

Annual Report of the Parish Council



1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

**Presented at the Annual Parish Meeting
on 13th May 2025 and**

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1. REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Overview

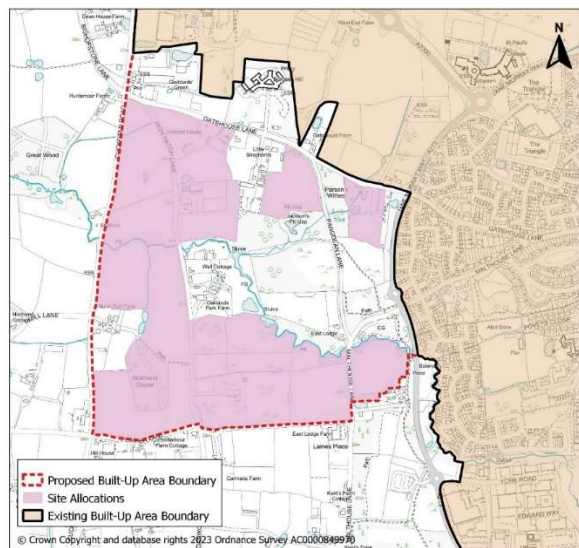
A review of our monthly input to Hurst Life over the last 12 months helpfully reminds us just how much has been going on over the period from a Parish Council perspective despite the persistent pressures of costs, insufficient funding and limited staff time. Of course, the active engagement of the community with suggestions for change and requests that are within our remit to deliver are always appreciated. Similarly, we naturally welcome both positive feedback and any constructive criticism received. Indeed, that two-way dialogue is a very helpful aspect of this community, whether through individuals or via the established societies within the parish. Do please keep that open dialogue going given the changes in local government that are planned for Sussex – more of which later.

There are the normal full reports from the respective chairs of the committees to follow, so I will not seek to duplicate that detail here. I do recommend that you read them as I will just focus upon a few areas of opportunity and concern:

District Plan Review

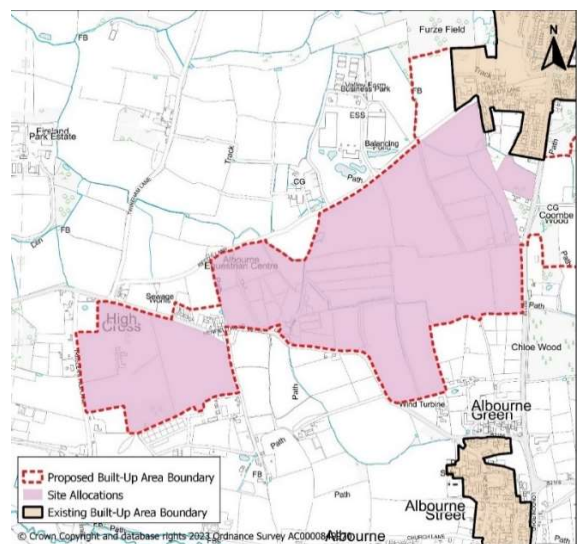
In last year's annual report, I highlighted the representation that had been made by the Parish Council in February to the Regulation 19 (Submission Draft) Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 -2039.





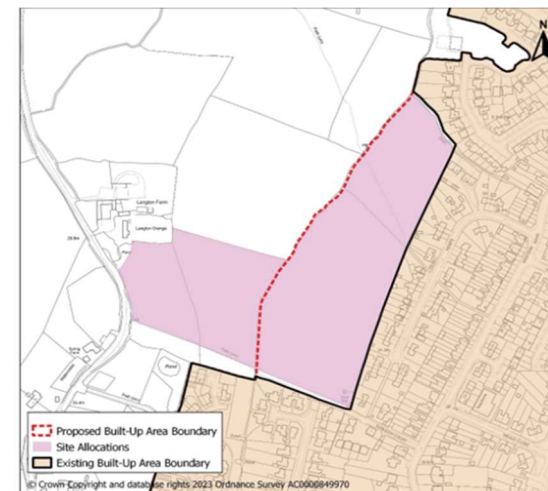
Plan 1

Our representation focussed upon the two significant sites to be built on land north of Hurstpierpoint/west of Burgess Hill (Plan 1) and to the west of Reeds Lane in Sayers Common and Albourne (Plan 2). Combined, the new sites proposed contain 1350 and 2393 homes respectively.



Plan 2

We also included the third site in which it is proposed to build 90 new homes at land west of Kemps, Hurstpierpoint (Plan 3).



Plan 3

The Parish Council's full response can be found on our website. Subsequently a Planning Inspector was appointed to review MSDC's submission of a draft District Plan, and the representations made by all parties including ourselves. The Stage One Examination in Public took place in October. We attended and spoke at the Examination as did representatives from the Hurstpierpoint Society, WILD (Watchdog for Intrusive Local Development) and other parties.

Whilst MSDC had clearly picked up on some of our issues and placed further documents in the public domain prior to the examination such as a "A Statement of Common Ground" between the relevant developers involved in the sites at Sayers Common/Albourne, the Inspector obviously had concerns over spatial strategy, the site selection process and overall housing numbers. Matters that we had also raised previously. The Planning Inspector requested further detail from MSDC, which was submitted in a timely manner. However, to date, there has been no further direction from the Planning Inspector or any timescale for the Stage 2 hearings which would plan to examine the detail supporting each of the selected sites.

Meanwhile, the current Government in February made changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) around housing numbers and the requirement for a five year land supply. The outcome is that the current District Plan no longer enjoys a five year land supply and there is a risk therefore of not being able to defend planning applications that are outwith the current made plan. Although the Parish Council still objects to the overall housing numbers, conscious that a Statement of Common Ground does not involve any input from the community or the Parish Council, we have continued to press for engagement around developing a master plan for the proposed Sayers Common development. We fear developments taking place in an isolated manner by respective developers with no overall community coherence or supporting infrastructure. Sayers Common has suffered from the lack of the latter over a number of recent developments. We will keep you appraised as this matter continues to develop.

A number of individuals have also questioned the way forward with our current Neighbourhood Plan which in 2014 was one of the earliest in the Country to be “made”. It is still valid and carries weight when the planning authority evaluates planning applications. However, changes in the NPPF in 2019 mean that a Neighbourhood Plan now has to follow the District Plan when proposed sites for development are considered and evaluated. As such, the current plan is to revisit our existing Neighbourhood Plan once the way forward with the new District Plan is known.

Parish Council Strategy

I reported last year that as a part of the work to achieve the existing Parish Neighbourhood Plan in 2015, the Parish Council developed what became known as the “Parish Community Life Plan 2016-2021”. It has underpinned much of what has been delivered and supported by the Parish Council during that period and since. It was due a refresh in 2021/22, but the COVID 19 Pandemic intervened. At last year’s Annual Parish Meeting we asked the following questions:



The results were fed into our Strategy Working Group who had also baselined what comprises our Parish across a number of metrics ranging from people to dwellings, to businesses and the environment. The aim being to develop a plan for the next 5-10 years and beyond to not only support our assets, but also to confirm our outputs. The next step was to consult with our community. Given the changes now being proposed to the local authority structures within Sussex we have decided to hold off from any public consultation at this time. Instead, we will consolidate our existing structures and processes drawing upon the detail identified to date and recommendations made. In due course, we may be able to coordinate the consultation on both our future Strategy and Neighbourhood Plan in parallel.

Facilities & Services

The details explaining how we maintain our current outputs, support current facilities and aim to improve them in the face of continuing financial pressures are elsewhere in this report. Last year we reported that this challenge had been increased by a spate of vandalism across the estate. Despite best efforts, that vandalism has grown in value for both staff time

and direct costs to repair. To date the direct costs alone have amounted to some £30,000, or nearly 10% of the Council Tax collected for the Parish Council. The most recent incident included 10 streetlights being smashed in the Willow Way area with a cost to repair of nearly £11,000. These are not victimless crimes. Those funds must be found from other services, projects, or result in much bigger increases in Council Tax. Once again, your support in helping to reduce vandalism within the Parish would be appreciated.

