



**Minutes of the Annual Assembly of
Hadlow Down Parish Council**
Held in the Village Hall, Hadlow Down
at 7.00pm on Tuesday March 14th 2023
*Note – this is a draft copy to be agreed and amended
at the next Annual Assembly*

Present: Cllrs Michael Lunn (Chair) (ML), Ben Floyd (BF), David Munday (DM), Damon Wellman (DW) and Peter Weston (PW).
In attendance: Steve Andrew (Head of Central Operations, South East Water) (SA), Rob Crumbie (South East Water) (RC), Cllr Bob Standley (ESCC), Penny Eliot (Mayfield Charities), Mikaela McCaren (St Mark's School), Samantha Weatherill (Clerk) and 21 members of the public.

The meeting started at 7pm.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- A presentation** was given by Steve Andrew (SA), Head of Central Operations, South East Water which was available on the village website. A number of questions and comments were raised by members of the public (MOPs), including:
 - 5 or 6 years ago the village had experienced exactly the same issues and a representative from SE Water came out and spoke and assured that they would improve the bottled water supply, improve the bowsers and would also improve the network so that when the residents rang to say there were issues SE Water would know that there was a problem with what houses, so this had not been a one-off event. SA responded that some things had improved: this time they had 200 pallets of water, had purchased 3 tankers which was how they had been able to keep hospitals supplied and had purchased fork-lifts for kerb side drop offs so they have made investments but it was not enough and couldn't supply water to farms. They could not cope with the scale of the incident.
 - There had been 2 bottled water stations, one at Crowborough which shut down as you couldn't get into it as it was blocking the A26 and the other in Tunbridge Wells which is 12 miles away and some people don't drive and the village hall was a central location for all villagers. SA responded that it was a challenge as they couldn't man enough bottled water stations so had tried to create them in the biggest centres with the largest populations. They couldn't supply bottled water at the water stations quick enough or to other locations. Wide scale events and the interactive map could not keep up but they were investing more money. They had planned for a worse case scenario but this was 3 times that and they just couldn't cope.
 - How would they cope with the number of new houses being built given that they couldn't cope with the current number of houses? SA said they are building new reservoirs but only have so much water and so are trying to get people to use less water. The other options are energy hungry and poor for the environment. The pressure was on so they were trying to encourage water efficiency in new properties, targeting them to use less water and to try to prevent water loss; for example using water butts, not watering lawns etc.
 - DM said that within the last 2 years there was an incident for about 48 hours in the village and the village hall was set up as a bottled water station and at that time he was promised that the communication would improve but this time it was impossible to get any information. SA said it was the scale of the event this time and they had to focus on the big hubs; they were trying to get smaller vehicles so they could supply smaller communities.
 - Given the large profit being made by SE Water, what assurances could SA give that things will improve? SA explained the figures and said there was a new business plan for 2024 which will say how they will be investing and the programmes for the next 5 years will be much bigger than the previous because of the resilience issues that had been experienced, However, their costs were increasing massively e.g. for energy, so they need to make a case for the way the money is used. People were using more water and this was a big challenge.
 - What percentage of profit goes back into resilience? SA responded that £100m per year is investment. The MOP felt that their biggest opportunity was with improving communication, call handlers did not know where TN22 was. SA said they knew they had this problem, 80% of calls were not about supply so their agents are largely responding to billing enquiries so when there is a big incident it causes problems but they are working on increasing call handler's knowledge and are investing in a new system so that information should be more available on their website and were also in the process of building their own new website as the current one is not coping.
 - What is the trigger mechanism for a hosepipe ban? SA responded that they look at 3 things – the weather forecast and whether it is going to get hotter, demand, and, what they can supply and it's that balance of supply and demand that they are basing their decision on. Also if stocks of the surface water supplies become crucially low and they think they will run out that could cause a hosepipe ban and bans could be introduced in different areas for different reasons.
 - -8 degrees was not an extreme weather event so who dictates the criteria for an extreme weather event? SA said they use the Met Office and they classed the last event as a 1 in 100 year event and that it was the temperature swing from extreme cold to warm that was the issue. People were using 150m litres of water per person per day and SE Water were supplying 2.3million people, not including the commercial demand and leakages which are high (25% of everything was leakage).
 - What incentives were likely to be introduced to encourage people to reduce their consumption? SA said they were looking into this and there is a potential to have a reduced tariff for those who use less. New houses were being supplied with smaller water connections so they could only use a smaller amount of water and they were looking at options for retro-

fitting properties and would like to give discounts to those using less water but it was very hard to do that without penalising large families.

- How are they communicating with people about what they need to do? SA said they need to attend events such as this evening's to meet people and explain how the system works but this was a challenge as they were a relatively small company, about half their staff were manning water treatment works and fixing leaks, about 300 were in call centres etc. which did not leave many to get out and about.
- The Chair pointed out that this community had experienced water outages in 2018, 2020 and 2022 but to his knowledge no-one had received any compensation. SA would respond directly to the PC with details of what community fund had been set up. RC added that there was a meeting with Wealden DC to discuss this issue.

