# **Mid Sussex District Association of Local Councils (MSALC)**

**Chair:** Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock (West Hoathly PC)

**Secretary:** Mandy Jameson (temporary)

**Email:** dalc@wsalc.co.uk

**Minutes of a meeting of Mid Sussex District Association of Local Councils held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 21 January 2025 by Zoom.**

**Present:**

**\*denotes also a member of Mid Sussex District Council**

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| Cllr John Drew | Albourne PC |
| Cllr Simon StokesCllr Jenny ForbesCllr Alison StevensonCllr Tofojjul Hussain \*Cllr Peter Williams Cllr Martin SheldonCllr Rex Whittaker \*Cllr Kristian Berggreen \*Steve Trice, clerk | Ansty & Staplefield PC Ashurst Wood VCBalcombe PCBurgess Hill TCBurgess Hill TCCuckfield PCEast Grinstead TCHassocks PCHaywards Heath TC |
| Cllr Rodney Jackson \*Cllr Annette StreetCllr Linda GraceSally McLean, clerkCllr Eric Prescott \*Cllr Ian Gibson \*Cllr Jane Veaney | Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common PCHurstpierpoint & Sayers Common PCLindfield PCSlaugham PCSlaugham PCTurners Hill PCTwineham PC |
| Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock | West Hoathly PC (and Chair of MSALC) |
| Trevor LeggoInspector David Derrick | West Sussex Association of Local Councils, CEOSussex Police |
| Mandy Jameson | Secretary (temporary) |
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1. **Welcome & Apologies**

 The Chair welcomed those present online.

 Apologies were received and accepted from Bolney Parish Council and Cllr Ed Godwin (East

Grinstead Town Council).

1. **Minutes of last meeting**

Pending the addition of one item (notified separately by Ashurst Wood Village Council), the minutes were approved for signing by the Chair.

1. **Neighbourhood Policing**

Inspector David Derrick gave a very helpful and comprehensive report on recent policing issues in Mid Sussex including the following:

* Reporting of facts on social media often lead to distorted information so it is important that councillors are able to relay accurate facts to their residents.
* One 16 year old male is responsible for numerous crimes in Mid Sussex, particularly in Burgess Hill but also in Haywards Heath. He has been arrested at least 10 times in the past year but is appearing in court on 7 Feb and the police are hoping for a custodial sentence.
* One prolific Mid Sussex burglar was arrested this morning and the police hope for a custodial sentence.
* Covert operations are taking place to monitor another prolific burglar – who steals power tools and quad bikes from sheds – as well as drug dealers living in Mid Sussex.
* Road safety operations have been taking place recently on rural roads in the district.
* The new ‘Cuppa with a Copper’ initiative is being introduced to offer people in rural areas more contact with the police, should they want to take it up. A PC will be sited in a designated café at a particular time.
* Insp Derrick stressed that Sussex is relatively a safe place to live and Mid Sussex particularly so. He offered his contact details - email David.derrick@sussex.police.uk or call him on 07912 896884 - and emphasised he is happy to attend MSALC meetings whenever possible. He will be remaining in post for another 15 months until retirement.
* Cllr Linda Grace asked about e-scooters and Insp Derrick has subsequently sent a summary of the police’s approach (see Appendix A).
* Cllr Williams asked if a more senior police officer could accompany the PCSOs running a stall in Burgess Hill later in the week and Insp Derrick undertook to send a Sergeant.
* Cllr Gibson asked about fly-tipping (the police will work with MSDC in cases of repeated offending) and about addresses of councillors being publicly available. Insp Derrick said the law is clear: elected officials should be protected by police so they can feel safe in their work. Insp Oliver Fisher is the designated Sussex Police contact for this issue. Trevor Leggo commented that addresses given in the Register of Members’ Interests can be redacted with the agreement of the local district council monitoring officer, if a persuasive argument is provided as to why this should happen.
* Cllr Hussain asked for a breakdown of total crimes in Mid Sussex and Insp Derrick said this could be provided at some stage but is very complicated.
* Cllr Sheldon said the ‘Cuppa with a Copper’ initiative would be warmly welcomed in Cuckfield where residents say they never see the police. Insp Derrick said requests can be emailed to him for the initiative to take place in other villages across the district.
* Cllr Berggreen commented on cars parked badly on the pavement in Ockley Lane and Insp Derrick said the powers to issue parking tickets now lie solely with local councils.
* Cllr Jackson mentioned speeding in his parish and Insp Derrick confirmed that the Roads Policing Unit deals with those issues, not the neighbourhood policing team.

Before Insp Derrick left the meeting, Cllr Denham St Pinnock thanked him for his time and his very helpful contribution to the meeting.

1. **WSALC report on recent communication with Mid Sussex District Council**

Trevor Leggo started by saying that of all the district councils he deals with in Sussex he finds MSDC the most challenging. On 18 November last year Trevor, the MSALC Chair and 14 clerks met to discuss levels of engagement with MSDC; the following day Trevor wrote to Louise Duffield (Director of Communities) with various suggestions including a joint conference on 7 April, an open day at Oaklands and queries about induction of new MSDC staff in terms of how they learn about parish councils. A reply finally arrived 2 months later saying the conference date was not possible and that there were few public facing staff so any special induction was not needed.

Trevor pointed out the comparison with Horsham DC and their openness and willingness to engage – it’s the opposite end of the spectrum.

Cllr Denham St Pinnock said he felt an air of hostility and resentment towards parishes from MSDC. He also suggested that MSDC seems not to appreciate the extremely high calibre of staff employed by Mid Sussex parishes and has a very isolationist attitude. Following his request to meet with MSDC leader Cllr Robert Eggleston, there has been no response.