County and District Council Tax rises remain capped at 3% pa, unless the council has adult social care responsibilities when a further 2% rise applies, or where a referendum is held to show support for a higher increase. Parish and town councils do not face the same cap on rises in Council Tax, so there are currently opportunities for parish and town councils to take on the funding and delivery of non-statutory services from those authorities, especially if those communities want those services to continue. Last year, as one of the examples, I highlighted the opportunity that the disposal of the Methodist Church gave the community.

On 20 March 2025, the old Methodist Church at 42 Cuckfield Road, Hurstpierpoint, was sold at auction. The Church closed in December 2023. In



response to requests from residents and local community groups, the Parish Council was able to register the building as an asset of community value in February 2024.

Although there are a number of

good-sized halls for hire in the parish, there is still a high demand for large hall spaces for all types of community activities. Despite the potential cost of the building, the Parish Council recognised what a fantastic asset it would be

for the community to satisfy this unmet need. The Parish Council also considered taking out a loan to purchase the old Church.

Unfortunately, we and our surveyor were not permitted access to the building until early 2025 when the disposal of the Methodist Church was finally placed in the hands of auctioneer. A valuation, building condition survey and structural survey were undertaken in short order to ensure the building could be refurbished.

On 13 March 2025, we agreed to put in an offer to purchase the venue for a price that was considered affordable and fair for council taxpayers. Sadly, this offer was not accepted, so the building was unable to be saved for community use. It subsequently sold at auction for only marginally more than our initial offer and within the range of value that we considered would be affordable given the work required to bring it back into use. Assuming the current sale goes through, we anticipate much interest in how the land and building are developed in the future. The Parish Council is now looking at other options to satisfy the unmet need for more larger halls within the Parish.

Devolution

Devolution is expected to be implemented in May 2026 with a Mayor for Sussex and a Combined Authority. This will be followed in May 2027 with the formation of 3 new shadow unitary authorities which in May 2028 will replace the current County and District Councils within Sussex. As part of that restructuring there will be a chance to further rebalance services and facilities for which Parish and Town Councils are responsible. This may enable clearer lines of responsibility and accountability within the Parish. For example, the Parish Council divesting itself of the 138 streetlights that are identical to the adjacent ones that are maintained by WSCC, but instead taking on play areas, some community facilities and recreation grounds that are currently the responsibility of MSDC.

Undoubtedly, given the current cost pressures within local government there will also be some non-statutory services that might be at risk in this change process that may be ceased at the new unitary authority level. But, at Parish Council level they may still be deemed important enough by the community

for the Parish Council to consider – subject to the necessary funding being identified. The supporting detail for these changes will develop over the forthcoming year and your engagement, feedback and support will be critical.

Highways, Cycleways & Footpaths

This area is not covered by other Chair reports and is not within the direct control of the Parish Council but one that we aim to influence and contribute to on behalf of residents and other organisations as appropriate.

More than 20 years since the first Sustrans study and subsequent proposals, the section of the east/west cycle route from Sayers Common to Hassocks that is within Hurstpierpoint has been delivered by WSCC



contractors. The shared space through Hurst Meadows has provided a more accessible all-weather surface for all, from pedestrians and cyclists to those with mobility issues. Another section is now proposed from St George's Lane to Highfield Drive that requires the conversion of the current footpath to a

shared use track. The existing footpath is very poor and uneven which makes the route inaccessible to many and a new full width surface will make it easier for everyone. This link is currently subject to further consultation as a WSCC Active Travel project. The requirement for a similar connection to The Triangle and the new Centre for Outdoor Sport remains within the Burgess Hill People and Connectivity Programme and funding becoming available.

Due to overwhelming public support, the extension of the 20 mph zone in Hurstpierpoint has been approved for the feasibility and design stage by WSCC. Their current aim is to complete the feasibility and design process through 2025/26, and then to propose the scheme for delivery as part of the construction programme 2026/27, subject to the funding being available.

This is good news and the Parish Council hope to work with the design engineers to develop the best possible scheme for the village.

Following a successful traffic regulation order application, the speed limit on roads leading to the 20 mph zone around Hurstpierpoint College has now all been harmonised at 30 mph. In response to safety concerns expressed by residents and local groups, the Parish Council has also requested additional parking restrictions in Trinity Road and Brown Twins Road. If approved the aim is to give pedestrians and drivers better visibility at road junctions and to ensure that the road is kept clear for emergency vehicles.

Further to requests from many parties, the Parish Council applied for an all-weather footpath along Chalkers Lane and College Lane to Hurst College, but WSCC found that there was not enough verge width to include a path from Hassocks Road to the College, or from Cuckfield Road to the College. Instead, the footpath from Cuckfield Road to the College that runs along the south and east side of Fairfield Recreation Ground, through Tilley's Copse and across fields, and along the west side of the College, will be upgraded in Summer 2025.

Finally, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) plans to impose parking charges in village carparks, including Trinity Road and Brown Twins. The Parish Council



strongly opposed these proposals and submitted a formal objection, which can be viewed here:

<https://www.hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk/parish-council-response-to-msdc-parking-charges-proposals>. On 10

March, Mid Sussex District Council's (MSDC) Cabinet agreed the introduction of

parking charges. A statutory consultation will follow, and the Parish Council will keep you informed as to how and when you can share your view. The charges are currently planned to take effect in December this year.

Councillors

With the additional Councillors that were co-opted in the previous year we started this period with a full complement of 15 – a position that we have not been in for a while. This has enabled the Council to broaden its reach and the work that it undertakes on behalf of the community; very much drawing upon the skills and abilities of the new councillors. Unfortunately, two of those councillors have subsequently resigned. Mark Froud led on work of our Strategy Working Group. I want to thank him especially for his considerable input into baselining the data that the Council holds upon its community. This detail has already placed us in a better position in a number of areas such as in responding to the developments around the draft District Plan and even MSDC's plans to commence charging within their car parks. Thankfully he has also agreed to assist the Council on a voluntary basis when we need to draw upon his considerable experience and skills that are pertinent to the business of this Council. We have subsequently been able to co-opt a further councillor, and we very much welcome Helena Browne to the team.

More recently, Barry Forster has resigned. He subsequently led on the Strategy Working Group. I want to thank him for his considerable efforts in drawing together a nascent strategy and identifying the needs and means to restructure the way in which this Council enables its business in response to the community defined outputs that we should deliver. But in particular, for enabling further channels of communication with the Sayers Common community. Barry's vacancy will be advertised in due course. Thank you to both former Councillors for their valued input to this Council.

With the end of the Council year, I wish to thank my fellow councillors for their continued support, feedback of all types, and advice during my tenure as Chairman. My thanks to Claire Majsai as both Vice Chair of the Parish Council and Chair of the Community Engagement Committee who continues to focus upon all aspects of engagement with the community, but has also found time to chair other key working groups, such as Hurst Meadows, Events, and Sustainability. I thank Julia Shorrocks, Chair of Planning Committee for ensuring that the Parish Council as a Statutory Consultee engages in a constructive and consistent manner with the Local Planning Authority, and Duncan Ranger, who is the Chair of the Finance, Governance and Estates Committee that enables all the outputs of the Parish Council.

External Assistance

The Parish Council could not deliver or support the community without the invaluable assistance of a growing band of volunteers, or organisations who share in achieving similar objectives. The past year has once again seen students from Hurstpierpoint College on their Community Action Day undertaking work within Hurst Meadows:



This time they assisted in removing plastic tree guards from the developing hedge and tree whips, thus giving the plants room to expand and grow and removing plastic waste from the Meadows. Other volunteers have been recording butterfly sightings within the Hurst Meadows, an excellent indicator of the health of the meadows, or removing tree guards from other areas such as Edgerley Meadow and Hovel Field, and assisting in the Heritage Apple Orchard. Thank you to one and all!

