

**HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL  
MEETING OF HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

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

**Apologies\*\* Absent\***

**Also present: There were ten members of the public in attendance.**

**25. Moment of Reflection**

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

**26. Apologies**

Cllr R. Cromie – Ill Health

**27. Public Forum**

Members had, prior to the meeting, been furnished with a written representation outlining the history to the Clair Hall project and the process that had been undertaken to review options so to secure its future provision for recreational activities due to its closure to the public. To support the written representation Mr Mike and Mrs Lesley Bright made a presentation on the future of Clair Hall on the basis that they felt that investment decisions needed to secure the future of Clair Hall had been delayed for four years by Mid Sussex District Council. In addition, there had been a failure generally in the consultation process and way the Mid Sussex District Council had handled the matter to date. Mr Bright stressed the importance of the Court Order to make Mid Sussex District Council go out to consultation and the fact that the Ombudsman had been involved with the issue, notwithstanding this, albeit in the view of Mr Bright that it was an ill-judged statement, it was felt that there had been adequate consultation to date. Reference was also made to the experience that residents have faced in Burgess Hill with the loss of the Martlets, the feeling in the community from comments made at the vaccination centre (located currently at Clair Hall)

With this in mind the following solutions, especially in light of the feeling that there was a strong steer away from refurbishment, were presented to the Council. In view of these MSDC/consultancy failures/deficiencies we wish to raise the following questions:

- Could the lease for the Clair Hall site be transferred to the responsibility of Haywards Heath Town Council?
- Could Haywards Heath Town Council assume responsibility for the investment planning and development of the Clair Hall site?
- In view of the way MSDC has conducted this matter, should consideration be given to taking legal advice in the form of a complaint that MSDC as a public body has acted inappropriately in the exercise of a public duty (to undertake

responsibly the High Court and community requirement to prepare in a timely manner for consideration an investment plan in order to decide upon the reopening of Clair Hall.

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In response Cllr P, Lucraft thanked Mr and Mrs Bright for their representations and the accompanying presentation. Cllr Lucraft asked that it be noted that there were a number Town Councillors in the room who were also dual hatted as Members of Mid Sussex District Council and that it should be acknowledged that there had been a significant change in the administration of both Councils due to the local elections earlier in the month. To this end, both Councils are in the process of reviewing their policies including the future of Clair Hall. Until these reviews had been completed, he would be limited in what he could say/discuss on behalf of the Town Council until the outcomes of such were finalised and in the public domain. Cllr Lucraft then stated that the Town Council felt it was important to get the right answers so a facility could be secured to serve the Town for the next forty to fifty years. Any facility would have to serve the Town with a mixture of recreational uses. Finally, it was felt that it was not appropriate, or the right time, to see any legal advice on the matter. The Town Mayor then let Mr Bright come back with a short statement to Members, 'Mr Bright stated that he understood that £350,000 had been spent on consultation/consultants to date on the matter of Clair Hall, but if he is wrong he would tone down his retrodict in the future.

**28. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023, without comment, were taken as read, confirmed as true and duly signed by the Mayor.

**29. Declarations of Interest.**

None.

**30. To Dispose of any Business Outstanding from the Last Meeting.**

Nothing to update.

**31. Mayor's Engagements and Announcements.**

The Town Mayor Cllr Inglesfield presented her list of engagements which were noted by the Council. Cllr Inglesfield stated that she and her Deputy Mayor had had a very busy and enjoyable start to their term of office and asked that their thanks to Maria Horne the Mayor's PA, for her support and hard work, be minuted. Cllr Inglesfield then made special mention of the following;

