

MEETING OF FULL PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2022 AT 7.30PM

Councillors Present : Cllrs Norcross (Chairman), Young, Parsons, Northam, Lloyd, Bell, I Alexander, S Alexander, Sullivan, Rudkin, Campbell and Goldsmith.

Clerks in attendance : John Fullbrook and Hazel Roxby

Members of the Public : 7 {plus WSCC Cllr Paul Linehan, Cllr Bob Platt and Wardens Paul Conroy & Michael Pearce}

Meeting commenced 7.30 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

ACTION

FULL/22/47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

47.1 Apologies were received from Cllrs Hanson, and Cllr Northam was in attendance but needed to leave by 9pm and so gave apologies. Cllr Trundle absent.

FULL/22/48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

48.1 None.

FULL/22/49 QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR *(in summary)*

49.1 The Chairman had received written questions from a resident who wished to remain anonymous, and she read these out and then responded on behalf of the Council. Both referenced a recent court case that concerns an SPC councillor.

49.1.1 Q – 1. *Will the SPC be proposing a vote of no-confidence in Cllr Goldsmith and requesting his resignation, as suggested by several local residents?*

49.1.2 A – 1. *As we are still awaiting the report from Hoey Ainscough concerning councillor behaviour, it would not be appropriate for us to consider this issue, until then.*

49.1.3 A – 1. *Cllr Goldsmith added it was not council business, rather it was between two private individuals*

49.2.1 Q – 2. *In the absence of any apology to the business owner even now by Cllr Goldsmith, will the council acknowledge its own failure to support and encourage this business owner, and make its own apologies for Rodney's behaviour, and wholly unjustified High Court case against a Steyping resident*

49.2.2 A – 2. *We have not failed to support or encourage any new businesses where possible. We will not be apologising for Rodney's behaviour as it is not the responsibility of the Parish Council, but rather the individual himself. Likewise with the High Court case, which was brought by Rodney as a private individual and not with the agreement nor authority of Steyping Parish Council. Consequently, we neither can, nor shall apologise for it, other than to note that any court action is always regrettable.*

FULL/22/50 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

50.1 Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Lloyd that the minutes for the meeting dated the 18th July '22 be accepted as true and fair record. **Agreed 10 For, 2 Abstained**

- FULL/22/51 MATTERS ARISING** – These items were taken as read
- 51.1** Signs on Bypass and Bostal hill to be replaced, Cllr Linehan to chase WSCC - **See item 52.3**
 - 51.2** Cllr Linehan to seek resolution to issues raised from Virgin media installation - **See item 52.3**
 - 51.3** Cllr Linehan to report back on police response to Steyning High St antisocial behaviour issue – **See item 52.3**
 - 51.4** Clerk to reconstitute the Local Action Team to help with local issues - **Actioned/See 56.10**
 - 51.5** Hoey Ainscough meeting to be confirmed & Community Committee meeting rescheduled – **Actioned**
 - 51.6** Complete amendments to 5-point plan for Planning Committee delegated authority process – **Actioned**
 - 51.7** 5-point plan process for Planning Com. delegated authority to be placed on SPC Web site – **Actioned**
 - 51.8** SDNP's Land Assessment consultation response requests – **Actioned**
 - 51.9** Clerk to thank all those involved in the SWAB & Neighbourhood plan processes on behalf of SPC – **See item 55.1**
 - 51.10** Clerk to distribute last HALC minutes when available – **Actioned**
 - 51.11** Receipt of all noted committee meeting minutes - **Actioned**
 - 51.12** Wardens and PCSO's to report on antisocial behaviour issues and what is being done to avoid further issues. – **See item 53.1**
 - 51.13** SPC Chairman to respond to residents' letter and the two remaining questions - **Actioned**
 - 51.14** £250 Grant to the Ukrainian Refuge Charity - **Actioned**
 - 51.15** Ukrainian Refuge Charity to possibly have Councillor representation – **See item 56.11**
 - 51.16** Warden's reciprocal working arrangements – Cllrs to send their views to wardens steering group reps - **See item 56.3**
 - 51.17** Information items from last meeting placed on SPC Web Site - **Actioned**
 - 51.18** Well-being service start up session discussed for the Steyning Centre – **Actioned**
 - 51.19** Shoreham Cement works consultation response delegated to Planning and Premises Com - **Actioned**
 - 51.20** Water Neutrality Meeting invitations accepted, and meeting attended - **Actioned**

FULL/22/52 REPORTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

- 52.1** **Cllr Platt (HDC update) - *Government proposed Investment zones*** – Councils are being asked if these are wanted in their district. The associated planning permission amendments have been seen as being not in keeping with the Councils green agenda to help combat climate change. Council leader Chowen had therefore responded saying, no thank you. Indeed, there is an announcement that the 'Wilder Horsham District' project has received £500K worth of govt. funding to help set up a wildlife corridor between the Knepp estate and Shoreham-by-sea

HDC Carbon emissions down to zero by 2030 scheme – HDC are asking that any appointed subcontractors are also net zero rated by 2050. Council Electric vehicles are continuing to be rolled out, and solar panels installed at some sites.

Water Neutrality - This issue is still delaying the completion of the District Council Local Plan.

52.2

Cllr Lloyd (HDC Update) – The £150 Tax rebate – To assist with the cost-of-living crisis, most households within Tax bands A to D should have now received this rebate – This initiative by HDC has been copied by other local authorities, HDC being widely seen as a lead authority in this matter.

Horsham recently 'Made' the Steyning neighbourhood plan - meaning the plan will now be used in the determination of planning applications within the Steyning parish in addition to the Horsham district plan framework.

Shoreham Cement works – There has been considerable interest in the recent consultation with 226 responses recorded from individuals and organisations. There will be a further consultation on a preferred option next year.

Cost of living crisis – HDC agreed the following motion – ‘The Council in recognising the cost-of-living crisis facing this country resolves to continue to deliver support to those most in need, and to continue to work with partner authorities and with third sector organisations to support all those in our community’. There is a wide-ranging package to be put in place {this will be placed on the SPC web site for reference}

Water Neutrality – In the light of recent remarks from the Prime Minister there is some concern about water neutrality being used as a benchmark for refusing planning permission. This is yet to be clarified.

52.3

Cllr Linehan (WSCC Update) – He began by adding, in relation to comments from Cllr Platt, the commitment WSCC continued to maintain concerning Carbon emissions reduction and funding appropriate schemes connected with the govt. investment zones.

Matters arising items 51.1 to 51.3 (above) – The two road signs have been replaced, the Virgin media installation issues are being addressed by the Highways team and their ongoing after works inspections. The Steyning Police station opening times are now set as follows: Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10am to 2pm.

Residents reporting to the police – He has written to the Police Chief Commissioner and reported that the current system simply wasn't working with the police often being unobtainable on the non-emergency number and on-line service. Following these communications, he can report that a complete overhaul of the process was undertaken, and now hopefully residents will be able to make contact more successfully.

Caring Services – Cllr Linehan outlined a number of Carer service safeguard initiatives being brought online by WSCC

Eco friendly Street sweeping initiative – 99% of street sweepings are not now going into landfill but are being usefully reprocessed, which is both eco-friendly and has also saved £2.6 million in the last 4 years.

Water resources – Cllr Bell wondered if reservoirs were a consideration for WSCC to assist with local water shortages – Cllr Linehan will investigate further.

Community Highways schemes – Cllr I Alexander asked about outstanding applications – There is nothing to report currently.

Virgin media cabinets – Cllr Lloyd wondered if the grey cabinets were going to be painted green – Cllr Linehan believed the light colour was to avoid over heating but will check.

Cllr Linehan

Cllr Linehan

Cllr Linehan

FULL/22/53

NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN'S REPORTS

53.1

The Council received the reports for July, August and September. The Wardens were in attendance and read through the reports and were able to receive questions, but none were forthcoming. The Chairman thanked them for their attendance and their service.

FULL/22/54 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- 54.1 Update from the Clerk on correspondence from the SPC External Auditor.** The Clerk reported that the interim report has been placed on the web site. The end of year certificate has not been issued as the auditors are having to deal with issues raised by a resident.
- 54.2 To agree the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2022/23.** The clerk recommended that Council continue to appoint the current service provider. Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S. Alexander that SPC agree the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2022/23 as per the supporting papers. **Agreed 8 For, 4 Against** **CLERK**
- 54.3 Hoey Ainscough report.** The clerk noted there had been a recent outline report presentation from Hoey Ainscough with councillors, office staff and monitoring officers in attendance and he noted that the final report was due to be sent to SPC in the next few days. He also proposed a plan to start the process of dealing with the report's likely recommendations. Cllr Norcross proposed a motion which was seconded by Cllr Young; however, Cllr Campbell proposed an amendment and this was voted upon. Cllr Campbell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Sullivan that SPC convene an all member working party on the 7th November at 7pm to look at recommendations from the Hoey Ainscough report and bring the actions back to Full Council and to invite an HDC representative or representatives to be in attendance and that the officers are invited to attend for the purpose of contributing or mediating as they see fit. **Agreed 6 For, 5 Against** **CLERK**
- 54.4 To consider the National Association of Local Council's latest Civility & Respect Policy.** Cllr Joanna Norcross proposed a motion which was seconded by Cllr S. Alexander and Cllr Campbell proposed an amendment which was voted upon as follows. Cllr Campbell **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Goldsmith that SPC convene an all member working party to consider NALC's Civility and Respect policy and that the meeting should take place after the scheduled meeting to discuss the Hoey report, and it is brought back to whatever council meeting comes after that. **Not Agreed 5 For, 6 Against, 1 Abstained.** Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S. Alexander that SPC convene an all member working party on the 26th October '22 at 2pm to consider NALC's Civility and Respect policy {with a view to agreeing it or otherwise at the next Full Council meeting in November}. **Agreed 7 For, 4 Against, 1 Abstained** **CLERK**
- 54.5 To agree the Chair of the Council take over the responsibility of signing previous agreed F&GP minutes dated June 2019 to July 2020 as the previous Chairman of F&GP, whose responsibility it was, has refused to do so.** The clerk appealed to Cllr Goldsmith to come in to sign these documents, but he once again refused, therefore the clerk asked for 8 councillors to sign a special motion in advance of the next Full Council meeting, and he said he would make this request via email. **CLERK**
- 54.6 Payment of the SPC Insurance Cover invoice.** Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S. Alexander that SPC approve the recommendation from F&GP Committee to pay the SPC Insurance Cover invoice. **Agreed** **CLERK**

FULL/22/55 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 55.1** Following HDC's approval of the Steyning Neighbourhood Plan in September, it has now become a 'made' Plan. The Chairman read out a statement which summarised the final processes associated with the plan becoming 'made', and more specifically she expressed the Council's thanks to all those many volunteers for their unwavering support and who put in countless hours to ensure the plan was produced. The full text of the statement is appended to these minutes **CLERK**

At point in the meeting Cllr Northam gave his apologies and left

FULL/22/56 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

- 56.1 (HALC/ WSALC/NALC) update.** Cllr Goldsmith reported no meetings. The clerk updated that there had been a climate change workshop event organised by HALC which he attended in the absence of Cllrs and that he would send on details of the presentation – he also urged for support in the attendance of a full day HALC Climate conference on the 20th October, with again details of the agenda to follow. **CLERK**
- 56.2 Isolation and loneliness / PPG update.** Cllr Young updated that the health centre is offering covid vaccinations every Saturday up until the end of November. Cllr Goldsmith asked that the representatives raise a request that two more disabled parking bays are allocated in the health centre car park **Cllr Young**
- 56.3 Cllrs S. Alexander and Goldsmith – Wardens Steering Group.** The clerk updated as the SPC reps could not attend the recent meeting. He sent out the minutes of the meeting (as per supporting papers) and summarised the points discussed. SPC currently have two representatives and the clerk asked on behalf of the warden's supervisor whether SPC needed to have both reps present. The feeling was that two reps should continue to be invited **CLERK**
- 56.4 Cllr Northam and Young – Joint Parishes Cemetery Committee.** No meeting to report **CLERK**
- 56.5 Cllrs S. Alexander, Trundle, Bell and Parsons – Climate Change Emergency working party.** There was a meeting on the 20th July and the detailed notes were presented by the clerk as a supporting paper. Cllr Parsons remarked on the proposed checklist for planning in relation to the Neighbourhood plan being a good idea, and the clerk stated that it will certainly be discussed further at the next meeting. Next meeting was on the 17th November. **CLERK**
- 56.6 Cllrs S. Alexander and Parsons – South Downs National Park.** No meeting to report
- 56.7 Update on Joint Parishes Youth Committee.** No meeting to report. Next meeting 27th Oct.
- 56.8 Cllr I. Alexander – update on the Steyning Heritage List Project.** The completed project will be presented to the planning committee at the next opportunity.
- 56.9 Greening Group update.** No meeting to report
- 56.10 LAT –** The Clerk updated that he had spoken with all parties and that it will now be an agenda item at the next Wardens steering committee **CLERK**
- 56.11 Ukrainian Representation – TBC**

FULL/22/57 COMMUNITY MATTERS

- 57.1** Council discussed the Chairmans Function which was now to be held on the 9th December and the associated Community Awards.

