

RUSTINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES: of the Monthly Meeting held on 27 January 2025

PRESENT: Councillors J Bennett (Chairman), Mrs V Allen, Mrs C Broomfield, M Broomfield, J Ceiriog-Hughes, Mrs A Cooper, A Cooper, Mrs P Gregory, R Grevett, G Lee, Ms L Lloyd, Mrs S Partridge, Ms M Revell, D Rogers, Mrs C Stevens and P Warren

In attendance: Mrs C Ward (Clerk of the Council) and Ms R Costan (Deputy Clerk of the Council)

1/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence from Members.

2/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Broomfield declared a personal interest in Minute 14/25. She remained in the Meeting during consideration of this item and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

Councillor Broomfield declared a personal interest in Minute 14/25. He remained in the Meeting during consideration of this item and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

Councillor Rogers declared a personal interest in Minute 14/25. He remained in the Meeting during consideration of this item and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

Councillor Mrs Cooper declared a personal interest in Minute 28/25. She remained in the Meeting during consideration of this item and took part in the discussion and vote thereon.

3/25 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Monthly Meeting held on 25 November 2024 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4/25 SUSSEX POLICE

Apologies for absence had been received from Sergeant West and PCSO Raju.

(a) Matters Arising

The Clerk referred to Minute 286/24(a) and said she had recently received notification that the homeless individual/beggar in the Village had, sadly, passed away at the beginning of January.

She then referred to the concerning number of retail units, together with cars/vans which had been broken into in Rustington over the past few weeks. She said Sussex Police were actively investigating all of these crimes, together with some significantly similar crimes in Littlehampton. She said she understood extra Police vehicle patrols were being carried out on a daily basis.

The Council was concerned to NOTE this information.

Councillor Mrs Cooper then reported on an email, which had been previously circulated to all Members advising that she was aware of a new Facebook group, which seemed to be very helpful. She said the Admin for the Page were meeting with the Police and had contacted the Littlehampton Town Council.

She also advised that an individual had been arrested and charged with the break-ins at three shops on 14 January 2025. She said the Police had expressed their gratitude for the CCTV provided which showed clear colour footage, and had really assisted in pulling the case together.

Mrs Cooper's email had also included the link to the aforementioned Facebook Page as follows:- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AAEcrhZg3/?> and had included a list of incidents from 20 to 26 January 2025.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Council, expressed his thanks and appreciation to Councillor Mrs Cooper for notifying the Council in this regard.

Councillor Lee referred to the arrest and charging of the culprit of the break-ins to a number of retail units, both in Rustington and Littlehampton, and said this was excellent news for the Village.

He then said PCSO Raju had advised him that there had been 50 crimes reported for Rustington so far in the current month.

The Council NOTED this information and the Chairman thanked Councillor Lee for his Report.

(b) Arun All Parishes Meeting - 20 December 2024

The Clerk advised that the Deputy Clerk had attended the above Meeting, which was again hosted by Inspector Ross Wickings.

The Deputy Clerk said Inspector Wickings had provided a general update Force wide advising that the Initial Investigation Team was going well but, unfortunately the Neighbourhood Policing Team job numbers were down, as a result of the recent changes.

He had also advised that Arun and Chichester would be trialling a Mobile Engagement Unit, in the form of an Alpha Drop Box, in early Spring 2025 for a period of three to six-months. The Unit would be able to be easily moved to various locations, and particularly to those in hard-to-reach areas, whilst also being able to visit several places in one day, if required. It would also enable Officers to meet face to face with members of the Public, and would provide a most welcomed visible presence. She said that Parishes might have to bid for visits. Inspector Wickings advised this was not a replacement for a Police Station but would provide extended engagement. He also hoped that Officers may foot patrol around it when it was in situ.

The Deputy Clerk reported Inspector Wickings had provided feedback on shoplifting in Villages and the fact that some businesses could feel reluctant to take any action. He had referred to a possible joint approach by Parishes with a Campaign delivering the message that theft would not be tolerated in their Villages.

He concluded by advising that recruitment was currently underway for a Business Crime Reduction Officer for the Arun District.

The Council NOTED this information.

5/25 DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ms Edwards and Gunner.

