



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ASHURST WOOD VILLAGE COUNCIL held on
Tuesday 4th March 2025, 7.00 pm at the Council's Meeting Room

PRESENT: Cllrs Haite (Chair), Broad, Fairbourn, Forbes, Granger, Phillips & Tyrrell

IN ATTENDANCE: Rebecca Roberts (Clerk), RFO, Samantha Booker, **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 1**

ABSENT: Cllr Loveday

1. a. County and District Councillors' Reports

County Cllr Russell sent her apologies and the following report:

20mph Speed Limit

Shortly after the last meeting, I received notification from Highways that as the consultation yielded 9 objections and 3 in support the decision fell to myself as County Councillor as to whether the scheme could go ahead which I approved. I understand the objection report is currently being compiled and have asked for an update on progress here.

Secondary School Admissions

Yesterday was National Offer Day where 87.1% of children in West Sussex received their first preference. Overall there were 9050 applications for school places and 283 children did not receive one of their three preferences which happens every year for a variety of reasons i.e. late applications or parents applying for schools outside of their catchment area. Any family wishing to appeal, these will run between 28th April and 26th June.

MSDC Budget

Cllr Belsey may have provided this update so apologies if I am doubling up but as I am also a District Cllr and was involved in debate, I thought I would give an update.

The Conservative group proposed an amendment to remove the proposal to increase parking charges for a third time in a year in the towns by 10p across all tariffs. The amendment was lost.

This means that parking for the first hour in East Grinstead will rise to £1.40 (from £1.30 last April). All other tariffs will also increase by 10p which means that for the first hour the increase is circa 8-9% but if you stay longer the percentage increase reduces i.e. if parking for 4hrs is £5.90 it will increase to £6. The money raised from this further increase will be 115k over the year. All monies raised from parking charges will go into measures to improve technology ie ANPR will be introduced into Vicarage car park to enable the council to have more targeted enforcement of non-payers.

Whilst the amendment was lost, the Leader of the Council (Cllr Eggleston) did rather unusually seek to amend his own budget by agreeing to introduce the overnight parking permit into Vicarage car park from April (already in Queensway) and carry out a feasibility study with respect to offering community volunteers that use council car parks a concessionary permit. This was not much of a concession as my understanding is that they were going to introduce it into Vicarage at some point anyway so they just brought it forward, plus will just increase their revenue and community volunteers should not have to pay anything at all to use the car parks.

Myself and John with 9 others in the chamber voted against the amended budget as we could not support a third increase in car park charges in the towns whilst the villages in the south of the district remain free.

A number abstained but ultimately the vote in favour of the budget was carried.

The 2025 budget was approved and council tax is set at 2.95%.

Devolution

The government consultation is now underway and will run until 13th April asking residents for their comments on a Mayoral Office for Sussex. An interim proposal agreed by the three upper tier authorities must be submitted by 21st March for comment with the final proposal to be submitted by 26th September.

District Councillor Belsey sent his apologies and the following report:

The budget got approved at MSDC with a 2.95% increase although I did not vote for the budget due to the further parking increases of another 10 pence, the third increase in just over a year combined with the extra

hours and Sunday parking as well as the differential rates which mean it costs more to park in East Grinstead than anywhere else in the District. However the budget went through sadly.

I have met with MSDC officers and complained about the state of the cutting in both the Rec and John Pears - I have had several residents complaining about the finishing of the hedge in the Rec and the officer said he would try to get the additional works done; however we are moving into bird nesting season so it might have to wait until the end of the season. He did agree that the cuts were not acceptable and he did agree remedial action would be appropriate. I won't comment more about the John Pears hedges but await to see the view of the Village Council re the hedge on the left as you go up John Pears.

I am told the tennis courts will be cleaned again and sprayed - it needs 6 dry days to take proper effect. The officer said that next year they will start the preparation of the court earlier now they realise the challenges - it was Glendale's first year of the contract (although I appreciate officers could have made the points in advance that the courts are particularly challenging to clean).

I have raised the finances and the money re the pavilion that the grant needs to be looked at and have asked about pavilion maintenance. I am waiting for a response and I know the Clerk has followed up on this too. Fingers crossed there is some movement on this.

