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Woodmancote Parish Council Ordinary Meeting Minutes of 11th March 2025 at The Pavilion

Present

- Cllr R Noel, Cllr C Dixon, Cllr D Austin, Cllr M Batchelor, Cllr W Noel.
- Others present: Cllr M Croker (District Councillor), the Clerk, and 1 member of the public.

2025 – 015 Apologies

- Apologies from: Cllr K Donald.

2025 – 016 Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Austin declared an interest in planning application DC/25/0320.

2025 – 017 Public Participation

- Discussion on appeal challenge to WSCC decision to retain footpath 2540 as a footpath. This is by the British Horse Society who had requested a change of use to a bridleway. The Council unanimously agreed that Cllr R Noel would resubmit its previous objection to the change, noting parishioners' concerns.
- Update requested on Hascombe Farm signs: Cllr R Noel confirmed that full permission had been granted by HDC Planning after an investigation by HDC Enforcement Team.

- Confirmation of summer fete; Cllr W Noel agreed to liaise with Sussex Cricket and the Playing Field Committee regarding dates.

2025 – 018 Minutes

- The draft minutes for the meeting on 14 January were resolved without amendment.

2025 - 019 Action Updates from Previous Meeting

019.1 'PRIVATE' signage on the road at the entrance of the playing field - Cllr R Noel reported that Ian Waring of Sussex Cricket had confirmed that these were painted by the painting contractor without his knowledge. The Council agreed that Cllr R Noel should write back to Ian Waring and request that the private markings are removed.

019.2 Stream bridge collapsed fence - Despite this being reported to the WSCC Ranger, Steve Alexander, a member of the public confirmed that the bridge had still not been repaired. Cllr R Noel agreed to follow this up again.

019.3 Neighbourhood Winter Plan update - The Clerk confirmed that the Winter Plan had been updated with current service contact details and live links. Colin Brooke has agreed to provide tractor assistance in snow, and updated insurance and public liability documents need to be obtained for this offer in order to update current WSCC records.

2025 - 020 Reports from outside bodies

020.1 West Sussex County Council - Cllr P Linehan was not present and did not submit a report.

020.2 Horsham District Council - Cllr M Croker and Cllr R Noel updated the Council.

- Council - The 25/26 budget was agreed under the medium-term financial strategy with a local Council Tax increase of 2.7% (£4.67 for Band D)
- Local Plan - HDC has still not received any informative correspondence from the allocated Inspector, just a request to publish a list of action points discussed during the examination hearings. However Cabinet has approved a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) - the proposed timetable for completing the Horsham Local Plan) based on three assumptions: 1. The Inspector on reflection continues with the Examination of the current plan as drafted. 2. The Inspector considers that his concerns cannot be overcome and invites HDC to consider withdrawing the Local Plan. 3. The Inspector invites HDC to undertake further work on the Local Plan in the form of main modifications, for example, allocating further sites for housing. Elements of the Plan's evidence base, such as the Sustainability Appraisal, would also need updating.

If option 3 is used by HDC, the new Local Plan could be approved by July 2028 (when HDC is scheduled to cease to exist).

- Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation - HDC has started a round of consultation meetings with selected Parish councils; the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) consultation on a Mayoral Combined Authority for 'Sussex and Brighton' is live until 13 April; initial proposals for the new Unitary Areas to be issued by 21 March and HDC Councillors will be briefed on 20 March; HDC is recruiting a project manager (jointly funded by District and County Councils) to produce a proposal for DLUHC on 26 September.

County Council May elections have been postponed and Cllr R Noel confirmed that he and Cllr Coker have been asked to serve an extra year as District Councillors.

Cllr R Noel stressed that he had made it clear at the Henfield meeting with the HDC CEO and Leader that WPC would hope to maintain its identity and independence as a Parish Council. He noted that the first inter-parish meeting (involving West Grinstead, Shermanbury, Henfield and Woodmancote) would be held on 8 April.

The Clerk presented a summary of the HDC presentation on devolution given at the Steyning Centre on 17 February.

2025 - 021 Planning

021.1 DC/25/0228 – The Spinney, Bramlands Lane - Erection of a triple bay detached car port. The Council unanimously agreed to submit 'no objection'.

