

HARTING PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the Meeting of Harting Parish Council held at Harting Community Hall
on **Thursday 21 September 2023** at **7.40 p.m.**

Present: Mr Shaxson (Chair), Mr Bonner, Mrs Bramley, Mrs Curran, Mr Miller, Mr Olphert and Mr Palmer.

Dr Kate O’Kelly attended in her role as County Councillor and Mr Tim O’Kelly attended in his role as District Councillor.

In attendance; Trish Walker, Parish Clerk.

There was one member of public in attendance.

111. Apologies for absence: Mrs Martin and Mrs Maxwell Davies.

112. Declarations of Interest: None.

113. Minutes from Meeting held on 22 August 2023.

The minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 22 August 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

114. Questions from the Public:

A member of public handed each councillor an extract from the minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 July 2019 and a letter from Gillian Keegan MP and the SDNPA dated 10 January 2022 and raised the following issues:

- There was a lot of bindweed in the Warren, strangling the trees, and no sign of the volunteers that were supposed to clear it all
- The public are not told what was going on

The Chair reiterated previous requests for the individual to persist from raising criticism and complaints about the Warren, some of which related to actions three years ago.

115. Matters of Urgent Public Importance: None.

116. Reports from the County and District Councillor

Dr O’Kelly, the County Councillor and Mr O’Kelly, the District Councillor, had circulated reports prior to the meeting.

Mr O’Kelly confirmed he had been to a meeting with the new Chair of Hyde Housing who had confirmed that other than the ‘Right to Buy’ the sale of Hyde houses in the District would be stopped unless they were in need of serious refurbishment. He also confirmed the 2023 review of parliamentary constituencies had now been laid before Parliament. This moves Harting parish council to the Arundel and South Downs Constituency with electoral matters being transferred to Horsham District Council.

Dr O'Kelly confirmed WSCC Highways had contacted the owners of the Egg Shack, positioned on the junction of the road joining the B2146 from West Harting, and asked them to remove the structure.

117. Committee Membership

Unfortunately, the Council has been short of two councillors since the elections in May 2023 and this has resulted in the various committees being short of members. This is a particular problem for the Planning Committee which could become inquorate as a result of absent councillors or members having to declare an interest in a particular application. Given the reasonably tight deadlines for the Council to submit consultee comments for applications and the importance of some applications to the whole community the members agreed that all members of the Council should become ex-officio members of the Planning Committee. This should ensure that sufficient members are available and there will always be a good representation for all meetings. As a result of this decision, it was agreed the planning committee terms of reference should be altered to reflect this change.

The members also agreed it would be beneficial for all members to undertake a bespoke training session for Planning, supplied by Mulberry & Co (providers of training for local councils). The session would be face to face and the trainer would tailor the session to include the impact of being within the South Downs National Park at a cost of £450 + vat and travel costs.

The following proposals were made and agreed:

- i. That all councillors will become ex-officio members of the Planning Committee*
- ii. That the wording of paragraph 5 of the Planning Committee Terms of Reference will be altered to read 'All members of the Council will be ex-officio members of the Planning Committee. In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Committee's chairman will be appointed by the Council at its annual meeting in May. At its first meeting following the Council's annual meeting, the Planning Committee will appoint its own vice-chairman.'*
- iii. That the Council agree to book a bespoke Planning training session from Mulberry & Co at a cost of £450+vat, plus travel costs if face to face.*

118. Tree issues on B2146 and footpath 3543

It was noted that the clerk, following the decision at the Council meeting on 22 August 2023, had contacted the two landowners to raise concerns about the 21 poplar trees alongside the B2146 and the hazard they pose to users of the road and footway. WSCC had also been notified.

The clerk had also contacted WSCC to raise concerns about the work to the ash trees growing on the land the County Council own next to the Village Path and Harting Brook. Some of the trunks had been left at about 15 foot tall and there are concerns they may eventually rot and fall, damaging property or pedestrians. WSCC had replied saying the WSCC arborist had instructed the contractors to leave tall stems as habitat and they would monitor them over the next few seasons for regeneration, with any remedial works prescribed and action taken.

It was noted neither of issues were the responsibility of Harting Parish Council.

The following proposal was made and agreed:

To note the report.

119. Parish Priority Statement Working Group (PPSWG)

The PPSWG had met and discussed various ways to engage the community which would include household leaflets, posters with QR codes for information, face to face meetings/workshops, village groups and societies as well as the Council website. It was also noted this level of engagement would not be possible by the SDNPA's initial deadline of 23 October 2023, especially as it had been an election year and most councils had held off any work on this until that point. SDNPA has indicated later deadlines could be negotiated and the PPSWG had initially requested an extension to the end of February 2023. A response to this request was awaited.

The following proposal was made and agreed:

To note the report

120. Completion of 2022/2023 External Audit

It was noted the external auditors, Moore had concluded the audit on 22 August 2023 and the Notice of Conclusion of Audit was posted to the Council website on 31 August 2023. There were no major issues raised in the audit.

The following proposal was made and agreed:

To note the completion of the 2022/23 External Audit.

121. Casual vacancies

The Casual vacancies resulting from the uncontested election on 4 May 2023 have not been filled and as a result the Casual Vacancy process has to be followed to ensure any future co-option is legal.

The clerk sent the public notification of vacancies to the Elections Department at Chichester District Council on 18 September 2023. This will run for 14 working days and if after this period there has been no call for an election, the Council can fill the vacancies by co-option.

An article will be placed in the October parish magazine, on village noticeboards and on the village website to advertise the vacancies.

