



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

held in the Village Hall, Hadlow Down  
at 7.00pm on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025

*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), Alan Hobbs (AH) and Stephen Lester (SL).

**In attendance:** Cllr Bob Standley (ESCC), Vicki Rutt (Clerk), Penny Eliot (Mayfield Charities), PCSO Choppin and 28 members of the public.

### 1. Introduction from Chairman, Cllr Michael Lunn

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. There is no guest speaker this evening, as the meeting is focusing on reviewing the current Parish Community Plan.

### 2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Floyd, Cllr Weston, Cllr Munday, Tracy Boorman and Mandy Chapman.

### 3. The minutes of the 2024 Annual Assembly

The minutes were proposed by Vicky Richards and seconded by Steve Godfrey. All approved. The minutes were signed by the Chair.

### 4. Community Plan interactive session and vote

Cllr Lunn explained that the Community Plan was written and agreed in 2011 and expires in 2026. There are 8 themes in the current plan, each theme has 3 objectives. The aim for the Parish Assembly is to give the chance for residents to review the objectives, state if they are still relevant and make any suggestions for new objectives. After 40 minutes of discussions, a summary of the discussion from each theme was presented to the attendees, residents were then asked to place a vote on each theme for the objective they felt was the most important. These details were photographed and a full report on this exercise will follow in due course.

### 5. ESCC Report

Cllr Standley's report can be found on the Parish Council website.

*Questions were asked of Cllr Standley. He confirmed that the new Sussex Mayor will not have overall budget control, but they will have their own precept. There will still be an East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton with a unitary combined authority above, no home addresses will change. It is hoped that the new Major will listen to Parish Councils.*

### 6. WDC Report

Cllr Lunn's report can be found on the Parish Council website.

*There were no questions for Cllr Lunn.*

### 7. Reports from Representatives:

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

Penny reported that the Charity helps out families and the elderly who need money. They can assist in purchasing school uniform, washing machines etc. Anything that may be required for those in need.

#### (b) St Mark's School – Karl Luckhurst, Head of School:

He was unable to attend but the Clerk received the following report:

*Dear Members of the Hadlow Down Parish Council, I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Head of School at St Mark's Primary School. Having served as Deputy Head last year, I am thrilled to step into this new role and continue working alongside our dedicated staff, supportive families, and, most importantly, our wonderful children.*

*The first half of this academic year has been both busy and exciting. We were pleased to welcome six new children as in-year transfers, who have settled in beautifully, as well as eight enthusiastic new Reception children who joined us in September 2024. It has been heart-warming to see them all integrate so well into the St Mark's community.*

*Our curriculum has been enriched with a variety of trips and hands-on learning experiences. Highlights include the Year 5/6 visit to the Bluebell Railway, where they explored the experiences of World War II evacuees, and a trip for Year 3/4 focusing on the history of railways. These excursions not only deepened their historical understanding but also inspired curiosity and engagement.*

*Sporting achievements have also been a source of pride for us. We celebrated a standout performance in swimming, with one of our pupils achieving the title of best 50m freestyle swimmer. Our Year 5/6 indoor athletics team triumphed in their competition, beating 8 other schools, progressing to represent the Uckfield area in the North Wealden finals, where they placed an impressive third.*

*Academically, our children have been immersed in exciting topics. Reception and Year 1 have been exploring the concept of monarchy, while Years 2/3/4 have delved into the fascinating world of the Maya Civilisation. Meanwhile, Year 5/6 have been studying World War II, which included a special interactive session with the TN22 Club — a fantastic opportunity for our pupils to learn directly from those with personal insights and experiences.*

*Another significant development has been our growing partnership with the Sussex Spires Federation. This collaboration has already brought many benefits to our school, and we are excited about the prospect of joining the full federation in September 2025, further strengthening the opportunities available to our staff and students.*

*It has been a positive and productive start to the year, and I look forward to sharing further updates with you as we continue to strive for excellence at St Mark's.*

#### (c) PCSO Sue Choppin, Sussex Police:

PCSO Choppin reported that there are more PCSOs going through training, 3 are about to reach independent patrol status. The rural crime team do work with the PCSOs, and they can be contacted via 101 or please call 999 in an emergency. Cllr Lunn thanked PCSO Choppin support to the Parish Council and the wider community.

#### **8. Reports from Councillors and Clerk**

These reports were available in written format at the Parish Assembly and are on the Parish Council website. The financial update for 2025/26 can be found in [Appendix A](#).