021.2 Late planning application - DC/25/0320 - Woodhouse Farm, Wheatsheaf Road - prior notification of change of use from agricultural to residential and erection of six dwellings. The Council agreed to submit 'objection' with the following comments: The application is over-development of a small plot; out of character with the surrounding rural area; would increase traffic and light pollution to an unacceptable level; would result in water pressure issues (as raised with the previous application) and does not align with the WPC Neighbourhood Plan.

021.3 Planning consultee comments – comments submitted by WPC since the last meeting were noted.

021.4 Planning update – HDC/SDNP planning decisions since the last meeting were noted.

2025 - 022 Finance and Payments

022.1 Reconciled accounts – the reconciled accounts for January and February 2025 were agreed and accepted.

022.2 Payments – the following March 2025 payments were agreed.

04.03.2025		Printer cartridge	15.00	Operational expense
03.03.2025		WSSC	710.60	Clerk salary
05.03.2025		Elizabeth Trundle	8.11	Mileage to notices
11.03.2025		Elizabeth Trundle	6.22	Mileage to meeting
11.03.2025		Elizabeth Trundle	6.00	Home working allowance
07.03.2025		Beacon Fencing	2150.00	Playground fence
		Total	2895.93	

2025 – 023 Blackstone Playing Fields

023.1 PRIVATE painted sign on the road entrance to Blackstone playing field – see 019.1.

023.2 New playground installation – Cllr R Noel confirmed that the new fence around the playground had been installed, and it was looking very good.

023.3 Revised Blackstone Playing Field lease – Cllr R Noel reported that good progress had been made with negotiating a new lease for the playing field with the Allen family; both party’s solicitors were in touch and that a new lease could be drafted shortly. The Council agreed that the final lease with Sussex Cricket would be posted on the WPC website, and a public meeting would be arranged for residents to comment on the new lease. Cllr R Noel agreed to continue liaising on this with WPC solicitors DHB.

023.4 Woodmancote and Blackstone Community Hall – Cllr R Noel agreed to continue to prepare a draft of a pre-paid ‘referendum’ response form. He stressed the importance of pressing on with plans for a community hall in the light of forthcoming devolution plans. The Council agreed to arrange a public meeting to address both the community hall and the new playing field lease. Cllr R Noel agreed to present a draft referendum response card, and information regarding possible WPC loans/grants for the new hall, for the next meeting.

2025 – 024 Governance

024.1 Annual Parish Meeting – Cllr R Noel suggested Helen Peacock, the HDC Climate Change Officer, as a speaker for the WPC Annual Parish Meeting. This was unanimously agreed by members and Cllr R Noel agreed to contact Helen and arrange this.

024.2 Devolution – A report on a presentation held in Steyning by HDC Leader and CEO regarding forthcoming changes resulting from the Government’s Devolution Priority Programme was given by the Clerk under agenda item 020.2

Cllr R Noel informed the Council that the first inter-parish meeting would take place in Shermanbury on 8 April. He therefore suggested that the next WPC meeting be

scheduled for 13 May combining both the Annual Parish and Annual Parish Council meetings. This was unanimously agreed.

024.3 Church Electoral Roll – Cllr R Noel pointed out that the Church relies on the Parish's support and encouraged members to sign on to the Church electoral roll to help secure the future of St Peter's, Woodmancote, as well as the other two churches within the benefice.

2025 – 025 Environmental issues

025.1 Dark Skies – Cllr R Noel reported that he had been advised by HDC that it was the responsibility of the Parish Council to ensure that bright outside night lighting is excluded in all future planning applications.

025.2 Climate Action Plan – A draft plan, drawn up by Cllr W Noel, had been submitted to HDC and members were asked to bring further suggestions for the plan to the next meeting.

2025 – 026 Correspondence

The Clerk circulated details of a forthcoming South Downs National Park (SDNP) Parish Council online meeting on 19 March 2025.

2025 – 027 items for the next agenda/to note

Cllr D Austin asked the Clerk to explain an email he had received regarding his Register of Interests. The Clerk informed him that it had been received from the HDC Monitoring Officer and that it was in relation to his address details. The Clerk agreed to re-forward the relevant correspondence to Cllr D Austin for him to respond directly.

2025 – 028 Date of next meeting

13 May 2025. Meeting closed at 9.27pm.

