



Clerk's Report

Annual Parish Council Meeting, 17th May 2023

Councillors are reminded to attend the meeting slightly earlier than usual, in order that their Acceptance of Office forms can be countersigned by the Proper Officer of the Council (the Clerk) before the meeting begins in accordance with s.83(1) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Local Elections (Declaration of Acceptance of Office) Order 2012. Councillors who have not executed their Acceptance of Office form prior to the start of the meeting, are not permitted to “act in the office except for the purpose of taking such a declaration”.

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

- | Number | Item |
|--------|--|
| 1. | Election of Chair for 2023/24
<i>s.15 & s.83, Local Government Act 1972 Standing Order (SO) 5(e) (f) & (i)</i> |

The first business to be transacted at the Annual Parish Council Meeting must be the election of the Chair for the forthcoming year.

Nominations for the position of Chair will be made at the Meeting.

Cllr. Jordan, as the out-going Chair, must preside at the beginning of the meeting, until this initial business is concluded.

As the presiding Chair, Cllr. Jordan is permitted to vote – including for himself if he is standing for re-election – and has a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

Following the election, the elected Chair will be required to complete a Declaration of Acceptance of Office as prescribed under the Local Elections (Declaration of Acceptance of Office) Order 2012, SI 2012/1465. This is in addition to their Declaration of Acceptance of Office as a Councillor required prior to the start of the meeting.

The Clerk will provide the newly appointed Chair with the form at the meeting.

2. **Election of Vice Chair for 2023/24**

s.15 & s.83, Local Government Act 1972 | Standing Order (SO) 5(e) & (g)

The Parish Council *can* appoint one of its elected Members as a Vice Chair; however, there is no legal requirement for a Council to have a Vice Chair. If the Parish Council's Chair is unable to attend a meeting, the Vice Chair automatically presides if present.

Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council has historically elected a Vice Chair and therefore, in accordance with Standing Order 5(e), the Council is permitted to elect its Vice Chair immediately after electing a Chair.

Nominations for the position of Vice Chair will be made at the Meeting.

It is not necessary for the Vice Chair to execute a Declaration of Acceptance of Office in relation to their specific role as Vice Chair (on a prescribed form); however, it is good practice for them to do so.

The Clerk will provide the newly appointed Vice Chair with the form at the meeting.

3. **Delivery by Councillors of their Acceptance of Office & Register of Interest forms**

s.83, Local Government Act 1972 | ss. 29 & 30 Localism Act 2011

Councillors must make and deliver to the Council a Declaration of Acceptance of Office. This declaration must be made in a form prescribed by an order of the Secretary of State, as set out in the Schedule to the Local Elections (Declaration of Acceptance of Office) Order 2012. Any Councillor who fails to do so shall forfeit their office and thereupon a seat will become vacant.

All Councillors have been provided with the correct form in advance of the meeting and advised to attend slightly early to ensure that the forms are countersigned by the Proper Officer of the Council before the start of the meeting.

Although the form can be completed *at* the meeting (as well as before), until the form is correctly executed, a Councillor is not permitted to act in the office of Councillor, except for the purpose of making such a declaration. Given that it is a legal requirement for the first item on the Annual Parish Council Meeting agenda to be the election of a Chair – and Members are required to vote in this regard – it is necessary that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be fulfilled *before* the meeting.

However, this agenda item allows the Council to formally be 'delivered' of the forms and agree to permit any Councillor who is not in attendance to make and deliver their Declaration of Acceptance of Office by an alternative date - 6th June 2023.

In accordance with s.30 Localism Act 2011, Members must, within 28 days of taking office, declare their disclosable pecuniary interests by completing the appropriate form.

Members took office on 9th May; therefore, the 28-day deadline to complete and return these forms is 6th June.

The Clerk has provided Councillors with this form in advance of the meeting.

Both the Parish Council and Chichester District Council (CDC), as principal authority, must publish Councillors' Disclosure of Interest forms on their websites. The principal authority's Monitoring Officer is responsible for officially holding the Parish Council's Register of Interests for inspection.

Councillors are advised to note:

s.34, Localism Act 2011 makes it a criminal offence to withhold disclosure and/or to fail to disclose any pecuniary interests within 28 days of taking office. Penalties include a fine up to level 5 on the standard scale and potential disqualification from being a councillor for up to 5 years.

4. Apologies for absence & housekeeping*

Apologies have been received from Cllr. Colmer.

**In accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018 all attendees of the meeting are hereby notified that the meeting could be recorded as an aide memoire for the Clerk when compiling the minutes. The recordings are held securely and are deleted after the resolution that the minutes are a true and correct record. 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 the person having given consent to being recorded (photograph, film, or audio recording) at the meeting, by any person present. Persons who record the parish Council's meetings are reminded that the "Public Forum" period may not be part of the formal meeting and that they should take legal advice themselves as to their rights to make any recording during that period.*

5. Disclosure of Interests in relation to matters on the agenda

As defined under the Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Localism Act 2011](#), Chapter 7 ss.26 – 37 in relation to matters on the agenda.

At the time of drafting this report, no disclosure of interests have been received from any Member.

If a Member becomes aware of an interest in any agenda item, they must notify the meeting (either at the beginning of the meeting, or before the agenda item is discussed).

Members have a positive duty to consider the agenda and notify the meeting if they, or their partner, have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI), or other interest in any matter listed. If a Member, or their partner, has a DPI, or any other interest, they are prohibited from participating in the discussion and/or voting. However, a Member can apply in writing to the Proper Officer (Clerk) for dispensation to participate and/or vote in the matter. It is a criminal offence for any Member to withhold disclosure of a DPI without reasonable excuse and/or participate in debate and/or voting (in the absence of dispensation from the Proper Officer).