- Attendance at a number of community events. Cllr Inglesfield had been delighted to attend a number of events and pleased to hand out a number of awards and prizes. These events included the Town Councils Spring to Summer Event organised by the Council's Events and Community Officer. As part of this work, she also expressed her joy in supporting those local charities who work so hard in the community and be able to thank those people who give their time to make a difference for the charities they support.
- Attendance at the Hawth Theatre to watch Ariel Theatre Company's show.
- Being able to attend two STEM events made an impression on Cllr Inglesfield due to the talent of children in their work and their presentation skills when they explained what they had achieved. This was supported by the enthusiasm and interest of local businesses who are very involved in the STEM project and on occasion are able to offer work experience opportunities. It was also pleasing to note a drive through the STEM project to get more girls involved in science.
- Visiting four care homes to meet and chat with residents alongside the ability to thank the staff who care for their residents.
- It was wonderful to support the Town's South and South East in Bloom by going on the judging Tour with Mr Murray Crump and Mr Richard Goddard so to show the South and South East in Bloom judge the wonderful gardens and

environment of Haywards Heath. Cllr Inglesfield stated she had learnt so much about the Town during the tour.

- Proud to announce that Muster Green had secured yet another Green Flag. Cllr Inglesfield thanked the Town Council's Groundstaff for their efforts and for caring for the green. Cllr Ellis was invited, as the Chair of the Haywards Heath in Bloom Committee to address the Town Council. Cllr Ellis congratulated the Groundstaff, the staff, the Town Clerk and volunteers as there is also background work to support the application. Cllr Ellis was proud to keep the Green Flag year on year.
- Thanks to the Events and Community Officer was also conveyed for the business cards presented to Members that evening and her work to relaunch Haywards Heath Dementia Forum. Members were reminded of the meeting to be held by Zoom that Thursday and asked Members to attend if they possibly could.

Finally, Cllr Inglesfield announced her Mayoral Chairty for 2023/2024, which was Time 4 Children. In accepting that the charity was that of a former Mayor it had suffered from the ability to fundraise due to Covid. Cllr Inglesfield explained the charity listened to children and helped them express themselves and try to reduce anxiety through teaching life skills and work through life problems.

### 32. To receive resolutions of the following Committees:

- (i) Planning Committee - **MINS. 1 - 33**  
The resolutions of the Planning Committees, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 - **Mins 1 – 8**, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 - **Mins 9 – 16**, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023 - **Mins 17 – 24** and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 - **Mins 25 – 33** were noted without discussion by the Council.
- (ii) Environment & General Purposes Committee - **MINS. 1 - 13**  
The resolutions of the Environment & General Purposes Committee, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 - **Mins 1 – 13** were noted without discussion by the Council.
- (iii) Policy & Finance Committee  
The resolutions of the Policy & Finance Committee, dated 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023 - **Mins 1 – 16** were noted without discussion by the Council.

### 33. Green Paper Haywards Heath – A Plan for the Future (June 2023)

Cllr P. Lucraft, Leader of the Town Council, was pleased to present the green paper to the Council as a policy plan for the Town Council. It was stated that the aim of the document was not to answer every question but to set out a direction and ambition for the Town Council for what it can seek to achieve over the next few years. Furthermore, having just gone through the election process in May, which resulted in a dramatic change in the composition of the Town Council, it was therefore appropriate that the Town Council looked to provide fresh ideas and strategic thinking and to map a way forward. The Town Council needed a work plan for its committees and the Green Paper provided the framework for the Town Council moving ahead. It was stressed that Members live in a fantastic community and an area surrounded by beautiful countryside which was well valued. Haywards Heath is a vibrant and successful Town and the Town Council will want to see that continue and aim to help where it can to improve matters that affect the lives of its citizens. It was appreciated that everyone is living in a global climate emergency, people are suffering under the Cost-of-Living Crisis, there has been dramatic change in peoples' lifestyles in recent years, partly ensuing from the recent pandemic but also before that with changes in the way people live and work. The Town faces pressure from developers, therefore there was an immediate need in this year to review the MSDC District Plan and update the Town Council's own Neighbourhood Plan. There is a planning application from Gatwick Airport for a second runway and the detail of the development of the Hurst Farm area needs the Town Council's attention as it comes to fruition. It was stated that the Town needs an active Town Council to work for the community and the Green Paper sets

out a direction to work positively with all colleagues to tackle the challenges. The Town Council has a clear role to play in championing the interests of the Town community and it can best do this through getting involved in projects and seeking to influence them for the best outcomes for the Town. It was stated that there was much to do so there was a need to be a proactive council bringing forward new ideas, having energy and ensuring that there are the resources to be such.