FULL/22/58 PROGRESS REPORT

- 58.1** How to interpret Risk Assessments – Cllr Training exercise from the Clerk – **Ongoing** **CLERK**
- 58.2** Standing Orders, SPC Finance regulations and SPC Code of Conduct be referred to the Working Practices Group which is charged with considering the amendments and points raised by Cllr Campbell and by HDC – **Ongoing** **CLERK**

FULL/22/59 CORRESPONDENCE AND INFORMATION ITEMS

59.1 Electric charging points for vehicles to be installed at Fletchers Croft Car Park in the near future. The clerk read out the details of an email from HDC as per supporting papers.

FULL/22/60 DATE OF NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING: 21st November 2022 at 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Signed Date 21st November 2022
Chairman

video recording of this meeting is available at -
<https://youtu.be/ItLQKc2W2h0>

APPENDIX

Chairman's statement under item 55.1

As I'm sure you all know, the Steyning Neighbourhood Plan, has now been made. As many of you will be aware it has been a long, and at times, complicated process. The genesis of the plan being with what was SWAB (Steyning, Wiston, Ashurst and Beeding) and then devolving into just Steyning as each Parish decided to formulate their own individual plans. A considerable number of people have, over the years, been instrumental in bringing the Steyning Plan to fruition, countless hours of meetings, focus groups, discussions and debates. All of which eventually culminated in the Steyning Neighbourhood plan that we now have. After much deliberation and consideration, the plan was submitted for examination to HDC. They requested that we make some small changes, which both the NP Steering group and then ultimately SPC agreed to, and the final plan was put forward. It went to referendum in July and was approved by a huge majority of 77%. Subsequently the plan was then approved by Horsham last month, or to use their parlance "Made". As a direct result of this SPC will now receive the higher rate of CiL and when any planning applications are made HDC are obliged to consider our plan when making decisions. Moreover, once HDC finally conclude their plan, we have agreed that within six months we will start a review of our plan and use this opportunity to consider elements that have not yet been included.

So, I would just like to say thank you to all the many people who have been involved, over the years, with the production of the Steyning Neighbourhood Plan. They are too numerous to name, and I run the risk of accidentally missing out someone if I were to try and name them all individually, but SPC would like to say a huge thank you all of them. Without the unwavering support of the community and the countless hours so many people put into the plan, we would not now be where we are. So once again, thank you to all who were, still are and hopefully still will be going forward, involved in the Steyning Neighbourhood Plan.

Warden Monthly Report

October 2022

Patrol hours (foot and vehicle) TOTAL:	63	ASB incidents TOTAL:	4
Foot patrol TOTAL:	28	Noise	0
Foot (high visibility) – Steyning	14	Neighbours	0
Foot (high visibility) – Bramber	5	Driving/vehicles	1
Foot (high visibility) – Upper Beeding	9	Bikes	0
Vehicle patrol TOTAL:	35	Alcohol 1/drugs 2	2
Vehicle patrol - Steyning	17	Public order	1
Vehicle patrol - Bramber	6	Clear up/disposal reports TOTAL:	5
Vehicle patrol - Upper Beeding	12	Fly tipping / flyposting	2
Notices/warnings TOTAL:	4	Graffiti	0
Fixed Penalty Notice	0	Dog fouling	3
Yellow card warning	0	Litter	0
Community Protection Warning/Notice	0	Drug litter	0
Parking alert	4	Hazards	0
Police reports TOTAL:	12	Community events attended	2
Phone (including 101 and 999)	0	School contact/engagement	0
Email	5	Reports to DVLA	0
Intelligence report	0	Reports to Operation Crackdown	0
E-CINS (multi-agency reporting)	0	Admin	33
Verbal	7	Visits to vulnerable people (all ages)	9
		Signposting	3
		Safeguarding referral	0

ASB/crime/criminal damage

Steyning-

We had a report of youths gathering in the Bus Shelter in the High Street and also alleged drug dealing. We have fed this information to Horsham Police and alerted our local Police Community Support Officers.

We had a report of youths smoking Cannabis at the Bike Shelter at the back of the high street car park. We have increased our patrols of the area and passed on the information to Police.

Bramber-

Nothing to report

Upper Beeding –

We had reports of young people climbing from The M.U.G.A and into the back gardens of residents to receive balls that had been kicked over. We also had a report from the Maintenance manager regarding damage to the Sports Hall resulting from young people kicking footballs against the walls and guttering. We have engaged with groups of young people regarding this. We have also requested that appropriate signage is sought to assist with the problem.

We had further reports of alleged drug use and dealing in the garages in Undermill Rd. We have passed this information onto the police and will increase our patrols there.

We had another report of shoplifting from the Nisa store. The owner has reported it to the police.

Fly Tipping

Steyping –

Fly tipping in first Layby on the Steyping Bostal. Reported to Hop Oast.

Bramber-

Nothing to report

Upper Beeding-

Nothing to report.

Parking

Steyping –

2 parking alerts issued

Upper Beeding

2 Parking alerts issued

Bramber

Nothing to report

Community engagement/events/meetings

We held two Drop in/Meet and greet sessions at the Hub Cafe

Steering Parish Council Meeting

Emergency First Aid Training

Act and Protect Training

Renewal of CSAS certificates.

Elderly and Youth

Continuation of regular visits to vulnerable people known to us across the parishes.

Continued support of youth clubs.

We have set up a meeting with two new representatives from Age Uk to explore how we can help support any future initiatives.

Licensing

None

Dog related issues

None Reported

**REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE OF STEYNING PARISH COUNCIL:
April - October 2022**

**NATALIE AINSCOUGH
PAUL HOEY
SARITA PRESLAND
HOEY AINSCOUGH ASSOCIATES LTD**

13 October 2022

Background summary

- 1.1 Steyning Parish Council is a council in the area of Horsham District Council. It has 15 councillors (14 at present with one vacancy). The Parish is not warded. The population of the town according to Wikipedia is around 6,000 people.
- 1.2 In common with many town and parish councils, Steyning Parish Council councillors do not sit in political groupings. The current Council's term of office began in May 2019 and will end in 2023. Eight of the current fourteen councillors were newly-elected or co-opted in 2019.
- 1.3 The Parish Council has a Clerk and Deputy Clerk who both work full time and also has an office administrator. The Chair of the Council was elected to the Council in November 2019, has been Chair since May 2021 and was re-appointed to the Chair at this year's Annual Meeting.
- 1.4 Relationships within the Parish Council have become strained over recent times, with difficult working relationships in particular between certain councillors and between the Clerk and certain councillors. This has led to a large number of Code of Conduct complaints. While these relationship difficulties seem to go back many years they manifest themselves primarily over differences about the way the Council is run and whether proper procedures are followed. Internally, this has led broadly to several councillors being dissatisfied with the governance of the Council and raising those concerns persistently with the Clerk and Chair as well as with the District Council; and at the same time other councillors complaining about the persistence and tone of those expressions of dissatisfaction. During the period of our review we were copied into or had forwarded to us a number of these email exchanges, some of them relating to matters going back several years.
- 1.5 According to the majority of people we spoke to these differences are sometimes made very forcefully in meetings but most of the conflict has been through email correspondence. This has led to meetings being difficult to manage, becoming protracted, for example over disputes about minutes of the meeting and descending into strong disagreements as passions run high. This has made working relationships unmanageable and made many councillors feel disaffected at the pressure they are under and wondering whether they wish to continue in their voluntary role, and also led to the Council officers feeling constantly under pressure and unable to do their job as effectively as they wish.
- 1.6 This has at times resulted in complaints being made to the monitoring officer at Horsham about alleged councillor misconduct in particular and has also meant that the Parish Council has become frustrated in the way business is conducted. Horsham approached us initially in January 2022 to discuss whether we could assist them in supporting the Parish Council and seeking to help them move forward more constructively and effectively and we were formally commissioned to carry out this review in April.
- 1.7 This review has not been about investigating any particular complaints or grievances, including any specific past incidents. The review was about looking in

general at the Council's processes, procedures and behaviours with a view to establishing and resolving the underlying causes. Our focus has always been on working with the Parish Council to address the way they could operate more effectively in the future, not to adjudicate on specific things that may have happened in the past.

- 1.8 The review team consisted of three people – Paul Hoey and Natalie Ainscough, who are co-directors of Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd, and Sarita Presland, working on behalf of Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd for this review.
- 1.9 Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd was set up in April 2012 to support local authorities in managing their arrangements for handling councillor conduct issues and wider governance issues. The company was co-founded by Paul Hoey, who had been director of strategy at Standards for England from 2001 until its closure in 2012, and Natalie Ainscough who had worked as his deputy. They have worked with some 400 councils on standards-related issues and advise a number of national bodies, including the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council clerks (SLCC) on local governance issues. They were also commissioned by the Local Government Association to produce a new Model Code of Conduct and supporting guidance in 2020.
- 1.10 Sarita Presland is an experienced local government officer and was until recently the Chief Officer at the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils.
- 1.11 In carrying out this review, we had the full cooperation of everybody that we spoke to at the Parish Council and District Council and we would like to thank them for the open and constructive way in which they approached the review and were willing to answer our questions and provide us with all relevant information we requested. We would also like to thank Trevor Leggo, the Chief Executive of the West Sussex Association of Local Councils who advised us on various issues through the review.

Methodology

2.1 Our proposal set out five aims:

- a) to review the Parish Council's processes and procedures to ensure that the right tools are in place to allow the Parish Council to operate effectively;
- b) to understand what their underlying issues are and help the Parish Council consider how they can work more effectively;
- c) to help the Parish Council's reputation through demonstrating that there is a culture of high standards and good governance;
- d) to ensure there is a good understanding of the different roles of councillors and officers of the Parish Council and that both can do their job effectively; and
- e) to develop an action plan to help the Parish Council resolve its difficulties and allow the District Council to monitor progress over time.