The Chair thanked SA for his presentation which had answered many questions from local residents.

2. **Apologies for absence** had been received from Cllrs Blyfield and Cllr. Lewis who would be joining the meeting as soon as she could; Fiona Shafer and Cllr. Phil Dixon (WDC).

3. **The minutes of the 2022 Annual Assembly** were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. **WDC Report** – Cllr. Bob Standley presented on behalf of Cllr. Phil Dixon:

“This year is the last year of the current council with new elections being held on 4th May. I will be standing down as the member for Hadlow Down and Rotherfield. It has been a pleasure and an honour to serve as your representative and I wish my successor all the very best in their endeavours. Chairman, I have been impressed by the hard work and passion shown by the parish councillors during my four years. I know this is often unrecognised, but it is such an important element of a vibrant small village.

As is normal, prior to an election, the council has set out its new Corporate Plan for 2023-27, which can be found on the website under Policies and Plans. The plan is described as ‘Ambitious for our future’, continuing the good work of improving health and wellbeing, decarbonisation, supporting the economy and building the homes we need. There is also a link to what has been achieved over the past 4 years on the previous corporate plan.

You may have followed the progress of our new local plan. As I said last year, the plan was paused while we waited for more clarity on the national planning policy from government, as they were asking us to build far too many houses in Wealden. The intention was to produce a draft plan this spring. However, the government, shortly before Christmas announced major changes to national policy, which is very good news for Wealden. Essentially the government targets are no longer mandatory as long as Wealden can reasonably justify using a lower number which should not be a difficult task for us. Given the number of houses which are already approved for construction over the coming years, there clearly will not be any need for many more new major sites.

Hadlow Down is, of course, well protected by being a small village in the AONB without many services, but that doesn't mean that there has been no controversial applications! There is always a balance to be struck between protecting the important landscape and allowing some necessary development or improvements in the village. Planning law does allow require authorities to refuse applications only with good policy reasons and Wealden can't refuse applications which they know will be overturned on appeal at a cost to the council taxpayer.

As previously, I would encourage anyone who has subscribed to Wealden Weekly, formerly My Alerts, to do so. This gives up to date information and bin collections, planning applications and all sorts of Wealden news. It has proved to be a very effective method for communicating with our residents, and has had a very good take-up, but it should be many more. To conclude, I would like to wish both the parish council and the village all the very best for the future.”

5. **ESCC Report** – Cllr. Bob Standley (County Councillor Wealden North East; Covers Frant, Hadlow Down, Mayfield (part), Rotherfield and Wadhurst. Cabinet Member for Education and ISEND. Deputy Chairman Police and Crime Panel)

How we will spend your money (net):

- Business Services / Orbis £27.7m
- Governance Services £8.1m
- Adult Social Care £233.2m
- Communities, Economy, Transport £72.0m
- Children's Services £116.4m
- Centrally Held Budgets £44.0m
- TOTAL £501.4m

Where the money comes from (net):

- Council Tax £351.8m
- Revenue Support Grant £4.1m
- Social Care Grants £44.6m
- Services + Council Tax Support £5.4m
- New Homes Bonus £0.4m
- Business Rates £95.1m
- TOTAL £501.4m

Highways

- 752 Road Improvements schemes including extra parking
- Understand frustration with Highways especially potholes
- Wet November followed by snow and ice caused many potholes. Does winter come every year – yes
- Drainage an equal problem
- New contractor starts on May 1st – Balfour Beatty.

Climate Change

- Net carbon neutral by 2050 latest
- Additional funds allocated to meet this target
- Updated Climate plan 2023-25
- 29% carbon reduction from 2019/20 baseline.

Childrens Services/Skills

- Need skilled workforce to attract well paid jobs
- Funding to assist Apprenticeships
- Increasing demand on SEND services

- New Specialist school in Eastbourne – Summerdown
- Holiday, activity and Food Programme.

Police and Crime Panel

- Task to hold Police & Crime Commissioner to account
- Commissioner holds Chief Constable to account
- Panel challenges Commissioner on budget and policy.