Parish Council Staff

The Council continues to be supported by a small staff of five full and part-time staff. The team is proficiently led by Sarah Groom, the Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer. Our Assistant Clerks are Helen Valler (until January 2025), Gemma Porteous (from January 2025) and Viv Aloy. Whilst the Estates and Facilities Manager is Stephen Witchell, and the Maintenance Officer is Hamish Raby.

We are very lucky to have such an able and enthusiastic team who regularly go the extra mile to meet both the planned and unplanned demands of the Council and residents alike. Indeed, their individual skills are also recognized by others. Helen was successful in gaining an advancement to the position of Deputy Clerk with Hassocks Parish Council. We congratulate her on her appointment – very much our loss and Hassock’s gain.

We welcome Gemma to the team as her replacement. She has certainly “hit the ground running” and we are very much benefiting from her efforts. On behalf of the Council, I very much thank the team for their commitment, perseverance often in the face of adversity, and their focus on delivering both for the community and the aims of the Council. Thank you.



Malcolm Llewellyn, Chairman of the Council

2. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee for both Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) and the South Downs National Park (SDNP) who make the planning decisions. The job of the Parish Council’s Planning Committee is to make representations on behalf of the Council to these bodies, but it is these bodies who make the planning decisions.

Residents can find the committee on the first Monday of every month, in the village centre at 7.30pm, sifting through the various applications that have been made by residents to alter homes, build new ones, change layouts and fell trees. We study the plans and make a decision over whether we believe MSDC should or should not give permission for the homeowner to go ahead with their plans. We always listen to residents’ concerns and do our best to support the views of people who attend, whether they are for or against the application.

Occasionally there are more complicated applications from developers looking to build large volumes of housing on our village. The future looks as though there will be more of these coming although the Parish Council may no longer have their statutory consultee status if other changes also come into force. Watch this space.

This year has seen 12 meetings and over 200 applications. We love to see residents whatever their reason for attending and we aim to make our meetings as friendly and welcoming as possible. We really appreciate all the residents who have taken the trouble to come and see us at work.

My thanks to each member of the Committee for their time and commitment, and to Helen Bedford for being the Vice Chair. The committee would like to thank both Helen Valler and more recently Gemma Porteous for clerking the meetings and to Sarah Groom for giving advice and guidance on policies and legal matters.

If you submit an application, or just want to see what happens, please come to a meeting and introduce yourself.



Julia Shorrocks, Chair of the Planning Committee

3. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE, GOVERNANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE

Finance and Governance

The Committee sets out an action plan each year to ensure it achieves its priorities.

As well as stringent internal controls, the Parish Council is regularly audited by an independent internal auditor (twice a year) and an independent external auditor (at the end of each financial year).

The Parish Council also has a comprehensive risk management process in place. The policy and the risk assessment records are reviewed by the auditors, who have remarked that it is evident that the type of approach used demonstrates that the Council takes its risk management responsibilities seriously. A separate financial risk assessment is reviewed by the Parish Council each March to ensure any income or expenditure risks are evaluated and any action is taken as necessary.

The record of land, buildings and equipment is kept up to date. The asset register is reviewed at six monthly intervals in line with the Internal Controls exercise and in accordance with the Asset Register Policy. An accurate and up to date value of the total assets is essential for our Annual Return to the external auditor.

The Committee is responsible for monitoring all the individual items of income and expenditure, which it does monthly. Annually, the Committee oversees the review of charges, and budget setting for the next financial year and recommends the final figures to Full Council in December for the next April financial year. The majority of Parish Council income comes from the part of the Council Tax known as the parish precept.

The financial pressures that affect our daily lives have not abated. Those same pressures similarly impact the Parish Council as it seeks to maintain and improve the facilities and services for which it is responsible. Those can



include play parks, community buildings, open spaces, allotments, cemetery, waste bins, streetlights and public toilets.

The Chairman's report draws attention to the added pressure caused by the recent increase in criminal damage.

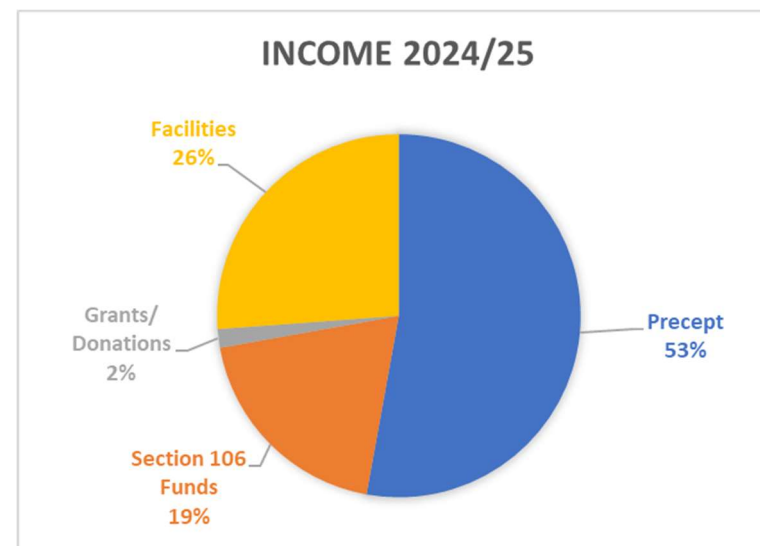
Review of 2024/25

As of 31 March 2025, the Parish Council had total funds of £563,877. Of that, the General Reserve is £114,427, with the remainder of £449,450 ringfenced as Earmarked Reserves; mainly for the ongoing maintenance of Hurst Meadows which can only be used for that purpose. The Parish 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.

Despite the continuing challenging financial climate, the Parish Council has focused on ensuring that our recreation grounds, play areas, community buildings, allotments, cemetery, street lighting, bus stops and public toilets are fit for use and available. Where possible, investments are made in maintaining and upgrading them. An update on all matters relating to our services are covered under the Estates and Facilities section.

The pie charts and table on the following pages show the end of financial year position of the Parish Council on 31 March 2025.

Income in 2024/2025



Expenditure in 2024/2025

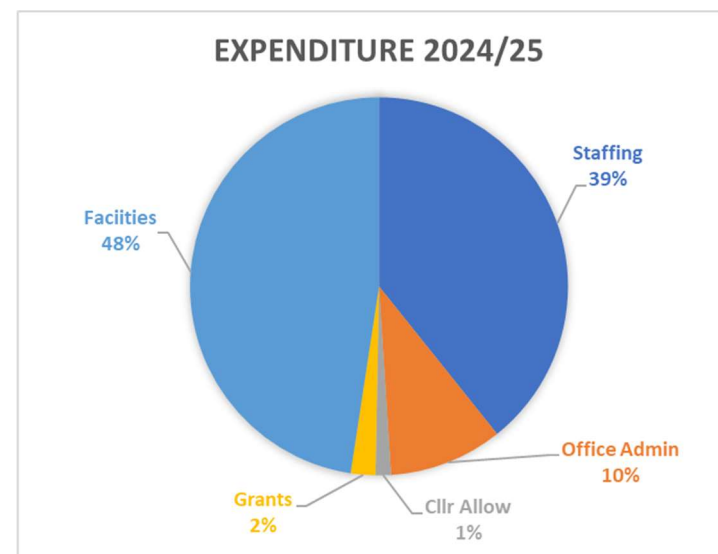


Table 1 – Income and Expenditure in 2024/2025 (compared to previous year)

2023/24	<u>Operating Income</u>	2024/25
303,638	Precept	318,161
27,112	Section 106 Funds	66,962
1,066	Grants/Donations	5,737
62,908	Facilities	90,689
0	Capital	0
0	Miscellaneous	0
394,724	Total Income	481,549
<u>Running Costs</u>		
181,361	Staffing	183,161
25,927	Office Administration	45,427
5,794	Councillor Allowances	6,123
0	Loan servicing	0
7,905	Grants	9,850
203,037	Facility Provision	222,069
424,024	Total Expenditure	466,630

In summary, the Parish Council ends the year with a General Reserve of £114,427 and Earmarked Reserves for special projects of £449,450 (of which £311,030 can only be spent on Hurst Meadows). This comes to a total of £563,877.

