

Minutes of the **TOWN OF HAYWARDS HEATH ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2025** held at the Town Hall, 40 Boltro Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 1BA on Monday, 28th April 2025 at 7.30PM.

Minutes

Present;

Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield (Town Mayor)	Cllr AM Lucraft
Cllr Duncan Pascoe (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr P Lucraft
Cllr A Bashar	Cllr A Murray
Cllr N Chapman	Cllr A Rees
Cllr AM Cooke	Cllr S Walsh
Cllr S Ellis	Cllr L Wilson
Cllr B King	
Steve Trice (Town Clerk)	Andrew Sturgeon (Deputy Clerk)
Helen Hewett (Assis to Town Clerk)	Victoria Morris-Birrell (Com Clerk)
20 members of the public	

1. Welcome from the Town Mayor

Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield (Town Mayor) welcomed those present to the meeting. The Town Clerk ran through housekeeping matters, including new Martyn's Law measures and stated that the meeting was being recorded for factual record.

2. Presentation by Haywards Heath Foodbank.

Heather Cooper, manager of Haywards Heath Foodbank and Babybank spoke about her experience with the Foodbank, which opened in 2012 and which she joined in 2016. She spoke about the work done by volunteers, how referrals were made, how the Foodbank operated during the pandemic and how it moved to better premises in Delaware Road in 2023. She mentioned the breakfast boxes the Foodbank provides and said that they will continue to do so until they are certain that breakfast clubs are being run at all local schools. The Babybank was established in 2023 following increase in demand. She said that in 2024 the Foodbank supported 2588 adults and 2090 children (totalling 4678). She mentioned that the Foodbank were using the Bank the Food app. She thanked people for their donations and added that demand was ever-increasing.

Nicola Brotherton, of MSOPC (Mid Sussex Older People's Council) asked a question about support for older people. Heather stated that e-referrals could be done by charities.

3. Presentation by the Mayor's Charity: The Alzheimer's Society.

Sam Swanson from the Alzheimer's Society spoke about her work with the Time for Dementia programme and how Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield (Town Mayor) had been involved. Time for Dementia involves medical students meeting with families experiencing dementia on a regular basis, to provide the students with a unique insight on living with the illness. The families involved love meeting the students and they benefit from the social interactions and by feeling they are involved with something very positive. From a devastating diagnosis, the Time for Dementia programme allows them to do something positive to educate young people. Sam added that they are always

looking for families to take part and invited audience members to get in touch if they know anyone who would like to get involved.

Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield (Town Mayor) presented a cheque for £5,850 to the Alzheimer's Society and spoke about how the money was raised, including almost £1,000 raised by Cllr Duncan Pascoe (Deputy Mayor) who ran the Brighton Marathon on 6th April 2025.

4. To agree the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 29th April 2024.

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 29th April 2025 were noted and approved.

5. Address by Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield, Town Mayor.

Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield (Town Mayor) addressed the meeting. Please refer to page 4 of the Town Council's Annual Report 2024/2025 for contents of her address.

6. Address by Cllr Paul Lucraft, Leader of Haywards Heath Town Council.

Cllr Paul Lucraft presented an update on the strategic activities of the Town Council. Please refer to pages 5-6 of the Town Council's Annual Report 2024/2025 for contents of his update.

7. Celebration of Haywards Heath British Empire Medal recipients recognised in the King's New Year's Honours List.

Cllr Inglesfield (Town Mayor) introduced two honours recipients; Marion Hemsworth, of J & M running and Mark Newey of Haywards Heath Rugby Club, spoke about their achievements and presented them each with a gift from the Town Council. Marion and Mark accepted their awards and shared a few words.

8. Public Question Time

Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield (Town Mayor) said that there had been 3 pre-prescribed questions received in advance of the meeting and these would be taken first, after which the floor would be open.

Mr Rupert Purchase raised concerns about pedestrian safety and traffic in Haywards Heath, making the following comments:

The increasing volume of traffic in Haywards Heath, the lack of signage within the town to warn motorists to control the speed of their vehicles plus the absence of a police presence to monitor traffic speeds is having an adverse effect on pedestrian safety. In particular, please consider managing traffic flow in four areas in Haywards Heath:

- *Paddockhall Road / Milton Road: no attempt is made to remind motorists of the 30-mph speed limit; there are no 'zebra crossing' markings for the safe crossing of this entire road. Crossing Milton Road at Winnals Park or at Caffyns is very difficult (accelerating traffic).*
- *Crossing the exit roads from Sainsburys / Harlands Road: motorists exit Sainsburys around a corner, often unaware of pedestrians; there are no zebra crossing markings.*

