



## Midhurst Town Council

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Minutes of a meeting of Midhurst Town Council held at Rosemary's Parlour, North Street, Midhurst on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 at 7pm

### MEMBERS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ✓ Mr M Purves Chairman of the Council<br>Rev. D Coote | ✓ Mr G McAra Vice Chairman of the Council<br>Mr N Cheshire |
| ✓ Ms J Fowler   | ✓ Mr G Evans   |
| ✓ Ms C Lintott Vice Chairman of the Council           | Mrs M Guest  |
| ✓ Mr J Quilter  | ✓ Mr S Morley  |
| ✓ Mrs T Truscott                                      | ✓ Mrs J Sutton   |
| ✓ Mr M Whittaker                                      | ✓ Mr G Upjohn  |

✓=Present

In attendance: Ms Ongley (Town Clerk). One member of the Press was present. No members of the public attended. County Councillor Dr Kate O'Kelly attended.

#### **127. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Rev Coote and Mr Cheshire. Mrs Guest was absent without apology.

#### **128. Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

#### **129. Representations from the Public**

##### **i. Members of the public**

There were none.

##### **ii. WSCC Councillor – Dr Kate O'Kelly gave a report.**

##### **Soft Sand Review**

Cllr O'Kelly noted that this item was on the agenda for later in the meeting. The consultation is to enable all interested parties to comment on potential approaches to maintaining a steady and adequate supply of soft sand. She had asked for a meeting with the planning and infrastructure team at WSCC for a briefing and for an opportunity to express the views of the different parishes. Her view is that clearly there is a need for a supply of soft sand as it is an essential raw material used widely in the construction industry. WSCC are looking at all the options which include sourcing from outside the region, as well as from within West Sussex, but outside the National Park.

In view of the primary objective of the National Park being enhancing and conserving the natural beauty and wildlife, the bar should be extremely high to consider digging for sand within the Park. They should be exploring all the other avenues first and only source from within the park in the last resort. The possible development of new sites, or expansion of old ones, is a significant concern for local residents in view of the negative environmental impact. An increase in heavy lorries would be the primary concern but also loss of habitat and the damaging effect that it would have on the natural beauty of the areas concerned.

Dated this 18<sup>th</sup> February 2019.....Chairman



**A27**

Highways England (HE) has rejected the application to upgrade the A27 in the next round of funding. Both options, the mitigated Northern bypass and the Southern option, have been deemed unworkable. HE has said the Northern option would be against the National Planning policy and unlikely to get approval. Estimated cost of the Northern route would be £480million. For the mitigated southern option, HE have said it is not technically buildable, with challenging construction, and with significant cost implications estimated at £500million. Both options were deemed not to deliver value for money. MP and leaders of both councils are meeting with Secretary of State on 25<sup>th</sup> January to chart a way forward.

**Bus Update**

A threat exists currently to reduce bus routes and services across the County. The WSCC Cabinet member has made his decision: a £300k cut from the subsidized bus routes, subject to the budget being adopted in February 2019. Bus operators were to be informed in January. WSCC has still not yet published the routes to be cut or reduced. The next local cross parish group meeting is on March 12<sup>th</sup> in Compton.

**Budget**

WSCC budget has been published and will be debated in Full Council on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Proposal is to increase the WSCC precept by 4.99%, including 2% ring-fenced for social care.

**Health and Adult Social Care Select committee**

The Committee had scrutinised South East Coast Ambulance Trust's rating across all services. Five areas were covered including safety, effective, responsive and well-led all requiring improvement. They were rated good on caring. Issues have been raised locally concerning very poor response times particularly in rural areas. SECAMB presented CCG wide data, but she felt this was not good enough as it provided average response times, and quicker response times in urban areas obscure what she suspects, which is very poor response times in rural areas. Average SECAMB data shows Category 1 incidents are responded within an average of 7.11 minutes, (National Target is 7), Category 2 in 19.24 minutes (18), Category 3 in 3.13 hours (2 hours) and Category 4 in 4.12 hours (3 Hours). Category 3 and 4 times are well below the national average. She requested to see the data broken down locally. This is essential so that the public can see this transparently, and only then will it be clear that more resource is required. There are also cross-border issues. She raised the issue of the neighbouring Trust in Hampshire and whether it is possible for them to help out if an ambulance is near the border. This already happens for Category 1 incidents but not for any other of the categories. She has requested that they consider this.

Mr McAra stated there is still an urgent need to get a response hub for the Ambulance Service in Midhurst. The town has been continually let down by SECAMB and he wants MTC to write to them again for an update, as they have not responded to our enquiry for some months. He stated that it is a poor organization. Mr Quilter agreed that they had promised a strategic post in Midhurst as mitigation for removing the ambulance station, and they had reneged on their promise. Midhurst people need reassurance. Mr Morley noted that there will be more need for the ambulance service in the future should a care home be built in Midhurst resulting in an older average population.

