

STORRINGTON & SULLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE MAIN HALL, THE PARISH HALL, THAKEHAM ROAD, STORRINGTON, ON WEDNESDAY, 24TH MAY 2023, commencing at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Mrs A Worthington-Leese in the Chair (and Chairman, Planning and Development Committee), Mr S Matthews (Chairman, Information, Communications and Environment Committee), Mrs L Wheatley (Chairman, Recreation and Property Committee).

19 Members of the Public.

Also Present: Lee Money (Officer, Horsham District Council)
Anna Czerska (Officer, Horsham District Council)
Thais Covre Delboni (Officer Horsham District Council)
Paul Marshall (Leader, West Sussex County Council)
Joan Grech (District Councillor)
Claudia Fisher (District Councillor)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** No apologies were received.
2. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.** These were duly **AGREED** to be a correct record of the proceedings thereat and were signed by the Chairman.
3. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.** Mrs Worthington-Leese presented her report (appendix 1)
4. **INFRASTRUCTURE, COMMUNICATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT.** Mr. Matthews presented his report (appendix 2).
5. **RECREATION AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE REPORT.** Mrs Wheatley presented her report (Appendix 3).
6. **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT.** Mrs Worthington-Leese presented her report (appendix 4).
7. **FINANCIAL REPORT.** The figures for the financial year 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023 had been prepared for audit and had been presented to the Parish Council at its meeting on 26th April 2023. The unaudited accounts would be available for inspection by members of the public from Monday 4th June, by prior appointment with the Clerk.

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8. **PRESENTATION ON AIR QUALITY BY HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICERS.**
Unfortunately, Sustrans had been unable to attend the meeting but HDC Officers gave a presentation on air quality (Presentation slides attached to this document).

The Sussex Air website and Horsham District Council's web pages on Air Quality were highlighted as sources of information about how air pollutants are measured and monitored. The use of diffusion tubes and a description of the equipment in the monitoring station on Manleys Hill was explained. The audience heard that since the Air Quality Management Area was declared in 2010, the quality of air has improved to an extent that only one monitoring point (the roundabout at the bottom of Manleys Hill) continues to show exceedances of the Government's objectives.

Some Members of the Public expressed their scepticism at this information and questions were asked about whether measurements taken were daily or hourly averages and how the data was interpreted. HDC Officers explained that the reporting requirements are set by Government and the Council has a duty to comply with that policy although it was acknowledged that other organisation may have different standards. Revised objectives are due to be released by the Government soon but it is not clear when and what they may entail. One member of the public asked whether the measurements taken over the years are comparable or whether the apparent improvements are due to changes in the standards, and it was acknowledged that this may have been the case prior to 2014 when vehicle emissions testing took place in controlled conditions and not on the highways. Since then, there have been a number of projects to ease congestion in the village (such as changes to the junction at North Street, removal of parking bays on West Street and the introduction of a weight restriction on School Hill). These coupled with the manufacture of cleaner vehicles, have all contributed to reducing pollution levels.

Another member of the public suggested that the improved data may be distorted due to Covid but HDC Officers explained that there are graphs on the Air Quality web pages that demonstrate a year on year improvement and the data from 2020 and 2021 is not taken as representative of typical years.

Referring to the CCTV Survey undertaken on School Hill in 2022 to capture data about HGVs breaching the weight restriction, one member of the public commented that the installation of a permanent Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Camera should be considered to identify and fine those vehicles. There had been a bid to Defra to fund an ANPR camera last year but unfortunately this had been unsuccessful. It was hoped that the CCTV evidence could be used to add weight to a further application when the next funding window opens but HDC Officers did caution that the power to impose fines lies solely with the Police.

