



Annual Parish Meeting

23 May 2024

Annual Report





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Chairperson's Report

The past year has been a mixture of challenges and achievements.

CLlr Ian Weir, has been Chair of the Parish Council for several years, accumulating much knowledge and experience of local matters and local conditions. I wish to acknowledge his commitment to Hassocks and his ability to steer a diplomatic path through some of the complexities we faced.

Our staff headed up by the Clerk have worked hard to implement the day to day administration as well as new initiatives of the Council, despite being without internet connections and landline for a total of over two months across the year. Compensation was sought and received from the relevant telecoms company!

Richard, our Groundsperson of many years retired this year. He was well known and appreciated by many in the village and I thank him for his work in particular maintaining Adastra Park to a high standard.

The office has dealt with in excess of four thousand enquiries by telephone, in person and email enquiries. These cover a wide range of issues including dealing with matters relating to HPC owned assets, public bookings and burials, parking discs, issuing food vouchers and signposting.

Ian, our Clerk, and Responsible Financial Officer has guided us to ensure that the budget is well controlled whilst also being spent on the initiatives and works decided on by Councillors. We have again been given a good internal audit rating by Mulberry auditors up to the financial year end 2023/2024, with the opinion that '.....the systems and internal procedures at Hassocks Parish Council are well established and followed '

The full audit report and Annual Risk Report are available on our website.

Councillors took a majority decision to increase the precept (tax) equating by approximately 3.38 % on a band D property, which allows us a cushion for higher costs and urgent, unplanned works in the forthcoming year.

The remainder of my report indicates examples of where our expenditure went last year in addition to staff costs, bills, equipment and services, what our committees worked on and examples of collaboration and support from our volunteers.

Grants

There are two opportunities in the year when local groups or local branches of charities can apply to us for grant funding up to a limited amount. We were pleased to give grants to the following groups:

Cycling Without Age Hurst and Hassocks
Greener Hassocks and Ditchling (formerly HKD transition)
Mid Sussex Radio
Oldland Mill Trust
St Johns' Ambulance
St Peter's and James' Hospice
St Catherine's Hospice
Hassocks Twinning Association
Air Ambulance Kent, Surrey Sussex
4 Sight Vision
Victim Support

Financial Support from Reserves

Hassocks Community Organisation

The Parish Council continued to fund the Christmas lighting in Hassocks with a new lighting design used for 2023. In addition the Council approved a £1500 grant to the Light Up Hassocks group (HCO) towards the costs of street lighting and waste management for the LUH event.

Adastra Hall

This hall, situated in Adastra Park and used extensively by the community, is run by trustees who wished to enlarge the building with part finance from developer contributions (S106 funds.) The PC formally gave support of this allocation when requested for comment by Mid Sussex District Council. Subsequently the hall trustees requested of the PC, as freeholders of the land, an extension to their lease and further financial support directly from the PC. We agreed to and paid for the lengthening of the lease and we allocated £30,000 to towards the cost of the building extension.

Policy, Resources and Communication Committee

Financial resources and staffing matters are the subject of much of this committee's business. It has also in the last year focused on improving our communications with our community. We now have a timetable for regular parish council articles which have started being published in one of the local magazines and we had a stall, display boards and parish councillors present at a Saturday event, 'Hassocks on Show' in October 2023.

This committee also drives the Business plan which it has reviewed and which we have started to compile for 2024 – 2029

Grounds and Environment Committee

GROUNDS

Adastra Park

Drainage

A waterlogged park at times of heavy rainfall, continues to be problematic - affecting the sports pitches, younger children's play area and the path network. The Clerk is in ongoing discussion with consultants regarding a proposed plan they have provided to HPC for drainage improvement works in south and north field. Any future works are likely to be expensive.

