

Reports for Parish Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday 15th November 2023

Graham Zacharias

IGas

The company has rebranded itself and, from June, is now known as Star Energy Group plc

Finance

The Clerk's salary increase for the year commenced April 23 as recommended by NALC is 5.8% or £1 per hour, to £18.10. I recommend that this increase, retroactive to April, is implemented with immediate effect.

Ongoing banking issues with Barclays continue to be both frustrating and time consuming.

Alternative arrangements will be explored.

Meetings

Nothing to report

Village Hall

Significant progress has been achieved in correcting and updating administrative shortcomings in the operation of the Village Hall (insurance, certifications, maintenance and repairs etc). The next challenges will be to market the facility more widely in the hope of increasing the utilisation and to review the various pricing options with the ultimate aim of stemming the losses incurred annually.

At the present time, the VH remains well funded.

E) Potholes

Nothing new to report

Tony Marshall

Parish Design Statement

Having taken issue with the additional requirements placed on us by SDNPA, there has now been a further change of personnel at their end; we are awaiting contact from the new person handling this.

Community Speed Watch

I took on the job of 'Coordinator' with best intentions a while back, but regret to say that I've found other pressures keep pushing it down the list of priorities. So I intend to stand down from this and would like to hand it over to someone else, so that the local scheme can be kept going.

Charlton 20mph TRO

I've drafted a TRO application for 20mph within Charlton, which reflects the original (and agreed) section of the CHS proposal relating to Charlton. In brief, this would create a 20mph zone throughout Charlton, from the Charlton sign at the bottom of the footpath to Levin Down, through to the existing 30mph limit signs on Knights Hill and the road out to East Dean. I have yet to obtain a few letters of support to add to the application, at which point I would go ahead and submit this; I would therefore like formal Council approval to do so.

Gates for Charlton

Of the various companies I've contacted for prices, the company that supplied the Singleton gates is by far the most competitive, with a total cost of £470 (exc VAT) for three simple post and rail style white (plastic) gates. I've not yet had a price for signage, but assuming the cost is similar to Singleton's, for the two village signs it would be around £500. I hope to recruit local help to install them; being country lanes, I don't believe we'll need traffic management. My next task is to approach people for contributions towards the cost – at which point I may be back for a PC contribution.

Southern Water

Despite repeated requests, I have yet to receive the promised information from Floyd Cooper concerning possible improvement works in the Leys Meadow, so as to avoid the need to pump sewage into the river at Charlton. Meanwhile, a Charlton resident wrote to our MP, whose office eventually received a response from Southern Water – which quotes some big numbers, but under

closer examination appears to be no more than PR. It refers to 'a £450K estimate on total works', but then says 'we have a £40k investigation quote planned'; they had Electrosan here three years ago, teams of engineers in the meadow last year and camera teams out regularly over the past year or so – suggesting that, once again, they are favouring 'investigation' over actually doing anything.

So I've written again to Floyd Cooper pointing out that, such is the anger about this locally, unless real improvements are seen within the parish in the very near future, the residents will expect the PC to be 'making more noise' about this. I previously suggested that we might contact the BBC about illegal pumping on dry days – but to no avail – so this is something we may need to follow through, if we see pumping this winter.

Jeremy Rigby

The Leys Parking Project

The final parts of the parking project that remain are:

Planting of trees for landscaping purposes. SDNPA will shortly provide:

- 6 x Crab apple - *Malus sylvestris* 1.75-2.00m
- 6 x Wild Cherry - *Prunus avium*. 1.75-2.0m
- 12 x 1.8m x 300m Galvanised Wire Mesh Guard
- 12 x 1.8m Chestnut machine round stake
- Buckle Tree Ties

The proposed location for the trees is either side of the new parking and between the path and the Lavant plus 2-3 around the village hall such that they do not impeded setting up for teas etc outside.

Volunteers will be requested to help with the planting when they arrive.

Providing somewhere to secure bicycles. This is one of the conditions of the £21,000 Rees Jeffreys Grant that we have received. It is proposed to buy 'rural' type posts of the same type used by the SDNPA. They will also be useful to prevent cars parking up on the verge. A quote has been obtained for £162+VAT each. An application will be made to the Rural England Prosperity Fund as an Active Travel enabler. If successful the PC will still need to provide 20% (£130). **Agreement is sought from the PC to buy 4 bike posts at a cost of £648 + VAT now.** It is proposed that PC arrange the setting up themselves. It should be noted that Grant re-imburement cannot be guaranteed and will not be announced until April 24.