Some questions were asked by MOP's:

- What road is closed when the sign says “the road ahead is closed”? DW had found the answer this recently and updated that “Road Closed Ahead” is the road you are on is closed ahead and “Road Ahead Closed” is a separate road that is off of the road that you are on is closed.
- Another MOP said they thought the Surrey roads were much better than the Sussex road and questioned why Sussex cannot repair the roads as well as Surrey? They added that the road markings on the main road through Hadlow Down were virtually invisible. Cllr Standley assured that neither Surrey nor Kent dealt with their roads better than Sussex.
- The Head of St Mark’s School raised that Cllr Standley said there was an average of 10% of children in schools with SEND, however, there were more than double that number at her school and there was not enough funding for them. Children within main stream education are not getting the same treatment as those at special schools and it was unfair, it takes so much time to get an Education Health Care Plan statement and in a school with nearly 20% SEND children they only receive additional funding for 1 child. Cllr Standley would talk to Mikaela outside the meeting.
- Why had the roadworks that had recently been done only dealt with bits of the road and not the whole job, surely this was not cost efficient? Cllr Standley said that they do work to a system which can be difficult to understand.
- Cllr Standley had said that ESCC were looking at climate change and how to reduce their carbon footprint so why were there ghost roadworks where traffic lights are set up and left for days without any work being done meaning that drivers are sat at the traffic lights belching out fumes. They suggested pressuring the Government to change policy if that was what was needed.
- Over the weekend there was emergency road works done outside Wilderness Wood but they had only fixed the road on one side not on the other where there was a large hole - why didn't they fix that whilst they were there? Also the BT man hole that was failing there, why did they not deal with that at the same time? Cllr Standley understood the frustration and agreed that that would have made sense.

The Chair thanked Cllr Standley for his presentation and said that he was an accessible Councillor and thanked him on behalf of the PC and residents for his service.

6. Reports from Representatives:

(a) Mayfield Charities – Penny Eliot, Trustee:

“I am Penny Eliot, one of 6 Trustees on the Mayfield Trust. The Trust is a small charity which began very nearly 400 years ago. Its purpose is to give financial help to those in need and living within the ancient Mayfield Parish boundary. This includes people now living in Hadlow Down and also more recently families whose children are attending St Marks, regardless of where their home is. In the past, for example, we have helped pay for school uniforms, school trips, carpets for rented accommodation and a washing machine. And over the last 12 months, we have provided financial assistance to 8 people in Hadlow Down. We could help with students doing A levels who are struggling to pay transport fees. We do not delve deeply into peoples’ affairs, but obviously we try to prioritize those with the greatest need. At the moment many people are suffering from inflated prices, if you or someone you know could benefit from the Charity’s help do please contact me. My details are on the Hadlow Down website and in the magazine.”

ML thanked Penny and the Mayfield Charity trustees for supplying a lifeline to those in need.

(b) St Mark’s School – Mikaela McCaren, Head Teacher:

“Good evening. Thank you for inviting me to talk at the parish assembly this evening and give an update on events and goings-on at St Mark’s School. For those I am yet to meet, my name is Mikaela McCaren and I was made substantive head at St Mark’s in November 2022. Prior to this I had been acting Head. I also worked at the school for six years prior to that as a class teacher and wore many other hats! St Mark’s school is a special place where nurture underpins academic success. We pride ourselves on our family-feel and aim to create strong local links. As in all areas of life, the pandemic put a stop to social events, including those where networks were made for the benefit of all in the village. On my school development plan this year, rebuilding these links has been of high priority. Some of the ways I’ve tried to achieve this to date are:

- through the revival of local volunteers visiting school. We now have four regular volunteers who live locally and come to school once a week to support the children with reading and other ways necessary.

- we’ve welcomed talented local residents into school to talk, present or perform to our children.

- We ran our first ever community tea whereby potential families were invited. This was our busiest yet allowing families current and potential to meet neighbours and friends to create strong networks.

- We reintroduced the Harvest lunch back at St Mark’s. A wonderful afternoon whereby I, as new head, was able to meet villagers.

- I’ve introduced myself to some of our immediate neighbours and would welcome introductions from anybody I’m yet to meet.

- Our whole school go to church every Friday and I’ve invited Father Pete into school regularly to work with our children.

- We held our first Christmas Fayre for five years. The church was incredibly busy for our Christingle service. We invited all attendees back into the school afterwards for Christmas drinks and food, crafts and a real opportunity to get to know each other.

- We welcomed the local Lindy Hop dance group into St Mark’s to teach our year 5/6 children to dance as part of their learning on World War Two. This was funded by Wings to Fly which I’ll talk more about in a moment.

- Our Year 5/6 children visit both the TN22 and TN22+ club termly to perform for the members, play games, tell jokes and generally have some fun together.

For the rest of this academic year, we hope to continue with the items mentioned above. In addition, we're hoping to attend the big village picnic, if there is one. If there are any other events, networks, local groups who would be interested in working with us, please make contact with our school office. All information can be found on our website.

In the past, sporting opportunities have always posed a challenge for rural schools. A lack of resources, less local schools for competition and capacity for running clubs made excelling in sport challenging. In the last 18 months, we've become creative in our thinking allowing us to overcome these barriers. We're now part of a network of schools who work alongside Uckfield College to provide outreach opportunities to more rural schools. This means we've had specialist coaches in various sports work with our children both in our school and we've taken groups of children to Uckfield. We've been able to join tournaments and sporting festivals which take place at Uckfield College. Some of the oldest children in our school have been trained as play leaders and now lead games for our youngest children during playtimes. Some sporting highlights this year have included our swimming team winning the whole of the Uckfield gala, beating ten other schools (including the much larger Uckfield schools), our netball team gaining a bronze certificate in their tournament and praise from the coaches at the behaviour and sportsmanship of our teams.