Adastra Park Tennis Courts Refurbishment

A major project works achieved by the Council in the past year has been the refurbishment of the three Tennis Courts in Adastra Park. The Council worked closely with the Lawn Tennis Association to achieve this. Works started in June and the L.T.A. Launch event was held in September. The cost of the refurbishment was covered by joint funding from Hassocks Parish Council, developer contributions, the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) Tennis Foundation and UK Government as part of the Parks Tennis Project.

The courts are easily accessible and available for public hire. They are bookable in advance and paid for online via "*Club Spark*" which is the L.T.A. booking management system. Keith Brown, a local LTA coach provides many coaching sessions every week to suit all ages and abilities, including some 'free' coaching sessions. Adastra Tennis Club also use the courts.

Garden of Remembrance Planting and Maintenance

Several years ago, former Cllr Jane Baker established a volunteer group to help maintain the Garden of Remembrance. In May 2023, Jane stepped down as a councillor. However the volunteers were keen to continue the work. One member agreed to act as the co-ordinator in Jane's place and the group has continued. The Parish Council is extremely appreciative of Cllr Baker's commitment and of the work carried out by the volunteers to look after the gardens.

North Field Barrier Gate.

The wooden gate from the North Field car park onto the North Field of Adastra Park was replaced with a metal defender barrier; in line with the North Field car park height barrier and the access barrier to the South Field.

Hassocks Parklife Coffee.

The Parish Council granted a concession for Parklife Coffee which opened on Monday 24TH July 2023. This business continues to serve refreshments in Adastra Park.

Mid Sussex District Council Play Days.

This annual event took place in Adastra Park on Tuesday 25TH July 2023 and was very well attended by local families and children.

Hassocks Burial Ground

Hassocks Parish Council owns and manages the Burial Ground and Memorial Garden, situated opposite St Cosmas and St Damian church. The Deputy Clerk proposed a scheme for improving access for visitors and a new path network was installed making the burial ground more accessible all year round.

Parklands Allotments

Parklands Allotments participated in the NGS Open Gardens scheme again in June 2023. Allotment holders worked hard to prepare for this event and the allotments received many positive comments.

Hassocks Allotment Holders Association (HAHA).

The Parish Council owns and maintains the allotment spaces at Parklands Copse, where demand for allotments is high. The Council works very closely each year with the Chair of HAHA. After 9 years of helping us to ensure maintenance standards as well as guiding and supporting allotment holders, Tony Copeland stepped down as Chair and I thank Tony for his work and dedication to this role. Rob Yates is now the new Chair.

Parklands Copse.

The small bridge at the eastern end of Parklands Copse had become unsafe and required replacement. This was carried out by The Monday Group on behalf of the PC, and the council is extremely grateful for the ongoing support of The Monday Group volunteers.

Talbot Field

The Woodland Flora and Fauna Group continue to manage and maintain Talbot Field in partnership with the Parish Council. The Council is very appreciative of the work carried out by the Group to protect and develop Talbot Field as a valuable natural reserve.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Rights of Way

Hassocks is endowed with numerous public rights of way, making our area ideal for walkers. Although West Sussex has a duty to maintain these paths, the Parish Council reserves a sum of money for contribution towards their maintenance. We keep a list of Public Rights of Way and their condition status.

Street Trees.

HPC funded the planting of a further 23 trees in verges on various roads in Hassocks, kindly supported by additional donations from Hassocks Community Organisation and residents.

Floral Planters & Floral displays.

The Council again funded the provision and maintenance of the lamp post baskets and hanging baskets throughout the High Street and on Keymer Parade. We also funded the planters on Orion Parade.

Penny Wadsworth, Hassocks resident, voluntarily visited businesses, as she does every year, to liaise with traders about the hanging basket scheme. She delivers and collects the required paperwork and acts as a first port of call for any queries. I thank Penny for her tireless work in helping our main shopping streets to look attractive.

Bus Shelters

The PC funded two wooden seats, which The Monday Group installed inside the bus shelters on London Road. We also purchased a replacement of the seat outside the shelter at Stonepound North.

Flood Working Group.