- *Crossing Harlands road at the Sainsburys' heavy lorry entrance (where goods are offloaded) is also difficult.*
- *Crossing the roads around Haywards Heath station / Bannister Way / Boltro Road: cars go under the railway bridge around a bend usually oblivious to anyone trying to cross the road.*
- *Crossing the road at the roundabout / Commercial Square / Market Place / Waitrose / Perrymount Road: there are four places to cross near to or at this roundabout, and these are always busy with people going to the railway station or to Waitrose. No effort has been made to inform motorists to slow down or stop for these pedestrians.*

Mr Purchase also spoke of his concern about litter in the town and asked the following questions:

- *Is litter collected on a daily basis in Haywards Heath? If not, what is the frequency of litter collection in the town?*
- *Will the Council consider replacing the communal waste bins which were situated in Sainsburys car park elsewhere in the town? Litter bins which were outside Haywards Heath railway station have also been removed.*
- *Litter bins in Clair Park are used by dog owners to dispose of dog waste. Can more dog-specific waste bins be placed in Clair Park and elsewhere in the town?*
- *Can the litter in twittens and in the hedges adjacent to public spaces, e.g. in Clair Park be collected more efficiently?*
- *Is Haywards Heth Town Council satisfied with the level of litter in Haywards Heath?*

Cllr P Lucraft said that although responsibility for these issues sat with Mid Sussex District Council and West Sussex County Council, these issues were a concern and the Town Council would like to look at them and take them up with relevant authorities to champion improvements.

Cllr Sandy Ellis said that the Environment and General Purposes committee had previously requested that an audit of bins around the town be completed and asked the Town Clerk to progress this. She added that around the station quarter, the TC had discussed this with Detective Derek and the Town Council had agreed to engage a consultant to look at safe passage across crossings for everyone, particularly for those with disabilities. It would be good for Mr Purchas

The Town Clerk stated that he had an email from MSDC about litter capacity, capacity collected by SERCO. This was the first stage of the audit. The way-finding safety project had been assigned to officers and had not yet been started, but due to it being raised by Mr Purchase and several other residents, this would now be taken forward.

A member of the public, Mr Laband, stated that, as a Rural Parish Councillor, he had had contact from Mid Sussex District Council stating that dog bin provision and collection was at full capacity.

A member of the public asked if the Council could work with relevant authorities and companies to ensure divisions caused by roadworks were appropriate and safe crossings were provided and spoke about the current issues on Paddockhall Road as an example.

The Town Clerk stated that the Town Council did flag up their concerns regarding the diversion route to West Sussex County Council before the current roadworks commenced, but the town's relief road was unable to be used as a diversion route as it also had roadworks on. The Town Council had expressed major concerns about the use of Paddockhall Road as a diversion and would continue to do this in the face of future works taking place on Muster Green.

A member of the public, Mrs Irene Balls, raised concerns about congestion around the station quarter and struggling road infrastructure, which would only increase with new development.

Mrs Lesley Bright had several concerns and had the following comments and questions:

Last year I asked for improvements in the safety and appearance of the alleyways leading into South Road from car parks. I asked for urgent relaying of pathways and increased lighting, and suggested that school sponsorship of alleyways could add colour and character, sadly lacking at present, to make these walkways more welcoming. I thought artwork and school logos would brighten up the walls, and give a sense of ownership to younger residents. My comments and suggestions were passed By Cllr Sujan to the relevant offices at WSCC/MSDC, whose response was positive, but no results have yet been seen. Could the Town Council please get an update?

I was concerned to read recently that MSDC are now considering a cinema complex at the Clair Hall site, and are seeking a company to progress this. Residents have continually indicated that we urgently need many more meeting rooms, including theatre space, but there is no mention of any of this in that latest proposal. I understood that HHTC had been ready to act as stewards for a new Clair Hall - please can you update us?

The Winch and Bord Developments building site in Oaklands Road to the right of the library and MSDC's offices, has been an eyesore now for many months, when work there ceased. No attempts have been made to tidy the site, and even trees that were cut down have not been removed. Can the Town Council please ask for action to tidy up this mess.

Cllr P Lucraft responded to Ms Bright's concerns regarding Clair Hall and said that the project was being managed by Mid Sussex District Council, who own Clair Hall. On the District Council's website, information was available about the procurement decision, an anchor tenant for a 3 screen cinema complex, unpins the investment from the District Council and the contracting supplier. A trusted party to take the lead. Alongside the cinema, there was to be a food and drinks venue and the project should create other community space to meet needs of the community. There may also be housing on the site, but the project will provide appropriate community facilities. There had been a lot of positive feedback to the proposal, with people also stating they would like a space that is flexible. The biggest screen cinema would also enable live entertainment with a flexible stage etc. The challenge with building a large theatre is the financial risk and no plans were received to create this and raise sufficient funding. The Town Council has registered its interest in trying to support whatever comes forward as a development and had talked about potentially putting in some resource. There was a long way to go

yet. The intention of the Town Council was to ensure the success of any project on the site, for the benefit of the community.