2.2 In order to carry out a review we divided our work into five phases. These five phases were:

- a) to have an informal discussion with the monitoring officer and the county secretary to understand the background to the Council and some of the underlying issues of the Council;
- b) to carry out a confidential online survey of councillors, officers and other relevant individuals to get a greater in-depth picture of the Council and some personal perspectives on the key issues;
- c) to spend a day in the Council having individual interviews with councillors to develop understanding of the key issues emerging and to spend time talking to the Clerk and reviewing the policies and procedures and ways of working of the Council;
- d) to present some interim findings to the Council and invite discussion on those conclusions;
- e) to prepare a report and action plan for Steyning Parish Council and Horsham District Council setting out ways in which the Parish Council could move forward.

2.3 The questionnaire for phase two was open for responses through May and June. In total, we had 23 responses to the questionnaire.

2.4 We then spent the day speaking to individuals from the Parish Council as phase three of the work on 23 June (with one 'virtual' interview done a few days later), and Sarita Presland carried out a desktop review of the Council's policies and procedures with the assistance of the Clerk. This was followed up by a presentation to the Parish Council for phase four on 6 September.

2.5 Phases two and three provided much of the evidence on which our findings and recommendations are based. It should be noted that the questionnaire and interviews were done on a confidential basis so no individual quotes are attributed in this report. It should also be noted that as sample sizes are inevitably small we have tried to generalise rather than seek to identify individuals or repeat any comments that were made about particular individuals, although inevitably some parts of the report make reference to the role of the Chair or the Clerk given their particular role within the Council.

Findings and recommendations

3.1 Based upon the written and oral comments and responses which we received, we gave feedback to a meeting of councillors and officers of Steyning Parish Council, together with the Monitoring Officer of Horsham District Council and her deputy on the evening of 6 September 2022 as phase four of the methodology set out in the section above.

3.2 We indicated that we would then make detailed recommendations for the consideration of the Parish Council as phase five. These are set out in this report.

3.3 There is a high degree of consistency as to issues affecting the Parish Council as identified in the responses to the questionnaire and the interviews we conducted at phases two and three.

3.4 In our view, the key issues are:

- a) a breakdown in working relations between a number of individual councillors and between some councillors and officers, characterised by mistrust, suspicion, disrespectful behaviour and an inability to have any constructive dialogue at some meetings or in correspondence between meetings;
- b) the need to improve understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Parish councillors and the Clerk;
- c) the need to improve certain aspects of governance in the Council, in particular in the way meetings are conducted and correspondence dealt with; and
- d) the need to review its external communications with its community and become more focussed on strategic outcomes.

3.5 Having considered the information available to us, we therefore set out a series of recommendations and an action plan to address each of these issues in the sections below. A full list of recommendations is attached at Appendix A.

A. Behaviour

3.6 The principal reason that we were asked by Horsham to review and support the Parish Council was because of a series of complaints made about the behaviour of councillors. In particular such complaints alleged, inter alia, instances of disrespectful behaviour, personal attacks on the characters of individuals, complaints about mismanagement of the Council, and the unacceptable behaviour of some councillors towards officers.

3.7 While our review went wider than a focus on behaviour and looked at what underlay some of the issues and wider governance of the Council it is abundantly clear that some councillors need, undoubtedly, to modify substantially their behaviour generally and when conducting Council business (so that it is professional, respectful, appropriate and to the standard you would expect in any workplace and in particular that of individuals who have been elected or chosen to represent their community and to deliver community and social initiatives for the benefit of the local community). Only when this happens can the Council as a whole begin to improve its working processes as outlined in the rest of this report. It goes without saying that the profound lack of appropriate behaviour is the root cause for the vast majority of the issues which exist at this Council.

3.8 Our experience from working with the councillors and observing the Parish Council is that there is an unacceptably high level of animosity between certain councillors which is holding the Parish Council back. While the Clerk is generally well-regarded by the majority of councillors some of that animosity has spilt over into questioning the capabilities of the Clerk which seems to go beyond legitimate questioning and the Clerk has to some extent been caught in crossfire between the mutual distrust between two groups of councillors. The way that these disagreements are articulated on both sides has at times gone way beyond legitimate disagreements about policy or procedures and has descended into disruptive behaviour, allegations being made which question the integrity of individuals and an unwillingness to engage in debate or allow legitimate concerns to be raised. These comments are made in meetings and in widely-circulated

emails. Such comments often lead to a downward spiral and what can start as a legitimate question or concern descends into wholly inappropriate and disrespectful comments and unevidenced allegations of wrongdoing which simply leads to positions becoming entrenched and the Council closing in on itself with defensive positions. The whole culture of the Parish Council thereby becomes deeply unprofessional and brings the Parish Council into disrepute.

- 3.9 It is our experience from working with other councils where they have similar issues that such ways of communicating do nothing to bring about the positive change that may be needed to improve the governance of the organisation or help the Clerk do his job effectively. Instead personal comments or allegations which question people's motives or make unfounded accusations of incompetence and illegality based on assumptions simply make people defensive, stifle legitimate concerns and lead to tit-for-tat accusations which mire the council in animosity.
- 3.10 If councillors are serious about bringing about the change that is needed, they must therefore start to work together collectively as a team and stop personal attacks and feeding the flames of such attacks. Councils, like any organisation, have to work collectively to achieve the best outcomes, and if people feel they cannot work collectively but must resort to disrespectful comments and questioning people's motives with little or no evidence then it is recommended that such councillors resign immediately from the Council as it cannot change while such poison exists within the organisation.
- 3.11 We should say that it is of course vital to any organisation, and in particular to a democratically-elected body, that people can challenge decisions, put forward opposing views and raise concerns that matters are not being implemented properly. However there is a world of difference between discussing those matters in a dignified, professional, measured and respectful way and simply being deliberately obstructive and confrontational and imputing the worst possible motives to matters with which you disagree. It is acceptable to challenge ideas with which you disagree. It is unacceptable to make personal attacks on individuals in a deliberately abhorrent and disrespectful way. In our schools we teach our children about Fundamental British Values. These include tolerance and respect for other people and their values and beliefs. We are afraid that certain individuals on the Council seem to have lost sight of those values. They should ask themselves whether they would act in such a manner in any other workplace and whether such behaviours would indeed be tolerated in other settings.
- 3.12 Councillors therefore need as a priority to stop behaving in this way if they have the interests of the Council and the community as a whole as their priority. The Council does need to change in certain aspects, and some of the concerns raised are legitimate, but change will only happen when councillors start to respect and tolerate each other and behave as mature, intelligent and measured parish councillors.
- 3.13 Of course we recognise that a more rational and trusting atmosphere will work most effectively when all feel they have confidence in the Council's working. It is

perfectly legitimate to have policy differences within the Council and concerns about the way the Council operates but the way in which they have been raised has made addressing them impossible. So there needs to be an agreement on all sides to deal with matters in a calmer and more rational way while the recommendations set out in other sections to improve the Council are adopted and implemented. To do this, each councillor needs to draw a line under what has taken place in the past, look forward, embrace change and the idea of new and fresh positive working relationships and employ coping mechanisms to assist them when dealing with communications or comments which they believe to be inappropriate. Further, all councillors should tailor any communications and ensure they are conveyed in a respectful and professional manner. We do believe the Council can improve the way it operates but we have seen no evidence that the Council is 'dysfunctional' as some councillors constantly claim in emails, and while there have been at times a failure to follow the rules and procedures and advice may not always have been clear or consistent, these more often reflect inherent issues within the local (parish and town) council sector as a whole rather than systemic issues at Steyning. though we do address certain specific issues elsewhere in the report.

3.14 All councillors we spoke to and met appeared to have the best interests of Steyning as a community at heart. However, this view is not consistent with the approach of councillors in failing to behave appropriately, as undoubtedly Council business is adversely affected. It is apparent that while the view of what was best for Steyning differed between individuals, that simply reflects a legitimate democratic plurality. Councillors must learn that disagreeing with a decision does not mean that decision is automatically wrong or the motives behind it wrong – it simply means that collectively the Council has decided to act in a particular way and once a decision has been taken by the Council, the Council is perfectly entitled to implement that decision. Similarly the Council must ensure that where people do have opposing views which are relevant to the matter in hand that those concerns are listened to, provided they remain respectful, and a reasonable amount of debate is allowed. It can be too easy to want to shut down discussion because matters are becoming polarised or personal or being unnecessarily prolonged and this highlights why it is important for behaviour on all sides to become more respectful before some of the issues outlined elsewhere can be resolved.

3.15 The Council has signed up to this review process and this is a positive important step. The problems faced by the Council have been protracted and expensive - not just in terms of reputation and time, but also at a not insignificant cost to Horsham in handling complaints and supporting the Council. But the time, stress to both councillors and officers, and the sheer opportunity cost of the resources that could have been deployed to improve local services rather than dealing with constant sniping has been significant.

3.16 Typical comments made to us were that the disagreements were 'all-consuming', 'exhausting' or 'soul-destroying' and that people felt 'beaten down' and battle-weary'. A by-product is that the Council, while it has achieved a number of important things, has lost focus and there have been a lot of councillors who have resigned before their term of office ended. This shows that

behaviours and relationships within the Council must change. Otherwise, one could legitimately question the effectiveness of the Council and its role going forward.

- 3.17 The aim of our report is to better unleash the potential of the Council. That potential is only in councillors' hands and the Council is capable of being a high-performing Council but it will only happen if councillors bring about the behavioural and cultural change that is required to enable people to work collaboratively and with respect.
- 3.18 Whilst we can make recommendations it is only through councillors adopting the report's findings in both letter and spirit that will make the actual difference. If there are instances of poor behaviour they need to be challenged, during debates and discussions as well as when made in correspondence. It is every councillor's responsibility to do this, and the Chair's specifically to ensure proper conduct during Council proceedings. We will pick up those matters later.
- 3.19 There also seemed to be an inordinate amount of time spent discussing procedural issues, reviewing minutes of previous meetings and seeking to challenge advice given or received by the Clerk. While it is right for councillors to raise concerns, too much time can be taken up with dealing with constitutional issues rather than substantive business. Where councillors have concerns about the way a decision has been made or a procedure followed they should discuss this with the Clerk in advance and the Clerk should be allowed to give a ruling with reasons as to whether or not the concern is legitimate. This is within the Clerk's remit and he needs to be afforded the opportunity to do this with confidence and without fear of repercussions, seeking external advice where necessary. Where the concern is legitimate such a ruling should include the steps needed either to rectify the matter or the changes needed to prevent the matter re-occurring. There should also be an agreement that, if advice is needed from Horsham, the West Sussex Association or other external bodies on a matter this should be done through the Clerk rather than individual councillors as this ensures there is a clear route and that advice, where appropriate, is definitive and available to all. If the Council collectively decides not to follow that advice, they are perfectly entitled to do so provided that is documented with their reasons, as the Council collectively is a sovereign body. If the advice is accepted by the Council collectively then that advice should be acted upon accordingly.
- 3.20 The majority of individuals we spoke to felt very strongly that meetings were difficult and the tone of debate, both at meetings and in correspondence, reflected very badly on the Council. It is likely that the constituents of Steyning are of this mind too. For example, the Council was referred to on a number of times as a 'laughing stock' and that the community as a whole had lost faith in it being able to run effectively. This is unacceptable. While we did not attend meetings in person, we did watch some meetings online and we also saw a large number of email exchanges and have seen the Code of Conduct complaints which were made. The weight of evidence presented to us clearly demonstrates that this pattern of behaviour does exist and that it is wholly inappropriate, unprofessional and far from acceptable.

