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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 27th October 2026 7.00pm. This meeting was held at Rusper Village Hall.
Present: Cllrs M Cooke (Chair), F Maitland-Smith, S White, D Matthews, M Fillmore, R Beckmann, G Hussey, G Sallows, D Halsey, Cllr G Fleming.
There were 2 members of public for part of the meeting.
Apologies: Cllr M Fenton.
Clerk: L Wilcock

Meeting commenced 1900hrs

099-26/27 — Apologies for Absence
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Marion Fenton.
RESOLVED: To note and accept the apologies for absence.

100-26/27 — Declarations of Interest
Members were invited to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or other interests in respect of items on the agenda.
Cllr Fenella Maitland-Smith declared a SWOI in Items 10 and 11. Cllr S White declared a personal interest in the planning application relating to the school, as his property backs onto the school premises.

101-26/27 — Minutes of the Previous Meeting
The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 29 September 2026 were considered.
RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 29 September 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings. The Chair duly signed the minutes.

102-26/27 — Open Forum
The Chairman opened the meeting to members of the public in accordance with Standing Orders.
A member of the public offered to assist with the Speedwatch initiative with some recommended volunteers. Chair of Save West of Ifield group spoke about the Local Plan site allocation, and concerns were raised regarding the planning application, with the view expressed that there may be grounds for a judicial review (JR). SWOI confirmed that it would continue to oppose the application and considered that there were likely to be grounds for a JR. It was noted that the group challenging the site had acknowledged this position. SWOI advised that it had taken legal advice and had dentified potential grounds for a JR but would need to review the report before the matter proceeded to the Planning Committee. It was acknowledged that judicial reviews are difficult to win. However, SWOI stated that extensive technical work had been undertaken over the past five years and that the group would not waste public money pursuing a JR without proper justification. The group remained of the view that there were strong grounds for a challenge. It was estimated that funding of between £40,000 and £50,000 would be required to pursue the JR. The Chairman thanked all those who had attended. The meeting was then closed to the public.

103-26/27 — Reports from Other Authorities
a) County Councillor's Report
No report made.
b) District Councillor's Report
No report made.

104-26/27 — Financial Matters

a) Financial Reports – September 2026

The Council considered the September 2026 Bank Reconciliation, Budget Report and Unity Trust Bank Statements.

RESOLVED: To approve the September 2026 financial reports.

b) Schedule of Payments

The Schedule of Payments was considered.

RESOLVED: To approve the Schedule of Payments.

c) Budget Review – FY 2027/28

The Council considered the proposed budget for the 2027/28 financial year, noting that it would need to be agreed ahead of Horsham District Council's January deadline. During the discussion, the Clerk reminded Councillors that the Council held limited reserves and that, with the parish continuing to grow, the increasing demands on these reserves needed to be carefully considered.

It was agreed that an additional £2,500 should be allocated to playground maintenance, reflecting the anticipated level of expenditure. Any underspend could be transferred to an earmarked reserve (EMR), given the likelihood of future maintenance costs. The Council also discussed creating separate EMRs for the hopscotch project, estimated at £750, and the tarmacking of the area, estimated at £5,000.

Regarding the Sports Pavilion, ongoing maintenance and wear-and-tear costs of approximately £7,000 were noted. The Council also considered the potential installation of new tennis court lighting, estimated at £8,000, with funding from Section 106 contributions to be explored. An additional £2,000 was identified for flooring.

The Council further noted that the grass-cutting contract was likely to increase significantly from its current cost. This potential increase would need to be taken into account when preparing the budget for 2028/29. This item to be carried to December 2026.

d) Earmarked Reserves

The proposed realignment of Earmarked Reserves was considered. The EMRs were agreed and were to be updated in line with the proposed agreed Budget FY27/28. This item to be carried to December 2026.

e) Cyber Insurance and Business Interruption Insurance

The Council considered the proposed addition of Cyber Insurance and Business Interruption Insurance to the Council's insurance cover, subject to the receipt of quotations.

RESOLVED: To accept the quotation received for the proposed insurance cover.

f) Financial, Physical Asset and Staffing Risks

The updated Financial, Physical Asset and Staffing Risks were considered.

RESOLVED: To approve the updated Financial, Physical Asset and Staffing Risk Assessments as presented.

g) Hinckley and Rugby Building Society Account

The Council noted that the Hinckley and Rugby Building Society account is currently being opened and that £30,000 should be transferred from Nationwide to the new account however that would take 30 days and to ensure the account is opened monies need to be transferred within 24 hours.