Cllr S Wickremaratchi responded to Mrs Bright regarding the alleys, stating that the Barclays alleyway has been added to the South Road project, which was still in development. Cllr P Lucraft stated that the Town Council would be happy to work with WSCC to try and ensure the alleyways are included in the South Road project.

Cllr P Lucraft responded regarding the Winch and Bord development, saying that the MSDC were aware of the problem and he believed they had been able to unlock the problem which had been causing the development to stall. He added that the Town Council could add weight in asking for the mess to be cleared up.

Mrs Lesley Bright further enquired about the future of the sundial at Clair Hall and whether the town may be able to retain this.

Cllr Pascoe stated that he did enquire with Mid Sussex District Council about the history of the sundial, but they didn't have much information, so he would chase this again.

A written question was submitted to the Annual Meeting by Mrs Clare Cheney which contained a number of significant variations between the account of events in the question and the report of the 2024 annual town meeting which is contained in the published minutes of the previous year's meeting. The draft minutes were published on the Town Council website, circulated to attendees and approved at this year's meeting without dissent prior to the question being asked.

Furthermore, the wording of the statement contained in the minutes of the 2024 meeting was agreed with the person in question's solicitor.

In view of this the questioner has been advised that the council will not be answering the question.

Mrs Clare Cheney had two additional questions, one to ask why the Council cancelled the Christmas fireworks which were always enjoyed by residents on the evening when the mayor turned on the Christmas lights.

And a second, to know why some of the wildflower beds have not been kept up. The one on the boundary with Lindfield was glorious in its first year but was abandoned for the next 2 years leaving a horrible brown circle of brown in the middle of the lawn.

The Town Clerk said that, regarding the fireworks, although these were enjoyed by some people, they were not enjoyed by others. Following consultations with local Cubs and Scouts groups, Town Council officers considered how the Council could support local businesses in the run up to Christmas and decided to run the Christmas fayre event instead. In 2024, a mayor event was planned for South Road, but this had to be adapted due to inclement weather. The adapted event involved children's activities being held in the United Reform Church Hall and small businesses selling in St Wilfrid's Church hall. Feedback received was very positive, so the Town Council plans to build on and expand the event in 2025, with the support of The Orchards Shopping Centre. Adding that the

main role of the Christmas festival was to support The Orchards and increase their footfall.

The Town Clerk said that the groundstaff had been tending the area but had been struggling to get anything to grow. He added that the wildflower beds had been reseeded by the groundstaff two weeks prior to the meeting and they had also replaced the stakes and ropes around the beds.

Mrs Ruth DeMierre asked a question about the cleaning budget and the Christmas Lights budget in the Annual Report.

The Town Clerk responded that this was an error and the cleaning budget had not dramatically increased, but the Christmas light maintenance budget had increased due to increased costs of fixture.

Mr Keith Jones asked whether improvements could be made to the road surface in Sergiston Close as it was deplorable. He also asked whether a countdown could be added to the traffic lights on South Road to tell people how long they had to cross.

Cllr P Lucraft responded and said that he was aware of the issues, and that the Town Council would take up the road surface issue and potential traffic light counters with West Sussex County Council.

Mr Sujan Wickremaratchi asked about open space management, (Victoria Park, Clair Park), with devolution coming along, how is the Town Council going to manage funding for these? Have you done any costings of these projects and what is the cost to the taxpayer? In the last years, we have had an increase of 18% in council tax. He asked parking charges in Haywards Heath, saying that 1 hour free parking on South Road and Sussex Road was a great help to businesses and asked why the Town Council did not oppose the increased charges.

He went on to thank Mayor Stephanie Inglesfield for her dedication and service as Mayor, before thanking RFO Andrew Sturgeon for his hard work and wishing him a good retirement. He also thanked the Town Council, staff and In Bloom for keeping Haywards Heath looking good.

Cllr P Lucraft said that local government had been unfunded for a prolonged period of time and with rising costs, difficult decisions had to be made to introduce additional charges. These parking charges were agreed in a cross-party budget at Mid Sussex District Council.

Regarding, public spaces, he said that there were big concerns around the reorganisation of local government as we don't yet know what is going to happen or who will be managing those facilities in the future. It is possible that Parish and Town Councils may be offered contracts to manage these spaces and it would be important that Haywards Heath Town Council be prepared to enter in to discussions about this. It is important to recognise that you can't get something for nothing, money needs to be

properly invested and the Town Council should lobby central government to put more money into local councils. He finally stated that car park usage in the town had in fact increased since the additional charges were implemented.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 9.11pm.