

MEETING OF FULL PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 17th FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.30PM

Councillors Present : Cllrs Norcross (Chairman), Young, Bell, Hanson, Lloyd, Linfield, Johnson, Foxwell
M Alexander, I Alexander, Sharp, Campbell, Trundle, S Alexander and Ballance.
Clerks in attendance : John Fullbrook
Members of the Public : 27 {inc. District Cllr Victoria Finnegan and Neighbourhood Wardens Michael and Alison}
Meeting commenced : 7.34 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

ACTION

FULL/24/91 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

91.1 Apologies received from Cllr Hanson, as she would be arriving slightly late for this meeting.

FULL/24/92 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

92.1 None

FULL/24/93 QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR {in summary}

93.1.1 **Q** – Trevor Cree stated that – 1. He looked forward to Cllr Sharp's report on the Town Clock, and hoped the report would be made available to residents. 2. That the SPC Solicitor should be appointed to review the evidence regards Clock Tower ownership. 3. That replacement Clock faces should be made of wood on this grade II listed building. He also remonstrated against the summary of his questions and statement noted within the previous Full Council draft minutes, suggesting words should be changed; from 'his theories' to 'his detailed research'; from 'he threatened' to 'he cautioned', and from 'he further warned' to 'he stated'.

93.1.2 **A** – The Chair responded that the points made were not questions, but that these matters would be dealt with under agenda item 10.2, and said draft minutes agreement would be dealt with under agenda item 4.

FULL/24/94 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

94.1 Cllr Campbell proposed a motion to amend the draft minutes as per Mr Cree's suggestions noted above, but this was not seconded.

94.2 Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr I Alexander that the minutes for the meeting dated the 20th January 2025 be accepted as a true and fair record, and agree that the amended Chairs statement to this meeting serve as an addendum to these minutes. **Agreed. 11 For, 1 against** {Cllr Campbell}, **2 abstained** {Cllrs S Alexander & Sharp}

CLERK

FULL/24/95 MATTERS ARISING – These items were taken as read

95.1 Cllr Finnegan to provide SPC Clerk with 'Dog reporting procedure' notes for SPC to publish – **Actioned**

95.2 Clerk to submit request for Precept to HDC following SPC agreement – **Actioned**

95.3 SPC to agree that the Chairs' statement be attached as an addendum to the 20th Jan' minutes- **Item 94.1**

95.4 Cllr Sanctions and HDC 'Decision notice' be published in accordance with SPC agreement – **Actioned**

95.5 The SPC Chair and Cllr Campbell to update on progress concerning sanction resolution – **See item 100.1**

- 95.6 'Devolution Working Party' to convene – **Actioned / See item 105.1**
- 95.7 Youth Service MOU to be taken to other parish Council's for signatures – **Actioned**
- 95.8 Neighbourhood Wardens MOU agreement to taken to other Parish Councils and HDC – **Actioned**
- 95.9 External audit notifications published and this action minuted - **Actioned**
- 95.10 External Audit invoice paid – **Actioned**
- 95.11 Clerk and SPC Cllrs to respond individually to Govt. Standards and Conduct consultation – **Actioned**
- 95.12 Clerk to make contact with local key stakeholders regarding SPC AGM presentations – **See item 100.4**
- 95.13 N. Plan steering committee to select 4 resident members following adverts & interviews – **Item 101.1**
- 95.14 SPC to receive £10K Grant from Locality & RFO to attribute invoices for reimbursement – **Actioned**
- 95.15 Climate Action Group to begin to deal with actions subsequent to Council agreements – **See item 101.2**
- 95.16 HALC / WSALC minutes from recent meetings to be distributed by Clerk – **Actioned**
- 95.17 Cricket Club Lease agreement to be discussed at F&GP Committee – **See item 97.1**
- 95.18 Cllr Sharp to make statement regards Town Clock – carried over from last meeting – **See item 100.2**
- 95.19 Clerk to publicise HDC waste prevention grant funding opportunities – **Actioned**

