



**HAYWARDS HEATH
TOWN COUNCIL**

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24th March 2025

To all Councillors,

Dear Councillor,

You are hereby summoned to attend a **MEETING OF HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL** to be held on **Monday 31st March 2025** at the Town Hall in the Council Chamber. 40 Boltro Road commencing at **7.00pm** when the following business will be transacted.

Yours sincerely
Steve Trice
Town Clerk

Before the meeting formally commences a presentation will be made to Mrs Josefa Figueira in relation to 25 years of service to the Town Council and her work in the Community.

A G E N D A

1. A moment of reflection.
2. To note any apologies for absence.
3. Public Forum - *Members of the public are invited to ask questions or raise issues which are relevant and are the concern of this Council. A period of 15 minutes is allocated for this purpose. Notice of intention to address Council should be given to the Clerk by noon of the day of the meeting.*
4. To confirm the Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 27th January 2025 (pages 3-6)
5. To receive Declarations of Interest from Members in respect of any matter on the agenda.
6. To dispose of any business outstanding from the last meeting and Town Clerk updates.
7. To note the Mayoral Engagements and any announcements. (page 7)
8. To receive for noting the resolutions of the following Committees. (pages 8-9)
 - a) Planning Committee held on the 3rd February 2025
MINS. 108-117

- b) Planning Committee held on the 24th February 2025
MINS. 118-127
- c) Planning Committee held on the 17th March 2025
MINS. 128-138
- d) Environment and General Purposes Committee held on the 10th February 2025
MINS. 38-49
- e) Policy and Finance Committee on the 24th March 2025
MINS. 61-74

- 9. To consider an update to the Town Council's Equality and Diversity strategy. (pages 10-16).
- 10. To consider the Town Council's response to the Mayoral Combined Authority consultation. (pages 17-21).
- 11. To consider any urgent items the Mayor has received.

Part 2.

- 12. To consider the exempt minutes and resolutions (Minute 75) of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on the 24th March 2025 in relation to staffing matters.

*'During this meeting the public are allowed to film the Committee and officers only from the front of the public gallery, providing it does not disrupt the meeting. **Any items in the Exempt Part of the agenda cannot be filmed.** If another member of the public objects to being recorded, the person(s) filming must stop doing so until that member of the public has finished speaking. The use of social media is permitted but all members of the public are requested to switch their mobile devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.*

Town Mayor Cllr Stephanie Inglesfield

Town Clerk Mr Steven Trice

**HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27th January 2025

**Councillors: Abdul Bashar **
Nick Chapman
Anne-Marie Cooke
Rachel Cromie
Sandy Ellis
Stephanie Inglesfield
Barbara King
Anne-Marie Lucraft
Paul Lucraft
Allan Murray
Deanna Nicholson **
Alison Rees
Duncan Pascoe
Anthony Platts
Sinead Walsh
Leila Wilson**

Apologies Absent***

Also present: Town Clerk, Committee Clerk, Project Officer

56. Moment of Reflection

The Town Mayor lead Members in a moment of reflection before the meeting commenced.

57. Apologies

Members	Reason
Cllr A Bashar	Personal commitment
Cllr D Nicholson	Illness

58. Public Forum

None

59. Minutes

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 25th November 2024, without comment, were taken as read, confirmed as true and duly signed by the Town Mayor.

60. Declarations of Interest.

Cllr R Cromie declared an interest as she is Director of Bentswood CIC.

61. To Dispose of any Business Outstanding from the Last Meeting.

The Town Clerk advised that St Wilfrid's Clock had now been fixed. The Town Clerk reminded members to complete White Ribbon training if they had not yet done so. He stated that he had registered the Town Council's interest in the White Ribbon scheme and an Action Plan now needed backing.

62. Mayor's Engagements and Announcements.

The Mayor began by thanking ECO Imogen Wilson for fantastic work for the Holocaust Remembrance Day event, which had to be reorganised last minute due to inclement weather.

She read the following letter of thanks from Irene Balls;

'Dear Imogen,

Just a quick note to say thank you for all you accomplished today. The organisation was impeccable, everything you did was brilliant. You ensured the event went smoothly. Martin and I appreciated your thoughtfulness and close attention to detail.'

The Mayor told members that Maria Horne, the Mayor's PA would be retiring. She said that Maria's connections to the community had brought her job to the next level and that the Council wished her well in her retirement. She said that Committee Clerk Victoria Morris-Birrell would now be taking on the Mayor's PA role.

