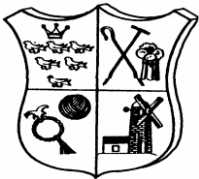




## **HAILSHAM TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**



CC/25/8/217

REPORT (Minutes) of the Communities Committee relating to the organisation of festivities and events held at the Fleur de Lys Meeting Room, Town Council Offices, Hailsham, on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 6.00 pm.

### **Public Forum**

To deal with any questions or brief representations from members of the public relevant to the remit of the committee, in accordance with Standing Order 1. and Hailsham Town Council policy. (15 Minutes)

None were present

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### **Committee members present**

Councillors: C. Bryant, D. Chapman, A. Blake Coggins (substituting for A. Clarke), K. Nicholls, A. Ricketts (Chair).

Other Councillors present: C. Mitchell, G. White

### **Other members present**

J. Beckingham (Hellingly and Hailsham Girlguiding), G. Constable (Hailsham Lions), T. Biggin (Hailsham Festival), B. Funnell (Hailsham Rotary), C. Musk (Hailsham Bonfire and 2<sup>nd</sup> Hailsham Scouts), B. Sandalls (Hailsham Bonfire Society), N. Mullery (Hailsham FM), B. Pratt (Hailsham Farmers' Market), C. Soper (Chamber of Commerce)

Officers in attendance: K. Giddings

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### **Apologies For Absence:**

Councillors A. Clarke

J. Golding (Hailsham Forward), D. Sinden (Hailsham Parish Church), J. Seale

220

### **Declarations of Interest**

C. Bryant and D. Chapman declared personal interests in the agenda item for the Bonfire Society, as they are members of the Bonfire Society.

Councillors K. Nicholls and C. Mitchell declared personal interests in the agenda item for Hailsham Run, as they are both involved in organising the event

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## **Confirmation of Minutes**

To resolve that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Committee held on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 be amended, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Proposer D. Chapman, Seconder C. Bryant

223

## **To receive an update about progress of resolutions from the last meeting of the Communities Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026**

There was no update

224

## **Finance Matters**

### **Update on sponsorship of events and VAT**

C. Mitchell addressed the Committee in relation to some questions that had been raised at a previous meeting about the Town Council's sponsorship of events and the payment of VAT in respect to the invoices raised from the events.

He advised that the Council is making a few changes in respect of how it provides funds when sponsoring events in the Town, to allow the Council to be more transparent about the treatment of VAT in its dealings with the community organisations

The sponsorship amount that has been agreed by the Communities Committee and Full Council to be allocated to an individual organisation for their event, will now be paid directly to the organisation. Instead of the Council paying the individual invoices on behalf of the organisation, the organisation will now take charge of these payments including payments of VAT.

Each individual organisation that has been allocated funds will need to report back to the Communities Committee after their event, providing a detailed report on their event.

C. Mitchell read out the following report to the Committee:

### **Changes to Grants and Loans from HTC**

*Hailsham Town Council needs to be more transparent about grants and grant processes, leases and loans and the treatment of VAT in its dealings with community organisations*

#### *Grants*

*Currently there are four different ways HTC awards Grants – ie payment for services or activities or events which are undertaken outwith HTC officer tasks but are still supported by HTC*

*There are Budget lines, such as CAB, Railway Club, Environment Hailsham, Union Corner Hall, which total just over £30,500. These are often referred to as standing Grants*

*There are one-offs, such as the boxing club, £15,000 this year.*

*There are Community events through the Communities budget – mostly listed under tourism in our annual budget - and which this year total about £25,000*

*There are also mostly smaller grants determined by Finance Committee which are budgeted at £11,000*

*Some events such as the Bonfire Society fall across two funding streams and their funding is split. If one part should fail the whole event could fail.*

*Overall, some £81,500 is handed out through these grant streams currently*

*Further, there was very little accountability for these grants apart from sight of some of the invoices, where these were being paid direct by the Council. There was no formal determination of how these amounts were to be paid to recipients. Payment has in the past been either on a claim, an Invoice, or by direct HTC payment of submitted invoices until the total award was reached. Such ad hoc arrangements are inherently unfair and can lead to disparities in*

treatment of recipients. Some grants have been missed in the past because of this lack of clarity

