

WEST HOATHLY PARISH COUNCIL

representing Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne, Tyes Cross and West Hoathly

Minutes of the West Hoathly Annual Parish Assembly Held on Monday 4th March 2024 in West Hoathly Village Hall

There were 25 people present

1) Chairman's Welcome

Douglas Denham St Pinnock, as chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Amy Marshall and Cllr Manfred Lindfield

3) Approval of Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 7th March 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 7th March 2023 were approved

4) A short introduction from Mark Pearson, the newly appointed CEO of Ashdown Forest, followed by a Q&A session

Mark Pearson the new CEO of Ashdown Forest gave a short introduction. Mark explained how he started his working life as Ranger at Hastings Country Park, he then became Head Ranger at Derbyshire County Council before working initially for Sussex Wildlife Trust, then Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Canal River Trust.

Mark explained how he is delighted to be working back in East Sussex and that the Ashdown Forest is a great environment to walk into with a great vision for the future.

Mark explained how the Ashdown Forest is a cornerstone of the Weald to Waves project and that they are pledging support of land. [Home | Weald To Waves](#)

The Ashdown Forest are working to secure a Landscape Recovery Scheme grant from DEFRA.

Mark Pearson answered questions from members of the public on several different topics, such as what the Forest may look like in 10 years' time, restrictions on wild camping and what the Ashdown Forest are doing to manage the deer population. There was also discussion on the declining Adder and Hedgehog populations, forest fires and the dramatic changes and loss of heathland habitat.

Ashdown Forest were featured on Countryfile on Sunday 11th February, the team filmed in January in several locations across the Forest. The episode on BBC iPlayer is available to view here: [BBC iPlayer - Countryfile - Ashdown Forest](#)

Mark Pearson left the meeting

5) Parish Council Design Competition launch – an opportunity to find out more about the proposal

West Hoathly Parish Council have agreed to launch a Design Competition to welcome ideas of a new vision to replace the planters at Vinols Cross.

Cllr Darvill explained how the Vinols Cross area at the bottom of Finche Field steps is now a bit dull and tiered, as this area is the gateway between Sharpthorne & West Hoathly it was felt that it would benefit from something a little more colourful and interesting. It is hoped that ideas would focus on making the area more symbolic.

Ideas are welcome from all areas of the community, whether that is businesses, local groups, or individuals. To participate the design must be in a format that can be displayed but the choice has no limits. Drawings, sketches, technical or artistic, paintings, models, any other media accompanied by a few descriptive paragraphs to assist interpretation if needed.

Certificates will be awarded for designs in a range of categories which will be determined once all contributions have been displayed.

It is hoped that at least one scheme will be chosen by popular vote and by a panel of judges to develop into a reality. If successful, the designer will be credited with a plaque and suitable inscription at the location.

The Parish Council plan to launch the competition this summer, dates to be confirmed.

6) Parishioners' Q&A session – An opportunity for general Q&As with the Parish Council

West Sussex County Councillor Garry Wall and East Sussex County Councillor Roy Galley attended the meeting to answer any questions, particularly on the conditions of the local roads.

There were several questions regarding the poor state of Grinstead Lane, Roy Galley explained how the latest news was that a 200-metre repair is hoped to be done in March, but this is heavily dependent on the budget and the weather.

Concerns were raised over the lack of investment on the roads and the failures to empty the gullies effectively. It was noted that the recent rain has not helped any repair work.

It was noted that the quick fix pothole repair method has been improved and potholes are now sealed. A photo is taken of every repair, this then goes back to County Council for review. Around 10% are physical inspections.

County Councillor Garry Wall expanded on the budgetary pressures and that roads are only a small part of what County Council do. WSCC now have an extra gully emptying team and they are allocated depending on priorities, which vary depending on the road.

The County Council investment budget remains the same, with 9 million to be spent over 2 years.

The new booking system at the Waste & Recycling Sites was discussed, Garry Wall explained how it has been implemented following a successful trial. The changes hope to stop queuing at peak times. Garry Wall acknowledged that the changes have not been advertised as well as they could have been.

A member of the public asked if there was any update on the West Hoathly Brickworks application, it was noted that there was no update, but the application may be considered by the District Planning Committee on the 21st March but this is unknown until the agenda is issued the week before.

The Chairman thanked members of the public for attending.

The meeting closed at : 21.22

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