

## HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Environment and General Purposes Committee 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

Nick Chapman (Chair)  
Alison Rees (Vice Chair)  
Anne- Marie Cooke  
Sandy Ellis  
Stephanie Inglesfield \*\*  
Deanna Nicholson \*\*  
Duncan Pascoe  
Leila Wilson

**Apologies\*\* Absent\***

**Also present: Town Clerk, Committee Clerk, ECO**

#### 27. Apologies

Member	Reason
Stephanie Inglesfield	Mayoral Engagement
Deanna Nicholson	Illness

#### 28. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

#### 29. Minutes

The minutes of the Environment & General Purposes Committee dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 were taken as read, confirmed as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

#### 30. Substitutes

Cllr Barbara King for Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield.

#### 31. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary or other interests.

#### 32. To receive a presentation from Matt Roberts of CT Sussex Community Transport

Matt Roberts introduced himself and Bluebird and Community Transport Sussex as a whole. He said the following:

- Community Transport Sussex presents as Bluebird in Mid Sussex but is based in North Chailey.
- In 2023 they covered 157,000 passenger journeys across West Sussex, a little bit in East Sussex and Surrey, for people who find it difficult to access public transport due to disabilities, mobility issues or poor bus links especially in rural areas, where rural social isolation is very prevalent.
- Of these, 38,000 journeys were in Mid Sussex.
- CT Sussex had 52 wheelchair accessible vehicles across the county, of which 20 are in Mid Sussex.
- CT Sussex's remit is to help anyone who finds it difficult to access public transport to get out and about, while their charitable aim is to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

He added that the reason he came to tonight's meeting was because CT Sussex have a stated aim of being Zero or Very Low Emission by 2030 and Completely Zero

Emission by 2035 and to discuss how this may fit into the Council's remit as a sustainability committee. They are initially doing this by replacing older vehicles with newer, cleaner Euro 6 Diesel engines which produce 98% fewer particles than older diesel engines and by using electric vehicles. He said that they had been working with Hydrogen Sussex at Brighton University looking at Hydrogen powered trains small enough to go into older diesel vehicles, although due to the current size of these, they wouldn't be small enough for regular vehicles for 3-4 years.

The Town Clerk said that the Council had a sustainability Action Plan but had had to move back from this recently as the electric van was not fit for purpose as a work van as it could not tow or do enough distance. The Council had a policy to look at green matters which had include the Plant Based Treaty and bottle top recycling, looking at solar panels etc. He added that the Council had a remit to support organisations to support their goals and to facilitate the help for the Council's goals.

Cllr Pascoe thanked Matt Roberts for attending and said that as well as learning how the Council could help, he would like to make the most value out of working with CT Sussex to enhance the offering they have for the town's residents.

Matt Roberts said that although Bluebird was well known in Mid Sussex, they had been doing the same thing for the same people and what they needed to do is spread the word that their transport was not just for older people in wheelchairs or special needs children, it was for anyone who found it difficult to get out. He added that every time they fill in a bus, it equates to about 12 car journeys being saved.

Cllr King asked if CT Sussex were fully utilised. Matt Roberts responded that although in the day time they came close to full utilisation, they were currently not, as it was hard to find staff and volunteers for evenings and weekends. He added that they planned to do a driver and volunteer recruitment drive in January.

Cllr Ellis said that people in the villages had no chance of getting a bus to Brighton hospital, which would be a big issue going forwards as there's no access for people. She said this service could be the missing link, as it will only get worse as we need more hospitals, for more patients and have to go further.

Cllr King said she thought the cost per journey was quite expensive to people on pensions etc and enquired about help for this. Matt Roberts responded that Mid Sussex District Council still provide taxi vouchers for those who are eligible and CT Sussex takes these.

Cllr AM Cooke said that there was a lack of wheelchair accessible vehicles in Mid Sussex and enquired about whether CT Sussex could be a viable alternative transport option. Matt Roberts said that this could be, if staffing allowed, and again mentioned the planned driver recruitment.

Matt said that CT Sussex had received funding from West Sussex County Council, the National Lottery and other partnership bids. He mentioned the current Electric Vehicle Community Car Club in Henfield, which was started by funding from Motability, a project which he was keen to bring to Haywards Heath, if there was enough interest.

The Henfield Club involves:

- 2 semi accessible cars.
- People who can't drive themselves can hire it with a volunteer driver and anyone in the village and surrounding area can hire the vehicle to drive themselves.
- The cost is £5 per month and £5 per hour to hire.

He said that this had reduced the amount of car journeys into town and encouraged people to give up their second cars, slowly changing peoples' behaviours. He added that sustainable Henfield are doing a study over Christmas regarding emissions where the 2 vehicles are based and hope this will show a substantial drop

The Town Clerk queried the cost of the Henfield project. Matt Roberts said the cost was predominantly due to the paid co-Ordinator, which they already had in Mid Sussex but needed newly in Henfield, which was £40,000p/a.