6. **Co-option procedure to fill a vacant seat after the election**
7. **To receive written applications for the office of Parish Councillor and to Co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy.**

Further to the May elections, the Parish Council has three (3) vacant seats. The Council is now required to fill these vacancies by Co-Option*.

An application has been received from Mrs. Sarah Denyer, which was circulated to Members via email on 9th May. The application remains confidential.

Sarah Denyer was Co-Opted to the Council in December 2022. Unfortunately, Mrs Denyer did not return her nomination paperwork to CDC by the deadline and so did not stand for election on 4th May. However, Mrs Denyer wishes to remain a Councillor. There is nothing preventing the Parish Council from Co-Opting her a second time.

Nevertheless, the Council is not obliged to fill the vacancy. It is against the Person Specification that a new Member is appointed (appendix C of the [Co-Option Policy](#)).

**Further information about Co-Option, casual vacancies and by-elections can be found on the Parish Council's website [here](#).*

8. **To adjourn the meeting to allow candidates to present to the Council (max 5 mins per candidate).**

In accordance with the Co-Option Policy, during the meeting candidates will be afforded five (5) minutes maximum to introduce themselves to Members, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Council. The process will be carried out by adjourning the meeting to allow the candidate to speak. It is not a mandatory requirement that a candidate presents to the Council – especially if their application is full and detailed (or they have previously – and very recently - been a Member). Alternatively, Members may wish to ask the Candidate some questions.

If the Council does not wish to hear from the applicant and/or ask them questions, the meeting can progress to item 9.

9. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Standing Order 3(d) & s.1, Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Best Practice advise is that Members' deliberations should be held in public to ensure the business and decision making of the Parish Council is open and transparent. Nevertheless, the NALC/West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) Co-Option Policy, which the Parish Council has adopted, provides for the exclusion of the press and public (which includes the candidate themselves, if in attendance) due to the inevitable disclosure of confidential information entering the public domain.

It is therefore the Clerk's recommendation that the Council resolve to exclude the press and public and candidate(s) (if in attendance) for the duration of any deliberation of the received application(s) in accordance with s.1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960; on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information. The Press, Public and candidate(s) would reconvene at item 9 below.

Even if there are no press and/or public and/or candidate(s) present at the meeting, it is advisable to make this resolution, as it means that the Parish Council can lawfully exclude any 'late comers', who would otherwise be admitted to the meeting at this juncture.

If, however, the Council does not feel that any detailed deliberations are required – owing to the particular circumstances of this Co-Option – then the Council can resolve that such an exclusion is not necessary and move onto item 10.

10. **Deliberation of candidate(s)**

Subject to the Parish Council's decision above, this element of the meeting can be conducted in either public or private.

If in private, the minute will be minimal: *"Members considered the applicant(s) against the Person Specification"*

11. **Voting by way of signed ballot and results**

The Clerk, acting as Returning Officer, will ask two Members to propose and second the applicant before voting. This does not reflect the way those Members may vote.

Members can vote regardless of existing personal friendships, or association.

In accordance with Standing Order 3(s) voting shall be either a show of hands or signed ballot. At the request of a Councillor, the Chair can approve voting by way if signed ballot.

If voting by way of signed ballot: each Member will receive a ballot paper. To vote in favour of election, a Councillor must sign their name in the space provided. They leave

the space empty if they do not wish to vote for a particular candidate. An 'X', or any other mark, spoils the ballot paper and that Member's vote will be discounted. The vote is confidential; the only person privy to Councillors' individual votes is the Clerk, as Returning Officer.

The Clerk collects up the ballot papers and tallies up the votes and advises of the results. If there are more than two candidates being considered, the person with the least votes falls away from the process and Councillors vote for a second time.

To be Co-Opted a candidate needs an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting); if 'hung' the Chair gets the casting vote (SO 3(r)). If the votes are evenly split, the Chair's casting vote is not private. The voting results will be appended to the minutes of the meeting.

After the vote has been concluded the Chair declares the successful candidate duly elected and, after signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, they may take their seat immediately. However, until they have returned their Declaration of Interests form (up to 28 days from election) they are not permitted to vote.

12. **Minutes**

Approval of the draft minutes of the full meeting held on 12th April 2023.

The draft minutes are published on the website and were circulated to Members, via email, on 25.04.2023.

Approved minutes shall be signed by the meeting Chair via Secured Signing – a secure and legally recognised digital signing software package - in accordance with Standing Order 12(g). The signed minutes will be published on the website [here](#).

13. **Public Forum**

At the time of drafting this report, no specific requests to address the meeting have been received.

In accordance with SO 3(e) the public are permitted to make representations, answer questions, and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda. However, public participation shall not exceed 10 minutes, unless otherwise directed by the Chairman (SO 3(f)). A speaker is limited to 5 minutes (SO 3(g)). The Council is not required to respond and/or debate a matter/question raised during public participation and the Chair can direct a response to be provided (oral/written) by either a Councillor or the Clerk (SO 3(h)). Only one person shall speak at a time and if more than one person wants to speak, the Chair shall direct the order (SO 3(k)). A record of the public participation session shall be included in the minutes (SO 3(t)).

The business of the meeting will resume immediately following the public forum.

14. **Memorial bench**

s.139, Local Government Act 1972

The Council has been approached by a family who seek the Council's consent to locate a memorial bench on the Plaistow village green (lower green, held in trust for the benefit of residents).

