

# HORSHAM DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

**Minutes from a meeting held via zoom on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

**Present:**

Malcolm Eastwood (Chairman & Henfield PC)

Graeme Acraman (Vice-Chair & Billingshurst PC)

Representatives of the following member councils:

Councillors Tony Moss (Ashington), Sandy Duck (Billingshurst), Mike Croker (Bramber PC & Horsham DC), Geoff Clark (Broadbridge Heath), Sheila Marley (Colgate), Jane Jones (Henfield), Donald Mahon (North Horsham), Owen Hydes & Jill Chaytor (Nuthurst), Elaine Kipp and Ian Hare (Pulborough), Paul Thompson (Rudgwick), Ritchie Gatt (Rusper), David Barling & Trevor Brown (Shermanbury), Philip Baxter (Shipley), Chris Young (Steyning), Anna Worthington-Leese (Storrington and Sullington), Dick Scott-Kerr and Norman Prince (Thakeham), Sally Pavey (Warnham), Fran Davis & Derrick Frost (West Chiltington), Craig Dixon (Woodmancote),

**Other:**

Tracey Eusden (Clerk to Storrington & Sullington PC), Louise Shaw (Clerk to Warnham PC), Trevor Leggo (CEO WSALC), Morag Warrack & Martin Boffey (Horsham Trafalgar NC), Ian Botting (Horsham Denne NC) and David Green (West Grinstead PC), Anna Beams (Mulberry and Co)

**1. Welcome, attendance and apologies:**

The Chairman welcomed those present and took apologies, namely Councillors Ann Blakelock (Bramber PC), Peter Cozins (Amberley PC), Wiston Parish Council and Councillor Susie Fischel, Ashurst Parish Council and HALC Treasurer.

**2. Approval of HALC Meeting Minutes of AGM dated 29/04/2021:**

The Minutes were duly approved and adopted subject to the following amendments:

Attendance list: Cllr Norman Price amended to Cllr Norman Prince

Item 9: Cllr Anne Blakelock amended to Cllr Ann Blakelock

**3. Appointment of Anna Beams as new HALC Secretary:**

The Chairman proposed that Anna Beams of Mulberry and Co be appointed as Secretary and Treasurer, there were no objections and Anna Beams was duly appointed. The Chairman thanked Anna and advised that a handover with the retiring Secretary would be arranged shortly.

**4. HALC Membership Fee Invoicing:**

The Chairman advised that the annual HALC membership fee would remain at £15 and that members would be invoiced in August for the current year.

## **5. Update on HDC Local Plan following Chairmans' letter and meeting with Leader of HDC:**

The Chairman reminded members that he had contacted the Leader of Horsham District Council by letter on 12<sup>th</sup> May regarding a lack of progress in respect of the Horsham Local Plan and also in regards to work with Sussex Wildlife Trust and Nature Recovery Networks. A reply was received on 1<sup>st</sup> June and the Chair and Vice-Chair met with HDC by Zoom on 12<sup>th</sup> July.

It was made clear at the meeting that HALC were disappointed by the level of communication received from HDC and a full and frank discussion was held between the parties. It was agreed that a Zoom session should be held between representatives of both parties once a quarter and prior to each HALC meeting. It was also agreed that a face to face meeting of HALC Members would be arranged at Horsham District Council and subsequently this has been set for the evening of 17th November 2021.

The Chairman explained that DC Roger Noel was now responsible for the Nature Recovery Network and that the Chairman was making arrangements with Helen Peacock at HDC for this subject to feature as a key topic at the face to face meeting.

During the 12th call discussion concerns about delays to the Local Plan were aired and it was explained by HDC that these have been caused by a lengthy dialogue on housing numbers with the Government which has required some local MP intervention, uncertainties created by the Planning White Paper and extensive consultations with Homes England. Covid also delayed responses from statutory consultees. HDC explained that in order to meet housing targets imposed by the Government they have been required to make some extremely difficult decisions on site allocation.

The conflict between Neighbourhood Plans and the Local Plan was discussed and it was explained that the Neighbourhood Plan timeline is until 2031 whereas the Local Plan is 2038 resulting in additional smaller sites being added over and above those already featuring in Neighbourhood Plans.

The Chairman further explained the risks of having no plan, that there would be no agreed housing number leaving an open season for developers without any restriction on numbers, there would be no five-year housing supply calculation or list of allocated sites to act as a constraint on developers bringing planning applications forward for any sites across the district and total reliance upon the NPPF with no local HDPF policy flavouring.

HDC feel that as presented the current Local Plan would be approved by an Inspector and has requested the support of HALC Members for it.

A vote to approve the Local Plan was due to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> July but was abandoned on the advice of HDCs QC due to Government changes to the Planning Policy Framework published on 20<sup>th</sup> July requiring amendments to be made to the Plan in three areas, tree lined streets, beautiful places and a 30 year vision for the District. This latter point requires some additional work to the Local Plan and could delay it returning to a Regulation 19 vote for three or four months. A new NPPF is due to be implemented at the end of 2021 and therefore Regulation 19 approval is required before that time in order to avoid starting the whole Local Plan process from the start. Further information regarding the NPPF changes can be found in section 14a of the new Government Guidelines.