#### *'Hidden' Grants*

*HTC also give 'hidden' grants in the form of subsidies to organisations which formally lease our facilities but do not pay market rents, nor pay for repairs nor utilities. We are about to quantify these hidden grants, but HTC estimate it could be as much as another £80 – 90,000.*

*All types of grants therefore currently total around 10% of our annual budget.*

*There was also the confused issue of VAT on invoices, and who claimed it where, and whether grants when paid direct by HTC, were net or gross of VAT.*

#### *Future*

*First, we as a Council need to be very transparent in our financial dealings, and to date, there has been very little post event scrutiny or accountability.*

*For just one example, how many organisations receiving Community event grants come back to this Committee with a report – or to Council in any committee?*

*There are notable exceptions but generally it is a process more honoured in the breach than in its observance.*

*HTC is therefore working towards standardising and harmonising the grants processes.*

*All grants will have to be bid for annually and will not just roll forward.*

*All grants will become the responsibility of the recipient organisation.*

*Without exception, all recipients will have to account for the grant expenditure within their own accounts, and in formal report to the appropriate Committees., who will then formally accept the report. This will also apply to one-offs*

*Failure to provide a satisfactory accounting, and a full report, will result in Grants being recovered from the recipient, and the organisation unable to bid in subsequent years.*

#### *Leases*

*We are evaluating all our leases to understand the elements of hidden grants and evaluating them. Where is the incentive to minimise utility and other costs, if these are being paid for by someone else?*

*We are making these costs transparent by amending leases to commercial fully repairing leases – usually as they come up for renewal - and granting back the elements of rent and utilities so that the effect is cost neutral, but the hidden grant is then exposed and valued, to be open to scrutiny*

#### *Loans*

*Loans will be similarly accountable, since these are HTC assets and investments*

#### *VAT*

*As grants are then the responsibility of the recipient organisation, the issue of VAT accounting becomes one for the recipient organisation, not the Council.*

*From the start of the financial year this will be applied to all grants, loans and leases and will make the whole position more transparent*

*It is expected that this process will remove the disparities, inequalities and unfairness presently within the system and regularise the VAT position, as well as reveal the true extent of subsidy provided to community organisations throughout Hailsham*

### **Finance report**

Members noted the report for finance

C. Mitchell left the meeting at 6.18 pm

225

### **Friday Trial Markets**

K. Giddings updated the Committee on the Friday trials that have recently taken place in Blackman's Yard, to ascertain whether a regular market would be successful in this location.

She advised that 4 out of the 5 trials have been held, with the last one held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

A questionnaire has been sent to all the traders who have attended the trials, asking for feedback. A report with all the relevant figures from the market will then be collated. The item will be on the agenda for the next meeting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June, so the Committee can consider the future of the markets.

K. Nicholls left the meeting at 6.25 pm

226

### **Town Beacon**

D. Chapman reported that a Beacon for the Town has been purchased and will be placed on Western Road Recreation Ground

The pole for the Beacon will be placed in the ground on 26<sup>th</sup> May and the basket will be installed 7 days later

Members noted that it may be possible to light the Beacon for the Prom in the Park event on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

It was agreed it was necessary to establish which Committee is responsible for the Beacon and the lighting of the Beacon at events. Members proposed that the responsibility should lie with the Communities Committee and it was agreed to take this request to the next Full Council meeting.

226.1

**RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the Communities Committee is responsible for any booking requests for the lighting of the Town Beacon

Proposer – C. Bryant. Seconder – D. Chapman

All members were in favour of agreeing to the request

227

### **Hailsham Forward and Hailsham Chamber of Commerce**

C. Soper reported that Hailsham Forward are currently speaking to local artists from Gallery North about placing vinyls in the windows of empty shops in the Town, to improve the appearance of these empty shops. They are also looking into planning permission for the vinyls

The nominations for the Business Awards have now closed and the judging process has started for the Awards.

