



**Full Parish Council – Minutes  
unconfirmed**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are invited to make any declaration of personal or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is to be considered.

Cllr Hersey's Declaration of Interest:

I wish to advise that with regard to any comment (s) I may make on any planning application on tonight's agenda, I reserve the right to alter my views on any application and submission should it come before Planning Committee A or the District Planning Committee, following reading the Planning Officer's report, considering any verbal update the Planning Officer may provide and taking into account the views expressed by other Members or members of the public at the meeting.

**MINUTES**

To resolve that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on Tuesday 10 May 2016 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**0050 RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 10 May 2016 be adopted and signed by the Chairman.

**TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEE MINUTES:**

TGR 24 May 2016:

**0051 RESOLVED** to receive the TGR committee minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016.

**FINANCE**

To approve the Financial Reports and authorise the list of cheques issued.

**0052 RESOLVED** to approve the Financial Report and authorise the list of cheques issued.

**0053 RESOLVED** to approve the accounts to the 31 March 2016; and

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- 0054 RESOLVED** to receive and note the Internal Auditor’s Report for 2015/16; and
- 0055 RESOLVED** to approve the Governance Statement for 2015/16 and authorise the Chairman and Clerk to sign the statement; and.
- 0056 RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Return for 2015/16 and to authorise the Chairman to sign the return for submission to the External Auditor

**REPORTS**

To receive report from County Councillor – Cllr Christine Field reminded the Council that grants were available from West Sussex County Council for conservation within the Parish. Cllr Field updated the Council about the household waste sites debate and that there were no proposals for closing any of the household waste sites, but that their opening hours would be adjusted once the results of the consultation had been analysed. Cllr Field confirmed that she was covering for a colleague at the moment so was quite stretched. In response to a question from Cllr Sarah Webster, Cllr Field confirmed that she would look further into the recruitment of a lollipop lady in the village.

To receive report from District Councillor – Cllr Chris Hersey informed the Council that £500 grant had been given for the Queen’s Birthday Celebrations. Cllr Hersey encouraged attendance at the scheduled District Plan update Seminar in July. The Council AGREED that Cllr David Colville and Cllr Billy Dye would attend this Seminar and report back to a future Parish Council meeting.

To receive and consider reports from Councillors – Cllr Mike Kirk made the following statement on behalf himself and Cllr Celia Vince:

*Both Celia and myself have been dismayed and upset by the constant stream of personal attacks we have endured since joining the NPSG, purely because of where we live. These attacks have all come from 3 ex members of the NPSG, who do not agree with the direction the NP is taking or the exclusion of some of the JF sites . For nearly a year a barrage of allegation lies and misinformation has been written and emailed to the PC and MSDC, delivered through doors to residents, published on social media, and now submitted during the recent consultation. The tone has been consistently hostile. Hundreds of pages have been devoted to questioning our conduct, integrity and judgement. Numerous accusations have been made for which there is no justification or evidence.*

*Last year Mr Terry Higham posted a leaflet through 150 doors which, accused individual councillors on the SG and the Clerk of dishonesty. Legal advice was sought and a solicitor engaged. The advice was there was*

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a case to answer in respect of the Clerk as her professional integrity had wrongly been called into question. In the case of the PC members the advice was we had to “take it on the chin”. The result after legal representation was Mr Higham had to issue a letter of apology for his conduct in relation to the Clerk who has always acted with total integrity the members of the SG did not receive a similar apology. Owing to our respecting the “Code of Conduct” we have not seen fit to enter into public interchange in order to explain in detail our position. Our relative silence has probably served to worsen the situation as the three gentlemen concerned were in a position to gain momentum through a relentless pursuit of vitriol against us individually and collectively by every means at their disposal.

We have never had chance to put our side of the argument and would like to do so now.

- It must be understood, there is a fundamental difference between this current SG and the previous one. They were firmly of the opinion that one very large estate was necessary on the Jeffery’s Farm/Sugar Lane sites. We have attempted to listen and it is our conclusion that the majority of villagers, while expressing the need for more affordable housing, do not wish to see a large development anywhere in the village.

