Annual Report of the Parish Council

1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The Annual Meeting of Electors, or the Annual Parish Meeting, is a relatively informal event for the community and is a totally separate meeting from the Parish Council's formal meetings. It is for the registered electorate of the parish and there is no set agenda. Someone needs to call the meeting, so it often falls to the Parish Council to organise it. There is no set format for the meeting, but it can include a presentation of the Parish Council's annual report, discussions of ideas for future action, public comment, or questions and a celebration of local community organisations.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020, and the associated lock down measures, it was not possible for the Parish Council to call an Annual Parish Meeting on behalf of the electorate, instead, the Annual Report was published on the Parish Council's website. In 2021, the Parish Council, anticipating further COVID-19 restrictions, not only published its Annual Report on the Parish Council's website, but also stepped out of its comfort zone and embraced technology to hold the meeting by a webinar. The theme was "Working together for a sustainable future" . As many attended, and more, as would have come to the traditional meeting in the Village Centre.

This year, building upon the experiences of the last 2 years we are publishing this report on our website, but also showcasing our Court Bushes Community Hub through holding the Annual Meeting in person at that location. In doing so, we have also invited many local groups to be represented so that we can all share what is happening in our community, and to focus upon those groups and their volunteers. There will be presentations from the groups, and free tea, coffee, cakes and a free sustainable bag for everyone who attends. It should be a great opportunity to network, and to celebrate our generous and supportive community.

I hope that you enjoy reading our report and please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk to the Council if you have any questions. Contacts details are set out at the end of this document.

Malcolm Llewellyn, Chairman of the Parish Council

2. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Overview

Despite a second year of living and working within the constraints imposed by the Pandemic, the Parish Council has once again been engaged in a wide range of activities. I will not seek to duplicate that detail here but recommend that you read the reports that follow by the respective chairs of the committees.

Facilities & Services

Throughout the year, and working within the constraints of any Government COVID-19 regulations, the Parish Council has focussed upon ensuring that its facilities and services have been available for residents. Latterly, as some semblance of normality has returned to our lives, it has been great to see everyone returning to those facilities, and increasingly in the way that they did pre-COVID. You will appreciate that funds received from the Precept i.e., our proportion of the Council Tax, does not fully fund the outputs of the Parish Council. We also need the income that is generated by the use of our facilities. So, users returning helps us to invest in those facilities and to keep any Council Tax rise as low as possible; especially important given the financial pressures that we all face at this time.

Elsewhere you will read however that with limited staff capacity and resources we have been able to undertake some of our much needed upgrade and investment programme. We were successful in gaining Section 106 funds from developers' contributions and have been able to carry out a long awaited upgrade to the Reeds Lane Recreation Ground play area, and the provision of decking at the Court Bushes Community Hub. From our own resources I would highlight the resurfacing of Pitt Lane, South Lane and the entrance road to the Community Hub, and a start to addressing the backlog of maintenance within the Cemetery and the Chapel. Using funds from within the Village Centre Charity and elsewhere you will have noticed some changes within the Village Centre, with Wi-Fi installed throughout, roof repairs, new lights and redecorating. To do more requires a much higher utilisation of the facility, and for activity levels to return to the pre COVID-19 era.

Partnerships

It has been a pleasure during the year to work in partnership with other groups within the community to enable, or to deliver, other projects for the wider benefit of us all. I would like to highlight 3 as examples:

- The Sayers Common Community Shop in working with us to enable the provision and installation of the Christmas lights that adorned the London Road for the first time last year. Along with our contractor, that partnership enabled us to turn a Community Engagement Committee idea into reality over a period of 4 months – a not insignificant achievement given the number of other agencies involved.
- The Hurstpierpoint Society and the successful development and implementation of The Heritage Trail through the village. It has been interesting to watch the number of groups moving through the village at various times either on organised walks, or just following the Trail on their mobile phones, stopping at key points and when complete making use of the shops and hostelries within the High Street. The Parish Council has also been able to enter into a 25 year licence arrangement to manage that part of Ladies Walk off Brown Twins Road that is owned by the Society. The Council will integrate it into the adjacent Hurst Meadows as a continuing wildlife corridor and community asset.

Coronavirus Memorial

- Freeman Brothers Funeral Directors for their very kind installation of a bench and a Horsham stone memorial on the Village Green adjacent to the War Memorial as a focal point for reflection in the light of our collective experiences of the Pandemic. It was completed in time for Wednesday 23rd March as the second anniversary of the first COVID-19 lockdown, or National Day of Reflection. When you are next passing the War Memorial, please take a moment to stop and reflect upon the last 2 years.

Hurst Meadows

You will also see that work progresses within Hurst Meadows to enable and support access by the community, for example from Bramble Park to Tilley's Copse and beyond, but also to improve the biodiversity and to encourage the wildlife; a challenging balancing act and a long journey that we have embarked upon.

Tilley's Copse Bluebells

Volunteers

It has also included the planting of over a 1000+ trees within the Meadows as part of the Queen's Canopy, and to meet the requirements laid on the Bramble Park development by Natural England to satisfy a Great Crested Newt Licence.

Of note has been the support that we have received from The Woodland Trust within the Ancient Woodland, as part of their wider Lost Woods Project, and the magnificent team of volunteers without whom we would not be able achieve what we have done so far. If any reading this have some free time and would like to get involved, then please make contact with the Parish Council Office – more assistance is always welcome.