It was felt that the Town has a community whose support and involvement can be drawn upon. The Green Paper will help inform the work plans of committees and the council in moving forward. Again, there were sections of the community who need the Town Council's help and it should seek to help them, there is increasing hidden poverty, there is a need for more activities for younger citizens and there are many elderly and people in care who also need help. The Town Council sees opportunities to help the broad community and involve them in projects too, hence its aspiration to see a future at Clair Hall - a vibrant venue for mixed arts and cultural activities, it seeks a partnership role in that and seeks wider involvement with Clair Park and Victoria Park too.

The Town Council wishes to work with MSDC to achieve these aims and await more information about their plans for Clair Hall and the way forward. The Town Council wants to improve the Council's outreach to and engagement with the community, it is important to upgrade the council's website and social media – particularly as it is believed that this can help engagement with the Town's young citizens and more generally by helping connect and inform people, businesses, community, voluntary and charitable organisations.

The Town Council wants to improve accessibility around Town for those with disabilities by providing better information and support and working with partners and other agencies. It wants to enable residents to reduce their carbon footprints, provide more linked footpaths and cycle ways with clearer routes, mapping and signage and improvements to the Town's street scape to facilitate safe local journeys. South Road, The Broadway and Sussex Road would all benefit from improvements which would make them more attractive to all users. The Town Council wants to work with West Sussex County Council on the plans for improved road design, in-ground tree planting, lower speed limits and should review the on-street parking regime. The Town Council would like to see better bus services. The Town Council is also thinking about how it can help further in achieving Net Zero and will bring forth more proposals to help citizens, businesses and other organisations achieve such.

The Town Council wants to reach out to our neighbouring parishes whose residents regularly visit the Town and who use its facilities/work/ shop and it wants to create a forum to discuss common issues. The Town Council is also committed to supporting its relations with our twin towns and look to improve these ties. The Town Council should be mindful of that and seek additional sources of revenues where possible and to leverage the resource of partner agencies, work with MSDC, WSCC and others. So, it should look to justify the council's actions based on the premise that they are worthwhile if they provide added social value/environmental improvement / community pay back and put money it spends back into the local community.

Additional spending on top of the base budget should be justified on these grounds.

The Town Council's assessment is that proactivity is necessary and valuable to the community it is here to represent.

The Town Council has the support of an excellent team of staff and it thanks them for their good work for the Town Council. It is important that the Town Council recognises good performance and it is proposing to seek wider recognition and accreditation for the Town Council.

In concluding, Cllr Lucraft realised that there would be some matters that Members will want to discuss and refine in detail and that there may be some differences from time to time but he reiterates what was said at the Annual Council meeting that the Town Council should seek to cooperate and to work in an open and collaborative way to tackle matters.

Cllr Lucraft then commended and moved to adopt the Green Paper to the Town Council with hope and positivity that the Town Council can achieve much for its community and asked that it be adopted as the Town Council's forward strategic plan.

Cllr Cooke seconded the adoption of the Green Paper and then the Town Mayor invited debate.

Cllr Ellis spoke against the Green Paper as she did not understand the vision and felt that it would confuse residents in relation to what had been delivered, what was going to be delivered and what was ongoing. The Green Paper was not costed, nor future proofed and included no explanation to working group involvement. It could also develop a discord between expectation and priority and heap more work on the Town Clerk and his staff, bearing in mind the biggest project in Town Council history, namely Hurst Farm, is coming forward after cross party agreement.

It was also questioned why the Town Council would want to take over District Council owned provision as the parks in the Town are well run and there is a lot more to them than just their beauty. Furthermore, she felt that pollinator and bird boxes were the responsibility of the Haywards Heath In Bloom Committee. The Environment Framework was in place, the one-hour South Road scheme was in place and had received good feedback from residents, visitors and businesses and that Network Rail had cleaned the bridge.

