

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on Tuesday 29th July 2025 at 7.00pm. This meeting was held at Rusper Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs M Cooke (Chair), G Hussey (Vice Chair), G Sallows, R Gatt, F Maitland-Smith, M Fillmore, M Fenton, Cllr D Matthews, Cllr S White.

Apologies: Cllr G Fleming

Also present: District Councillor Tony Hogben and there were 7 members of the public for part of the meeting.

Meeting commenced 1900hrs

65-25/26 Apologies

It was **resolved** to accept apologies from Cllr G Fleming.

66-25/26 Declaration of Interests

It was **resolved** to accept a declaration of interest from Cllr Fenella Maitland-Smith, who is Chair of Save West of Ifield; it was noted that this interest is **non-financial**.

67-25/26 Co-option Application

Item to be carried to the next meeting.

68-25/26 Climate Crisis

It was **resolved** to **acknowledge** that there is currently a climate crisis, and to ensure that all decisions made within the meeting have consideration to this.

69-25/26 Minutes of previous meetings

It was **resolved** to **approve** the minutes of the previous Council meeting 24th June 2025.

70-25/26 Open Forum

A representative from SWOI (Save West of Ifield) reported that a number of Rusper residents, supported by SWOI, are strongly opposed to the Homes England hybrid planning application to be submitted for development of 3,000 houses in the West of Ifield area. Concerns have been raised that the application is heavily reliant on desk-based assessments, particularly in relation to transport and traffic modelling, with little or no on-site validation. Other serious flaws with the plans include the fact that Crawley sewage treatment works are already at capacity, and that the loss of Ifield Golf Club is not being properly mitigated - especially now the appeal to build 800 houses at Horsham Golf and Fitness has been successful meaning that another 18 hole course will be lost.

SWOI has engaged professional planning consultants to support its response and continues to work collaboratively with residents. Councillors supported the view that a site visit should be arranged, and that Horsham councillors – many of whom are believed to be unfamiliar with the site – should be encouraged to attend, ideally coordinated through the Parish Council.

Concerns were also raised regarding the timing of the application and its validation period, which could mean that the public consultation falls over the summer holiday period, potentially limiting public awareness and engagement. The Council agreed to write to the planning authority to request an extension to the consultation period, encourage greater resident notification, and offer to assist with site visit arrangements.

It was further noted that SWOI is fundraising to secure professional support and that any assistance or signposting that the Parish Council can offer would be welcomed.

A member of the public (MOP) expressed strong objections to the planning application for CCM Garages, noting that the proposed extension would be directly outside a bedroom window of the neighbouring property, significantly affecting residential amenity.

MOP also noted that the applicant suggests his property is commercial rather than residential, simply because a business is registered there and is run from a small office; to say this is a commercial property is a misrepresentation of reality.

Conversely, MOP expressed support for the Stumblehome Farm application, which was described as a positive and appropriate use of agricultural land. MOP offered to share detailed notes and observations with the Parish Council to support its response.

A member of the public (MOP) spoke about the ongoing difficulties being experienced by Rusper Stores, which remains a vital community hub in the centre of the village. The shop, which is widely supported and valued by residents, has recently suffered a series of break-ins, resulting in significant damage and loss. It was noted that the cost of repairs and closures far exceeds the value of stock stolen, and the shop has had to shut temporarily on multiple occasions.

The shop is also facing rising operational costs, including increased energy prices and the recent National Insurance increase, both of which have placed further strain on its financial viability. In addition, the opening of the M&S in Faygate, with its more accessible parking, has impacted footfall at Rusper Stores. MOP advised that the shop is currently operating at a small monthly loss, and the team is working on a strategy to mitigate this, including seeking community support and exploring ways to boost trade. It was stressed that the item under discussion at tonight's meeting is essential to the future of the shop, and that any support the Parish Council can offer would be greatly appreciated.

Councillors expressed sympathy with the situation and acknowledged the shop's critical role in the village. Options for support will be discussed under the relevant agenda item.

71-25/26 **Land West of Ifield – anticipated Planning Application**

It was **resolved** to agree the allocation of roles and responsibilities among Council members in preparation for responding to the **Homes England hybrid planning application**, to ensure all key areas are reviewed thoroughly and professionally.

Discussion Points and Role Allocation:

- a) **Transport** – Assessment of site access, traffic flow, public transport connections, and parking provision.
 - **Cllr Simon White** and a **member of the public (MOP)** to take the lead.
 - It was noted that a recent transport survey lacks detail in the public domain, limiting the ability of experts to respond effectively.
- b) **Landscape** – Review of visual impact, green space integration, and preservation of local character.
 - **Chair, Cllr Michelle Cooke** to lead.
- c) **Biodiversity** – Evaluation of ecological impact, existing habitats, and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.
 - **Cllr Fenella Maitland-Smith** and **Cllr George Sallows** to lead.
- d) **Water Supply and Flood Risk** – Consideration of infrastructure capacity, surface water drainage, and flood risk management.
 - **Cllr Fenella Maitland-Smith** and **Cllr George Sallows** to lead.
- e) **Section 106 Contributions** – Identification of potential planning obligations under Section 106, including funding for community facilities or local infrastructure improvements.
 - **Cllr Malcolm Fillmore** to lead.
- f) **Expenditure and Expert Advice** – Consideration of costs for professional support in preparing a response.