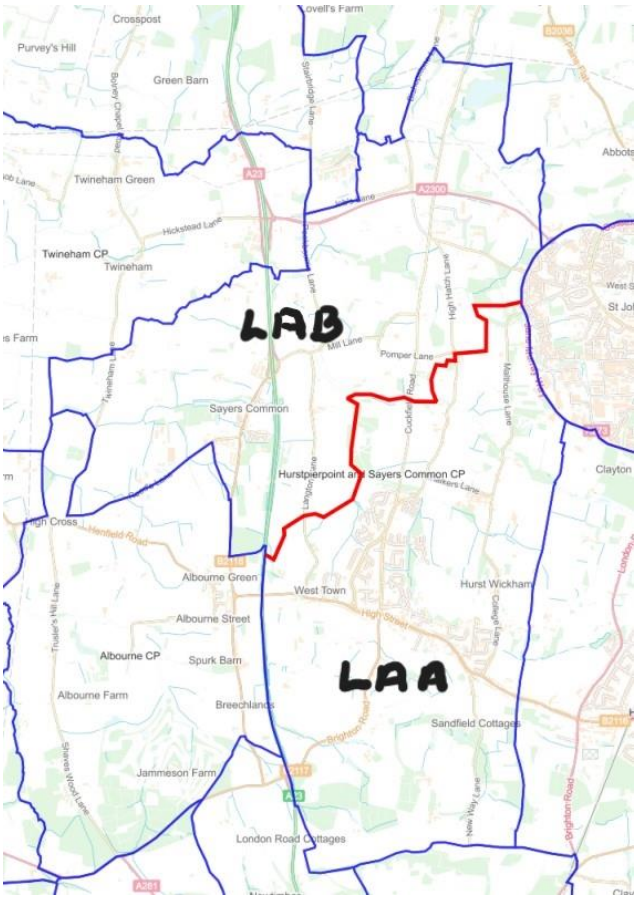
District Plan Review

In last year's report I drew attention to three strategic planning consultations which could have a significant impact on the type and number of homes built in the parish in future. That challenge has not gone away, indeed it has grown in scale and is now a meaningful threat to the countryside and open spaces that we currently enjoy within the Parish. In January of this year, Mid Sussex District Council released papers giving their proposals for a review of the Local Plan. The report outlined plans to build nearly 4000 new homes within the Parish and Albourne in the period out to 2038, with the majority centred around Sayers Common and the other cluster in the north of the Parish off Malthouse Lane. The formal public consultation that was planned has been paused so that MSDC could gain further clarity from Central Government over the impact of impending legislation and whether that would also change the numbers to be achieved. Either way we need to be aware that for the current District Plan to continue to carry weight in planning terms this review needs to be completed and adopted by early next year.

Community Governance Review

The other significant issue facing the Parish Council is the current Community Governance Review, which followed a petition by some residents of Sayers Common for their own Parish Council. Their petition envisages their Parish Council adopting the current electoral boundary for the LAB ward of Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common. That ward includes areas to the east of the A23 such as parts of Langton Lane, Cuckfield Road, Goddards Green, Gatehouse Lane. Our response to MSDC did not support the creation of a separate Parish Council for Sayers Common at this time. We felt that it would be detrimental to the residents of that village and would probably lead to a significant increase in Council Tax for those residents to enable the services for which a parish council is responsible i.e., the current economies of scale would be lost.

Current Electoral Ward Boundaries



However, if MSDC proceeded with the creation of a new parish council we recommended that the boundaries of the current electoral wards of LAA and LAB (pictured) be redrawn to ensure those residents of the current parish who live to the east of the A23, and see themselves as Hurstpierpoint residents, would not be transferred to any new Sayers Common Parish Council. Our full response can be read via our website and Facebook pages. We will next have an opportunity to contribute to this process in June. Any revised arrangements will be in place for the Council elections in May 2023.

Parish Councillor Vacancy

There are often posts on the Hurstpierpoint Hub commenting on matters that relate to the Parish Council. We have a vacancy for a Councillor at this time. If you have the time and energy, are a resident of the Parish, and wish to contribute to the work of the Parish Council, then please seek to be co-opted for the remaining term of this Council. Full details can be gained from the Parish Council Office or via our website www.hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk.

Councillors and External Assistance

My thanks again to my fellow councillors for their support, feedback both positive and negative, and advice during my tenure as Chairman. I would like to highlight the Vice-Chairman and Chair of the Estates and Facilities Management Committee, Allan Brown, who has continued to helpfully keep everything in perspective. My thanks also to Claire Majsai, Chair of Community Engagement; Julia Shorrocks, Chair of Planning and Environment; John Lowman, Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources and Tony Lank as Chair of the Joint Council Highways, Cycleways, and Footpaths Working Group for all their effort and commitment throughout the year. To Dr Georgina Judd, a local resident, who has continued to not only give support and advice as our volunteer ecologist, but has worked tirelessly with The Woodland Trust to ensure that the Wilderness and Tilley's Copse have benefitted as part of their Lost Woods Project, and cultivated a group of essential and much appreciated volunteers to support our work in Hurst Meadows – thank you. To Martin Sadler, another local resident, who is our lead and drive behind our developing Heritage Apple Orchard – thank you. He has continued to devote a considerable amount of his time to further developing and nurturing the Orchard, and undoubtedly without his efforts and commitment it would not exist.

Parish Council Staff

Once again, our staff were not furloughed over the past year but, depending upon the Government COVID-19 measures that were in force at the time, they have worked from home, been in the Parish Council Office, or out on the ground. Increasingly, the pre COVID-19 routine has returned, and normal opening hours for the office at Village Centre has meant that our staff have been much more accessible to all in the community. Sarah Groom, our Clerk to the Council, has ably led the small team of six full and part time staff responding to residents needs and queries, and facilitating the Council's priorities and the full programme of projects that we have delivered during the year. Our former interim Clerk to the Council, Andy Beams, who we had retained in the role as Locum Finance Officer to enable the full transfer and embedding of our completely restructured budget, finally left us in July for other Parish Councils' who needed his help and expertise. Stephen Witchell, who joined us as our Estates and Facilities Manager in late 2020, has settled into his appointment and the skills and expertise that he has previously gained in both the private sector and with MSDC have been put to good effect; particularly in our open spaces. Assistant Clerks Helen Valler and Lorna Cooksey have continued to support everything from burials, allotments, planning application responses, facility bookings/cancellations, committee meetings, to the diverse range of Community Engagement priorities. As ever no day is the same as the last. Finally, throughout Richard Lechmere has continued to manage the Cemetery and to enable burials. Whilst our Maintenance Officer, Hamish Raby, has been redecorating areas within Village Centre, or out on the ground trying to keep on top of everything from out of control undergrowth to clearing key footpaths and responding to emergencies on our estate. To all, on behalf of the Council, I would like to thank them for their continued support, diligence, drive, and enthusiasm for both the work of the Council and the community that we serve.

Malcolm Llewellyn, Chairman of the Parish Council

3. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The Planning and Environment Committee have had another busy year holding 12 meetings and considering over 200 planning applications. The ability to hold meetings face to face again, has facilitated easier, full and in-depth discussions about some of the more controversial applications and members of the public have once again been able to make their views known, something that the Parish Council really appreciate and value.

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee for both Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) and the South Downs National Park (SDNP) but it is these bodies who make the planning decisions.

Using the criteria laid down in our Neighbourhood Plan, the Planning & Environment Committee aim to ensure that our planning policies are followed.