The attached map shows the proposed locations of the trees and bike posts.

The final condition of the Rees Jeffreys Grant was to install EV in the vicinity as proposed by the PC in the grant application. This is being addressed separately.

School Layby parking

The aim is to mitigate the damage done to the verge alongside the school playing field by establishing more resilient parking arrangements. Extending the existing layby with a tarmac covering would be in the region of £60,000. Earlier plans had suggested echelon parking (right angles to the road); this would take up most of the verge, require the removal of existing plants and trees and lose most of the grass. It is suggested that this is discounted since, although it would accommodate more vehicles, it will impact significantly on the rural look of the approach to the village and, after an informal discussion with SDNPA is unlikely to be given planning permission given the aesthetics and loss of verge and trees. **The recommended option is hardening the verge to allow cars to park parallel to the road** but with grass growing through the blocks and a splayed kerb to ease access. This could provide in the region of 15 – 20 parking spaces (to be validated). Early cost estimates are in the region of £40,000. WSCC has been approached to recommend some

additional approved highway contractors in order to refine the design and get a selection of quotes. At that stage funds will need to be identified / raised. The disruption caused indicates a school holiday period would be preferred for the works and, if we were to aim for them to be conducted summer 2024 we would need to be in a position to afford to go to contract by March / April next year.

Centurion Way

The extension between West Dean and Hat Hill is on track to be completed and open by Spring 2024. In the near term it will be dependent upon a link along the A286 footpath between West Dean School and the new section. More detail is in the attached SDNPA Update. The PC will be invited to provide a representative to join a site visit to begin the review of options for a cycle friendly link between Singleton and the Hat Hill access.

Sam Cox

Maintenance

Having not had any requests of areas that need maintenance (appropriate to this time of year) pointed out, nor any particular requirements being obvious walking the village, a volunteer clean up/maintenance day in the Autumn isn't proposed.

Requests for bulb planting and village pond maintenance are appropriate for the spring (for summer bulbs) and late summer (for the following spring) and as such I will look to arrange a day in March, tentative date March 23rd.

EV charging

Communications continue with CDC/WSCC and their regional partner Connected Kerb, with a view to arranging for several EV points in The Leys Parking Project. We await feedback of suitability from an electrical engineer survey. More to follow.

Vivien Nuttall

Finance Report

Total in Current Account (14/11/23) – £11,110.54

Balance in Savings Account – £7,047.38

Funds Received since 13/09/23

Precept - £12,670.50

VAT Refund - £7,524.08

Jeremy Hunt

Have your say on the County Council's budget proposals for next year

West Sussex County Council is asking residents for their views on its priorities and how it proposes to spend taxpayers' money as it works to close a £44.9m budget gap for the coming year (2024/25).

Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: "Inflationary costs, a growing need for services, and measures to protect the environment, mean councils across the country are having to make tough choices in order to plan for the future.

"We know people in our communities, especially the most vulnerable, rely on our services so it's important we ensure our spending aligns with the priorities in [Our Council Plan](#), focusing on what matters most to our communities.

"At the same time, we are very conscious that it is not our money we are spending, but our residents' and businesses' money, and that it is our responsibility to ensure the money is spent well in delivering cost-effective and value for money services."

The county council's budget proposals include reductions of £11.8m alongside a possible increase of council tax of 2.99%, plus an additional adult social care precept of 2%.

The proposals also include an extra £53m in revenue spending on vital services including an additional £31.2m for vulnerable children and young people, £12.3m more for adults' social care, and an extra £5m to maintain the county's 4,000km of roads.

If approved, the current proposals would still leave a budget gap of £4.4m to be bridged, something which has been described as 'challenging but achievable'.

The consultation asks residents:

- what they think are the most vital county council services
- where they'd spend or reduce money
- which options they feel the county council should focus on to achieve a balanced budget

Full details of the consultation, which is open until 10 December 2023, can be found at www.westsussex.gov.uk/budget. Anyone without access to the internet can visit a library or family hub to complete the consultation.