**Kate's Drop Ins**

Midhurst – The Grange – 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 10.30-12.30



**iii. CDC Councillors**

Mr McAra reported that the final Council Tax demands will be published by CDC in February. There is likely to be a shortfall, and they are awaiting input from a government experiment of offering 75% of the business rates to help with the shortfall.

Mr McAra reported that CDC will be spending £5.25million renovating St James Business Park, which needs essential work. This indicates the continuing imbalance of the way CDC money is spent in the city centre and not in outlying areas of the district.

Mr Morley echoed Cllr O’Kelly’s concerns about the A27 decision, and that the A272 is being used increasingly as a short cut or rat run.

Mr Morley reported that Cllrs Tony and Pam Dignum from CDC recently accepted an invitation from Midhurst Society to talk with Midhurst residents. He understands that they suggested that MTC and residents generally had not made their feelings known regarding the proposed care home at the Grange site. Mr Morley takes great exception to this inference, as he and many other people had let CDC know their feelings very clearly, and yet all their messages had been ignored. He understands that the audience are apparently convinced now that CDC deliberately did not take into account the views of Midhurst people before they made the decision for this sale. He also understands that the SDNPA has recently issued a statement in the pre-application advice that a care home on the site would likely be an acceptable scheme in principle, as it is an acceptable town centre use. The pre-planning advice refers to the application as a Residential Nursing Home, yet CDC refers to it always as a Care Home. The two are very different in usage. He urged all Councillors to read the SDNPA documents for pre-planning advice online. He shall keep asking why they and he (Mr Dignum) think a Care Home is appropriate and how this development can offer anything positive to the economic viability and social vitality of the town. He shall continue to try and reverse this decision to accept this particular offer and look hard for another tender for the type of development that Midhurst residents have repeatedly informed him is needed. He will be at a District full council meeting tomorrow and may have more to report next month.

**Minutes of the meeting 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

Mr Quilter proposed the adoption of the minutes, Mrs Sutton seconded, all agreed and adopted as a true record.

**130. Matters arising from the minutes of 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

125.8 – Mrs Sutton asked if the get-together with Easebourne Parish Council was progressing. The Clerk will follow this up.

125.6 – Mr Morley asked if there was any further information available about the function of the Dog Wardens in Midhurst. The Clerk has written to them to ask if they will attend a future Community and Environment Committee meeting to talk about what they do, and is awaiting a response. She will follow it up, and intends to get someone to a meeting in February, March or April.

**131. Minutes of Planning & Infrastructure Committee Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019**



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Mr Whittaker proposed the adoption of the minutes, Mr Upjohn seconded, all agreed and adopted as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

### **132. Minutes of Finance, Asset & Policy Committee Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

Mrs Sutton proposed the adoption of the minutes, Mr Morley seconded, all agreed and adopted as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

### **133. Midhurst Vision Group Developments**

Mr Morley gave a report from last week's meeting of the Midhurst Vision Group (MVG). CDC had previously publicised that at this meeting decisions would be made about how the £12.5k could be spent or how it might be allocated to various town vision ventures. Subsequent to the town branding briefing of the previous week organised by Philippa of VISIT MIDHURST, this funding from CDC became the subject of a lively debate. Should the group be spending money on a branding exercise or nominating existing programmes such as painting and cleaning signs, bollards and street furniture?

Tania Murphy of CDC explained that she could not guarantee that this year's grant money would be rolled over to next year's budget. This focused the thoughts of those at the meeting and it was proposed and then agreed that the first quarter of the grant should be released now. It was understood that this would be an initial payment to engage a company to deliver a branding exercise for Midhurst. Mr Morley then delivered an update on the town's highway review. He explained that MTC has budgeted for a SID (Speed Indicator Device), are researching the possibility of carrying out their own review of residents' and traders' opinions as opposed to engaging a transport consultant, the apparent ongoing and worsening traffic flow problems in North Street and the complaints these incur. He also spoke of the air pollution problem and other town highway matters. As a result he was pleased to hear from CDC that one of the hoped for "quick fixes" was being progressed in that there should be replacement car park signs later this year. Tania Murphy is progressing this.

Other topics such as Place, Business Development, Town Promotions and Community Activities were also reported on to a lesser degree. He added that a new group had emerged separately to the MVG, called the Midhurst Business Network, whose first meeting is on 12<sup>th</sup> February at the Bricklayers Arms. This is aimed at the wider business community.