Matt Roberts said they CT Sussex were not currently requesting any funding, but were after support and time to get the message out about their services, especially their 2025 volunteer recruitment drive.

The Town Clerk stated that the Council had a new website launching soon, which they could put CT Sussex on and they could write an article in the newsletter that goes out to every house in town.

Members **NOTED** the presentation.

**33. To consider the Council's community events in 2025/2026.**

The ECO referred to her report and advised that the 2025 Community Awards had not been mentioned in this report as they would fall into the 2024/25 financial year, but the date had moved from 16<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of March. The marathon had also been included in the report, but it had come to light that, although not officially confirmed, the government may move the May Bank Holiday from the Monday to the Thursday to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day. This would potentially cause issues as Burgess Hill run their marathon on the Bank Holiday Monday and the marathon is a Three Towns event. The marathon needed to be kept in the budget as nothing was guaranteed, but there was potential that it may not go ahead of may look different. The next marathon meeting would be in February, so updates would follow.

The ECO advised that the budget requested was lower than the budget required for the year, as the reserves budget for events was quite good, due to higher sponsorship, stallholders fees and advertising fees being received in the past two years. She advised that sponsorship had been harder to source last year and she expected this to be the same in 2025/26.

She further advised that there was currently almost £15,000 in the events budget reserves, although £1,000 would need to be removed for the Community Awards, as this had changed to be a larger, more positive event in its own light, with the March date having been chosen to ensure that the event never fell within the pre-election period. She advised that the Leave No One Behind campaign has been in the events budget last year but had been removed from the 2025/26 budget to be considered separately, as had the Youth Enterprise Market, although both had still been included in the report as they needed to be considered in regards to officers' workloads. The Holocaust event would fall into the Council remit from 2026, no budget was required for 2025.

The ECO also advised that various events usually run at Muster Green, but with the potential work that would be happening in this area, events may need to be moved to Victoria Park, which would incur additional costs for toilet hire etc.

The ECO advised that £1,000 for Twinning Events had been included in the budget for two years but nothing had been called upon for that.

Cllr Pascoe enquired whether this was driven by the Twinning Association or by the Council. The Town Clerk stated that there had historically been a large budget for Twinning. This had been removed, but a smaller budget was reinstated in 2021/22. There had previously been discussions about an event, but nothing had materialised. He said that Cllr Inglesfield had been strongly in favour of keeping a budget for Twinning, but she had done her part and attended all events she had been invited to. He added that the money that had been included in the budget to cover any potential visit from the Twinning partners.

Cllr Ellis said that she thought it was important to keep the Twinning budget, to celebrate friendship between the towns. She said that although the Council may not be able to allocate the same size budget as the Twinning partners, the money we have could be used towards some sort of host event here. She said she thought that as the friendship had been going for so long, the Twinning budget was just a small amount of money to keep aside.

The ECO advised that the cost of Remembrance Sunday cost had increased due to the road closure cost and the order of service cost increasing.

Regarding the 2024 Christmas festival, the ECO highlighted how much work the Project Officer had done and how St Wilfrid's had gone out of their way to accommodate the event, adding that if they hadn't, the event would have been cancelled. She noted that the reorganisation of the event came at a massive workload for the Town Hall team.

Cllr Ellis said that she knew that so much work had gone into the 2024 and that the ECO had done a fantastic job. She said she would be happy with improving this and getting bigger and different in 2025. She asked whether there had been a reaction to not having the fireworks and questioned whether there was a possibility of holding anything like a silent light show instead.

The ECO advised that there had been relatively little backlash regarding the fireworks and there had been much more positive feedback. The Town Clerk advised that light shows had previously been considered, but they were very expensive, meaning the budget for the event would potentially need to be doubled.

Cllr AM Cooke advised that the feedback she received was that people missed having a proper 'one and done' light switch on. With regards to lighting, the Town Clerk advised that the Christmas Lights were due to be reprocured in 2025.

Cllr Chapman said the Council or town centre car parks could be used for extra space next year. The Town Clerk said that the Christmas event was intended to support The Orchards, so using the Town Hall would be too far away but other car parks could be potentially considered.

Cllr Pascoe said that the most important thing was that the event was kept as a free event for families during the festive period.

Cllr Rees said that people had greatly enjoyed the trail aspect of the 2024 event and if possible could this be built on and extended at future events, possibly linking between halls or venues.

Cllr Wilson said that the 2024 event had worked really well, and it was very busy, so there wasn't a lot of space to move around. She would like to see a large venue used in future. Cllr Rees suggested that perhaps St Wilfrid's church itself could be used. The ECO advised that St Wilfrid's were keen to continue working with the Council.