Council Tax 2025/26

The Parish Council tax for a typical Band D property will rise by 3.95%, or 7.2p per week to £99.05 per annum. Council Tax 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. Those fees and charges will increase by the September 2024 CPI rate of 1.7%. To fund any improvements and project work within the Parish, external funding will continue to be sought, such as S106 Developer Funds and grants where available, or alternatively earmarked reserves held by the Parish Council will be used.

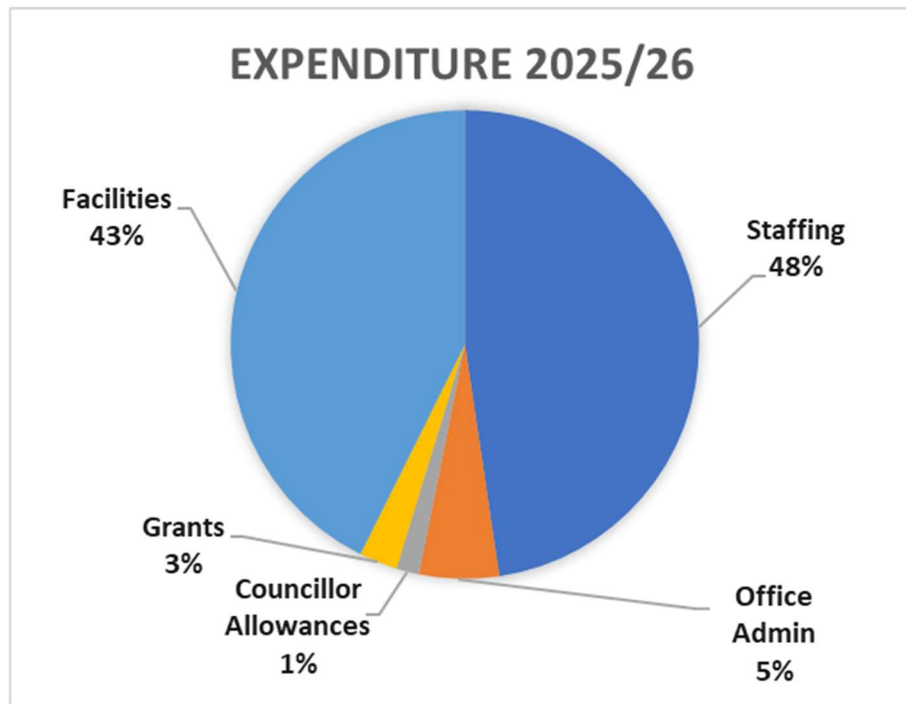
Despite the considerable costs of addressing the impact of vandalism across the estate and other price increases, the aim remains to maintain the general reserve at the current low level whilst continuing the current outputs of the Parish Council and, if possible, avoiding the closure of key assets such as the public toilets.

The following table and pie chart show an expenditure budget summary for next year with a total of £435,452 (this excludes the Village Centre which is accounted for separately as the Village Centre Charity):

Expenditure Budget 2025/2026

Staffing	£207,506
Office Administration	£23,984
Councillor Allowances	£6,800
Grants	£11,500
Facilities	£185,662
Total	£435,452

Expenditure Budget in 2025/2026



Estates & Facilities

The Finance, Governance and Estates Committee is also responsible for Parish Council land and buildings, including Court Bushes Community Hub in Willow Way, the Village Centre in Trinity Road (a separate charity), the 50 acres of countryside open space known as Hurst Meadows, the Cemetery and Chapel in South Avenue, Chantry Stables (the Charity Shop), Albourne Road allotments, parish owned streetlights, South Avenue and Reeds Lane Recreation Grounds, as well as the two public toilets in Hurstpierpoint and five bus shelters around the parish.

Public Toilets

As public toilets close around the country causing anxiety and restricting the lives of many people, the Parish Council has continued to prioritise funding the maintenance of the two facilities in Hurstpierpoint. We believe this is important, not just so that our village stays clean, but because we want all visitors and residents to enjoy being out and about and not have to worry about being “caught short.” At some time in our lives most of us will have a particular need to be able to access a toilet quickly, whether because we are caring for young children, are pregnant, have prostate issues or indeed are on the road as delivery drivers, etc.



Depressingly, our efforts in prioritising keeping these important facilities for the benefit of everybody are being undermined by repeated (and thoughtless) vandalism of our public toilets. We are sure that those involved would not want their own grandparents or their pregnant partner or their children to be in the distressing situation of desperately needing a toilet and not being able to find one.

If you notice anyone damaging our toilets or in other ways causing criminal damage in the parish, please report to the police by calling 101 or (if you wish to remain completely anonymous) use the Crimestoppers website: [crimestoppers-uk.org](https://www.crimestoppers-uk.org).

Recreation Grounds

The Parish Council owns and manages several of the local recreation grounds in Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common, including Reeds Lane Recreation Ground, which has a history of flooding and damp ground conditions. A project has been completed to install an underground drainage solution that has improved these issues. Following a recent consultation with the children

of Sayers Common, the Parish Council will now move forward with completing the second phase, installing new play equipment to make the site an even better destination for fun activities.



Five new lime trees have been planted in South Avenue Recreation Ground thanks to a generous donation from the Hurstpierpoint Society. A Section 106 grant (from developer contributions) also paid for the planting and tree guards.

Hurst Meadows

Extra benches have been installed in Walnut Tree and Buckwilly fields by the Monday Group and a further three at the top of Fifteen Acre field. A key section of the West Sussex County Council new mixed-use cycleway, that will eventually link Downlands School to Sayers Common, now comes through part of the Meadows. Both the new benches and the cycleway have proved very popular with residents and visitors.



The Meadows continue to be a popular and well used area by walkers with or without dogs. The whole area of woodland, grassland, hedges, ditches and footpaths continue to be maintained in accordance with the Management Plan. Actions include phased cutting and collection of the larger grass areas and the encouragement of wildflower meadows in Buckwilly and Bellows Nose.

Grass-cutting takes place every September. This annual cut is carefully timed so that wildflowers have set seed and ground-nesting birds have finished breeding. The contractor uses a cut and collect mower. This means that arisings are taken away thus reducing nutrients in the soil to the benefit of wildflowers and other more tender plants. With natural regeneration in full swing shown by the many willow and oak saplings present, we mow to maintain some areas of Fifteen Acres as shorter grassland. This helps to create a mosaic of different habitats across the Meadows which benefits the widest possible range of insect, bird and mammal populations. We experimented this year with a less regimented shape to our mown areas to give a more natural look.

The Heritage Apple Orchard continues to grow and develop thanks to the considerable efforts of Martin Sadler who tends and nurtures the maturing trees.



Village Centre

The Village Centre is managed by the Parish Council on behalf of the Village Centre charity, of which the Parish Council is both custodian and sole trustee. The loyal, regular users of the facility continue including the Preschool, Gym Club, Star Dance, Agnes Dance School, art classes and many other community-based organisations.

In the Conference Room, the ability to use the audio-visual system for remote meetings and training sessions is well received by commercial and voluntary groups. Important health and safety measures including the fire alarms, extinguishers and smoke detector inspections have been completed.

It has been pleasing to see that the revenue generated across the Village Centre and Court Bushes sites is back to the level expected in the budget.

Court Bushes

This fantastic venue continues to increase in popularity which is reflected in the hire income. Kiddie Capers Childcare offers much needed support to many working parents in the area. Other hiring activity attracts local groups covering a range of activities from martial arts to embroidery, as well as private parties.