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor for attending 5 events including the opening of the Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity Centre and the AGM for the Ashenground Community Centre.

The Mayor presented her schedule of attended events; highlighting:

- The Mayor's Charity Quiz & Pizza Night which raised £1800.
- The Time for Dementia programme which saw the Mayor visit a family who had been working with medical students to learn more about the programme.
- The great success of the Town Council's Christmas festival event on 23rd November, for which she extended thanks to Imogen Wilson, St Wilfrid's and the United Reformed Church for their hard work.

The Town Clerk added that three Haywards Heath residents were honoured in the King's New Year's Honour's List and suggested that these be invited to attend a Council meeting to share their success.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Community Awards deadline was approaching and they should continue to provide their nominations for awards.

63. To receive resolutions of the following Committees:

- (i) Planning Committee - **MINS. 89-107**
The resolutions of the Planning Committee held on the 2nd December 2024 - **Minutes 89-97**, Planning Committee due to be held on the 23rd December 2024, which was cancelled – **Minutes 98**, and Planning Committee held on the 13th January 2025 - **Minutes 99-107** were noted without discussion by the Council.
- (ii) Environment & General Purposes Committee – **MINS. 27-37**
The resolutions of the E&GP Committee held on 9th December 2024 were noted without discussion by the Council.
- (iii) Policy & Finance Committee **MINS. 48-60**
The resolutions of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held 20th January 2025 were noted without discussion by the Council.

64. To consider the Town Council's 2025/2026 budget.

The Town Clerk presented the budget, highlighting the 6% increase in the precept, which included a 5% increase in Council Tax and a 1% increase in the tax base, making an average Band D cost of £72.72 p/a.

Cllr P Lucraft extended thanks to the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer for their work in bringing the budget together and he noted that the Town Council performed within budget last year. He stated that the Council wanted to try and expand the Council's activities to be able to support the community, particularly in difficult times and with the backdrop of proposed reorganisation of local government. He added that it would be important that the Town Council be able to step into the gap that may arise by any potential unitary structure, to ensure that the town's people are properly served by a local council. He added that most of the increase in budget would be to cover inflation in costs, but also included money put aside for potential staff changes at the Town Hall, to allow for necessary training and recruitment.

Cllr R Cromie queried a line on the budget regarding the forecasted budget for Bentswood Hub CIC/Community People SLAs and the split between these two. The Town Clerk confirmed that the split would be as follows;

- Bentswood Hub CIC - £12,000
- Community People - £7,500

With unanimous agreement;

Members **RESOLVED** to ratify the amended recommendations of the Policy and Finance Committee dated 20th January 2025 and,

- a) resolve the 2025–2026 budget with a 5% rise in Council Tax and 6% increase in the precept (including 1% in the tax base), representing a precept of £922,344 and an average Band D cost of £72.72 per annum.
- b) Resolve that the Capital Budget is topped up by £28,221.35 by moving the following from restricted reserves.
 - £14,000.00 from Haywards Heath Town CIC to leave reserve at £5,681.
 - £5,649.15 from Town Development with reserve budget line deleted.
 - £6,322.20 from CCTV with reserve budget line deleted.
 - £2,250.00 from Roundabout Liabilities with reserve budget line deleted.

65. To consider membership of committees.

The Town Clerk stated that there were two vacancies on committees, which were advertised in late 2024.

Without comment;

Members **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Rachel Cromie to the Planning Committee and Policy and Finance Committee with immediate effect.

66. To consider a report relating to the application for a unitary authority for Sussex and a Sussex Mayor and subsequent potential for Devolution.

The Town Clerk presented the report.

Cllr Ellis stated that she would like more information and asked how other local Councils would be tackling the issue. The Town Clerk stated that he had discussed this with Clerks across Mid Sussex and understood that many would be positioning themselves in a similar way, with only limited information being available at this time.

Cllr P Lucraft said that he shared Cllr Ellis' concerns about the lack of mention of Town and Parish Councils in the government's devolution White Paper, and added that around 40% of the UK is already served by a unitary authority model. He stated that although details were unknown, enough was known about the potential for devolution and changes in the Council structure, to justify setting up a work group regarding the issue.

Cllr B King said it would be good to have all documentation relating to devolution placed in a centralised area.

