**Meeting of Midhurst Town Council took place on**

**Monday 23rd October at 7:30pm in**

**Midhurst Town Council Offices, Old Library, Knockhundred Row, Midhurst, GU29 9DQ**

**MINUTES**

**Present**: Cllr D Coote, Cllr M Facer, Cllr D Fraser, Cllr A Lambert, Cllr G McAra, Cllr D Merritt, Cllr J Travers and Cllr R Watts (Chairman).

**In attendance**: S Hurr, Town Clerk, Chichester District Councillor H. Burton, County Councillor K. O’Kelly, and one member of the public.

**C/081/23 Chairman’s Announcements:** The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting.

**C/082/23 Apologies for Absence:** None, all present.

**C/083/23** **Declarations of Interest:** None

Meeting halted for Public Participation Session

**C/084/23 - Public Participation Session:** Mr Beckexplained that he did not believe the Town Clock was functioning.

**Action:** The Clerk to contact the Clerk to the Town Trust to ascertain the current condition of the Town Clock.

Mr Beck further commented that he felt further maintenance was required on the hedges and grass at the Cemetery. The Chairman explained that further maintenance work was planned.

Meeting reconvened.

**C/085/23 - Minutes of the Previous Meetings:** The minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2023 were proposed by Cllr Merritt, as a correct record, seconded by Cllr McAra, agreed by all present and adopted.

Cllr Facer requested that minutes were forwarded to Councillors following the Chairman’s approval of the draft.

**Action:** The Clerk to forward minutes of meetings to all Councillors following Chairman’s approval of the draft minutes.

**C/086/23 - Matters Arising from those Minutes:** None.

**C/087/23 Report from County, and District Councillors.** A report from Cllr O’Kelly had been circulated prior to the meeting. Councillors sought clarification regarding the budget allocation for adult social care and child mental health support services. Cllr O’Kelly, confirmed that the budget was being carefully considered and any potential cuts scrutinised. Cllr O’Kelly further commented that those taking responsibility for this area of the County Council’s work were of high calibre which provided reassurance and the focus would be directed at those who were most vulnerable. Advocacy services had ended in the summer, which brought concerns regarding the negative impact on those who were using the service. Cllr O’Kelly added that the importance of providing timely mental health services to children would ensure a reduced/limited impact on those individuals in adulthood and therefore had to be considered as a significant priority. Cllr O’Kelly further added that appropriate data pertaining to such services was available to the County Council.

A report from Cllr Burton had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Burton drew specific attention to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund Grants Programme cited within her report.

**C/088/23 Finance, Asset, Community and Environment Committee:** Minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2023 were proposed by Cllr Lambert as a correct record, seconded by Cllr Travers, agreed by all present and adopted.

**C/089/23 Planning and Infrastructure Committee:** Minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2023 were proposed by Cllr Merritt as a correct record, seconded by Cllr Travers, agreed by all present and adopted.

**C/090/23** **Reports from Outside Meetings:**  None.

**C/091/23 Conclusion of Notice of Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022-23**

The Clerk detailed the comments provided by the External Auditor:

*On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with the Proper Practices and no other matter have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.*

*Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw the attention of the authority:*

*Incomplete information was provided with initial supporting data submitted for review with regards to significant variance, which was later provided on request. The parish council should in future ensure that all the necessary supporting information is provided with their annual submission.*

**C/092/23 Annual Donations:** Forms had been completed and received by three of the four organisations allocated within the budget to receive funds. Following a debate regarding whether other organisations should be included within the donations list, it was proposed to add The British Legion Poppy Appeal to the list, hold the Midhurst Tourism allocation pending receipt of their form, and provide donations (listed below) by Cllr Travers, seconded by Cllr Facer and agreed by all:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organisation** | **Amount** |
| The Royal British Legion Poppy (purchased wreath and large poppies = £55) | £135 |
| Midhurst Green Volunteers | £1,500 |
| Midhurst Youth Trust | £3,000 |
| Rother Valley Together | £3,000 |
| Total | £7,635 |

**Action:** The Clerk to process the payments allocated.

Cllr Coote further requested another Councillor to join the (ad hoc) Grants Panel which will shortly advise full Council regarding allocations to organisations which have submitted application forms for ad hoc funding. It was agreed that the Grants Panel would consist of Cllrs Coote, Merrit, Travers and Lambert.

**C/093/23 Twinning Garden Show 2025 (and further request for Twinning):** The Chairman reported that the Council had received a request from Baiersbronn to include a garden dedicated to Midhurst within their 2025 Garden Show. The Chairman also reported that a request had been received from Lassay-les-Chateaux, for Midhurst to consider a twinning arrangement. Following a short debate, it was agreed to discuss the invitations with residents currently involved with twinning, and include this item on the next Council meeting agenda.

**Action:** The Chairman to discuss the twinning invitations with residents currently involved with twinning, within the town, and report back to the next meeting of the full Council on 27th November 2023.

**C/094/23 Midhurst Vision Update:** The Chairman reported that there was no further update at this time.

**C/095/23 Pest House Charity request for Trustees:** The Chairman reported that the Pest House Charity was seeking further Councillors to become trustees alongside Cllr Travers. Both Cllrs Merritt and Lambert agreed to become Trustees for the Pest House Charity.

**Action:** The Clerk to inform the Clerk of the Pest House Trust, that Cllrs Merritt and Lambert would join the charity as Trustees.

The Chairman requested that the Council enter a closed session which was agreed by all. Cllr O’Kelly and Burton, and the member of the public left the meeting.

*Cllrs O’Kelly and Burton left the meeting and did not return.*

The meeting reconvened and the member of the public returned to the meeting.

**C/097/23 Matters of Report:** Cllr Travers reported an abandoned vehicle.

**Action:** Cllr Travers to provide the Clerk with details of the abandoned vehicle which the Clerk will report to West Sussex County Council.

Cllr Coote explained that two trees by the Fire Station had died and would be replaced, with one being planted in memory of a highly valued and committed member of Midhurst Green Volunteers. The Green Volunteers were also raising funds for the tree/s. Cllr added that a small ‘in memory’ plaque would be ordered for the appropriate tree.

The Clerk reported that a number of staffing policies were being prepared for adoption at a future meeting of the Council.

**Date of Next Meeting:** 7.30pm, 27th November 2023

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.

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

Chairman