

HORSHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (HALC)

Notice of Annual General Meeting

on **Thursday 20th August 2026 at 6:30pm** at Beeson House, Southwater Parish Council, 26 Lintot Square, Fairbank Road, Southwater, RH13 9LA

Present:

- Cllr Graham Watkins (HALC Chair)
- Cllr Val Court (HALC Vice Chair)
- Emily Simpson (Interim HALC Secretary)
- Cllr Douglas Denham St. Pinnock (WSALC Chair)
- Victoria Wyllie de Echeverria (HDC Climate Action Network)
- Ashington (Cllr. Tony Moss)
- Billingshurst (Parish Clerk Greg Burt & Cllr. Sandy Duck)
- Broadbridge Heath (Cllr. Geoff Clark)
- Colgate (Cllr. Stephen Davies)
- Cowfold (Cllr. Kate Howell & Cllr. Felicity Thorpe)
- Nuthurst (Cllr. Dave Cotton & HALC Vice Chair Val Court)
- Pulborough (Cllr. Ian Hare)
- Rudgwick (Cllr. Simon Torn & Paul Kornicky)
- Rusper (Cllr. Fenella Maitland-Smith)
- Shermanbury (Cllr. Trevor Brown & Cllr. Richard Few)
- Shipley (Cllr. Matt Payne)
- Southwater (HALC Chair Graham Watkins, Cllr. Claire Vickers, Cllr. Derek Moore, Julie Crowhurst)
- Upper Beeding (Cllr. Bob Harber)
- Warnham (Cllr. Sally Pavey)
- West Chiltington (Cllr. Viv Gibson)
- West Grinstead (Cllr. Lyn Lambert, Cllr. Rachel Richards)
- Woodmancote (Cllr. Roger Noel)

1. Welcome

The HALC Chair, Graham Watkins, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He gave apologies on behalf of WSALC CEO, Trevor Leggo, and Inspector Neil Durkan. The Chair also said there would be a few changes to the agenda in light of matters relating to the Constitution and which in turn meant the AGM could not take place but instead would become a general meeting. To read his report in full, please see the appendices.

Following the Chair's report, a number of questions were asked:

A councillor asked if invoices would be sent to which the answer was yes, within the next two weeks. The interim Secretary, Emily Simpson, would also ask for the names of the elected HALC representatives.

Councillor Roger Noel (Woodmancote Parish Council) asked if the election votes would not be possible this evening to which the response was no, but they would be the first items at the next meeting. He confirmed items 3, 4, 5 and 6 on the agenda would be removed and postponed.

Councillor Trevor Brown (Shermanbury Parish Council) asked why the Constitution was not appropriate to which the Chair said the Constitution was produced 7 days before a meeting in 2022 whereas there should have been 4 weeks' notice. It was not proposed or seconded; there was no record of the vote, and something as important as the Constitution should be properly tabled, to which the councillor agreed.

A few councillors questioned how HALC would operate when HDC would not be in existence; it was clear changes needed to be made. The Chair said there could be a Horsham Area Association; it was something to consider and the DALC's needed to discuss further. Councillor Val Court (Nuthurst Parish Council) said prior to the previous Chair passing away, there was no Constitution. He introduced it and it had not been read by the Chair until recently, hence only just becoming aware of its content.

Councillor Trevor Brown (Shermanbury Parish Council) said HALC had a limited lifespan but we were facing unprecedented times regarding planned housing and infrastructure issues, as well as local government reorganisation. There needed to be a structure in place to bind us together so that local interests are represented, especially the rural parishes.

Councillor Bob Harber (Upper Beeding Parish Council) asked if Councils could change HALC representatives for the next meeting to ensure good attendance to which the Chair said as the Constitution was not fit for purpose, he encouraged all parishes to elect two representatives.

Councillor Roger Noakes (Woodmancote Parish Council) suggested that the announcement on local government reorganisation should be received before calling the next meeting so we know where we stand as parishes in the new unitary structure.

Councillor Geoff Clark (Broadbridge Heath Parish Council) said if the Constitution was not suitable, was one even necessary to which the Chair said it was a set of basic rules to which the Association needed to adhere to, so he believed it was essential, but it needed to be properly discussed and agreed.