Cllr A-M Cooke said that she had watched the Brighton Council Meeting regarding devolution on Youtube and had found this helpful and advised that other Councillors may also find this informative.

Action: The Town Clerk stated that he would pass on to members the slides from Mid Sussex District Council, along with the District Plan when he had received them. Town Clerk to explore a possible Sharepoint area to store devolution documents.

Members **RESOLVED** to **DELEGATE** to the Clerk to **hold initial discussion if approached or make a formal request if matters progress and for the Chairmans Working Group to review any correspondence and proposals, which would be overseen by the Policy and Finance Committee and ultimately Full Council.**

67. To consider membership of the Co-Operative Council Innovative Network.

Without comment;

Members **RESOLVED** to the **Town Council joining the Co-operative Councils Innovative Network at the cost of £300 per annum.**

68. To consider any urgent items the Mayor has received.

The Town Clerk stated that a member of staff had indicated their intention to retire. The Town Clerk stated that an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council would be called if necessary.

Action: Cllr Ellis requested the revival of the Staff Working Group. The Town Clerk stated that this would be done.

Meeting Closed at 7.45pm

Mayor's Engagements
22nd January – 24th March 2025

- **Friday 24th January:** The Mayor attended Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony at the Town Hall.
- **Wednesday 12th February:** The Mayor visited Safari Pizza to present a certificate of appreciation.
- **Thursday 13th February:** The Deputy Mayor attended the Haywards Heath Horticultural Society tree pruning event at Scrase Valley orchard.
- **Wednesday 6th March:** The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor attended the groundbreaking ceremony at Barn Cottage Green.
- **Saturday 9th March:** The Mayor hosted the Haywards Heath Community Awards at the Town Hall.
- **Tuesday 18th March:** The Mayor attended an evening session at Haywards Heath 1st Scouts.
- **Wednesday 19th March:** The Mayor did an interview with Mid Downes Radio to discuss the Time for Dementia support programme
- **Saturday 22nd March:** The Mayor attended the Sussex Chorus Spring Concert at Ardingly College.

Committee Meeting: Full Council

Report of: Committee Clerk

Date: 25th March 2025

Subject: Minutes of Committee Meetings

Purpose of Report:

1. The purpose of this report is for Members to receive and adopt the resolutions of the Council's standing committees.

Summary:

2. The Town Council is asked to note the decisions (resolutions) of the Council's standing committees as allowed under delegation from Full Council in line with Standing Orders. These resolutions relate to the Planning Committee held on the 3rd February 2025 - **Minutes 108-117**, Planning Committee due to be held on the 24th February 2025 **Minutes 118-127**, and Planning Committee held on the 17th March 2025 - **Minutes 128-138** Environment and General Purposes Committee held on the 10th February 2025 - **Minutes 38-49**. Policy and Finance Committee meeting held 24th March 2025- **Minutes 61-74**.

Members are recommended to;

(a) Note the resolutions of the Council's Standing Committees as laid out under points 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of this report.

3. Planning Committee – 3rd February 2025 - **Minutes 108-117 resolutions;**

MIN 115. - Members **RESOLVED** to support the Traffic Regulation Order application to extend double yellow lines on Mayflower Road at the junction with Woodlands Road.

4. Planning Committee – 24th February 2025 - **Minutes 118- 127 resolutions;**

MIN 126. - Members **RESOLVED** to approve the representation to the Lewes District Council: Lewes Local Plan consultation and to **DELEGATE TO THE CLERK** to make the representation to this consultation as written in the report.

5. Planning Committee – 17th March – **Minutes 128- 138 resolutions;**

MIN 136. - Members **RESOLVED** to SUPPORT the application to extend the existing double yellow lines on Sydney Road at the junction with Park View.

MIN 137. - Members **RESOLVED** to SUPPORT the application to introduce double yellow lines on the northern side of Gander Hill between the junctions of Sunte Close and Gander Green.

6. Environment and General Purposes Committee – 10th February 2025 – **Minutes 38-49 resolutions;**

MIN 46. - Members **RESOLVED** to ADOPT the Haywards Heath Town Council Environment Policy with the following amendments and additions;

- Amend wording to 'to continue to improve the impact HHTC has on our environment'
- Add 'To lobby other authorities and encourage residents to be more environmentally aware'.

MIN 47. - Members **RESOLVED** to DELEGATE to the TOWN CLERK to respond to the enquiry as suggested and invite Fairer World Lindfield and Greener 7 Lindfield to attend the In Bloom committee meetings to discuss planting.