For anyone not aware, we're very fortunate at St Mark's to be supported by our wonderful charity 'Wings to Fly.' You'll have seen in the news and felt in your homes the impact of the increase in cost of living. The charity has been invaluable to our community. When other schools have struggled to provide the extra curricular experiences for their children, we, with the funding of Wings to Fly, have flourished. Some of the highlights funded by the charity include a road safety magic show, a whole school maths adventure day, a cost-of-living cooking club (where our disadvantaged children made meals to share with their families) and just today, a whole school art project where the children have made enormous willow sculptures displayed around the school. Photos to follow in the parish magazine!

At the end of the last academic year, we achieved some fantastic results in our end of key stage 2 assessments including being in the top 20% of all schools for writing. Our staff and children are currently working hard to maintain these high standards in preparation for our year 6 children to move onto their secondary education journey.

I think the highlight of the year to date has been our school success in the Mini ROAR project. This project is run by the Uckfield Lions. Our year 6 children were set the challenge to create a prototype invention which would have a positive impact on our world with a focus being 'eco'. Each team presented their invention to a panel of in-house judges (myself, our chair of governors, Peter Smyth and the President of the Uckfield lions, Keith Mates) The children had to demonstrate their project, perform a jingle or advertisement and take questions from the floor (you can imagine this challenge from a large group of 4-10 year olds!) They all did a fantastic job of presenting so confidently and eloquently and really showed our vision and values in full practice. Our winning team came up with the Eco2. A device designed to reward litter pickers for their efforts and provide litter grabbers attached to park bins. The team then went to the Uckfield finals where they competed against many other school finalists. Our team won the Mini Roar for 2022 and we couldn't have been prouder. We were presented the winners plaque by the High Sheriff of Sussex who also came to visit our school and meet our children. You might have seen the article in the Sussex Express.

Finishing with the theme of pride, it is my privilege to lead St Mark's School. I manage a team of teachers and support staff who give their all to achieve the highest level of nurture, opportunity, academic provision and aspiration for our children. The children at St Mark's are well behaved, well mannered, determined and aspirational. Our families are supportive and engaged. And finally, the community in which we serve has welcomed the growth of partnerships and I look forward to this continuation in the year ahead. Thank you."

The Chair thanked Mikaela for this update.

7. **2023/24 Precept** – The Clerk explained that as a result of the date of the elections the Annual Parish Assembly could only be held before the period of purdah begins on 20th March or after the elections had taken place in May so it had been brought forward to tonight instead of the usual April timing, so that the current Parish Council could look back over their achievements in the past year. This meant that the end of year financial accounts, which were normally presented at this meeting, were not yet available but would be calculated at the beginning of April and published on the village website. The Clerk reported that the Precept for 2023/24 had been set at £39,679. The Parish Council tries to keep the precept as low as they possibly can and by very careful budgeting has been able to keep the cost to the tax payer at 0% for 2023/24 by transferring £830 from its Reserves. A comparison of Precept costs between the current financial year and 2023/24 had been handed out and are shown at the end of these minutes.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for this update.

8. Reports from Councillors

(a) Rights of Way, Speed Indicator Signs (SID – Cllr. Peter Weston:

- **Speed Indicator Sign:** The purpose of the sign is twofold – to influence driver behaviour and to collect vehicle speed data to evidence the need for greater traffic calming in the village (i.e. to inform the decisions made by East Sussex Highways). Sample data is shown on the next slide. Recently a license was applied for and granted for a third site that will collect data for eastbound vehicles approaching the village on the A272. The socket was installed on 8th March and data from this site will be available for the next meeting of the Parish Council in April. Independent of this Steve Godfrey has been fundraising and has secured sufficient funding for a second sign.

PW thanked Steve Godfrey for his extraordinary effort in fundraising which will help fund a third site for the existing SID and the purchase of another SID, meaning we will have 3 sites and 2 signs. He added that licensing requirements allow the sign to be put out for 3 months at a time only but we would be able to get data from all 3 sites. He hoped to have the pole for the third site up within the next few days meaning that cars speeding in from Buxted along the A272 will be captured in the data and the objective of this is to build a case for the need for traffic calming which ES Highways cannot ignore. He thanked the villagers and parents of children in St Mark's School for contributing to the funds raised. If anyone wanted full SID data they should contact him.