The District Council recently released an update to their plan that would have resulted in nearly 4000 units being built in this south eastern area of the district. Due to pressure from this Parish Council, other parish councils and many residents, the District Council have paused this plan for the moment whilst they wait for the Secretary of State to reply to their letter requesting an update on housing numbers. As soon as we know the outcome of this, the Parish Council will ensure that residents are informed and we will be listening to everyone's views to try and ensure we are not forced into taking vast numbers of units.

I'd like to thank each member of the Committee for their time and commitment, Tony Lank for being my Vice Chair, and a massive thanks to Helen Valler and Sarah Groom for clerking our meetings and giving advice and guidance on policies and legal matters.

Julia Shorrocks, Chair of the Planning & Environment Committee

4. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Our twin priorities over this last Council year have been to push forward those projects that had to be put on hold during the height of the Covid pandemic and to support the community to recover and re-connect. We have built stronger links with a variety of local organisations from St Lawrence CE Primary School to Age UK to the Hurstpierpoint High Street traders and businesses. Many of our most successful initiatives have involved working in partnership with other groups and authorities and we will continue to build on these links in order to be able to serve our residents better. We saw the power of effective mutual aid during the Covid lockdowns - we really were "stronger together" - and we see this again today in the community's rapid response to the Ukraine crisis.

Our committee is always particularly mindful of the needs of the more vulnerable in our community and this is reflected in our Action Plan. We are aware that we all have times in our lives where we are in need of more support or better facilities. We aim to improve access for residents to health and support services, partly through encouraging and facilitating their use of our premises such as the Village Centre. Our efforts to bring a community midwife clinic back to our Parish have continued after being on hold whilst the local NHS understandably had other issues to deal with. The Chair is a member of the Mid-Sussex Health and Wellbeing Network which enables us to draw attention to the needs of our villages as well as make contact with groups who might be able to support local residents.

We are aware that it can be difficult to access some facilities without a car, particularly for Sayers Common residents. Last year we requested a re-routing of the 100 (Burgess Hill – Pulborough) bus to go through Hurstpierpoint to help Sayers Common residents who need to travel to the Health Centre using public transport. We very much hope that West Sussex County Council will agree to this important change.

Food Bank

We have regular contact with our local Food Bank and where space allows, we publish details of helplines, local services, etc. that might be useful to residents.

HURSTPIERPOINT COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

Although our efforts to set up sustainable and predictable partnership funding for the local Youth Club were not successful, we have regular meetings with interested parties to try to improve the facilities available to our young people. At the moment much hinges on future plans that Mid-Sussex District Council may have for Fairfield and Court Bushes Recreation Grounds as well as the proposed new sports facilities that are part of the Northern Arc development. We recognised the difficulties that many local young people are facing with their mental health through a grant for additional counsellor provision at Downlands Community School.

Hurstpierpoint High Street

The Parish Council is very aware of the benefit to the community of having a lively and vibrant High Street with thriving retail and leisure options. We are also conscious of the challenges faced by businesses at the current time. Consequently, the Committee's High Street Group, in conjunction with the Clerk, have assisted the High Street traders in applying to the Mid Sussex District Council's Welcome Back Fund for a substantial grant. This helped to fund the Santa's Fun Sunday event and the free sustainable shopping bags and High Street maps that will be launched at the Annual Parish Meeting in May.

Dementia Awareness Project

The Committee are very keen to do what they can to enable people living with dementia to enjoy a full, independent life and in particular to be able to avoid the isolation that can result from increasing memory issues. We are also very aware of the isolation that can be experienced by those caring for someone with dementia. We were pleased therefore that Safe Place training was finally able to take place in October. Led by Rachel Bignall from Music for Memories, the training was well attended by councillors, High Street traders and businesses as well as staff from the Parish Council Office, the Melting Pot Café and the Health Centre. The Safe Places are now identifiable by the flower symbol in their window and offer somewhere for a confused and anxious person to wait while help comes. We are very grateful to all those businesses now displaying the symbol but are keen for more to join the scheme. Please contact the Parish Office if you are interested – free training will be offered.

The Committee has also continued to support the Memory Moments Café which takes place at Court Bushes Community Hub on the first Thursday of the month. We have had lots of very positive feedback from residents who have attended these fun, sociable sessions.

Reeds Lane Play Area

The Committee were pleased to see that, following delays caused by the pandemic and by drainage issues, the new play equipment in Reeds Lane was finally installed using Section 106 funding obtained by the Parish Council. We hope it will be very much enjoyed by local children. Many children kindly sent us their ideas for the play area and with phase two of this project at the development stage we are keen to hear from more families as to what they would like to see in the rest of the recreation ground.

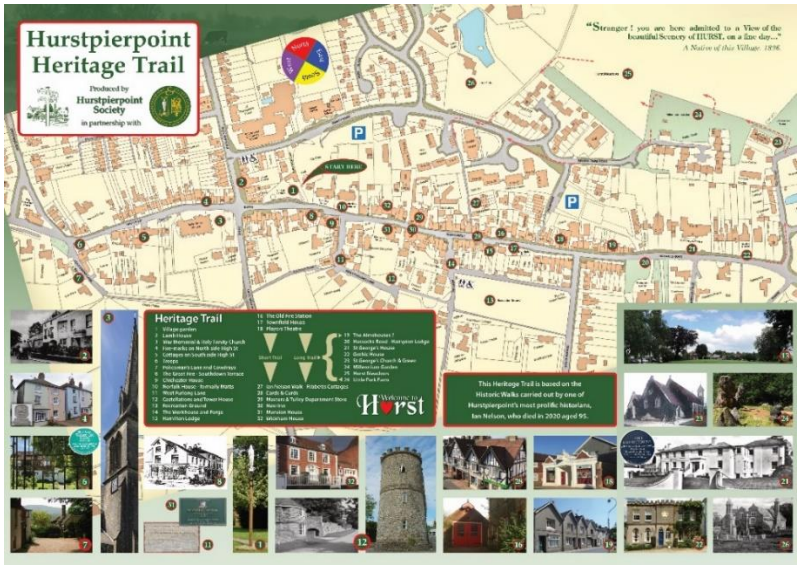
Christmas Lights

Probably the most well-received Community Engagement initiative of the last few years has been the purchase and installation of the magnificent Christmas tree that stands proudly in the Hurstpierpoint Village Garden every year. The lights really lift spirits at a dark and dreary time of year and the Committee agreed that it was time to look at developing a more festive environment in Sayers Common. With the help of additional funding from the Sayers Common Community Shop, we were able to purchase and install nine light motifs to decorate the lampposts in the centre of the village starting last Christmas. As is so often the case, this project was not as simple as it initially appeared with numerous permissions and tests having to be sought and implemented. Office staff worked tirelessly to get the lights put up in time and, despite setbacks on the way, we met the deadline.