The preferred site is between the birds-mouth fencing and zipwire: -



The family will purchase the bench and pay for its installation. However, they have asked the Council if it would thereafter adopt the bench as a Council asset.

Power

Pursuant to s.139 LGA 1972, the Council has the lawful power to accept, hold and administer gifts for the purpose of discharging any of their functions (as a Local Authority – which includes providing public seating) and/or for the benefit of the inhabitants of their area.

Many benches within the Parish have been donated to the community in this way and either expressly or over time, have become assets of the Council managed for the benefit of residents.

Cost

The annual insurance cost - working on the basis that the bench increases the Council's 'Street Furniture' sum insured by c.£1,000 - will be £4.32 (including insurance tax).

The Council provides an annual budget of c.£500 for general bench maintenance. Unless benches are expressly damaged (vandalised), they do not routinely incur annual

maintenance and are expected to last between 10 – 25 years before needing to be replaced due to age.

The family would also like the Council's consent to either scatter the ashes of their loved ones on the village green or inter the urn within the bench footings. UK law does not prevent either option, with landowners' consent.

However, at the time of writing this report, information is pending regarding the required depth of footings and what, if any, impact this could have on the root systems of near-by trees; particularly, the ancient Sessile Oak. This will influence the Council's consideration of location.

The Council will need to consider and resolve upon: -

1. the location of the bench
2. adopting the bench
3. scattering/interring the ashes on the green.

15. **To receive reports from [County and District Councillors](#)**

Reports provided in advance of the meeting are published alongside the agenda on the Parish Council's [website](#) and circulated to Members, via email, for advance consideration.

Further to the Chichester District elections on 4th May, the Loxwood Ward returned two Liberal Democrat [District Councillors](#), Gareth Evans, and Charles Todhunter. The Liberal Democrats have gained majority control of CDC.

Janet Duncton did not re-stand for election as a District Councillor within the Loxwood Ward (she stood in Petworth Ward instead); however, Janet remains the Loxwood Ward's West Sussex [County](#) Councillor. WSCC did not have elections this year – the next election period is 2025, when all the West Sussex seats will be up for election.

Full election results can be found on CDC's website [here](#).

16. **To consider the Crouchlands Farm Planning Applications for Rickman's Green Village**

There are two applications: -

[22/03114/FULEIA](#) | Erection of 108 dwellings

[22/03131/OUTEIA](#) | Outline* application (with all matters reserved except access) for the erection of up to 492 dwellings.

**Outline planning applications are used to gain an understanding as to whether the nature of a development is acceptable. Specific details known as 'reserved matters' are confirmed at a later date, once planning permission is granted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) - which is Chichester District Council (CDC). Planning permission, if*

granted, is subject to the condition that the reserved matters are approved by the LPA before development begins.

The Council will consider: -

- Interim reports and recommendations prepared by the Planning Working Group and SW Transport Ltd

On 28th April 2021 (C/21/075) the Parish Council resolved to instruct planning and transport experts to assist the Council in ensuring that the plans for the site are in keeping with the area and bring about positive change. This resolution was reiterated and confirmed on 8th June 2022 by the Planning Committee. The Parish Council has experience instructing and working with SW Transport Planning Ltd.

On 13th July 2022, the Council resolved to appoint a Planning Working Group to support the Planning Committee and full Council in relation to large-scale and complex planning applications. The Planning Working Group was officially constituted at a public meeting of the Planning and Open Spaces Committee on 3rd August 2022.

- Its response to the applications

The purpose of instructing experts and a Planning Working Group is to assist the Parish Council assess the planning applications to ensure that the plans are in keeping with the area and bring about positive change.

As outlined in the full Parish Council meeting minutes dated 28th April 2021, and during the Chairman's address at the October 2021 public Annual Parish Meeting, the following must be always borne in mind:

"Members agreed that in relation to the anticipated Crouchlands Farm planning applications a pragmatic approach would need to be taken. The Farm has a future which will involve some rural diversification. The Community should not assume that this is a 'fight'; the proposals may bring about welcomed opportunities for the area and it would be wholly wrong to pre-judge, and everyone should remain open minded. The instruction of experts will assist the Council in ensuring that the plans for the site are in keeping with the area and bring about positive change."

- To resolve to instruct SW Transport Ltd to support the preparation of the Parish Council's response to traffic issues.

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations (para 11.1(a)(ii) and (iv)) the procedures regarding awarding contracts do not apply to contracts which relate to specialist services and/or for work to be executed which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the council.

- To resolve to instruct the Planning Working Group to support the full Council, its Planning Committee and Clerk by liaising with the instructed expert and in the preparation of the agreed response.

The Clerk, with the assistance of the Planning Working Group, will prepare the Council's written response to the applications.

17. **Adopt the General Power of Competence (GPoC)**

Localism Act 2011, ss. 1 & 2 | Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed & Conditions) Order 2012 | Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, para 7 of Schedule 5

Local councils in England can rely on general powers to act and spend money unless they are restricted from doing so.

The powers are: -

- a. Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972
- b. The General Power of Competence (if eligible)

Neither power allows a council to circumvent prohibited actions set out in legislation.

Section 137, LGA 1972 enables councils to spend a limited amount of money for purposes which directly benefit their area, for which they have no other specific statutory expenditure powers. For example, hitherto, many of the annual grants the Parish Council makes to groups/causes are pursuant to s.137 such as the Youth Club and defibrillator maintenance. S.137 is a limited power however – for example, an annual spending cap set by Government.

s.137 cannot be used by a local council that is eligible to exercise the General Power of Competence (GPC) except to donate money to certain charities and appeals.

s.1(1), Localism Act 2011 provides that a local authority – including Parish Councils – **have the power to do anything that individuals generally may do**, if they are eligible.