Some questions were asked by MOP's:

- Was there anything that they could do to help bolster the case for introducing traffic calming measures? PW said that once there was enough data to support changing the speed signs in a more reduced way (instead of going from 60 to 30, reducing in drips like it does in the other direction), MOPs could write to ES Highways in support of the proposal.
- Could photographic evidence of people speeding with the speed camera visible be used? Cllr Standley replied that they could submit the evidence to Operation Crackdown.
- Could the SID outside the School, for which she was very grateful, be altered to stop people getting a well done sign if they were driving at 29mph, given that this was still dangerous around the school area? PW said that the new SID would have a different sign so could be swapped but he would investigate the options.
- Would be possible to have "Speed Camera" signs? Cllr Standley said that you cannot put up speed camera signs unless a camera is occasionally on.

SPEED DATA

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Summary | A272 - Westbound Vehicles |
| Period | 30 th August 2022 to 9 th January 2023 |

| Speed Range | Vehicles Detected | Percentage of Total |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 0-29 mph | 183,589 | 47.03% |
| 30-39 mph | 176,372 | 45.18% |
| 40-49 mph | 28,782 | 7.37% |
| 50-59 mph | 1,570 | 0.40% |
| 60+ mph | 75 | 0.02% |
| Total Vehicles | 390,388 | 100.00 |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Summary | School Lane - Northbound Vehicles |
| Period | 9 th January to 18 th February 2023 |

| Speed Range | Vehicles Detected | Percentage of Total |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 0-29 mph | 25,196 | 87.77% |
| 30-39 mph | 3,482 | 12.13% |
| 40-49 mph | 28 | 0.10% |
| 50-59 mph | 0 | 0.00% |
| 60+ mph | 0 | 0.00% |
| Total Vehicles | 28,706 | 100.00 |

- **Parish Council Risk Assessments:** The Parish Council is responsible for a number of 'assets' in the village, including finger posts. The condition of all of these assets is assessed on a regular basis and remedial action taken as necessary (e.g. repair of the kissing gate at the south west end of the Burial Ground, repair / repainting of finger posts, etc.).
- **Finance:** As part of the Vice-Chair role - to work with the Clerk on the monthly finance papers prior to scrutiny by the full Parish Council.

(b) Highways, Drainage, Footpaths, Gatwick Airport – Cllr. Damon Wellman:

Highways:

DW spends much of his time dealing with ES Highways, going out in the middle of the night to take photos of contractors not doing work etc. but is not making much progress. He attends meetings with ES Highways, goes on service outings but one of the big disconnects is communication. DW will get an email from the ES Highways Service Director, in response to an email about road works, which says that the work has been done, DW goes out and checks and it has still not been done, goes back to the Service Director, waits another 2 weeks for him to get back to say he has spoken to the teams etc. and by then the road is even worse, for example, the patch outside Wilderness Lane which has been reported constantly as it has been a failure for nearly 8 months. DW had emailed ES Highways to say that the road is so bad something has to be done and has this week received an email from the Service Director to say that the road does not meet the criteria for repair, so he doesn't know that in the meantime, an emergency repair was conducted on Friday and the road was shut by the police! The situation had got so bad that he had agreed with the PC to send a letter to all PC's and TC's to see if there is an appetite to take group action. ES Highways do have a new contract with Balfour Beatty starting in May but this will use the same sub contractors so was unlikely to make things better. ES Highways will take no responsibility and very little accountability for the failures and they have threatened to block DW from communications but please do not think that the PC and Cllr Standley are not doing anything. Thanks were passed onto DW from the residents for his efforts.

A MOP asked whether the local MP had been contacted to which DW said that he had but had received a generic reply. DW updated that the BT man hole cover had been reported but ES Highways cannot deal with this BT has to.

A MOP added that he had spoken to the contractors doing the road recently and they had said that the material that is being used is sub grade tarmac and would not last. The verge on the footpath is full of debris still and the gully on the corner of Wheelers Lane is full of hardcore - one issue creates another massive issue. DW would report these issues and added that he had taken photographs of all the drainage that hadn't been cleared so we go back to the original issues with poor communication.

ML added that DW and the PC would try to keep up the pressure on ES Highways.

Strengthening Local Relationships (SLR) meetings:

SLR meetings are a challenge as it was mainly dealing with Highways issues but it does cover a range of other issues such as pavements, drainage, signage, speeding, hedgerows and verges. It is a challenge to try to get things done in the way we wish them to be done, they say there is not enough money but he thinks it is more about them using the money more efficiently. If they didn't have SLR meetings he believes things would be worse. There is a staggering amount of work that goes in and minimal results that come out.

CAGNE (Communities Against Gatwick Noise and Emissions):

Gatwick airport are continually pushing for additional capacity, more night flights and the permanent use of a second runway. We support various efforts to lobby the aviation industry and policy makers to limit the disturbance caused by Gatwick's activities. Unfortunately it does seem that any engagement with local groups raising concerns is just a tick box exercise.

(c) Hadlow Down Village Hall and Community Centre – Cllr. Michael Lunn on behalf of Cllr. Rachel Lewis:

Village Hall:

Throughout the last year ongoing maintenance of the hall has continued and some of the issues highlighted in the questionnaires sent out last year have been addressed. However, the road continues to be an issue particularly as prolonged spells of rain washes the repairs away, the road is not fully owned by the hall, Paul James has been very kind in the past and made repairs where he can, but these are not a permanent fix, and discussions with the Parish Council will be sought to see if a more permanent solution can be sought.

