no matters to report.

C21/22.097 To receive the minutes and where appropriate, consider the recommendations of the following Working Group and Committees: The Chairs introduced the following sets of minutes:

C21/22.097.1 Highways, Cycleways and Footpaths Joint Council Working Group: (22 November 2021) Cllr Lank ran through the main points from the meeting. The SID data was indicative of what information would be available to interrogate in future. Key trends would allow us to request spot checks by the Police in response to certain patterns that may emerge. There were no recommendations for Council.

C21/22.097.2 Planning & Environment Committee (2 December 2021) Cllr Shorrocks ran through the main points from the meeting. MSDC had rejected the application for a new build in Langton Lane. The Chairman confirmed this location was adjacent to a listed building and outside the built-up area in the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan. There were no recommendations for Council.

C21/22.097.3 Finance & Governance Committee (9 December 2021) The recommendations for Council were listed as items on the main agenda.

Following the review of the Working Group and Committee minutes, Members:

RESOLVED: That the Council RECEIVES the minutes of the following Working Group and Committees:

i. **Highways, Cycleways and Footpaths Joint Council Working Group (22 November 2021)**
ii. **Planning & Environment Committee (2 December 2021)**
iii. **Finance & Governance Committee (9 December 2021)**

C21/22.098 Street Lighting Loan: Members considered repaying the street lighting Public Works Loans Board loan in full, as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee. The Parish Council received a £180,000 receipt from a Deed of Easement across South Avenue earlier in the year, and the Committee has recommended this is used to pay off the loan repayment in full. The amount of the loan that remained was £130,140.69. There are 15 years left of payments at £10,204, per annum equalling £153,060. The amount due if repaid in full now is £147,112.77. Thereby saving £5,947.23 over the remaining period of the loan.

A full discussion was had on different financial scenarios, including a debate on the benefits of not having the £10,204 per annum loan repayment figure in the annual budget. Cllr Jee proposed a more optimal repayment date of 2032 for liquidity purposes, in relation to the current interest rates at the banks. Members had not identified other requirement for the funds and a balance of approx. £30,000 was still available, which the Finance & Governance Committee had considered for a South Avenue earmarked reserve for items such as re-surfacing South Avenue or improvements to the play area.

The Chairman explained that although there were opportunity costs of having the funds available, an additional reason for consideration is that as the Parish Council is due to face a Community Governance Review in 2022, which may see it reorganised in May 2023 with the proposed creation of a separate Sayers Common Parish Council. There is no indication at this time from Mid Sussex District Council as to how they would require the assets of the Parish Council to be apportioned if this came to pass. Members were motivated to clear the Parish Council's debts whilst they had the opportunity in advance of any re-organisation. Members of the Council considered the recommendation and took a vote on the matter. Twelve Members were in favour of repaying the loan in full and one abstained; and it was:

> **RESOLVED: That Members AGREED to repay the street lighting Public Works Loans Board loan in full, as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee, at a cost of £147,122.77 at 20 December 2021.**

C21/22.099 Draft Budget 2022/23: Members considered a briefing note and the Parish Council budget requirements spreadsheet for 2022/23 including staffing costs as recommended by the Finance & Governance Committee. The Clerk was thanked for completing the work involved and the Chairman introduced the Briefing Note highlighting the £156,000 of the Precept which made up the staffing costs. The Chairman highlighted the work the Committee had done to attempt to reduce the risks associated with all the unknown variables such as the national pay award for 2021/22 and 2022/23. The Committee had factored in a 4% increase for pay next year, as well as the 1.25% increase on National Insurance Contributions and an indicative spinal column point increase for each member of staff. The Planning & Environment Committee had requested a budget for consultancy, and it was proposed that would be underwritten by the General Admin Professional Support budget line. The Chairman ran through the spreadsheet and highlighted the Tax Base number confirmed by MSDC. Members agreed the 3.95% increase on the Parish Council precept was a positive outcome as there was no reduction in the services offered and the figure, although an increase, was less than inflation, and it was:

> **RESOLVED: That Members AGREED the 2022/2023 budget and the Precept requirement of £281,608, which based on the tax base figure confirmed by MSDC of 3,196.9, equates to a Band D equivalent Council Tax Precept payment of £88.09 per annum (an increase of 3.95% or £3.34 per annum or 6 pence per week on 2021/22).**

C21/22.100 Parish Action Plan: Members considered version 19 of the Parish Action Plan and noted that the revised format will be completed by March 2022. The Chairman stressed the importance of

ensuring that the Budget matches the aspirations of the Action Plan and all projects and their budgets must correspond, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Members NOTED version 19 of the Parish Action Plan and that the revised format will be completed by March 2022.