Cllr AM Cooke added that she would like it to be noted that she knew how much work the Town hall team had put into reorganising the Christmas event, with Cllr Rees adding that the Council were very grateful for it all.

The ECO advised that the budget had increased due to the inclusions of staffing costs and reminded Councillors that as they have chosen to run these events, they are urged to attend as many events as possible.

Cllr A-M Cooke questioned why the Holocaust event budget has been set so low. The ECO advised that this was due to advice being received from the current organisers. She further added that as the event involved only a service at the War Memorial, a voluntary guest speaker (whose expenses would be covered) and schools providing the art displays that would be placed in the Town Hall, with refreshments served afterwards, the budget would be minimal.

Members **RESOLVED** to recommend a **£32,850 Budget for inclusion in the Environment and General Purposes budget 2025/2026, with the 2025 Christmas Festival budget to be discussed with The Orchards and potentially re-considered and presented at an informal meeting before the next Environment and General Purposes committee meeting on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2025.**

**34. To consider the draft Environmental and General Purposes budget for 2025/2026**

The Town Clerk presented the draft budget. Cllr Ellis commented that she would like the Best Kept Gardens, Allotment Competitions and Haywards Heath South & South East in Bloom budgets to be kept into the budget, because although the town would not be submitting an entry for the town for 2025 South East in Bloom due to the potential works on Muster Green, the In Bloom Committee would be involved in multiple projects and initiatives within the community, including the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World Earth Day in April 2025.

Cllr Chapman queried the Leave No One Behind campaign and the grant received from the National Lottery. The ECO advised that the 2024 campaign was under budget as the Council received a grant of £3,442 from the National Lottery and had also recently received £1,000 from CSL Behring in support.

Without further comment;

Members **RESOLVED** to recommend the draft **Environmental and General Purposes Committee Budget to the Policy and Finance Committee for inclusion in the 2025/2026 budget.**

**35. To receive a request from Fairer Lindfield regarding Town Council Planting processes.**

Cllr AM Cooke presented the request received regarding planting at the roundabout in Commercial Square and stated that she had previously been approached by Fairer World Lindfield and had also had some contact with Greener Lindfield.

Cllr Ellis stated that she would be supportive of discussion with Fairer World Lindfield about planting but suggested that this should be fed through the Haywards Heath In Bloom committee, before being fed back to the Environment and General Purpose committee, as they have recently won the Gold In Bloom award, especially as this involves the head Groundsmen who is doing the planting. She added that she would welcome anybody who wanted to enhance and improve our environment to get involved. She added that with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World Earth Day coming up in 2025, it would be nice to have a link with Lindfield and other villages to celebrate, and perhaps this could include the Lindfield Repair Cafes and be placed on the Council website.

Cllr B King queried the percentage of the Council's planting being sustainable. The Town Clerk said that this was currently 5% as agreed policy. He added that the groundsmen had made great strides, as there had never been a bed of perennial planting on Muster Green until the In Bloom committee took it up, and that the Council were working towards more sustainable planting and that the policy could be revisited in the future. He said that planting had had to be reduced due to increasing costs.

Cllr Ellis said that the town should be proud as they were the first town to put in pollinators working with Brighton University and their seed banks and people often don't realise what the town had achieved.

Cllr King said that Haywards Heath could also lead the way, as well as being responsive to what's currently enjoyed by the town, but also say this sustainability is the way we should be going in the town.

The following notes were suggested in the reply letter to Fairer World Lindfield:

1. Thank you.
2. As you are aware Haywards Heath is very proud of its plant and management of owned green spaces. Our ambition is to provide an uplifting and colourful environment that will equally support insects and biodiversity.
3. We purchase our bedding plans from Ford Open Prison, so local, well-priced and also with a social value.
4. As you are also aware our achievements have been acknowledged by Britain in Bloom as a Gold prize winner for the south and south east, as Best Large Town 2024.
5. You have identified the roundabout by the station as needing improvement on several counts. As entrance to the town from the railway and also one of the busiest parts of the town for all types of transport, we agree this could be improved.

We have great interest in your ideas for this space as an effective stepping stone for insects and birds in this part of the town.

**Members RESOLVED to DELEGATE to the TOWN CLERK to respond to the enquiry as suggested and invite Fairer World Lindfield and Greener**

**Lindfield to attend the In Bloom committee meetings to discuss planting.**

**36. To receive a verbal update on South and South East in Bloom.**

Cllr S Ellis said that In Bloom could do a full town entry in 2025, due to the potential works on Muster Green, although the cemetery would be entered. She said that the groundsmen wanted to recharge their batteries and look at different projects, by working in the community, to encourage people to take part. This would involve working with schools and care homes, before building up to the 2026 entry. We would like to potentially see a banner outside the railway station promoting the Gold prize success.

Members **NOTED** the update.

**37. Urgent Items**

There was none.

**Meeting closed at 8.45 pm**