FULL/24/96 LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVOLUTION

- 96.1.1 **'What does Local Government devolution potentially mean to Steyning and its parish council neighbours'. An update from Horsham District Council Leader (Martin Boffey) and HDC Chief Exec. (Jane Eaton).** Martin explained there were two parts to this item – *English Devolution* and *Local Government Re-organisation*, and he went on to summerise what was involved in each, and how it might specifically affect Sussex as a whole, moving from a three tier system {including parish/ town councils} to a two tier system of one unitary authority with an elected mayor, with the Horsham District Council ceasing to exist from April 2028, and with parish and town councils having opportunities to step up and provide some of the service provision at a more local level.
- 96.1.2 In terms of what services are to be supplied by each tier of local government, no one as yet, it appears, knows this detail. West Sussex CC and Horsham DC have to work on these specifics over the next few weeks and by the 21st March present an outline proposal to the government, with final plans needing to be agreed by September '25. There would follow mayoral elections for the new Sussex seat in 2026, unitary authority elections likely in May 2027, with the new authority likely taking its powers by April 2028.
- 96.1.3 Some parish councils might need to consider consolidating / amalgamating to create appropriate scale to ensure preferred levels of local service provision, rather than allow one unitary authority to deal with all services centrally, while it should also be noted that some non-statutory services currently being supplied at district level could be lost if not taken on at parish/town level. This concept of service transfer to parishes was termed '*double devolution*'
- 96.1.4 Who therefore becomes the '*custodian of place*' and to what level could well be in the hands of the parish and town councils, and how they position themselves in terms of this service provision and their ability to negotiate these aspects with the new unitary authority.
- 96.1.5 Horsham District land assets might also potentially be transferred to parish/ town councils. Most will cost money in terms of maintenance, but some might also raise revenue opportunities. Jane went onto point out there was a long list of these assets for the Steyning Parish which included Bramber Brooks, Fletchers Croft open spaces and the three Car Parks,

but also indicated that this potential offer might only be available for a short period, before the government or county council steps in.

96.1.6 Jane then spoke about how SPC and its neighbours might want to function in the new local government landscape, with a suggestion of merging councils to be bigger and more able to deal with better local service provision. But also suggested other models for consideration, notably 'Hub and Spoke', with the larger Parish or Town taking the lead and supporting their smaller neighbours.

96.1.7 Members from SPC and Bramber, Upper Beeding, Ashurst and Wiston Councils then had an opportunity to pose questions to Martin and Jane, and there follows a summary of this Q&A:

- **Q - What about any potential parish boundary changes?**

A - The District Council has within its current annual plan, a Community Governance Review, and within its remit is an ability to change parish boundaries.

- **Q - What District Council services do you see being suitable to be delegated to Parish Councils?**

A – Examples include, some councils currently paying for a higher level of street cleaning; potentially well-being services; community services; youth services; events and entertainment; warden services; and parks and open spaces services; because a cash strapped unitary authority might not entertain maintaining such non statutory services.

- **Q - What about any potential health service boundary changes?**

A - The integrated services may well be run at unitary level similar to the current framework, but with some merging at management level.

- **Q - Within the first six week consultation will you have opportunity to talk about whether Parish Councils are better being combined or similar to their current structure, in terms of them being custodians of place?**

A – There is no statutory requirement for district councils to consult with parishes on this matter, but Jane and Martin are determined to do what they can.

Devolution itself could provide many benefits and opportunities at parish level, but in the meantime it could get harder for things to get done.

- **Q - What about any political boundary changes?**

A – That's a different process and is unlikely to be affected.

- **Q – Does your land asset list include Fletchers Croft {Steyping}?**

A – There was open space noted under 'Land at Vicarage Lane' on Jane's current list

FULL/24/97 STEYNING CRICKET CLUBHOUSE PROPOSED RENEWAL

97.1 Representatives from the Cricket Club to provide a short presentation regarding proposed developments to their Clubhouse. Gary Hunt {Cricket Manager} & Paul Shippam {Committee Chair} presented reasons behind the need for a Clubhouse redevelopment. The proposal outlined the clubs history and very successful current position, including a membership in excess of 600 playing and non-playing members. The fast rising costs associated with the maintenance of the aging clubhouse has made it clear that it will in the near future be unfit for purpose. With this in mind the club engaged a professional firm with a specific expertise in clubhouse development, and SPC members were given illustrations of the proposed building, as per the firms designs. The club representatives asked members for support to allow them to move the process forward towards a planning submission. Future ownership of the building and leasing arrangements were to be discussed at future F&GP Committee meetings. Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S Alexander that SPC supports the Steyping Cricket Clubs' desire to redevelop their clubhouse facilities whilst there is an assurance that the renewal works do not exceed the limits of the existing leased area, and with final council agreement being subject to planning permission being granted, and a newly prepared 99 year {or similar} lease being mutually acceptable to both Club and SPC. **Agreed**