C21/22.101 Calendar of Meetings 2022/2023: Members considered a provisional list of meeting dates for 2022/2023 to be ratified at the May 2022 Council meeting. Members noted that Thursday 2 June 2022 was a bank holiday for HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Members AGREED the provisional list of meeting dates for 2022/2023 to be ratified at the May 2022 Council meeting.

C21/22.102 Civility & Respect: Members considered a letter from the West Sussex Association of Local Council's calling for Local Councils to sign a petition to encourage Government to introduce sanctions for poor behaviour. Members of the Council considered the response and discussed criminal behaviour versus a lack of existing penalties under the Member's Code of Conduct. It was noted that it is not the Parish Council's role to suggest the possible sanctions but to sign up to the principle of the initiative. Members took a vote on the matter. Seven Members were in favour of signing the petition, three were against and three abstained, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Members AGREED to sign a petition to encourage Government to introduce sanctions for poor behaviour and support the Civility & Respect initiative in principle.

C21/22.103 Member's Code of Conduct: Members considered the Members Code of Conduct, last adopted on 17 December 2020, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Members agreed to ADOPT the Member's Code of Conduct.

C21/22.104 Co-option Policy: Members considered the Councillor Co-Option Policy adopted on the 25 March 2021. Following Cllr Evans' objection to being transparent about who he was casting his vote for, Members discussed the wording of the Policy and Standing Orders. The Chairman pointed out that the co-option process was intended to mirror a normal election process whereby candidates put themselves forward for election and a vote is taken. The Parish Council had incorrectly operated an interview style selection process in the past and the process must be transparent and undertaken in public. Following a discussion it was agreed to amend the wording on the Policy under 3.1 to add a final sentence that reads "For the purposes of co-option, this will be executed by a written ballot" and that Clause 3.2 would be deleted. The amendment to 3.1 of the Policy would also be proposed for Clause 8 of the Standing Orders at January 2022's Council meeting, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Members agreed to ADOPT the revised Co-Option Policy as amended.

C21/22.105 Health and Safety Policy: Members considered the Health and Safety Policy last adopted on the 17 December 2020, and it was:

RESOLVED: That Members agreed to ADOPT the Health & Safety Policy.

C21/22.106 Promoting Bicycle Stands: Members considered a verbal report from the Chairman on a request from Hurst Rethink on promoting greater use of the existing bicycle stands in the village, and to consider additional cycle racks at the Village Centre and South Avenue Recreation Ground, and it was:

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RESOLVED: That Members AGREED to support the request from Hurst Rethink on promoting greater use of the existing bicycle stands in the village, and to install the cycle racks currently in storage at the Cemetery in front of the Village Centre and South Avenue Play Area.

C21/22.107 The Council NOTED the following information items, correspondence received and requests:

C21/22.107.1 Police & Crime Commissioners Focus Group: Cllr Lank attended the Police & Crime Commissioners Focus Group meeting for Mid Sussex held on 29 November 2021 to discuss local policing priorities and he had been invited to prioritise local concerns. Cllr Lank was advised minutes would be available but was then told these were for the PCC only. Various matters were discussed including the success of CCTV in town centres and PCSO Surgeries which were being held successfully in the towns. Cllr Lank also repeated the Parish Council's concerns about the use of e-scooters on pavements and was advised that Sussex Police would take action and confiscate them, if specific details could be provided.

C21/22.107.2 Verge Cutting: The Chairman introduced the proposal by WSCC to trial Hurstpierpoint "urban verges" with three verge cuts a year rather than the five currently. This is a notable reduction from eleven cuts only a few years ago. The cuts would be 'cut and collect' with arisings being placed in selected areas for composting. After a few years, only three cuts would be needed as the re-wilding would have developed. There was concern expressed about the longer grass on the verges tempting irresponsible dog owners into leaving the dog faeces in situ rather than to pick it up.

C21/22.107.3 Virtual Meetings: The Clerk had received an email from Trevor Leggo at WSALC dated 14 December 2021 explaining that although the Government was being lobbied to reintroduce legislation to allow Parish Councils to hold their meeting virtually again, this had not yet been enacted.

C21/22.107.4 New Year's Day Walk: Cllr Majsai promoted the annal Hurst Meadows New Year's Day Walk starting at the Owls in the Millennium Garden at 10.30am.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.35 pm.

Chairman

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