#### **9. Chairman's Report – Cllr Michael Lunn**

Cllr Lunn read out the following report:

*'It is great to see you all here this evening, thank you for taking the time to come along and contribute to tonight's discussion on our Parish Community Plan. It's important that the Parish Council listens to Parishioner's and checks in on what is important to you. Your contributions will help us to update and refresh our Parish plan.*

*Firstly, I would like to say I am extremely grateful to my fellow Parish Councillors, who despite having our own personal commitments, find the time to attend Parish Council meetings and undertake actions, to ensure that Hadlow Down remains a wonderful place to live. None of us take any allowances for our time to support our community. However, it must be noted that the job is getting busier with more and more responsibility not just for the Councillors but also the Parish Clerk, who has been an amazing support. It's not easy being the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, and I would like to personally thank Vicki for keeping us in check and ensuring everything we do is legal!*

*The last 12 months has been incredibly busy, we have:*

- *Installed the water chamber at the playing field and resolved the flooding issues on neighbouring property*
- *Assisted HDCC in also installing their water chamber which resulted in extant permission being received prior to the deadline*
- *Held regular meetings with the Advisory Committee to ensure that the HDCC project moves forward*
- *Cleared the excess vegetation in the extended burial ground area.*
- *Lobbied for surface improvements on the Bridleway running through Waste Wood opening up access to Blackboys.*
- *Achieved commitment from ESCC to spend capital funding to reduce speed limit changes on the A272 and A267.*
- *Applied pressure to UKPN to improve the service following frequent power cuts across the village and although the traffic lights are causing issues, it is good that this project has commenced and hopefully power cuts are a thing of the past!*
- *Worked closely with PCSO Sue Choppin and Sussex Police on speeding through the village and escalating rural crime remains a concern.*
- *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 and the Community Centre Advisory Committee who have worked closely with the Parish Council to ensure that their project continues moving forward and I feel that the next year will be exciting times as funding is hopefully secured. Huge thanks to the whole Committee for all their hard work on this project. It's not been easy, and we have had some challenging conversations.*

*Each year the Parish Council like to recognise a volunteer within our community who have gone beyond the call of duty, past people have been Sandra Richards, Bob Lake, and Steve Godfrey. There are so many of you who do so much for our community and many people qualify but there is one person who has stood out for many years, even decades in supporting our community. This person to the best of my knowledge has sat on nearly every single committee impacting on the village. So it is with great pleasure that this year the Parish Council agreed that Janet Tourell should be awarded as Parish Champion. Can I have a big round of applause for Janet.*

*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. If anyone has any questions on this evening I or my fellow Councillors would be happy to answer them, but please do stay to enjoy the nibbles and drink.*

**10. Questions from the floor –**

There were no questions, but Sarah Prall thanked the Parish Council, she notes they are all volunteers and has seen firsthand the many hours they put into the role. It is appreciated by the community. She also thanked the Clerk for doing a fantastic job.

All reports referred to in the minutes are available on the PC website here:

<http://www.hadlowdown.com/parish-council/hdpc-parish-assembly-15-04-25/>

**The meeting closed at 20:38**

## Appendix A

A finance meeting was held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024, where Cllrs and I went through each budget line to ensure that the Council can run 'business as usual' but also be able to start building contingency pots for future projects that will come up.

The Precept for 2025/26 was set at £45,400. This was a 6.5% increase. On a band D property, this is an increase of 6p per week.

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.

Below is a breakdown of the precept comparison. If you ever have any questions on the Parish Council's finances, please do not hesitate to contact me.

<b>HADLOW DOWN PARISH COUNCIL - PRECEPT COMPARISON</b>			
<b>EXPENSE CATEGORY</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2025-26</b>	<b>% DIFFERENCE</b>
Clerk's salary	£23,500.00	£23,500.00	-
Parish Project Hours	£1,000.00	£1,800.00	80.00
Clerk's training	£300.00	£300.00	-
Administration	£1,346.00	£1,800.00	33.73
PC insurance	£550.00	£550.00	-
Subscriptions	£652.00	£464.00	- 28.83
Grants	£3,710.00	£3,490.00	- 5.93
Hire of hall	£556.00	£672.00	20.86
Audit	£700.00	£700.00	-
Bank charges	£72.00	£72.00	-
Maintenance of Burial Ground	£1,520.00	£1,520.00	-
Tree Survey/Work	£500.00	£500.00	-
Litter & dog bin emptying	£1,650.00	£1,684.00	2.06
Fingerpost maintenance	£744.00	£0.00	- 100.00 ***
Chairmen's expenses	£100.00	£150.00	50.00
Councillor's training	£300.00	£150.00	- 50.00
Chair and Councillor's allowance	£0.00	£0.00	-
Election expenses	£0.00	£500.00	-
Website/IT	£1,000.00	£100.00	- 90.00 ***
Highways	£1,035.00	£1,035.00	-
Legal fees	£0.00	£2,000.00	-
Maintenance of play area & inspection	£1,405.00	£1,405.00	-
Entrance to playing field Loan paymt	£1,135.00	£1,135.00	-
Defibrillators	£60.00	£60.00	-
Contingencies incl. Highways/Footpaths/Noticeboards	£500.00	£500.00	-
Play equipment [into reserves	£100.00	£100.00	-
Transfer into reserves	£225.00	£225.00	-
Earmarked reserves	£225.00	£1,000.00	344.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>£42,885.00</b>	<b>£45,412.00</b>	<b>5.89</b>
Transfer from reserves	£0.00	£0.00	-
<b>TOTAL PRECEPT</b>	<b>£42,660.00</b>	<b>£45,400.00</b>	<b>6.42</b>

\*\*\*use funds out of reserves if needed