- 3.21 Above all we believe that it is the responsibility of all councillors to challenge disrespectful behaviour in the Council chamber and support the meeting in being run effectively, with the right balance between debate and getting the business done. The Council collectively should therefore agree where the boundaries of respect lie and how that should be enforced in meetings. We therefore recommend as a first step that the Council collectively sign up to and agree to abide by the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge which has been recently launched.
- 3.22 If personal attacks are made by councillors in future which breach the Pledge the matter should be referred to Horsham District Council who will deal with the matter in line with set criteria against which complaints will be assessed and will ensure that anything that falls below the Council's agreed standards is appropriately dealt with and breaches of the Code are sanctioned and publicised. Referrals to Horsham District Council should not, however, be pursued lightly, should be done only where there is a genuine belief that there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct (and not as a result, for example, of merely an internal disagreement with a policy or as a means of revenge because of another complaint). It should also be borne in mind that Horsham District Council is not obliged to investigate all complaints but will assess them to see whether they meet the "threshold" for investigation against agreed criteria.
- 3.23 This report is about moving forward so a constant reference back to things that happened in the past, in some cases several years ago, will not help the Council move on. This report should be seen as setting a new benchmark for the Council to move forward with greater respect and tolerance.
- 3.24 We therefore think the Parish Council needs to agree the following actions:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 As a priority the Council should sign up to the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge.**
- R2 In doing so the Council should collectively agree what language is and is not appropriate in meetings and correspondence among councillors and with officers, how such language should be challenged in meetings and how meetings can be run more efficiently without getting bogged down in minutiae nor stifling legitimate debate. Behaviour needs to be re-set to improve relationships to allow Council business to be transacted.**
- R3 In agreeing to the Pledge, all councillors should give an undertaking to treat fellow councillors and officers with respect and not to make personal attacks on individuals or their integrity. Until such respect is shown the Council cannot move forward**
- R4 All councillors should undertake that, where they have concerns about the way a decision has been made or a procedure followed they should discuss this respectfully with the Clerk and the Clerk should be allowed**

to give a ruling with reasons such as a reference to existing policy or legislation as to whether or not the concern is legitimate. This ruling should be communicated to all councillors. Where the concern is legitimate such a ruling should include the steps needed either to rectify the matter with an agreed timescale or the changes needed to prevent the matter re-occurring. Where the majority of councillors accept that the concern has been dealt with, the matter cannot be raised again for six months in line with Standing Orders.

- R5 All councillors who are unwilling to take, or abide by, the Pledge and modify their behaviour to improve internal relations should consider resigning with immediate effect for the greater good of the constituents of Steyning and Council business.**

B. Roles and responsibilities

Role of councillors

- 3.25 The role of councillor, at whatever tier of local government, can be a difficult and daunting role, particularly to those who come new to the role. We would therefore expect all councils to provide comprehensive induction and ongoing development (to include training in relation to what constitutes acceptable behaviours) to councillors to support them in their job. This is particularly true for councillors who are new in post and inexperienced.
- 3.26 The Council needs to do more work to help individuals understand what is expected of a councillor. There is a lack of clarity in many parish councils about what individuals do or can or should do. The sector of course relies on volunteers and people helping out where they can but the formal role must also be understood and boundaries not crossed. Of course what each individual can give to the Council varies widely – some councillors will work fulltime so cannot devote as much time and energy to the role as others. That is perfectly understandable and normal but does need to be recognised. However beyond that, parish councillors need to be clear what it is they are expected to do and cannot do as individuals. No parish councillor (including the chair) can be given delegated individual decision-making responsibilities. Decisions can either be made by Full Council, a committee or the Clerk depending on the scheme of delegation. Often in practice of course, individual councillors (particularly the chair) will have been authorised by the Council to have some individual responsibilities, either because of the need to react quickly to developing events or else because of a particular recognised expertise. Even in these rare cases, however, any binding decision must formally be taken by the Clerk in consultation with the individual and in line with a delegation scheme agreed with the Council and subsequently be ratified at a Full Council meeting.
- 3.27 We believe the Council should ensure all councillors understand they cannot act without express authorisation from the Council and should agree proper role descriptions and expectations for councillors.

- 3.28 That should include a clear statement of what an individual's role as a councillor in the community is as opposed to their role on the Full Council; and what a councillor's role is with regard to outside appointments where they represent the Council – including clarity about what views they should express, what they are delegated to say or decide and what they should or should not report back.
- 3.29 In particular the Council should seek to put in place a detailed training programme for the incoming Council on the role of the parish councillor, understanding the role of the Clerk, understanding delegated authority, chairing and meeting skills, the Code of Conduct, financial regulations and other matters. This also needs to become an ongoing package for future new councillors.
- 3.30 We would also expect councillors to undergo regular refresher training throughout their term of office. We believe that it is vital councillors have a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities before they start to discharge their functions, and, while training cannot be made mandatory, the Council should therefore consider what training individual councillors must undergo as soon as possible after they take up office. They should also consider what training they would require of councillors before they are allocated permanent seats on any committees to ensure councillors understand fully their role and responsibilities on a particular committee in future.
- 3.31 Individual councillors also need to be aware that, collectively as a Council, they have a duty of care as employees towards their staff. The actions of an individual can have implications for the finances and employment practices of the Council. The Council therefore needs to ensure that it has comprehensive and up-to-date HR and grievance procedures in place, that these are enforced and that any individual's behaviour which risks breaching these policies should be robustly challenged. The Council should work with Horsham and the West Sussex Association to ensure it is following best practice.

- R6 The Council should develop a comprehensive training and development strategy for the new Council which covers all areas of Council business. It should in particular include training on the Code of Conduct and appropriate standards of behaviour.**
- R7 The Council should develop an agreed understanding of the role and expectations for individual councillors when they are acting as Full Council, as committee members, as individuals and as representatives of the Council externally.**
- R8 That councillors are reminded that they cannot speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised by the Full Council to do so. Any correspondence from individual councillors needs to make this clear. Where an individual represents themselves as speaking on behalf of the Council, the Clerk should correct the record at the earliest opportunity.**
- R9 That councillors understand their fiduciary duties and vicarious liability and be reminded that they are all individually and severally liable for the**

finances and employment practices of the Council. Individual councillors should therefore be reminded that they should not act alone and unilaterally once Council collectively has made a decision or agreed a course of action

- R10 The Council should consider working with Horsham and the West Sussex Association or any other appropriate organisation approved by Horsham to ensure it has comprehensive and up-to-date HR and grievance policies and that these are effectively enforced**

Role of the Clerk and officers

- 3.32 While councillors set the tone and strategic direction of an authority, the Clerk and other officers are charged with supporting the Council and delivering its strategy on a day-to-day basis. The Clerk must therefore be resourced adequately and have the appropriate skills to do this.
- 3.33 We believe the current Clerk gives the Council sound support within the parameters of his role. However, the Clerk should be given time and space to complete their CiLCA qualification so that they can ensure they are working to an appropriate professionally-qualified level.
- 3.34 The officers, from our observations, actually work beyond their contracted hours. This is sometimes inevitable particularly in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of Council meetings but the Parish Council should ensure that officers are not over-burdened, that the workload is sustainable and that they ensure they fulfil their duty of care to the staff. That is why all councillors must recognise that there needs to be a more effective management of email traffic and correspondence and there are limitations on what the Council can realistically achieve. The Council as a whole is the Clerk's employer and therefore each individual councillor has employment responsibilities to ensure that the Clerk has a reasonable working environment and is able to manage the workload within contracted hours or else consider as a Council what changes to resources or terms and conditions may be necessary to achieve this.
- 3.35 We found that the Council had set little strategic direction for the Clerk, was not addressing workloads, and there was no clear understanding of what contact with the Clerk was appropriate on a day-to-day basis nor a recognition that individual councillors should not set work priorities for the Clerk.
- 3.36 The Clerk seemed to be asked to respond to a lot of emails and correspondence making very detailed comments and broadly seeking to keep going over similar ground. There is of course nothing that can be done to stop emails being sent and councillors and the public do have right to seek information and raise queries. However, the Council does have to recognise that this can place heavy demands on the resources of the Council and takes the Council and the Clerk away from undertaking the work of the Council. The Council already has an agreed policy limiting email correspondence but this is routinely ignored. Given the other calls on the Clerk's time the Council needs to ensure its policy in

handling emails is rigorously enforced and that the Clerk is empowered to draw a line under certain matters.

- 3.37 The Council also needs to be clear that where governance issues are raised there needs to be sufficient notice to allow a response to be prepared for tabling and/or discussion at a meeting if required. There also needs to be an understanding that the time spent on such matters would have to be limited to allow the transaction of other important business. Thus, for example, it might be that ten minutes is set aside at the start or end of the meeting for any governance issues, and that each councillor is limited to raising no more than one concern. Similarly, if the Council collectively is satisfied that the matter has been addressed it should not be raised again within an agreed period unless circumstances have changed. Steyning's Standing Orders make clear that resolutions previously made cannot be reversed within six months except by special motions or a motion from a committee and the Council should ensure this is enforced to help achieve better governance.
- 3.38 We also believe it would help the Council and the Clerk if some form of schedule of work was prepared. This would help the Council to recognise what was a reasonable expectation on the Clerk and be clear with the Clerk what the priorities on their limited time should be. SLCC has a useful calendar available to clerks to remind them of what needs doing when. The Clerk should get this timetable and share it with councillors so that it can inform this work schedule.
- 3.39 The Council also needs to review the issue of councillor access to officer time. While councillor access to officers is important, there was a view that some councillors were spending too much time absorbing officer time with no clear purpose and were stopping higher priority work being done. The Council therefore needs to look at how officer contact with councillors is regulated – for example by putting a system in place where councillors can only see officers during working hours by prior appointment, or for a set time unless by prior appointment, or only at particular times of the week. This would complement enforcement of the email policy. The aim would be to strike a balance between allowing councillors to raise their own local priorities and issues and support officers with advice while allowing officers time to carry out their job and run the office effectively.
- 3.40 There is a balance to be struck in any public administration between what one might call 'maintenance' on the one hand – that is, the day-to-day running of the council through, for example supporting meetings, carrying out statutory duties etc – and what one might call 'progression' – taking forward longer-term goals and projects. The more ambitious a council is in terms of strategy the more it needs to decide where the balance lies between maintenance and progression and if it is adequately resourced to deliver both. Our view is that given current behavioural issues the Clerk and their staff can do little other than focus on maintenance within their existing hours. The Clerk has tried to move to a more 'progressive' role. For example a Neighbourhood Plan has been produced which seems a good example of an attempt at long-term planning. However, if the Council is to progress it needs to ensure that it is satisfied the right balance is struck by the office between maintenance and progression and the office need to

be given time and space to work on helping the Council deliver this Plan. This may include reviewing resources as ambitions grow but in the short term would be helped by ensuring the Clerk is less focussed on dealing with internal correspondence and other matters.

Recommendations

- R11 The Clerk should complete CiLCA as a matter of priority. A timetable should be agreed between the Chair and the Clerk with dedicated 'professional development' time set aside in the working week to allow this to happen**
- R12 The Council should ensure that its email policy is properly enforced and the Clerk empowered to draw a line under correspondence such that if the policy is breached the Clerk will simply reply to say that the email will not be responded to as it falls outside the policy. There may be exceptions for significant urgent matters but the Council as a whole shall agree a definition of what those exceptions should be. All emails should go through the Clerk.**
- R13 The Council should have an agreed and enforced policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious correspondence to ensure that the business of the Council is not unnecessarily diverted.**
- R14 The Council should agree how governance issues should be raised in meetings to allow reasonable discussion but also to allow other business to be transacted.**
- R15 The Council and the Clerk should agree a work schedule to ensure that officers' time is focussed and that there are realistic expectations on their time within agreed working hours.**
- R16 The Council needs to agree a councillor-officer protocol which would include a shared agreement as to the circumstances when councillors should have access to officer time and how the Clerk should respond to queries from individual councillors.**
- R17 The Council should review its current staffing structure to ensure it is in line with its strategy and able to help the Council deliver it and that the Clerk's key performance objectives and time are geared to deliver that strategy**
- R18 The Council should ensure that the Clerk and the Council make best use of external support and advice from its memberships of professional bodies**

C. Policies and procedures

- 3.41 Aside from the behavioural issues (which we believe to be at the heart of the difficulties experienced at and by the Council), we also carried out an in-depth**

look at the governance and administration of the Council. The following sections look at each of the areas we examined in turn and make a series of recommendations, starting with our review of the Council's policies and procedures.