A charity golf day will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> May, with a charity quiz night held on 8<sup>th</sup> June at “The Cottage” on the A22.

Bookings can be made on the Chamber website.

228

### **Youth Service**

The Youth Service report had been circulated to the Committee

Members praised the staff of the Youth Service, for all their work.

229

### **Sussex Day**

K. Giddings stated that 27 traders/organisations are booked in so far for the event, alongside a Harvey's Beer tent, music and entertainment on the day. Some classic cars will also be on site. The event runs from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm, with a road closure from 7.00 am to 5.00 pm

230

### **Prom in the Park**

Members were advised that everything is ready for the event on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June.

K. Giddings advised that fundraising will be organised on the day for St Wilfrid's Hospice and volunteers were still needed to help with bucket collections on the Recreation Ground. A. Ricketts and A. Blake Coggins both volunteered to help with the bucket collections.

231

### **Community Forum**

K. Giddings read out an update from J. Seale:

*Attendance is good and information is submitted and notes are distributed following each meeting for those unable to attend.*

*Several collaborations and helpful connections have been made between organisations to their mutual benefits and the group remains useful and a continued success.*

232

### **Hailsham Bonfire Society**

B. Sandalls reported that the organisation of the Bonfire Societies Flaming Fun Day event is underway, the event will be held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June at Western Road Recreation Ground.

He enquired whether the Council would be able to lend 10 gazebos to the Bonfire Society for the Fun Day? K. Giddings stated that he would need to place the booking with T Lee, the Operations Manager.

The Committee agreed to this request.

232.1

**RESOLVED** to agree to the Bonfire Societies request to use the Town Council gazebos at the Flaming Fun Day event on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2026

Proposer A. Ricketts, Seconder A. Blake Coggins

233

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Hailsham Scouts**

C. Musk reported that the Scouts had attended a survival camp overnight, the event had gone well and the Explorers had visited Bushy Wood.

He further advised the Scouts are currently looking for a new scout hut to accommodate their members

234

### **Girlguiding Heathfield and Hailsham District**

J. Beckingham advised that the Girl Guides are also looking for units to accommodate their members. Volunteers are also needed.

The Brownies are currently practising their maypole dancing for Sussex Day.

235

### **Hailsham Lions**

G. Constable stated that the Lions are looking for a new premises as they will need to move out of their current premises shortly.

She further advised that the Lions recently helped two young men by providing washing machines for them both.

236

### **Hailsham Festival**

T. Biggin advised that the Festival website will shortly be active. The brochure will also be available in July. As it is the Festival's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, it is planned to hold a street celebration on the first Saturday of the event.

237

### **Hailsham Farmers' Market**

B. Pratt reported that the Farmers Market had taken place on the previous Saturday and the

market was going well.

238 **Hailsham FM**

N. Mullery updated the Committee on this year's Hailsham Hero and advised that nominations can now be made for the Hailsham Hero award.

He requested a gazebo for Hailsham FM at the Sussex Day event.

239 **Hailsham Parish Church**

There was no update.

240 **Hailsham Community Run**

K. Giddings advised that Hailsham Run is set for another busy event with 951 Entries booked in, as of this morning.

241 **Remembrance Sunday**

The first meeting of the Remembrance Sunday Committee will be held on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June

242 **Stand Proud 3**

K. Giddings advised that the event is set and ready to go.

243 **Hailsham Railway Club**

A. Ricketts stated that the Club was running well, with guest speakers attending and a "Sing A Long " recently organised at the Club.

A Blake Coggins reported that the Club is looking to become a CIC.

244 **Twinning Association**

P. Townsend stated that the Association has arranged for 12 visitors to come over from Gournay en Bray.

The Twinning Association will be travelling to France at the end of June.

Members also noted that the Twinning Association has its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.00 pm

**The next meeting will be held at 6.00 pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026 Global/Minutes & Agendas/Communities**