As with all public buildings, the safety of users is paramount and all necessary safety checks are undertaken such as electrical tests, water safety, fire alarms, fire call points, extinguishers and smoke/heat detector inspections.

Other Areas

To save the traditional white painted wooden fingerposts found at key junctions within the parish, the Parish Council has taken ownership of them from West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The fingerposts were at risk of neglect and/or removal and another piece of our local character could have been lost. A programme of sensitive repairs has been implemented and the latest two fingerposts to be refurbished with Section 106 grant funding, are at the crossroads at Goddards Green and at the junction of Mill Lane and the Cuckfield Road.



The Parish Council owns and operates a Speed Indicator Device (SID) which is placed at different locations throughout the parish, and the data is collected for analysis. According to <http://www.think.gov.uk/themes/speed>, speed contributes to around one in four fatal collisions on our roads and kills or injures 58 young people every week. We urge everyone to be mindful of their speed when travelling through our villages.

A new defibrillator has been installed at the Sportsman Pub in Goddards Green. The unit was kindly donated by Downlands School. There are now six Parish Council managed defibrillators, which are listed on our website <https://www.hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk/services-information/defibrillators/> including at the Bowls Club, Cricket Club, Morleys Bistro, Sportsman Pub, Village Centre and Court Bushes.



Some of the other work undertaken during 2024/2025:

- The former Methodist Church was successfully registered as an Asset of Community Value with the aim of securing it for the continuing benefit of the community. Unfortunately, as outlined in the Chairman's report, we were unsuccessful at purchasing the building.
- Following the bin audit some existing litter and dog waste bins have been relocated or upsized, and additional bins have been installed where requested.
- The option to install PV cells on the roof of the WSCC Library and Village Centre is being investigated.
- The other section of the flint wall at the southern boundary of St George's Green has been rebuilt. WSCC has completed the formal consultation for the section of proposed mixed-use cycle path from St George's Lane to Highfield Drive.



Summary

My thanks go to the members of the Committee, for 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. I would like to thank our Clerk to the Council, Sarah, for her diligence in both preparing for the Committee meetings and then accurately recording the outcome in a timely manner. Both the Assistant Clerks, Gemma and Viv, manage the cemetery and allotments respectively and take all the bookings for the venues. The Estates & Facilities Manager, Stephen and our Maintenance Officer, Hamish have both supported all our work with patience, diligence, and good humour throughout.



Duncan Ranger, Chair of the Finance, Governance and Estates Committee

4. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Community Engagement Committee takes the lead on building relationships between the Parish Council and our community with the aim of improving the quality of life for everyone who lives, works, or visits the Parish. This task can be challenging – we can never please everyone! Other challenges are that we may have to limit what we do due to only having a small staff team who have many tasks, that we may need to liaise with other responsible authorities who can have other priorities, and that sometimes, implementing change can prove painfully slow. However, the committee moves forward all the time with clear objectives.

Our staff team may be small, but they bring invaluable experience and commitment. We have a mix of experienced and new councillors on the committee who again bring varied skills from life outside of the council, and we have the fantastic resource of the people of the Parish and beyond.



We are very lucky in Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common to have so many residents who give freely of their time to the community in many ways, from organising village events, to running uniformed groups, to surveying butterflies. At a time when society and the world seem so divided this gives the committee great hope for the future and we thank you all.

Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Community Forum

Over the last few years, the Committee has learnt that one of the areas where the Parish Council can be of most use to the community is in facilitating contact between all the different local groups and service providers. This provides for more effective working through information sharing and networking as well as enhancing the identification of unmet need.

The Community Forum, which is held annually, is designed to complement the Annual Parish Meeting. Both are organised by the Committee's Events Working Group. This year's Forum took place on 29 January 2025 in conjunction with Community People (previously Mid Sussex Voluntary Action.) Once again, we were really pleased with the turnout and the variety of groups represented. The Forums give a valuable opportunity to these



groups, (mostly but not entirely voluntary), to share their current initiatives with others and discuss any gaps in local provision and ideas for filling those gaps. The meeting is informal, and topics covered this year included support for people with sight loss, the role of Community People in supporting not-for-profit

organisations, West Sussex Fire Brigade's Safe and Well visits, a new youth worker at Holy Trinity Church, and the services offered by Befriended whose mission is to end loneliness and isolation amongst older people and many others. As ever, we were particularly pleased to welcome the Social Prescribers from our local health centre.

If you are involved in a local group and would like to be on our distribution list for future events and opportunities, please contact the Parish Office for details.

Annual Parish Meeting May 2024

This was held in the Village Centre with a theme of “Beyond Your Doorstep: Discover the Hidden Nature in Your Parish” and included talks from two fantastic speakers, Karen Laver from the Lost Woods of the Low Weald and



Downs, and local ecologist Laurie Jackson on the wildlife in Hurst Meadows. The meeting retained the format from the previous year with stalls for local groups and opportunities for informal networking and meeting the public before and after the speakers.

Refreshments at the Annual Parish Meeting were again kindly served by the Melting Pot Café. The Melting Pot is run by volunteers from our local churches and takes place every Thursday morning 10.00 – 12.00 at Court Bushes Community Hub. This friendly community café serves tea, coffee, cake, cup-a-soup and toast, free or for a small donation.

Parish Events

As usual, the Committee awarded grants towards popular community events such as the Hurst Festival Super Sunday, Hurstfolk and the St Lawrence Fair. We always focus our funding on events that are free, and therefore accessible, to all in our community. Both financial and organisational support was offered again to the High Street traders’ Santa’s Fun Sunday which had an even better festive atmosphere in 2024 with many people taking the opportunity to do some Christmas shopping, stroll along a Hurstpierpoint High Street closed to traffic and enjoy food, drink and live music.

We held our second Hurstpierpoint Wassail in January. Local choir leader, Jo Burke, led a free workshop in the afternoon to teach the wassail songs ready for the procession between the old and the new orchards in the evening.



Around 150 people participated in the Wassail as cider was poured on the roots of the apple trees to ensure a successful harvest the following year. With the support of Hurst Rethink and their hard-working volunteers, the Wassail was even better this year with atmospheric lighting of the apple trees and stewards to keep everyone safe on a dry but very icy night. The singing was supported by Brighton Folk Choir who enjoyed generous hospitality from the Hop Tub in the High Street.

The fun continued as the Hop Tub then hosted an extremely popular event for the community later that evening involving sea-shanty singing, a mummers play and even some Morris dancing! We have already had enquiries from as far away as Australia about next year’s Wassail!

The Events Group also organised our usual stall at the St. Lawrence Fair. As ever, this was a great opportunity for councillors to chat informally to residents. Please come and talk to us at the 2025 Fair.

Grants

At our regular meetings, the Community Engagement Committee has the important task of considering any 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 for 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 important part of our role.

As we are responsible for public money, and that is limited, we unfortunately cannot award grants to everyone who comes to us. This year we reviewed and improved the information, guidance, and forms on our website to make applying for a grant easier, with more clarity on criteria, etc.

In 2024/2025 grants were given to a range of organisations from the Sayers Common Village Society for a “flagpole-style” lighted Christmas tree, to Hurst Colts for training equipment for the under 6 years old teams (pictured),



and to our two local hospices towards caring for residents living with life-limiting illnesses.

We were particularly pleased to support the Christmas Toy Bank again. They provide gifts to the many families locally who are unable to afford presents for their children.

This year we launched a new “Sustainable Communities” grant which is intended to support projects in the Parish which are aimed at meeting one or more of the Key Objectives in the Parish Council’s *Sustainability Strategy*.

Details of all the other grants awarded can be found on our website or on the Parish Council pages of the March 2025 Hurst Life.

We also have a small amount of money for health and wellbeing projects that meet a specific local need as identified by the Council. This year we were very pleased to work in partnership with AgeUK and Sussex Vale Rotary Club to re-launch the monthly Memory Café at Court Bushes Community Hub for people with dementia and their relatives and carers.