3.42 Overall, we found that the broad suite of policies and procedures at the Parish Council were in place and up to date. However, we believe they should be made more easily available through the Council website. The policies tend to be based on national policies prepared by NALC so conform with good practice.

3.43 We did identify a couple of gaps where we thought significant policies were either missing or not properly enforced. We have already mentioned the email policy above which we think needs to be adhered to, and also the seeming absence of a vexatious and persistent correspondence policy, which we would expect to see in any parish council.

3.44 We also believe there is some confusion around what information held by the Council councillors are entitled to see as a matter of course. Councillors in general are entitled to see most information held by the Council, including exempt information not available to the public, in order to help them do their job. There will always, however, be circumstances where a council is legally entitled to regard certain information as confidential. The law itself sets out grounds for certain business to be considered in private by the Council and it is widely recognised through case law and elsewhere that not all councillors are entitled to see all information at all times, as some personal information for example has to be regarded as confidential unless there is a demonstrable need for an individual councillor to have access to that information to carry out their duties.

3.45 As set out in NALC Legal Topic Note 1, councillors do not have a 'need to know' all aspects of council business and cannot claim an automatic right to see all council documentation and information. In other words, councillors are not permitted a fishing expedition in respect of council documentation and information simply because they are councillors.

3.46 We therefore think the Council needs to agree a 'need to know' policy to establish a common understanding of where the boundaries of confidentiality and access to information might lie. This would also cover any information held by individual councillors and be tied closely to the Council's responsibility to protect information under GDPR.

3.47 In developing a policy, the following extract from NALC LTN 1 may prove helpful in establishing whether a councillor has a 'need to know':

- If a councillor is a member of a committee, he or she has the right to inspect documents or to obtain information relating to the business of that committee;
- If a councillor is not a member of a particular committee, he or she has to demonstrate why sight of the document(s)/or receipt of the information in question is necessary to enable him or her to perform his or her duties as a councillor;

- If the councillor's motive for seeing the documents/obtaining information is indirect, improper or ulterior, then the documentation or information should be withheld.

3.48 Related to this is the Council's approach to freedom of information. The Freedom of Information Act is a mechanism for people to hold organisations accountable. Those people within an organisation, such as in this case councillors, should not need to use a freedom of information request to obtain the information they feel they require and are lawfully entitled to see. All minutes should be freely available to all councillors (and the public). If a committee has a meeting and an item is considered confidential, however, those councillors not on that committee have no right to sit in on a confidential item - based on the principle of "need to know" in essence they have no further rights than a member of the public to see that confidential matter unless they can demonstrate a need to know against agreed criteria. Steyning need to consider their whole freedom of information approach. Whilst the policy they currently have is sound in theory, the way it is implemented and the approach to councillor access to information needs to be re-thought in such a manner that councillors will have access to everything they are entitled to see and need to know in a timely and appropriate manner rather than having to make FOI requests. To this end the office needs to ensure that all information is put onto the Council website or a suitable portal for councillors to see as soon as possible unless it is confidential information which does not meet the 'need to know' test. Just because a councillor did not attend a meeting or is not a member of a committee is no reason to withhold information, subject to rules on exempt and confidential information but see our comment below on meetings.

3.49 We also believe the Council should review its recording of meetings policy. The Council keeps a library of recordings of all meetings. Although laudable as a transparent action however, it is common practice elsewhere that once minutes are approved then all additional records, notes and recordings tend to be deleted so the minutes stand as the official record and thus extracts can't be taken out of context.

3.50 We also believe the Council needs to adopt a Social Media Policy which would cover both appropriate use of social media by individuals and the Council's own approach to social media as an organisation. This is routine best practice elsewhere but seems absent here.

3.51 We also felt the Council needed to review its approach towards planning delegation, although we were told when we met in September that this has already been done but we mention it here in any case, and as an example of where the Council is already moving forward.

Recommendations

R19 The Council needs to review whether it has all appropriate and up-to-date policies in place and ensure that policies are available on the website.

- R20 The Council needs to adopt a clear statement of councillors' right to information and a 'need to know' policy and review its implementation of freedom of information requests in the light of that policy.**
- R21 The Council should adopt a recording of meetings policy and decide how long it needs to keep recordings once minutes have been agreed**
- R22 The Council needs to adopt a social media policy which would cover both appropriate use of social media by individuals and the Council's own approach to social media as an organisation**
- R23 The Council needs to review its approach towards planning delegation if this has not already been done in the last six months.**

D. Meetings

- 3.52 We understand that some meetings have been difficult to run because of conflict in the meetings and the disruptive behaviour arising from this conflict. This section therefore makes some recommendations for making meetings run more effectively and efficiently.
- 3.53 Although we did not attend Council meetings in person, we have watched some online, and it was clear to us from all that we have been told and noted from our observations and also reading of past minutes that Council meetings have become increasingly difficult to manage.
- 3.54 Everybody is dissatisfied with the way the meetings take place. A wholly disproportionate and inordinate amount of time is spent revisiting matters. People have stopped listening to each other and meetings need to become genuine discussions again rather than disagreements. Individuals need to accept that it is perfectly fine to disagree and healthy debate is to be encouraged as it leads to better decision-making but there must be a recognition that once a decision is made, that is the democratic decision of the Council. It must also be recognised that a balance needs to be struck between progressing the business of the meeting effectively and not unnecessarily stopping discussion and stifling the progress of Council business.
- 3.55 It is essential, therefore, that the Parish Council draws up a proper protocol about how councillors treat each other which needs to be observed fully at all times and properly enforced if failings arise. Matters should be properly managed in meetings and the standards framework should not be misused to air disputes about personalities or perceived procedural failings but should be used where there are genuine cases where the Civility and Respect pledge is not adhered to.
- 3.56 We would always look to the chair of a meeting to enforce behaviour standards clearly, firmly and fairly. The role of the chair is to act as an impartial referee, to ensure that people are treated equitably, everyone is encouraged to contribute to the debate and that the meeting is conducted in an orderly and civil way so that business can be conducted. A chair should know when to seek advice from the clerk but should not let the clerk run the meeting. A chair also

needs to be conversant with Standing Orders and ensure that they are applied. However, the chair also needs the support of other councillors to ensure that Standing Orders are consistently and fairly applied to all councillors. We say this as it is apparent that councillors in general felt that meetings were not being effective because of disruptive behaviour and the balance being wrong about how some discussions were held owing to the fact that a uniform approach was not applied to all councillors' conduct.

- 3.57 To ensure that debate can be managed efficiently, we believe the Parish Council needs to enforce the '2 minute' rule at its meetings as set out in its Standing Orders – that is people's interventions in meetings – whether councillors or the public - should be strictly limited to 2 minutes and, when the 2 minutes is up, they should stop speaking. Most councils actually have a 3-minute rule, so if it is to be rigorously enforced, the Council may consider whether 2 or 3 minutes is appropriate.
- 3.58 Everybody is entitled to an equal say at meetings but all should equally respect that others should have an input and interventions should be limited to allow the meeting to proceed. By enforcing this rule it ensures that people are treated fairly – not being allowed to speak for too long, but equally not being cut off before their allocated time.
- 3.59 There may of course be times when an agenda item is of such significance that councillors collectively will wish to speak for more than 2 or 3 minutes. Any waiving of the rule for a particular item should be proposed by the Chair at the start of a meeting and agreed by the meeting.
- 3.60 We also believe it would be helpful to have a timetable alongside the agenda of how long can be spent on each agenda item so that the business of the meeting can be progressed, and not too much time spent, for example, discussing the wording of previous minutes or raising procedural issues. Again the Chair could waive the timetable should the meeting collectively agree that an item was more significant than initially considered.
- 3.61 We also want to cover the taking of minutes. Charles Arnold-Baker (the so-called Parish Bible) says "minutes should be a formal record of official acts and decisions, not reports, still less verbatim reports of the speeches made by councillors. Minutes should, therefore, be as short as is consistent with clarity and accuracy, and the arguments used in the discussion need be recorded only if the decision cannot be clearly expressed in any other way."
- 3.62 We believe too much time has been spent at meetings arguing about minutes of previous meetings. We therefore recommend that Council agree that minutes follow the model of simply being a recording of the decision rather than a verbatim record. As it is important that all councillors are clear what has been agreed we recommend that at the end of each item the Chair asks the Clerk to read out what he believes has been agreed as the decision for that item so that all present are clear and agree that what has been noted is sufficient for the minutes.

- 3.63 Minutes should be agreed at the following meeting and cannot be deferred under any circumstances save in the event of manifest error. The Council also needs to be clear that amendments can only be proposed by those who attended the meeting and should be factual only rather than opinion. Likewise when minutes come to be agreed it is not legal or appropriate for somebody to add in further comments as to the validity of the narrative especially if they did not attend the meeting.
- 3.64 One issue raised with us related to substantive motions being raised at meetings and thus taking the place of items for report only. We do not think this is appropriate. There is no clear national guidance on this as far as we know but an agenda must be sent out three clear working days before the meeting specifically to enable people to have time to consider the items and appropriate responses - noting a report is quite different from coming along prepared to discuss a substantive item and it would be unfair to change the nature of the item at the last minute. The better way to deal with this would be to agree to discuss the item as a substantive item at a future meeting.
- 3.65 Apologies for absence should be properly recorded and only accepted if the Council is satisfied with the reason; otherwise they should simply be noted but not accepted. Where a councillor does not wish to disclose a reason publicly, for example because of health or security issues, they should nevertheless notify the Clerk of the reason in confidence who can then satisfy the meeting that there is a good reason.
- 3.66 It would also be helpful if all councillors had a pack which contains all policies, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders that they bring to each and every meeting to aid understanding and avoid confusion. Further, it is incumbent upon councillors to familiarise themselves with such regulations and orders and we recommend, therefore, that councillors are clear about the rules prior to meetings to aid the conduct of meetings and the progression of Council business.
- 3.67 We note that Steyning's standing orders require that voting is recorded but this is not usual or necessary. The important thing is whether a decision was reached either unanimously or by a majority and the resulting decision stands alone in a court of law. It has been noted that some councillors, if they cannot attend a meeting, will still send their views for consideration at that meeting. That is not allowed and should be stopped
- 3.68 There also needs to be a greater understanding of how motions to move to next business can be used to ensure business is got through effectively where discussions are proving difficult to manage.

