

**MINUTES OF HORAM PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD
ON THURSDAY 27th MARCH 2025 AT 19.10hrs UNTIL 21.23hrs IN HORAM
VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Councillors A Billings (Chairman), G Brockhurst, J Howells, G Knight, S Lane, A Sadler, S Lane, J Trott, and V Roberts

District Councillor B Bowdler, Clerk and Admin Assistant were also in attendance

Representatives from: Horam Community Garden, Heathfield and District Ramblers and the A267 Road Safety Group were present

34 members of the public

The meeting started at 19.10 pm with the Chairman welcoming everyone to the meeting and thanked the WI for providing the refreshments. The Chairman explained the structure of the Parish Council that it was made up of the Clerk who in Horam is also the Responsible Finance Chairman, the Chairman and Parish Councillors. Horam have three main Committees, Planning and Highways, Finance and Staffing all of these Committees report to Full Council. Planning meetings are held twice a month and the Councillors can spend up to 4 hours over 2 days preparing for this. The Finance Committee is held 5 times a year. The Chairman reported that Cllr Cousins had resigned from the Parish Council earlier this month after serving on the Council for 23 years. It was reported that if anybody is interested in becoming a Parish Councillor please could they email Jackie the Clerk at clerk@horamparishcouncil.gov.uk.

The Chairman outlined some of the disappointments of the year. The first was the land between Discovery Way and the A267. Horam PC proposed a local green space and project. WDC Draft Plan wants a 5 house development there. The footway between Horam and Maynards Green. Horam Parish Council requested kerbs for safety and spatial separation and ESCC have laid bumpy tarmac where most of it flush with the road. The wooded area South end of Horam Station. Horam Neighbourhood plan proposed green space and ecological project. Wealden have felled trees and ignored the Cuckoo Trail consultation. In the Neighbourhood Plan there was a gaps as residents wanted to maintain distinctiveness of settlements but this has been rejected by Wealden.

The Chairman then went on to speak about Horam PC's achievements. The Parish Council participated in the Cuckoo Trail Enhancements and are awaiting a response from WDC. A new website was launched earlier in the month and parishioners are able to contact ESCC Highways directly regarding potholes. Wealden District Council can also be contacted regarding missed bin collections, damaged road signs and dog fouling. Also all agendas and minutes of meetings can be found on the website and downloaded. Horam Parish Council have produced an Emergency Plan which is a requirement of a Parish Council and this will be finalised shortly. Prepared and agreed a Business Plan. It was reported that £30,477 of Community Infrastructure money has been spent in the last financial year. Work has started on a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment and Biodiversity Assessment

The Clerk then addressed the meeting she explained she was the Clerk and the Financial Officer for Horam Parish Council. She said together with the Chairman, the Clerk is the face of the officialdom in the community and together they have an important public relations role in informing the community about, and promoting, the council and its activities. It was reported that she was head of administration and is responsible for the internal management and organisation of the council. To simplify the Clerk works for the Council to ensure that they act in a legally correct manner and to advise and administer the actions of the Council.

To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 16 May 2024

The minutes were duly approved and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman introduced Mr Adam Price from the Horam Community Garden Scheme

Horam Community Garden – Mr Price addressed the meeting and said in had been an incredible journey and wonderful progress had been made on the community garden. The garden was created so that people would escape to the outdoors, forge new friendships and not suffer form loneliness. The community garden have a facebook page where they share their progress and it was noted that local businesses had made generous donations. It was reported that it is a wonderful space for families, there was a handmade seesaw, willow den, forest school, archery and bulb planting. It was noted that Nus Ghani had visited the community garden and had said that the garden was a wonderful idea.

The Chairman introduced the Ramblers. It was noted that Peta Highton is the Chairperson for Heathfield and District Ramblers.

Ramblers – Alison Knight gave a presentation she reported that Heathfield and District had 76 members and did weekly walks in all weathers. Their walks take place on Saturday and range from 5-8 miles. It was reported that the walkers operate car sharing. In 2024 they led 47 guided walks. The Ramblers also report on the state of the footpaths. More information can be found on the website [Home | Heathfield Ramblers | Heathfield and District Ramblers](#)

Membership of the Ramblers is £43.00 per year for a single person and £58.00 for joint membership. When you walk with Heathfield and District Ramblers you do not pay anything.

It was asked how quickly do gates get repaired once the Ramblers have reported it. It was reported that repairs to the last gate reported were very quick.

It was noted that the Definitive map of footpaths is kept at County Hall Lewes.

The Chairman introduced County Councillor Bob Bowdler

Wealden Works - Mr Bowdler spoke about Wealden Works. Wealden Works have been running for 13 years in Heathfield and is an independent charity. They help 16-24 year olds and hold 7 courses a year. Last year Wealden Works moved into new premises in Station Road, Heathfield. If anybody would like to visit you are very welcome to pop along on an afternoon. Following the end of the course, friendships will have been made, a CV will have been created and these students

are then supported by Wealden Works for the next year. Wealden Works is funded by local Parish Councils and at present Wealden Works has submitted an application to the National Lottery.