- It was **resolved** to develop a **scope of works** and **engage Steve Tilbury** for professional expertise at a maximum cost of £1000.

It was **further resolved** that associated costs for Steve Tilbury of up to **£1,000** be taken from the **EMR (Earmarked Reserves)** allocated to the **Neighbourhood Plan**.

- **Cllr Fenella Maitland-Smith** and **Cllr George Sallows** to prepare a briefing document ahead of the meeting with Mr Tilbury.

Timeline:

It was **noted** that the statutory consultation period for this application is likely to begin following **validation during August**, with a full response required by **October**. Preparations will continue accordingly to ensure a thorough submission.

72-25/26 Rusper Stores – Grant Application

a) Grant Application – Refrigeration Equipment

The Council considered a grant application under **Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972** towards the **cost of refrigeration equipment** for Rusper Stores.

It was **RESOLVED** to **award a grant of £2000**, to support these essential services.

It was **RESOLVED** to **support the continued running of the shop** in principle. Further details and a full proposal will be reviewed at a future meeting if required.

b) Grant Application – Defibrillator and Security Lighting

The Council considered a further grant application under **Section 137** towards **ongoing running costs for the defibrillator and associated security lighting** at the shop.

It was **RESOLVED** to **award a grant of £500**, to support these essential services.

It was noted that running costs are approximately **£250 per year**, covering **electricity for both the light and defibrillator**. This will be considered in future **Council budget planning**.

Standing Orders were suspended at 1933 hrs

The Council **recorded thanks from Rusper Stores** for the support received and **noted that plans are in place to arrange a meeting with the developer at the Millfields site and Rusper Stores**. The aim is to explore opportunities for **promoting the business to on-site workers**, particularly with regard to providing **lunches and refreshments**.

The Council noted that training on how to use a Defibrillator would be sent to the Clerk.

Standing Orders were resumed at 1949 hrs.

73-25/26 Reports from other Authorities

During discussions regarding the Homes England planning application, the Council noted the following contextual updates relevant to strategic planning and political considerations:

- The HDC Planning Committee comprises 15 members the origins and political direction of the Local Plan may influence the committee's stance on the Homes England application.
- The abolition of the Duty to Co-operate under the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was discussed. While the implications of this policy change on cross-boundary planning obligations are not yet fully understood, it was noted that the "Tests of Soundness"—including deliverability, effectiveness, and consistency with national policy—have become more central to the assessment of major planning applications.

The Council will continue to monitor developments in both national and local planning frameworks to assess their potential impact on this application.

Noted that the **first phase of consultation** on the creation of a **Horsham Town Council** has been completed.

- **76% of respondents** were in favour of establishing a town council for Horsham.

- However, **46% expressed concern about potential increases in taxation** as a result.
- A **second consultation** is expected, focusing on the **proposed size and composition** of the new council before any final decision is made.

It was also noted that a **Liberal Democrat candidate is being considered for the position of Mayor**, should the Town Council be established.

Licensing – Holmbush Farm

The Council noted that a **licence application** has been submitted for events at **Holmbush Farm**, which is located within an **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**. The application seeks to allow activity **up to 11pm**, and **objections are expected** on grounds including **noise, traffic, and landscape impact**. The Parish Council will monitor the application closely and may submit comments.

74-25/26 Rusper Sports Club

A **verbal update** was received on the progress of the **sports club underlease**.

It was **RESOLVED** that the **Clerk issue a copy of the draft underlease** to the Landowners and confirm **whether they are in agreement** with its terms.

75-25/26 Gatwick

The Council received an update on matters relating to proposed changes at Gatwick Airport, including:

- The consultations on new flight path routes which is expected to be published in Q2 of 2026.
- A revised night flight regime which is anticipated to be introduced in 2027; with consultations possibly later this year or early 2026.
- The status of the Development Consent Order (DCO) which remains uncertain; the Government is expected to make its decision known in October 2025 and notably has already indicated that Gatwick would need to increase the numbers coming by public transport as a key.

It was noted that further representations may be needed in relation to the SofS decision, potentially by judicial review, if the expansion is allowed.

The Council discussed whether to prepare for representations prior to in October and agreed this will be reviewed at the September meeting.

The Council representative is currently reviewing all these matters and gathering relevant information. Cllr Fillmore will circulate a timeline of key dates for both the new flight paths and night flight consultation processes when confirmed.

He will also be attending the quarterly GATCOM (Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee) meeting next Thursday and will provide a report to the Council following that meeting.

