

HAILSHAM FORWARD

Stakeholder Group Meeting

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 10.00AM ON 30TH JANUARY 2015 AT
THE DIPLOCKS HALL, THE DIPLOCKS, HAILSHAM

Attendees:

Mr Charles Hendry MP
Peter Sabine: Wealden Conservative Association
Steve Wennington: Hailsham & District Sports Alliance
Dermot Clarke: DWP
Peter Sutcliffe: Hailsham Trust
Rob Slater: Federation of Small Businesses
Jan Townsend: Tomorrow's People
Ralph Olesen: The Link Hailsham
Cllr Nick Collinson: Wealden District Councillor
Cllr Nigel Coltman: Hailsham Town Councillor
Richard Grocock: Environment Hailsham
Cllr Roy Galley: Wealden District Councillor
John Harrison: Hailsham Town Council
Mickey Caira: Hailsham Town Council
Michelle Hagger: Hailsham Town Council
Terry Hall: Hailsham Town Council
Isabel Garden: Wealden District Council
Jacqueline Baldwin-Charles: Sussex Police

1. Introductions and Apologies:

Cllr Nigel Coltman thanked everyone for attending and invited all those present to introduce themselves to the meeting. He reminded the attendees that they have a part to play in the future of Hailsham and should be striving to move Hailsham forward.

Apologies were received from:

Anton Bree: Hailsham & District Chamber of Commerce
Sgt Mark Ritchie: Sussex Police
Jenny Seale: Hailsham Farmers' Market
Phil Matthews: Hailsham Community College
Irit Meyer: representing St Marys Walk
Jeremy Shepherd: representing St Marys Walk
Suzanne Collins: Hellingly Parish Council
Carolyn Fogg: Tomorrow's People
Cllr Amanda O'Rawe: Hailsham Town Councillor
Cllr Jo Bentley: Hailsham Town Councillor
Cllr Paul Holbrook: Hailsham Town Councillor
Cllr David White: Hellingly Parish Councillor

Cllr Bill Bentley: East Sussex County Council
Nigel Hannam: Wealden District Council
Michelle Gray: Wealden District Council

2. Notes of meeting held on 6th November 2014:

The notes of the meeting held on 6 November 2014 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising:

Sports Park:

Councillor Nick Collinson asked for an update on the Sports Park Project from Steve Wennington. Steve confirmed that the working group had met once and agreed that in order to progress two potential sites needed to be found. He stated that two sites have been identified although one of the landowners had gone quiet in recent times. The other site was more promising with the developers showing willingness to assist with the project. Steve thanked the Stakeholders for their support with the project.

Councillor Collinson stated that Wealden District Council's Corporate Plan includes the potential to set up a Community Company that could support the Sports Park Project.

Wealden District Council Car Park Review:

The Chairman asked for an update on the Wealden Car Park Review, Isabel Garden confirmed that there were changes to some of the parking time periods in Hailsham car parks, but the proposal to reduce the three hour limit to two hours has not been agreed.

Councillor Collinson confirmed that the car park adjacent to the Charles Hunt Centre would be changed to a six hour time limit from three hours and the car park on the other side of Waitrose would remain on a three hour time limit.

Feedback:

Mickey Caira confirmed that he will be working on gathering information from both local visitors to the town and town centre traders over the coming weeks via two short questionnaires. The visitors' questionnaire will be put out during the Street Market and other busy periods in the town. The town centre traders will be hand delivered a questionnaire with an explanation letter, this may include an update on the town centre improvements subject to negotiations with ESCC Highways.

4. Road Improvement Works:

John Harrison provided an update on the proposed works. Following the last MASHH meeting in December, ESCC have confirmed the scheme is around two months behind schedule with a start time now around June. The build time is 12 weeks for the High Street with a further 3 weeks for the remainder of the town centre. The plans are due to be finalised in January with an independent safety audit taking place in February and Traffic Regulation

Orders (TRO) being put forward in March. John highlighted that if there is opposition to the TRO this could delay the scheme further. The tenders for the work are due to go out in March and the contractor appointed in April/May. In the original plan a communications plan was to be finalised once the contractor is in place, however, a number of local businesses are already showing concern over the lack of information on the scheme and John has confirmed he will try and get ESCC to provide details of the scheme out in the public domain as soon as possible. This could include a dedicated Facebook page and press releases. John confirmed he will follow this up at the next MASHH meeting scheduled in March.