The Chairman then shared a developer prepared single page Red, Amber, Green traffic light survey showing the status of each parish and its level of protection against speculative planning applications. The majority of parishes are red, suggesting an inability by HDC or parishes to challenge those applications because of the lack of a 5 year housing supply, the fact that their Neighbourhood Plans are more than 2 years old or that the current Neighbourhood Plan doesn't include site allocations because these are incorporated within the Local Plan which is delayed.

Cllr Anna Worthington-Leese (Storrington & Sullington PC) stated that the parish council does not support the Local Plan and is not of the view that any Plan is better than no Plan, she added that her council are of the view that there needs to be a Plan in place but that it should be the correct Plan.

The Chairman agreed that we need to get to the correct plan but we also need to understand the risks associated with having no plan and the time constraints that we are working with. He added that HALC need to get to a point where a Plan can be agreed hence the need to improve dialogue with HDC and the District Councillors who he feels are largely accountable for the situation that we find ourselves in as they could have approved a Local Plan some seven months ago, have chosen not to and we are now placed in an increasingly difficult position.

Cllr Paul Thompson (Rudgwick PC) understands that some recent appeals have been lost on the inability to demonstrate a 5 year supply and queried what HDC were doing to recover from the situation. In response, the Chairman advised that the plan is to get the Local Plan past Regulation 19 and then build the supply numbers from that work. An alternative approach which would buy time would be for HDC and parishes to ask developers to submit planning applications (for those that are already supported in neighbourhood plans) to fill the "gap" in supply, then HDC can add more weight to those sites in appeal situations. The current shortfall isn't large so a small number of sites doing this might buy sufficient time.

Cllr Owen Hydes (Nuthurst PC) echoed previous views and aired his concern regarding the proposed Buck Barn development.

In response to a query from Cllr Phil Baxter (Shipley PC) the Chairman advised that the parish council are perhaps reliant on the Local Plan as they have no nominated sites for development. Without the protection of the 5 year housing supply we are all more exposed to speculative development.

DC Mike Croker (Horsham District Council) advised that Horsham District Councillors have not delayed the Plan as a group and that after December 2021 Horsham would have a plan albeit with less weight. He advised that any delays have primarily been caused by Covid-19.

The Chairman proposed the following:

The Chairman proposed that HALC write to HDC with proposals to

1. Hold a number of HALC workshops run by HDC Planning to "Understand the Local Plan" which should be attended by Parish Councillor representatives & our District Councillors. These need to happen in September. It was felt that one big meeting would be too unwieldy, HDC say that individual meetings would take too much HDC resource so

perhaps four workshops covering, north, south, east and west of the district which would consist of 6 or 7 parishes per meeting. The purpose would be to understand the planning reasons behind the site selections which in some cases aren't aligned with parishes preferred sites. We need an open and honest discussion with an objective to be better informed about the Plan, the no plan implications, the site decisions and to understand any adjustments which might help the Local Plan.

2. Post these workshops parishes to encourage open discussions with their District Councillors to agree any steps needed to move forward and agree positioning/ communication with our residents.
3. HDC/Parishes to look at ways of reducing risks of speculative development by encouraging planning applications from developers whose sites are supported in existing neighbourhood plans in order to close the gap in the 5 year housing supply.

- It was **AGREED** that the Chairman would write to HDC to propose the above.

#### **6. HALC Climate Emergency Group:**

The Chairman advised that following request by HDC a HALC working group has been formed to look at climate change issues and to enable two members of the group to sit on Horsham's Climate Change Group.

Cllr Sally Pavey provided an update following a meeting of the Climate Change Group. She advised that councils can apply to the Horsham Climate Community fund to enable them to replace equipment, such as old boilers, for more energy efficient versions and that assessments can be carried out to assist parish councils in adopting greener energy sources. It was highlighted that new housing is currently not being developed with green energy sources such as solar panels and the Group has invited developers to attend a meeting to explain why housing cannot be developed with greener energy sources.

Cllr Pavey advised that she will send further details of the content of the meeting which may be circulated to member councils.

The next meeting will be held in September.

#### **7. HALC Constitution Review:**

The Chairman advised that a new constitution has been drafted and will be circulated with the Minutes for approval at a future meeting. He welcomed any comments to be submitted through the Secretary. Some alignment with the other WSALC ALCs has been achieved in this draft and it will be a matter for further discussion at our first meeting of 2022.

In response to a query from Cllr Paul Thompson, it was noted by the Chairman that there is an inconsistency regarding the name used for the Association on documentation and that it will be clarified and a vote will be taken at the next meeting.

#### **8. HALC Year End Accounts:**

The Chairman referred to the accounts previously circulated. During 2021 the Association spent £200.50, received £450.00 in revenue and currently holds £1,956.85 in the bank.