A member of the public enquired about the emissions from school buses and Mrs Worthington-Leese agreed that the age and condition of some of these were clearly contributing to pollution levels. She had approached WSCC some years ago, with a suggestion that companies only be invited to tender for the contract to supply school transport if their vehicles were compliant with the latest Euro standards. However, she was advised that this would be cost prohibitive, could cause some companies to decline to quote and ultimately cause a risk to the supply of school transport. That being said, it was agreed that the Parish Council would raise this matter again with WSCC.

The discussion then turned more generally to traffic related issues and these are summarised below.

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9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

- Traffic. A member of the public enquired about the Parish Council's position on the proposals for improvements to the A27 and Mrs Worthington-Leese responded that this project is vital in resolving much of the traffic related problems experienced in the village. She referred to a survey undertaken by the Air Quality Steering Group some years ago which found that 50% of vehicles travelling through Storrington High Street, were merely passing through the village and not stopping and whilst HGVs at that time, accounted for just 3% of the traffic, they were responsible for 30% of emissions. The Parish Council's position is that the introduction of a bypass is crucial in reducing the volume of traffic and it has therefore declared its support for the proposed route.
- Roadworks. Comments were made about the frequency of road works being undertaken in the Parish and the adverse impact upon congestion levels. County Councillor Marshall referred to the recent introduction of a Lane Rental Policy which focusses the utility companies to expedite the works in order to cause the least amount of disruption to road users. He explained that as different contractors are used to carry out certain stages of the repair, the previous process allowed for instances where the roads remained closed with no activity being undertaken. This new Lane Rental policy provides the company with a licence for a specified time and any delays beyond the agreed period are subject to penalties.
- Traffic Working Party. Mrs Worthington-Leese reported that the Parish Council would shortly be forming a Traffic Working Party. She cautioned that results may not be immediate as potential projects will need to be completely thought through in order not to displace the problems but assured the audience that the Parish Council would continue to seek ways to improve the various traffic and parking related issues in the Parish.
- Neighbourhood Wardens. One member of the public had earlier enquired about the future of the Wardens and it was announced that a public event would be held shortly to gather feedback from the community on whether the scheme should be extended beyond March 2024. Other methods of giving feedback include by email or telephone to the Parish Office. A decision on the matter would be made at the Parish Council meeting on 28th June. Those in attendance were asked to raise their hands if they were in support of extending the scheme and the vast majority did so.

No further matters were raised and so Mrs Worthington thanked everyone for attending and invited them to take refreshments.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Parish Council Annual Report 2023
Chairman: Councillor Anna Worthington-Leese

Welcome everyone. I will try to keep this fairly brief as we have a presentation about Air Quality from our colleagues at Horsham District Council, so we want to leave plenty of time for that.

This year was an election year and although we did not have an election but were elected unopposed, we have three new councillors, John, Mark and Andy so welcome to them. I hope they will take the time to familiarise themselves with the many issues that the council deals with so that they can make a positive contribution. Obviously that means we have lost several councillors, so I wish to thank Jim, Bob, Doug and Cheryl for their help and support during their time on the council.

We also had elections for the District Council and after more years than I care to count, Ray Dawe decided to stand down. He was a tremendous support to us as a parish, particularly in relation to planning matters and he will be greatly missed. James Wright also stood down, so we now have two district new councillors, so we welcome Emma and Claudia and congratulate them and also Joan who was re-elected. They are hoping to join us shortly after a meeting in Horsham.

This year we sadly had to respond to the death of Queen Elizabeth II which involved suspending council business for the mourning period and the tradition of reading the official proclamation of the new King in Place Villereest. I also attended the dedication of a headstone to a local man who died as a result of WWI but was never commemorated. He was known to be buried somewhere in St Mary's churchyard, but the exact location was unknown so his family – many of whom were at the ceremony – now have a tangible memorial to him.

A topic that evoked much public interest this year was the proposed closure of the car park at Kithurst Hill. This is in the National Park but privately owned and the owner felt unable to continue maintaining it. The SDNPA refused to take it over, so we were involved in negotiations with WSCC and HDC to try to prevent its closure and I am happy to say that those negotiations were successful and HDC has taken over the car park. Our wardens will continue to do periodic checks up there and report any issues back to HDC.