Defibrillators

Following the purchase and installation of a new defibrillator at Court Bushes Community Hub and work by the Parish Council Office to make sure all units in the villages are registered and functioning, training was finally able to take place in September. This very successful training session was offered to all groups who use the Hub and covered first aid as well as how to use a defibrillator. *It is important to note however, that the units are designed to be able to be used by untrained members of the public upon calling 999.* We are very grateful to our volunteer who checks the units regularly to ensure they are all up to date and ready for use in an emergency.

Hurstpierpoint Heritage Trail



We were so pleased that this joint project with the Hurstpierpoint Society finally came to fruition with the Heritage Trail map now displayed on the wall between the Trinity Road car park and the High Street. Not only does this sign complement the paper and online trail maps but it really brightens up

that cut through! Again, many thanks go to the Parish Office staff for their persistence in finding a way through many unforeseen layers of challenge to get the map in place. Much work from Hurst Society members also went into designing and producing the map and it has been really good to see the interest shown in the Trail by residents and by visitors alike.

Events

The Community Engagement Committee Events Group worked hard to produce last year's Annual Parish Meeting which had to go virtual with fairly short notice due to Covid. We were very pleased with the result but this year the focus is on a "real" event to help bring the community together after a challenging year. We also support other village events, either through grants, through assisting with organisation, paperwork, etc. or through having a presence such as an information stand. The Parish Council successfully took on a greater role in the Remembrance Sunday commemoration for the first time last year and we are currently supporting local groups planning the Big Jubilee Picnic Lunch to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Grants

The Community Engagement Committee has the important task of considering grant applications received by the Parish Council. Priority is given in line with the Council's Action Plan with a focus on groups who provide services which directly aim to improve the quality of life of residents in our villages. We very much encourage those groups applying for grants to come along to one of our meetings to tell us about their work. As well as helping us decide where to award grants this also helps with the networking, signposting and facilitating of partnership working which is an increasingly important part of our role.

In the year 2021/2022, grants were given to a range of organisations including Victim Support, Sussex Clubs for Young People, Know Dementia, Age UK, 1st Hurstpierpoint Girls Brigade, Knit and Natter, St Catherine's Hospice, Hurst Festival Music Club, The Monday Group (pictured) and Life Centre Trauma Counselling. We aim to support a range of residents from the elderly, to the young as can be seen. It can be challenging awarding grants as with a relatively small amount of money we can't help everybody. We have a focus on supporting groups who provide services aimed at the most vulnerable and those who are socially or economically disadvantaged.

Communication

Our committee also has responsibility for developing the Parish Council's communication strategy in conjunction with the Chairman and Clerk. Our new website continues to grow with additional pages being added and new information being regularly highlighted. We hope that residents will turn to this for answers to questions from "How do I rent an allotment? to "What are the names of the fields in Hurst Meadows?" Please let us know if there is other information you would like to see added to the website.

We have also had very positive feedback on our more reader-friendly pages in Hurst Life. Over the months these articles give a really good flavour of the work of the Parish Council and hopefully provide useful and interesting information.

This Annual Report gives a picture of the range of different projects that the Community Engagement Committee has been involved in over the last year. Our Action Plan can be found on the Parish Council website if you would like more information on our plans and priorities. We are always keen to hear from residents with positive ideas for how we can better support and engage with our community. Please come along to one of our meetings or email the Parish Office if you would like to contribute in this way.

Finally, I would like to end by thanking the members of my committee, most particularly my deputy Bob Sampson who provides the longstanding councillor experience that I lack and the members of the Events and the High Street Group who have put in many hours of additional work and demonstrate teamwork skills second to none. I would also like to thank all those individuals and community groups who have worked positively with us over the last year. Most importantly, I would like to thank Assistant Clerk Lorna Cooksey whose efficiency, hard work and sense of humour are vital to the work of this committee. We really couldn't do it without you Lorna!

Claire Majsai, Chair of the Community Engagement Committee

5. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE ESTATES & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

This report covers the various Parish assets including the Village Centre in Trinity Road, Court Bushes Community Hub in Willow Way, Hurst Meadows, the Cemetery and Chapel in South Avenue, Chantry Stables (Charity Shop), South Avenue and Reeds Lane recreation areas, as well as the two public toilets and the bus shelters in the villages.

As for last year, this year has been affected significantly by the ongoing covid situation which has affected all of our activities. This has lead to reduced income from hirers at the Village Centre and Court Bushes, but has again highlighted the value to our community of the outdoor space at Hurst Meadows.

The Council's Clerk and staff have been working for periods from home but are now increasingly returning to the office. Their efforts have allowed us to manage and balance the financial issues whilst also taking advantage of some of the financial support provided by central government through West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC)

The Village Centre

The Village Centre is managed by the Parish Council on behalf of the Village Centre charity. As previously noted, although income from hirers was significantly reduced, we did receive a Covid 19 grant from MSDC which helped offset the deficit. The Hurstpierpoint Pre School did manage to remain open during the period and continued to offer key worker childcare support.

Village Centre Conference Room

During this year we have also made significant improvements to the facilities at the Village Centre, including upgrades to the public area lighting and the installation of a new facility wide WiFi, and an audio-visual system in the conference room. The installation of the audio-visual system was also supported by a grant from MSDC. These additions will allow hirers a video conference facility and much improved connectivity.

Small Meeting Room at the Village Centre

The long-term hire of the small family room at the Centre ended this year, and this room has been redecorated and refurbished and is now being offered for hire as an office or consulting room.

Other costs have been restricted to repairs such as flat roof repair at the rear of the building. This item was identified as part of a building condition survey that was undertaken during the year, which also identified other non-urgent items which will be addressed during the next financial year.

Court Bushes Community Hub

As with the Village Centre, hire income from Court Bushes was significantly reduced by Covid 19 although the Pre School did remain open during the period and continued to offer valuable childcare support. Lost hiring revenue was again supported by a Covid 19 support grant from MSDC.
Hiring activity is showing signs of recovering as restrictions are eased, and assuming this continues the prospects should improve. Changes to the lighting in the large hall area are under way to make the light levels more able to be controlled for differing events. Changes have also been made to the external patio to improve access and to allow external areas to be used by hirers.