The following proposal was made and agreed:

To note the report

122. Harting Community Hall (HCH)

As part of the ongoing refurbishment programme a deep clean of the hall was carried out in August with a focus on the high areas and to steam/de-grease the kitchen.

A local company, TPC, carried out this work at a cost of £750 + vat. The Hall Management Committee have requested this payment is made from the grant held in reserve.

The main entrance hall had been decorated during the summer months and new tables had been purchased from Roseland Furniture Ltd at a cost of £252.03 + vat. The payment was made by the Chair of HCH and will be refunded to him. The Hall

Management Committee have requested this payment is made from the grant held in reserve.

The members considered the requests and agreed to gift the items and works to the Hall Management Committee.

The following proposals were made and agreed:

- i. That the Council agree to gift the cost of the deep clean by The Petersfield Cleaning Services Ltd to Harting Community Hall at a cost of £750 + vat and this shall be offset against the Parish Council grant held in reserve.*
- ii. That the Council agree to gift the purchase cost of the new entrance hall tables from Roseland Furniture Ltd to Harting Community Hall at a cost of £252.03 + vat and this shall be offset against the Parish Council grant held in reserve.*

123. Data Protection Officer

Although there is not a legal requirement for parish councils to appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO), it is considered good practice to do so. The Council has appointed ProcessMatters2 since 2019 to ensure it is compliant with GDPR. The DPO provides monthly updates and would be a vital contact with the Information Commissioners Office if there was a data breach. The members agreed to appoint the DPO for a further year at a cost of £150 and noted this had not increased since 2019.

The following proposal was made and agreed:

That the Council agree to appoint ProcessMatters2 to continue as Data Protection Officer for a further year at the cost of £150 per annum

124. SDNPA Parish Workshop

The following proposal was made and agreed:

That the Council appoint Mrs Bramley and Mr Miller to attend the SDNPA parish workshop on Wednesday 4 October 2023.

125. Footpath closures – request from Trotton Parish Council

An email had been received from Trotton Parish Council asking the Council to support them in an approach to WSCC to stress the importance of keeping Rights of Way open and asking them to reconsider their decision to close any paths they cannot afford to clear. It was recognised that it is the landowners legal duty to keep paths clear, but this does not always happen. The members agreed keeping Rights of Way open was very important and whilst there were currently no known issues in the Harting parish, support should be given.

The following proposal was made and agreed:

that the Council confirm support for Trotton Parish Council in their approach to put pressure on West Sussex County Council to ensure public rights of way are not closed for due to financial pressures.

126. Review of Terms of Reference – Personnel Committee

The following proposal was made and agreed:

To note the Terms of Reference for the Personnel Committee have been reviewed by the Chair of that Committee and no changes are recommended.

127. Internet banking

The internet banking policy was reviewed and with a minor amendment to correct a typo, was agreed.

128. Habitual and vexatious complaints

The habitual and vexatious complaints policy was reviewed and agreed.

129. Health and Safety Risk management

The Health and Safety Risk management policy was reviewed and agreed.

130. Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan was reviewed and agreed.

131. Finance

131.1. The payments made in August were noted:

Undisclosed	Clerk and RFO Salary	1364.71
M H Kennedy & Son Ltd	Grass cutting	193.76
Trish Walker	Monthly Zoom subscription	15.59
Trish Walker	Kaspersky annual subscription	39.99
Mr P S Bramfitt	Fire Safety Ladder - Committee Room	786.25
Furniture@work Ltd	Folding tables - Committee Room	364.80

131.2. It was agreed that the following payments should be made:

Undisclosed	Clerk and RFO Salary	1,418.71
HMRC	Tax and NI contributions	398.64
Mark Adams	Materials for Committee Room Refurbishment	387.57
Trish Walker	Information Commissioner - Data Protection Fee	40.00
Moore	External Audit Fee	378.00
SLCC	Annual membership fee	198.00
Trish Walker	Monthly Zoom subscription	15.59
Harting War Memorial Playing Field	Lengthsman	186.00
The Petersfield Cleaning Company	Deep Clean Hall - HCH Grant	900.00
Mr Hugh Twiss	Chairs - Committee Room Refurbishment	383.88
Mr Hugh Twiss	Entrance Hall tables - HCH Grant	302.44
JNR Computer Services	Office 365 licences and annual IT support	2,379.84
M H Kennedy & Son Ltd	Grass cutting	193.76

131.3. It was agreed that Mr Miller and Mrs Bramley would authorise the August online payments.

131.4. There was no income to note for August 2023.

131.5. Bank Reconciliation for August 2023

It was noted that the bank reconciliation had been scrutinised and signed by the Chairman of the Finance Committee. The Chairman of the Council then signed the reconciliation in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

132. Bank balance as of 31 August 2023 - £88,266.59 (earmarked funds £41.3k)

133. Budget Statement to 31 August 2023

Noted.

134. Planning Committee

The minutes of the Planning Committees held on 20 July 2023 and 22 August 2023 were noted.

135. Feedback from WMPF and HCH representatives

There were no reports.

136. Correspondence

Letters sent to WSCC and landowners about the poplar trees alongside B2146 (see minute 118)

Letter sent to WSCC regarding the ash trees along FP3543 (see minute 118)

137. Clerk's report

The report was noted.

138. Items for future meetings

Council Facebook page

Social Media policy

Restoration of water pump

139. Date of next meeting: The next meeting would be held at 7.30pm on Thursday 19 October 2023 at Nyewood Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.33 pm.