**Addendum:** Shortly after the MSALC meeting, Cllr Denham St Pinnock held a phone conversation with Cllr Eggleston.

* Cllr Jackson said there were several MSDC councillors (including himself) present at this meeting and all these comments were being carefully noted.
* Cllr Williams said he was appalled at the lack of response from MSDC – everything is secretive – very frustrating.
* Cllr Stevenson said she felt her letters to MSDC get binned immediately.
* Cllr Forbes said her parish has a rural management agreement with MSDC but haven’t received payment since May 2023.
* A discussion then ensued about MSDC plans to bring in parking charges in villages including Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, Lindfield and Cuckfield. Consultation with the public has not yet started but the proposal is likely to cause extremely bad feeling among residents and people who work in those villages. Cllr Street said she believed the decision had already been made by MSDC and that it was merely a case of how the charges would be levied.
1. **Update on proposals for Devolution**

Trevor Leggo and Cllr Denham St Pinnock gave a summary of the current situation as follows:

* On 16 December ’24, the government announced that bids were invited for the setting up of new strategic authorities. The deadline for bids to be received was 10 January. West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove have submitted a joint bid to become unitary authorities with one overriding combined authority overseen by a directly elected mayor. The proposed areas fall very much within the government’s initial remit (ie. combined population of over 1.5m, and substantially rural).
* Brighton & Hove would probably take on Adur and Worthing but what happens to the current debt of £51m owed by B&H? The overall financial implications are worrying.
* Keith Stevens, NALC Chair and East Sussex councillor, has indicated that the government is keen to forge ahead with plans for devolution which will essentially mean the end of district and borough councils. Apparently there are ‘financial sweeteners’ for those councils who go down this route early in the process.
* If this were to happen in Sussex, it could give towns and parishes the opportunity to take on extra responsibilities and Cllr Gibson said this gives the chance for positive change.
* A decision should be announced at the end of the month to say if Sussex has been chosen for the priority programme and, if so, the County Council elections for May 2025 would be cancelled.
* At this stage the public are not being consulted on devolution plans but WSALC and ESALC are keeping a very close eye on things and will keep members updated.
1. **Planning update**

Trevor Leggo explained that planning consultant Steve Tilbury has put together a paper about changes to the National Planning Policy framework and at this point it appears that the role of Neighbourhood Plans is unaffected. However, there will be reforms to come. In the meantime Steve Tilbury is the most reliable source of information for WSALC and ESALC, and his paper will be circulated to West Sussex councils shortly.

Cllr Jackson said this is a worrying time and he hopes there will not be a proliferation of speculative developments. Cllr Williams agreed, especially regarding the current green space between Burgess Hill and Hassocks. Cllr Gibson advised that parishes should get on with background activity such as evidence-gathering until the district plan is formalised.

1. **To consider any other items raised by member councils**

* **Next WSALC board meeting -** Trevor Leggo explained the next WSALC board meeting will take place on 31 January so if members would like an issue raised, please let him know.
* **Burgess Hill development –** Cllr Williams detailed the grave concern within Burgess Hill TC at the fact that key milestones have not been met in the proposed development by MSDC and New River Retail. MSDC are fobbing off requests for updates, claiming confidentiality, and BHTC feel powerless. Cllr Denham St Pinnock suggested that a Freedom of Information request could be submitted.
* **Weald to Wave initiative -** Cllr Grace asked if this had been followed up after her presentation to the last meeting. Cllr Denham St Pinnock apologised and confirmed that it will be raised again in a future meeting. Cllr Jackson said that Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common PC would be interested in becoming part of the initiative. Trevor Leggo asked for contact details so that more information about Weald to Wave can be circulated to West Sussex councils.
* **Speeding issues** – Cllr Drew said there is work ongoing with WSCC to look at speed reductions in Albourne – the parish council is particularly keen to get a reduction from 30 to 20mph on Henfield Road near the school. Trevor Leggo suggested making contact with Cllr Cathy Mills of Westmeston PC who successfully managed to get this done in her own area. WSCC Highways are very reliant on accident data etc, so it’s a long and time consuming process.

Cllr Sheldon said they’ve been told speed signs are irrelevant as drivers take no notice of them, amid Cuckfield’s case to reduce speeds to 30mph in the village.

Cllr Stevenson said she is a traffic engineer so is happy to be approached with questions from fellow MSALC councillors.

Cllr Berggreen said speed reductions need to be enforced otherwise there’s no point having them.

To conclude, Cllr Denham St Pinnock thanked all for their attendance and said he was very pleased with the level of interest in the meeting.

The date of the next MSALC meeting will be advised in due course.

*The meeting finished at 20.53 hrs.*

Signed

Date

Appendix A

**The police’s approach to e-scooters – a summary by Inspector David Derrick**

1. They are defined by the transport agency as an MPV (Mechanically Propelled Vehicle)
2. They are illegal to use on roads and pavements
3. The police have powers to seize them
4. The owners can claim them back if they sign a waiver saying they will only be used on private land.

However:

* Pursuing someone under 18 on an e-scooter is unlikely to be approved by the duty OSCAR (person in control at HQ of all operational urgent issues)
* The main users of e-scooters are people under 18 who will not stop for police, therefore are very hard to catch
* Where the young person is obedient and stops, then police take them to parents and warn that next time the scooter will be seized

Best news:

* If someone commits a crime using an e-scooter the police will seize it
* If someone collides with someone using an e-scooter the police will seize it

If councillors know of anyone using an e-scooter in an anti social way, please give the police their name and the police will visit this person at home.