HURSTPIERPOINT & SAYERS COMMON
PARISH COUNCIL

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Cllr Jonathan Ash-Edwards
Leader, Mid Sussex District Council
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24 March 2022

Dear Cllr Ash-Edwards,

Community Governance Review of Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute comments to inform your consideration of whether a new parish council should be created for Sayers Common.

You have asked that for you to properly consider the proposition, we should concisely explain how the proposal might derive the following benefits:

- Improved community engagement
- Enhanced community cohesion
- Better local democracy
- More effective and convenient delivery of local services and local government.

We should also explain how your proposition reflects the identities and interests of the community.

Background

The Parish Council considered the MSDC correspondence at its 24 February 2022 meeting, at which it noted the community governance review process and agreed a draft response would be developed for consideration at its 24 March 2022 meeting:

> **Minute C21/22.126 Community Governance Review:**
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> At the 24 February 2022 meeting, Members of the Parish Council noted that the District Council was required to undertake the review as it had been triggered by a petition submitted in 2019 calling for a separate parish council for Sayers Common based on the Sayers Common electoral ward boundaries (Ref: LAB).
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> There was concern that the review is running parallel to the District Plan Review and that the District Plan Review should come before the Community Governance Review. There was concern that some residents of the wider Sayers Common electoral ward area, not resident in the village, might not associate their identity with Sayers Common. It was noted that ward boundary changes were permitted under this review and with the new geographical features of the A23, A2300 and Jane Murray Way, these boundaries could be used to help define the two wards.
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> The Chairman confirmed the new arrangements would be in place by May 2023 but the deadline for the current consultation was 15 April 2022. Members agreed that they wanted the residents of Sayers Common to decide their own identity and how they would be served. If they wanted a separate parish council it would be supported. Consideration would be given to potential new boundaries and a response would be drafted for consideration at the 24 March 2022 Council meeting.

The Parish Council met again on 24 March 2022 and considered a draft response on the community governance review process to submit to MSDC. It was resolved that the following response be submitted to you.

Our Response

The Parish Council is not making a case for a new Parish Council for Sayers Common. We do not agree that it would provide:

- Improved community engagement
- Enhanced community cohesion
- Better local democracy, or
- More effective and convenient delivery of local services and local government.

The Parish Council believes that these objectives are best met through the current arrangements that provide economies of scale, value for money and support in depth. In outline, the very small number of facilities that the Sayers Common Parish Council would manage would be two notice boards, 0.67 hectares of open space with one play area, and eight streetlights. In 2021 the Parish Council also arranged for 9 WSCC street lamps to display Christmas motifs. There are no community venues, cemetery, allotments, or public toilets.

This level of provision may not warrant its own parish council with all the associated overheads of employees, office space, IT and communication technology, twice weekly play area inspection, annual ROPSA play area inspections, subscriptions to NALC and WSALC, the ICO, Employers and Public Liability Insurance, to name but a few of the mandatory requirements. Also, in separating out an area from the existing Parish Council, there is the real risk of increasing the Council Tax liability for all residents within both Parish Council areas and the potential for Hurstpierpoint Parish Council not being able to support and deliver the current community facilities for which it is liable.

The District Plan Review to 2038 will also be a key shaper of future development and housing numbers in the parish and it may well be prudent to await the outcome of the District Plan Review before completing a community governance review. That could then enable a far wider and perhaps timely review of Parish boundaries within the area to take account of the impact of the Northern Arc development and potentially others. Forecasts for the number of people on electoral registers likely to occur in the next five years must be considered and should have been available to us at the start of the review.

The proposal is to split the current parish area in half diagonally across the middle based on the LAA and LAB electrical wards and form separate Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common wards. The LAB ward takes in areas to the north of Hurstpierpoint such as Langton Lane, Mill Lane, High Hatch Lane, Cuckfield Road, Goddards Green and Gatehouse Lane where many residents feel more aligned to Hurstpierpoint than to Sayers Common.

The MSDC Settlement Sustainability Review in May 2015 identified Hurstpierpoint as a Category 2 settlement and Sayers Common as a Category 3 settlement. The acknowledged hierarchy reflects that there is a mutually supporting infrastructure in place as the residents of Sayers Common and Goddards Green look to the larger village of Hurstpierpoint for some of their educational, health and social activities and wider shopping experience.

The Parish Council has worked hard for many years to integrate the two villages under the current Parish Council arrangements, even changing its name in 2000 from Hurstpierpoint Parish Council to Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council to emphasise the combined importance of the two villages. On that basis, the current proposals seem to work against our integrated Parish Council.

However, the Parish Council is agreed that should the residents of Sayers Common village make a convincing case to you, then we would support their wishes.

We would further add however, that the CGR Guidance document clearly permits the opportunity to use a CGR to readdress boundary issues and a GCR offers an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries, tied to firm ground features such as motorways for example.

The A23 cuts through the parish in a north / south direction separating all the historic footpaths and bridleways between Albourne, Sayers Common and Hurstpierpoint. The new A2300 dual carriageway which is currently under construction also cuts off the northern part of the Parish at Goddards Green. With the northern arc development, these man-made constructs may change the behaviour of residents going forward and in turn we recognise that they may influence the boundaries of the parish.

It remains open to MSDC to make a recommendation that is different to the recommendation the petitioners wished the review to make and MSDC shouldn't feel forced to implement the petitioners recommendation.

We therefore ask that if MSDC is mindful of support a new parish council for Sayers Common, that the opportunity is taken to review the boundaries of LAA and LAB so they better reflect the local geography and the identities and interests of the community using clear, high quality maps to support the proposals.

In summary, the proposal for a new parish council for Sayers Common would be supported by the Parish Council if the residents demonstrate that it is justified, and that it is not just a request from a very small minority of the loudest residents.

However, we believe the changes in boundaries that we have set out above would provide the most appropriate parish areas which would reflect the identities and interests of the local communities.

We look forward to reviewing your draft recommendations when you publish them on 3 June 2022 and commenting on them again before 1 August 2022.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Sarah Groom
CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

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