Highway issues around Sydney Road were in progress with designated crossings and weigh restrictions. In addition, a safer route audit had been resolved with funding previously. It was felt that there was no evidence of the lack of PSCO's and the Town Council worked with them closely and they attend Town meetings, as did the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner on occasion. Furthermore, Sussex was one of the safest places to live in the country with one of the lowest budgets. The very low tax comment does represent the previous work of the Council and Haywards Heath had been the envy of Mid Sussex with low tax taxes offering good value for money and kept money in the pocket of the tax payer. Cllrs Ellis repeated her objection to the Green Paper.

Cllr Nicholson stated that as a long-term resident of the Town there was a lot less in terms of public provision, stating Clair Hall and a lack of doctor's surgeries as an example, than when she arrived in the Town set against an explosion of house building. Where she appreciated that not everything was in the remit of the Town Council and what previous Councils were trying to achieve by keeping Council tax low, she supported the new vision and accepted that the detail needed to be worked on, so she was in support of the Green Paper.

Cllr Lucraft responded to comments made stating that whilst the Green Paper was trying to achieve was taking stock of where the Town Council is, acknowledging what was already in place, and was not ignoring those projects and initiatives already agreed. It was stated there would be the need to reset and challenge in some instances. The Green Paper gave an overall direction of travel for the term of the Town Council and provide clarity on the work and ambitions of the Town Council, which would need to sit in line with strategic policies and documents of both Mid Sussex District Council and West Sussex County Council.

Cllr Cooke thanked Cllr Lucraft for presenting the Green Paper and the strategic direction it set and stated that everyone around the table was ambitious and proud of their town which she welcomed. Cllr Cooke went onto say she welcomed the positivity of the Green Paper, its constructive criticism and looking forward to working on the detailed work in forthcoming Committees and Working Groups, then again commended the document for approval.

With this the Town Mayor took the adoption of the Town Council's Green Paper Haywards Heath – A Plan for the Future to a **vote with 14 in favour and 1 against.** With this,

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Adopt the Town Council's Green Paper Haywards Heath – A Plan for the Future (June 2023).**

**34. Committee Placement and Outside Representations**

With out comment and on advice of the Town Clerk.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

- a) **Appoint Cllr Duncan Pascoe as the Town Council's representative on the Bentswood Hub.**
- b) **That Cllr Alison Rees replaces Cllr Anne Marie Cooke as the representative on the Scrase Valley Nature Reserve.**
- c) **Reaffirmed the member of the Environment and General Purposes Committee, namely Cllrs Chapman, Rees, Wilson, Ellis, Nicholson, Inglesfield and Cooke.**

**35. Renaming of Town Day Request**

Members were in agreement to keep the name as they did not want to cause confusion and the conflict with the Fair that comes to Victoria Park each year. Members were reminded at the time of the Environment and General Purposes Committee's consideration of the matter that there was a request by Members that the Haywards Heath Past and Present group be invited to Town Day to celebrate the Dolphin Fair. The Town Clerk responded saying that the invite had been extended. A further view was that the issue be put the public in the future, accepting it was too late this year. The Town Clerk said such was in the gift of the Town Council, but any decision made could not be reviewed for six months. As a result, a compromise was made that it would be up to the Chair of the Environment and General Purposes Committee to return the issue to the committee process if he wished. As an aside it was noted that a rebranding of what is now the Miller and Carter restaurant to The Dolphin was not successful.

Members **RESOLVED** to;

**Retain the name of Town Day as the Town Council's flagship event in September each year.**

**36. To consider any urgent items, the Mayor has received.**

It was noted that Mr Alistair Porter a prominent Haywards Heath resident had passed away who was a great supporter of and Chairman of the U3A, President of the Blue Cross Charity and who was awarded a CBE for his work with the Veterinary College. Member conveyed their condolences to his wife Jenny and her family.

Meeting Closed at 8.21pm