

# Horsham Association of Local Councils (HALC)

**Chair:** Cllr Malcolm Eastwood (Henfield Parish Council)  
**Secretary:** Anna Beams, Mulberry & Co, 9 Pound Lane, Godalming, GU7 1BX  
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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Horsham Association of Local Councils held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 at 7.00pm by Zoom.

## Present:

Cllr Peter Cozens	Amberley Parish Council
Cllr Terry Kearney	Ashington Parish Council
Cllr Anthony Moss	Ashington Parish Council
Cllr Susie Fischel	Ashurst Parish Council
Cllr Ann Blakelock	Bramber Parish Council
Cllr Geoff Clark	Broadbridge Heath Parish Council
Cllr Terry Oliver	Broadbridge Heath Parish Council
Cllr John Evans	Coldwatham Parish Council
Beverley Claydon	Colgate Parish Council
Cllr Donna Everest	Cowfold Parish Council
Cllr Malcolm Eastwood	Henfield Parish Council (Chairman)
Cllr Daryn Goldsmith	Henfield Parish Council
Cllr Ian Botting	Horsham Denne Neighbourhood Council
Cllr Alan Britten	North Horsham Parish Council
Cllr Donald Mahon	North Horsham Parish Council
Cllr Norman Bryant	Nuthurst Parish Council
Cllr Jill Chaytor	Nuthurst Parish Council
Cllr Ian Hare	Pulborough Parish Council
Cllr Paul Kornyncky	Rudgwick Parish Council
Cllr Derek Moore	Southwater Parish Council
Cllr Cheryl Brown	Storrington & Sullington Parish Council
Louise Shaw	Warnham Parish Council
Cllr Patrick Heeley	Washington Parish Council
Cllr Fran Davis	West Chiltington Parish Council
Cllr Chris Fagan	West Chiltington Parish Council
Cllr Derrick Frost	West Chiltington Parish Council
Cllr David Green	West Grinstead Parish Council
Cllr Justin Reynolds	West Grinstead Parish Council
Cllr Roger Noel	Woodmancote Parish Council
Cllr Guy Stanley	

Helen Peacock  
Anna Beams

Environment Manager, HDC  
Secretary

**1. Welcome and apologies**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Elaine Kipp (Pulborough PC), Cllr Claire Vickers (Southwater PC), Cllr Ritchie Gatt (Rusper PC), Cllr Batchelor (Woodmancote PC), Cllr Norman Prince (Thakeham PC), Cllr Steve Davies (Colgate PC), Cllr Rod Goldsmith (Steyning PC), Cllr Philip Baxter (Shipleigh PC) and Trevor Leggo (WSALC).

**2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

It was **AGREED** that the Minutes should be approved and signed as a correct record.

**3. Matter arising from the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022 & joint HALC/HDC meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

No matters arising.

**4. Members list / May elections**

The Chairman reminded members that their council would need to appoint two representatives to HALC at their annual meeting in May and advise the secretary of the appointments.

*At the Chairmans discretion, items 7 and 8 were addressed next.*

**5. Climate Change & Environment – workshop activities update from Helen Peacock, Environment Manager HDC**

Helen advised that face to face Climate Change workshops were held in Autumn 2022 with an on-line follow up taking place in November. She is committed to running three follow up workshops a year with one being face to face. It was pleasing how many attended the workshops last year and if anyone did not attend and would like to be invited to future workshops, please let Helen know.

Following the workshops, parish councils were encouraged to maintain a dialogue through a WhatsApp group and an online platform, 'Knowledge Hub'. Resources can be posted on the Knowledge Hub by both HDC and parish councils and there is a discussion thread for communication. Knowledge Hub will be explained further at the next workshop due to take place remotely on 15<sup>th</sup> March, information regarding the workshop will be circulated shortly.

Helen is keen to receive suggestion for guests and speakers at future workshops.

The Chairman reported that a proposal has been received to produce a film to use in parishes to encourage good activity around climate change based on the outcomes of the workshops. It is hoped that this will be progressed following the elections in May.

He added that 28 councils and organisations were represented at the workshops and feedback received has been positive.

Following a question raised regarding whether the May elections would have an impact on progress the Chairman suggested that, if climate change is part of the councils plan, there should be no impact as it is imperative that progress continues.