We continue to try to resolve various traffic issues – including the weight restriction on School Hill, which is regularly flouted. A camera survey in September identified some of the culprits and we continue to liaise with WSCC Highways to try to find a solution to this problem. Only recently the building at the bottom of School Hill was hit yet again – just after repairing the damage done the previous time and this is simply not acceptable. However, it is not as easy as you might think to stop this, but we continue to try...

Traffic and parking continue to be a problem and we are looking at setting up a Traffic working group to look at the village as a whole and see if anything can be done to improve matters.

Lastly, once again I would like to thank Tracey and Lauren for all their hard work and assistance over this last year, all councillors but in particular my Vice Chairman, Lisa, and the chairmen and vice chairmen of the various committees.

Infrastructure, Communications & Environment Committee Annual Report 2023

Chairman: Councillor Stuart Matthews

I am pleased to report that the committee had a busy 12 months. We welcomed Cllr. T Bennett to the committee and bid farewell to Cllr. D. Wilkins (stood down from council).

My thanks, as ever, goes to our Parish Clerk and Ass. Clerk for all their sterling work and much needed guidance and producing all the minutes from the meetings.

We engaged with the Sussex Pond Doctor, to get the Memorial Pond back to a good condition. They have done a marvellous job in cleaning up the pond and surrounding area. We have had the pumps and fountains replaced. The Pond Doctor has the maintenance contract.

Unfortunately, the Mill Pond by the library is owned by Horsham District Council and it is down to them for the maintenance etc of that pond.

Earlier this year, although it had been on the committee agenda for some time, we took a good look at how we communicate with the community. We acknowledge that the community maybe unaware of what is going on within Storrington & Sullington and cannot rely solely on the internet. We have recently re-engaged with Sussex Local to provide a more regular report from the council. Due to the cost of living crisis, we decided to stop producing our quarterly newsletter. The cost of printing wasn't the issue but the cost of getting it delivered to every household in the community, we felt was too much. This along with other methods will be reviewed over the coming year.

We have also seen the roll out of Ultra Fast Broadband within the community. Our thanks to Cllrs. D. Bentley & D. Wilkins for their brilliant work in engaging with some of the providers. It has to be said that some providers have not been forthcoming in wishing to communicate with the Parish Council, while others have fully engaged not only with us but the community. It is hoped that by the end of 2023 the whole of the parish will have access to Ultra Fast Broadband.

In the last 12 months we have hosted 3 very successful events, again a huge thank you to our Clerk & Ass. Clerk for their organisation of these events. Last year we had a brilliant day celebrating HM Queen Platinum Jubilee, with a dog show/competition, live acts on stage & stalls. Sadly in September, she passed away after an amazing 70+ years serving this country. We all came together when our Parish Council Chairman Cllr. A. Worthington-Leese read the Proclamation at Place Villarest.

We followed that event with a brilliant Christmas event. Slightly different this time around, we decided to go with Christmas trees on the businesses through the High Street, instead of the previous Christmas decorations. We subsidised the trees for the businesses and were pleased with the uptake. This decision was taken to again cut costs. The Anchor hosted stalls in their car park and we had stalls in Old Mill Drive & North Street. Thank you to all those business that took part in this event.

More recently, this month! We hosted a Coronation event, to celebrate the King's Coronation the day before. Thankfully this gave us an extra Bank Holiday weekend! Thank you to all that supported/attended this event. Thank you to the businesses that donated monies so the fair ground rides could be free for the younger members of our community.

I'm sure the next 12 months will be equally busy for the committee. My grateful thanks to all the committee members for their due diligence, guidance and support over the year. I hope this can be carried on in the next year.