Cllr Jeremy Hunt, West Sussex Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, said: "We know how important it is to make best use of our limited resources. And with the increased financial pressures and demands being felt by everyone we are looking at every available option to ensure we can protect vital services and invest in the priorities of Our Council Plan.

"It's important for us to hear the views of our residents on these matters so I would urge people to take part in the consultation and help guide our budget plans.

"In the meantime, we are committed to continue to lobby government to recognise the funding constraints being placed on local authorities and the rising demand that is impacting local services."

The Cabinet is due to consider feedback from the public consultation at a meeting in January before recommending the Council Plan and budget to Full Council in February next year for a final decision.

Investing in Better Roads

This is a new website covering many aspects of how we are investing in our roads. The website includes a lot of information, some key facts and some videos. I would urge you to visit the site @ <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/maintaining-roads-verges-and-pavements/road-maintenance/better-roads/>

16 to 20 Bus Saver fares introduced

Young people aged 16 to 20 are now able to qualify for a discounted bus fare with the launch of a new '16 to 20 Bus Saver' scheme developed by West Sussex County Council alongside bus operators and funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of a national scheme to boost bus services. West Sussex received a £19m grant.

From Sunday 22 October this year, young people were able to receive the new discounted bus fares if their journey starts or finishes anywhere within West Sussex. The '16 to 20 Bus Saver' means young people can benefit from reduced child rate fares offered by their local bus operator.

When young people reach the age of 16, they usually stop qualifying for the cheaper child-rate tickets when travelling on the bus, and often end up having to pay an adult fare. This new scheme means young people can continue to receive a discount right up until the day before their 21st birthday, giving them the freedom to travel for less - whether it's getting to college or university, attending a job interview, traveling to work, or meeting up with friends."

The new scheme is expected to run until March 2025 and could be extended by bus operators if successful. To get the discount, young people just need to show a valid ID or a [CitizenCard](#).

Joy added: "We want to help young people become more independent and fulfil their potential and a key focus of [Our Council Plan](#) is to enable active travel and access to education, employment and services for our residents. The new '16 to 20 Bus Saver' not only helps us to do this but it also provides a more affordable and environmentally friendly travel option for young people."

For more information on the new '16 to 20 Bus Saver' scheme, visit: www.westsussex.gov.uk/16to20BusSaver

WSSC's meals on wheels service has been crowned one of the best in the country

West Sussex County Council's meals on wheels service has been crowned one of the best in the country after being named joint winner of a prestigious national award.

West Sussex County Council and service provider Health & Independent Living Support (HILS) were one of four joint winners of this year's Meals On Wheels Service of the Year prize at the National Association of Care Catering Awards, which were held on 5 October.

Throughout the year the service offers more than just a hot meal to our customers. Delivery teams also offer a friendly face, company and someone to check they are safe and well. Alongside our service provider HILS, we have worked in partnership with other organisations to raise awareness of various wellbeing and care initiatives, as well as share important practical advice. This helps support people to continue to live independently in their own homes, which we know is extremely important to many of our residents.

For more information about the meals on wheels service, or to sign up to receive meals in West Sussex contact please call 0330 2000 103, email westsussex@hils-uk.org or

The Home Upgrade Grant.

This is available across the county through the Warmer Homes programme. It is aimed at lower income households living in the least energy efficient homes without gas central heating. Residents can qualify for free energy efficiency improvements worth thousands of pounds. These include solid wall insulation (up to £10,000), air source heat pumps (up to £14,000) and solar panels (up to £6,000).

To qualify, residents must ensure that:

Their home is not heated by mains gas (e.g. you use electric, oil or LPG).

Their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating is D, E, F or G (this can be checked by Warmer Homes if the resident is unsure).

They have a household income of £31,000 or under, or receive a means tested benefit.

The funding is available to owner occupiers and private rental tenants only. For private rental tenants, their landlord will be required to make a financial contribution. Residents can apply through the Warmer Homes website www.warmerhomes.org.uk/apply or calling the freephone number - 0800 038 5757.