To be eligible to use the General Power of Competence, the Parish Council needs: -

1. a qualified Clerk - which Plaistow and Ifold has, by virtue of the Clerk attaining CiLCA in 2021;
2. a minimum of two-thirds of the total number of councillors have been elected - 8 Members of the Council are elected, having been returned via the election process on 4th May. The Council has 11 seats; therefore, 8 elected Councillors is more than 2/3rds;
3. it has resolved at a meeting of the council (and each subsequent relevant annual meeting (that is, an annual meeting that takes place in a year of ordinary elections of parish councillors) that it meets these conditions.

In plain English – if between now and the next annual meeting after elections (i.e., in May 2027) the Parish Council loses either its qualified Clerk and/or it does not have two-thirds of elected councillors (because elected Members leave and are replaced by Co-Opted Members such that the number of Co-Opted Members out-number those who were returned via an election process) then the Council will remain eligible until the next annual meeting in a year of ordinary elections (2027). This is important, because the Council could begin a project not otherwise permitted other than by virtue of having the GPoC, and then loses the GPoC. However, the legislation allows for matters started under the GPoC to be completed. This minimises risk.

Unlike expenditure incurred by a council under s.137, the GPoC imposes no statutory maximum limit to the level of expenditure. It also allows the Council far greater freedom and scope for carrying out its functions as a Local Authority – the Council will have the power to do anything that individuals generally may do.

As Plaistow and Ifold PC are eligible to exercise the GPoC, it has lost the ability to use s.137 to incur expenditure (except to contribute to the funds of charities in furtherance of their work in the United Kingdom or not for profit bodies operating in the UK).

Therefore, the Council should pass the following resolution confirming that it meets the eligibility criteria: -

Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council resolves from 17th May 2023 until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Council (May 2027), that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, it hereby adopts the General Power of Competence.

18. **Financial Matters**

1. Financial Reports for April – May 2023 (Payments and Receipts Analysis)
Includes income and expenditure between 1st April and 11th May 2023.

PAYMENTS

The beginning of the financial year is always busy (expensive) – all the agreed grant payments were made before 30.04.2023 and several annual payments for services / subscriptions also come out e.g., to West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC), National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the PC's accounting package (Rialtas). The Council has also had the Colin Smith Planning Ltd review of the Neighbourhood Plan; the various Coronation expenses; the first 50% payments to Action in Rural Sussex for their support regarding the two trusts (Winterton Hall and the Playing Field); litter pick & children crossing signage; tree surgery and spring maintenance at the Ifold bus stop.

RECEIPTS

To note is the first Precept instalment and the HMRC VAT return for Jan-March 2023.

Councillors are asked to note and approve the Clerk's expenses – Working From Home allowance and relating to the Coronation.

2. Insurance arrangements for 2023/24

Pursuant to the Council's decision in May 2022 (C/22/067(3)) the Council is in a three-year binding Long Term Agreement (LTA) with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited until May 31st 2025. The renewal annual premium is £1,683.12 and the (non-recoverable) Tax: £201.97 - Total £1,885.09. The annual 2023/24 budget for insurance was £1,966.80.

The Council is strongly advised to additionally protect itself with cyber insurance, which is not automatically included within the standard policy. The Council's insurance broker Gallagher has provided a quote from Optimum Speciality Risk for an annual premium (including tax and fees) of £367.36. This would provide standard cyber cover of £250,000, and also £25,000 of cover for cyber-crime.

However, the Council can look elsewhere for cover, as this is not part of the LTA. In addition, the Council would have to agree to/implement standard protection such as a firewall and file back up. Some requirements the Council does, others need to be implemented.

The Clerk advises that a Lead Member is appointed, who can support the Clerk and Council review and implement cyber security.

3. Regular payments and budget expenditure

Regular (monthly / quarterly or 'known') payments include: -

Zoom (monthly, Direct Debit)	Secured Signing (monthly, Direct Debit)
BT – Winterton Hall WIFI (monthly, Direct Debit)	Staff salary and oncosts to CDC (monthly)
Southern Electric (pavilion) (quarterly, Direct Debit)	Data Protection Registration (annually, November)
BT – telephone and internet (monthly, Direct Debit)	Bank charges (monthly, Direct Debit)
Ground maintenance contract – Sussex Land Services Ltd (monthly)	RoSPA playground inspection (annually, June)

The Council is invited to make a resolution authorising the Clerk to make payments, which have been considered and approved by the Council and within the approved budget limit. By way of an example, once the Council has considered quotes for tree surgery works and appointed a contractor, once the work is completed the Clerk shall make the payment, without the invoice coming back to Council for consideration (provided noting has changed between the quote and subsequent invoice). Another example, if the Council resolves to undertake a task or project and sets a budget e.g., the annual upkeep of the Ifold bus stop area, the Clerk is duly authorised to manage the completion of the task / project, within the agreed budget, and make payments. The Clerk to report to Council each meeting of any activity so undertaken/payments made.

Financial Regulation 5.6 provides that the Council and/or Finance Committee can resolve to authorise an employee of the Council to make payments within approved budgets.

For each financial year the Clerk and RFO shall draw up a list of due payments which arise on a regular basis as the result of a continuing contract, statutory duty, or obligation (such as but not exclusively) Salaries, PAYE and NI, Superannuation Fund and regular maintenance contracts and the like for which council or a duly authorised committee, may authorise payment for the year provided that the requirements of regulation 4.1 (Budgetary Controls) are adhered to, provided also that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council.

