

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of HDC and HALC**  
**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021**  
**Parkside, County Hall North, Horsham**  
**7.00pm**

**1.0 Attendance**

<b>Those Present</b>		<b>Neighbourhood &amp; Parish Councils</b>	
<b>Horsham District Council</b>			
Nigel Jupp	Billingshurst	Peter Cozens	Amberley
Tony Hogben	Colgate & Rusper	Tony Moss	Ashington
Jonathan Chowen	Cowfold, Shermanbury & West Grinstead	Graeme Acraman	Billingshurst
Lynn Lambert	Cowfold, Shermanbury & West Grinstead	Geoff Clark	Broadbridge Heath
Christian Mitchell	Holbrook	John Evans	Coldwaltham
Toni Bradnum	Nuthurst & Lower Beeding	Stephen Davies	Colgate
Diana van der Klugt	Pulborough, Coldwatham & Amberley	Donna Everest	Cowfold
Paul Clarke	Pulborough, Coldwatham & Amberley & Leader HDC	Guy Stanley	Forest NC
Billy Greening	Southwater	Jane Jones	Henfield
Claire Vickers	Southwater	Malcolm Eastwood	Henfield & Chairman HALC
Martin Boffey	Trafalgar	Ian Botting	Horsham Denne NC
Roger Noel	Bramber, Upper Beeding & Woodmancote		
Mike Croker	Upper Beeding & Woodmancote	Ian Wassell	North Horsham
Helen Peacock	Environment Manager	Sally Wilton	North Horsham
Catherine Howe	Head of Strategic Planning	Ian Hare	Pulborough
Henri Broderbank	Sussex Wildlife Trust	Richard Landeryou	Rudgwick
Richard Black	Sussex Wildlife Trust	Paul Thompson	Rudgwick
Barbara Childs	Director of Place	Phil Baxter	Shipley
Adam Chalmers	Director of Community Services	Derek Moore	Southwater
		Anna Worthington-Reese	Storrington & Sullington
		Dick Scott Kerr	Thakeham
		Norman Prince	Thakeham
		Sally Pavey	Warnham
		Fran Davis	West Chiltington
		David Green	West Grinstead
		Justin Reynolds	West Grinstead
		John Goring	Wiston
		Anna Beams	HALC Secretary

Summary: 19 of the 32 Parish Councils and 2 of the Neighbourhood Councils were represented.

**2.0 Chairman of HALC Cllr Malcolm Eastwood**

2.1 Cllr Malcolm Eastwood welcomed those in attendance and recorded his thanks to Horsham District Council for hosting and organising the meeting. He explained that since their election in April HALC Officers have sought to reestablish lines of communication, initially with a focus on the Local Plan but this meeting gives the opportunity to broaden the dialogue to include Wilder Horsham and Climate Change. He thanked Paul Clarke and Glen Chipp for their positive engagement since April.

**3.0 Leader of Horsham District Council Cllr Paul Clarke**

- 3.1 Cllr Paul Clarke welcomed all present during challenging times and he is delighted that the District Council has continued to deliver all frontline services during and despite being in the grip of a pandemic.
- 3.2 The main aim has been to improve communications between the DC and PCs and he sees this meeting as an important part of that.
- 3.3 Support grants have been distributed to many local businesses offering support during a difficult period.
- 3.4 Horsham District Council continue to build evidence to support their Local Plan despite last minute changes to the NPPF and are working closely with Natural England, Southern Water and DLHUC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) on the Water Neutrality issue.

**4.0 Wilder Horsham Initiative**

- 4.1 Helen Peacock, Environment Manager HDC, explained that the Initiative is a five-year project developed to combat the biodiversity and climate crisis within the Horsham District. She added that it is a partnership between Horsham District Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT). Helen introduced Richard Black of Sussex Wildlife Trust who has been working with the District Council on the project as a land owner advisor.
- 4.2 Helen Peacock and Richard Black jointly gave the attached presentation (**Appendix A**).
- 4.3 Helen Peacock noted the important role of parish councils in increasing awareness of actions that communities can take and in helping empower them to do so. Horsham District Council wish to embed the principals of the initiative within the organisation through staff training, carrying out baseline surveys and developing good dialogue with grounds and maintenance teams.
- 4.4 Richard Black explained that core nature areas need to be connected to form a nature recovery network. Nature reserves are not enough and are of limited value if they are isolated patches of good habitat, wildlife needs to be able to move across the landscape. There are two main river systems within the District which form natural corridors and are a logical place to start. Land owner engagement is a very important part of the project which includes engagement with community groups, neighbourhood and parish councils. Targeted events will be held to engage with parish and neighbourhood councils.
- 4.5 The Nature Recovery Award which funds practical schemes that make links and networks for wildlife through the landscape has been launched for applications of up to £5,000. The fund is awarded quarterly and the next round opens on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022.
- 4.6 A question was raised regarding the protection projects have from planning. It was explained that with increased understanding and communication it is hoped that a joint approach may be taken to work together to protect as many important areas of biodiversity as possible and to incorporate this understanding when new developments are being designed.
- 4.7 In response to a question raised regarding working with adjacent areas, it was explained that consideration is being given to how to work across boundaries. The project is working with many groups that cross boundaries such as the SDNPA.
- 4.8 Malcolm Eastwood added that an important message to take from the meeting is that the initiative needs to be a joint project with engagement from parish and neighbourhood councils and he stressed the importance of their involvement in the scheme. He encouraged parish councils to identify local groups who might be able to come forward and support the survey work that will give us the detailed picture required and supplement the limited resources available at HDC and SWT.

