HAILSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of Hailsham Town Council, held in the Hailsham Civic and Community Hall on Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 7.00pm.

HTC/AM 26/001 **<u>Present</u>:** Councillors: K M Blundell-Smith, C. Bryant, A. Blake-Coggins, G. Blake-Coggins, M. Ciara, B. Carpenter, D. Chapman, A. Clarke, F Clarke, J Crittenden, B. Holbrook, P. Holbrook, C. Mitchell, A M Ricketts, D Rusu and G. White.

002 **<u>Officers in Attendance</u>**

J. Harrison (Town Clerk), T. Lee (Operations Manager), K. Giddings (Corporate Services Manager), D. Saxby and T. Hall.

Also in attendance were County Councillors N. Cleaver and P. Soane.

<u>Election of Chair/Town Mayor</u>

003.1 **Retiring Chair's Address**

Councillor Bryant thanked colleagues for their support in the last year. Things had changed a lot in the last year, particularly around governance and staffing issues.

003.2 **Nominations for Office**

Councillor Nicholls nominated Councillor Bryant. This was seconded by Councillor Mitchell.

Councillor Bryant 10 votes
Abstentions 2 votes

Councillors C. Bryant, A. Blake-Coggins, G. Blake-Coggins, M. Ciara, B. Carpenter, J Crittenden, B. Holbrook, C. Mitchell, A M Ricketts, D Rusu and G. White voted for Councillor Bryant.

Councillors P. Holbrook and K.M. Smith abstained from voting.

003.3 **RESOLVED** that Councillor C. Bryant be duly elected as Chairman/Town Mayor for 2026/27.

Councillor Bryant signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took the chair.

Councillor Bryant thanked everyone and said he hoped that all councillors could continue to work together..

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004 **<u>Councillor D. Chapman</u>**

Councillor Chapman entered the meeting at 7.07pm.

005 **Public Forum**

Mr P. Turner said it was good to see so many councillors present. In the past, decisions were made by very few councillors present.

The Town Clerk stated that apologies should be given in advance with the reason stated. A vote of acceptance of any apologies should be taken with a resolution to accept them.

Councillor P. Holbrook asked for an update on the provision of land for the Seeds of Hope Project. The Town Clerk responded that the matter was with the Council's solicitors.

006 **Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors A. Clarke, F. Clarke and M. Laxton.

007 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest given.

008 **Election of Vice Chairman/Deputy Town Mayor**

Councillor Ricketts had nominated Councillor C. Mitchell. This was seconded by Councillor Bryant.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mitchell be duly elected as Vice Chairman/Deputy Town Mayor for 2026/27.

This vote was carried unanimously

Councillor Mitchell said that he and the Chairman had worked well in the last year, and he hoped this would continue.

Appointment of Standing Committee and Working Groups and External Bodies

009 **RESOLVED** that in accordance with Standing Order No. 5, the following Committees be appointed:

(a) Planning and Development Committee
(b) Finance, Budget, Resources and Staffing Committee
(c) Assets Management Committee
(d) Communities Committee
(e) Neighbourhood Plan Committee
(f) Staff Committee
(g) Strategy Committee

010 **RESOLVED** that each committee is not appointed by political or other group membership.

011 **Working Groups**

RESOLVED that the following Working Groups be appointed:

(a) Remembrance Sunday Sub-Committee
(b) Hellingly Liaison Working Group
(c) Devolution Working Group

Membership of Committees and Working Groups

012 **RESOLVED** that the numbers of councillors on each committee be set at six unless otherwise agreed.

Planning and Development Committee
Finance, Budget, Resources and Staffing Committee
Assets Management Committee
Communities Committee
Neighbourhood Plan Committee
Staff Committee
Strategy Committee
Post Office Committee

(b) the allocation on each of the following:

(a) Planning and Development Committee

Councillors A. Blake-Coggins, Bryant, Chapman, Crittenden, P. Holbrook, Nicholls and Ricketts

Substitutes: All other councillors

(b) Finance and Governance Committee

Councillors Mitchell, Blundell-Smith, Rusu, White, G. Blake-Coggins and P Holbrook

Substitutes: All other councillors

(c) Assets Management Committee

Councillors Laxton, Mitchell, Chapman, Bryant, Caira, Carpenter, P. Holbrook and A Blake-Coggins

Substitutes: All other councillors.

(d) Communities Committee

Councillors G, Blake-Coggins, Ricketts, Chapman, Bryant, Nicholls, Carpenter and F Clarke

Substitutes: All other councillors.

(e) Neighbourhood Plan Committee

Councillors, Laxton, Mitchell, Chapman, Bryant and Blundell-Smith

Substitutes: All other councillors.

(f) Staffing Committee

Councillors Carpenter, Ricketts, Nicholls, Rusu, G Blake-Coggins, Caira, Mitchell and B Holbrook

Substitutes: All other councillors

(g) Post Office

Councillors Carpenter, Crittenden, P. Holbrook, Laxton and Mitchell

Appointment of Chairmen of Standing Committees

013 **RESOLVED** that the Chair and Vice-Chair of committees be elected at the first meeting of the committee with the exception of the Staffing Committee.

The vote in favour was unanimous.

RESOLVED that Councillor Nicholls be Chair of the Staffing Committee for 2026/27 and that Councillor Ricketts be the Vice-Chair.