Mrs Truscott, who had attended the meeting, stated that the aims of MVG are not just about branding, but also about place and vision for the whole town, not just commercial developments. The majority of the group thought an independent outside view from a skilled consultant would help in facilitating the workshops. However, it is still not clear who is running the Vision itself.

Mr McAra stated that MVG will not work properly in its current incarnation. CDC decided to restart the group and expected MTC to run it, without asking and without offering any extra resources. MVG last week looked at starting the whole process again from scratch. Many thousands of pounds were spent 10 years ago to achieve what CDC are proposing all over again. This needs the whole town to be involved, and currently this is not happening. It is a large and complex process with a small budget, and only MTC to do the work, with its already stretched and meagre resources. CDC is likely to want match funding for any monies spent, and MTC has already committed not to fund the MVG in its forthcoming budget. If MVG wants to proceed it must be



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handed back to CDC for funding and support, as they have full-time officers and resources MTC does not have. Only then will it work properly.

Mr Morley reported that Malcolm Allen, the consultant at the meeting, stated that it is least likely to succeed if it is led by a Council. Mr Morley agreed with Mr McAra's points. When Midhurst Society representatives attended MVG, they felt it was not something the Society wanted to get involved with. If organisations such as this do not get involved, it will fall onto the shoulders of a few individuals to drive it forward, and he is unsure who those individuals would be. He also stated that meetings should be held in the evenings in order for all sections of the community to have the opportunity to attend.

Mr Quilter stated that last time, although a large number of people were interested at the start, by the end of the process it had dwindled to a small group of MTC and CDC Councillors. To be meaningful it needs to involve a wider group of people and be driven by someone with passion and also resources. It will not happen naturally and will have to be driven.

Mrs Truscott also attended the meeting and she felt the proposal was not to reset, but to recognise that things have moved on since the last Vision was created, and to approach it with fresh eyes and add new items.

Ms Lintott stated that its intention was always to consult with and involve the wider community.

Mr McAra reported that Petworth Town Council has refused to adopt the Petworth Vision. He said he is not trying to kill the Vision, but he feels it must be done properly and funded properly.

Mr Quilter stated that the financial situation of the world is very different now from 10 years ago, therefore you can't bolt onto the old Vision. There is no group of people available to make things happen.

Mr Purves stated that there is evidently a problem with the Vision and this is why MTC has resisted it so far. Everyone else in the process can walk away from it, but MTC cannot. MTC has its own projects to achieve. The CDC funding on offer of £12,500 is a small amount of resourcing for potentially a lot of work. MTC does not necessarily have to drive it forward. He approves the idea in principle, but the reality is not viable, and it will be difficult to deliver anything meaningful. He wanted the document to be a working, relevant document, which people use whenever a development occurs within the town.

Mr Quilter stated that the original funding for MVG was £80,000. This time the funding is not enough to justify all the work.

Mr Morley is not convinced there is appetite enough in the town to take it forward.

Mr McAra stated that Midhurst is being offered £12,500 whereas a total of £15million is being spent in the Chichester city centre.

Mr Purves wanted MTC to agree a position regarding its level of engagement in the MVG. He proposed that MTC adopts the following position: That MTC remains a stakeholder in the Vision process, but does not chair the group or drive the Vision forward, and that MTC urges CDC to allocate sufficient funding and resources to drive it forward. Mr McAra seconded, all agreed to this proposal. The Clerk will write to CDC to summarise MTC's position.

### **134. WSCC Soft Sand Review**

Cllr O'Kelly from WSCC had forwarded a consultation document on the Issues and Options Consultation ENV12 18/19. Three of the nine possible sites are near or within Midhurst. The closing date for the consultation is 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Mr Purves proposed that the Consultation be referred to the Planning and Infrastructure



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Committee to consider, to compile a response, and to report back to Full Council. Mr Evans seconded, all were in favour.

### **135. Reports on documents received & meetings attended**

**135.1** The Clerk read out a report from Rev Coote in his absence. He had attended the Midhurst Society meeting with CDC Councillors Tony Dignum, leader of CDC, and Pam Dignum. Residents had submitted questions in advance. Many of these questions expressed concern about the old Grange site, and ranged over 9 themes including planning issues, parking, housing, emergency services and South Pond. The answers given revealed a real disconnect between the CDC Councillors and the aspirations of Midhurst residents, especially evident in the conversation concerning the Grange site. Many of the questions could have been answered by Midhurst's own District Councillors, and all the issues raised had been discussed by MTC in the past year or two. MTC meetings also often have the WSCC Councillor present. In the light of this experience, Rev Coote wished to see the regular agenda item "Representations from the public" changed to "Representations and questions to the Council by members of the public", with questions submitted to the Clerk in advance, and no more than 15 to 20 minutes allocated to this item each meeting.