The fire doors to the main hall have now been replaced and a new ramp will be installed to assist with wheelchairs.

As advised last year an independent Structural Engineers report was commissioned to determine the condition and life expectancy of the roof but also to highlight any structural issues that may be manifesting as the building continues to age.

The report identified the following:

- The roof sheets have started to shrink, split and crack which will encourage water penetration, in addition cracked sheets will increase the risk of asbestos being released into the air.
- The roof is at a point where it needs extensive refurbishment and in the not-too-distant future replacing.
- Localised repairs to some fascia boards.

The life expectancy of the roof is between 3/5 years, but this could change if there is a sudden roof deterioration due adverse weather. The HDVH are very aware of the ongoing project to build the new Community Centre and do not want to cause undue conflict, however they have a duty to maintain the building in a good state of repair. Representatives of the HDVH and the HDCC met with Cllr Michael Lunn last month to discuss how the current village hall is maintained until the village has a new community centre. It was agreed with the committee of the HDCC that HDVH will proceed to obtain quotes, planning permission (if required), surveys, and investigate available grants, but will not look to implement the roof replacement for a period of 2 years. This will allow the HDCC to raise the funds required to proceed with the project, after which time if sufficient progress has not been made the HDVH will proceed with replacing the roof of the existing village hall. Hall bookings have returned, and exceeded, pre-covid levels.

Community Centre (HDCC):

The priorities to be addressed during 2022 were as follows:-

- 1) Marketing Plan – this was to include a pricing structure and promotion of the community centre within and outside the parish.
- 2) Fund Raising Plan

The first task was to check if the funding priorities of the identified grant providers had changed. There was evidence that the impact of the pandemic had led to some agencies to concentrate more on the alleviation of the effects of Covid. Secondly, to continue to identify other potential sources of funding. Third, to be guided by a professional fund-raising consultant who assists voluntary, community organisations.

- 3) Local fund-raising - HDCC planned to hold two local events: firstly, a Race Night in April and secondly a Boot Fair at Tinkers Park towards the end of June.

Deterred by the spiralling costs of construction materials that happened on a weekly basis, it was agreed that there was little point in attempting to finalise a Business Plan which would require regular revision. Since the final quarter of 2019, such costs have risen 32% and a more accurate cost of building the new hall is nearer £2 million!! Upon checking the funding priorities of various grant providers, a very worrying and challenging situation was revealed as many charitable trusts previous supportive of capital projects, had re-aligned their funding priorities to support Covid alleviation.

Given the uncertainty and increasing enormity of the fund-raising task, the HDCC recognise that securing the required funds might not be achieved within the duration of the planning consent. (HDCC were granted a five-year consent back in June 2019 and therefore would expire at the end of May 2024 – in barely 15 months.). Valuable time had been lost due to the pandemic. However, an opportunity to make the case to Wealden planners presented itself in April when Stacey Robins, Head of Planning and Environmental Services attended a meeting with the Parish Council. Bob Lake took the opportunity to ask if the 'lost' time of 18 months to 2 years could be re-instated, he was very supportive of the HDCC situation and saw no problems and simply requested writing to him setting out the circumstances. Seven months later and after several phone calls and emails, still no response. Finally, after intervention by Michael Lunn, HDCC got a response. Unfortunately, they

would have to submit a fresh application. It then became clear that the time left would be insufficient to secure the funding required.

The Race Night did go ahead in spite of Covid and its restrictions, roughly fifty people attended with a respectable profit of £2000 plus.

HDCC priorities for 2023 - to:-

- 1) carry out a new survey of parishioners in order to demonstrate a continuing need for a new hall. It will be crucial when applying for funding that there is both a demonstrable need and support within the community. The last survey was conducted in 2011.
- 2) re-appraise the HDCC strategy regarding the construction of the new hall and consider a phased approach e.g. the building of the main hall as Phase 1 and the sports accommodation as Phase 2.
- 3) consider the options available to us in terms of planning consent and resolve the matter urgently.
- 4) ensure that all planning conditions are resolved by beginning of May.
- 5) Secure 'extant' planning permission. This will require us to undertake some limited works on site to commence a planning permission and thus keep it alive. HDCC will not need to submit a fresh planning application and pay the fees of £5,800 to the planning authority.

No one could have predicted Covid, and the wide-reaching impact that it would have on the progression of this valuable community project. Bob Lake continues to work tirelessly towards providing a new Community Centre for the village, which has amounted to a huge amount of time and effort that he has donated to the village.