## **6. Wildlife & Ecology – workshop activities update**

Helen reported that two workshops have taken place, one in the north of the district and one in the south, which were well attended by residents and community groups. The workshops included a series of presentations and 3 breakout sessions – action, evidence and getting people involved.

A resource pack is being developed based on the outcome of the workshops and other ways of following up are being discussed.

Helen thanked members for their high level of interest in both the Climate Change & Environment and Wildlife & Ecology initiatives.

The Chairman added that legislation is currently going through in nature recovery strategies which the county will lead and any work that the district can do in advance of that will be advantageous.

The Chairman further reported that in total five parishes within the district did not attend either the Climate Change or Wildlife & Ecology workshops. He encouraged all parish councils to take part or, if they were unable to, someone within the local community that cares about the topics can be invited to attend on their behalf.

*19:43 Helen Peacock left the meeting*

## **7. HDC Local Plan update**

The Chairman began by advising that an NPPF Levelling Up Consultation was issued on 22<sup>nd</sup> December with a deadline for responses on 2<sup>nd</sup> March. The newly appointed planning consultant for WSALC has been commissioned by WSALC to draft a response to the consultation. Member councils have been invited to be included in the WSALC response.

The Chairman continued by updating members on his understanding of developments with the Local Plan at Horsham District Council.

A project manager has begun work on the Water Neutrality Implementation Plan although no date for completion has been forthcoming and work has started on a Southern Water Monitoring Plan.

Four parish councils within the district are waiting for their Neighbourhood Plans to be moved to referendum. The Chairman has sought an update from HDC who are seeking legal opinion around the impact of water neutrality and are hoping to be able to provide the relevant parish councils with answers shortly. One of these parishes advised that a joint letter had been sent to HDC urging them to allow the Neighbourhood Plans to move forward. This will be shared with the Chairman who was thanked for his support.

The Local Plan was progressing to Regulation 19 however a decision was made to delay. Concerns were raised over the lack of transparency in decisions being made regarding the Local Plan. Although the response from HDC was that governance procedures were not breached there was a failure to address lack of transparency or consultation. It is understood

that the decision to delay was made to allow the District Council to understand the new Bill once it is passed

With the agreement of Members the Chairman held a straw poll with the following results:

QUESTION	YES   AGREE	NO   DISAGREE	UNSURE
I think it is helpful that HDC have deferred making any decision on their new Local Plan later in 2023	31%	58%	12%
I would have liked to have seen the new Local Plan moving forward into Regulation 19 without further delay	65%	23%	12%
I don't believe that HDC needs a new Local Plan	12%	54%	35%

Following full discussions it was **AGREED** that the Chairman would write to HDC on behalf of HALC expressing the concerns raised at this meeting.

#### 8. Financial update

Anna Beams reported that all subscriptions for 2022-23 have been paid, a £500 grant has been received from the West Sussex Association and the current balance is £2,663.85.

#### 9. Cost of Living crisis update

The Chairman advised that Henfield Parish Council have purchased a Community Fridge and have been speaking to neighboring parishes about the process of running a Fridge.

Steyning Parish Council also have a Community Fridge which is being well utilised by the community.

#### 10. To receive reports from outside bodies

- **Standards Committee**

The Standards Committee representative was not present at the meeting therefore there were no further updates to his written report ([appendix A](#))

- **WSALC**

The Chairman reported that WSALC have appointed a Planning Consultant, Steve Tilbury, who is available for member councils to contact for planning related advice at a reduced fee of £60 per hour.

WSALC have commissioned a promotional video to aid in the recruitment of councillors at the May elections and for any vacancies that become available throughout this year and beyond. The video will be available to member councils from 1<sup>st</sup> March.

#### 11. Member issues

It was suggested and agreed that the annual HDC/HALC face to face meeting should take place during the warmer, lighter months and not in November when it has traditionally been held. The Chairman will suggest to HDC that the meeting is held during the summer and circulate details once available.

**12. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023 @ 7pm by Zoom

HDC/HALC joint meeting to be re-arranged for the summer months – date to be agreed.

*Meeting closed at 20:26*

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT

## Appendix A

### **Report to HALC: HDC Standards Committee 30th November 2022**

The Chair opened the meeting by reminding attendees that a primary purpose of the Committee was to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

The Chair had suggested one amendment to the grammatical construction of one sentence in the Minutes of the previous meeting (15 June 2022). That had been adopted.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair made one announcement: the Monitoring Officer (Sharon Evans) would be leaving HDC at the end of December.

