



Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Email: office@hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk
Website: www.hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk
Telephone: 01273 833264

Village Centre
Trinity Road
Hurstpierpoint
West Sussex BN6 9UY

Briefing Note

Parish Strategy: Route Map

For Council on 21 March 2024

Where are we:

Compared to many Parish Councils we are in a very good place.

- We have two amazing villages and village centres surrounded by good quality countryside and amenity spaces
- We have a strong and professional staffing team.
- We have strong processes and procedures.
- We have a strong balance sheet and finances.
- We have a coherent set of services with some planning for each.
- An annual Budget and plan for 2024/2025
- We have a set of Councillors who are proficient, and questioning
- We have a Neighbourhood Plan (2014) and some baseline data from 2014
- We have a number of other plans and documents supporting our way forward

What we do not have is:

- Community understanding of our role and impact (this is not unusual for government, at any geographical level)
- Staff that are experienced at options appraisals
- An up-to-date structured picture of the Parish supported by data and forecasts
- A long term-perspective on the state of our assets and how we need to invest in them
- A long-term vision and strategy with a set of coherent plans
- A up to date Neighbourhood Plan

Some potential challenges:

- An increase in the housing stock from c 3,500 to 7,500 by 2045
- If the plan allocations in the MSDC Local Plan are endorsed then it is possible that the Parish geography will change to remove the housing that will be built to the West of Burgess Hill (to become part of Burgess Hill Town) and to the housing that will be built to the west of the A23 to form a new Parish (Sayers Common and possibly adjoining villages).
- Assets that potentially require long-term investment and management.
- Continue the journey that began in 2020 from a problem/issue solving reactive mindset to a proactive mindset
- Lack of engagement from large parts of the community or who are passive service users (again not unusual in local government)

Setting the agenda:

There are number of issues that require the guidance of the Councillors.

- Over what period should we be planning?

It is suggested that a vision should be set for 2025-2050 (recognising the need to look further forward as we have two significant leases up for renewal in 2054). With a detailed 5-year plan containing objectives. The longer-term plan should contain 5-year milestones. The reason is that our most significant asset (Hurst Meadows) needs this long-term perspective) However, the core of the plan should cover the period 2025-2030

- How ambitious should we be?

It is suggested that a number of scenarios are developed. These might include

- minimise what we do
- continue with our current activities
- be very proactive and take on significant new projects.

The Council can then develop one or a number in more detail. Each will identify high level rewards and risks.

What we need to do:

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed:

Stage 1

The first job is to establish information and turn it into intelligence and establish some baselines and scenarios. It is suggested that this is completed March to June.

1. Update and draw out implications of the evidence base for the Parish
2. Asset review
3. Results from the Parish meeting (21.05.2024)
4. Complete a SWOT (building on the work completed with Trevor Leggo)
5. Defining our appetite for risk
6. Development of vision scenarios (high level)
7. Financial scenario development (high level)
8. Councillor session (externally moderated)

Stage 2

Having refined the options this stage is all about consulting our residents on their views. It is suggested that this is completed June to September.

1. Council to meet and receive evidence and scenarios and agree which to use and/or modifications
2. Design and carry out resident consultation (Possibly group meetings in each neighbourhood and/or survey)
3. Consultation analysis and implications for scenarios/vision
4. Councillor session

Stage 3

This is to develop the plan. It is suggested that this is completed September to October.

1. Identify key long and short-term objectives, with targets
2. Identify key actions
3. Identify resources and timescales for each action
4. Review actions and project plan
5. Present plan to Councillors

Stage 4

This is to finalise and adopt the plan. It is suggested that this is completed October to November.

1. Design and carry out resident consultation (Possibly group meetings in each neighbourhood and/or survey)
2. Consultation analysis and implications for scenarios/vision
3. Councillor session
4. Adoption of the plan

Resources

There might be a need for a limited resource allocation (£). This can be satisfied from within the existing professional services budget (held by the Finance, Governance and Estates Committee). The most significant resource need is time. MF has time available (and experience of data analysis and strategy development).

There are two risks (which are linked). The first is the amount of consultation proposed. This is resource and time intensive. The Working Group will consider this as one of its first issues. The second is timescale. While the information collection and analysis stage can be completed quickly, time for Councillors to consider and reflect is required. It is envisaged that a limited amount of time at some Council meetings could assist this process.

Next steps:

Form a Working Group to take this work forwards, reporting to the full Council. This will be supported by the Clerk.

Recommendations:

1. **The Council will develop a Parish strategy and action plan with supporting documentation by the end of 2024.**
 2. **The work to develop this strategy will be managed by a task and finish working group.**
 3. **The budget to support the strategy will come from budget line 5180 (Professional Support).**
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