(d) Planning, Emergency Plan – Cllr. David Munday:

Planning:

- All local planning applications are considered and advice is sent to Wealden
- District Councils (Wealden) are required to have local plans for future housing
- The 2019 plan was rejected by the planning inspectorate- failure to assist nearby councils and too much emphasis on environmental protection
- At present we work with the National Planning Policy- often in favour of development
- The new Wealden plan to be ready for final consultation in 2023, not Spring but Summer (perhaps!)
- Cllrs Floyd and Munday attend the local consultation meetings.

Emergency Plan:

- New emergency plan in May 2021, updated in May 2022, next update May 2023
- A simple plan for a small village, relying on local volunteers for unpredictable events.

(e) Playing Field – Cllr. Ben Floyd:

"This year has seen a lot of hard work and enthusiasm by the Playing Field committee and volunteers. The new grass cutting contract has been well received by the Cricket club and makes the site look very presentable. Unfortunately, Crowborough football club are no longer using the football pitch but they have been replaced by Buxted. The large goals that have been stored behind the pavilion and have gone to a new home at Buxted. Before the football season started a new fence has been erected along the northern boundary to prevent the balls going into the neighbouring property and to stop people falling down the slope. The Playing Field Committee applied for a grant to change the current ball park area into a sensory garden but unfortunately weren't successful, but have been asked to reapply. To aid wildlife at the Playing Field the Committee planted a new hedge along the footpath to the football pitch. The Playing field has always suffered with the bottom area being very waterlogged, so the decision was made to have a contractor to re profile the boundary ditches, this has proven successful. The Parish Council have also taken steps to reopen the ditch alongside the zip wire to prevent it blocking and stop surface water running onto the highway across and neighbouring drive. The annual stall at Tinkers Park Steam Rally was very successful and brought in some much needed income, but unfortunately the main fundraising event, the Bonfire Night, had to be cancelled due to the adverse weather conditions forecast, which was very disappointing as a lot of hard work had gone in to making the torches and collecting the pallets for the bonfire. The pallets are now being stored off site ready for using next year. A lot of maintenance has gone into the Pavilion including a new window in the kitchen and a new toilet, along with re organising the under crofts, and the Parish Council replacing the entrance fence. Under the Together We Can Project the Playing Field Committee and Volunteers organised the 'Walks on the WildSide'. This proved very popular with villagers with all walks being fully or oversubscribed. The packed lunches went down very well with all. It was thought that by now the extension to the play area would have been completed but unfortunately this hasn't yet been completed but the Parish Council will seek the remaining funding needed in due course.

On a final note I would like to thank the Playing Field Committee and Volunteers for all their hard work throughout the year and I would encourage any new Villagers to volunteer in such a picturesque area of the village."

(f) Burial Ground– Cllr. Damon Wellman presented on behalf of Cllr Sally Blyfield:

Burial Ground:

- Work has now been completed and a new pathway has been laid along with new edging stones around the perimeter of the burial ground, all overhanging trees and bushes have been tidied up and the yew tree by the gate at the rear of the burial ground has been removed.
- The area to the rear of the burial ground owned by the Parish Council for burial ground extension had become very overgrown, this has now been cleared with thanks to Ben Floyd and Guy Osbourne, there will need to be ongoing maintenance to this area to prevent it going back to how it was, this is currently being discussed by the Parish Council.
- The subject of litter continues, despite reminders asking people to take their litter home this is very difficult to address, relatives may travel long distances to visit graves and leave bunches of flowers and wreaths so it is not always convenient for them to return when the items have perished and need removing, the Parish Council will continue to periodically clear litter and items from the burial ground, but would still like remind people to take their litter home where possible so that the burial ground remains a pleasant area for visitors.

Trees:

- There is very little to report with regards to trees, as advised last year the Parish Council cannot grant permission for the felling of trees, we are able to provide advice on how to obtain permission from Wealden should the landowner believe the tree maybe subject to a TPO.

9. Chairman's Report

"It is great to see you all here, thank you for coming along. I would like to thank everyone who has presented tonight which has, hopefully, demonstrated the amount of activity that the Parish Council has been involved with over the last 12 months. We are approaching the end of a four-year term for the Parish Council and I am extremely grateful to all of the Parish Councillors, most of whom have their own work commitments as well as trying to keep up with all the paperwork, actions and meetings (and not just Parish Council meetings!) that are required as part of their role on the Parish Council. It can sometimes be frustrating and time consuming but we all do it because we want Hadlow Down to be a great place to live, work and play.

We are all volunteers and none of us take any allowances to act on your behalf on the Parish Council. The Parish Council is very much about team work, building on the strengths of our skills and doing what is best for the whole Parish. So I would like to thank my colleagues as you have made my job so much easier. We don't always agree, we don't always get things right, but we all try our best. This last 12 months has been particularly busy, and the role of being on the Parish Council is a lot busier than I have ever known.

Having said that, your Parish Council is well run. The finances are in very good shape, and, recognising the cost of living, the Parish Council has agreed that it is appropriate to have a zero % precept rise this year. I believe this is only the second time this has been done in the last 15 years. We have also come in under budget and met most of our objectives.