The Chair then introduced WSALC Chair, Douglas Denham St. Pinnock who recommended that members support the current Chair until the WSALC AGM in November and confirmed there would be a WSALC Board meeting in October once the Government announcement had been released. He reiterated that District Associations are informal bodies; they all have Constitutions in West Sussex (although he could not see one for ADALC), but regarding the future, said we are beholden to government. He said he attended meetings on behalf of the newly formed Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA). These meetings take place monthly and anyone can attend as a member of a public. The three Sussex principal authorities and boroughs did a huge amount of work, were ready for the election of a Mayor, and the postponement caused immense frustration and irritation. Trying to postpone the elections and then the change in leadership in two of the three principal counties because of the elections, caused further issues. He said he had met both the new leaders and believed both appeared qualified to create the Mayor's office. He also said he was encouraged that both had made a commitment to him and the Chair of ESALC that they will be recognised going forward.

The WSALC Chair said there was speculation that there may be an election for the Mayor in 2027 but this had not been confirmed, however, he said all were aware of the underlying

electoral cycle; if we lose our place when we are at the same time as other major elections then the cost burden on parish councils is extremely high.

He said that WSALC had a good relationship with the leaders of Arun, Chichester, Mid Sussex and Horsham, as well as the Leaders and Chief Executives of Crawley, Worthing and Adur. The position in West Sussex is we await the decision on LGR and there is little point discussing the District Associations until we have the answer. He said the strong relationship between HALC and HDC was largely due to HALC Chair Graham Watkins and the late Malcolm Eastwood.

He finished by saying as soon as LGR takes place and further information is known, WSALC will share accordingly with all member councils. There will be a reaction and we hope to have all three leaders of the SBSA at the joint ESALC and WSALC Conference on the 4th November to have a conversation about the future of local government and our Associations.

The HALC Chair thanked Douglas Denham St. Pinnock for the update. He said a document would be prepared and shared with HALC members with future proposals for the Association and any suggestions for amendments.

Councillor Trevor Brown (Shermanbury Parish Council) said research around unitary authorities across the country had already taken place and said one of the common threads on how to bring parishes together was with common issues. The WSALC Chair agreed and said cluster meetings in Mid Sussex had been taking place for years and had worked well.

The HALC Chair moved to Item 8 and introduced Victoria Wyllie de Echeverria, HDC's Sustainability Officer who proceeded with a presentation on the Climate Action Network.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from the following parishes and councillors:

Cllr. Susie Fischel (Ashurst Parish Council), Bramber Parish Council, Cllr. Terry Oliver (Broadbridge Heath Parish Council), Coldwaltham Parish Council, Henfield Parish Council (proxy vote received), North Horsham Parish Council, Cllr. Jason Thomas (Washington Parish Council), Cllr. Jonathan Chowen (West Grinstead Parish Council)

3. Election of Officers of HALC

a) Nominations for and election of Chair

b) Nominations for and election of Vice Chair

c) Update on Secretary and Treasurer (through WSALC)

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

4. Approval of Minutes of the previous HALC meeting held on 22nd June 2026

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

5. Appointment of representatives to outside bodies

a) WSALC Board x2

b) CPRE x1

c) HDC Standards Committee x1

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

6. HALC accounts and agree annual subscription for 2026-27

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

7. Report of past year's HALC activities by the Chair

This was covered in the Chair's opening report.

8. Climate Action Network, update from Victoria Wyllie de Echeverria, HDC's Sustainability Officer

Victoria Wyllie de Echeverria gave a presentation on the Climate Action Network and it was confirmed a copy would be circulated with the minutes.

The Chair thanked Victoria for her presentation. He said it was a great principle but the cost could be excessive for parishes and communities to reduce their carbon impact. He asked if HDC had done any work on cost comparisons to which Victoria said she had not but would be happy to look into it further. She said many councils put funds aside into a 'climate pot.' She referenced HDC's Community Climate Fund which opened four times a year and was available for parish councils to apply for up to £5k for their project. She also confirmed a county-wide Climate Strategy was in development. Other officers were involved and community and parish involvement was expected.

The HALC Chair thanked Victoria for her presentation.

Councillor Roger Noakes (Woodmancote Parish Council) said land is blighted if planning permission is given, even if no building takes place. Communities, together with the land, just sit there and nobody else wants to do anything with the land, i.e. farmers. The Chair said the government was meant to be doing something about land grabbing but it has not; there are no repercussions.

Councillor Sally Pavey (Warnham Parish Council) suggested that HALC meet with MP Peter Lamb who feels strongly about the lack of infrastructure for all the housing. The HALC Chair said he would take this on board.

9. Update on local policing, Inspector Neil Durkan

Members were notified that Inspector Neil Durkan had given apologies for the meeting but hoped to attend a future meeting.

10. LGR update by WSALC Chair, Douglas Denham St Pinnock

This item was discussed at item at the start of the meeting.