5 streams run through our village. To encourage the health and maintenance of these streams, the Flood Action Group revamped the West Sussex Riparian Ownership booklet informing residents of riparian responsibilities and rights. The booklets were delivered to all properties adjacent to a water course in Hassocks. The group continues to urge West Sussex to implement its own plan for flood mitigation measures and in the meantime, we collaborate with Greener Hassocks and Ditchling (formerly HKD transition) and the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust on some of the natural flood initiatives which they implement in Hassocks.

We also send photo and video evidence to the strategic flood management team at West Sussex County Council as part of data collection which they requested.

We have been reassured by WSCC that Hassocks remains a high priority for any schemes to mitigate flooding.

20mph Speed Limit Working Group

The Parish Council offered its support to a request from Hassocks Community Organisation for 20mph Speed Limits in the village. A working group was set up including parish councillors and a representative from HCO to explore progressing this further.

King Charles III Coronation

To commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III, on May 6th 2023, the Council commissioned "Coronation Rose beds" in the Adastra Park Garden of Remembrance. The works were done by the Garden of Remembrance volunteers. In addition a new engraved wooden bench was installed on Ockley Lane.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee meets every three weeks that is 17 meetings a year. During the last year we have dealt with 327 Planning Applications.

The committee considers applications from Mid Sussex District Council and the South Downs National Park who are the statutory planning authorities. In addition to considering planning applications, the committee is also consulted on street naming, temporary road closure applications, licensing related matters and various planning related consultations.

The majority of applications have been for extensions to existing properties, but applications considered also include tree work on trees with Tree Preservation Orders or in Conservation Areas, and for new dwellings and larger scale developments

An example of larger and potentially controversial applications we have commented on during the past year is :

DM/23/0036 Byanda Brighton Road Hassock.

This was for a 60 bedroom residential care property and ancillary buildings.

We had several reservations about this application including overdevelopment of the site, flooding, access onto Brighton Road via a steep narrow private lane and too few parking spaces. The application was also strongly objected to by neighbours. The Parish Council recommended refusal.

The Parish repeatedly recommended refusal, however the application was finally granted permission in September 2023, two and a half years after submission.

We are not the planning authority, we can only comment, but our area has been the object of increasing pressure from developers and it is still important for our voice to be heard. We also have to be aware of government changes to planning laws regarding flooding and environmental issues

I would again like to thank our Deputy Clerk, Tracy Forte, for ensuring that our planning committee meetings are administered smoothly.

Neighbourhood Plan Committee

We considered proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and submitted our views as part of that consultation in January 2023.

Early in 2024 this Committee considered and made comments on MSDC's revised draft District Plan (Regulation 19) Consultation.

Priorities Statement Survey

Under levelling up legislation going through Parliament from Dec 2022, proposals for communities to formulate Neighbourhood Priorities Statements were introduced. Hassocks PC decided to be an early adopter and a public survey of residents was carried out in December 2023 (in conjunction with Action in Rural Sussex). The survey elicited views on what Hassocks could be like in 2033. The results indicated that the views of residents who responded, were in alignment with the Councils existing priorities for Hassocks.

Conclusion

Much hard work goes on behind the scenes to ensure that the community benefits from having a Parish Council. We could not have achieved as much without eliciting the support and collaboration of community groups and volunteers and we also appreciate the support of our elected Councillors at West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council.

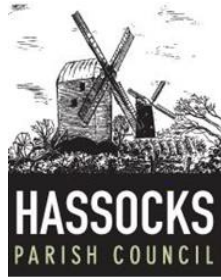
I wish to acknowledge the hundreds of hours of unpaid public service and commitment of Hassocks Parish Councillors and similarly of all the volunteers who help us to implement our projects and who contribute to Hassocks as a great place to live, work and visit.

Finally thank you to our Clerk and staff, who provide a welcoming and friendly service to all who engage with them.

Frances Gaudencio

Chairperson

Hassocks Parish Council



HASSOCKS PARISH COUNCIL INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2023-2024