Councillor Galley expressed concern over the lack of communication and strongly suggested that there needs to be a strong communications plan that involves the Chamber of Commerce, FSB and Hailsham Forward. The Plan should clearly show that Hailsham is open for business through the build period and who to contact if people have issues over the works.

The Chairman asked if the overall plans for Hailsham phased the work to allow for the least amount of disruption, including completion the one-way system in Vicarage Lane/Road before the High Street is started. John Harrison confirmed he would ask for the detailed schedule of works.

Peter Sabine highlighted the difficulties in Uckfield during their road improvement works and also suggested that peripheral works in Hailsham should be undertaken first to allow for the least interruption during the High Street works.

Councillor Collinson suggested that Hailsham Festival FM could be used to broadcast regular updates as the works are happening. He has spoken to the organisers and they are keen to assist. This would help bring the town together during the works. He also highlighted that once the works were finished it would be a great opportunity for the town to re-launch itself.

Councillor Galley asked if it would be possible to restrict cars from parking in London Road north from the High Street to help improve traffic flows. The Chairman highlighted the issues of the cost to implement this and who will enforce it?

Jackie Baldwin-Charles stated that all new yellow lines in the town that will be put into place as part of the road improvement works would need to include the restriction plates, so that the traffic orders can be enforced.

5. Reconnecting the Town:

Councillor Collinson highlighted the perceived disconnection between various parts of the local business community and the need to address this.

He suggested that the pending road improvements could help bring the business community closer together. The establishment Hailsham Community

Radio may also assist in the process together with the three town centre events planned for June, July and August.

He also mentioned the potential to re-launch of the local Chamber of Commerce which could also help in bringing the local business community closer together. This has been done recently in Eastbourne, where the Chamber of Commerce now has 600 members. He proposed that Hailsham Forward and the Town Council need to be directly involved in this process. He highlighted the success of the Community Forum and suggested that there should be a link between the business and community groups.

John Harrison asked how we get the local business parks involved. Councillor Collinson suggested that you have to knock on doors and offer them something to make it worth their while. Steve Wennington offered to assist in this process as he will be canvassing the business as part of his work on the development of the Sports Park, and would talk directly to Councillor Collinson about achieving this. Nick Collinson stated that Anton Bree was in the process of recruiting an apprentice to assist with the development of the Chamber of Commerce and this person may be used to help in talking to the businesses on the business parks.

Jan Townsend highlighted the issue the Hailsham Works Project has in engaging with the business parks as they only make contact when they have a suitable young person and therefore do not know a lot about the businesses that exist. She asked for help from the local Chamber and FSB to assist her in connecting with these businesses.

Dermot Clarke informed the meeting that Eastbourne Job Centre Plus is holding an apprentice week in March and asked everyone including the Chamber and FSB to get this message out.

Councillor Collinson provided an update on the creation of a permanent Hailsham Community Radio Station. There are a number of issues in obtaining a permanent licence including funding the cost. There are limited times OFCOM will consider a licence application for an FM station but Hailsham needs to be ready when the time-slot becomes available. He suggested that during the road improvement works AM could be used to transmit. He highlighted that national regulations had recently changed and community radio station can make limited money from advertising and that two FM stations can be located in the same area. Charles Hendry suggested discussing the creation of the radio station with Uckfield who have experience of setting a radio station up.

6. Update Report on the work of the Executive Committee:

The Chairman asked Rob Slater to go through the written report presented on the work of the Executive Team.

Shop Fronts:

Rob first asked for an update from the Police on the spate of break-ins and broken shop windows that have occurred in recent weeks in the town centre.

Jackie Baldwin-Charles confirmed that there appears to be a number of different individuals/groups involved in these crimes and that two people had been arrested, one of which has admitted to three of the offenses. The Police are continuing to work on these.

A22 Signs:

John Harrison provided an update on the A22 signage which was there has been little movement from ESCC although a new Highways officer had been appointed to assist with the project.

