



## Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Hadlow Down Parish Council

Held in the Village Hall, Hadlow Down  
at 7.00pm on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

*Note – this is a draft copy to be agreed and amended  
at the next Annual Assembly*

**Present:** Cllrs Michael Lunn (Chair) (WDC Cllr) (ML), Damon Wellman (DW), Peter Weston (PW), Alan Hobbs (AH) and Stephen Lester (SL).

**In attendance:** Cllr Bob Standley (ESCC), Penny Eliot (Mayfield Charities), Vicki Rutt (Clerk), Christine Sullivan and 18 members of the public.

The meeting started at 7pm. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair explained this was not a Parish Council meeting but a Parish Assembly meaning it was the Parish residents meeting.

1. A **presentation** was given by Christine Sullivan, Senior Nurse with 30 years' experience on doing CPR and the use of defibrillators. An explanation was given to the value of what3words for identifying emergency locations in rural areas. A member of the public asked whether the village has a list of 'first responders' who would be able and willing to assist in a medical emergency. ML did not know but it would be raised at the May 2024 Parish Council meeting. **Action 1**
2. **Apologies for absence** had been received and accepted from Cllrs Floyd and Munday.
3. **The minutes of the 2023 Annual Assembly** were approved and signed by the Chair.

*The presentations below are available on the Parish Council website.*

4. **ESCC Report** – Cllr. Bob Standley (County Councillor) reported that he covers Wealden North East Division which consists of Frant, Hadlow Down, Mayfield (part), Rotherfield and Wadhurst. He is also a Cabinet Member for Education and ISEND Member Sussex Police and Crime Panel. Cllr Standley explained that the net revenue Budget for 24/25 is £538m but using £14.3m out of reserves. There is going to be no reduction in services. 75% of expenditure is spent on children services. The cases are more complex. The recent Ofsted was rated Good. SEND cases are increasing. A member of the public asked why Uckfield High Street has just had a total resurface although it was not in a bad state, whereas the A272 is horrendous, particularly outside Wilderness Wood where you have to swerve potholes, it is incredibly dangerous and nothing is being done. Cllr Standley agreed that it was poor and has reported the potholes. He does not know why Uckfield High Street was repaired. A resident thanked Cllr Standley for everything he does for Hadlow Down. This was seconded and agreed by all the Parish Councillors.
5. **WDC Report** – Cllr. Michel Lunn (District Councillor representing Hadlow Down and Rotherfield Ward) reported that the District Council has changed significantly since the elections last May. The Council have maintained a 2.99% Council Tax increase well below inflationary pressures and that reserves are in a good place partly due to the well managed former administration. He explained it was frustrating that the community recycling bins were removed from Wilderness Woods as were all community recycling bins across the district, which saved the District Council a mere £50k which ML felt represented good value for money for a community service. He explained that he and the Clerk are constantly chasing for planning enforcement updates, there has been big changes in that department recently. The draft Local Plan is out for consultation, which closes at 5pm on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024. The link is available on social media. The impact on Hadlow Down is limited but the village is likely to be impacted by additional traffic traveling through the village from the net increase in housing developments in Uckfield, Horam, Heathfield and Crowborough. A resident asked whether there is any help for those wishing to downsize from their large properties but remain in the village, Cllr Lunn explained that WDC are increasing the build of smaller properties. A resident asked about the water issues, Cllr Lunn explained that South East Water is a consultee to the Local Plan so will have the opportunity to feed in about infrastructure but it is not a statutory consultee to every day planning applications. Members of the public are able to make comment of the draft local plan and it is encouraged that they do. A resident heard that the Council are looking at parking charges in towns? Cllr Lunn reported he had heard the same rumour but nothing has been presented to District Councillors as yet. If and when it does this will be reported in the normal way to the Parish Council. Cllr Lunn added he would be opposed to parking charges being brought into Wealden run Car Parks.

### 6. Reports from Representatives:

(a) Mayfield Charities – Penny Eliot, Trustee and Parish Representative:

Penny reported that she is a Trustee for Mayfield Charities Trust who have been formed for 400 years and they help people with financial issues. Last year in Hadlow Down, they helped purchase school uniform, for some children to attend an after school club and a washing machine. If you know someone who would benefit from this service, please contact Penny, her details are in the Parish Magazine. ML thanked Penny and the Mayfield Charity trustees for supplying a lifeline to those in need and for everything that they do.