Councillor Mrs Cooper, in her capacity as a District Councillor for Rustington, then reported on Arun District Council matters as follows:-

- *Working Party currently working hard in respect of the Masterplans for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton*

- *Also, part of a Working Party currently looking at Community Assets held, evaluating current viability - results will be fed into the Economy Committee*
- *January Economy Committee Meeting - Policy on how to dispose of Assets to Parish and Town Councils was adopted*
- *2025-2026 Budget - To be agreed in the near future.*

Following her Report, Councillors Mrs Cooper and Mrs Partridge responded to a number of questions from Members including:-

- *An enquiry from Councillor Mrs Gregory as to what the District Council was doing with its Housing Stock, and whether it would be passing it to Housing Associations - Not yet known*
- *Query from Councillor Lee as to whether the Local Plan was likely to be completed in the foreseeable future - Work still continuing at the present time.*

Councillor Cooper then referred to the potential devolution, and said that the time leading up to its implementation would provide an opportunity for the District Council to shape the District for the future. He said that it was likely that as a result of the proposed devolution and reorganisation of Local Government, Town and Parish Councils would be expected to assume responsibility for more local services.

The Council NOTED all of the above information and the Chairman of the Meeting thanked Councillors Mrs Cooper, Cooper and Mrs Partridge for their contributions in respect of District Council matters.

6/25 COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Mrs Cooper reported on County Council issues as follows:-

- *Devolution - The Leader of West Sussex County Council, together with the Leaders of East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council had written to Government to express their desire to be included in the first priority programme and the announcement as to who would be being included in this programme was expected on 31 January 2025. Following a period of consultation this could see the Mayoral Elections taking place in May 2026 - If not accepted into first programme then second programme would see a similar timeline with Mayoral Elections taking place in May 2028 - Further information to follow*
- *Highways Issues - Will be meeting with the new Highways Manager on 28 January 2025 to discuss highway related problems in Rustington.*

The Council NOTED the above information and the Chairman thanked Councillor Mrs Cooper for her Report.

Councillor Lee then asked Councillor Mrs Cooper what the benefits of devolution would be for West and East Sussex, to which she responded that this was unclear at the present time.

Councillor Bennett expressed his concern in respect of how it was going to be possible for the Boundary Commission to be able to complete the current Boundary Review in a period of 12 months, when it would normally take at least two or three years to complete.

7/25 **CLERK'S REPORT**

(a) **Offertory Collection - Annual Civic Thanksgiving Service & Community Awards Reception**

The Clerk reported the receipt of a letter of thanks and appreciation from Blind Veterans UK Limited, in respect of the donation of £479.77, representing the Offertory Collection taken at the Annual Civic Thanksgiving Service.

The Council was pleased to NOTE this information.

(b) **Littlehampton District Lions Club**

The Clerk reported the receipt of a letter of thanks and appreciation from the Littlehampton District Lions Club, expressing its thanks and appreciation to the Council for agreeing to waive the hiring fee for its use of the Samuel Wickens Centre as a Christmas Grotto.

The Council was pleased to NOTE this information.

(c) **Community Carol Concert**

The Clerk reported the receipt of a letter from The Friendship Singers, expressing their enjoyment at being able to perform at the 2024 Carol Concert.

The Council was pleased to NOTE this information.

8/25 **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman reported on his official representation and attendance at Meetings, Events and Functions since the last Monthly Meeting as follows:-

- Blind Veterans UK Rustington - Christmas Day Visit - 25 December 2024
- St Peter and St Paul's Parish Church - Christmas Day Lunch - 25 December 2024

The Council NOTED this information.

9/25 **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Council NOTED the Reports of the Planning Committee Meetings held on 11 November 2024, 9 December 2024 and 6 January 2025.

10/25 **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

(a) **Report of Meeting held on 16 December 2024**

The Council received the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 16 December 2024.

The Council RESOLVED that the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 16 December 2024 be APPROVED.

(b) **Precept - 2025/2026**

The Council AUTHORISED the issue of the Precept on the Arun District Council in the sum of £786,000.00 for 2025/2026.

Councillor Cooper, in his capacity as Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, requested that the Council's thanks and appreciation should be recorded for all Members of Personnel involved in the budget and precept setting preparation process.

(c) Report of Meeting held on 27 January 2025

The Council received the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 27 January 2025. (Verbal Report from the Chairman of the Committee).

The Council RESOLVED that the Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 27 January 2025 be APPROVED.

11/25 MEETING DATES

The Clerk asked the Council to consider changing the dates of the February and October Meetings of the Allotments Committee and Leisure and Amenities Committee.

Following a brief discussion, the Council RESOLVED to approve the change of dates for the following Meetings of the Allotments Committee and the Leisure and Amenities Committee:-

17 February 2025 to 3 March 2025
6 October 2025 to 20 October 2025

12/25 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PARISH MEETING - 10 APRIL 2025

The Clerk referred to Minute 296/24 and said that this matter had been deferred from the November Monthly Council Meeting for further consideration at this Meeting.

Following a further discussion, the Council RESOLVED that, in the first instance, the Chief Constable of Sussex Police should be invited to attend the Annual Assembly as the Guest Speaker. It was also AGREED that if Ms Shiner was unable to accept the Invitation, then an Invitation should be extended to the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner or a Senior Member of Sussex Police.