Hurstpierpoint High Street

Community Engagement have a small sub-group tasked with liaising with High Street traders and businesses. This year the focus for this group has been on seeking and collating views on the Mid Sussex District Council proposal for parking charges in the Trinity Road and Brown Twins Road car parks. (More can be found on this elsewhere in the report.)

Youth Offer

Residents will be aware of the closure of Sussex Clubs for Young People who had been running the youth club at Court Bushes. The Committee have been proactive in seeking ways to revive a youth club in this location as we are very conscious of the impact of the loss of this facility. Whilst no solution has been able to be actioned yet, we are hopeful that we have been able to find a way forward that should come to fruition in 2025.

Communication

Members of the Committee and Parish Office staff took part in communications training, and we continued to work on improving the

Council’s communication with the Parish through our website, articles in Hurst Life, social media presence, etc. Our members proactively seek and share information that will be useful to the community, as well as using every opportunity to remind other authorities, agencies and voluntary services, of the needs of residents and businesses outside of the larger Mid Sussex towns.

Do check our website and Facebook page regularly to see what the Parish Council is up to and for information on facilities, current projects, and events. We also post on Instagram so, if you use this, please follow us there as well.



April 2025 | Parish Council News
Village Centre, Trinity Road | Hoveparton, BN16 9JF
Tel: 01273 833268 Email: office@hurstmidsussex.gov.uk
www.hurstmidsussex.gov.uk

Refurbished Fingerposts
To save the traditional white painted wooden fingerposts found at key junctions within the parish, the Parish Council has taken ownership of them from West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The fingerposts were at risk of neglect and/or removal and another piece of our local character could have been lost. A programme of sensitive repairs has been implemented and the latest two fingerposts to be refurbished with Section 106 grant funding, are at the crossroads at Goldlands Green and at the junction of Mill Lane and the Cuckfield Road.

Extending the 20 MPH Zone
The extension of the 20 mph zone in Hurstpierpoint has been approved for the feasibility and design stage by WSCC due to overwhelming public support. Their current aim is to complete the feasibility and design process through 2025/26, and then to propose the scheme for delivery as part of the construction programme 2026/27, subject to the funding being available. This is good news and the Parish Council hope to work with the design engineers to develop the best possible scheme for the village.

Footpaths to Hurst College
Following requests from the public the Parish Council requested an all-weather footpath along Chalkers Lane and College Lane to Hurst College, but WSCC found that there was not enough verge width to include a path from Hassocks Road to the College, or from Cuckfield Road to the College. Instead, the footpath from Cuckfield Road to the College that runs along the south and east side of Fairfield Recreation Ground, through Tilley Copse and across fields, and along the west side of the College, will be upgraded.

Trinity Road and Brown Twins Road Parking
The Parish Council has asked for additional parking restrictions in Trinity Road and Brown Twins Road in response to safety concerns expressed by residents and local groups. Overall, most responses supported more double yellow lines around the Heath Centre to give pedestrians and drivers better visibility at road junctions and to ensure that the road is kept clear for emergency vehicles.

Hurstpierpoint Carpark Charges
Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) plans to impose parking charges in village cararks, including Trinity Road and Brown Twins. The Parish Council strongly opposed these proposals and submitted a formal objection, which can be viewed here: <https://www.hurstmidsussex.gov.uk/parish-council-response-to-made-parking-charges-proposals/>. On 10 March, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) Cabinet agreed the introduction of parking charges. A statutory consultation will follow, and the Parish Council will keep you informed as to how and when you can share your view. The charges are currently planned to take effect in December this year.

Hurst Meadows
More benches have been installed in Hurst Meadows funded by WSCC as part of the cycleway project and installed by the Hendry Group. This means plenty of places for people to rest and enjoy the beautiful views and the sound of birdsong. Song thrushes are particularly plentiful in Hurst Meadows and are an easy bird to learn to recognise through its song. The thrush can be quite hard to spot in the trees but look out for linnets, stonechats and as we approach summer whitethroats, perched singing on the top of the bramble bushes.

Save our Skylarks
Hopefully this Spring you will have heard the skylarks singing again over Hurst Meadows – such a wonderful sound as they spiral high in the sky becoming just a dot in the far distance. Skylarks try to nest in Hurst Meadows every year between March and September. Unfortunately, though, they are a ground-nesting bird and so are extremely easily disturbed on or around the nest, particularly by dogs. Please keep your dogs with you on the paths across Hurst Meadows and do not let them run across the central grassy areas. Thank you for protecting our nesting skylarks!

Orchard Blossom Day Saturday 26th April
Celebrate this annual event by visiting the Heritage Orchard in Hurst Meadows to see the apple trees at their most beautiful. Orchard manager Martin Sadler will be on hand to answer questions about the Orchard and give advice on the best way to care for your own fruit trees. The Orchard will be open between 10am and 4pm.

Butterfly Spotting
The Hurst Meadows butterfly survey season starts again on 1st April. The volunteer team will be out every week looking for and recording butterflies. This year they will be hoping that numbers of the rare brown hairstreak butterfly increase again. The plentiful supply of young blackthorn growth in the hedgerows provides the vital habitat that they need to lay their eggs. Butterfly numbers vary every year depending on the weather and it can be hard to predict what might be seen. The largest butterfly hope in Hurst Meadows is that maybe one day we will have purple emperor butterflies. The willow and the oak trees that they need to breed are there, so fingers crossed that this is the year that they find their way to Hurstpierpoint.

Consultation on Extension of Cyclepath
Many residents and visitors have enjoyed using the first phase of the new Sayers Common to Hassocks cyclepath, particularly the section through Hurst Meadows. The shared space has also provided a more accessible all-weather surface for pedestrians and has proved extremely popular for those with mobility issues. A new section is now proposed from St George's Lane to Highfield Drive that requires the conversion of the current footpath to a shared use track. The current footpath surface is very poor and uneven which makes the route inaccessible to many and a new surface will make it easier for everyone. However, this project will require the full support of local residents for it to proceed. The WSCC Active Travel project is very much supported by the Parish Council as it aims to make it safer to cycle between the parish and Hassocks, particularly for children travelling to Downlands School as they will be able to avoid Rattlesden Corner. Please give your support for this scheme by 14th April 2025 and complete the online survey on the WSCC website: <https://yourvoice.westsussex.gov.uk/at-georges-lane-footpath-upgrade> or email: active@travel.team@westsussex.gov.uk

Our monthly article in Hurst Life is still probably the most accessible source of information as it is delivered to every household in the Parish. If you have not discovered Hurst Life yet, please have a look when it comes through your letterbox at the beginning of every month. We work hard to make our Parish Council pages as interesting as possible!

Sustainability Strategy

The Sustainability Strategy Working Group consists of three members of the Community Engagement Committee who meet regularly to review progress with the Strategy which consists of an Action Plan with five objectives:

Help Nature to Recover

Natural regeneration in Hurst Meadows is now well-established, and the planted native hedges and trees are thriving. A mosaic of different habitats has emerged through, for example, the growth of young willow and oak saplings and scrub such as bramble and blackthorn. These complement the grassland, wildflower areas, heritage orchard and ancient woodland. Birds of prey such as barn owls and kestrels hunt in Hurst Meadows as the small mammal population recovers, and volunteers have recorded many bird and butterfly species including linnets, stonechats, whitethroats and the rare brown hairstreak butterfly.



Other areas of the Parish Council estate such as the village garden are managed carefully to be both attractive and biodiverse. The Parish Council also encourages improved biodiversity across the villages through participation in initiatives such as No Mow May. In 2024 the Council agreed to join the Weald to Waves Garden and Greenspaces Network by pledging at least 30% of our land to nature recovery. Residents have also been encouraged to do the same as we seek to protect and provide homes for nature in the face of the threats to wildlife and the countryside coming from the proposed large-scale building development.