Recommendations

- R24 All councillors need to be familiar with Standing Orders and should have a pack which contains all policies, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders that they bring to each and every meeting to aid understanding and avoid confusion.**

- R25 The '2-minute' rule in Standing Orders should be enforced and all councillors should support the Chair in ensuring the meeting is run efficiently and without conflict. The rule may be waived in exceptional circumstances where an agenda item is of particular significance but this must be agreed at the start of the agenda item and a revised time limit (say 5 minutes) agreed**
- R26 Minutes should be agreed at the following meeting. Amendments can only be proposed by those who attended the meeting and should be factual only rather than opinion**
- R27 Minutes should be done in the recommended style as a record of the decisions made at meetings to help anybody understand the process by which a decision is made. So they should make clear the decision taken with some brief summary of matters considered for and against**
- R28 The requirement that voting is recorded should be reconsidered**
- R29 The practice of allowing a councillor who cannot attend a meeting to send their views for consideration at that meeting should be stopped**
- R30 The agendas for meetings should be timetabled to ensure business is effectively transacted. Where there needs to be a variation to the timetable that should be agreed at the start of the meeting**
- R31 Apologies for absence should only be accepted where a valid reason is either given to the meeting or given to the Clerk in confidence**

E. Ambition and strategy

- 3.69 While Steyning Parish Council has delivered on a number of projects for the community over recent years, and has recently developed a Neighbourhood Plan, we believe it can improve its approach towards a long-term strategy for the town. Its in-fighting and constant and relentless bickering in particular has meant that the Council has not been able to focus adequately on its community or real sense of long-term purpose. Indeed we were impressed by some of the things the Council has managed to achieve despite all this bickering but we believe there is the potential to do more. The Council needs to improve sufficiently that the incoming Council is better equipped to implement a measurable and costed action plan to improve the town. Previous lack of strategic direction has had two effects. It has left the Clerk and officers unclear about their role or what they are meant to be achieving beyond the day-to-day. And it has left councillors free to pursue certain projects without a wider context – almost acting as pseudo-officers in the absence of guidance or strategic direction.
- 3.70 We therefore believe the incoming Council will need to put in place a strategic vision which looks at what it wants to achieve over the next 5-10 years, with realistic aims, financial planning and milestones. This needs then to be matched up with the resources needed to deliver that vision and measured to ensure progress.

- 3.71 While not everyone will share the same vision, the Council needs to work together to come to a collective understanding and then ensure there is an agreed consensus to deliver that plan for the town.
- 3.72 As part of this we consider that the Council should strengthen its relationship with the community by developing a shared vision and strategy for delivering priorities. It is always a difficult issue for any council at this level and with limited resources to ensure it is sufficiently strategic and engaged with its community but this is not insurmountable and other councils are successful in implementing such strategies. A lot of work was done earlier this year around the Neighbourhood Plan, but we think it particularly important given current circumstances that Steyning is seen to continue to consult widely on its priorities and to have engaged as fully as possible with the community about its work. Some of this will no doubt form part of individual election campaigns but, following the election, the new Council should re-evaluate how to build on its Neighbourhood Plan to communicate and develop its strategic vision with its community - for example through one or a series of open days where the community are invited to help shape future priorities and agree objectives.
- 3.73 Some of this engagement needs to happen soon, however, as part of a drive to promote the profile of the Council to encourage more people to engage with the Council and ultimately to stand for election with a view to moving to contested elections. The Council therefore also needs to consider how to encourage more and different members of the public to attend meetings and help promote the visibility of the Council through a more effective communications strategy.

Recommendations

- R32 After the next election the new Council should develop a fully costed and resourced long-term strategic plan for the Town putting personal agendas and differences aside for the greater good of the Steyning community**
- R33 The Council should review its communication strategy in conjunction with the public to evaluate its effectiveness and ensure that the public understands the work of the Council, is engaged in developing a vision for Steyning and is able to participate more fully in local decision-making.**
- 3.74 We believe that all councils should be aspirational and demonstrate to their public that they are working effectively. We think this is particularly important for Steyning in future given the issues it has faced. In our view there is no reason why, once it has developed a deliverable strategy, it should not be capable of becoming an outstanding council for its size and receiving external validation for its work. We therefore recommend that the Council Chair and Clerk actively seek opportunities on behalf of the Council to learn from and share best practice with outstanding councils in their vicinity. A good starting place would be to work with the West Sussex Association to look at local councils in the area who have been recipients of the Local Council Award Scheme.

Recommendation

R34 The Council Chair and Clerk should look to learn from and share best practice with outstanding local councils.

F. Monitoring of this plan

3.75 While these recommendations are a matter for Steyning Parish Council, we feel it is important that they are accountable for ensuring that these actions are considered properly and, where appropriate, instituted. We therefore think Horsham District Council needs to be able to monitor progress. Whilst the District Council does give valuable support to Steyning, this support comes at a price in terms of time and resources and there has been considerable investment of council taxpayer's money in this review. It is important that in due course Steyning's demands on the monitoring officer's time at Horsham are substantially reduced.

3.76 The Parish Council's first steps should therefore be to review and prioritise these recommendations and share its implementation plan. When it has done so it should provide a copy to Horsham. This initial implementation plan should be drawn up within six weeks of the report being presented to the Council. Some of the recommendations need urgent action to get business back on an even keel but should be relatively straightforward – for example, the review and enforcement of policies; others have a longer-term output but are strategically important. It goes without saying that the modification of behaviours, the consideration of the Civility and Respect Pledge and strategies surrounding the improvement of behaviour should be the first item and should be treated with the utmost urgency and as a priority. We have not put deadlines on the recommendations but the Parish Council should meet and agree an over-arching action plan to put these recommendations into place by no later than six weeks from the receipt of this report.

3.77 The Council need also to be aware that if the internal issues in Steyning Parish Council do not improve to Horsham's satisfaction, Horsham is entitled to carry out a Community Governance Review in consultation with the local community (which could have as an outcome a recommendation for the dissolution of Steyning Parish Council)

3.78 In conclusion, the onus must be on Steyning Parish Council to adopt the recommendations noted in this report and bring about modified behaviours and the cultural change that is required to enable the Council to function effectively. However, Horsham District Council will support the Council, monitor progress and the implementation of any strategies recommended within this report and the Parish Council should co-operate with Horsham District Council to facilitate such review. Councillors must strive to work out their differences maturely and professionally. Otherwise the Council needs to be aware that if the internal issues in Steyning Parish Council do not improve, it could find itself the subject of a Community Governance Review including the option to dissolve Steyning Parish Council.

Recommendations

- R35** Where Steyning Parish Council needs to use external support to comply with these recommendations, they should consult with Horsham District Council and the West Sussex Association before agreeing such support to ensure they have considered all the options and are obtaining expert advice at value for money.
- R36** Steyning Parish Council should develop an initial implementation plan within six weeks of the report which should be shared with the monitoring officer of Horsham District Council. They should also report on their progress in implementing this action plan to the monitoring officer in 6 months and again in 12 months after the date of this report

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1** As a priority the Council should sign up to the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge.
- R2** In doing so the Council should collectively agree what language is and is not appropriate in meetings and correspondence among councillors and with officers, how such language should be challenged in meetings and how meetings can be run more efficiently without getting bogged down in minutiae nor stifling legitimate debate. Behaviour needs to be re-set to improve relationships to allow Council business to be transacted.
- R3** In agreeing to the Pledge, all councillors should give an undertaking to treat fellow councillors and officers with respect and not to make personal attacks on individuals or their integrity. Until such respect is shown the Council cannot move forward
- R4** All councillors should undertake that, where they have concerns about the way a decision has been made or a procedure followed they should discuss this respectfully with the Clerk and the Clerk should be allowed to give a ruling with reasons such as a reference to existing policy or legislation as to whether or not the concern is legitimate. This ruling should be communicated to all councillors. Where the concern is legitimate such a ruling should include the steps needed either to rectify the matter with an agreed timescale or the changes needed to prevent the matter re-occurring. Where the majority of councillors accept that the concern has been dealt with, the matter cannot be raised again for six months in line with Standing Orders.
- R5** All councillors who are unwilling to take, or abide by, the Pledge and modify their behaviour to improve internal relations should consider resigning with immediate effect for the greater good of the constituents of Steying and Council business.
- R6** The Council should develop a comprehensive training and development strategy for the new Council which covers all areas of Council business. It should in particular include training on the Code of Conduct and appropriate standards of behaviour.
- R7** The Council should develop an agreed understanding of the role and expectations for individual councillors when they are acting as Full Council, as committee members, as individuals and as representatives of the Council externally.
- R8** That councillors are reminded that they cannot speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised by the Full Council to do so. Any correspondence from individual councillors needs to make this clear.

Where an individual represents themselves as speaking on behalf of the Council, the Clerk should correct the record at the earliest opportunity.

- R9** That councillors understand their fiduciary duties and vicarious liability and be reminded that they are all individually and severally liable for the finances and employment practices of the Council. Individual councillors should therefore be reminded that they should not act alone and unilaterally once Council collectively has made a decision or agreed a course of action
- R10** The Council should consider working with Horsham and the West Sussex Association or any other appropriate organisation approved by Horsham to ensure it has comprehensive and up-to-date HR and grievance policies and that these are effectively enforced
- R11** The Clerk should complete CiLCA as a matter of priority. A timetable should be agreed between the Chair and the Clerk with dedicated 'professional development' time set aside in the working week to allow this to happen
- R12** The Council should ensure that its email policy is properly enforced and the Clerk empowered to draw a line under correspondence such that if the policy is breached the Clerk will simply reply to say that the email will not be responded to as it falls outside the policy. There may be exceptions for significant urgent matters but the Council as a whole shall agree a definition of what those exceptions should be. All emails should go through the Clerk.
- R13** The Council should have an agreed and enforced policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious correspondence to ensure that the business of the Council is not unnecessarily diverted.
- R14** The Council should agree how governance issues should be raised in meetings to allow reasonable discussion but also to allow other business to be transacted.
- R15** The Council and the Clerk should agree a work schedule to ensure that officers' time is focussed and that there are realistic expectations on their time within agreed working hours.
- R16** The Council needs to agree a councillor-officer protocol which would include a shared agreement as to the circumstances when councillors should have access to officer time and how the Clerk should respond to queries from individual councillors.
- R17** The Council should review its current staffing structure to ensure it is in line with its strategy and able to help the Council deliver it and that the Clerk's key performance objectives and time are geared to deliver that strategy

- R18 The Council should ensure that the Clerk and the Council make best use of external support and advice from its memberships of professional bodies**
- R19 The Council needs to review whether it has all appropriate and up-to-date policies in place and ensure that policies are available on the website.**
- R20 The Council needs to adopt a clear statement of councillors' right to information and a 'need to know' policy and review its implementation of freedom of information requests in the light of that policy.**
- R21 The Council should adopt a recording of meetings policy and decide how long it needs to keep recordings once minutes have been agreed**
- R22 The Council needs to adopt a Social Media Policy which would cover both appropriate use of social media by individuals and the Council's own approach to social media as an organisation**
- R23 The Council needs to review its approach towards planning delegation if this has not already been done in the last six months.**
- R24 All councillors need to be familiar with Standing Orders and should have a pack which contains all policies, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders that they bring to each and every meeting to aid understanding and avoid confusion.**
- R25 The '2-minute' rule in Standing Orders should be enforced and all councillors should support the Chair in ensuring the meeting is run efficiently and without conflict. The rule may be waived in exceptional circumstances where an agenda item is of particular significance but this must be agreed at the start of the agenda item and a revised time limit (say 5 minutes) agreed**
- R26 Minutes should be agreed at the following meeting. Amendments can only be proposed by those who attended the meeting and should be factual only rather than opinion**
- R27 Minutes should be done in the recommended style as a record of the decisions made at meetings to help anybody understand the process by which a decision is made. So they should make clear the decision taken with some brief summary of matters considered for and against**
- R28 The requirement that voting is recorded should be reconsidered**
- R29 The practice of allowing a councillor who cannot attend a meeting to send their views for consideration at that meeting should be stopped**
- R30 The agendas for meetings should be timetabled to ensure business is effectively transacted. Where there needs to be a variation to the timetable that should be agreed at the start of the meeting**