13/25 THE WOODLANDS CENTRE - PROPOSED MAJOR REDESIGN AND REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

The Clerk referred to Minute 297/24 and said that the Working Party had agreed to proceed with obtaining an 'all in' cost to revise the Cost Plan and update other information, to incorporate the revisions requested to Phase One of the Project, at an estimated cost of £1,400.00. She said that Studio Scott Taylor and the Quantity Surveyors were now aiming to be able to provide an update going forward in the next couple of weeks.

The Council NOTED this information.

(Prior to consideration of the following item, Councillors Mrs Broomfield, Broomfield and Rogers had declared a personal interest as Members of the Littlehampton District Lions Club)

14/25 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY - 8 MAY 2025

The Clerk referred to Minute 298/24 and said that, following approaches to the Littlehampton District Lions Club, Showtime Amusements and the Rustington Sports and Social Club, it had become evident that a Day of Celebratory Events on the Woodlands Recreation Ground was not realistically possible for Saturday 10 May 2025. Instead, the Working Party was recommending that:-

- A Musical Concert should be held in the Village Memorial Hall on the afternoon or evening of Saturday 10 May 2025 - *Timings to be confirmed*

- There should be a small Exhibition to commemorate the 80th Anniversary at the Museum, with a themed Public Talk by Graeme Taylor at the Samuel Wickens Centre, during the week of the Anniversary
- The Proclamation should be read by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman at the War Memorial and Chaucery Memorial respectively at 9.00 pm on 8 May, followed by the lighting of Lamp Lights of Peace at 9.30 pm.

Following a further discussion, the Council RESOLVED that the Recommendations received from the Working Party should be APPROVED.

The Clerk then reminded the Council that the Littlehampton District Lions Club was, as part of the Village Celebrations for the Anniversary, holding a 'Themed Quiz Evening with a Fish and Chip Supper' in the Village Memorial Hall on the actual Anniversary on Thursday 8 May.

She said she had also been advised by Blind Veterans UK Rustington that plans were currently underway to have an evening Event on the 80th Anniversary, with a Beacon Lighting on the Quarterdeck to coincide with the National Beacon Lighting, together with other celebratory events in the Centre during the day. She said that all Councillors would be being invited to the Beacon Lighting Event, and whilst only invited guests would be able to access the building and grounds, it was hoped that members of the public would be able to watch the lighting of the Beacon from the beach.

The Council was pleased to NOTE this information.

15/25 RUSTINGTON IN-BLOOM COMMITTEE

The Clerk referred to Minute 299/24 and reminded Members that this matter had been deferred from the November Monthly Council Meeting for further consideration at this Meeting.

She said that she had met with the Council representatives on the In-Bloom Committee, together with the Treasurer, who was a community Member of the Committee, and it was agreed they would like the Committee to continue to exist to help enhance the ambience of the Village in small ways, without entering any In-Bloom Competitions. Several suggestions were made including the Committee having 'Clean Up' days, whereby Members could walk around areas of the Village, litter picking etc. It was also agreed that the 'In Bloom Collection Tins' could again be placed in shops and businesses as an ongoing fundraising method, but unless there were any major projects requiring substantial expenditure, no major events needed to be arranged.

She advised that the Treasurer had reported that the Committee had somewhere in the region of £2,400.00 in its Bank Account.

She said that she had then advised the Meeting that the commemorative wooden seat sited on the Holmes Lane Triangle, which had been donated by the In-Bloom Committee in 2012 in memory of Sue Axtell who had inspired the Village's initial entry into the South and South East in Bloom Competition in 2004, had recently been removed as it was dilapidated and unrepairable, and was posing a risk to public health and safety. She asked the Committee Members if some of the aforementioned funds could be used to purchase a replacement seat and plaque, as the seat held such importance to the history of 'In Bloom' in the Village. It was agreed that this would be an excellent use of some of the funds currently held, and the Clerk said that she would investigate this further and send links of the preferred type of seat to Councillors Mrs Broomfield, Broomfield and Mrs Probert, Treasurer, for them to make a decision on which seat they would like, following which a quotation would be sought, etc.

It was further agreed that this would be a perfect way to relaunch the Committee, but that in order to 'jump start' the Committee, other Members of the Council should be asked to join, if only for a short period of time until more community representatives were recruited and the Committee was well supported and, once again, able to function completely independently. It was finally agreed that a Meeting of the

Committee, with all interested individuals from both the Council and the local community, should be held as soon as practicably possible.

Councillors Mrs Allen, Bennett, Ceiriog-Hughes, Lee, Mrs Partridge and Mrs Stevens said that they would be prepared to join the In-Bloom Committee, initially to assist with its relaunch.