The vote in favour was unanimous.

Representation to External Bodies

014 **RESOLVED** that the following members be appointed as Hailsham Town Council representatives to the following organisations:

Wealden District Association of Local Councils – The Chair and Deputy Chair of Council.

Hailsham Active – Councillor Carpenter.

Hailsham Forward Executive – Councillors G. Blake-Coggins and Carpenter

Movement and Access Strategy for Hailsham & Hellingly (MASHH): Councillors Ricketts and White.

Cuckmere Community Bus Stakeholder's Group: Councillor P Holbrook.

Union Corner Hall: Councillors B Holbrook and Mitchell

Environment Hailsham Board: Councillor Ricketts.

Wealden & District Citizens Advice Bureau – Councillor Crittenden

Wealden Dementia Group – Councillors A Blake-Coggins and Ricketts.

RESOLVED that the following members be appointed to the following sub-committees and working groups:

015 Remembrance Sunday Sub-Committee – Councillors Bryant, Chapman, P. Holbrook and Ricketts.

Devolution Working Group – Councillors Carpenter, Bryant and P. Holbrook.

Hellingly Liaison Group – Councillors Laxton, Bryant, G. Blake-Coggins and Carpenter.

Wealden Larger Councils Devolution Group – Councillor P. Holbrook and a member of the CMT.

016 **Meeting Dates 2026/27**

RESOLVED to approve the schedule of meeting dates as circulated with the agenda.

017 **Confirmation of Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes and Reports of the meeting of Hailsham Town Council held on 25th March 2026 be agreed, taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

018 **Finance Report**

RESOLVED to

A. note the Income and Expenditure position for 2025/26
B. note the Internal Auditor's report
C. agree the Annual Governance statements
D. agree the Asset Register as at 31st March 2026
E. agree the Bank Reconciliations as at 31st March 2026
F. approve the Annual Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2026. Authorise the Mayor and Town Clerk to sign Section 1 Authorise the Mayor, as Chairman of the Council, to sign Section 2 of the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return on behalf of the Council
G. note the Explanations of Variances
H. note the Reconciliation of Reserves as at 31st March 2026
I. approve the dates of the Notice of Public Rights
J. Note the Earmarked Reserves position
K. Approve the continuation of bank accounts with Barclays, Unity Trust and CCLA

The votes on A to K were taken individually and all were unanimously agreed.

019 **Strategic Plan 2026 -2030**

The Chairman reported that one response had been received from a member of the public.

RESOLVED to agree the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

The vote in favour was carried unanimously.

020 **Motion to Council re Women's Sport**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Bryant and seconded by Councillor Chapman.

To launch a campaign to promote and support women's sport across the town especially with respect to council run facilities, working with bodies like Hailsham news to promote successful projects. To look at national campaigns and funding to support women's teams that use council assets.

RESOLVED to launch a campaign to promote and support women's sport across the town especially with respect to council run facilities, working with bodies like Hailsham news to promote successful projects. To look at national campaigns and funding to support women's teams that use council assets.

The resolution was carried unanimously apart from Councillor Ricketts who had left the room.

Committee Recommendations to Council

021 Finance and Governance Committee 26th April 2026 – Periodic Statements and Committee Expenditure

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2025/26 be signed.

RESOLVED that all leases currently not at market value should be fully repairing and amended to the market rate, to be determined through professional valuation, including all utility costs and that the Council then gives each organisation a standing grant in order to make them financially neutral with a Memorandum of Understanding for each grant to be agreed

The votes in favour were unanimous.

022 Communities Committee – 12th May 2026 – Town Beacon

RESOLVED that the Communities Committee has the responsibility for bookings of the beacon and, therefore, all requests should be made through the Committee.

The vote in favour was unanimous.

023 **Confidential Business**

RESOLVED that the press and public are excluded during the discussion on the remainder of the agenda as they concern: the beginning of legal proceedings and terms and conditions of service (in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders No. 1E).

Assets Management Committee – 8th April 2026

024 Streetlights

The Chairman declared an interest in this agenda item as he was a friend of the person who had tendered for the work.

Councillor Caira asked that Festive Illumination had the capacity to undertake this work.

RESOLVED that up to go out to formal tender for the work, noting that two companies had already tendered and that the necessary work be carried out over a three-year period; funding for the first year's work to come from CIL money.

The vote in favour was unanimous.

025 **Motion – Council Property**

A motion was proposed by Councillor Carpenter and seconded by Councillor A. Blake-Coggins about Council property.

Councillor White declared an interest as this project might involve a grant from Wealden District Council.

RESOLVED to set up a working group for this project, comprising the Chair of the Assets Management Committee, Councillors Bryant, Carpenter, Chapman, and White, County Councillor Soane, two representatives from Hailsham Active, a representative of the Chamber of Commerce, a representative from the Hailsham Festival, a representative from Hailsham Forward, representatives from Wealden District Council (including Mr D, Chennell, if possible) and officers from Hailsham Town Council as necessary.

The vote in favour was unanimous apart from Councillors Crittenden, B. Holbrook, P. Holbrook and Mitchell who abstained from voting.

RESOLVED to make an offer on the property using CIL money.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.05pm.

CHAIRMAN

Global/Minutes and Agendas/ DS/ AM Minutes 28/05/25