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Village Centre
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MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Tuesday 13 May 2025 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). Nine parish councillors and four members of the Parish Council staff team. Plus 31 representatives of numerous local groups including the Sussex Police Community Speedwatch, Fire & Rescue Service, Social Prescribers and 4Sight Vision, the Monday Group, Befriended, Use It or Lose It, Groove Movement, Star Dance, Hurst Works, Lyona, Run Club, Cycling Without Age and Ella' Art Class, the Woodland Flora and Fauna Group, the Hurstpierpoint Society, Glendale and members of the public.

1. Introduction and Welcome

- 1.1 Cllr 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 Wellbeing and what is available locally. Although there weren't very many members of the public present groups were encouraged to network and make useful contacts. The Annual Report of the Parish Council was available for all to read on the Parish Council website, and paper copies had been distributed. There was also the opportunity for all present to complete a feedback form at the back of the Annual Report.

2. Report of 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. The Parish Council's Annual Report covered most of the work completed over the previous year but he wished to highlight a few key areas of work.
- 2.2 The Reeds Lane Recreation Ground drainage project was completed last Summer and the phase two project for more play equipment was underway. In response to residents' requests, dog waste and litter bins had been audited, and new bins purchased and/or re-located.
- 2.3 The Parish Council had investigated the purchase of the old Methodist Church, which it had successfully registered as an asset of community value but had been prevented access to it until it was listed at auction. An offer had been made by the Parish Council to try to secure the old Church for the community but despite the bid not being far off the final sale price, the Parish Council was not successful and it was sold to a developer.
- 2.4 Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) were planning to implement parking charges in the Hurstpierpoint Trinity Road and Browns Twins Road car parks later this year. The Parish Council consulted residents and other key stakeholders and submitted a 44 page response objecting to the proposals. MSDC will carry out statutory consultation upon their charging plans later this year, and all were encouraged to respond.
- 2.5 The Mid Sussex District Plan to 2039 is currently on hold but last year the Chairman had spoken about the consultation phases and inspection stages by an independent (Government) Planning Inspector. The Stage One inspection examinations had taken place in October 2024 and were attended by the Parish Council, the Hurstpierpoint Society and "WILD". There has been no response yet from the Planning Inspector.

The Parish Council has been calling for a master-planning approach for the two large developments planned for the local area and has been successful in securing a meeting with MSDC and developers next week. The current Neighbourhood Plan from 2014 still carries weight in planning decisions, but once the District Plan is renewed the Neighbourhood Plan will require updating. With all of these changes and the concurrent developing plans around a Mayor for Sussex, a combined authority and new unitary authorities, the responsibilities for Parish and Town Councils may change. Therefore the plan to consult on a new Parish Strategy will be placed on hold.

- 2.6 Finally, the Chairman spoke about the rising cost of vandalism (such as the ten streetlights destroyed in Willow Way) and how it is not a victimless crime, as an increase in insurance claims may mean the Parish Council assets become un-insurable. The Chairman asked everyone to be vigilant against anti-social behaviour and criminal damage offences and concluded by opening up the floor to questions:

Q1 – A resident asked whether the old Methodist Church might come back on the market for sale, if the planning application wasn't successful. The Chairman reiterated that the Parish Council had looked to purchase the old Church as outlined previously and would watch the planning application outcome with interest. The resident felt the proposal for up to 6 dwellings on the site was an overdevelopment of the plot.

Q2 – A resident asked what the Parish Council's thoughts were on devolution. In response to the question, the Chairman explained that by May 2026, Sussex would be electing a Mayor of Sussex, which it was felt was generally a good idea, so that Sussex is represented nationally alongside e.g. Manchester and Wales. There are also plans for three combined authorities namely East, West and Brighton & Hove, which would replace the County Councils and District/Borough Councils by May 2028. The Government's intention is that these reorganisations will save money. Final arrangements are expected to be agreed before the end of this year. If agreed, there would be elections for both Parish Councillors and Unitary Authority Councillors in May 2027.

Q3 – In conjunction with the above question, a resident asked whether the Mayor is best placed to deliver strategic, sustainable development when the Mid Sussex District Plan presumably won't apply, and the Parish Neighbourhood Plan isn't applied by MSDC. The Chairman felt that a strategic level plan would be beneficial before the detail can be delved into. Therefore the Parish Council plans to update its Neighbourhood Plan once the final Mid Sussex District Plan to 2039 is agreed.

Q4 – A resident asked for an update on the plans for improved cycleways. In response, the Chairman explained that back in 2004, Sustrans identified a route to improve connectivity to Downlands School. The West Sussex County Council Safer Routes to School programme has now upgraded the Manor Road and Hurst Meadows section of the Sayers Common to Downlands School cycleway. WSCC has recently consulted residents on re-designating the St George's Lane to Highfield Drive footpath, into a shared-use cycleway. The Parish Council is particularly supportive of this as it will remove the need to cycle up St Georges Lane to Hassocks Road and round the Randiddles corner. Further improvements are planned to link the parish to the Green Circle and The Triangle in Burgess Hill, when funds become available. The Chairman asked for any suggestions to be sent in, so cycleways can be fed into the master-planning for the District Plan and our replacement Neighbourhood Plan.

The Chairman thanked residents for their questions.

3. Introduction to the Presentations: Cllr Helen Bedford introduced the speakers:

3.1 Sussex Police Community Speedwatch

Steve O'Connell gave an informative and in-depth presentation on the Police's support for community speedwatch volunteers such as those at Sayers Common, although there is not currently a Hurstpierpoint Community speedwatch team. Offending drivers are written to by the Police who check their details with the DVLA. The scheme proves quite effective on reminding drivers about their speed, with statistics showing that 94% of offenders do not re-offend within the year. Repeat offenders are dealt with under special measures which can include them ultimately having their driving licences revoked. Any volunteers interested in implementing a Hurstpierpoint speedwatch group should contact the Parish Council.

3.2 One Minute Pitches (Group 1)

Local groups were given one minute to speak about their activities in respect of wellness as follows:

- Befriended
- Groove Movement
- The Monday Group
- Star Dance
- U3A
- West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

3.3 Social Prescribers

Amelia Drake explained the role of the social prescriber service offering free advice and support for people whose health issues aren't always clinical. The service is free and is based at the Mid Sussex Healthcare Trust (in Trinity Road Health Centre, and also in Hassocks and Ditchling). People are supported to take up social and physical activities that are of personal interest to them, and so help improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

3.4 4Sight Vision

Kirstie spoke about her personal story, losing her sight 27 years ago, practically overnight, and along with the trauma she also lost her driving license, her independence and her job. 4Sight Vision Support was established 100 years ago in West Sussex and there are 22 residents of the parish receiving their support. There are waiting lists for their services, which include financial support and advice regarding accessible technologies. Modern technology is excellent for helping connect people and to help them live their lives.

3.5 One Minute Pitches (Group 2)

A further set of local groups were given one minute to speak about their activities in respect of wellness as follows:

- Hurstworks
- Lyona
- Run Club
- Cycling without Age
- Move It or Lose It
- Ella Art Class
- Mid Sussex Healthy Walks

4. Conclusion

Cllr Helen Bedford invited any further questions, thanked the speakers, suggested further networking, and closed the event. Gail from Befriended said a thank you on behalf of the local groups for the support of the Parish Council and belief in all that they do.

Chairman