



HAILSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of Hailsham Town Council held remotely via the internet on Wednesday 24th March 2021 at 7.00pm.

HTC/20/
04/197 **Present:** Councillors: K. Balsdon, G. Blake-Coggins, C. Bryant, A Clarke, N. Coltman, D. Cottingham, B Granville, R. T. Grocock, K. Hinton, B. Holbrook, P.S. Holbrook, M. Laxton, K. Nicholls, A. O’Rawe, T. Powis, J. Puttick and A-M Ricketts.

Councillors N. Cleaver (Wealden District Council) and G. Fox (East Sussex County Council) were also in attendance.

198 **Officers in Attendance**

Mr J Harrison (Town Clerk), Mr M Caira (Deputy Town Clerk and Business Enterprise Manager) Ms M Foster (Finance Officer), Mrs K Giddings (Planning and Development Officer), Mr D Saxby and Mr. T. Hall (Communications Officer).

199 **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence had been received.

200 **Public Question Time**

There were no members of the public in attendance.

Councillor O’Rawe reported that ex-Councillor Bridget Pinkney had passed away following a lengthy illness. There was a minute’s silence for Mrs Pinkney.

The Town Clerk read an email he had received from a member of the public concerning the Wealden District Council consultation paper – Direction of Travel, which would shape the future Local Plan. There had been no comments on the document from Hailsham Town Council. The member of public asked for clarification on whether it had been discussed.

The Town Clerk said that the paper had been discussed at length at the Planning and Development Committee, it had been agreed that nothing more could be added and not to make a formal response. Councillor Powis did, however, make an individual response.

It was agreed to reply to the member of public enclosing a copy of Councillor Powis’ response.

201 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Puttick said that he would not be voting on the Casual Vacancy item, as he is related to one of the candidates.

Councillors P Holbrook and R Grocock declared an interest as they are members of the Hailsham Aspires Sponsorship Board.

Councillors Laxton and Nicholls declared an interest as are members of Hailsham Community Land Trust.

Councillor Balsdon said he was on-call at work and may have to leave the meeting early.

Councillor Hinton said that he may have to leave the meeting temporarily. He had informed the Town Clerk that if he did, he would not vote or participate in any agenda item that he had not been present for the full debate.

Casual Vacancy

202.1 The Chairman explained that a vacancy had occurred because of the resignation of Mr Craig Tasane. He thanked Mr Tasane for all he had done whilst on the Council.

The Town Clerk said that all six candidates had confirmed their eligibility, and all had been invited to this meeting. Five of the six were in attendance and addressed Council and answered questions from members.

The Town Clerk advised that voting would be undertaken by exhaustive ballot.

The result of the first ballot was:

Ross Newark 7 votes

Trevor Burns 6 votes

Joanna Elmer 3 votes

Philip Gibbs, Stephen Gander and Lewis Isted received no votes.

(Cllr Puttick abstained from voting)

The Town Clerk said that the second ballot would be between Ross Newark and Trevor Burns.

The result of the second ballot was:

Ross Newark 9 votes

Trevor Burns 5 votes.

(Cllrs Puttick and Blake-Coggins abstained from voting)

202.2 **RESOLVED** that Ross Newark be co-opted to the current casual vacancy on Hailsham Town Council for Hailsham North Ward; and that Councillor Newark sign the Declarations of Interest book on Friday 26th March 2021 and that he be allowed to participate and vote in this meeting.

202.3 **RESOLVED** that Councillor Newark sit on the Assets Management Committee until the Annual Meeting in May 2021.

203 **Police Report**

The Chairman introduced Inspector Kendal Wells who had recently taken up post in Hailsham.

Inspector Wells spoke about his background and about the issues affecting Hailsham.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Wells for his attendance.

204 **Councillors Balsdon, Clarke and Hinton**

Councillors Balsdon, Clarke and Hinton left the meeting at 8.15pm.

205 **Chairman's Update**

The Chairman reported that he had five or six engagements coming up.

Chairman's Allowance

206.1 The Chairman proposed that he gave a grant of £100 to each of the following local organisations from his remaining £1,517 of the Chairman's Allowance for 2020/21:

Hailsham Bonfire Society
Hailsham Horticultural Society
Hailsham Choral Society
Bird Aid
Environment Hailsham
Healthy Living
Charles Hunt Centre
Hailsham Tennis Club
Hailsham Junior Football Club
Friends of Whitehouse School
Friends of Grovelands School
Hailsham Youth Service

206.2 **RESOLVED** that authorisation be given to pay a grant of £100 to each of the above organisations from the Chairman's Allowance.