Recreation and Property Committee Annual Report 2023
Chairman: Councillor Lisa Wheatley

Firstly, thank you to all members of the committee for their hard work, support and humour throughout the past year.

Unfortunately, several planned projects have been curtailed due to financial pressures, but the committee continues to prioritise issues and roll out ideas as appropriate.

In the light of rising fuel costs and the recognition of climate change, we commissioned energy audits for each of our buildings to determine how changes may benefit our spending and reduce our carbon footprint. Successful grant bids have resulted in improvements being carried out, ensuring better energy efficiency. There is still work to be done and this will be carried forward into the new council year.

A group formed to improve communications across the clubs that use the recreation ground continues to operate. Progress has been made in improving co-operation and feedback suggests that members find this approach useful.

The age of our pavilions mean that accessibility is an issue that demands the Councils attention. Work is ongoing to find permanent and cost-effective solutions that are in line with Councils budgets and user's expectations.

The committee have agreed to look into the feasibility of a youth council. A youth forum is the first step towards this goal and a youth survey is being undertaken to ascertain what young people in our parish would like as a provision. We work with the youth worker at Horsham and our wardens to gather this information and then evaluate the results.

Finally, many thanks to Tracey and Lauren for their support and hard work - very much appreciated!

Planning and Development Committee Annual Report 2023
Chairman: Councillor Anna Worthington-Leese

This year we have considered and responded to 124 applications, slightly down on last year's number. However, because of the ongoing water neutrality issue we are seeing mainly fairly minor applications and recently a fairly high number of tree applications. Here I would like to mention in particular Richard Jerman who, as our resident tree expert, looks at all trees when applications come in and guides the rest of the committee in their decisions, so I would like to thank him for the time he spends on this.

We have also collaborated with our neighbouring Washington Parish Council in relation to applications which come under the joint Neighbourhood Plan that we produced together. Currently we are supporting them in relation to an application to develop Old Clayton kennels and also in relation to the Rampion windfarm proposal.

Since this meeting last year, 4 new appeals have been lodged and of these one was dismissed and we are still awaiting decisions for the other three. There is a considerable backlog at the Appeal Inspectorate and decisions are taking anything up to a year or more to be decided. Of the appeals lodged in 2021/2022, prior to our last meeting, 5 were dismissed and 2 allowed.

The water neutrality issue is still ongoing and Horsham District Council are still working to try to find a solution to this so it is still affecting applications. As a result of this and other issues, the proposed new Local Plan being produced by HDC was suspended in February for the third time. As this was an election year and there are a large number of new councillors at Horsham, all of whom have to be trained and to familiarise themselves with things, it seems likely that the plan will be in abeyance for some time yet, but we are in regular touch with our district councillors on this matter and continue to fight unnecessary and inappropriate development on our green fields. Ordinarily this would leave the district exposed to speculative applications from developers looking to take advantage of there being no up-to-date plan, but water neutrality is effectively working to prevent this. This Parish Council is not of the opinion, like some, that any plan is better than no plan. We believe that the plan must be acceptable to the parishes who have to live with any development that comes forward and that the parishes should be involved in deciding where that development goes.

Planning does not simply involve responding to applications submitted. We also receive a large number of documents to read and consultations to respond to which take considerable amounts of time. As well as all this, we continue to campaign for a fairer distribution of the funding that comes with development. As you know, Storrington acts as a hub for surrounding villages that do not have their own services and/or shops. This means that when houses are built in our neighbouring villages, the CIL Money – community infrastructure levy – currently goes to those villages and we get nothing – despite providing those services and that infrastructure. This does not seem fair and we are trying to bring about a change for those villages like us that act as hubs.

Lastly I would like to thank Lauren for all of her work on planning. Despite the various issues and the still slow nature of applications, she has really got stuck in and applied herself to becoming familiar with the various aspects of planning. I would also like to thank Jim, my Vice Chairman last year, who stood down at election time, for his help and support over the last year and all members of the planning committee.