RESOLVED: To transfer £5,000 from the Unity Trust Bank account to the Hinckley and Rugby Building Society account within 24 hours to facilitate the opening of the account, as the transfer of £30,000 from Nationwide would take approximately 30 days. The proposed transfer from Nationwide will be reconsidered at the next Council meeting.

h) Grass Cutting Tender Documents

The Council considered the Grass Cutting Tender Documents.

RESOLVED: To defer consideration of the Grass Cutting Tender Documents to the next meeting, with the tender arrangements to be in place by the end of the current financial year. Carry item.

105-26/27 — North of Horsham Liaison Meeting – 28 October
The Council considered whether it wished to make a representation regarding Phase 2b at the forthcoming North of Horsham Liaison Meeting.
RESOLVED: To raise any relevant matters at the meeting and continue to monitor whether future attendance at the meeting is relevant to Rusper Parish, until the parish boundary is amended.

106-26/27 — **Planning Applications**
The following planning applications were considered:
a) **DC/26/1517 – Land North of East Street, Rusper, West Sussex**
Proposal: Fell 2 x Field Maple trees and undertake surgery to 1 x Field Maple and 1 x Holly and Hazel trees.
RESOLVED: No objection in principle, but the hedgerow thickness and diversity needs to be maintained to ensure that the rural character of the village entrance is not lost. This will likely involve a degree of replanting beyond the 2.5m limit, but within the tree line, to ensure the hedgerow well is maintained. Significant trees have also been removed at the western edge of this hedgerow, which according to the submitted plans were not identified for removal. However, the plans do show some replanting in this area and it is important that this is properly monitored.

b) **DC/26/1423 – New Barn Farmhouse, Capel Road, Rusper, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 4PZ**
Proposal: Demolition of existing equestrian buildings, erection of 10 dwellings, construction of replacement equestrian facilities including stables, horse walker and sand school, and all ancillary works.
RESOLVED: This site has been problematic for some time. The situation has been exacerbated by Horsham District Council's approval of previous barn conversions, resulting in an incongruous mix of residential properties within an otherwise equestrian and commercial site. Much of the current proposal goes some way towards addressing these longstanding issues. However, the revised layout still shows one three-bedroom dwelling sharing its access with the equestrian and commercial development. No justification has been provided for why this property cannot be accessed via the western entrance, alongside the other residential properties, or why it has been submitted as a separate application under reference DC/26/0963 see next minute.

c) DC/26/0963 - New Barn Farmhouse Capel Road Rusper Horsham West Sussex RH12 4PZ
Replacement of caravan with new dwelling.
RESOLVED. The Parish Council considers that the proposals represent a significant overdevelopment of the site, particularly given its isolated rural location, more than two miles from public transport, schools and other amenities. The proposed extension of the development southwards, beyond the existing building lines, would also have a detrimental impact on the rural landscape and surrounding views, particularly from public footpath RUS1492. The elevated views from the edge of Horsegills Wood along this footpath would be significantly affected by the proposed line of three large five-bedroom dwellings on the southern boundary of the site. Although additional tree planting is proposed, this would take many years to mature and provide meaningful screening. In the interim, the scale and prominence of these dwellings would have a significant visual impact on the rural setting. The Parish Council considers that an acceptable compromise would be to remove the three large dwellings proposed along the southern edge of the site, thereby reducing the visual impact of the development and retaining more of the existing rural character. The Parish Council also considers that the large replacement barn proposed to the east of the site, within the new equestrian area, should be relocated further north to align with the existing building lines and minimise its impact on open views from the south. The Council notes that this barn appears to be shown as an existing structure on drawing **"EXISTING SITE PLAN: (01)-002, REV D"**. However, the Council has been unable to identify any record of the structure on the available mapping or within the planning application history. Clarification is therefore requested regarding the status of this building and the basis on which it is shown as existing.