4. HS3 Tree works on Plaistow Village Green

On 13th July 2022 (C/22/103(2b)) the Council resolved to instruct Andrew Gale to undertake an updating Tree Condition Survey of Plaistow Village Green. Due to the public nature of the Village Green, tree condition surveys are required every 18 month – 3 years, depending upon a range of factors including the issues raised in previous reports / the weather in previous seasons / the age of trees and known/suspected diseases e.g., Ash Die Back.

Andrew Gale undertook the survey on 14th October 2022 and the report was published on the website and reported to the Council at its full meeting on 9th November 2022 (C/22/139(4b)).

The required works were graded according to their urgency: -

HS2: Within 6 months of the reports date

HS3: Within 12 months of the reports date

HS4: Before the next survey date

On 9th November 2022, the Council resolved to obtain quotes for the works and on 8th March 2023, the Council considered the quotes and appointed Sawing Heights (C/23/038) to undertake the HS2 works (completed 21.04.2023) and sought a quote for the HS3 works.

The Council has received four quotes: -

Contractor	HS2	HS3
C	£ 2,616.00	£ 960.00
E	£1,600	
H	£940	
S	£2,160.00	£1,080.00

Contractor H – Sawing Heights: HS3 quote - £520

Sawing Heights can undertake the HS3 works on 14th June.

5. Transfer of funds into Reserve Account

Pursuant to the Finance Committee’s resolution of 12th April 2023 (F/22-23/028(4)(a)) that “*the Clerk be given a mandate to move funds between the Parish Council’s two accounts (current and reserve) as required, without the need for prior authorisation. The Clerk to report to the Finance Committee and/or Full Council at the next meeting*”; the Clerk hereby informs the Council that £10,000 was so moved.

19. **Administrative Subscriptions & subscriptions to other bodies**

The Council routinely uses Zoom and Secured Signing to facilitate efficient administrative management of the Council’s functions e.g., Working Group meetings and executing documents. Zoom also makes Council activity more accessible and transparent to the public, which is good practice.

Rialtas Suite is the Council’s financial and accounting package, which it has used for many years. There are a handful on the market, however Rialtas Suite is large and reputable, specialising in Local Government accounting, and its package is recognised by HMRC and supports the Council’s VAT re-claim and internal and external audit processes.

TEEC provides/hosts the Parish Council’s website and email accounts.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) exist to advise and support Councils, Councillors and Clerks in their respective roles. It is in the Council’s interest, and essential to adhering to best practice, that it remains members of both the National and County associations. Membership of WSALC gives membership to NALC – the Council cannot ‘join’ NALC

directly. NALC provides the Council with model documents e.g., Standing Orders and Financial Regulation, which it keeps updated in accordance with any legal changes; and provides other legal and procedural guidance to Clerks and Councils. Without access to these documents, the Council would fail its statutory audits as it would not be compliant with lawful and proper practices.

Chichester District Association Local Councils (CDALC)

CDALC was established over 20 years ago – along with many other district associations such as Horsham District ALC (not to be confused with County associations such as WSALC) – **as a vehicle for town and parish councils to liaise / communicate more effectively with their district authority (CDC).**

In 2022/23, Cllr. Talyor was the Council's appointed CDALC representative and attended 9 CDALC meetings. In November 2022, Cllr Taylor recommended that the Parish Council no longer actively participates in the CDALC meetings as he questioned the value in continuing active engagement. Therefore, on 09.11.2022, the Council resolved (C/22/142) to suspend its attendance at the meetings for the foreseeable future. The Clerk was instructed to continue to circulate the CDALC meeting agendas and minutes, so that the Council can keep apprised of topics. The Council's formal membership will be considered at the time CDALC look to introduce a membership fee.

Background

Over the years CDALC's purpose has become lost, which is recognised by CDALC itself - however, there is a move to re-establish the true purpose of the district association. Horsham is very pro-active and has made huge changes; it offers training to its member councils on topics such as climate change initiatives and planning matters – which dovetail into Horsham DC's work. There is talk that Horsham DA may begin to provide training and guidance to support the other DAs in the area, such as CDALC. It is recognised and accepted that there is a lot of inactivity between meetings and meetings can be, overall, ineffective. Meetings are also suffering from a lack of engagement and attendance, which exacerbates the issues and makes effecting change harder and slower to achieve.

Chichester is a huge geographical area and the North and South have very different needs and priorities. It is accepted that the meetings are dominated by the issues of the South of the district. There is/was an intention to establish a North CDALC and South CDALC to allow these nuances to be recognised and make the meetings and the topics covered more relevant to the attending town and parish councils.

Participation with CDALC is not mandatory, however some of the disadvantages of withdrawing completely – as set out in the November 2022 Clerk Report - would be:

- P&I would not be present to 'spot' if it manages to become more effective.

- P&I would not be able to influence a 'change for the better' and the establishment of a more useful North CDALC.
- The board members of the County Association – West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) – are elected by the district association – CDALC elects 2 of WSALC's board members.
- Engagement with the district association provides a degree of communication / networking between the Chichester District Parishes, access to information / best practice / ideas on what other Parish Councils are doing
- Opportunity for P&I not to conduct its business in an 'echo chamber', which is poor practice. It is healthy and encouraged for Councillors to network and get an understanding of what other Councils are doing.

Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

This is the Clerk's professional body, which supports the Clerk - and by extension the Council - to ensure that they act lawfully. It provides sector specific training/advice/policies/support. It is integral to the ability of the Council to evidence that it discharges its duty of care as an employer, and its contractual employment duties to the Clerk i.e., to ensure that they are properly trained and supported.

Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS)

Detail on AiRS can be found at para 10, pg., 5 of the Clerk's Finance Report prepared for the Finance Committee meeting on 10.08.2022 ([here](#)).

On 10.08.2022 (F/22-23/010) the Finance Committee resolved that the Parish Council should become a member of AiRS. (The Council's membership will directly support the Winterton Hall Management Committee, as well as ensuring the Clerk and Councillors are properly trained and appraised of relevant matters.) This resolution was noted by the Full Council on 28.09.2022 (C/22/122(1)).

Since then, AiRS have begun to provide bespoke advice to the Council and Winterton Hall Committee regarding 'unravelling' the mess which is the various trust deeds of the Hall, Youth Club and Council (there is a meeting scheduled on 18.05.2023); and they are also supporting the Council to officially become the sole trustee of the Plaistow Playing Field. The work on both matters is mid-way and the Council has paid the first 50% of the agreed contracts. Therefore, it is not possible, currently, for the Council to cease its membership.

[CAGNE](#)

The Parish Council is a Member of the CAGNE Aviation Town and Parish Council Forum. CAGNE is not a lobbying group; it is a forum which provides Councils with "*information and expertise regarding flightpaths and airspace changes*" (CAGNE website). This forum is run by Councillors to engage and consult with town and parish councils and is independent from its lobbying activity. Each year it charges members a 'renewal donation' of £4 towards the running of the website and online meetings, which the PC is invited to attend.

The Parish Council does not currently have a nominated Lead Member for Gatwick/aviation issues and does not attend Forum meetings. However, on 12th April 2023, the Council resolved to continue its membership and agreed to pay an increased fee of £10, if implemented.

20. **Appointment to outside bodies and roles of responsibility**

The current incumbents are in brackets below: -

- Tree Warden (David Lugton, Co-Opted Member of Planning Committee)
- Footpaths & PRowS – (Cllr. Doug Brown)
- Plaistow Village Trust – (Cllr. Nicholas Taylor)
- Durfold Wood Residence Association (DWRA) – (none)
- Ifold Estates Limited – (Jon Pearce, Co-Opted Member of Planning Committee)
- Winterton Hall Management Committee – (Cllr. Phil Comer)
- Kelsey Hall Management Committee – (Cllr. Phil Comer)
- Highways Lead – (Cllr. Sophie Capsey)
- Website and Social Media - (none)
- Community seating – (Cllr. Sophie Capsey)
- Community Speed Watch – (Cllr. Doug Brown)
- Neighbourhood Watch / Police Liaison – Updates circulated via email by the Clerk and seek liaison via Parish Council notice board.
- CDALC – (Cllr. Nicholas Taylor)
- West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) (Cllr. Nicholas Taylor)
- CDC Northeast Parishes – (ad hoc appointment as meetings arise).
- WSCC Local Committee – (ad hoc appointment as meetings arise).

The Council could also consider appointing someone as CAGNE/aviation lead.

Likewise, the Clerk has above asked the Council to appoint a Lead for insurance and cyber security. This could be the same person as the website and social media lead; however, someone with expertise / understanding of cyber security would be helpful.

Councillors should note that any activity undertaken in their role as Lead member on behalf of the Council e.g., attending separate meetings, counts towards their meeting attendance generally and helps to ensure that their attendance 'clock' is never in default, and they cease to be a Councillor.

21. **South Downs National Park elections**

WSALC have advised as follows: -

If your town, parish council or parish meeting is located wholly or partially within the National Park boundary your council is entitled to nominate a councillor representative to sit on the SDNP Board. In the case of a parish meeting, it can only be the Chairman of that PM.

This process occurs every four years and ensures that there are six parish representatives [two from each of Hampshire, West Sussex, and East Sussex] serving on the 26-person Board. Should any county have more than two nominations it will be necessary to hold a ballot and you will be notified should this be the case.

The first stage is to ensure you place an item on your Annual Council Meeting agenda to nominate a councillor – just as you would for any outside body and send the name to me as soon as you can. The process will need to be completed by the end of May to satisfy the requirements of DEFRA.

A small percentage of the Parish sits within the SDNP; therefore, the Council is eligible to nominate someone. However, this is not a mandatory requirement; the Council could decide not to nominate anyone. Please note, that if more than 2 Councillors from West Sussex are nominated, then there would be a ballot process.

22. **Appointment of Committees**

The Council shall appoint Members / Co-Opt non-elected Members to the following Committees and agree the Chair:

- Planning & Open Spaces (maximum 8 Members)

It is advisable that the Parish's Tree Warden remains a Member of this Committee.

- Winter & Emergency Plan (maximum of 8 Members)

- Finance Committee (maximum of 6 Members)

Anyone who is not a Councillor is prohibited from membership of the Finance Committee.

23. **Appointment of Working Groups**

The Council shall appoint Members / Co-Opt non-elected Members to the following permanent Working Groups and agree the Chair: -

- HR Working Group

- Playpark Working Group

- Finance Working Group

Anyone who is not a Councillor is prohibited from membership of the Finance Working Group.

- Newsletter Working Group

- [Planning Working Group](#)

It is advisable that many of the current members remain, as they have been appointed for their specific expertise e.g., landscape and heritage specialisms.

24. **Committee / Working Group Terms of Reference**

The Clerk recommends that the Council resolves to permit each Committee/Work Group to review its Terms of Reference document at its first meeting and update the Council accordingly thereafter. No changes have been made to any of the current Terms of Reference documents – they remain as previously adopted by the Council. Any Committee / Group without a Terms of Reference document should devise one and present it to the Council for adoption.