CLERK

FULL/24/98 NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS REPORT

98.1 The Warden report for January 2025 was received, and no questions arose.

FULL/24/99	REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS (In Summary)	
99.1	Cllr Victoria Finnegan – (HDC) update, Item 1. Devolution – Victoria expressed appreciation for SPC engaging with Martin and Jane so early in the process - thereby ensuring residents are well served and assets are protected moving forward.	
99.2	2. Dangerous Dog – Information has gone out on social media, and police monitoring situation	
99.3	3. Parking leaflets – Information shared	
99.4	4. HDC Committee meetings to be convened in locations in south of region – More information will go out via Clerk to members when Victoria has it	CLERK
99.5	5. Wi Fi on the High Street – There was a meeting with local community representatives, and three well-reasoned installation positions now clearly identified. One of these mast locations needs to be adopted from the current owner, but all other matters are moving forward well.	CLERK / Cllr Finnegan
99.6	6. HDC have adopted a declaration promoting ‘River recovery’ of habitats associated with the Rother, the Arun and the Adur – There is cooperation between councils and many agencies and land owners to manage more appropriately these waterways	
99.7	7. SDNP Trees – An initiative called ‘trees for the downs’ is promoting tree planting and hopes to achieve 100,000 trees planted by the end of next year.	
99.8	8. West Sussex health and well-being board – There is a survey which would provide feedback concerning how pharmacies work – contact details will be sent to the Clerk	CLERK
99.9	9. Well-being walks – These are organised to promote good health and there are two organised for Steyning in March	
99.10	10. Local Plan update – There was a briefing on the 9 th Jan – it was confirmed that all the action points were completed, and information is now with the inspectors.	
99.11	11. HDC office movements – These will be completed and new site opened by the 3 rd March	
99.12	12. Digital Display Boards – SPC now has all the information needed to take this forward.	CLERK
99.13	13. Glebe Farm – The Vistry group have now purchased the land and will be working on the new full planning application. There is a meeting planned for the 18 th Feb {tomorrow}, to discuss community engagement meeting arrangements/ logistics with the Clerk and Victoria	
99.14	14. Questions – Asset adoption for High Street Wi-Fi was confirmed as being the Police CCTV mast. The planning committee will be updated following the meeting with Vistry.	CLERK
99.15	Cllr Nicholas Marks {HDC Update} – Not in attendance.	
FULL/24/00	GOVERNANCE	
100.1	To receive an update from the Chair and Cllr Campbell in regards progress towards code of conduct sanctions resolution. Cllr Campbell made it very clear he had no intention of apologising to Steyning Parish Council members nor the SPC Clerk for his conduct, as per his requirement to do so via the agreed Horsham District Councils recommended sanctions towards him. This message from him will be relayed to the Monitoring Office by the Chair.	Cllr Campbell Cllr Norcross
100.2	A report concerning the Steyning Town Clock / Clock Tower.	
100.2.1	Cllr Sharp had produced an eight-page report covering 185 years of history in relation to the Clock and Tower ownership over that period and presented a verbal summary of this document. The compilation having required him to scrutinise years of records within Parish Archives, Steyning Museum documents and the West Sussex Records Office.	
100.2.2	The conclusions of this report were as follows:- 1. There is insufficient evidence to contest the Land Registry title of No.72 High St. Indeed, much that supports it. 2. This is not just the SPC view. At least 4 lawyers have looked into this issue in the last 40 years, and none has supported anything other than the Tower belonging to the owners of No.72 High St, or any initiative to alter the ownership. Why would a fifth solicitor reach a different conclusion? 3. This issue was settled, in effect, 40 years ago	

