

**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