Mr Bowdler spoke on Devolution he said ESCC did not have a choice. He did not think Parishes would change but there would be more planning. He reported that the district boundaries would still be in place but did not know about MPs. It was asked how long he thought it would take. Mr Bowdler reported that they had received the first notice on 16 December 2024, there was an outline meeting last week and the final plan would be heard in September 2025.

The Chairman introduced the A267 Road Safety Group, Melvyn Butcher, Susan King and Sarah Jones

A267 Road Safety Group Mr Butcher said that he had been correspondent for the Sussex Express since 2006 and wrote the Parish Pump articles. His wife Susan King was a reporter for the Sussex Express. Following the fatal crash on the A267 last year, Sarah Jones had approached him and said something needs to be done regarding the road. He reported that there were 700 members of the group and he hoped that this would soon rise to over 1,000. The group had given presentations to Mayfield, Five Ashes, Hadlow Down, Heathfield and Waldron and Horam Parish Councils. Mr Butcher believes that the most dangerous stretch of the A267 is Little London to Horam where the road has tight bends. The Group are preparing a consultation document asking that the speed limit between Mayfield and Horam is reduced to 40 mph. Mr Butcher reported that Nus Ghani has given an enormous amount of support.

A member of the audience addressed Mr Butcher and thanked the group for all they were doing. It was reported that she lived along Little London Road by the garage and they witness approximately 2 accidents a year and cars are written off. Drivers along this stretch of road are ignoring the 30 mph signs.

Cllr Knight spoke and said that the Parish Council had been talking to ESCC regarding the speed at this location for a long time and were still talking to them with the possible erection of CIS.

Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Lane addressed the meeting regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, she said the work on the plan had taken 5 years to complete. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering group contributed a lot of time and an enormous amount of effort to get this plan made. At the Referendum on 26 September 2024 there was a 20% turn out which Wealden said was a big turnout. By having a Neighbourhood Plan the Council receive 25% for local infrastructure. Neighbourhood Plans are now part of the Wealden planning process and are used in planning decisions by Wealden.

Budget and Precept

The Chairman addressed the meeting and said the precept had gone up by 54% but this was due to three extraordinary items.

The first was the increase rental for the office and meeting room.

The increase in general reserves

and the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Coxlow area.

It was noted that the office rental would be a recurring cost.

Reserves will need to be looked at again next year.

It was hoped that the Landscape Assessment for Coxlow would be a one off cost of approximately £20,000. Wealden have indicated that 750 houses will be built here and the Parish Council received a lot of comments from residents who saw the WDC plan and said that the Cuckoo Trail is precious. Horam Parish Council are looking at keeping new buildings further back from the Cuckoo Trail to enable it to stay rural.

The meeting was then open to questions.

A member of the public spoke and asked if Horam Parish Council would support 7 local residents who are opposing the licensing and selling of hot food 7 days a week from a window in the garage building. The resident said that this was being heard at a Licensing Committee meeting next week, the Clerk said she would look into this immediately.

There was another question raised regarding the CIL allocated. The member of the public noted that there was £347,000 in reserves and £322,00 was unspent CIL funds. He understood that if CIL money was not used it may have to be returned to WDC. He went on to say that public toilets on the Village Hall recreation ground should be considered as the toilets in the Village Hall and Football Pavilion could not be used. The Chairman reported that this is a capital item that could be considered but the Village Hall would need to be in charge of the cleaning as CIL does not allow for cleaning. A question was raised regarding the £258,000 held in Barclays and said that it is usual to open additional bank accounts to spread the money as financial services compensation only covers £85,000. It was noted that Horam PC are in the process of opening further accounts.

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council were keen to purchase Horam Manor Farm prior to May 2023 and Wealden had offered their support but had withdrawn it.

A member of the public said that Hailsham Recreation Ground had self cleaning toilets installed on its Recreation Ground. It was reported that these had been shut due to vandalism.

The question was raised regarding the huge increase in the precept and the member of the public said there were 42 Parish/Town Councils and their average increase was 8.91%. He said one of the main reasons was the rent on the club rooms it had risen 75% from April last year when it was charged at £285 and now £500 per month and there is only an allocation of 30 meetings a year.

A member of the public noted that staff wages had increased dramatically in February 2024. The Chairman reported that to have a fully trained Clerk you have to pay the correct rate. With all the work the Council are handling an assistant was taken on last April. The Chairman said staff costs have risen 4% but this includes the NI increase last November.

The Chairman said going back to the increase in office costs there was a gentleman's agreement with Horam Charity Trustees. A Councillor then got in touch with the Charity Commission regarding this and they said that we needed to pay the full commercial rate so this is why the rental has risen. The Chairman said I do not think we are paying the full commercial rate on this building and the rate is negotiated year on year until we decide we do not use it or move.

The Chairman thanked the 7 residents from Little London who would be attending the meeting of the Licensing Committee and said it was good that residents fought their own corner.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 21.23.

DRAFT