Ms Fowler commented that the public is generally not aware that MTC discusses these subjects and that more public awareness is needed.

**135.2** The Clerk reported that the office had received 3 thank you letters from recent grant recipients – Revitalise, Midhurst Area Cycling, and South Pond Group.

**135.3** Mr Morley reported that he had attended a meeting to discuss the future of Dunford House, the historic home of Richard Cobden, and whether it could be saved for its heritage value. Since becoming involved, the great- great- great-grandson of Richard Cobden, Nick Cobden Wright has been working to form a group of trustees who would continue to run and manage Dunford House. in the way that was intended in 1952 when it was endowed to the YMCA. He would like to create a trust that reflects the YMCA's principles and values, for example, this trust would continue their work by restoring 30 bedrooms and creating links with local charities. He explained his plans and ideas on how to achieve this. However, he first needs to convince the YMCA that a Cobden Foundation/Trust would offer a better future for Dunford House than putting it on the open market. This is where MTC could help by writing a letter of support for his plans. Mr Morley expressed a wish to see the Community and Environment Committee discussing this subject and writing to the current owners, the YMCA, to show support for keeping the house as a historic asset rather than selling it for housing development.

**135.4** Mr Morley had attended the joint meeting of The Arun and Rother Rivers Trust and The Rother Valley farmers Group on January 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. The meeting was held in a barn on Kilsham Farm south of Petworth. They walked and talked and were given presentations on river bank rebuilding, the importance of their restoration of gravel flows for fly and fish life and witnessed demonstrations of how soil erosion can be halted while at the same time preventing a build-up of soil in the rivers. This last item became the one Mr Morley was most interested in since he could see they might offer a solution to Midhurst's own problem of the silt build-up in South Pond. He therefore took the opportunity to invite two Water Catchment Sensitive Farming engineers to meet him at South Pond later that same day. He also took them to the top of the stream that runs in to South Pond, i.e. the fields on the other side of the road from the Holmbush



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Industrial Estate. They agreed to meet again once they had had time to consider the problem more fully. Hopefully next time they can arrange for members of the South Pond Group and more Councillors to be in attendance. They have some exciting ideas on how to at least slow down or even almost halt the flow of sand/silt/soil etc from the fields that surround Midhurst and hence assist in creating the problems that manifest themselves at South Pond. This method of "filtering" the sediment could help save CDC much in the way of dredging costs in the future. He shall be happy to share his notes with whoever wants to pursue this project with him and intends to forward this information to the South Pond Group and the relevant CDC officers.

- 135.5** Mrs Truscott reported that she had attended a South Pond Group meeting. They had announced the 2019 programme of tasks for the volunteers. They are looking for a fundraising volunteer for major works. They are also reviewing roles within the group to make it more sustainable.
- 135.6** Mrs Truscott had attended a Town Team CIC meeting, from which the Business Network idea had arisen. They discussed potential arrangements for the Street Party this Christmas, and the possible extension of Christmas lighting into Knockhundred Row and Church Hill, not necessarily to be funded by MTC.
- 135.7** Ms Lintott reported that she and Mrs Truscott had attended the Grange drop-in session last Saturday. One member of the public who had previously complained of fast and dangerous traffic in Ashfield Road returned to report that recent roadworks in the town had resulted in it being gridlocked, where drivers and residents nearly came to blows. Another member of the public had complained of no footpath nor lighting at Holmbush Industrial Estate, where school children walk to school in the dark. Concerns are for their safety, particularly as tractors park on the grass verge where they would walk. As this is a private road, Ms Lintott had suggested that residents write to the freeholder to ask them to make improvements to safety. Another member of the public expressed concerns about the old Grange site becoming a Care Home, and the resulting strain on medical resources in the town. They suggested any company running such a facility should employ their own medical staff.

### **136. Matters of Report**

- 136.1** Mrs Sutton had received a list of dates from the Assistant Clerk for the 2019 Grange drop-in sessions, and urged all Councillors to fill in dates they can attend.
- 136.2** Mrs Sutton reported that she is now involved in the 2019 Carnival preparation, and that the theme this year will be The Birds and the Bees. She intends to approach all clubs and societies in the town to encourage participation, and would appreciate any input from other Councillors regarding contacts with other organisations.
- 136.3** Mr McAra reported that progress was being made with the Old Library works. He had circulated photos to Councillors.

### **137. Signing of Cheques**

Ms Lintott and Mr Morley signed 2 cheques.

With no further business the meeting closed at 8.20pm.