Reduce Waste



To put food waste to good use, a compost bin was installed at the Village Centre for use by the Pre-School, Parish Council and library staff. In addition, hirers agreements were reviewed to require rubbish to be taken home for recycling in household bins.

Following the previous year's bin audit and in response to residents' requests, two larger rubbish bins were installed at South Avenue recreation ground. Unfortunately, despite this, large amounts of litter, primarily take away cups, pizza boxes, etc. are frequently left in

these areas. A large dog waste bin has been installed at Reeds Lane and a dog waste bin and litter bin relocated from Bellows Nose to Langton Lane.

Despite this, sadly, as in so many places across the country, we still see full dog poo bags left on the ground and on trees and fences around the villages, even in our most beautiful countryside.

We continue to monitor our water use and to reduce this, water-saving devices have been installed in the Village Centre urinals in 2025/26

Increase Access to Green Spaces

The Parish Council continued to organise community nature walks in Hurst Meadows, for example for the local U3A. We are always pleased to respond positively to requests by local groups, schools and youth groups for us to lead walks in Hurst Meadows and talk about the nature to be found there.

Last year a dedicated area within Hurst Meadows was allocated for the forest schools that are run by our local preschools, and it has been good to see these very young children enjoying being out in nature. We also again hosted a group of students from Hurst College who spent their community day helping our Estates and Facilities Manager with land management tasks.

Our team of Hurst Meadows conservation volunteers continues to grow and whether spotting butterflies, raking grass or caring for tree saplings this is proving to be a rewarding way to spend time outdoors in nature. Please email the Parish Office if you are interested in joining this informal group.



More benches have been put up in Hurst Meadows this year, partly as part of the new cyclepath project. This has provided many more "rest spots" for the



less mobile and hopefully the increased seating means that more people feel confident to enjoy this lovely space. We have noticed people of all ages enjoying relaxing on the benches chatting, listening to the birdsong, or watching the butterflies or skylarks.

The cyclepath itself has provided a fantastic all-weather accessible surface for walking as well as wheeling, with fine views across the fields of Hurst Meadows to the College. It has proved very popular with residents of all ages, including young children trying out their new bikes for the first time!

The Parish Council consistently argues for greater provision of public green spaces as part of planning agreements as we are very aware of the value of access to the countryside and nature to the mental and physical health of our residents.

Reduce Carbon Emissions

The Parish Council continues to support and promote active, sustainable travel, including the provision of better bus services and the establishment of a network of cycle routes around the Parish and towards Hassocks and Burgess Hill. We have installed new bike racks and encourage “shopping local” and hence reducing car use.

We aim to make walking in the villages safer and more enjoyable for pedestrians – for example through increasing the extent of 20mph zones and requesting footpath improvements from West Sussex County Council.

The Parish Council continues to use a renewable energy provider for electricity for its buildings and actively looks for ways to reduce energy usage.

Build Resilience

The Parish Council has been closely involved in seeking solutions to the flooding issues in Sayers Common. A sustainable drainage solution at Reeds Lane

recreation ground was implemented which included solutions such as ephemeral ponds and increased hedging which also benefit wildlife.



At the opposite extreme, we continue to support increased urban tree planting which as the trees get bigger helps to reduce heat through shading. Future generations will hopefully be able to enjoy sheltering from the sun under the new lime trees that we have recently planted on the recreation ground adjacent to South Avenue.

Sustainable Communities Grant

In 2024 the Parish Council introduced a new Sustainable Communities grant. This is available to local groups and not-for-profit organisations who have ideas for action to support the objectives of the sustainability strategy. Guidance on how to apply for this grant is available on the Parish Council website.



The 2024 Annual Parish Meeting had a nature theme. Attendees were asked what was good and not so good about living in the Parish, what the Council should focus on over the coming 3 – 5 years and what nature in our Parish meant to them. Many residents commented on the sense of community, range of shops on the High Street and the easy access to countryside and nature. On the negative side comments related to a lack of public transport, particularly in the evenings and to the Triangle Leisure Centre and Princess Royal Hospital, concerns over traffic and the amount of new housing being built,

while still being too expensive for young people to buy or rent. Areas for the Council to focus on included cycle routes, lobbying for better transport links, and continuing to fight against large housing developments. Nature was clearly of high importance, with residents highlighting the diversity of birds, butterflies, woods, wildflowers, and hedgerows amongst the things that were important to them. This survey confirmed for us that sustainability remains very important to our residents.

The full version of our Sustainability Strategy can be found on the Parish Council website under “Parish Action Plans.” Please do read it. If you have ideas for other ways in which we could support a more sustainable community life, please contact the Working Group via the Parish Office.

And finally....

I would, like to take this opportunity to thank our fabulous staff team for their commitment, hard work and professionalism most especially Assistant Clerk Viv. Thank you also to the members of my committee - your energy, enthusiasm and ideas are very welcome – even when you all talk at once! As ever, thanks are especially due to the Events Working Group, who put in a lot of extra time, effort and ideas, (plus many Teams meetings!)

This Annual Report gives a flavour 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 do get in touch via the Parish Office.



Claire Majsai, Chair of the Community Engagement Committee

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 21ST MAY 2024

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 21 May 2024 at 7.00 pm at the Village Centre

Present: Cllr Malcolm Llewellyn (Chairman of the Parish Council) and Claire Majsai (Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council & Chair of Community Engagement Committee). Councillors and staff of the Parish Council. Representatives of the Woodland Flora and Fauna Group, the Hurstpierpoint Society, Hurst Re-think, the Lost Woods Project, Hurst Meadows Conservation Volunteers Butterfly Survey Group and approx. 35 members of the public.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Helen Bedford opened the event, welcomed everyone to the meeting and ran through the housekeeping matters. Cllr Claire Majsai explained the format for the evening and that the theme was Nature on Your Doorstep. There was also the opportunity for all present to complete the four simple questions that were set out around the room and also via the QR code on-line about the things they like about the Parish, what can be improved, what the Parish Council should focus on and what nature means to you and what people do to encourage it. This feedback will help develop the Parish Council's new Strategy.

2. Welcome from the Parish Council Chairman

- 2.1 The Chairman, Cllr Llewellyn welcomed all those present to the meeting and explained that the focus of the meeting is to update residents on the work of the Parish Council over the last year, and on listening to the local community to help shape future priorities. The Chairman reminded residents that there were only certain services that the Parish Council provided directly as explained on the "What We Do" banner but it would be happy to take up causes and lobby others as necessary. The Parish Council's Annual Report is available in printed paper copies and on-line.

- 2.2 The Chairman listed some of the key achievements of the Parish Council over the previous twelve months including new safety surfacing in the South Avenue Play Area, newly planted trees in the Recreation Ground and in Walnut Tree Field in Hurst Meadows, repairs to the flint wall in St George's Lane, a review of litter and dog bins, notice boards in Hurst Meadows, the planning for a drainage project in Reeds Lane Recreation Ground that will take place over the Summer, followed by further play equipment next year. The new east/west cycle route through Hurstpierpoint is being completed by West Sussex County Council after some twenty years of lobbying for a safer route for children to get to school. There had been challenges from vandalism in the public toilets and at the Court Bushes Community Hub to be overcome. Martin Sadler had personally initiated and maintained the heritage apple orchard in Hurst Meadows and the Orchard has been designation as a National Plant Collection by the Plant Heritage charity. A Wassail event was held in January to sing to the apple trees to help them produce bountiful blossom and apples this year. The Parish Council responded robustly to the second stage of consultation on the review of the Mid Sussex District Plan by MSDC, which sets out the policies and sites for development up to 2038, and proposes some 4,000 new homes in the local area. There were some 1300 representations received from across the District. We are now waiting for a Planning Inspector to be appointed by the Government who will review the Plan for a final time.
- 2.3 The Parish Council was able to keep the increase in its part of the Council Tax bill, called the precept, as low as possible at 2.97% for an average Band D type property. The Parish Council is not capped in its increase unlike the District and County Councils whose budgets are under pressure. They will be looking at their non-statutory services and alternative options for the future. For example, in 2015, MSDC were going to close the public conveniences in Hurstpierpoint, so the Parish Council stepped in and took them over. This year the budget to operate them represents 5.5% of our precept or £17,500 – so these additional liabilities if taken on will come at a cost. Other opportunities include the old Methodist Church that has now closed. The Parish Council managed to get it registered as an asset of community value and now the Church intends to sell it, the opportunity exists for a group to get together to

raise funds to purchase it for the community. Large halls/meeting places with a good capacity are in demand in the local area. If any groups are interested in joining this initiative, they should let the Parish Council know.