**5.0 Climate Change Update**

- 5.1 Adam Chalmers, Director of Community Services gave the attached presentation (**Appendix B**). Much work has been completed within the HDC operation and regular newsletter items are distributed which we are encouraged to share with the public.
- 5.2 He added that by working collaboratively, the District Council and neighbourhood and parish councils can make a bigger impact. Collaboration is key to gathering ideas and information.
- 5.3 Neighbourhood and parish councils are urged to sign up for the Community Climate Fund, the next round opens in January 2022.
- 5.4 The District Council will check whether staff training modules can be shared with neighbourhood and parish councils so that continue to spread awareness.

**6.0 Update on Horsham Local Plan**

- 6.1 Barbara Childs, Director of Place and Catherine Howe, Head of Strategic Planning jointly gave the attached presentation (**Appendix C**).
- 6.2 Horsham District Council is working with four parish councils who have Neighbourhood Plans which allocate land for development and are pending the Referendum stage to ensure that they meet Water Neutrality requirements. HDC will consult Natural England as part of the process. The Neighbourhood Plans cannot proceed unless water neutrality is part of the plan. For plans which do not allocate land for development, it is hoped screening assessments will be able to demonstrate these plans will not impact on water neutrality. This work is ongoing.
- 6.3 Natural England have confirmed that a mitigation strategy needs to be in place before any new development, that increases water usage, is permitted and therefore no new development planning applications that cannot demonstrate water neutrality are being approved whilst this strategy is formed. Whilst a timescale cannot be confirmed, it is currently envisaged that this situation could continue for a further 4-6 months whilst this strategy is finalised. Whilst Natural England will need to sign off on the strategy they, HDC (and the other affected local authorities), Southern Water, DEFRA etc are all working together on its formation. The impact is widespread across land agents, developers but also businesses looking to expand to larger premises and those working hard to recover from the pandemic. There is also a social impact on the development of schools, community facilities and the supply of new affordable housing.
- 6.4 The housing target has not changed as yet despite further development being paused. Representations are being made at every level possible within Government to ensure that there is an understanding of the difficulties faced within the district and the impact that water neutrality will have on housing provision.
- 6.5 The District Council will continue to provide updates as they receive further information and agreement on the way forward becomes clearer.

**7.0 Open Forum for Questions**

- 7.1 To summarise, in effect parish councils have no dates to work to?  
*There is no Local Plan preparation timetable as yet until the timetable for the preparation of the mitigation strategy is clear.*

Do the same criteria apply to Neighbourhood Plans that still need to go through referendum?

*There may be some requirement to change some wording of plans to comply with water neutrality (they require the addition of neutrality conditions) and include mitigation strategy. Cannot definitively say whether that will meet basic conditions, legal advice may need to be sought. HDC are working to move these forward as a priority.*

- 7.2 Are most planning applications received by parish councils cut off at single dwellings?  
*Planning officers need to carry out an assessment for each application as to whether it will increase water usage defined by comparing the current with the future use of the land. Additions or changes to existing dwellings do not generally increase water usage, therefore the cut-off point is usually a single new home upwards. It was explained that Government Planning Inspectors are similarly constrained in their decision making. The long term solution is to identify alternative water sources but the mitigation strategy will provide an interim solution allowing planning to move forward whilst the longer solutions are built.*
- 7.3 Can you explain how a development that has started but not yet finished effects the calculations of Natural England?  
*Natural England assume that all development that has detailed planning permission already is included in the equation. However, if there is a site that has outline planning permission then further reserve matters cannot be determined positively.*
- 7.4 Is there any indication that Government will place a moratorium on housing numbers due the current position?  
*There is currently no indication from Government that there will be any leniency on housing numbers although the District Council continue to hold regular conversations and the matter is understood to be high on the agenda. It was explained that whilst it cannot happen now the Local Plan still needs to be prepared to determine which sites are to be developed and to protect the District against speculative development once a mitigation strategy is in place.*
- 7.5 District Councillor Jonathan Chowen delivered a statement to the room (**Appendix D**).
- 7.6 Malcolm Eastwood closed the meeting by thanking the presenters and all those in attendance for a very productive meeting.

*Meeting closed 21:04*