Another significant change has been the resurfacing of the access road leading to the car park. This will be followed in the next financial year by the resurfacing of the main car park and possible installation of some external storage facilities.

Hurst Meadows

The Meadows area continued to be well used by our residents during the Covid period, especially by the residents of Bramble Park for both recreation and access to the village facilities.

During the year we have extended the area of the Meadows to include the strip of woodland called Ladies Walk which borders the western edge of the 15 Acre field. This woodland was previously maintained by the Hurstpierpoint Society who have transferred the long lease of the area to the Parish Council who will now incorporate it in the Management Plan for the Meadows and ensure the wooded area continues to provide a visual and physical boundary along that section and an essential wildlife corridor.

The rest of the Meadows continues to be maintained in accordance with the Management Plan that was prepared by Dr Georgina Judd last year. Actions include phased cutting and collection of the larger grass areas and the encouragement of wild flower meadows in Buckwilly and Bellows Nose.

The apple orchard continues to grow and develop thanks to the considerable efforts of Martin Sadler, who has added more Sussex apple varieties this year and tends and nurtures the maturing trees.

Activity in the ancient woodlands which include the Wilderness and Tilley's Copse, have included thinning of some immature oak trees in Tilleys and the removal of some intrusive plant species in the Wilderness. The removal of the oaks was funded by the Woodland Trust as part of the Lost Woods of the Low Weald and Downs project and was carried out to improve light penetration and to allow the more developed oaks to mature without competition.

Volunteer activity has increased significantly in the year, with groups under the supervision of Dr Judd being utilised to help with the weeding in the Wilderness and with some tree planting. Another group has been formed to carry out controlled butterfly observations through the summer months. Details from these observations will be fed into a national data base.

A large number of trees have been planted in the Meadows, including over eight hundred in Edgerley Field as part of the Bramble Park environmental offset, and a number in Hovel Field which will help thicken the wooded area and help with wildlife connectivity in the future.

With the limited budget available to develop and maintain the area, efforts are now under way to find funding sources through external countryside development schemes.

Cemetery And Chapel (South Avenue)

This year has seen considerable efforts to improve the Chapel building by work on the stained glass windows, frames and stonework to prevent water access. This is part of an ongoing process of maintenance and improvements to the cemetery.

Reeds Lane Play Area

The first phase of the children's play area has been completed and well received by the residents after a delay due to various issues such as funding and site preparation. The second phase is now under way, and is again subject to the resolution of drainage planning being coordinated with WSCC.

South Lane and Pitt Lane

These two lanes/roads which are owned by the Parish Council, have been resurfaced to a better standard than previously to provide a better wearing surface. Increased car access especially in South Lane, had led to a badly pitted and rutted surface through water erosion. The new tarmac surface with improved drainage and traffic control features has greatly improved the situation.

My thanks go to the members of Estates & Facilities Management Committee and our Vice-Chair Rodney Jackson for all their hard work this year. The Estates & Facilities Manager, Stephen Witchell has supported all our work with patience, diligence and good humour throughout.

Allan Brown, Chair of the Estates & Facilities Committee

6. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE HIGHWAYS, CYCLEWAYS & FOOTPATHS JOINT COUNCIL WORKING GROUP

Another year has passed and whilst things seem to be nearer to normal than they were, we haven't been able to make a much progress as we would have wished on various matters.

Community Highways Scheme
As reported last year this had been rejected, but a revised scheme was submitted to WSCC Highways last June. The opportunity had been taken to make some minor changes, both adding to and removing parts from the original Scheme in the light of experience and advice from the Highways Department. We are pleased to say that in January we received notification that the revised Scheme had been approved. The next stage is to meet with Highways Engineers to fine tune the details before they draw up the formal Scheme for consultation etc. We have been pressing for this meeting over the past couple of months. Given past experience we are reluctant to say just when any work will proceed other than by this time next year, we hope that some if not all of the work will have at least commenced. We are confident that the funding has been identified and allocated. Full details of the scheme is available on request.

Cyclepaths
West Sussex County Council continue to work on two proposals, a cyclepath linking Sayers Common, via Albourne and Hurstpierpoint, to Hassocks, and cyclepath links between venues to the north of the parish, e.g., the Triangle and future sports facilities within the Burgess Hill Northern Arc, and Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common. This scheme forms part of the County Council's "Active Travel Fund programme". During the past year a degree of consultation took place, following which WSCC agreed that work on the section between Stonepound Crossroads and Downlands School would commence during 2022/23. The route between Western Road and St Georges Place was also subject to discussion and the Parish Council continues to express a strong view that any route eastwards from that point must avoid Randiddles corner. We remain in discussions on that aspect.

Speed Indicator Device (SID)
Hopefully residents will have noticed SID as they drove passed on the Albourne Road and more recently outside the Players Theatre. Unsurprisingly more than 50% were exceeding the 20mph limit at the latter location! The SID is now on the Cuckfield Road. The SID can only be used at pre- approved locations, and it has been necessary to install bespoke posts in certain places to meet this requirement, something that proved more difficult to achieve than one might imagine. In the meantime, SID is providing us with very useful data both as regards numbers of vehicles and actual speeds. Should the latter flag up a particular issue such as consistent excessive speeding we will take this up with the local Police with a view to getting more formal action (speed traps) used, although to date general speeds recorded mean this hasn't been deemed necessary.