206.3 Councillor Grocock abstained from voting as a member of Environment Hailsham he was a beneficiary.

207 **Councillor Hinton**

Councillor Hinton rejoined the meeting at 8.32pm.

Confirmation of Minutes

208.1 **RESOLVED** that the Minutes and Reports of the meeting of the Hailsham Town Council held on 27th January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

208.2 The Town Clerk said that minute 194 of the minutes of 17th February should read Councillors Laxton and Nicholls, not Councillor Laxton and Puttick.

208.3 **RESOLVED** that the Minutes and Reports of the extraordinary meeting of the Hailsham Town Council held on 17th February, as amended be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Committee Recommendations to Council

209.1 **Assets Management Committee 17th March 2021 – Street Lights**

The Town Clerk reported that the Assets Management Committee had

recommended that £6,000 be allocated from Ripley's Capital Receipts for street light repairs.

209.2 **RESOLVED** that £6,000 be allocated from Ripley's Capital Receipts for street light repairs.

210.1 Assets Management Committee 17th March 2021 – 4 Market Square

The Town Clerk said that urgent work needed to be undertaken to 4 Market Square because a number of tiles around the first-floor window had fallen off. He had authorised payment of £250 for netting to make the building immediately safe but the tiles needed to be repaired at a cost of approximately £3,500. He had identified some areas where there had been an underspend that could be used. These were:

£1,639 from properties
£1,100 from insurance
£2,600 from the Newsletter

210.2 **RESOLVED** to allocated underspent money to undertake urgent repairs to 4 Market Square; and to obtain three competitive quotes for the work.

211 Neighbourhood Plan Committee

RESOLVED to:

Note the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee held on 25th February 2021, and

Approve the Neighbourhood Plan Committee's delegated authority up to the next Town Council meeting or for a longer period of time as is required.

Council Meetings and Coronavirus Legislation

212.1 The Town Clerk reported that that the legislation that allows councils to meet remotely expires on 7th May 2021. The signs are that the Government are resisting calls to extend the date. Therefore, as things stand, it will not be legal to hold anything other than physical meetings, which will present a number of safety issues.

The Town Clerk had two suggestions. The first was to move the Annual Council Meeting, scheduled for 19th May to 5th May to allow it to be held remotely.

He had also block-booked the James West Centre for all council and committee meetings, as this is the only venue large enough to hold meetings in a Covid-safe way. A risk assessment would have to be undertaken to ensure that the Council is complying with its duty of care to staff. The downside to this would be that some regular hirers from community groups would be unable to use the centre, thus losing the income and possibly mean that they find other facilities permanently elsewhere.

The Town Clerk stated that a year ago Council resolved to accept members' apologies across the board due to the unprecedented uncertainties around the emerging covid pandemic, and some members' possible inability to attend remote meetings. He was of the opinion that the time had arrived for Council to remove that 'blanket' acceptance of apologies.

In response to Councillor O'Rawe's question on why there was a need to return to

physical meetings if there was no need, the Chairman stated that it was now the time for everybody to return to work. Ms Foster objected to this, saying that staff, whilst not always in the office, continued to work and provide a service to councillors and the public from home in line with government policy. The Chairman said that this was not what he meant and was meant not be critical of staff.

212.2 **RESOLVED** to

- a) Move the Annual Council Meeting to 5th May 2021 to allow it to be held remotely, and
- b) Rescind the across-the-board acceptance of apologies for council meetings.

Motion 176 – Covid Memorial Benches

213.1 Councillor Laxton proposed the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Ricketts:

That we as a town council take positive action in recognition of how Covid impacts our community throughout the pandemic.

I recommend we purchase 2 benches exactly as the enclosed picture with the same inscriptions.

They should be placed at our war memorial and funded from CIL contributions as it fits the criteria.

These benches would be a permanent memorial to all affected by the Pandemic, through the grief of losing a loved one, the loneliness of shielding and even being restricted on going about our daily business

We also wanted to separately say "thank you" to all those working so hard to keep us safe and bring us through.