7. Policy and Finance Committee – 24th March 2025 – **Minutes 61- 74 resolutions;**

MIN 66. - Members **RESOLVED** to RECOMMEND to Full Council to approve the list of payments and receipts for the period to 31st December 2024.

MIN 67. – Members **RESOLVED** to RECOMMEND to Full Council to approve the list of income and expenditure for the period to 31st December 2024.

MIN 68. – Members **RESOLVED** to RECOMMEND to Full Council to approve the bank balances and reconciliation statements as at 31st December 2024.

MIN 69. – Members **RESOLVED** to award;

1. A grant of £500 to Haywards Heath Lions to help with running costs for the annual Swimathon event
2. A grant of £500 to St Catherines' Hospice to help with running costs
3. A grant of £500 to The Grove Garden to help with running costs to pay a garden manager or three months
4. A grant of up to £1000 to the Bolnore Village Community Partnership to help towards the cost of a replacement fire door at the Woodside Centre – DELEGATED to the Town Clerk to award after further information is sought.

MIN 70. – Members **RESOLVED** to ADOPT the Town Council's Financial Risk Assessment and Risk Management Policy.

MIN 71. – Members **RESOLVED** to ADOPT the Town Council's Investment Policy.

MIN 72. – Members **RESOLVED** to RE-ADOPT the Town Council's General Data Protection (GDPR) Policies.

MIN 73. – Members **RESOLVED** to DEFER the response to the Sussex Mayoral Unitary Authority consultation until the next Full Council meeting on 31st March 2025.

Committee Clerk

Committee Meeting: Full Council

Report of: Town Clerk
Date: 31st March 2025
Subject: Equality and Diversity Policy (Revision)

Purpose of Report

- 1) The purpose of this report is for Members to consider a Town Council policy document.

Summary:

- 2) Haywards Heath Town Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and equal opportunities, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. The following report provides revisions to the Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy (2024 – 2028).

Recommendations;

Members are asked to review the revisions to the Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and re-resolve its adoption for the period 2025-2028.

Background

- 3) The Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy was last reviewed and adopted on the 17th September 2024 at the Policy and Finance Committee and then ratified by Full Council meeting 23rd September 2024.
- 4) The following issues have been raised with the document - refer **point 1 of Clause 1**.
 - In the Equality Act 2010, regarding protected characteristics, the word used is "sex" rather than the legally different "gender", as opposed to the separate characteristic "gender realignment".
 - There is the specific omission of "pregnancy and being on maternity leave" as a protected characteristic. This should be stated and not covered under "any other".
 - Also needing to be added is "married or in a civil partnership". Therefore, as it deemed that the Town Council could be challenged on both the "sex" vs "gender" issue and the "pregnancy and being on maternity leave" inclusion it is important that anyone can easily see the legally protected characteristic.
 - Other characteristic such as "politics, trade unions and background" which are not in the 2010 Act as protected characteristics were included so it is thought better to remove them as they could be deemed to be such and they can now fall under "any other".
- 5) The definitions of protected characteristics under clause 8 have been updated also.
- 6) The revisions are presented in the Equality and Diversity Policy attached to this agenda.

Financial Implications

7) None

Legal Implications

8) Policy which is required by law.

Town Clerk

Adopted at P & F Committee meeting 17/09/2024 under minute number 30 revised 31/03/25

HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN COUNCIL

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

2024(5) - 2028

1. **POLICY**

The Town Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. In the implementation of this policy the Town Council will:

- ensure that people are treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity leave, gender orientation, disability, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction described in the protected characteristics of Equality Act 2010 s4).
- promote diversity and equality for all staff, volunteers, Councillors and prospective Councillors and value the contributions made by individuals and groups of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and distinctive backgrounds
- promote and sustain an inclusive and supportive work environment which affirms the equal and fair treatment of individuals in fulfilling their potential and does not afford unfair privilege to any individual or group
- treat part time staff fairly and equally
- challenge inequality and less favourable treatment wherever practicable
- promote greater participation of under-represented groups of staff by encouraging positive action to address inequality
- promote an environment free of harassment and bullying on any grounds in relation to all staff.

2. **RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The Town Council has ultimate responsibility for the effective implementation of the policy. The policy will be reviewed at least every two years, to ensure it remains commensurate with the law and best practice. The Town Clerk will oversee the implementation of this policy.