Tony Lank, Chair of the Hurstpierpoint Highways & Cycleways Joint Council Working Group

7. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

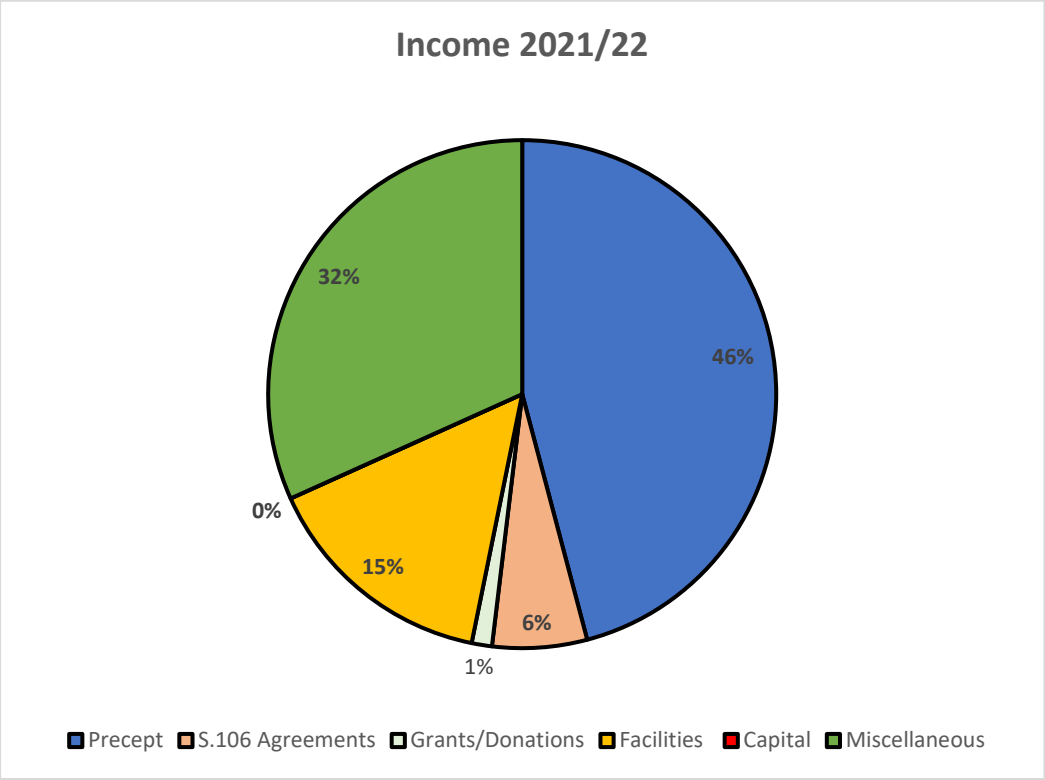
Throughout the last financial year our new budgeting structure and financial systems, which were outlined in previous reports, have enabled us to fully track the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on our budget. This has enabled us to reprioritise funding to ensure that key facilities and services for which we are responsible remained available to the community. It has also allowed us to continue with our programme of investing in those facilities, albeit at a slower rate than planned, and to start to clear a backlog of maintenance and refurbishment requirements which have been highlighted by recent estate surveys. We have also taken the opportunity review our risk management, rebuild costs, insurance levels and a full overhaul of our Asset Register, and to continue to align and validate our internal controls. The aim remains to ensure that the Parish Council is well placed to deliver within the current boundaries of the Parish regardless of the outcome of the Community Governance Review that is ongoing.

As of 31 March 2022, the Parish Council had total funds of £515,000. Of that, the General Reserves were £68,652, with the remainder as Earmarked Reserves; mainly for the ongoing maintenance of Hurst Meadows and can only be used for that purpose. The Council's policy remains to ensure that revenue income and expenditure are generally in balance year on year, including maintaining and investing in our facilities. However, one off, or capital expenditure, should be met from grants, borrowing, Earmarked Reserves, or developer contributions in the form of Section 106 funds. During the financial year Council was successful in bidding for Section 106 funds of £18,574 to implement the much awaited Phase 1 of the upgrade of play equipment at the Reeds Lane Recreation Ground in Sayers Common, and a further £16,149 to finish the provision of the decking adjacent to the Club Lounge at the Court Bushes Community Hub. The latter had been previously deleted as part of the refurbishment and rebuild of that site due to insufficient funds in 2018. Other significant outgoings, or investments in our facilities encompassed:

- Resurfacing Pitt Lane, South Lane and the access road to the Court Bushes Community Hub.
- The provision and installation for the first time of Christmas lights on the London Road in Sayers Common. The Sayers Common Community Shop also were able to give a grant to support this work.
- The refresh of IT to support the Parish Council staff, including cabling the Village Centre to enable other IT supported services and WiFi.
- Repairs to the Chapel windows in the Cemetery.

The following pie charts and table show the financial position of the Parish Council on 31 March 2022.