- 2.4 Finally, the Chairman opened up the floor to questions:

Q1 – A resident who enjoys jogging around the streets was concerned over the number of over-growing hedges forcing pedestrians and push chairs into the roads. In response, the Chairman explained that he agreed with the comment and will continue to use any influence he can to pressure West Sussex County Council Highways to improve the issue. The Parish Council has no powers to enforce this matter but had included the problem in its Hurst Life articles, appealing to home owners to maintain their hedges. It is also important that all residents report their concerns to WSCC, via their website, as they have a new enforcement team for this issue. The Parish Council would organise the cutting back of the tree on Iden Hurst which was raised as an urgent concern, immediately.

Q2 –A resident asked why the tall tree in the Trinity Road car park had been cut down. In response to the question, the Chairman explained that the tree was apparently diseased, so MSDC had it felled completely.

Q3 – A resident asked why brambles are cut back on Wolstonbury Hill but not in Hurst Meadows. In response to the question, the Chairman explained that the fields are being managed in pockets to attract the maximum amount of wildlife, so for example, some areas are cut and the arising collected for the Skylarks. Some is left for small trees to grow which will shade out the brambles. Cllr Majsai explained the South Downs is about the flowering plants on the chalk downland, and Hurst Meadows is clay so has to be managed differently. All areas have been studied carefully with Dr Judd (Ecologist). Birds especially love the mixed habitats and the talks tonight would explain more.

Q4 –A resident requested additional benches in Hurst Meadows. In response, the Chairman explained that there were already plans for four

additional benches that will be made and installed by the Monday Group.

Q5 –A resident complained about the noise made by lorries turning in College Lane when they realise they can't get to the College and requested signage. In response, the Chairman explained that WSCC was harmonising the speed limits in College Lane, Chalkers Lane and part of Malthouse Lane but will look at the issue of signage with them.

Q6 –A resident felt the magnificent old Methodist Church building should be saved and used for community activities like youth projects and possibly a climbing wall. In response, the Chairman agreed, but the funds would need to be found!

Q7 –A resident wanted a copy of the route of the new cycleway. In response, the Chairman explained the route will initially turn off Hassocks Road into St George's Lane, through the St George's Green and north of the Millennium Garden, coming back out on Brown Twins Road, down Trinity Road, over Cuckfield Road and down Manor Road to Western Road towards Albourne Road. The longer-term plan remains for the twitten between Highfield Drive and St George's Lane to be a safer route to avoid Randiddles Corner. The twitten needs to be re-designated and widened before it can be used as a cycleway. The cycleway surface will be permeable stone with a hedge through Hurst Meadows to screen it from the views looking south from the College.

Q8 –A resident asked if Solar Panels had been investigated for the Village Centre Roof. In response, the Chairman explained the Parish Council wished to include Court Bushes Community Hub as well. The Village Centre has been investigated by MSDC as part of a wider WSCC initiative to provide local nodes for generation and consumption. We are awaiting the report.

The Chairman thanked residents for their questions.

- 3. Introduction to the Presentations by Chair of the Community Engagement Committee:** Cllr Claire Majsai introduced Karen Laver from the Lost Woods Project and Laurie Jackman a local ecologist.

3.1 The Lost Woods Project

Karen Laver explained the purpose of the Lottery Funded Lost Woods project managed by Action in Rural Sussex. Lost Woods are defined as those in danger of being lost, especially ancient woodlands defined as having been undisturbed for over 400 years. Pockets of woodland can be isolated, invaded by weeds, over grazed by deer, at risk of diseases and climate change threats. Some argue they should just be left alone but humans have always used woods for fuel, food, building homes and ship building. The aim of the project is to identify woods at risk, assist the landowners to manage them and reconnect communities with woodlands and build skills for sustainable outcomes. Tilley's Copse wood was used as a pilot for the scheme. Woodlands provide huge health benefits and people are encouraged to walk through woods and notice nature such as bats, dormice and butterflies. Apps are now available to help identify plants e.g. the Flowers of Britain App or Merlin App for identifying birds.

3.2 Nature on Your Door Step

Laurie Jackson showed photos of a large number of her favourite plants and wildlife from Hurst Meadows that walkers could look out for. These included skylarks, common whitethroat, parakeets, newts, nightingales, ground ivy, the early bumble bee, wild garlic, hoverflies, treecreepers, firecrest birds, dragonflies, damselflies, woodmice, field vole, kestrels, sparrow hawks, moths (buff tips), yellowhammers, oxeye daisies, birds-foot trefoil, tufted vetch, red bartsia plant, arboreal butterflies, purple hairstreak, brown hawker dragonfly, sharp leaf lily, slow worm (a legless lizard), hemp agrimony, batman hoverfly, hummingbird hawk moth, brown hairstreak, barn owls, nocturnal bats such as the brown long-eared bats, flowering ivy and ivy bees, holly blue butterflies, honey bees and finally the redwing bird. Laurie wanted to whet everyone's appetite and encourage everyone to record what they see on the iRecord App.

4. Conclusion

Cllr Claire Majsai thanked the speakers. Cllr Majsai ran through feedback from the survey and key points raised included:

What's Good: Access to countryside, shops, friendly people in a lovely community and friendly shop keepers.

What's Not So Good: Potholes, uneven pavements, cost of housing, lack of parking, lack of public transport in the evenings.

What the Parish Council could do: Better lighting in the public toilets, better traffic management/parking, better mobile signal, fight large developments, protect the countryside.

What Nature Means to You: Birds, hedgerows, hedgehogs, don't keep cats, No Mow May.

Finally, Cllr Majsai thanked everyone for attending the event and reminded everyone to look out for the volunteer sessions and bird walks that are put on for all to attend.

Chairman

6. LIST OF COUNCILLORS, OFFICERS AND CONTACT DETAILS AT 7 MAY 2025

Councillors:

1. Cllr Michael Avery
2. Cllr Sarah Baldey
3. Cllr Helen Bedford
4. Cllr Helena Browne
5. Cllr Susan Dyke
6. Cllr David Evans
7. Cllr Rodney Jackson
8. Cllr Malcolm Llewellyn
9. Cllr Claire Majsai
10. Cllr Duncan Ranger
11. Cllr Bob Sampson
12. Cllr Julia Shorrocks
13. Cllr Annette Street
14. Cllr Lindsay Thompson
15. Vacancy

Officers:

Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Council
Viv Aloy, Assistant Clerk
Gemma Porteous, Assistant Clerk
Stephen Witchell, Estates & Facilities Manager
Hamish Raby, Maintenance Officer

Contact Details:

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

Tel:	01273 833264
Email:	office@hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk
Postal Address:	Parish Office, Village Centre Trinity Road, Hurstpierpoint West Sussex, BN6 9UY

7. EVENT FEEDBACK

We would really appreciate your feedback on the event. Please complete the form below and hand it to a member of staff, or you can respond online:
<https://www.hurstpierpoint-pc.gov.uk/apmfeedback/>

How did you hear about the event?

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Poster
- ☐ Word of Mouth
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Was the length of the event:

- ☐ Too long
- ☐ Too short
- ☐ The right length

Do you have any suggestions for future themes?

.....

.....

.....

Any other comments about the event?

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