The Policy and Finance Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of all equal opportunities policies and procedures and reporting on the progress made in achieving equalities targets to the Full Council. The Town Clerk has overall delegated (under LGA 1972 S101) responsibility for co-ordinating the day to day operation of the policies and procedures.

3. RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY

All members of staff remain personally responsible for ensuring that they act within the law (Equalities Act 2010). The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring that all staff perform their duties in a lawful manner and that proper training and support is provided accordingly under the Equality and Diversity Act 2010 to all staff, volunteers and Councillors. In certain circumstances the Town Council could be vicariously liable for actions carried out by staff purportedly in the Town Council's name. Any member of staff, volunteers and Councillors may be personally liable if, whilst on Council business and despite guidance and training from the Council, they behave illegally.

4. RELATED POLICIES

All Council policies and procedures will be reviewed to ensure that they comply with the Equality and Diversity policy. The following directly relevant policies and procedures support the Town Council's implementation process:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Age Retirement Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Annual data monitoring and action plans will be developed and maintained as appropriate in relation to areas such as race, disability, age, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment and work-life balance. Appropriate objectives will be set. Equality and diversity awareness will be built into all planning and review processes.

All related policies, procedures and action plans will be implemented with the co-operation of and in consultation with staff and Trade Union representatives.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Policy and Finance Committee will monitor the implementation of the policy and all associated equality action plans, reporting annually to the Full Council.

6. ACTION PLANNING

6.1 Staff Recruitment and selection procedures.

Recruitment and selection procedures will be reviewed and updated in the light of emerging equalities legislation and guidance offered to all relevant staff on drafting job descriptions and person specifications. Annual data monitoring will be undertaken in relation to recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion, pay, grading, disciplinary

cases, grievances and harassment in respect of gender, age, disability and race/ethnicity. Areas of identified inequality will be addressed.

- 6.2 Positive action measures will be put in place to support under-represented groups in specific areas, such as women seeking management posts and the employment of ethnic minorities and disabled staff.

6.3 **Training**

All employees, volunteers and councillors undertaking recruitment and selection will be trained in equality issues. Equality and diversity training will be included in induction sessions and induction packs for all newly appointed staff. Line Managers with responsibility for staff will receive training in equality and diversity matters, including the relevant law and their duties. Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff attend equality and diversity training within three months of their appointment.

7. **COMPLAINTS**

- 7.1 Any member of staff may pursue a grievance relating to their employment via the Grievance Procedure. Staff who experience bullying or harassment should follow the procedure outlined in the Harassment Policy.

- 7.2 The Harassment Policy is available in the Staff Handbook.

- 7.3 Further details on reporting issues of concern are available in the Town Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

8. **EQUALITY AIMS – PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

Gender reassignment - The Town Council will publish a Gender Equality Scheme in accordance with the Gender Equality Duty. Workforce targets will be maintained and reviewed through the appraisal process. The Town Council will promote a positive work life balance environment and develop family friendly policies.

Age - The Town Council will eliminate unlawful age discrimination and will review policies (including retirement) to ensure that they comply with age discrimination legislation. Monitoring will be undertaken to identify any areas of inequality.

Sexual Orientation - The Town Council will eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

Disability - The Town Council will remove barriers to participation by disabled people, wherever possible. Implementation will be monitored and targets reviewed in relation to increasing numbers of disabled staff. Staff who become disabled whilst working with the Council will be offered reasonable adjustments to enable them to continue working. Monitoring will be undertaken to identify any areas of inequality.

Race/Ethnic Origin - The Town Council will encourage participation of black and minority ethnic groups in all its activities. All policies will be reviewed and amended as appropriate in line with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and in accordance with the Race Policy. Monitoring will be undertaken to identify any areas of inequality.

Religion or Belief - The Town Council includes people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds and will respect the needs and requirements of people who adhere to a range of cultural and religious beliefs. This will include staff needs in relation to dietary requirements, and requests for leave and facilities for religious observance.

Marriage and Civil Partnership - The Town Council will not discriminate against employment because a person is married or in a civil partnership.

Pregnancy and Maternity - in pregnancy and maternity focus on ensuring fair and equitable treatment, eliminating discrimination, and promoting equal access to care, including protection against unfair treatment and dismissal, and ensuring access to maternity leave and pay.