- R31** Apologies for absence should only be accepted where a valid reason is either given to the meeting or given to the Clerk in confidence
- R32** After the next election the new Council should develop a fully costed and resourced long-term strategic plan for the Town putting personal agendas and differences aside for the greater good of the Steyning community
- R33** The Council should review its communication strategy in conjunction with the public to evaluate its effectiveness and ensure that the public understands the work of the Council, is engaged in developing a vision for Steyning and is able to participate more fully in local decision-making.
- R34** The Council Chair and Clerk should look to learn from and share best practice with outstanding local councils.
- R35** Where Steyning Parish Council needs to use external support to comply with these recommendations, they should consult with Horsham District Council and the West Sussex Association before agreeing such support to ensure they have considered all the options and are obtaining expert advice at value for money.
- R36** Steyning Parish Council should develop an initial implementation plan within six weeks of the report which should be shared with the monitoring officer of Horsham District Council. They should also report on their progress in implementing this action plan to the monitoring officer in 6 months and again in 12 months after the date of this report

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R1	As a priority the Council should sign up to the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge.	All Cllrs sign up and agree to abide by the pledge at a Full Council Meeting	SPC	HIGH 21st Nov. '22
R2	In doing so the Council should collectively agree what language is and is not appropriate in meetings and correspondence among councillors and with officers, how such language should be challenged in meetings and how meetings can be run more efficiently without getting bogged down in minutiae nor stifling legitimate debate. Behaviour needs to be re-set to improve relationships to allow Council business to be transacted.	Agreement on Language can be made via Working Practices WP The tone of the emails is a more difficult issue to deal with – as to how – at present this is unresolved – in the first instance this should be self-regulated by Clerk and then by majority rule from the Council if needs be.	Working Practices WP Then agreed at Full Council SPC Clerk to regulate in first instance– emails. Chairs to challenge Cllrs in - meetings. Council to agree or otherwise	HIGH January Working Party HIGH – Immediate action by Clerk and Cllrs
R3	In agreeing to the Pledge, all councillors should give an undertaking to treat fellow councillors and officers with respect and not to make personal attacks on individuals or their integrity. Until such respect is shown the Council cannot move forward	Behaviour needs to be modified by first taking the pledge. If some individuals do not understand that they are causing offence, then hopefully they will respect other Cllrs and the clerks' comments and not continue to argue their position.	Cllrs All Cllrs have to work together to assist with a higher level of understanding	HIGH Initially - 21st Nov '22. Then Ongoing with recourse to Code of Conduct
R4	All councillors should undertake that, where they have concerns about the way a decision has been made or a procedure followed, they should discuss this respectfully with the Clerk and the Clerk should be allowed to give a ruling with reasons such as a reference to existing policy or legislation as to whether or not the concern is legitimate. This ruling should be communicated to all councillors. Where the concern is legitimate such, a	Cllrs to follow the guidance not only of this recommendation and take care in how they raise issues, but then adhering to existing, and any amended, SPC policies, then await a response. The Clerk should respond as soon as reasonably practical or give reasons why not.	Cllrs Clerk	HIGH From 21st Nov. '22

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

	ruling should include the steps needed either to rectify the matter with an agreed timescale or the changes needed to prevent the matter re-occurring. Where the majority of councillors accept that the concern has been dealt with, the matter cannot be raised again for six months in line with Standing Orders.	Cllrs should abide by the response given. If the requester still has concerns, the matter is taken to all councillors and the majority ruling abided by.	Cllrs Clerk and Cllrs	HIGH From 21st Nov. '22
R5	All councillors who are unwilling to take, or abide by, the Pledge and modify their behaviour to improve internal relations should consider resigning with immediate effect for the greater good of the constituents of Steyning and Council business.	All Cllrs to take the pledge Some Cllrs to modify their behaviour	All Cllrs Cllrs	HIGH From 21st Nov. '22
R6	The Council should develop a comprehensive training and development strategy for the new Council which covers all areas of Council business. It should in particular include training on the Code of Conduct and appropriate standards of behaviour.	There is already a Training programme in place. There is a SPC Training 'Statement of intent' and both Cllrs and staff are offered opportunities to train from the moment they 'sign up'.	Cllrs and Clerk	COMPLETED
R7	The Council should develop an agreed understanding of the role and expectations for individual Cllrs when they are acting as Full Council, as committee members, as individuals and as representatives of the Council externally.	Cllrs to re-read the information already provided and abide by Policies. Clerk to check Cllrs are aware where the information is and resend if necessary	Cllrs Clerk	HIGH From 21st Nov. Before End of Nov
R8	That councillors are reminded that they cannot speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised by the Full Council to do so. Any correspondence from individual councillors needs to make this clear. Where an individual represents themselves as speaking on behalf of the Council, the Clerk should correct the record at the earliest opportunity.	Cllrs to re-read the information already provided and abide by Policies – with an amendment required to email policy to clarify position Clerk to check Cllrs are aware where the information is and resend if necessary	Cllrs Clerk	HIGH From 21st Nov. Before End of Nov

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R9	That councillors understand their fiduciary duties and vicarious liability and be reminded that they are all individually and severally liable for the finances and employment practices of the Council. Individual councillors should therefore be reminded that they should not act alone and unilaterally once Council collectively has made a decision or agreed a course of action	A Cllrs fiduciary duties and vicarious liability to be written into their guidance pack / information with greater clarity. Then woven into the appropriate SPC policy, then agreed.	Clerk with approval from Council	MEDIUM Before end of Council term
R10	The Council should consider working with Horsham and the West Sussex Association or any other appropriate organisation approved by Horsham to ensure it has comprehensive and up-to-date HR and grievance policies and that these are effectively enforced	There are policies already in place	N/A	COMPLETED
R11	The Clerk should complete CiLCA as a matter of priority. A timetable should be agreed between the Chair and the Clerk with dedicated 'professional development' time set aside in the working week to allow this to happen	Clerk Chair & Vice Chair to continue to monitor progress and complete appraisal review before end of 2022	Clerk Chair and Vice Chair	MEDIUM Cilca completed before end of Council Term
R12	The Council should ensure that its email policy is properly enforced, and the Clerk empowered to draw a line under correspondence such that if the policy is breached the Clerk will simply reply to say that the email will not be responded to as it falls outside the policy. There may be exceptions for significant urgent matters, but the Council as a whole shall agree a definition of what those exceptions should be. All emails should go through the Clerk.	Email Policy to be amended Clerk to respond to breaches as per set out in recommendation Cllrs to abide by response	SPC Clerk	HIGH MEDIUM MEDIUM

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R13	The Council should have an agreed and enforced policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious correspondence to ensure that the business of the Council is not unnecessarily diverted.	A new policy should be put in place which covers vexatious behaviour	Clerk's office to source policy guidance & present to Working Practices for SPC approval	MEDIUM Before end of Jan '23
R14	The Council should agree how governance issues should be raised in meetings to allow reasonable discussion but also to allow other business to be transacted.	This item should be discussed at Working Practices and written into Councillor / Officer protocol then agreed at Full Council	Clerk's office to source policy guidance & present to Working Practices for SPC approval	LOW Before end of Council term
R15	The Council and the Clerk should agree a work schedule to ensure that officers' time is focussed and that there are realistic expectations on their time within agreed working hours.	Produce a working schedule for both Clerk's and Council's agreement	Personnel Committee	MEDIUM Before end of Feb '23
R16	The Council needs to agree a councillor-officer protocol which would include a shared agreement as to the circumstances when councillors should have access to officer time and how the Clerk should respond to queries from individual councillors.	This item should be discussed at Personnel Committee and written into Councillor / Officer protocol then agreed at Full Council	Personnel Committee	MEDIUM Before end of Feb '23
R17	The Council should review its current staffing structure to ensure it is in line with its strategy and able to help the Council deliver it and that the Clerk's key performance objectives and time are geared to deliver that strategy	Review of Staffing Structure K. P. I's are already in place, but need to be reviewed before end of 2022	Clerk , Chair & Vice Chair, then Personnel Com' Clerk/Chair/V. Chair	MEDIUM HIGH
R18	The Council should ensure that the Clerk and the Council make best use of external support and advice from its memberships of professional bodies	Largely this already happens. To be reviewed by Personnel Committee	Personnel Committee	LOW Before end of Council term

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R19	The Council needs to review whether it has all appropriate and up-to-date policies in place and ensure that policies are available on the website.	Some policies to be reviewed and appropriate amendments put in place Policies are available on Web Site	Working Practices	LOW Before end of Council term COMPLETED
R20	The Council needs to adopt a clear statement of councillors' right to information and a 'need to know' policy and review its implementation of freedom of information requests in the light of that policy.	A 'Need to Know' policy to be put in place or its points added to an existing policy	Working Practices	MEDIUM Before end of Feb'23
R21	The Council should adopt a recording of meetings policy and decide how long it needs to keep recordings once minutes have been agreed	SPC to consider amending either its Communications policy or its Retention and Disposal policy and or its Community Engagement policy	Working Practices	LOW Before end of Council term
R22	The Council needs to adopt a social media Policy which would cover both appropriate use of social media by individuals and the Council's own approach to social media as an organisation	There is a policy already in place	N/A	COMPLETED
R23	The Council needs to review its approach towards planning delegation if this has not already been done in the last six months.	There is a policy now in place	N/A	COMPLETED
R24	All councillors need to be familiar with Standing Orders and should have a pack which contains all policies, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders that they bring to each and every meeting to aid understanding and avoid confusion.	There is a pack distributed to Cllrs when they take up the position after election	N/A	COMPLETED

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R25	The '2-minute' rule in Standing Orders should be enforced and all councillors should support the Chair in ensuring the meeting is run efficiently and without conflict. The rule may be waived in exceptional circumstances where an agenda item is of particular significance, but this must be agreed at the start of the agenda item and a revised time limit (say 5 minutes) agreed	This rule has been more robustly enforced recently by all SPC Chairman to ensure meetings are run more efficiently and with less disruption or unnecessary diversion Chairs to continue use this Standing order, but have in mind when it should be waived	Chairman	Ongoing Already being used
R26	Minutes should be agreed at the following meeting. Amendments can only be proposed by those who attended the meeting and should be factual only rather than opinion	Councillors to continue to be aware of the comments noted within the recommendation and abide by them Chairman to enforce this	Cllrs Chairman	Ongoing MEDIUM
R27	Minutes should be done in the recommended style as a record of the decisions made at meetings to help anybody understand the process by which a decision is made. So, they should make clear the decision taken with some brief summary of matters considered for and against	None	Clerk	COMPLETED
R28	The requirement that voting is recorded should be reconsidered	Cllrs should be aware that Standing orders gives them the right to ask for voting to be recorded, however this should be used sparingly and not agreed for the whole or 'rest of the' meeting	Cllrs / Chairman	LOW PRIORITY But enforced at & after 21st Nov. '22
R29	The practice of allowing a councillor who cannot attend a meeting to send their views for consideration at that meeting should be stopped	This practice to stop forthwith	Cllrs	LOW PRIORITY But enforced at & after 21st Nov. '22