Income in 2021/2022



Expenditure in 2021/2022

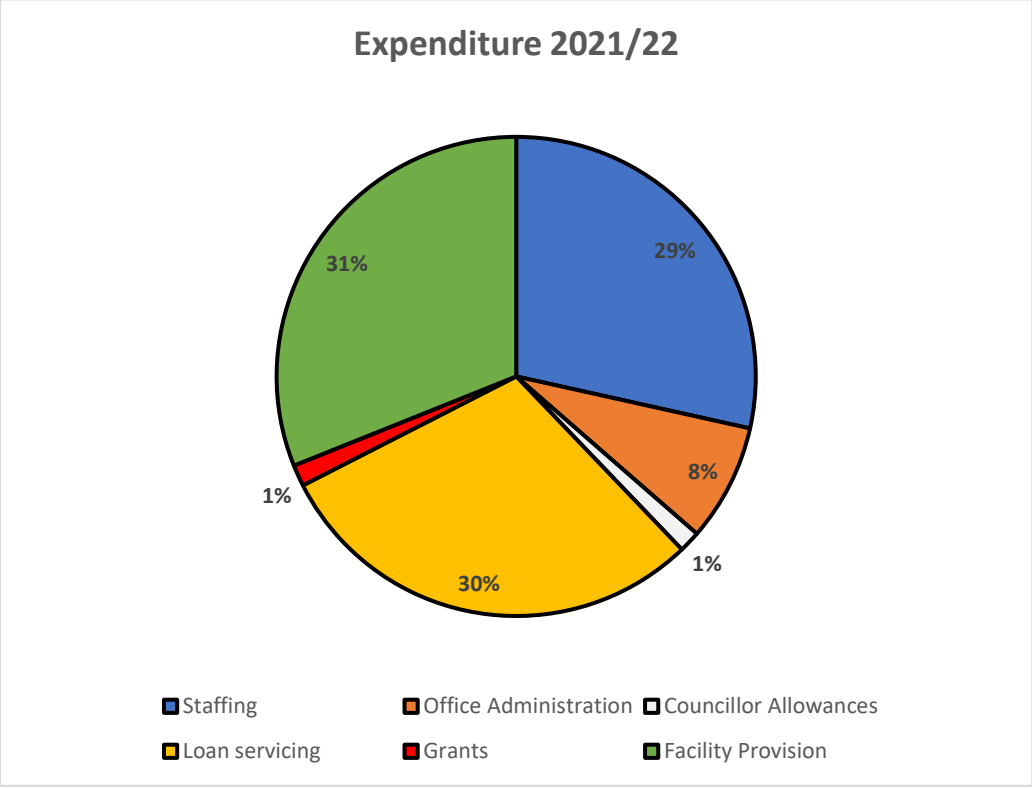


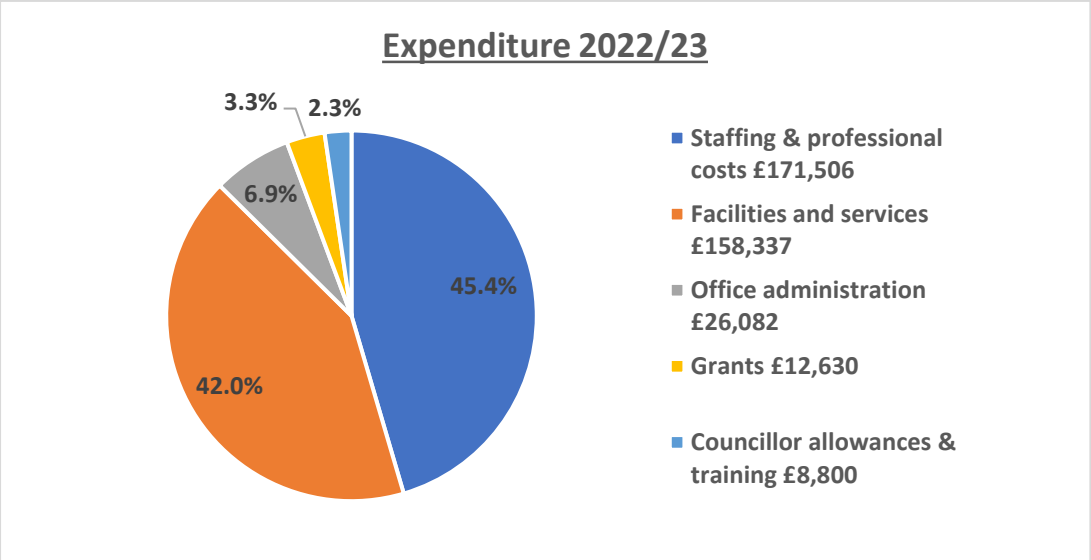
Table 1 – Income and Expenditure in 2021/2022

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council		
2020/21	**Operating Income**	**2021/22**
252,021	Precept	264,520
0	S.106 Funding	34,723
17,445	Grants/Donations	7,434
57,027	Facilities	86,899
0	Capital	0
5,017	Miscellaneous	182,960
331,510	**Total Income**	**576,536**
	Running Costs	
144,494	Staffing	151,406
20,070	Office Administration	42,106
8,294	Councillor Allowances	7,673
13,864	Loan servicing	157,539
9,271	Grants	7,667
107,842	Facility Provision	165,182
303,835	**Total Expenditure**	**531,573**

1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

For 2022/23, the Parish Council Tax for a typical Band D property will rise by 4.1%, or 6.4p per week. This, together with other income from rents, hiring fees, allotments, and cemetery fees, is expected to cover the ongoing day to day operations and maintenance requirements. Whilst our auditors continue to note that our General Reserve is below that for a Parish Council of our size, we have again agreed to not rebuild those reserves at this time so as to limit the increase. Following the receipt of funds on the sale of an easement, we also took the opportunity to repay the outstanding Public Works Loan Board loan (£157,539 Loan servicing above) for the streetlights that were replaced in 2017/18/19. This will reduce our outgoings in future years by £10,204 per annum. Thus, the rise aims to prevent any further depletion of the General Reserve, a reduction in the outputs of the Parish Council, or the closure of a key asset. As ever, any rise will not be appreciated but, along with everyone else in the community, we are once again facing significant cost increases, such as utilities, which are significantly in excess of this rise. The following is a planned expenditure budget summary for next year with a total of £377,355 (excluding the Village Centre which is accounted for within the Village Centre Charity):

Expenditure Budget 2022/2023



Since setting the above budget during the period December 2021/January 2022, and noting the year end position for 2021/22, Council has decided to redirect about £65,753 from the General Reserves to specific Earmarked Reserves. These are to address some of the shortfall and pressures in the funding that exist in specific cost centres. They are focused:

- on the maintenance work required within the Cemetery,
- road/pavement repairs and tree work in South Avenue,
- legal fees/District Plan review support, and TUPE support depending upon the outcome of the Community Governance Review,
- enabling access to Hurst Meadows not covered by Section 106 funds,
- making good an identified shortfall in the Sinking Fund for Court Bushes Community Hub,
- to support the community midwife project.

I would like to thank again the Vice Chair of this Committee, Duncan Ranger, for his input through the year, in particular and in concert with our Clerk to the Council, the revision of our Risk Management Policy, Assets Register and insurance, and internal controls, and to Sarah Groom, our Clerk to the Council, for her diligence in both preparing for the meetings and then accurately recording the outcome in a timely manner. Finally, I also thank Committee members for again maintaining a critical focus on the detail, ensuring that assumptions and priorities are tested where appropriate, but always aiming to identify the best solution to meet the needs of our community.

Malcolm Llewellyn, Chair of the Finance & Governance Committee

8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 18 MAY 2021

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 18 May 2021 at 7.30 pm using Zoom Video Conferencing in a Webinar Format

Introduction

Last year in May 2020 the Country was in lock-down due to the Government's instruction for everyone to stay at home wherever possible to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore no Annual Parish Meeting was held and instead of a gathering of electors, the Parish Council published its annual report on its website.

For this year coronavirus restrictions on social gathering were still in place in May 2021, so the decision was made to offer the annual gathering of electors in the parish a webinar format instead, using zoom video conferencing. An environmental theme was chosen as it was felt would unite electors in a common cause. The webinar arrangements had been made by a task force headed by Parish Councillor Helen Bedford and she kindly introduced the format and agenda for the evening.