Town & Shopping Guide:

Mickey Caira confirmed that the Guide has been update with a number of recent changes in the town centre. The Guide now includes details of the community groups and Mickey reminded the meeting to pass on the message to the community groups that they can have their details included in the Guide if they have not yet provided them. Mickey also confirmed that he will request that the toilets and Heritage Trail details are included in the Guide.

The Chairman requested that there is another promotion of the Guide and QR Code via the Town Council's Newsletter and press release.

Welcome Letter:

Mickey Caira confirmed that the next batch of letters to new residents will include the community groups listing.

Hailsham Street Market:

Mickey Caira informed the meeting that the Vicarage Field Shopping Precinct was being sold, it was then reported that the sale has been completed. He highlighted the potential issue that a new owner may not be so positive about the market trading in this location.

Charles Hendry suggested that the new owners should be made welcome to Hailsham and informed of the benefits of the market to the town's businesses, especially those on Vicarage Field. Mickey Caira confirmed that he would contact Anton Bree to see if it was possible to meet up with the new owners as soon as possible.

Mickey Caira highlighted the success of the Christmas Market that was jointly organised with the Town Council's Festivities Committee. He confirmed that for the first time there had been no negative comments on the format of the event. The meeting agreed that a similar event should be organised for 2015.

Events:

It was reported that three events are being planned by the Executive Team and the Council's Festivities Committee; on the last Friday of June, July and August. They would be based around the Street Market with entertainment

during the afternoon and early evening. The three events would be themed; June – young people, July – 1940's/War August – Continental. It was suggested that St Bede's School is asked to take part in the young persons' event along with Hailsham Community College and Hailsham Works.

Community Forum:

Michelle Hagger confirmed that the next meeting of the Forum would take place on 5th February at St Mary's Church Lounge. She highlighted that the groups were working well together and more of the larger groups were now involved and wanted some kind of community event in the town in 2015.

Councillor Collinson highlighted the issue that the Bonfire Society had been advised by Wealden District Council that they cannot hold their firework display at the bottom of the Vicarage Lane Car Park for safety reasons. He stated that it was unclear what the safety issue are and would seek information from Wealden officers. Rob Slater offered assistance in terms of health and safety advice, and would discuss this direct with Councillor Collinson.

Free Public Wi-Fi:

Councillor Collinson is promoting this project and was waiting for a local expert to assist with the proposal. He also confirmed that Wealden District Council is considering a plan to provide this across the whole district.

7. Appointment of additional members to the Executive Team:

The Chairman highlighted the fact that the Executive Team has few business and community representatives and asked for more volunteers from these groups.

8. Any Other Business:

Ralph Olesen commented that he has been a resident of Hailsham for 50 years and seen the rapid growth of the town over this period, with more development to come. He highlighted the issue with traffic flows in the town and the need to look at alternative forms of transport including re-opening a rail type link to Polegate in the next 10 - 20 years. He asked if there was support for this.

Peter Sutcliffe commented that in four separate surveys carried out in Hailsham recently the public have highlighted the desire for some kind of rail link to the town.

Councillor Collinson highlighted the difficulties with the potential reinstatement of the Uckfield – Lewes line, which would be easier to achieve than a link between Hailsham and Polegate. He suggested other alternatives could be considered including a tram link from Berwick to Hailsham.

The Chairman updated the meeting on the proposals by St Mary's Church to make improvements to the church buildings and to open up the churchyard into a public open space. He highlighted the fact that the plans to open up the

churchyard would not happen until 2017 and are subject to some additional funding.

John Harrison reported that he was in the process of arranging a meeting with Chris Neilson from Sussex Police to look at the issues affecting the town centre businesses including burglary and damage to shop windows. He confirmed there will be a meeting at the end of February.

Jackie Baldwin-Charles informed the meeting that the police have put measures in place to deal with the anti-social behaviour of some young people in the town and this included working with their parents and other agencies. She also informed the meeting that a number of arrests had taken place in recent days in response to a number of the burglaries of business premises in the town centre.

Dermot Clarke informed the meeting that Universal Credit is being rolled-out locally over the coming months.

9. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting will take place around the end of April 2015

Charles Hendry stated that he has been impressed by the work of Hailsham Forward and how they are a role model of how a community can work together to improve the town. He wished every success in the future.

The Chairman thanked Charles Hendry for all his support to Hailsham Forward.