Terms of Reference documents can be viewed via the website [here](#).

25. **2023/24 meeting schedule**

The Council is invited to ratify the 2023/24 meeting schedule which can be viewed on the Council's website [here](#) (and [here](#)). Each venue has confirmed the meeting dates.

26. **Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct & Scheme of Delegation**

The Council is advised to adopt the following required documents, which supports/ensures its lawful activity. The Council must have lawful Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. These policies are published on the Council's website [here](#).

- a. [NALC model Standing Orders](#)
- b. [NALC model Financial Regulations](#)

Within the last 12 months there have been no other changes / updates to these documents. Therefore, the documents remain as they were when the Council last reviewed / adopted them in May 2022.

However, since May 2022, the Clerk has updated the formats of the documents to accord with the NALC document formats – which includes a 'smart' index, which allows the reader to 'jump' to whichever section of the document they wish to read.

- c. [CDC's model Code of Conduct](#)

The Council is encouraged to adopt CDC's model Code of Conduct, as it is the most 'up to date' version of the document which is, from time-to-time updated to reflect legislation, new policy and good practice; and it also assists the Monitoring Officer (Mr Bennett, CDC) if he is ever called to apply the Code of Conduct in a complaint matter (rather than having to apply a completely different and unfamiliar document). It also ensures that all District and Parish/Town Councillors are compliant with and judged according to the same approved national standard.

The Clerk will consider the CDC's model Code of Conduct and the Parish Council's current document and amalgamate the two. The Clerk will present the document to the Council for adoption in due course, as part of the wider policy review. Therefore, in the meantime, the Clerk recommends that the Council re-affirms its adoption of its current Code of Conduct, which will not be materially different.

d. [Scheme of Delegation](#)

The Scheme of Delegation sets out the remit of the full Council, its Committees, and staff. In particular, the document allows No Comment planning decisions to be made by the Proper Officer, consequently allowing some Planning Meetings to be vacated. The document has not been changed since it was last adopted in May 2022.

27. **Policies**

The Council is advised to adopt the following [policies](#) which have not changed since their last adoption in May 2022: -

1. [Media & Communications Policy](#)
2. [Co-Option Policy](#)
3. [Complaints Procedure](#)
4. [Publication Scheme](#)
5. [Asset Register](#)
6. [Volunteer Policy](#)
7. [Pension Discretion Policy](#)
8. [Dignity at Work Policy](#)
9. [Playground Inspection & Maintenance Policy](#)
10. [Working Group Policy & Terms of Reference](#)

The Clerk intends to complete a Policy Audit in 2023/24 and will review / implement policies the Council requires. Some policies are mandatory; some referenced in other mandatory/essential documents e.g., the Council's Standing Orders / Staff Contracts etc. This exercise will dovetail with the Council's development of its Business Plan / Asset Audit and ongoing review of its Risk Management Scheme (approved at the 8th March 2023 meeting C/23/041).

Whilst policies can be considered with scorn, they govern the way the Council conducts itself lawfully and ensures that in the event of a situation, the Council – including its Members and Staff – know how to respond.

Many of the required documents are available as model document from NALC / WSALC and therefore require limited amendments.

28. **Coronation Children's Party & Litter Pick**

The litter pick took place on 29.04.2023 and was well attended. The website has been updated with a picture of the litter collected by the volunteers ([here](#)). Cllr. Robinson and Sallie Baker expertly organised the event. The next litter pick will take place in the Autumn (October/November).

Coronation: -

The Council's Children's Party in honour of The King's Coronation was a wonderful success.

Sincere thanks to Sallie Baker and Cllrs. Jane Price, Sarah Denyer, Doug Brown, and Paul Jordan and of course in particular for all their help organising the day.

Many hands arrived at 10am on 8th May to help set everything up and then again at 4:30pm to pack away ... and *SO* many cakes arrived!

The dedication plaque of the new Wild Service Tree on the village green is in situ, thanks to Cllr. Bown – do take a look when you are next passing (and it's not so muddy).

On Friday 5th, the Council took the decision to cancel the inflatable assault course due to the weather forecast and the impact rain would have on the insurance. On Monday 8th, the Working Group made the decision to put the assault course money 'behind the bar' and offer a free ice cream to every child. This went down a treat (quite literally) and in all 77 children had an ice cream on the Parish Council!

At least 154 people were in attendance; although at points there were more, as many children had more than one adult with them.

The Council has not yet received the £500 grant from CDC – although the Clerk has requested it and sent the relevant invoices.

The only outstanding cost is for the Winterton hall hire. The event was successfully delivered within budget: -

A/c Code	4311 Events			Annual Budget	1,500
Centre	102 General Administration				
Date	Reference	Source	Transaction Detail	Debit	Credit
			Opening Balance	0.00	
28/03/2023	BACS	Cashbook	Coronation first aid	434.00	
12/04/2023	BACS	Cashbook	Coronation plaque	138.35	
03/05/2023	BACS	Cashbook	MagicMarty Coronation	450.00	
08/05/2023	BACS	Cashbook	Coronation icecream	192.50	
11/05/2023	BACS	Cashbook	Coronation refreshments& items	90.02	
	Account Events		Account Totals	1,304.87	0.00
	Centre General Administration		Net Closing Balance	1,304.87	



This sorbus terminalis was dedicated to His Majesty King Charles III by the Parish of Plaistow and Wold, in celebration of His Coronation on 6th May 2023.



29. **Correspondence**

None to note, which has not been specifically considered as a separate agenda item.

30. **Clerk's update & items for inclusion on a future agenda**

1. Election expense forms

Don't forget – every Councillor must return an election expenses form - even if it is a NIL return no later than 35 days after the election (Representation of the People Act 1983, s.81).