Sex - The Town Council will eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, particularly regarding protected characteristics like sex, which includes being male or female. The act protects individuals from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on sex and other protected characteristics

Ends

Committee Meeting: Full Council

Report of: Town Clerk
Date: 31st March 2025
Subject: Consultation on proposals for a Mayoral Combined Authority for Sussex and Brighton.

Purpose of Report:

1. The purpose of this report is to consider a response to a third-party consultation.

Summary:

2. A consultation on proposals for a Mayoral Combined Authority for Sussex and Brighton is now open and everyone across the county is invited to have their say. The following report presents the Town Council's suggested response that has been formulated by the Town Clerk working with the Chair's Working Party, which has subsequently been resolved for adoption by the Policy and Finance Committee.

Recommendation(s): As recommended by the Policy and Finance Committee dated 24th March 2025.

Members are recommended adopt and delegate the making of the response to a consultation regarding the proposed Combined Mayor Authority for Sussex and Brighton as presented in Appendix 1 of this report to the Town Clerk.

Background:

3. The government is running the consultation, which is specific to the Sussex and Brighton region, until Sunday 13 April 2025. All interested parties are welcome to have their say, including organisations as well as individuals who live and work in the region.
4. The consultation specifically asks about:
 - The proposed geography
 - Governance arrangements
 - Supporting the economy
 - Improving social outcomes
 - Local government services
 - Improving the local natural environment
 - Supporting the needs of local communities and reflect local identity
5. West Sussex County Council and neighbouring upper tier authorities in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove will be submitting their own responses to the questions.
6. Full details of the consultation can be found on the gov.uk website at: [Sussex and Brighton devolution - GOV.UK](#)
7. Further information is available in the government press notice here: [Devolution Priority Programme consultations launch - GOV.UK](#)
8. The bid to be on the government's devolution priority programme is deemed to be a positive opportunity to draw down more powers and funding for all areas from central government.

9. Ministers have agreed that a strategic authority for Sussex and Brighton, made up of an elected mayor, and two members of each constituent authority, offers the chance to give the people who live here more control and influence over the issues that affect them, from transport and housing to skills and employment, as well as a stronger voice in how national decisions affect them.
10. The decision whether or not to proceed with the proposal will be one for the government to take based on its assessment of the consultation responses. No formal steps towards setting up a combined authority for Sussex can be made until that decision is made.
11. Separate to this process, authorities across our region are discussing plans for local government reorganisation, with a proposal to government due to be submitted soon.

Financial Implications

12. None.

Legal Implications

13. None consultation.

Town Clerk

Appendix 1

Sussex and Brighton Devolution – Government consultation

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

The geography of the Mayoral Combined County Authority seems sensible to cover the whole of the County as it sits currently.

However, the proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority, bringing what is currently West Sussex and East Sussex into one high level authority with Brighton and Hove, will result in the Mayoral Combined County Authority having to deal with a diverse and challenging range of communities. This is in terms of the differing needs of the coastal strip, the rural north of the County and a number of distinctly different Towns across the County not forgetting a major airport and Brighton and Hove being one of most vibrant and diverse cities in the country.

Any division below the Mayoral Combined County Authority must be considered so to derive the benefits foreseen from a Mayoral Combined County Authority with thought about how any unitarities are split across West and East Sussex, taking into account these differing needs so the benefits that can be realised from re-organisation are in a cohesive manner. This should ensure that decisions will not be centralised and issues of land use against population being addressed, especially taking into account the South Downs National Park. There needs to be thought given to areas that are not parished being empowered to work in their community at a local level. It cannot be seen that local democracy is perceived to be further from the community than it is

already. Town/Parish Councils are well placed to take on more powers and duties and new local Councils need to be formed to bridge gaps that will inevitably exist.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

A more streamlined approach to Local Government in Sussex must be welcomed but there needs to be assurances on how there will be continuity of services across the County with the new Local Government structure.

At the present time the County suffers from differences with regards to two/three tiers of authorities across Sussex. Parish and Town Councils are consistent in fully parished Districts so the creation of new Parish/Town Councils across the County where gaps will appear as a result of re-organisation must be considered.

One concern is how the tax payer, in line with the proposed plans, will be affected on the grounds that the formation of the Mayoral Combined County Authority will inevitably mean that for a period of time there will be three/four tiers of local authority while those existing authorities are re-organised. There is concern that the tax payer will take the burden and brings into question, during the interim period after the formation of the Mayoral Combined County Authority, how the Local Government structure will work to meet the needs of the local community.