In summary, the Parish Council considers that a coordinated approach to both applications is essential to ensure that the overall development is appropriately designed, respects the rural setting and minimises its impact on the surrounding landscape and public footpaths.

c) **DC/26/1100 – Rusper County Primary School, Horsham Road, Rusper, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 4PR**
Proposal: Erection of a single-storey portable building.
RESOLVED: Rusper Parish Council supports this application, which will help secure the long-term viability of the local primary school. The Council hopes that the design principles will include double glazing as a minimum standard to improve energy efficiency and minimise noise impact on neighbouring residential properties.

d) **DC/26/1515 – Normans, East Street, Rusper, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12**
Proposal: Prior Notification for the change of use of an agricultural barn to form a 2-bed dwellinghouse.
RESOLVED: It seems that the original reasons for refusal still apply. Despite the assessments based on current usage, the original rejection correctly highlighted that the current agricultural use might not apply and future uses could have significant impact. "The design of the building and its location within a field (that may not be under the same ownership as the application site) would allow farm animals, machinery, chemicals, and agricultural uses to be immediately adjacent to the building. This would not accord with a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework to seek a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.". Additionally, the concerns about the tree impact for any resident still apply, particularly: "There is concern that due to the position, form and size of the mature trees, future residents would experience issues with natural light to the property and curtilage as well as issues with falling tree detritus including acorns and bird excrement. This will result in an unacceptable and undesirable living condition as well as unacceptable pressure for removal of the trees." and the conclusion: "All of these associated works would be impractical and undesirable within the 15 metre Ancient Woodland (AW) buffer zone."

107-26/27 — Planning Applications Received Since Publication of the Agenda
No further plans were considered.

108-26/27 — Horsham District Local Plan
The Council received a debrief on the Horsham District Local Plan hearings.
Councillor George Sallows provided a debrief on the Horsham District Local Plan Examination.
Councillor Sallows reported that he had attended the first three hearing sessions in person and had made representations on behalf of Rusper Parish Council in relation to **Matter 5: The Spatial Strategy and Site Selection** and **Matter 6a: Strategic Policy HA2 – Land West of Ifield**, with further input in relation to **Matter 6h: Site HA(NP3) – Kilnwood Vale Housing Allocation**, particularly regarding its potential impacts on Rusper. He had also listened to the remaining hearing sessions via the Horsham District Council YouTube channel. The hearings had been conducted professionally and participants had been given an opportunity to present their views. However, Councillor Sallows noted that there had been limited opportunity to challenge responses where he considered that the evidence presented was insufficient.
Councillor Sallows advised that, in his view, the Inspector had considered the representations made and had taken account of the points raised both in support of and opposition to the Plan. However, he expressed concern that the Inspector appeared to have prioritised progressing the Plan and meeting the increased housing requirements set by central government. He considered that this had resulted in significant concerns regarding individual sites, particularly Land West of Ifield, being left to be addressed through the subsequent planning application process rather than through the Local Plan Examination.
Particular concerns were raised regarding the impact of the West of Ifield development on the local road network and the potential for increased traffic through the rural lanes around Rusper. Councillor Sallows reported that, during the Examination, no clear mitigation measures had been identified for these impacts.

Concerns were also raised regarding infrastructure and utility capacity. In particular, it was noted that no clear timetable had been identified for the necessary infrastructure improvements associated with the West of Ifield development and that concerns had been expressed regarding existing wastewater capacity. Councillor Sallows reported that the Inspector had indicated in his closing remarks that he was minded to find the Plan sound subject to the main modifications proposed and a number of minor amendments. He expressed disappointment that, in his view, significant objections raised by a number of organisations in relation to the inclusion of West of Ifield had not been given sufficient weight.
The Council discussed the potential implications for Rusper and noted that the Parish Council would need to continue to make robust representations when the relevant planning applications were submitted.

109-26/27 — Land West of Ifield
a) The Council received an update on the proposed Land West of Ifield development.
It was reported that the application would not be considered by the Planning Committee before December at the earliest, although there was no confirmation that it would proceed at that time. Outstanding matters relating to statutory consultees were noted, particularly junction design, traffic mitigation and flood defences. During discussions on the Local Plan (LP), SWOI had focused on concerns regarding the scheme's financial viability, sewerage infrastructure and the loss of the Golf Club. KC had subsequently provided responses; however, these were considered to lack supporting detail and substantive information on the issues raised. It was noted that the development would be assessed against the emerging Local Plan. Traffic mitigation had also been raised during the hearing, but HDC had not provided a response on this matter.

b) Section 106 Funding – Traffic Calming
The Council considered the proposed Section 106 funding for traffic-calming measures associated with the Homes England development, including the potential installation of chicanes in Rusper village, Lambs Green and, if required, Ifield Wood. The Council discussed the suitability of the proposed measures and whether alternative recommendations should be submitted to Horsham District Council (HDC).
RESOLVED: That George prepare a draft response for consideration by the Council, highlighting the need for traffic-mitigation measures to be implemented before the new road is constructed. The Section 106 agreement should be amended to reflect this requirement. The Clerk will submit the response to HDC once agreed by the Council via email.