(b) St Mark's School – Claire Roberts, Interim Headteacher, was unable to attend but the Clerk read out the following report: *“Since September 2023 Claire Roberts has been interim headteacher at St Mark's. Claire is a local authority interim leader. Governors have worked across the year to secure future leadership and have agreed a partnership with the Sussex Spires federation - two local church schools, Herstmonceux and All Saints and St Richards. The partnership will last for the next school year, across the year governors from the federation and St Mark's will consider whether St Mark's will join the federation. This will mean the move to one governing board. Sussex Spires is led by an executive headteacher with a head of school in each school. This is the interim model that we will move towards across the summer term. Since September 2023 we have focussed on the broad and ambitious curriculum to ensure our pupils are as ready for the next stage in their education as possible. We have trained all new and existing staff in our adopted phonics scheme. We have supported all teachers to become leaders of their subjects and we have focussed on ensuring the culture of safeguarding as effective as possible. Our children have had wider curriculum opportunities - trips to Temper Temper chocolate factory to link with Mayan work, to Bignor Roman Villa and to Drusillas to link with our weather and habitats work. We use the SMILE meadow as an art stimulus, as well as opportunities for our Year 6 and Reception buddies to continue to forge their supportive relationships. We have increased our club offer to ensure a broader range of extra-curricular activities including coding, drama, karate, football, netball, cross country, dance and lego. These clubs have been well taken up with those in receipt of pupil premium offered reduced cost access to ensure all children have the sense of belonging to the St Mark's community. Ofsted inspected on 27 February, the report is now on the school and Ofsted website. We are pleased that St Mark's remains a good school and that the journey of school improvement was recognised in the return visit planned for 1-2 years' time for a full inspection.”*

## **7. 2024/25 Precept –**

The Clerk introduced herself for those who did not know her. She has been the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer since September 2023 so has not yet completed a full financial year but feels that she has a good understanding of the finances in the 8 months she has been in post. The Precept for 2024/25 has been set at £42,660. The Parish Council tries to keep the precept as low as they possibly can, however, due to the fact that there has not been an increase for a while and the cost of inflation rising which has resulted in most expenditure lines increasing, the precept had to see an increase of 7.51%. On your seats will be the precept broken down so you can see where the increases are, and they will also be attached to the end of the minutes from the meeting tonight. If you ever have any questions on the Parish Council's finances, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk. ML thanked the Clerk and all Councillors for their work on the budget.

## **8. Reports from Councillors**

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

Cllr Weston explained that if you see any issues with footpaths, please let the Clerk know or a Councillor so this can be reported. On the subject of the SIDs, Cllr Weston expressed his thanks to Mr Steve Godfrey on all his support with the data and moving the SIDs around the village. Cllr Weston reported that the 2 SIDs are under licence which means they have to move location every 3 months. The SIDs gather data such as speed but not number plates. The data is being used for two things; to show the need for graduated speed zone system from Buxted as it drops from 60 to 30 suddenly. There are also a number of footpaths in that area, one of which is used by children to cross to Smile Meadow. Several letters have gone back and forth between HDPC and Mr Nick Skelton at ESCC, however it has been very disappointing. Cllr Standley is trying to arrange a site visit so Mr Skelton can see the issues. A resident said if nothing comes to fruition from the site visit, the idea of a petition could be revisited.

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

**Gatwick** – Cllr Wellman explained that Gatwick are looking at introducing a second runway. They have said it will be less flights over Hadlow Down, however Cllr Wellman has looked into this, and it is not true, there will be more flights with more pollution and noise.

**Highways** – Cllr Wellman reported that he has been a Councillor for 12 years and every year it is the same problem. There is not enough money and Highways need to be more efficient with the funds they have, every business needs to budget, so ESH need to do the same. It is the same contractors and the same management, there needs to be accountability. HDPC were recently told that an inspection of the A272 happens once a month, Cllr Wellman does not believe this happens. A resident asked whether other Parish Council feels the same. Cllr Wellman explained that he sent out a letter last year and 87% of those who replied agreed and are having the same problem.

