

## **HAILSHAM ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

**1 MINUTES AND REPORTS** of the Hailsham Annual Town Meeting held at Hailsham Civic and Community Hall on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.30 pm.

**2 PRESENT:** 12 Hailsham town councillors; 39 Hailsham electors; 8 officers of Hailsham Town Council.

**3** The Town Mayor/Chairman of Hailsham Town Council, Councillor P.S. Holbrook opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public and councillors. He introduced the councillors sitting on the stage; these were the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the standing committees.

The Chairman introduced and thanked representatives from the various stakeholders who were in attendance and had stalls providing information on their services. These were Wealden District Council, Hailsham Twinning Association, Sussex Police, Hailsham Youth Service and Environment Hailsham.

This had been the Chairman's fourth year in the post and had been a particularly challenging year for him. He thanked Hailsham Town Council staff and councillors.

He said that this Annual Meeting was earlier in the year than normal because of the upcoming elections. Two existing councillors, David Cottingham and Trevor Powis were ineligible to stand as they had moved out of the area. He thanked them both for their contributions over the past four years.

The Chairman highlighted a couple of events that he had been involved with in his capacity of Town Mayor.

The first was the Community Food Bank. He had raised £750 at a mayor's event before Christmas. A member of the public had also very generously donated a van for use by the Foodbank.

The other event was the Military Tattoo that he attended with other mayors and chairman from across the county at Herstmonceux Castle.

**4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Apologies had been received from Councillors J Cook, J. Crittenden, R. Grocock and K. Nicholls.

### **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**5** The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

**6** There were no matters arising.

### **HAILSHAM TOWN COUNCIL: ANNUAL REPORT**

The Chairman said that copies of the report had been made available prior to the meeting.

He asked those present if there were any questions or comments on the contents of the annual report. There were none.

## **8 Electors Questions**

Before taking questions from members of the public, the Chairman said a letter had been received from County Councillor Gerard Fox, as he was unable to be present at the meeting. He asked the Vice-Chairman, Councillor John Puttick to read the letter.

Councillor Fox apologised for not being at the meeting. He stated that ESCC Highways contractors had repaired 8261 potholes since the start of the year, this left a further 595 reported potholes currently in the system awaiting repair.

The zebra crossing on South Road will be refreshed once resurfacing work is completed later in the year.

Families are being urged to check their eligibility for help to buy milk and food through the NHS Healthy Start initiative. It was estimated that over 1400 eligible families in East Sussex were missing out on at least £320,000 of available funding every year.

The Chairman invited County Councillor Steve Murphy to address the meeting.

Councillor Murphy said that lots of work was being carried out at county level.

South Road bridge was to be resurfaced in April.

He thanked Hailsham Town Council for their work in helping to organise the candlelight vigil to mark the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

He had organised the provision of Christmas lunches for the lonely on Christmas Day at the Hailsham East Community Centre.

The Chairman asked the Town Clerk to read out the written questions received. The first one read:

*Please could the meeting be updated on progress to include PO Alfred Frederick French's name on the town's war memorial?*

The Town Clerk said that the stone with PO French's name would be in situ very shortly. It had been torturous getting planning permission from the Conservation Officer.

Councillor Keogh added that trustees of the War Memorial Institute were pleased that the names on the War Memorial had been cleaned and where necessary repainted in time for Remembrance Sunday. He thanked the Town Clerk for organising that.

The second question read:

*Section 5.1 of the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plans details a desire to encourage walking and cycling as an alternative to the use of cars for short local journeys. In*

*the light of their hoped for completion by 2028 I wish to ask: What progress has been made towards achieving these goals and are they likely to be achieved by 2028.*

*Has the Council monitored the amount of car and cycle use since the plan was approved?*

*Would the Council consider pedestrianisation of the High Street in their plans?*

Councillor Laxton spoke as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee; she said that the Wealden Local Plan was still awaited. The Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan will then be reviewed. The Neighbourhood Plan was at the heart of all Hailsham Town Council's activities.

Hailsham Town Council had not undertaken any monitoring of traffic in the town.

On the question on pedestrianisation of the High Street, Councillor Laxton said that this would create a problem for businesses who had no other access for deliveries, so there were no plans to do this.

Question 3 read:

What provision has been made for all the new traffic going through the town, generated by the thousands of new houses being built and proposed between Marshfoot Lane, Market Street (Mill Road) Station Road and Ersham Road?

We have had the glossy-picture plan for the new roundabout joining Diplocks, South Road and Ersham Road. To ease the bottleneck and rush hour tailbacks right back to the dual carriageway, starting in 2007/8. When will it happen?

Question 4 read:

*Why has the level of precept levied by Hailsham Town Council of an 8% increase significantly higher than the increase in Council Tax by Wealden District Council.*

The Responsible Finance Officer, Mrs M Webber explained that an increase of in the Hailsham Town Council precept equated to 10 pence per household per week. The increase in the precept was largely due to the Post Office, which Hailsham Town Council had taken over the franchise of before the pandemic lockdown and had still not recovered enough to make a profit, this was still being underwritten by the Town Council. Royal Mail had also introduced a parcel collection service which has had an impact on the number of people attending the post office.

The Chairman then invited members of the public in the audience to ask questions.

A question was asked about the access to the James West Centre in Brunel Drive. Local residents were concerned that the road was busy, and some users of the Centre were parking in the street and not in the allotted car park. This meant that the area became dangerous for drivers and pedestrians alike. The Chairman said that the Council would look into the parking issues at the Centre and put up notices and inform hirers to use the car park wherever possible and certainly to park responsibly and safely.

Another member of the public raised concerns about the lack of parking enforcement

in Hailsham. On occasions bus drivers were unable to use bus stops as cars were parked in the bus laybys. The Council was asked to employ a traffic warden. Councillor Laxton replied that the Council was not able to justify the cost of employing this person. Wealden District Council had taken the decision not to decriminalise parking in the whole of the district. This meant that the responsibility for issuing parking fines laid with the police and not the Council.

County Councillor Bentley suggested that thought be given, possibly in conjunction with other councils, to the provision of charging points for electric cars.

A member of the public asked if thought had been given to limiting the speed of traffic in High Street to 20 miles an hour. The reply was that this was not a matter for Hailsham Town Council.

A member of the public asked what the situation was with the adding of an additional name on the War Memorial. The Town Clerk replied that he would arrange for this to be done as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked if there were any further questions. As there were none, he closed the meeting at 8.33pm.