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

**Monday 27th November 2023 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) M Haywood (Deputy Town Clerk) Chichester District Councillor H Burton, and two members of the public.

**C/093/23 Chairman’s Announcements:** The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting.

**C/094/23 Apologies for Absence:** An apology had been received from County Councillor Kate O’Kelly.

**C/095/23** **Declarations of Interest:** None

Meeting halted for Public Participation Session

**C/096/23 - Public Participation Session:** The members of the public were invited to address the Town Council but did not wish to do so.

Meeting reconvened.

**C/097/23 - Minutes of the Previous Meetings (and actions):** The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2023 were proposed by Cllr Merritt, as a correct record, seconded by Cllr Facer, agreed by all present and adopted.

Cllr Watts confirmed that he had met with Judy Fowler regarding the request for twinning received from Lassay-les-Chateaux, and from Baiersbronn to establish a garden dedicated to Midhurst within their 2025 Garden Show. Cllr Watts will also aim to organise a meeting with Colin Hughes to discuss this matter.

**Action:** Cllr Watts to arrange a meeting with Colin Hughes, and the Clerk to forward holding responses to each Council.

All other actions were reviewed and completion confirmed.

**C/098/23 - Matters Arising from those Minutes:** None.

**C/099/23 Report from County, and District Councillors.** A report from Cllr Burton had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Burton reported that the smaller vehicles employed for green bin collections in narrow locations were being decommissioned, and she had attended a ‘River Rother Summit’, convened to consider necessary remedial works to remove silt, and reduce sewage resulting from ground water. Such works may include introduction of reed beds, habitat restoration and highway installations to reduce run-off of ground water. Cllr Coote drew attention to the issues of removal and disposal of silt from South Pond. In response to a question from Cllr Fraser, Cllr Burton confirmed that Southern Water engineers had been present at the Summit.

A report from Cllr O’Kelly had been circulated prior to the meeting, and there were no further requests for clarification at this time.

**C/100/23 Finance, Asset, Community and Environment Committee:** Minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2023 were proposed by Cllr Travers as a correct record, seconded by Cllr Coote, agreed by all present and adopted.

**C/101/23 Planning and Infrastructure Committee:** Minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2023 were proposed by Cllr Travers as a correct record, seconded by Cllr Merrit, agreed by all present and adopted.

Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October 2023 were proposed by Cllr Merritt as a correct record, seconded by Cllr Facer, agreed by all present and adopted.

**C/102/23 Midhurst Vision:** Cllr Watts had circulated a short report prior to the meeting and proposed relocation of the ‘A to Z’ signage from outside The Grange Centre to another position and installation of a new clearer sign to the car Park, alongside a brown Tourist sign identifying a route to the Old Town of Midhurst, which was seconded by Cllr McAra and agreed by all present. Following a further discussion regarding potential new signage, Cllr Coote suggested that as the South Pond Group were currently considering renewal of their signage, that a consistent design would provide a more cohesive appearance within the location. Cllr Lambert further commented regarding the lack of signage to St Ann’s Hill in the town.

**Action:** Cllr Watts to confirm with the Vision Group that the ‘A to Z’ sign would be relocated and agreement to the introduction of visitor signage. Cllr Watts will also suggest a meeting between the Vision Group and the South Pond group to discuss design of further signage.

**C/103/23 Dante:** Cllr Wattsreported that he had met with sculptor Philip Jackson, and Harvey Tordoff from The Midhurst Society. Mr Jackson has identified an appropriate stone for the plinth which he proposed to be installed on a small mound and left to set for a number of months prior to the erection of the Dante statue next spring. The cost is likely to be in the region of £5,000, far less than was originally anticipated. A time capsule would also be buried beneath the statue. Further plans were also being formulated for unveiling of Dante.

**C/104/23 Co-option of Councillor:** Cllr Watts invited Mr Paul Piper to address the Town Council regarding his reasons for wishing to be co-opted as a Councillor. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to invite Mr Piper to join the Town Council.

**Action:** The Clerk to contact Mr Piper to arrange signing of the appropriate forms.

**C/105/23** **Reports from Outside Meetings:** Cllr Coote reported that he had attended the Rother Valley Together Annual General Meeting which had been a positive and well-attended meeting. Cllr Coote had also attended a Community Hub meeting which similarly had been positive and well-attended with representatives from a number of organisations present including West Sussex County Council, and Chichester District Council. Five presentations had been given and a number of proposals for future projects including a free lunch club to be held at the Methodist Church.

**C/106/23 Matters of Report:** Cllr Merrit reported that members of the St Ann’s Working Group had met with Paul Ullson from Raven Tor Living regarding potential use of St Ann’s Hill.

Cllr Merrit also voiced concerns regarding anti-social behaviour and the time it took for Police Officers to attend. Cllr McAra further commented on the current closure of the police station, and Cllr Burton offered to look into both matters.

**Action:** Cllr Burton to speak with the Police Community Service Officer, Nathan Ford regarding attendance times at incidents, and investigate the reasons for the current closure of Midhurst Police Station.

Cllr Watts reported that an invitation from Hyde Housing had also been received to meet and discuss the potential introduction of new housing and updating of some of their current housing stock.

The Clerk requested Councillors to provide details of the person to be contacted in case of emergency.

**Action:** All Councillors to provide details of those to be contacted in case emergency.

**C/107/23 Date of Next Meeting:** 7.30pm, 2nd January 2024

The meeting ended at 8.22pm.

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

Chairman