### (c) Footpaths – Cllr Stephen Lester:

Cllr Lester introduced himself as a relatively new Councillor but it keen to get stuck in. He shared two good news story, the byeway at Dog Kennel Lane has recently been repaired and the path to Waste Wood is hopefully being added to the programme for 24/25 which has not yet been finalised by ESCC.

### (d) Planning, Emergency Plan – Cllr Damon Wellman on behalf of Cllr David Munday:

Cllr Wellman read out the report from Cllr Munday which is available on the website.

### (e) Hadlow Down Village Hall, New Community Centre – Cllr Michael Lunn:

Cllr Lunn reported that the Village Hall Committee have made the Parish Council aware of some issues related to the fabric specifically the roof structure so a meeting is being arranged in May for discussions to be had on this matter. He explained that the new Community Centre Committee chaired by Mr Bob Lake is doing a sterling job and it has been a very positive process.

(f) Burial Ground, Tree Warden– Cllr Alan Hobbs:

Cllr Hobbs introduced himself as a relatively new Councillor but it keen to be more involved and to learn what he needs to.

(g) Playing Field – Cllr Michael Lunn spoke on behalf of Cllr Ben Floyd:

*“Again, this year has seen a lot of hard work and enthusiasm by the Playing Field committee and Volunteers. Last week saw the first cut on the cricket wicket in preparation for the start of the season. Unfortunately, the annual fundraising stall at Tinkers Park steam rally didn’t go ahead, but I would like to thank John Thompson for all his hard work though this difficult time and glad to see him making a full recovery and getting back with hands on work. The annual Bonfire celebrations went ahead despite the awful weather conditions, but this meant that the fireworks had to set off from a neighbours field for which I would also like to thank them for the use of. With the bad weather this did mean that the foot fall was lower than usual but a good profit was made to help boost the playing fields funds. As last years Bonfire celebrations didn’t go ahead due to bad weather the normal weekly pallet collections for constructing the bonfire was slightly different this year. All of last years pallets that were kindly stored by John Rose were collected in one go. Also the torches that were made last year were kindly stored by Graham Cook at the New Inn, an afternoon was set aside to check that these we still in good order and ready to be used. Thanks to everyone for their help with storing and helping out on the preparation days. The popup dinners also proved very popular again this year and everyone attending thoroughly enjoying them. Another fundraising event added to the calendar was the introduction of pavilion breakfasts, again these proved popular. I suggest everyone checks the calendar on the Playing Field website to check all the upcoming events this year. Lots of maintenance as continued throughout the year on the site, pavilion and the undercrofts, making better use of the limited storage facilities. To help improve the drainage at the Playing Field the Parish Council reopened the culverted ditch that runs along the bottom field next to the zip-wire. This involved a large opening at the bottom corner where the old pipe connects to the outlet pipe to the road drainage. Shortly this area will have a headwall installed with a silt trap, so the area can be reinstated. Along with this works, the Hadlow Down Community Centre are also planning to install the beginnings of the drainage system for the new Community Centre. 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.”*

**9. Chairman’s Report – Cllr Michael Lunn**

*“It is great to see you all here this evening, thank you for taking the time to come along and listen to what the Parish Council have been involved in over the last 12 months. Firstly, I am extremely grateful to my fellow Parish Councillors, who despite having their own personal work commitments, they find the time to attend Parish Council meetings and undertake actions, to ensure that Hadlow Down remains a wonderful place to live. A special thank you to those villagers who voted at the election in May 2023 which resulted in myself, along with Cllrs Wellman, Weston, Floyd and Munday being elected. Cllr Alan Hobbs and Cllr Stephen Lester were co-opted in December 2023 so thank you to them for coming forward. We all remain as volunteers and take no allowance for our service to the community. However, I need to inform you that the workload this year has been exceptional and as Chair I spend close to a day a week on Parish Council activity. I would like to thank all my colleagues for working together to ensure the jobs gets done. We may not always agree on things but we try our best and we are doing it for this wonderful community. The last 12 months has been incredibly busy, and we had a few months of not having a Clerk so I found out first hand how hard the job can be, but following Samantha’s retirement and some recruitment issues, our new Clerk Vicki has been in post now for 8 months and I feel that we are a very well run Parish Council. Thank you to the new Clerk Vicki Rutt for everything she has done. The finances are in good shape and although we had to put the precept up slightly due to the rise in inflation rates, this was a small rise compared to other local villages and I know the Clerk is constantly monitoring the budget. As I mentioned, we have had a busy 12 months. We have:*