110-26/27 — Speedwatch – Training and Volunteer Recruitment
The Council received an update on the Speedwatch group arrangements, including volunteer recruitment and training. It was noted that only a small number of volunteers remained to complete their training. Cllr S White will put together all the names of the volunteers. Volunteers will be required to complete an online course, followed by a training session on 2 November at 6.00 pm. The Council also discussed appointing a further coordinator to oversee an additional Speedwatch group, enabling it to operate autonomously.

111-26/27 — Village Gateway Feature – East Street
a) Proposed Model/Specification
The Clerk provided an update on the proposed village gateway feature, and the Council considered the current design and specification.
RESOLVED: To submit the current design to Stonebond for consideration and invite alternative design suggestions. The Clerk will circulate the resulting proposals to Councillors for approval. The Council also agreed to undertake ongoing maintenance of the feature and obtain the necessary licence.

b) Licence with West Sussex County Council
The Council considered entering into a licence with West Sussex County Council for the future maintenance and insurance of the village gateway feature on East Street, following completion and formal sign-off of the developer's highway works.
RESOLVED: To agree in principle to enter into the necessary licence with West Sussex County Council, subject to the final design being approved by the Council and the relevant licence arrangements being confirmed.

112-26/27 — Gatwick Matters
The Council received the Gatwick Representative's Report.
NOTED: The report was received and noted.

113-26/27 — Playground
The Council received and reviewed the playground safety inspection report and considered the update on the Hopscotch area.
RESOLVED: To accept the playground safety inspection report as presented.

114-26/27 — Reports from Representatives
Councillors provided updates on matters relating to external bodies, committees and working groups.
Cllr Fenella Maitland-Smith reported that the footpath requires significant remedial work and remains closed. She also raised concerns regarding repeated and prolonged power cuts in Ifield Wood, including three significant outages lasting up to nine hours, followed by periods of poor supply. It was noted that these disruptions were particularly unsettling for older residents and appeared to be worsening.
Concerns were also raised regarding low voltage levels, reportedly dropping to 207 volts overnight. A recording device had been used to monitor the supply and had recorded 133 instances of voltage falling below the expected level. MOP had also experienced similar issues. A further planned power cut was noted for Thursday in Lambs Green which was subsequently postponed.
The Council discussed raising these concerns with John Milne MP and UK Power Networks. The Clerk will prepare a draft letter for Cllr Fenella Maitland-Smith to review and amend before it is sent.
Cllr Malcolm Fillmore raised the possibility of a visit to the recycling centre at Langhurst Wood and asked whether Councillors would be interested in attending. The Clerk will arrange a visit.
Cllr Daniel Matthews reported that the four planters needs new plants.
Cllr Richard Beckman raised the matter of the remains of the shed at the Sports Ground which still needs to be removed.

115-26/27 — Matters Arising
The Council reviewed outstanding issues, actions and discussions arising from previous meetings.
No matters were raised.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be discussed involves confidential and/or sensitive information which may be prejudicial to the public interest.

116-26/27 — Land Acquisition
a) Update on Proposed Acquisition
The Council noted that negotiations regarding the proposed acquisition are ongoing, with no further updates available at this stage.
b) Public Engagement
The Council noted that preparations for future public engagement are ongoing, with no further updates available at this stage.
c) Next Steps
The Council noted that work to progress the proposed acquisition is continuing. As no further updates were available, all three items were deferred to the next meeting for further consideration.

117-26/27 — Clerk Salary
a) Amendment to Clerk's Salary
The Council noted the amendment to the Clerk's salary, as agreed at the previous meeting.

NOTED: The salary amendment was noted and has been confirmed to payroll.
b) Annual Leave
The Council noted that the Clerk would be on annual leave from 2 to 14 November 2026.
NOTED: The Clerk's annual leave arrangements were noted.
The next meeting will take place on 24th November 2026.

Meeting closed 2058hrs