11. Reports from outside bodies

a) WSALC

b) HDC Standards Committee

c) CPRE

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

12. Matters of concern to your council not on the agenda

Question from Rudgwick Parish Council:

On 9th July 2026 the House of Commons voted to implement a National Scheme of Delegation (Planning). What steps, if any, did HALC or NALC take to resist this scheme bearing in mind the declared CPRE position:

"This gives council planning officers deciding power over most planning applications in your community, preventing you, your neighbours and your elected representatives from having a right to speak in decisions about new developments in your area. Controversial decisions that will shape our countryside for decades to come should not be approved without scrutiny from those who live there".

The Chair addressed the above question by saying there was a consultation period and he submitted a document on behalf of HALC. He received no feedback and said the representation had no effect on the House of Commons decision. He said the new NPPF had slight tweaks to give planning officers power and there would still be planning committees and parish councils would still have representation. He said Parish Councils were encouraged to have Neighbourhood Plans in place as it will hold more weight.

Councillor Sally Pavey (Warnham Parish Council) said she was a trustee for CPRE Sussex and said the new NPPF had ramifications for rural parishes. Neighbourhood Plans still remain which is a grey area for everyone; Warnham's Neighbourhood Plan is out of date and they are facing developers and Horsham who are seeking to approve every application which comes through. She said these applications were unsustainable as there was no investment in the infrastructure which was something many parishes would experience. She also said there would be issues with traveller sites and councils would not be able to successfully object to them. The Chair agreed that it was difficult to challenge many applications but believed there was still a necessity for Parish Councils to have an in-date Neighbourhood Plan. Once the Plan is 5 years old though, it becomes weak.

Councillor Sally Pavey (Warnham Parish Council) said the new NPPF said Neighbourhood Plans remained valid but questioned having one when they came at a large cost and said the rest of the NPPF would bulldoze it,. She took Ruspur Parish Council as an example: their Neighbourhood Plan was ignored.

Councillor Paul Kornysky (Rudgwick Parish Council) said the National Scheme of Delegation question was his and he said it did not seem as if NALC were on the side of parish councils. He compared responses to the latest NPPF consultation between NALC, HDC and CPRE with the former welcoming the proposed updates whereas the other organisations were strongly against.

The Chair said economics come into the equation, as regardless to what is said, the developer will only spend a certain level. When their profitability stops, they cease to develop in that area and move on. Neighbourhood Plans can make it more costly for developers to build.

The WSALC Chair said both he and WSALC CEO, Trevor Leggo, shared frustration and disappointment with NALC and did not understand why they took this view. A new Chief Executive would be in post next March so there may be changes. He believed it would be a waste of time trying to challenge NALC and time was better spent looking after Sussex.

Councillor Paul Kornysky (Rudgwick Parish Council) said the policies which protected the countryside in the NPPF were now overruled. There is presumption that even if you meet your housing targets, these policies will still not apply.

Councillor Trevor Brown (Shermanbury Parish Council) said there are plans to build 40,000 houses with the existing infrastructure which would be creating an environment not in favour of the people currently here or those who want to move to the area. We need to be less accepting. It is easier to argue that there is not the infrastructure – sewage, GP appointments, hospital waiting times etc. He believed the profile of a lack of infrastructure needed to be raised in this area and questioned how that could be done more publicly. The Chair said this was worth investigating and speaking about with our planning consultant.

Councillor Sally Pavey (Warnham Parish Council) said the lack of infrastructure comes under a separate item. The NPPF could address some of those failings but it has not been improved for the good where it needed to be improved. She said it gives the right to the developers and the developers will likely promise everything but will not deliver. The NPPF could have changed this and made it a balanced approach but it does not. There are some grey areas for interpretation in the NPPF which is the only slight positive. When planning officers are under such pressure to provide housing numbers, and government will step in if they aren't approved, these officers will not have the power to raise issues of infrastructure.

The Chair said a change in Section 106 monies was causing problems in Southwater. Southwater Parish Council should be benefitting from Section 106 monies related to outside play areas and the library to name a couple, totalling approximately £350,000. However, the developer, Berkeley Homes, have resubmitted an application for 94 houses rather than the original 594, and have requested the S106 monies are refunded to them. Southwater parishioners are not getting the gain they were originally promised. Complaints have been made to the planning department and legal department.

The Chair asked if there were any other questions to which Councillors Trevor Brown and Roger Noakes said they would be happy to support the Chair with any developments regarding the Constitution.

13. Date of next meeting

The Chair said as soon as the relevant information was ready, a date would be circulated.

The meeting closed at 8.02pm