On another matter there is a concern that there could be democratic deficits in local communities due to the reduction in local representation, this must be addressed during the creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority. This is where the devolution of services to Parish/Town Councils is so important so they can focus on the local services that residents see on a day-to-day basis.

Subsequently, Parish/Town Councils must be empowered now by the Government and existing principal authorities to allow them to provide devolved services within their communities as a result of the re-organisation. Larger Town Councils can act as hubs for the area whilst clustering with those Parishes who may not have the necessary infrastructure. Good examples of this already exist across the County.

The cost savings that should be realised from what would be a removal of a tier of Local Government must be reinvested into the community so to benefit the area in terms of improved services, to avoid any reduction in such, and the savings being lost to Central Government. Indeed, there should be efficiency, improvement and new services provided.

It is envisaged there will be long term funding plans which should provide assurances on local services, which should see added value when negotiating larger contracts for core services on a long-term basis.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

With re-organisation promising long term funding plans there should be thought and assurances given, through the creation of Mayoral Combined County Authority, that the economy is to be supported. This should translate into opportunities for inward investment into business communities so to grow the economy and stimulate job creation. Focusing on Business Improvement Districts, working with business parks/association/chambers of commerce and colleges and universities is essential to

creating a vibrant economy. Mid Sussex is well placed with strong further education establishments located within and its location on the main Brighton to London railway line and sitting against the A23 corridor,

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

The aforementioned statement should be based on thought being given to the geographical makeup of the County and the needs of Brighton and Hove, Adur, Arun and Worthing are very different to Mid Sussex, Crawley, Chichester and Horsham within West Sussex. It is therefore a grouping that meets mutual needs of each authority, which can be met alongside their neighbouring authorities. Diversity in the proposed area must be at the forefront of organisational thinking with huge combination of rural/urban challenges bringing those areas together successfully. Therefore, local community is enhanced as we need to be near our community and know their needs.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

As long as funding supports the proposed creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority to maintain and enhance services, it is in theory that services could improve. Obviously, the services provided at the current time and their volume will not change, but there is opportunity to add value for money through larger contracts with savings enhancing the value and capacity of the services.

There is also need for devolvement of services that can be offered at a local level. Town/Parish Councils have the unique ability to raise their precept to accommodate the transfer of services. Funding is expected to support any transfer but long-term ambitions can be funded and driven by communities. The loss or reduction of services must be non-negotiable. During the re-organisation services must be secured or devolved down. Money raised should be commuted to Towns and Parish and Town Councils where it is deemed to be necessary in the interest of the community - a pound better spent at a local level can do more than paying for centralised services. This would in terms of a quicker response time, local knowledge and less travel time means that services are more cost effectively delivered at a local level.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

The risk with this matter is the loss of the ruralness of Sussex, which needs to be protected. Where housing is needed there needs to be a balance against the Government's drive for increased housing numbers and the protection of the local natural environment. The changes in the Local Government should not allow for an open season of building on the Green Belt and not be a trigger for rural areas to meet the unmet housing need of urban authorities.

Notwithstanding the need for houses the natural environment must be protected and any form of housing delivery in line with revised NPPF in December 2024 must allow the retention of the Town/Village characteristics including natural landscapes and settings. The South East and indeed Sussex must only take its fair share of new

housing numbers. This is paramount in the Mid Sussex area of the District. This all must be taken into account in areas that are not protected by the South Down National Park. This would tie in with thought being given to revised Parish/Town boundaries and the fact that Haywards Heath sits on the main commuter belt from Brighton to London taking in Gatwick Airport.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

The main concern is that the creation Mayoral Combined County Authority will take decision making further away from communities. It will also be hard for the authority at the Combined level to know what is needed in communities across such a large area.

Therefore, it is essential that Town/Parish Councils are empowered to take on services and provision from the District Council. The Devolution Bill does not make clear the Government's thinking on how Town/Parish Councils fit into any new arrangements. It does not recognise them as local authorities, which they indeed are.

The proposed Geography will work if there is empowerment and formal process for Town and Parish Councils to feed up the needs and interests of local residents and indeed the Town Council. This whilst they continue to provide local services and should be given the opportunity to provide services that could be lost or not seen as a priority by the Mayoral Combined County Authority, as it deals with Government directives and major infrastructure needs.

Ends