	4. There is no current issue with Tower maintenance – the historical prompt to ownership debate. SPC have a good relationship with the current owners, and the backstop of the Grade 2 listing.	
100.2.3	The presentation was very well received by members and residents. Two constructive suggestions were raised by the author subsequent to the work undertaken during the compilation of the report. First, over the years, Steyning residents have paid considerable sums of money to repair and maintain this historic clock. And although they can see the dials, hands etc and hear the chimes, they cannot see the historic mechanism. Would it not be an idea therefore to install a webcam inside the Tower which will livestream the mechanism in action, so people can actually see what they are paying for. This idea to be taken to F&GP Committee.	CLERK
100.2.4	Second, most of the early records of the SPC (up to 1964) have been transferred to the West Sussex Records Office, which is an excellent place for scholarship, and where old and irreplaceable files are indexed, fire protected, and well supervised. It is difficult for SPC to provide access to them in the same way as there is little space nor resources to supervise their safe usage. Therefore the suggestion is to transfer all SPC Minutes files up to the Year 2000 to WSRO at the earliest opportunity. Cllr Norcross proposed, seconded by Cllr Bell that SPC Working Practices Group looks at the SPC records {disposals} policy, specifically with a view to transferring SPC records to the West Sussex Records Office in due course. Agreed	CLERK
100.2.5	Cllr S Alexander proposed seconded by Cllr Ballance that following a lot of misinformation posted on social media about this matter, it is imperative that the correct details are published on SPC Website and on SPC social media platforms. Agreed {The publication of this report on social media will be discussed via the SPC community engagement committee}. Maintenance questions were raised, and the Clerk confirmed a full update will be given at the next F&GP meeting.	CLERK
100.3	To consider agreement for the ‘SPC Meetings Schedule’ to cover the period to May 2026 The Clerk had distributed a supporting paper which was broadly similar to the previous years agreed scheduling in terms of distribution and number of meetings, but obviously with specific dates of meetings changed. Cllr Norcross proposed, seconded by Cllr Trundle that SPC agrees the meeting schedule to cover the period to May 2026, as per supporting papers. Agreed	CLERK
100.4	To discuss the theme of this year’s SPC March Annual Parish Meeting – The Clerk suggested that having engaged with various contacts, it seemed likely that there was going to be a more detailed presentation from the <i>Steyning Cricket Club</i> , plus there could be one from the <i>Ouse and Adur River Trust</i> . Members explored a number of further ideas should these not work out including the <i>Youth Service</i> , <i>HDC</i> returning to talk once more about Devolution and <i>WSCC</i> coming to talk about the same subject, or to discuss the <i>walking and cycling plan</i> – as the theme initially discussed was <i>development in the community</i> . The Clerk will continue to pursue contacts and keep members informed.	CLERK
FULL/24/01	COMMUNITY MATTERS	
101.1	Update from Cllr Bell from the SPC Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee. The Clerk and Cllrs Bell and Sharp had undertaken a number of interviews and had gained agreement for 4 resident members to join the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee. The first full meeting for which was to convene on the 18 th February @ 7pm. The field was very strong for the selection process, and the two unsuccessful candidates that had made it to the interview stage were asked, and had agreed to, taking on work in a different capacity when there was a need for working party discussions. There had been much progress on members assessment of design codes, and Squires consultants have also been asked for guidance in terms of informing the group as to its approach to priority tasks, and future grant applications.	CLERK

- 101.2 Climate Action Group.**
Cllr Johnson updated that *One Planet* group are working with HDC and all the parish councils to adopt a live 'Action Plan', and are showcasing the CAG version and that of Greening Steyning. The Brighton and Hove Bus Company representative has been asked to attend the next CAG meeting but is yet to respond.
- 101.3 Parish-wide disability awareness.**
Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Lloyd that the SPC Chair and Clerk speak to representatives to discuss parish wide disability awareness. **Agreed**
- FULL/24/02** **PROGRESS REPORT**
- 102.1 To receive the following ongoing items**
Making Steyning a 'Dementia Friendly Town' – Cllr Norcross to provide further information at the next meeting – **To be dealt with under motion at item FULL/24/101.3**
- 102.2 Youth service team to make future presentation to SPC Full Council - Ongoing**
- FULL/24/03** **CORRESPONDENCE AND INFORMATION ITEMS**
- 103.1 Neighbourhood Policing Team** – August will be a 'month of Action' which will focus on multi agency working and extra patrols from police and PCSO's – if there are any events in August please inform the Clerk so it can be passed on to PCSO Bicknell.
- FULL/24/04** **CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**
- 104.1** Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Young to resolve, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, in accordance with Standing Orders 3d to exclude the press and public on the grounds that the confidential matters to be discussed under agenda item 15 may involve disclosure of personal or privileged information which would be inappropriate to put in the public domain. **Agreed 14 For, 1 Against**
- FULL/24/05** **POTENTIAL FUTURE STAFFING AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS**
- 105.1.1 To begin considering potential restructuring of Steyning Parish Council in the light of matters arising from item FULL/24/96.1.**
Members discussed Bramber Brooks, Fletchers Croft, the Leisure Centre and the Car Parks in terms of potential asset acquisitions, amongst others, and members also noted extra staff might be required such as, for example, a park ranger should there be a need to look after an expanded portfolio of open space and other non-statutory service provision with members resolving to further discuss this at F&GP Committee.
- 105.1.2** Cllr Norcross **proposed, seconded** by Cllr S Alexander that SPC delegate the Clerk to write to Horsham District Council to signal SPC's willingness to discuss any possible transfer of assets, this being subject to any terms of that transfer. **Agreed**
- FULL/24/06** **DATE OF NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING:** 14th April 2025 at 7.30pm
DATE OF SPC ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: 17th March 2025 at 6pm

Meeting closed at 10.04 pm

Signed by the Chairman Date 14th April 2025

A recording of this meeting is available at - <https://youtu.be/3j9Uk8FUePc>