



**Minutes of the Meeting of Billingshurst Parish Council
Wednesday 8 January 2025
7pm at the Billingshurst Centre**

Present

Cllrs Doug Waller (Chairman), Faye Algar, Paul Berry, Sandy Duck, Craig Gale, Jeremy Harris, David Hingamp, Craig Jones, James Marchant, Trevor Leonard, Anna Rhodes and Steve Thomas.

In attendance

G C Burt, Clerk to the Council
County Cllr Amanda Jupp
2 members of the public

01/25 Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman advised that

1. The meeting was being streamed to the internet.
2. Cllrs wishing to speak should raise their hand and speak loudly and clearly.
3. Mobile phones should either be switched off or silenced.

02/25 Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Edna Benger, Phillip Day and Kate Rowbottom for approved reasons. On the proposal of Cllr Doug Waller, seconded by Cllr Craig Gale, **RESOLVED** that the apologies and reasons given be accepted.

03/25 To Receive Declarations of Interest and consider any requests for a dispensation.

None.

Adjournment for

04/25 Public Session (Members of the Public may speak for up to 3 minutes at the discretion of the Chairman).

None

05/25 Reports from:

- a. County and District Councillors.
County Cllr Amanda Jupp reported on several matters, as set out in Appendix A, and took questions.
- b. There were no District Councillors present. The Clerk was asked to convey to the District Councillors the Council's disappointment that no District Councillor was

present, apologies given, or report submitted *in lieu*. The Clerk was able to answer a query from Cllr Paul Berry about the *Better Billingshurst Fund* progress.

c. Council Representatives on Outside Bodies.

Cllr Craig Gale reported that there had been flooding at Jubilee Fields caused by the *Klargester* but that swift action by the BSRA had mitigated any damage. The Chairman praised the recent *Walking Nativity* in the village that the Council had helped sponsor.

Resume Meeting

06/25 Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 November 2024.

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2024, previously circulated, were taken as read. On the proposal of Cllr Doug Waller, seconded by Cllr Trevor Leonard **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and signed as a correct record accordingly.

07/25 Clerk's Report.

The Clerk reported that

- i. the Annual Parish Meeting of Electors would be held on Wed 5 March 7pm. Speakers: representatives CPRE and Sussex Wildlife Trust. He hoped all Cllrs would be in attendance.
- ii. The Inspector had cancelled the Examination of the Draft Local Plan after only one week. His detailed reasons were awaited.
- iii. The agreement with Horsham District Council for the provision of the Neighbourhood Warden Service had been renewed, following resolution of outstanding issues.

08/25 To consider RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. From the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 18 December 2024 to approve a revenue budget of £675,648 for 2025-26 (Minute 121/24 (b) refers). On the proposal of Cllr Craig Gale, seconded by Cllr Jeremy Harris, **RESOLVED** to approve a revenue budget of £607,723 for 2023-24.
- ii. From the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 18 December 2024 to approve a precept of £533,816 for 2025-26 (Minute 121/24 (c) refers). On the proposal of Cllr Craig Gale seconded by Cllr Jeremy Harris, **RESOLVED** to levy a precept £513,010 for 2025-26 upon HDC accordingly.

Note

This represents an increase on the overall precept of £30,717 = 4.76%

For an average Band D property this equates to:

£116.80 per year = £2.25 per week.

a rise of 2.24% per annum

a rise of £3.77 per annum

7.3 pence extra per week.

09/25 To receive Minutes *en bloc* as approved by the following Committees:

The following approved minutes were received:

- a) On the proposal of Cllr James Marchant, seconded by Cllr Faye Algar, **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning & Environment Committee of 5 November & 3 December 2024 be received.
- b) On the proposal of Cllr Craig Gale, seconded by Cllr Craig Jones, **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the F&GP Committee of 30 October 2024 be received.
- c) On the proposal of Cllr Craig Gale, seconded by Cllr Steve Thomas, **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Property Committee of 11 September 2024 be received.

10/25 Neighb

ourhood Wardens - to receive Wardens' Reports for October and November 2024 - previously circulated. NOTED. Cllrs expressed their appreciation of the Wardens' hard work.

11/25 To appoint a Cllr to undertake the Clerk's *End of Year Review*. (Standing Order 19b).

On the proposal of Cllr Doug Waller, seconded by Cllr Craig Gale, **RESOLVED** that Cllr Steve Thomas undertake the Clerk's *End of Year Review*.

12/25 Date of Next Meeting 12 March 2025

The meeting finished at 7.32pm

Chairman

Date

APPENDIX A

County Councillor Report

Highways

After a competitive procurement process, West Sussex County Council has awarded two highways' services contracts to provide maintenance and drainage works on the county's road network in line with the Council's Highways Asset Management Policy and Strategy.

The highways maintenance core services contract, which has been awarded to Volker Highways Limited, has an estimated combined annual revenue and capital spend of £16.5million. The contract will cover several key areas of local highways operations

including repairs to emergency & reactive defect reports, winter treatment, maintenance of structures, minor carriageway patching, weed control, tree maintenance and maintenance of signs, lines, and markings.

The highways drainage maintenance services contract has been awarded to FM Conway Limited and has an estimated combined annual and capital spend of £4.2million to cover small scale reactive drainage and ironworks tasks, reactive system jetting and CCTV investigations, ditching maintenance works and cyclical cleansing of gullies.

Both contracts will start on 1 April 2025, for an initial period of seven years.

Devolution

Following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, the Leaders of West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council have reached a consensus that an elected Mayor for Sussex will unlock significant powers and resources and ensure that Sussex has a strong voice representing our interests with national Government.

West Sussex County Council's Cabinet will be discussing whether to submit a joint proposal for devolution of powers across Sussex with Brighton & Hove City Council and East Sussex County Council at their meeting tomorrow, 9 January.

Subject to formal decisions by each authority, the three councils will submit a collective proposal to Government to be included as a priority area in the next week.

To allow for consultation on the new mayoral combined authority, and to clear the path for elections to it in May 2026, the Government is highly likely to require the postponement of any elections due to take place in May 2025. This directly affects the two county councils, each of whom will need to write to the Government requesting the postponement of their upcoming elections, to fulfil the requirements of the priority programme. The decision to postpone the elections in May 2025 will be for the Government not the County Council.

In the coming months the Government also require proposals for local government reorganisation to be considered locally to unlock the benefits of devolution, and the three authorities have confirmed that they will work with East and West Sussex's districts and borough councils to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation across Sussex that will meet the needs of local communities while also strengthening the financial resilience of councils.

The English Devolution White Paper sets out:

1. The introduction of Mayoral Combined Authorities to all areas of England and an associated move to unitary government replacing two tier local government where it exists.

2. Clarity about the powers available and the conditions for accessing them.
3. Clarity about the size of authorities (unitary councils at least 0.5m population and Mayoral Combined Authorities at least 1.5m population).
4. Clarity about the role of a mayor in relation to current local government responsibilities for strategic planning and housing and in time, for wider public services such as Police, Fire and Rescue services, Probation, skills and employment support, environment and climate change, business support, health and health inequalities.

If the Government accepts the Sussex proposal, there will be a public consultation in the spring.

Mayoral elections would take place in May 2026 and the election of a shadow unitary authority would take place in May 2027 with the unitary authority coming into effect in May 2028.

District and Borough Councils and County Councils would be dissolved following the establishment of Unitary Councils.

Amanda Jupp