Finally, I have had a small number of residents contact me re the phone mast. I have not yet replied to all but am monitoring the website and the objections, I realise that it is an unwanted application from a landowner perspective, I am very sympathetic towards them but there is very little that Councils can do in practice - I also get lots of residents grumbling about the poor phone signal in the village so it is a very difficult situation. That said should it go ahead I will urge for sensible terms and conditions to go with them and I do agree Beeches Lane should not lose its rural character as a result.

b. **Public Questions** – A resident was hoping to ask the County and District Councillors what the plans for Devolution are with regards to assets within the Village – for example John Pears Pavilion and field

2. **Apologies for absence** – Cllr Loveday; apologies were received and **resolved; the reasons were accepted**

3. **To receive Declaration of Interests from Members in respect of any matter on the Agenda – None**

4. **Chairman's Announcements** – Cllr Haite invited Cllr Phillips to report on the sad passing of Roy Branson who was a stalwart of Village life and was the Councils first Village Handyman. Roy was also very enthusiastic with raising a lot of money towards village events through sponsorship. The Village Council sends condolences to Roy's family.

5. **To confirm the Minutes of the Village Council meeting held on 4th February 2025**–. The minutes of the meeting were **approved** and were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate account of the meeting.

6. **Clerk's Report** – the Clerk's report was received and noted.

7. **To receive the minutes of Committees and reports from working groups and to consider any matters arising:**

- a. Planning Committee – minutes from the meeting held on 4th February 2025 were received and noted
- b. Finance, Administration & Human Resources Committee – None. Cllr Phillips reported that the end of year figures are looking good and that the total reserves carried forward at the end of the year should be around 40% of the precept, which is within the acceptable range
- c. Events Working Group – None

8. **To receive an update on recent & planned events**

- a. **VE-Day 80** – The Fish & Chip van, Stephanie Belle and the Historians have all confirmed their attendance at the event. The Clerk has been in contact with the Maypole Inn and is awaiting confirmation of their attendance, but it seems likely. Decorations have been purchased, including a VE-Day 80 flag for the flag pole. Children’s games are coming along and include skipping ropes, hopscotch, splat the rat, tin-can alley, marbles and jacks.
- b. **Annual Village Meeting** – Several community groups have confirmed attendance. Cllrs Loveday & Tyrrell were asked to cover a stand for Youth Club. The Community Café will not be attending; therefore it will be up to the Councillors to serve refreshments. Cllr Phillips requested that photos from the Village Council achievements over the past year are sent to him.

9. **Highways**

- a. **To receive an update on the application for a 20mph speed limit in the village** –the TRO Objection Report is being compiled with approval from County Councillor Jacquie Russell (see County Councillor’s report above). It is now hoped the 20mph speed restriction will go ahead.

10. **Finance**

- a. **Accounts to pay**
The accounts payable from 1st to 28th February totalling £5,309.25. were **ratified and approved by the Council**
- b. To receive and approve the Finance Pack for February 2025 (which includes the RBS income & expenditure report, & bank reconciliations) – **the Finance Pack was received and noted.**
- c. To approve the Clerk carrying over 42 hours annual leave (6 days) and the Assistant Clerk 34.3 hours (8days) – **Resolved; members approved staff carrying over annual leave**
- d. To agree to increase the spend limit on the Lloyds Corporate Card from £400 to a £600 limit and to increase the spend limit for small items from £100 to £200 per item – **Resolved; members agreed to increase both the card limit to £600 and expenditure for small items to £200 per item.**

11. **To consider Grant Applications** – (amount spent so far this year is £1,175 and the budget was £2,500)

- a. St Catherine’s Hospice requested £250 towards the cost of providing specialist hospice services – **resolved; members discussed and agreed to award a grant of £500**

12. **Consultations** – None

13. **To receive reports from Councillors who have attended outside bodies** – None

14. **Items of correspondence** - Previously circulated. E-mails were received and noted from Cllr Belsey & a resident regarding the hedges adjoining the resident’s land at John Pears. It was agreed to reply to Cllr Belsey that whilst the Village Council sympathises with the resident, the hedge is the responsibility of MSDC and it is not in a position to help. Cllr Tyrrell confirmed that she had discussed the laid hedge adjoining the road with a representative from Mid Sussex District Council and that he confirmed he would instruct their contractors to only cut the front of the hedge by the road at John Pears.

15. **Items for reporting or inclusion on future agenda:** None

16. **Date of next meeting** – 1st April 2025

Meeting closed: 7:56pm

Chairman.....

Date.....