There are bespoke steel benches with representative images of all groups of people touched by the pandemic and with the inscription:

"For many months, to sit outside was but a wish "

The second inscription is :

*"Recognising all those who helped to overcome Covid 19
NHS, Key Workers and all Volunteers"*

It is hoped as people sit on the benches by the war memorial they will reflect on the struggle of the second world war where pioneering surgery was developed, through to the 2020/21 pandemic where again pioneering science was needed to bring us back to being able to enjoy the simple things like sitting on a bench in the sunshine.

While remembering those who did not make it.

Councillor Grocock asked where the money (£2,500) was coming from to finance the benches. Councillor Laxton responded that it would come from CIL money.

Councillor Granville said that he would prefer to wait until it was certain that the pandemic was over.

The Town Clerk envisaged a problem placing the benches in the War Memorial; the existing benches were already memorial benches with plaques belonging to members of the public. Permission would have to be sought and given to replace them with new benches.

Councillor Laxton agreed to siting the two Covid memorial benches in the Western Road Recreation Ground instead.

- 213.2 **RESOLVED** to agree the purchase of two memorial benches as detailed in the above motion, to be sited at the Western Road Recreation Ground if it were not possible to place them at the War Memorial, at a cost of £2,500 plus an additional expenditure of approximately £300 to provide a hard stand, with the work to be done in-house.

214 **Councillors B and P Holbrook**

Councillors B and P Holbrook left the meeting at 9.19pm. The Vice-Chairman, Councillor O'Rawe presided over the meeting.

Changing Places

- 215.1 The Town Clerk explained the background to this agenda item.

At its meeting on 25th September 2019 the following resolution was made:

*RESOLVED that Wealden District Council is approached to ascertain if it would allow Hailsham Town Council to put a Changing Places pod on Vicarage Field. If agreed, £100,000 is ringfenced from the Community Infrastructure Levy to meet the cost, including the transportation to another site in the future.
(Minute Ref HTC/20/2/171.1-171.3)*

On 29th January 2020, following discussions with Wealden District Council, the following resolution was made:

RESOLVED that the changing spaces pod is deferred to financial year 2021/22, considering the district wide review to be undertaken by Wealden District Council.

As agreed on 29th January 2020, Council was now to reconsider the suspended resolution.

Councillor Grocock stated that the Government had ruled that all future major developments a changing places facility must be included.

Councillor Granville said that Hailsham Town Council should not pay for a facility that would be for short-term use as Wealden District Council would be obliged to include this facility in its Hailsham Aspires project.

Councillors Laxton, Nicholls and Ricketts all spoke in favour of providing this facility as soon as possible saying that the needs of disabled people could not wait for Wealden District Council.

- 215.2 **RESOLVED** to delay this project for a further year 2022/23 to ascertain the plans of Wealden District Council.

This resolution was carried by 7 votes to 6.

Confidential Business

- 216 **RESOLVED** that the press and public are temporarily excluded during the discussion on agenda items 15, 16 and 17 as they concern the terms of tenders and proposals and counter proposals in negotiation for contracts, terms and conditions of employment or are otherwise confidential information.

(In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders No. 1E).

Motion 177 – Post Office Staff

- 217.1 Councillor Laxton proposed the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Hinton:

In recognition of our "Post Office Staff" who throughout Covid 19 lockdowns have given a selfless and dedicated community spirited daily service to our residents.

I propose that a £50 gift voucher (Waitrose) and bouquet of flowers is presented to each member of staff with our gratitude on behalf of HTC and the residents.

- 217.2 **RESOLVED** that in recognition of our "Post Office Staff" who throughout Covid 19 lockdowns have given a selfless and dedicated community spirited daily service to residents.

Therefore a £50 gift voucher (Waitrose) and bouquet of flowers is presented to each member of staff with our gratitude on behalf of HTC and the residents.

This motion was carried by 7 votes to 4. Councillor Grocock requested that his abstention from voting be recorded.

- 218.1 The Town Clerk stated that the Post Office staff had requested a pay increase.

- 218.2 **RESOLVED** that all members of Post Office staff receive a 3% pay increase from 1st April 2021.

- 219 **RESOLVED** that as the meeting had been sitting for three hours that it stand adjourned until 7th April 2021 to address the remaining items of business.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.58pm.

CHAIRMAN