Present:
Malcolm Llewellyn (Chairman of the Parish Council)
Allan Brown (Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council – not on screen)
Tony Lank, (Chair of the Highways and Cycleways Joint Council Working Group)
Claire Majsai (Chair of the Parish Council's Community Engagement Committee)
Martin Machan (Chair of the Planning & Environment Committee)
Parish Councillors: Rodney Jackson, Duncan Ranger, Bob Sampson and Julia Shorrocks
The Parish Clerk and 5 members of staff
Speakers: Colin McFarlin, Dr Judd, Charlotte Wilson, Ed Goodall, Karen Laver and James Christofides
Sixty eight members of the public

1. Introduction by the Parish Council Chairman and Open Forum:

1.1 The Chairman, Cllr Llewellyn welcomed all those present to the meeting and began by thanking the wonderful community within the parish who had responded so brilliantly to the pandemic by creating a COVID-19 Neighbours' Support Group. The Group had been recognised in the 2020 Mid Sussex District Council's Applaud Awards, being joint-winner of the Stronger Communities category.

1.2 The lock-down had restricted everyone's travel but the Parish Council had been delighted to see use of the 50 acres, known as Hurst Meadows, maximised. The villages were very lucky to have the countryside open space on its doorstep and the site now had a detailed Management Plan thanks to the hard work and dedication of Dr Georgina Judd and the support of Allan Brown the Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council. The year had presented some challenges with the unfortunate closure of the Nationwide Branch and the further removal of the ATM at the Post Office, despite a combined, robust objection being logged with the Chief Executives of both. Cllr Llewellyn urged residents to use the Post Office Counter Service so that the Post Office is well used and stays viable.

1.3 In response to questions, the Chairman concluded his opening remarks with a review of the finances of the Parish Council and explained that they were being well managed with appropriate levels of reserves for the size of the authority. In addition, an acknowledgement of the impact of the pandemic was being considered in the form of a memorial, where people can sit and contemplate or reflect on the impact it has had on so many lives. A number of questions were asked about the Hurst Meadows path infrastructure and possible cycle-path. Suggestions for possible volunteers

for work in Hurst Meadows were given. The Chairman confirmed there was a project planned to re-surface South Lane and Pit Lane in 2021 following consultation with the residents.

2. **Introduction to the Presentations by Chair of the Community Engagement Committee:** Cllr Claire Majsai explained that she had joined the Parish Council after being a member of the Hurst Meadows Advisory Group. She was inspired to try to take steps to minimise global warming but explained that the Parish Council had stopped short of declaring a climate emergency and wished to take action to make a difference locally instead. Therefore the Parish Council was reviewing and re-launching its Environmental Policy later in the year and had asked for suggestions and ideas via social media and the Hurst Life magazine in order to inform the content. This evening's meeting was also part of the consultation process and a number of very relevant speakers had been invited to talk about their work to make a difference. However, it was equally important to hear the views of school children and two videos had been made by St Lawrence Primary School and Downlands School. These excellent videos were shown during the presentations and highlighted how important the climate and environment were to future generations.

3. **Presentations:** Claire Majsai then introduced the following presentations:

- St Lawrence Primary School Video
- Colin McFarlin – Recycling in our Community
- Dr George Judd – Managing Hurst Meadows
- Downlands School Video
- Charlotte Wilson – Introducing Hurst ReThink
- Ed Goodall – The Lost Woods Project
- Karen Laver – Action in Rural Sussex Volunteering
- James Christofides - Sustainable Buildings

4. **Open forum for the public:** In response to the presentations the following matters were raised:

- Recycling food waste is being piloted in the Arun District Council area with weekly collections for a year. Also, fortnightly land fill collections are moving to three weekly as part of the trial.
- Scandinavian countries are now incinerating waste that can't be recycled. They tend to have the space for them that the UK does not. Some of the UK's landfill goes to Sweden to be burnt.
- Small changes made by many people can make a difference. Hurst ReThink aims to help residents live a more sustainable lifestyle by, for example, providing the terracycle bins.
- The Woodland Trust had secured a £349,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant to support the re-introduction of public access into forgotten ancient woodlands. Three pilot schemes hope to unlock a further £5million. Tilleys Copse and The Wilderness had been chosen as one of these pilot schemes. Initial work involves the removal of invasive species like rhododendron, and re-stablishing the native broadleaved tree species which omit pathogens that aid wellbeing.
- A "Renewable Heating Incentive" grant for heating homes is available.
- The Parish Council is not responsible for verges but supports the No Mow May initiative on its own land parcels.

5. **Further Questions:** The following questions had also been raised through the chat function and were responded to as fully as possible by the relevant person:

- What were the current plans for managing Hurst Meadows and what is being done about the abuse of the land by horse riders and cyclists. Could the Guides help in Hurst Meadows. Could there be more dog bins?
- How can residents access cash now the Nationwide and Post Office ATMs have closed if they can't drive to banks.
- Can the Post Office make its post box a priority box.

- Are there plans to increase biodiversity. Could there be a working group to protect insects from the radiation generated by wifi and microwaves.
- Can the leaves be cleared on the path from Highfield Drive to College Lane.
- The Wellingtonia in the Trinity Road car park looks thirsty.
- Are there plans for commemorating coronavirus.
- Are there any ideas for making retail sustainable in the High Street.
- How is the Parish Council managing its reserves.
- Are there plans to resurface South Lane.

6. Closing remarks by the Chairman:

The Chairman thanked all those attending and wanted to especially thank the school children for their video contributions and the guest speakers. The evening had been extremely helpful for the development of the Parish Council's Environmental Policy. He thanked Cllr Helen Bedford and her team for making the event such a success and finally thanked the audience for joining in the webinar and making their excellent contributions.

Chairman

9. LIST OF COUNCILLORS, OFFICERS AND CONTACT DETAILS

Councillors:

1. Cllr Malcolm Llewellyn (Chairman)
2. Cllr Allan Brown (Vice-Chairman)
3. Cllr Michael Avery
4. Cllr Helen Bedford
5. Cllr David Evans
6. Cllr Rodney Jackson
7. Cllr Seth Jee
8. Cllr Tony Lank
9. Cllr John Lowman
10. Cllr Martin Machan
11. Cllr Claire Majsai
12. Cllr Duncan Ranger
13. Cllr Bob Sampson
14. Cllr Julia Shorrocks
15. Vacancy

Officers:

Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Council
Helen Valler, Assistant Clerk
Lorna Cooksey, Assistant Clerk
Stephen Witchell, Estates & Facilities Manager
Hamish Raby, Maintenance Officer
Richard Lechmere, Cemetery Manager

Contact Details:

All Councillors and Officers can be contacted through the Parish Office:

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Email:	office@hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk
Postal Address:	Parish Office, Village Centre Trinity Road, Hurstpierpoint West Sussex, BN6 9UY