I would like to thank all the different village organisations, co-ordinators, volunteers and parishioners for all the ways that they contribute to keeping the Parish and village a thriving place to live.

I would like to specifically thank the Playing Field Committee and the Village Hall Committee who manage major assets for the village and the Parish Council. Without their support our Parish would be a lot poorer. I would also like to thank the New Community Centre Committee who despite many challenges including the Covid pandemic have made progress and I do hope that in the coming months and with the support of a new Parish Council that some real progress can be made. But the need for new volunteers to join the various organisations within the village has never been greater so I would urge anyone who thinks they may be able to contribute in any way to get in touch and find out how they can help. Indeed you can see around the side of the hall all the boards which were kindly put together by Sarah Prall and her colleagues under the Together We Can project. Unfortunately, Sarah recently stepped down and with no one to take the whole project forward the Parish Council voted unanimously to close the project. I would like to thank Sarah, Mandy and all the volunteers who worked so hard on the project which unfortunately has been unable to be completed.

In that regard the Parish Council met last week and agreed to recognise two particular volunteers within our community who have gone beyond the call of duty. The first person to be recognised is Sandra Richards who has co-ordinated the annual village litter pick and on behalf of the Parish Council we would like to thank Sandra and all the volunteers who supported her with a small certificate of appreciation.

The second person who the Parish Council would like to recognise is Steve Godfrey who has co-ordinated a fundraising campaign for speed initiatives including the purchasing a new Speed Indicator Device. The total to which Steve assisted in collecting and presenting to the Parish Council is over £5,000 which will be ring fenced in a special reserves account.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, without your support we could not achieve what we do. It is not easy. We have had to deal with a multitude of issues over the last four years but I believe that it is very important that Hadlow Down maintains its Parish Council as an independent and direct voice for the local community. I also feel strongly that politics should not have a place at Parish Council levels. Hadlow Down is lucky to have a strong sense of community and it's been a pleasure to act as the Parish Chair.

And finally, before we let you free to the food and drink, as some of you are aware Samantha our Parish Clerk has resigned so we are in the process of recruiting a new Parish Clerk. I would like to thank our Clerk Samantha Weatherill, who has assisted me and the Parish Council in running and managing the council and ensuring that the strict rules governing a Parish Council are met and she has managed the budget and precept with utmost care and attention. The job is a lot bigger than years gone by and as Chair I have been shocked at how much work goes on behind the scenes. Our sincere thanks to Samantha for all her support."

10. Questions from the floor – none.

11. Closure of business – A MOP said that, on behalf of the residents of Hadlow Down, they would like to thank the PC for all their hard work..

The meeting closed at 9:10 pm.

HADLOW DOWN PARISH COUNCIL - PRECEPT COMPARISON

| EXPENSE CATEGORY | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | % DIFFERENCE |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Clerk's salary | £19,940.00 | £21,950.00 | 10.08 |
| Parish Project Hours | £0.00 | £1,155.00 | 100.00 |
| Clerk's training | £515.00 | £380.00 | (26.21) |
| Administration | £1,542.00 | £1,418.00 | (8.04) |
| PC insurance | £730.00 | £550.00 | (24.66) |
| Subscriptions | £620.00 | £652.00 | 5.16 |
| Grants | £2,870.00 | £3,400.00 | 18.47 |
| Hire of hall | £440.00 | £480.00 | 9.09 |
| Audit | £552.00 | £552.00 | - |
| Maintenance of Burial Ground | £1,148.00 | £1,900.00 | 65.51 |
| Tree Survey/Work | £500.00 | £500.00 | - |
| Litter & dog bin emptying | £1,560.00 | £1,638.00 | 5.00 |
| Fingerpost maintenance | £1,730.00 | £744.00 | (56.99) |
| Chairmen's expenses | £50.00 | £100.00 | 100.00 |
| Councillor's training | £150.00 | £300.00 | 100.00 |
| Chair and Councillor's allowance | £0.00 | £0.00 | - |
| Election expenses | £2,000.00 | £0.00 | (100.00) |
| Website/IT | £965.00 | £899.00 | (6.84) |
| Maintenance of play area & inspection | £1,644.00 | £1,464.00 | (10.95) |
| Entrance to playing field Loan payment | £1,135.00 | £1,135.00 | - |
| Defibrillators | £0.00 | £0.00 | - |
| Contingencies incl. | | | |
| Highways/Footpaths/Noticeboards | £800.00 | £1,067.00 | 33.38 |
| Transfer into reserves | £225.00 | £225.00 | - |
| Total | £39,116.00 | £40,509.00 | |
| Transfer from reserves | | -£830.00 | |
| TOTAL PRECEPT | £39,116.00 | £39,679.00 | |
| % INCREASE PER ANNUM | 4.10% | 0% | |
| £ INCREASE PER ANNUM | £3.89 | £0.01 | |