Here to help - cost of living

WSSCC has dedicated web pages to provide you with the latest help, advice and practical support for those facing cost of living pressures. Please go to [Advice and information pages](#)

Local Issues

Communities Highways Project

I understand that a meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 14th between our highways team and the PC (TM?) to review the proposed scheme. I presume that there will therefore be an update brought to the meeting. I apologise that I do not have any further information on these plans, but unfortunately I have not been party to the correspondence between the PC and our officers. Could I please ask that in future I am copied in to any dealings that the PC are having with the CC, as it is obviously helpful if I know what progress is - or is not - being made. I can then at least try to ensure that things progress in a timely way, or at least understand what is going on if any issues arise.

Communities highway scheme - Binderton/West Dean Speed Limit reduction

Just to let you know that West Dean PC applied for a Communities TRO scheme to implement a 50mph speed limit between West Dean and Binderton, a 40mph limit through Binderton and then a 50mph limit through to Lavant. The speed data has supported this application, as do the Sussex Police. Our TRO team have therefore confirmed that hopefully the scheme should be out for consultation prior to Christmas, but the exact timings are still to be confirmed.

Finally, please don't forget to keep an eye on our website, especially our news and campaigns page where you can keep up to date with all our latest news. <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/news-and-campaigns/>

Henry Potter

Nothing to report of direct concern for singleton but generally, the delay in preparing the final review of the District Local Plan for presentation to the Inspectorate for adoption is slipping further into the future. This, all because of the indifference and lack of support by National Highways for the necessary works to the A27 included in the review to enable the target of 625 new homes per annum to be met. By law, the review and adoption of a new Local Plan MUST be completed by mid 2025! But there is a grave risk that this may not be met. The transport study which was carried out in 2016, is now hopelessly out of date, evidenced by the current situations surrounding Chichester. If a new transport study is deemed necessary this will take another 9 or 10 months which will take us close to this cut off date. It is hard to appreciate that an Agency, NH, responsible for transport, the back bone of our economy, can be so negative.

The most recent two meetings of the Development Plan and Infrastructure Panel have really exposed the difficulties faced by our Planning Officers. And of course. The only consolation is that NH have suggested that major planning decisions should be refused or deferred until any impact on the Highways Network is resolved. Quite what will become of the Strategic Site for 1,300 new homes at Tangmere which already benefits from Outline Permission must be in doubt due to the immense impact on the A27, which is already 'at capacity'

In the meantime WSCC have proposed a review of the highways network around Chichester in order to mitigate the increased use of A and B class roads. What they could possibly do to New Road, Hunters Race and other feeder roads is far beyond my imagination.

Invites should soon be issued for any Local Authorities, PCs, schools landowners to apply for discounted tree saplings to plant in neighbourhoods. This scheme follows last years introduction of the Queens Green Canopy during which 25,000 trees were planted throughout the District. We hope it will be repeated this winter. I appreciate that The Goodwood Estate have been proactive in planting trees but if the PC would like to join this scheme and plant a few more trees throughout the parish, details can be found on the CDC Website.

The recent weather has certainly tested our resources, though I must report that, apart from localised flooding we have been luckier than most. The threat of storm Ciaran was well addressed by most responsible Authorities by issuing warnings and helpful contact details to report any incidents. As I write this it looks to have passed us by with the worst fear for us, Power Failure, not materialising. We must be thankful. Apart from the torrential rain causing flooding in exceptional places, I think it was less damaging than the '87 Storm.

At last weeks meeting (07/11) The Cabinet considered the Councils Financial Strategy and Plan for '24-'25 through to '28-'29. This includes setting the minimum level of Reserves, this is recommended by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. Also that the reserve budget of £8m set aside for the potential needs caused by the Cv19 pandemic, and unused, be returned to the General Reserve Fund.

Another issue to be considered is a recommendation to increase Car Parking Charges but this will be subject to a Public Consultation which I am sure will attract much criticism from users. These are still reasonable compared to other municipalities, Winchester and Horsham are cited in the Cabinet Report, but the sight of so many empty parking spaces in our car parks at any time of day should be of great concern. I can only think of Freddie Laker whose motto was "sell 'em cheap and fill every seat" I hear many folk complain about car parking charges, any increase is unlikely to be welcome. The occupancy of the Chichester Park Hotel has now settled down and I'm pleased that the demonstrations are over. I have heard of no problems to date and I wish them well.