Members can send their completed form to the Returning Officer at CDC via email: democraticservices@chichester.gov.uk

Helpful tips:

- The date the notice of the election was published - 22nd March.

Return of Election Expenses Form

In the [.....ward of the]

As the parish is not warded, please leave this section blank.

Parish/Community of

Put 'Plaistow and Ifold' in this section

2. Councillor Training

The Clerk will organise external and internal training for Members – especially new Members - in the coming weeks.

3. Councillor Vacancies

Further to the election, the Council has 3 vacant seats (or 2 if Mrs Denyer is Co-Opted on 17th May). The Council has received the following guidance from CDC:

There will not be an election [to fill the 3 remaining seats] if the parish has attempted to co-opt and has a quorum. There will be a charge for the 4 May uncontested poll that will be advised in due course.

With 8 / 9 Members, the Council is quorate. Therefore, the Council will continue to attempt to fill the remaining vacant seats over the course of the coming weeks.

4. Neighbourhood Plan

The funding window has not yet opened; therefore, the Council cannot, at this time, make an informed decision about re-instating a Neighbourhood Plan until it can accurately consider the financial implications to do so.

The guidance remains: *“The Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme run by Locality on behalf of DLUHC commenced in April 2018. DLUHC have advised Locality that it is highly likely that funding will be made available for the continuation of support for a further year, 2023-24. We will update you once DLUHC have confirmed this ...”*

Given that the Council has new Members, the Clerk will provide some NP training/guidance in the coming weeks. This will also update Members on advice issued by Locality on behalf of DLUHC.

Once the funding window opens, the Council will consider its NP at either a full meeting, or an extraordinary meeting (as required).

5. Winterton Hall Trust Advice meeting

A meeting with AiRS is taking place on 18th May. An update will be provided to the Council in due course.

6. To note Sessile oak ground level visual assessment on 11th July

Further to the Council accepting Gale Tree Consultancy’s fee quote for the Sessile oak visual inspection (12.04.2023, C/23/051(8)) the assessment will take place on 11th July.

7. To note an update regarding the bus shelters

The WSCC Team who will build the two bus shelters have issued the following: *“Oak now delivered to [redacted for security] Farm and stored there. Frames for shelters were started yesterday and work will continue next week. You will not see any activity on site just yet, but we are now on working on this project.”*

The Council will re-issue letters to neighbours to update them on progress.

8. Children's Crossing sign

The sign has been delivered to the Winterton Hall and will be in immediate use. The Youth Club and Pre-School have extended their thanks.

9. School Safety Zone (SSZ) & Rickman's Lane TRO application

SSZ:

The public engagement letters were sent on 14/04/23 and are scheduled to end 01/05/23. Once this stage has been completed, it is unlikely that anything will change from there. So, in terms of signage locations, these should not change from the current proposal. From this point it is down to our contractor Enerveo to get delivered. [WSCC] will update you after the public engagement period, then, I would suggest applying for your 20mph TRO [along Loxwood Road within the SSZ]. Please include the design for this SSZ scheme, so they are aware of the scope of the scheme.

Rickman's Lane TRO:

No further update. The Clerk continues to chase.

10. WSCC Highways update

The following has been received from WSCC Highways: -

As you will be aware, following the weather events we have experienced over the last year, we are now tackling a large number of issues on the network.

We continue to see exceptionally high numbers of customer reports, in March this was just under 8,000 enquires, this is double what we would normally expect at this time of the year and this trend continues. In January the number of enquiries exceeded 11,000.

The impact on the Highways teams has been significant. The teams are incredibly busy and the volume of work is unrelenting. Current staff vacancies and the significant incidents on the network have also added pressure to the workload.

I would like to assure you we are doing all we can to manage the workload; officers are working over-time and we have successfully recruited new staff but they need support and training to become fully operational.

Our contractors' gangs are also working twilight shifts and Saturdays to manage the increased number of jobs. We are also looking to increase the number of gangs further but as I am sure you will appreciate; this is

common to the entire south-east and nationally, sourcing additional gangs at this time is very difficult. We have deployed 3 Jet Patchers in the county, so this will help.

To enable the Highway Teams to effectively deal with the volume of safety issues being reported, we have paused non-statutory activities for a period of 4 weeks as we did in January. We have extended our response times to customers on general enquiries from 10 to 20 days.

On this basis, our responses to Parishes and Town Councils are likely to take much longer. Of course, if you have urgent issues then these can be escalated. We appreciate your support at this very busy time.

A summary of the temporary measures we have put in place is detailed below.

Temporary measures (from April 17th up to 12th May)

- *Extend SLA for customer responses – up to 20 days*
- *Pause non-essential licensing activities (e.g., residential Vehicle Crossovers, Standard Forms of Consent for activities like licensing banners or planters).*
- *Pause responses to general enquiries, including Community Highway Schemes*

11. Letter of Variation to the West Sussex Pension Fund Pooling Agreement

The following was received from the WSCC Pension Fund Governance department who administer the Parish Council's pension scheme: -

As a result of the 2022 Valuation, a review of the current Small Scheduled Bodies Agreement has taken place. In order to keep this document updated a letter of variation is required, detailing the changes required.

The letter has been amended and returned to WSCC.

31. Date of next meetings

- Planning & Open Spaces Committee, 13th June 2023, Winterton Hall, Plaistow
- Finance Committee, 14th June 2023, 7pm, Winterton Hall, Plaistow
- Full Parish Council, 14th June 2023, 7:30pm, Winterton Hall, Plaistow