



HAILSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of Hailsham Town Council held at the Hailsham Civic Community Hall, Vicarage Lane on Wednesday 22nd January 2025 at 7.00pm.

HTC/24/
5/4/185 **Present:** Councillors: G. Blake-Coggins, K-M. Blundell-Smith, C. Bryant, B. Carpenter, D. Chapman, J. Crittenden, N. Hayes, B. Holbrook, P. Holbrook, C. Mitchell, A. M. Ricketts, D Rusu and G. White.

186 **Officers in Attendance**

Mr J. Harrison (Town Clerk), Mr T. Lee, Mrs R. White and Mr D. Saxby.

Also in attendance were County Councillors G. Fox and S. Murphy.

187 **Public Question Time**

A member of the public thanked the Town Council for its support in writing to the Department for Education over Burfield Academy.

A member of the public spoke about the proposed increase in the precept. He accepted that the proposal would be carried but said that the non-Liberal Democrat members had the option to either vote against, abstain from voting or resign from the Council.

188 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received and accepted from Councillors A. Blake-Coggins, A. Clarke, F. Clarke, M. Laxton and K. Nicholls.

189 **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were declared by councillors.

190 **Confirmation of Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Hailsham Town Council held on 13th November 2024 and the extraordinary meeting held on 12th December 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

191.1 **Hailsham 'Furniture Now'**

The Chairman invited Mr N. Gossage of 'Furniture Now' in Hailsham to address the meeting.

He said that their premises had recently been broken into; there had been lots of damage caused and money stolen. He requested an emergency grant of £500 to make the premises safe.

191.2 **RESOLVED** to refer this matter to the Finance and Governance Committee that is

being held on 29th January.

192 **Chairman's Update**

The Chairman updated the meeting on his activities since the last meeting. This included opening two new shops and turning on the Christmas lights.

Councillor Blundell-Smith said that it was good to see the Chairman back in good health.

East Sussex County Council Update

193.1 Councillors Fox and Murphy had provided written reports and answered members' questions.

Councillors A. Blake-Coggins and Ricketts were thanked for organising the Knife Crime Seminar and the Railway Club for older residents.

193.2 **RESOLVED** to note the East Sussex County Councillors' updates.

Wealden District Council Update

194.1 Councillor White provided an oral update. This included plans to provide a medical storage centre in the town and a possible minor refurbishment of Vicarage Field.

Councillor Carpenter suggested setting up a working group to investigate any issues coming from the merging of local authorities.

194.2 **RESOLVED** to note Councillor White's update.

Committee Recommendations to Council

Staffing Committee -16th January 2025: Staffing Review

195.1 **1 Finance Assistant**

The extraordinary meeting held on 12th December 2024 had resolved to revoke further implementation of the Staff Review until May 2025. Since that meeting the Staffing Committee had resolved that the Council proceeds with the recruitment of a new Finance Assistant.

The Town Clerk advised that if Council endorsed the Finance and Governance Committee's recommendation, it would need a two thirds majority as it would be rescinding a previous resolution.

Discussion ensued.

195.2 **RESOLVED** to proceed with the recruitment of a new Finance Assistant.

This resolution was carried unanimously, therefore exceeding the two thirds majority needed.

196.1 **2 James West Community Centre Manager**

In light of the update provided by Facilities and Operations Manager regarding the

growth of bookings, the Staffing Committee had recommended to Council that it proceeds with the recruitment of a new James West Centre Manager.

The Town Clerk advised that if Council endorsed the Finance and Governance Committee's recommendation, it would need a two thirds majority as it would be rescinding a previous resolution.

It was confirmed that the current hall manager had tendered her resignation with effect from August 2025.

Following debate, Councillor Carpenter proposed that the current arrangement continues with the hours being increased for the current caretaker being increased to 25 hours a week.

- 196.2 **RESOLVED** to continue with the current arrangements for the James West Centre with the caretaker's hours being increased to 25 hours a week and to look at the arrangements again at the next meeting.

Chairman's Allowance

- 197.1 As the Chairman had not provided his list of organisations that he wished to give grants to, it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

He said that the Finance Assistant, Mrs S. Harper was leaving the Council on 21st February after nearly 18 years. He thanked her for all her work.

The Chairman said he was planning to put a plaque on the inside wall of the James West Centre commemorating the previous centre manager, Mr R. Boxer.

- 197.2 **RESOLVED** to defer the payment of grants from the underspend of the Chairman's allowance to local organisations until the next meeting where the Chairman will provide a list of organisations to be given money..

Report of the Independent Wealden Parish Remuneration Panel 2025/26

- 198.1 A copy of the report of the Independent Wealden Parish Remuneration Panel for 2025/26 had been circulated with the agenda. Members were asked to consider whether to accept the increase in members' allowances as recommended by the Panel.

The recommendation was to increase the basic allowance and the Chairman's allowance by 3%.

- 198.2 **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation of a 3% increase in allowances as recommended by the Independent Wealden Parish Remuneration Panel 2025/26.

Precept 2025/26

- 199.1 The Responsible Finance Officer, Mrs R. White spoke in support of her written report that had been circulated with the agenda.

In response to a question from Councillor Mitchell, Mrs White confirmed that the increase in the tax base was 70.

Councillor Blake-Coggins proposed the budget as set out in the officer's report to

Council.

- 199.2 On being put to the vote, the proposal was not carried by 5 votes to four with four abstentions.
- 199.3 Councillor Mitchell proposed reviewing the budget at the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 29th January with a view to getting it ratified at an extraordinary meeting of the Council before the closing date with Wealden District Council of 7th February 2025.
- 199.4 **RESOLVED** to review the budget at the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 29th January with a view to getting it ratified at an extraordinary meeting of the Council before the closing date with Wealden District Council of 7th February 2025.

Strengthening the Standards and Conduct for Local Authorities in England – Government Consultation

- 200 **RESOLVED** to defer this agenda item to the next meeting.

Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Programme

- 201 **RESOLVED** to note the consultation programme.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.34pm.