- As soon as we joined the NPSG it became clear that the independent consultant Chris Bowden and MSDC both had serious concerns about the proposals for large scale development on JF.

- At the first meeting of the NPSG we attended, Chris Bowden advised the NPSG to rethink their proposals for JF as there was clear opposition to a new estate on the fields. We did not ask him to say this, in fact it came as a surprise that he did so.

- In late June 2015 there was a meeting attended by T Higham and P Watling and Mark Bristow of MSDC who advised against the risk of using all the fields around Jeffrey’s Farm as “it would potentially create a knock on or domino effect of development and there would be little control over a massive estate being developed”. This was a view he repeated many times in subsequent meetings with councillors and when he attended consultation workshops in September. We did not persuade him to say this, it came from him.

- Following this advice, and on consideration of the covenant on Front Field, Chris Bowden reassessed 3 of the JF sites as unsustainable. Once again this was not something that Celia or myself asked for or prompted.

- More accusations were thrown at us, this time of falsifying the workshop feedback and misinterpreting the questionnaire responses. This is untrue. The questionnaires are available to anyone who wishes to check.

Finally NPSG proposals for site allocations were considered by the PC at meetings in December, January and February. We declared our interest in the JF sites and took no part whatsoever in the discussions or voting on those sites.

- I was amused by Kentons personal; in the consultation emails where he requests an apology for lies told about him when he was on the SG and in the next sentence accuses Celia and myself of dishonesty. Perhaps he will be gracious enough to apologise to us.

- I have sympathy with the owners of Jefferys Farm, who feel they have been unfairly treated. Their expectations were unfairly raised by the previous SG.

The 3 members of the SG have experienced three different Parish Clerks, of varying Neighbourhood Planning experience, and three different Parish Council Chairmen, within the last 7 months. To produce any

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*plan at all is to be congratulated. To produce it whilst fielding a barrage of time wasting emails, lies and miss-information is nothing short astounding.*

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Council received a report from the Acting Parish Clerk which can be found attached to these Minutes as an appendix. The Council discussed the following issues:

- The Council considered whether a broader range of people (non-councillors) be included onto the Neighbourhood Plan item for the Council; and
- The Council discussed whether future work on the Neighbourhood Plan should be conducted by the whole Council; and
- In an attempt to be even more transparent and open the Council discussed ensuring that all agendas were published and all meetings clerked by an Officer of the Council; and
- The Council considered whether to engage an external expert to review the responses received as a result of the consultation. The expert would then submit a report for the Council to consider. Depending on the results of this report, the Council would update the Plan or publish a revised Neighbourhood Plan. If significant changes were highlighted a further consultation period may have to be undertaken.

After consideration of the Acting Clerk’s report and also after considerable debate, the Council agreed the following:

**0057**      **RESOLVED** to endorse the decision of the Mid Sussex District Council’s Standards Committee[s] concerning individual Councillors that there were potential breaches of the Code of Conduct on the 2nd July 2015 and 6th August 2015 but in themselves these did not justify the use of public money to conduct an independent investigation. Council acknowledges all the hard work that has gone into the Neighbourhood Plan preparation and resolves for all Councillors to work together in a more cohesive manner; and

**0058**      **RESOLVED** to endorse the recommendation of the Mid Sussex District Council Head of Legal to engage the services of an independent specialist to review all the representations received; and

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- 0059 RESOLVED** that the Council take over responsibility for the Neighbourhood Plan and not delegate to a Committee; and
- 0060 RESOLVED** - to defer issuing an invitation to residents to sit on the Council for the purpose of taking the Neighbourhood Plan to the next stage until after the independent specialists has submitted his report; and
- 0061 RESOLVED** - to engage the services of Lindsay Frost (external expert) initially for five days to review all the representations that have been received and to prepare a report for Council so the Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to the next stage and delegate to the Clerk in consultation with Cllrs David Colville and Sarah Webster to meet with Lindsay Frost and agree his remit; and
- 0062 RESOLVED** – to delegate to the Clerk to arrange an Extraordinary meeting of the Council to consider the expert’s report once submitted to the Council; and
- 0063 RESOLVED** – to pay the external expert from the Council’s reserves, but also to delegate to the Clerk to ascertain whether a grant from GROUNDWORKS would be available to contribute to the costs of the external expert.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 12 July 2016**.