76-25/26 Roads, Footpaths and Open Spaces Committee

Recommendations for Council Review:

Replacement Slide and Apparatus – Rusper Playground

a) Procurement Compliance and Recommendation

The Committee recommended that the resolution to replace the slide equipment proceed **in accordance with Rusper Parish Council's Financial Regulation 5.7**, which states:

"For contracts estimated to exceed £30,000 including VAT, the Council must comply with any legislative requirements relating to the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices regarding the award of contracts."

It was **further recommended** that the full **procurement process be initiated in line with RPC's Financial Regulations 5.1 to 5.21** (Document 3).

It was **resolved to accept the Committee's recommendations**.

Procurement Process and Actions Agreed:

- It was **agreed** to accept the specification for the Contracts Finder listing, with a closing date set for 28 days after the submission onto Contracts Finder/Find a Tender with wording of the specification amended to:
"Multiplay slide unit – plastic or metal slide with a platform height of 1.9m, in an area of 25 m²."

- It was **agreed** to adopt the evaluation criteria as presented to the Council.
- It was **agreed** that the Clerk will publish the contract opportunity on the Contracts Finder government website.
- It was **agreed** that evaluation of suppliers will be carried out using a scoring matrix, with a recommendation for approval to be brought to the September Council meeting via the Roads, Footpaths and Open Spaces Committee.
- It was **noted** that current project funding is allocated as follows:
 - £30,000 in Earmarked Reserves (EMR)
 - £16,018.18 from Section 106 – DC/13/0368
 - A further grant application will be submitted to Courage Dyers.
- It was **agreed** that a community engagement survey be launched, with:
 - Publication on the Parish Council website
 - Paper copies placed in the Rusper shop and on village noticeboards
 - A QR code to access the survey online.

It was **agreed that the Chair, Cllr Michelle Cooke, will oversee the organisation of this community engagement.**

It was noted that the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) will be attending procurement training on 9th September. Advice on the correct Contracts Finder process will be sought in advance from:

- The Internal Auditor
- The County Association of Local Councils
- The Contracts Finder Helpline

b) Liz Kitchen Memorial Bench

Recommendation:

The Committee **recommended a resolution** to select the Playground as the most suitable location for the commemorative bench.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept this recommendation.

Actions Agreed:

- The Clerk will contact the District Councillor to:
 - Seek the family's permission for the installation.
 - Confirm the preferred wording for the commemorative plaque.
- The Clerk will liaise with the donors to agree on the bench's size and style

c) Fingerposts Maintenance

The Committee recommended a resolution to appoint Contractor R to carry out the refurbishment and ongoing maintenance of the village fingerposts at a cost of £6160.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Contractor R as recommended.

77-25/26 Financial

a) To approve the financial reports as attached Bank Reconciliation, Budget Report, Unity Bank Statements, and Transactions Report for June 2025. It was **resolved** to approve the reports.

b) To consider the appointment of Mulberry LAS to conduct the Interim Audit and End of Year Audit for FY 2025/26. It was **resolved** to approve the appointment.

c) To acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit for FY 2024/25, which has been published on the Parish Council website and parish noticeboards.

It was **resolved** to acknowledge the notice.

d) To note the covering letter from the External Auditor addressed to the Clerk.

It was **resolved** to note the letter.

e) To approve the payment of External Audit fees, totalling £504.

It was **resolved** to approve the payment.

f) To consider the delegation of Cllr M Fillmore and the Chair to meet with the Clerk and RFO to prepare a report for Horsham District Council (HDC) detailing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 spending to date.

It was **resolved** to delegate this task as proposed.

78-25/26 **Schedule of payments**

The Council reviewed the schedule of payments.

It was **resolved to approve the payments** as presented.

79-25/26 **Matters Arising**

The Council was invited to note any items for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.

It was **agreed to move the Finance section earlier in the order of business** to facilitate timely discussion.

Recommendation: *That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.*

80-25/26 **Staffing Matters**

Recommendation: *That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. Resolved to accept the public bodies.*

It was **resolved** to accept the recommendation.

- a) The Council formally **acknowledged** that the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) has successfully achieved the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA).
- b) It was **resolved** to award the Clerk and RFO a pay increase to **SCP31**, effective from **1 August 2025**, in accordance with **Clause 9.3** of the Clerk's Contract of Employment.
- c) It was **further resolved** to adopt the national pay award as agreed by the **National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC)**, and to apply the updated rate for **SCP29**, **backdated to 1 April 2025**, in line with NJC recommendations.

Note: *Clause 9.3 of the Clerk's Contract of Employment provides that, subject to satisfactory performance, one salary point shall be added on 1 April each year until the maximum of four incremental points is reached, in recognition of success in obtaining or holding a relevant qualification*

Meeting closed at 2117hrs

Upcoming Meetings

- The **next meeting** will be an **Extraordinary Meeting of the Planning Committee**, scheduled for **Tuesday, 5th August 2025**.
- It was noted that **Full Council will not meet during August 2025**.

Circulation: *All Parish Councillors Members of the public should be aware that being present at a meeting of the Council or one of its Committees or sub-Committees will be deemed as a person having given consent to being recorded (photographed, film or audio recording) at the meeting by any person present.*