**A meeting of Midhurst Town Council took place on**

**Monday 17th April 2023 at 7:00pm at the Midhurst Town Council Offices,**

**Old Library, Knockhundred Row, Midhurst, GU29 9DQ**

**MINUTES**

**Present**: Cllr C. Lintott, Cllr D. Coote, Cllr J. Travers, Cllr D. Merritt, Cllr R. Watts, Cllr J Hensey, Cllr D. Fraser, Cllr D. Smallman, and Cllr J. Sutton

**In attendance**: Sharon Hurr, Town Clerk and one member of the public, Mr S. Morley.

**C/252/23 – Chairman’s Announcement:** The Chairman opened the meeting by congratulating those elected to the new term for Midhurst Town Council and gave the following statement:

For those Councillors who decided not to stand, there is still time to change your mind and stand for co-option!

For those leaving the Council thank you all for your service to the town; Glyn, who has been a Councillor since 2003, twenty years a Councillor and he has seen many changes during that time. Jeanette has been a Councillor since 2015 and has been at the helm for many projects while also serving as my Vice Chairman for two years; Laura & Debbie have been Councillors since 2019; Nigel since 2020 and Jane since October last year.

As I said in Midhurst Matters, I am very proud of the Council’s many achievements during my 16 years as a Councillor. Despite the challenges, the pandemic and now the terrible fire on North Street, Midhurst will continue to punch above its weight, its wonderful community spirit and resilience will ensure it remains a very special place in which to live, work and visit.

I would like to thank Sharon, without whom the Council would surely grind to a halt, and Jess and Chris for their support.  Thank you also to all the Councillors I have worked with, past and present; please know that you all have been, or still are, part of a wonderful team of volunteers doing the very best for your community.

Finally, I wish the incoming Council all the very best for the future.

**C/253/23 – Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were given by Cllr G. McAra, and Cllr N. Yeo. Cllr G. Upjohn was absent with apology.

**C/254/23 - Declarations of Interest:** None

Meeting halted for Public Participation Session

**C/255/23 - Public Participation Session:** Mr Morley wished to bring the traffic review work undertaken 2018 to the attention of the Council in light of the current North Street road closure due to the fire which took place on 17th March 2023. County Councillor O’Kelly was able to confirm that since the review, many meetings had taken place with both West Sussex County Council highways officers and the Midhurst Vision Partnership to discuss the future of North Street, and Deacon Designs the consultants engaged, had taken this work into consideration. Councillor O’Kelly did however highlight the complexity of future planning for this area of the town.

Meeting reconvened.

**C/256/23 - Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2023 were proposed by Cllr Coote, seconded by Cllr Merritt, agreed by all present and adopted.

**C/257/23 - Matters Arising from those Minutes:** None.

**C/258/23 - Report from County and District Councillors:**

* **West Sussex County Councillor Kate O’Kelly** – Report circulated prior to the meeting and no further information was sought. Cllr O’Kelly added that meetings were currently paused, and cited the progress of speed limited (30mph) Traffic Regulation Order for Woolbeding. Cllr O’Kelly also advised that when the formal consultation for Ashfield Road (plan to implement one way traffic for the whole length of the road) was in progress, that the Council should resubmit its comments. Cllr O’Kelly confirmed , she would advise the Officers that there is likely to be a high level of objection from the residents of Heathfield Gardens who would find their private road used as a rat run to circumnavigate a total one way on Ashfield Road.
* **District Councillor Gordon McAra** – Report circulated prior to the meeting and no further information was sought. Cllr Merritt commented that as Cllr McAra was not standing at the May District Council elections a vote of thanks should be given for his work in representing the Town, which was agreed by all present.

**C/259/23 – Finance, Asset and Policy Committee:** The minutes and questions relating to the Minutes and adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2023 were adopted by Council as proposed by Cllr Hensey, seconded by Cllr Watts and agreed by all present.

**C/260/23 - Planning and Infrastructure Committee:** Minutes of 13th March 2023 were adopted by Council as proposed by Cllr Merritt, seconded by Cllr Fraser and agreed by all present.

**C/261/23 - Planning and Infrastructure Committee:** Minutes of 27th March 2023 were adopted as proposed by Cllr Fraser, seconded by Cllr Watts and agreed by all present.

**C/262/23 -** **Community and Environment Committee:** The meeting of the Committee on 13th March 2023 was postponed.

**C/263/23 – Lilac Cottage Update:** Cllr Watts reported thatinitial quotations were still awaited for asbestos removal, and damp resolution.

Prior to the meeting, an email from the Community Hub following the meeting with Cllr Hensey and Cllr Watts was circulated. Cllr Watts explained how he considered the Council should respond; to correct some of misinterpreted assumptions and to confirm that the Council was committed to providing an appropriate base for the hub, provided the necessary planning permission for change of use was agreed and once the building was repaired to provide suitable working accommodation.

**Action:** Cllr Watts to respond to the Community Hub.

**C/264/23 –** **Review of outstanding actions:** None

**C/265/23** - **Reports from Outside Meetings:** Cllr Coote confirmed that he and Cllr Fraser had

attended the MADhurst AGM at which a thank you and farewell was given to the outgoing

Chairman Mrs Brown-Fuller who had done an excellent job. Cllr Coote added that the

programme for the coming year was very good and that he would like to thank MADhurst for its

positive contribution to the life of the town, which was agreed by all present. Cllr Fraser

confirmed he had also attended the recent Chichester District Council/South Down National Park

drop-in information sessions held following the North Street fire in a personal capacity.

**C/266/23 – North Street Fire Update:** The Chairman confirmed that the budget had been

reviewed by Cllr Travers, Cllr Watts and the clerk and had been able to take funds from other

budget lines to allocate up to £5,000 to recovery of Midhurst following the fire.

The Chairman reported that she had attended further Recovery Group meetings with the current

main theme focusing on there not yet being a firm date for construction work. South Downs

National Park would be meeting with the owners and their insurers on the morning of 19th April

2023, and therefore further information should be available at the next Recovery Group Meeting

on the afternoon of the 19th April. Work was also in progress on a Frequently Asked Questions

(FAQ) list.

The Chairman highlighted to the Recovery Group the importance of adhering to the six-week

timeline (from 3rd April 2023) for work to be undertaken to enable the road to be opened. The

free car parking had in part been used as 24-hour parking by residents, and had therefore limited

the availability of parking for those visiting the town. Chichester District Council had however

issued residents of Angel Yard with parking permits. Mike Thomas, West Sussex County Council

highways officer would also be meeting with Cowdray Estate, and Boots the Chemist regarding

access.

Motorcyclists breaking the rules to ‘ride’ around the safety hoarding should be reported via

Operation Crackdown. The North Mill, road closure signs had also been changed to state ‘road

ahead closed’. Forensic work was in progress to establish the cause of the fire but safety issues

were hindering this process. In response to Councillors’ questions, the Chairman reported that

much of process going forward with regards to the Angel building would be the responsibility of

the owners and their insurers but appreciated the frustrations being caused. The Chairman

concluded that many people were working hard to resolve the issues being experienced.

**C/267/23 - Matters of Report:** Cllr Watts thanked all Councillors for their work, Cllr Fraser added his thanks to Councillors for their time and commitment. Cllr Merritt thanked the Chairman for her many years as a Town Councillor and added that the previous Chairman, Mr Purves, had particularly asked for his thanks to be passed to the Chairman. Cllr Coote further thanked the Chairman and those who had been part of the Council.

**C/268/23 Date of Next Meeting –** To be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 7.47pm.

Signed………………………………………………………… Dated……………………………………….

Chairman