The meeting closed at 9:25pm

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**Appendix to the Minutes**

**HORSTED KEYNES PARISH COUNCIL**

To: Council

Agenda Item No. 7.1

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Contact for this report: Acting Clerk

Subject: Neighbourhood Plan and Complaints. The Way Forward

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The purpose of this report is to up-date members of the current situation regarding the above items and to suggest a way forward for consideration at the Council meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

1. In the past Horsted Keynes Parish Council has not behaved in an open and transparent way. This cannot be allowed to continue and must change now if the Neighbourhood Plan is to have any chance of success.
2. All Members are aware of the complaints against the Council and individual Councillors, however, the Council has been given a second chance by Mid Sussex District Council's Standards Committee.
3. The principal authority will not spend further public money to take these complaints any further and you are invited to improve your performance so the process cannot be challenged. In order to ensure the Council's governance procedures are fit for purpose several actions need to be implemented and these are detailed below.
4. Having met with the three Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee, two of whom have been the subject of individual complaints and accusations, it is considered more appropriate for the Council as a whole to now take over the next stage of the Neighbourhood Plan.

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Matters that now need to be agreed include:

- Implement Council's previous decision to include a broader range of people (non - councillors) onto the Neighbourhood Plan item for the Council if it is decided that future work on the Neighbourhood Plan should be conducted by the whole council.
- All meeting agendas must be published to give the public an opportunity to attend. It could be considered beneficial to hold an additional Council meeting just for the Neighbourhood Plan item.
- All meetings must be clerked by an officer of the Council.
- All minutes must be available for the public.
- As recommended by the Head of Legal at Mid Sussex District Council, engage an external independent expert to review the responses received as a result of the consultation.
- The detail of the above appointment to be agreed but it is recommended that this person should review the responses and submit a report for the Council to consider.
- The Council to review this report and agree changes and update the Plan if only small changes recommended.
- Publish a revised Neighbourhood Plan and if the changes are **significant**, undertake a further consultation period.
- Review any further representations and if these are significant the Neighbourhood Plan may need a second revision by Council.
- Council to agree the final Plan prior to submission to Mid Sussex District Council.

5. The Council has a choice of expert advice available. The original consultant could be approached although it may be felt that he is possibly too close to the original process to be seen as independent.

AiRS (Action in Rural Sussex) has been involved in some Neighbourhood Plans in Sussex, including Hurstpierpoint in West Sussex.

Lindsay Frost, former Head of Planning at Lewes District Council) has been recommended by SALC as he now works alongside this organisation and his c.v. is available to all Members. Mr Frost charges £450 per day and it has been suggested he would need to spend 5 days to review the representations and prepare a report.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**(a) Council to endorse the decision of the Mid Sussex District Council's Standards Committee concerning individual Councillors and to acknowledge all the hard**

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***work that has gone into the Neighbourhood Plan preparation and to resolve for all Councillors to work together in a more cohesive manner.***

- (b) Council to endorse the recommendation of the Mid Sussex District Council Head of Legal to engage the services of an independent specialist to review all the representations received.***
- (c) Council to take over responsibility for the Neighbourhood Plan and not delegate to a Committee.***
- (d) Council to give notice of invitation to residents to sit on the Council for the purpose of taking the Neighbourhood Plan to the next stage.***
- (e) Engage the services of Lindsay Frost initially for five days to review all the representations that have been received and to prepare a report for Council so the Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to the next stage.***

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