The Committee was asked to note the Report on the 'Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review' and there was some discussion of it. The Chair noted that whilst there were two types of complaint (action or lack of it by Council and staff and allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct) the Standards' Committee dealt with the second of these.

There had been 18 complaints dealt with; 2 upheld, 2 not, 11 closed without full investigation and three returned to HDC for local resolution. (Details of the complaints are in Section 3 of the Public Reports Pack).

The Chair had received a request from HDC Councillor Bevis to address the Committee on one particular complaint (unsatisfactory housing where compensation had been paid to the complainant who was suffering from a medical condition). He was of the opinion that lessons had to be learned from this and that the Council needed to become more customer-centric. He and the Committee noted that some training had been put in place as a result of recommendations but he was of the opinion that not enough had been done. The Chair noted that Michael Gove MP (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) had written to say that Councils must 'raise the bar' on social housing – especially in light of a recent distressing case where a young child had died. She noted however, that the case had been considered by the Ombudsman and that he had decided. HDC had taken recommended action but this was not within the jurisdiction of the Standards' Committee. Cllr. Bevis was advised to contact the Officers (and other Councillors) whose responsibility it was in HDC to deal with this matter.

The Committee then reviewed the Hoey Ainscough Report and Recommendations on Steyning Parish Council. This issue of continuing complaints in relation to Steyning Parish Councillors, mainly Councillor against Councillor, has been reported on previously and need not detain the reader further: suffice to say that the Committee Members welcomed the Report and the 36 Recommendations contained in it, considering it a very well-worthwhile activity. Whilst £20,000 had been budgeted for the exercise, £13,680 had been spent and that compared very well with the £65,000 per year that dealing with these complaints had been costing HDC. (The Monitoring Officer noted that it was because of the time and effort required to deal with these complaints, that HDC also had two deputy Monitoring Officers). That was why the Committee had recommended an investigation by Hoey Ainscough.

The point was made that much of the difficulty encountered was because of the lack of sanctions against miscreant Councillors – but the government had decided not to implement recommendations for such sanctions.

During the last three years, 70% of Code of Conduct complaints to HDC had related to Steyning; 80% of the department's time had been spent on them and the Committee considered the £65,000 per year cost, given that Steyning was one of 35 HDC Councils to be disproportionate. Under the complaints procedure, the Committee could recommend appropriate action to resolve the complaint.

Steyning Councillors had felt that they needed help on how to take on board the concepts of the report and the MO and a Deputy MO had met the Council. That had been very positive; the Council had resolved to note the report, to take the action recommended; and to report on progress within a six month period and again within 12 months. At the same meeting Steyning Parish Council had resolved to take the Civility and Respect Pledge (a NALC initiative recommended by WSALC) as had many other Parish Councils.

The Committee had found the Hoey Ainscough Report to be clear, constructive and full of wise advice, identifying the real problem with Steyning PC which was that behaviour had fallen below the expected standard. In discussion various points were made: tolerance underpins working relationships; it was incumbent upon every Cllr to make a start on change and to show leadership.

The Committee concluded that in general the HA Report was constructive and would provide a way forward.

Deputy Monitoring Officer Robert Baxendale then summarised current activity. From April 2021 to March 2022, 34 Code Complaints had been received: 26 relating to Steyning. Two thirds of the way through the current financial year up until last week, there had been nine Code complaints, four relating to HDC, three to Steyning Councillors – which would be dealt with by the Hoey Ainscough process – one relating to Nuthurst and 1 to Pulborough. The numbers were significantly lower this year so far. Of the nine and following full assessment, no breach of the Code had been found in five cases; 3 Parish Council ones had been dealt with within the Hoey process; and one case dealt with by informal resolution. A further four Code complaints had been received within the last week. Four outstanding cases were yet to be reviewed.

Finally, a training session (via 'Zoom') had been undertaken on Monday 28th November: 87 people had attended at one point and the course had been very well received, with good feedback, and had generally been felt to have been very useful.

There was no urgent business. The next meeting is scheduled for 15th March 2023.

Phil Baxter & Steven Watkins  
(Parish Representatives)  
30th November 2022