He advised that Anna Beams, Graeme Acraman and himself would be taking over the bank account in due course and that a handover of other administrative matters will take place before the next meeting.

## 9. Gatwick Airport Presentations:

- **Association of Parish Councils Aviation Group (APCAG):** Cllr Ian Hare introduced himself as chairman of APCAG and shared a presentation outlining the purpose of the group.

The sole purpose of the Group is to represent parish council members, it is not a campaign group and exists to represent the views of and to brief and guide member councils on aviation matters. The Group reports back on discussions and meetings with Gatwick and signposts items of concern, for example the growth of Gatwick. There are three types of membership, full, associate and members who merely wish to be kept informed.

Cllr Hare stated that he is happy to have discussions with individual councils outside of this meeting.

Current projects include a work plan agreed to take to the Noise Management Board examining what is fair dispersal of arrivals and joining point for descent into airport and lobbying to have a plan of significant growth scrutinised.

- **Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE):** Cllr Sally Pavey introduced herself as the Chairman of CAGNE which she explained was formed in February 2014 by communities and parish councils. She explained that the member councils at the time realised that they should not be members of a lobbying group and therefore the CAGNE Aviation Town and Parish Council Forum was formed by councillors. Cllr Pavey advised that she was representing the Forum as an elected member and that she had made a full declaration to her council as she is Secretary to the Forum.

The Forum has 32 councils as members and holds regular meetings. Cllr Pavey referred to wording on the forum website at [cagnepcforum.org.uk](http://cagnepcforum.org.uk) outlining the role of the Forum. The Forum is impartial and assists with issues that parish and town councils may have with Gatwick. Speakers at meetings have included the Department for Transport, airspace designers, air traffic controllers and representatives from Green Employment Opportunities. Members of the Forum have visited Swanwick, the Air Traffic Control Centre for the South East and has also had talks involving the Youth Cabinet of West Sussex. Membership is free although during the Covid pandemic members have contributed £4 per year to be used to develop a new website and contribute towards Zoom meetings. All members can use extensive knowledge of the CAGNE library and have representation on the Noise Community Forum. Councils can join the forum by clerks emailing through the website.

The Chairman concluded that both groups may be utilised as appropriate by member councils and that their work should be helpful to Members who wish to form a view about Gatwick Airport and its future direction.

## 10. WSALC Board Feedback Issues:

Cllr Donald Mahon clarified that he serves as a WSALC Board member along with the HALC Chairman and that Trevor Leggo and Anna Beams provide service support to the County Association as well as HALC which has the benefit of continuation. He thanked both Trevor and Anna for providing a high level of service delivery to WSALC members and advised that

feedback from member councils has been positive. He requested that any feedback regarding the service provision to be passed through Trevor and Anna.

He noted that the following topics were prioritised by the WSALC Board at their recent meeting:

- Recruitment and retention of clerks
- Continuation of liaison with Sussex Police
- Introduction of a review of the WSALC Health & Wellbeing Report
- Armed Forces Covenant Grant
- Parish Online License support – Cllr Mahon requested that feedback be sent to Trevor Leggo as to whether councils wish to use Parish Online and take advantage of a reduced subscription through WSALC.

Cllr Mahon thanked Trevor and Anna for organising very thorough meetings and producing prompt Minutes.

Trevor Leggo advised that two surveys have been circulated to WSALC members in respect of issues with Southern Water and Neighbourhood Plans, results to the surveys are being compiled and will be circulated when available.

#### **11. County Council Meetings:**

Cllr Donald Mahon explained that the County Council would like to improve communications with the parish and town councils. There have been no regional meetings with County Councillors for approximately two years due to the Covid pandemic and the County Councillors have therefore set up County Forums, Cllr Mahon suggested that feedback regarding the Forums may be an item for discussion at a future meeting.

#### **12. Outside Body Member Reports:**

The Chairman advised that he has recently attended a County Association bi-annual meeting with the Chief Constable of Sussex Police which is attended by the Chairmen of all West and East Sussex District Associations. Updates provided at the meeting included:

- The priority for Sussex Police is 'Protect, Catch & Deliver', a scheme designed to remove criminals from the street.
- 101 calls response times are now significantly improved and average 3 minutes.
- Online reporting has increased substantially during the past year building up a useful database of intelligence.
- Rural crime teams have been strengthened.
- A new resource has been implemented to recruit individuals directly to detective work.
- The Force are using more unmarked resources.

- Anti-social behaviour, littering and speeding continue to be big issues across the region.
- The Force continue to work very closely with Community Speedwatch teams.

**13. Member Issues:**

No issues were raised.

**14. Date of Next Meeting – via Zoom or face to face:**

A face to face meeting will be held at Horsham District Council premises on the evening of Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

It was **AGREED** that subsequent meetings would be held remotely by Zoom and that this would be the norm going forward.

*20.42 Meeting closed*

Signed