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R30	The agendas for meetings should be timetabled to ensure business is effectively transacted. Where there needs to be a variation to the timetable that should be agreed at the start of the meeting	Timetabling 'guidance' to start at the 21st of November Full Council Meeting This is still subject to Chairmans discretion	Clerk / Chairman	LOW PRIORITY But enforced at & after 21st Nov. '22
R31	Apologies for absence should only be accepted where a valid reason is either given to the meeting or given to the Clerk in confidence	This was reviewed at the recent meeting with HDC Monitoring Officer, and it was generally agreed that current practice is acceptable – to avoid conflict	All	COMPLETED
R32	After the next election the new Council should develop a fully costed and resourced long-term strategic plan for the Town putting personal agendas and differences aside for the greater good of the Steyning community	None	Clerk & SPC	COMPLETED
R33	The Council should review its communication strategy in conjunction with the public to evaluate its effectiveness and ensure that the public understands the work of the Council, is engaged in developing a vision for Steyning and is able to participate more fully in local decision-making.	Low priority to be reviewed by new Council if they feel it necessary	New Council	LOW After May 2023
R34	The Council Chair and Clerk should look to learn from and share best practice with outstanding local councils.	Best Practice is already shared and taken up when appropriate. Needs to be discussed more openly when disruption lessens	Chairman & Clerk	LOW Before end of Council term

	Recommendation	Action to be taken	By Whom	Timescale for Completion
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Hoey Ainscough Report Review – Recommendations & Proposed Actions

R35	Where Steyning Parish Council needs to use external support to comply with these recommendations, they should consult with Horsham District Council and the West Sussex Association before agreeing such support to ensure they have considered all the options and are obtaining expert advice at value for money.	Consultation is already in place. Council to maintain open minded approach to support and expertise	Councillors & Clerk	LOW ONGOING
R36	Steyning Parish Council should develop an initial implementation plan within six weeks of the report which should be shared with the monitoring officer of Horsham District Council. They should also report on their progress in implementing this action plan to the monitoring officer in 6 months and again in 12 months after the date of this report	Draft Implementation Plan completed and agreed at 21st November Full Council meeting Progress review April 17th SPC Full Council Meeting – Then sent to HDC Final Review at October 23 SPC Full Council Meeting – Then sent to HDC	SPC & Clerk	COMPLETED BY 21st Nov '22 APRIL 2023 OCTOBER 2023

Briefing Note

Item 8.1.3

Subsequent to the 7th November 'All member Working Party' the HDC monitoring office compiled the following motion for SPC to consider and agree

SPC duly note the report from Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd and have prepared a detailed implementation plan in relation to the recommendations contained in the report.

SPC believes that some of the recommendations have already been completed but the majority require action. The proposed actions and timeframes are detailed within the implementation plan.

SPC resolves to take the actions and to implement the recommendations as detailed and to report on the progress in 6 months and 12 months to Full Council and to the Monitoring Officer at Horsham District Council.

Civility and Respect Pledge suggested agenda item:

To pass a resolution to sign up to the civility and respect pledge

Definition of Civility and Respect

Civility means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word.

Examples of ways in which you can show respect are by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and One Voice Wales (OVW), believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

By our council signing up to the civility and respect pledge we are demonstrating that our council is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

Signing up is a simple process, which requires councils to register and agree to the following statements:

Statement	Tick to agree
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.	
Our council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff	
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors	
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.	
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.	
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when it happens.	
Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme	
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	

All Member Working Party Meeting - Notes

Date and time convened – 26th October 2022 @ 2pm.

Clerked by – J. Fullbrook and Hazel Roxby

Members attending – Cllrs Young, I Alexander, Hanson, Lloyd, Bell, Goldsmith, S Alexander & Campbell.

Reasons for convening the meeting

1. Resolution from Full Council - At the last Full Council meeting SPC agreed the following.

Cllr Norcross proposed, seconded by Cllr S. Alexander that SPC convene an all member working party on the 26th October '22 at 2pm to consider NALC's Civility and Respect policy {with a view to agreeing it or otherwise at the next Full Council meeting in November}. Agreed

Therefore, this was the main reason for this meeting. Also, to be considered if time allowed :-

2. Resolution from F&GP meeting in October - To reconsider the current committee quorums and or to consider recommending a naming of the substitute members of a committee as per Standing Orders 4d (iv).
3. Resolution from Full Council - To consider Cllr Campbell's suggested amendments to the existing Code of Conduct policy, as discussed in May Full Council meeting and subsequently agreed to take to Working practices for recommendation back to Full Council

Notes

Item 1 – To consider adopting NALC's new Civility and Respect Policy.

All present put forward their views. It was felt by most that if SPC were to adopt it, it would, if anything, be replacing a more robust existing SPC policy, and that the existing policy covered councillors as well as employees. No one disputed the main ideas framed within the new policy, but it seemed to lack some of the detail that was incorporated within the existing policy such as guidance on communication, how to attempt to resolve disputes via informal means and noting the route to formal dispute resolution including the sort of sanctions that could be imposed by the monitoring office. – The Clerk pointed out that the existing policy was based upon the previous NALC dignity at work policy, but this too had not been meant for councillors and that it was this council that within the last three years had amended it to include covering councillors conduct, and that actually councillor conduct was largely meant to be covered by the SPC Code of Conduct document.

It was agreed however that SPC did not want to lose some of the aspects from this policy, so would not necessarily entertain simply allowing the Civility and Respect Policy to supersede the existing policy, nor was there appetite from all present for SPC to spend another period of time revisiting the large range of SPC policies which covered employee, councillor and contractor conduct and communication guidance, simply to allow for its adoption. Councillors did agree however that the matter be revisited after the meeting on the 7th November

In a related matter, the Clerk pointed out that the first and main recommendation from the Hoey Ainscough review report was that SPC should sign up to the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect pledge. It was stated that agreeing to sign up to the pledge was not the same as agreeing to the Civility and Respect policy per se, even if it did have wording within the pledge stating that the Council should have '... good governance arrangements in place including a dignity at work policy'. The Clerk suggested that provided SPC always had an agreed Dignity at Work policy in place, be it the existing one or when approved a new one (therefore SPC not having to adopt the new Civility and Respect policy first), the terms of the pledge remained intact. With this proviso, ***the working party agreed unanimously to recommend that SPC Full Council agree to take the Civility and Respect pledge.***

Item 2 – To Consider committee quorums and or naming of substitute members.

The Clerk spoke in support of an item raised by councillors at the last F&GP meeting, noting that on a number of occasions recently, committee meetings had either been inquorate due to low attendance, or close to it, or that the office had had to ask councillors who had already stated they were likely unavailable to please attend a meeting anyway as without them meetings would end up inquorate, and that this situation could be avoided by simply lowering the quorum requirement on the Community Committee back to 3 which had been in place for many years. And for the F&GP Committee quorum, he supported consideration of agreeing to name a councillor substitute member as per standing order 4d (iv).

After some debate, the lowering of Community Committee quorum was rejected because a majority of those present thought there were too many decisions of high importance that could not be left to only, on occasion, 3 councillors. The clerks pointed out councillors ought to be able to trust and respect the decisions made by 3 councillors with clerical guidance, and that it was perhaps more important to have some meetings with lower quorum membership than no meetings at all. However, the majority of those present did not agree. Nor was there appetite to recommend to full council that a substitute F&GP member be considered.

Item 3 – To consider Cllr Campbell's amendments to the existing Code of Conduct policy.

Following the monitoring office email which clarified the difference between the definition of 'relates to' and 'affects', Cllr Campbell was less inclined to ask that his suggestions as per supporting papers were considered, however he pointed out that there were occasions where the policy could more accurately distinguish between the role of the Monitoring Officer and that of the SPC Clerk.

It was agreed that the clerk's office revisits the SPC Code of Conduct to clarify this matter and to then present these amendments to Full Council for agreement.

Meeting closed at 3.40pm

Recommendations from the Personnel Committee Item 8.3

Briefing Note

The following two recommendations come from the Personnel committee meeting on the 16th November 2022

Pe/2/15 Following a lengthy discussion by all present the Committee agreed the following recommendations to Full Council:

Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S Alexander that the Personnel Committee recommends to resolve a vote of no confidence against Councillor Paul Campbell in view of his continuing harassment of the Office and the Clerk. **Agreed**

Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr T Lloyd that the personnel Committee recommends that Working Practices consider strengthening the email policy with regards to dealing with threatening and/or vexatious emails. **Agreed**

MEETING OF THE JOINT PARISHES YOUTH COMMITTEE

AT THE STETNING CENTRE

On Thursday 27th October 2022 AT 6.30 p.m.

Members in attendance – Cllr Alan Chilver, Cllr Rachel Burstow, Cllr Simon Alexander, Cllr Joanna Norcross, Stephen Keogh- Clerk for Upper Beeding, Sussex Youth services co-ordinators Sheri Birch and Grace Martin.

Clerk in attendance - John Fullbrook & Hazel Roxby

Members of Public in attendance. None

DRAFT MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1** There were apologies for absence from Cllr Is Allen and Bramber Rep. Paul Richards Rep for Bramber parish Council

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR.

- 2.1** There were no questions from the floor.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

- 3.1** Cllr S Alexander **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Alan Chilver to accept the minutes of the meeting held on the 13th June 2022 as a true and fair record of the meeting. **Agreed.**

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Taken as read)

- 4.1** 4.1 Says to be removed from the Charity Commission website on 28th June 2022. Confirmation has been received from the Charity Commission that the SAYS Charity has been removed. **Actioned.**
- 4.2** 6.2 Cllr Alexander to explore further groups in the local area to populate the booklet and bring back to the next meeting. **Ongoing**

5.0 CURRENT YOUTH SERVICE OPERATION OVERVIEW

- 5.1 To discuss how the youth service has been operating over the summer period and update on the plans for the Autumn Term.**

Sherie informed that the purple bus at the MPF had been well received by the youths during the summer period. There was good engagement with the youths and activities carried out were T- shirt painting, hat painting and making bags. There were no reports of anti- social behaviour given to the leaders or the wardens over the summer.

There were lots of new members attending the junior sessions. The 12 to 14 year olds have done an Empower project of upcycling clothes. A fashion show is being held at the Steyning Centre on 7th November at 5.30pm for the youths to show what they have been doing.

The Thursday evening sessions in Steyning have been very good at the Cuthman Centre with the older youths Group. Due to the alterations made to the Cuthman centre by the school it is now not appropriate for the younger youth sessions.

There was a day event at a Trampoline park for the whole of the Sussex Clubs for Young People.

The youths attending had an excellent day.

5.2 Update on the plans of the use of the Changing rooms at Steyning Memorial Playing Fields

The junior sessions on Monday's evenings at the MPF and the changing rooms are not working well. There have been constant approaches and complaints on a weekly basis to the youth leaders from the cricket club and a councillor. They have been told they are not wanted at the MPF and should not be in the changing rooms next to a licenced club. The youth leaders feel this is intimidation and not a good atmosphere for the youths. This issue will be raised at the Parish council meeting.

It is suggested that the Monday sessions with the purple bus be run from a different location. Permissions for a trial period to be requested. Sheri to inform the office of a start date.

6.0 TO RECEIVE YOUTH SERVICE PROVIDERS ORGANISATIONAL TERMLY AND FINANCE REPORTS

6.1 The termly reports June- July and summer period were sent out to the committee.

Cllr Simon Alexander **proposed, seconded** Cllr Joanna Norcross to accept the reports. **Agreed**

Cllr Alan Chilver commented that the reports were very encouraging.

7.0 A.O.B / CORRESPONDENCE / INFORMATION

7.1 Clerk informed that the next agenda should include the draft contract 2023 to 2026 for discussion.

It was queried if there had been any reports or feedback from the young leaders that attended the last meeting. Sheri will ask them to attend and report to the next meeting.

8.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING. – 9th January 2023 at 6.30pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.05 pm