

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 29th January 2024

Councillors: Abdul Bashar
Nick Chapman
Anne-Marie Cooke
Rachel Cromie
Sandy Ellis
Stephanie Inglesfield
Barbara King
Anne-Marie Lucraft
Paul Lucraft
Alan Murray
Deanna Nicholson
Alison Rees
Duncan Pascoe
Anthony Platts**
Sinead Walsh
Leila Wilson

Apologies Absent***

Also present: The Projects Officer was in attendance to observe the meeting.

66. Moment of Reflection

The Town Mayor welcomed the new Committee Clerk and Projects Officer to the council, both members of staff gave a short introduction to members.

The Town Mayor lead Members in a moment of reflection before the meeting commenced.

67. Apologies

Cllr Platts – Ill Health

68. Public Forum

There were no members of the public in attendance.

69. Minutes

The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of the Council held on 27th November 2023, were taken as read, confirmed as true and duly signed by the Mayor.

70. Declarations of Interest.

Cllr Cromie declared an interest in agenda Item 9 as she is a director of the Bentswood Hub cic.

71. To Dispose of any Business Outstanding from the Last Meeting.

There was no outstanding business.

72. Mayor's Engagements and Announcements.

The Town Mayor Cllr Inglesfield presented her list of engagements which were noted by the Council.

The Mayor thanked Cllr P Lucraft for attending the Carers Rights Day at the Dolphins Practice on her behalf and Cllr Pascoe for attending the Bentswood Hub annual Christmas party for underprivileged children.

The Mayor went onto outline some of the highlights from the list of engagements presented to the Council.

On the evening of Saturday 2nd December, the Mayor attended the Coro Nuovo Christmas concert in the Ascension Church in Haywards Heath where she enjoyed African style music and dancing.

On 7th December, the Mayor attended the Haywards Heath Town Council community Christmas Carols at the Town Hall where she was impressed with the warm and enthusiastic service.

On 12th December, the Mayor attended the Christmas Party for AGE UK West Sussex in Lamb House in Haywards Heath at which she enjoyed an 80's style disco and had 'the best of times'.

She spoke about how she had attended many differing styles of carol services over the Christmas period and was impressed with the range of talents from the Rainbows, Brownies and Guides all the way through to the professional choirs.

The mayor reminded members of the forthcoming 80's night which is to be held at the Town Hall, tickets are now on sale.

The Mayor also thanked the Deputy Clerk/RFO for clerking the meeting.

73. To receive resolutions of the following Committees:

- (i) **Planning Committee - MINS. 85-109**
The resolutions of the Planning Committees, dated 11th December 2023 – **MINS. 85-93**, Planning Committee held on 2nd January 2024 – **MINS. 94-101**, and Planning Committee held on 22nd January 2024 – **MINS. 102-109** were noted without discussion by the council.
- (ii) **Environment & General Purposes Committee - MINS. 40-50**
The resolutions of the Environment & General Purposes Committee, dated 18th December 2023 - **Mins 40-50** were noted without discussion by the Council.
- (iii) **Policy & Finance Committee- MINS. 50-61**
The resolutions of the Policy & Finance Committee, dated 15th January 2024 - **Mins 50-61** were noted without discussion by the Council.

74.To ratify the 2024/2025 Budget as resolved at the 15th January 2024 Policy and Finance meeting.

Members were presented with the budget.

Cllr P Lucraft spoke, he thanked the Clerk and the RFO for the budget proposal. He advised that the key points driving the increase in the 2024/2025 budget were inflation and staff costs. The need for additional members of staff was due to more projects coming forward, staff resilience and future proofing. He noted that the Hurstwood Farm development will increase the workload of the council staff, in the long term there will be a cemetery, allotments and country park to manage but in the short term there will be an increase in workload due to the land transfer and related legalities. Additionally, there will be other projects identified by the council last summer such as updating the council website and improving communication outreach within the community.

He also advised the Town Council had taken measures to get a better return on savings. He summarised by saying that the Town Council was trying to set a responsible budget and reminded that Haywards Heath Town Council were low in the league tables relating the average Band D cost compared to other local councils. He recommended the budget and hoped that members would support it.

Cllr Ellis spoke, she thanked the RFO and Clerk for their work on the budget but explained that she could not support the budget increase. She noted that she had attended, in the public gallery, the previous Policy and Finance meeting at which the budget had been discussed. She reiterated that she could not support either the budget or allowances increase. She noted that although she understood the reasons behind the allowances and encouraging people to join the council, she believed this is the wrong time to be making increases during a cost of living crisis. She said she was proud that over the last 12 years during her time on the Environmental and General Purposes committee the council had been able to put on and take part in events whilst giving value for money.

The Mayor asked for any other comments, there were none. The mayor proposed a vote, Cllr Ellis asked that the vote be recorded for Part a of the recommendation.

In favour	Against	Abstain
Cllr Inglesfield	Cllr Cromie	
Cllr Pascoe	Cllr Ellis	
Cllr P Lucraft		
Cllr Cooke		
Cllr Chapman		
Cllr Walsh		
Cllr A Lucraft		
Cllr Rees		
Cllr Bashar		
Cllr Wilson		
Cllr King		
Cllr Nicholson		
Cllr Murray		

In relation to part b members voted by show of hands with **all in favour**.

Members RESOLVED to ratify the recommendations of the Policy and Finance Committee dated 15th January 2024 and,

- (a) resolve the 2024–2025 budget as presented in Appendix 1, with a 12.5% rise in Council Tax and 13.2% increase in the precept (including 0.65% in the tax base), representing the average Band D cost of £69.26 per annum.**

- (b) Resolve the recommendations made by the Responsible Financial Officer to top up the following reserves for Western Road Cemetery by £6,000.**

75. To consider the annual membership renewal to the West Sussex Associations of Local Councils and National Association of Local Councils for the 2024/2025 council year.

Cllr Lucraft spoke, he said he would like to support the recommendation to continue the membership of both associations. He advised that the associations provide a lot of support to both the Town Council and the staff in terms of information and advice. He was aware of another Town Council who had lost out on grant funding because as non-members they were not aware the funding was available.

Cllr Ellis said that when Haywards Heath Town council had not renewed membership in the past it was due to lack of communication around the membership benefits. She would like more clarity on how the Town Council benefit from the memberships. She asked if members could be provided more details on a regular basis of the benefits available and what the Town Council have gained from the memberships over the year.

A vote was taken and with all in favour.

Members RESOLVED to;

- (a) To renew the Town Council's membership with the West Sussex Association of Local Councils (£1,750) and the National Association of Local Councils (£1822.39) at the total cost of £3572.39 for the 2024/2025 council year.**

76. To consider any urgent items, the Mayor has received.

There were none.

Meeting Closed at 07.58pm