- *Dug the ditch at the Playing Field to assist water flow and resolve flooding to a neighbouring property.*
- *Work with HDPFC to sort out water discharge licence which has now been issued*
- *Established the Community Centre Advisory Committee to review and validate details to formalise process to gain extant permission*
- *SE Water stakeholder meeting and obtained a water bowser*
- *Water consent application approved, preparing quotes ready for work to proceed with installing a new water chamber*
- *Worked closely with PCSO Sue Choppin and Sussex Police*
- *Worked closely and consistently raised concerns about potholes, and the state of the roads and drainage.*

*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. We could not do this without you, so thank you.*

*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 suffer. I would also like to thank the Hadlow Down Community Centre Committee who have worked closely with the Parish Council over the past 6 months, after the PC formed an Advisory Committee to ensure we were working together. Lots of work has been happening behind the scenes with many phone calls taking place between the two Chairs and Clerk. The discharge condition paperwork has been submitted to Wealden District Council so we await confirmation from WDC that the work is enough to obtain extant permission before the deadline of*

28<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Huge thanks to the whole Committee for all their hard work on this project. In that regard the Parish Council met last week and agreed to recognise a volunteer within our community who have gone beyond the call of duty, Bob Lake. Bob has worked tirelessly on the Community Centre project and he deserves recognition for this and then some. On behalf of the Parish Council, thank you Bob for all you do and continue to do for this village. Finally, Hadlow Down is lucky to have a strong sense of community and it's been a pleasure to act as the Parish Chair. It is a real honour and I want to thank you for your time this evening, but I am very happy to take any questions from the floor before we close the meeting and please do stay to enjoy the nibbles and drink."

10. Questions from the floor –

A resident commented on the potholes and said the best result would be to work with other Parish Councils on this together as you with one joint voice, you will shout much louder. A new resident to the village was shocked at the speeds what vehicles do in School Lane, particularly past a school and playing field. Cllr Weston explained a SID is now in School Lane to capture data. A resident thanked on behalf of the work of the Parish Council, the Clerk and all the Councillors for all their hard work.

The meeting closed at 20:50.

<b>HADLOW DOWN PARISH COUNCIL - PRECEPT COMPARISON</b>			
<b>EXPENSE CATEGORY</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>% DIFFERENCE</b>
Clerk's salary	£21,950.00	£23,500.00	7.06
Parish Project Hours	£1,155.00	£1,000.00	- 13.42
Clerk's training	£380.00	£300.00	- 21.05
Administration	£1,418.00	£1,346.00	- 5.08
PC insurance	£550.00	£550.00	-
Subscriptions	£652.00	£652.00	-
Grants	£3,400.00	£3,710.00	9.12
Hire of hall	£480.00	£556.00	15.83
Audit	£552.00	£700.00	26.81
Bank charges	£0.00	£72.00	-
Maintenance of Burial Ground	£1,900.00	£1,520.00	- 20.00
Tree Survey/Work	£500.00	£500.00	-
Litter & dog bin emptying	£1,638.00	£1,650.00	0.73
Fingerpost maintenance	£744.00	£744.00	-
Chairmen's expenses	£100.00	£100.00	-
Councillor's training	£300.00	£300.00	-
Chair and Councillor's allowance	£0.00	£0.00	-
Election expenses	£0.00	£0.00	-
Website/IT	£899.00	£1,000.00	11.23
Highways	£0.00	£1,035.00	-
Maintenance of play area & inspection	£1,464.00	£1,405.00	- 4.03
Entrance to playing field Loan paymt	£1,135.00	£1,135.00	-
Defibrillators	£0.00	£60.00	-
Contingencies incl. Highways/Footpaths/Noticeboards	£1,067.00	£500.00	- 53.14
Play equipment [into reserves	£0.00	£100.00	-
Transfer into reserves	£225.00	£225.00	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>£40,509.00</b>	<b>£42,660.00</b>	-
Transfer from reserves	-£830.00	£0.00	-
<b>TOTAL PRECEPT</b>	<b>£39,679.00</b>	<b>£42,660.00</b>	7.51
<b>% INCREASE PER ANNUM</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7.51%</b>	