The Council was pleased to NOTE this information and AGREED that the above-named Members should join the In-Bloom Committee as additional Council representatives.

16/25 REDUCED USE OF PAPER FOR MEETINGS

The Clerk referred to Minute 138/24 and said that at the present time, six Members were still receiving paper copies of Agendas, Minutes and associated documentation. She also advised that all Members, with the exception of two, were now in possession of or had access to a Council owned laptop.

Following a detailed discussion, the Council RESOLVED that:-

- (a) A further review should be undertaken towards the end of 2025, with the continued hope that the maximum number of Members possible would no longer require paper copies of Council documentation
- (b) The previous guidance received from the Council's Data Protection Officer in respect of the receipt of emails on personal devices, should be reviewed as soon as practicably possible.

17/25 FUTURE OF ZACHARY MERTON HOSPITAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH FACILITIES

The Clerk said that a Meeting of the Working Party had been held on 6 January 2025, and a subsequent Meeting with neighbouring Parish Councils had been held on 20 January 2025.

She reminded the Council that the Hospital has been closed since 30 November 2023, due to major health and safety issues which had rendered the building no longer fit for purpose.

The NHS Sussex Community Trust had subsequently had an independent Survey undertaken of the building, which found that substantial works would be required to bring the building up to a satisfactory standard for it to be re-opened, once again. As a result, it was anticipated that the necessary works would cost in the region of £8 Million. She said that the Trust did not have the funding required available, but was working with NHS Sussex to see if there were any financial resources available to fund the aforementioned works in 2025/2026, and was anticipating that it would know in the next couple of months whether or not any funding would be forthcoming. At that time the Trust's Board would make a decision as to the way forward.

She then referred to the Meeting that had been convened of Parish Councils in the Eastern Arun Area and said that all represented Councils shared the Council's concerns that the first objective was to save the Hospital from closure, but that in the event of the demise of the building as a Community Hospital, local communities could be protected by the building or site being retained as a vital health facility, in whatever form that might be.

She said that as a starting point, the Working Party had agreed that a Petition could be organised to not only demonstrate the strength of public feeling in respect of the possible loss of the Hospital as a community health facility, but at the same time to make suggestions as to what facilities were believed to be lacking and should be created/introduced/implemented/added at the Zachary Merton Hospital site. The representatives from the Neighbouring Parish Councils had been supportive of this decision, subject to them having sight and their Councils' agreeing its content, prior to it being launched.

The overall feeling was that a Survey should also be carried out, to ascertain what community health facilities the residents of Rustington and the surrounding Villages felt were most needed and severely lacking, and this could then be placed before the Trust's Board, to help to influence its decision, particularly if it was proposing not to retain the building/site as a community hospital, but was instead prepared to consider introducing alternative community health facilities for the site.

Following a detailed discussion, the Council RESOLVED that, going forward, the Working Party should be AUTHORISED to produce a Petition and/or Survey, as soon as practicably possible, and if appropriate to do so.

18/25 GIRL GUIDE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - RENT REVIEW

The Clerk reported that the current annual ground rent of £550.00, in respect of the Girl Guide Headquarters' Building on the Woodlands Recreation Ground, was due to expire on 24 May 2025, following a five-year period which had commenced on 25 May 2020.

She advised the Council that the current ground rent had been increased by £50.00 per annum with effect from 2020, having been £500.00 per annum for the preceding five years (2015-2020) and £450.00 for the fifteen years prior to that, namely 2000-2015.

Following a brief discussion, the Council RESOLVED that the annual ground rent should be increased to £600.00, in respect of the Girl Guide Headquarters' Building on the Woodlands Recreation Ground for the next five-year period commencing 25 May 2025.

19/25 OFFICE OF ALISON GRIFFITHS MP - NEW HOMES (SOLAR GENERATION) BILL

The Council NOTED an email received from Alison Griffiths MP in this regard.

The Clerk then referred to Minute 300/24 and said that Ms Griffiths, MP, had offered to meet with the Council, and the Meeting had now been confirmed for Friday 28 February 2025 at 11.00 am. She said that the majority of Members (13) had indicated that they would be able to attend.

She then reminded Members that the main purpose of the Meeting was for Ms Griffiths to hear about, and discuss, issues specific to Rustington, and suggested that a list of any such issues should be sent to Ms Griffiths in advance of the Meeting, to enable her to research/familiarise herself accordingly.

She said that she would be sending an email to all Members to not only confirm the date, time and venue for the Meeting, but to also ask them to let her have details of any issues that they would like to be included in the aforementioned list.

The Council NOTED this information.

20/25 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL - REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Clerk reported that she had previously circulated an email received from Jane Fulton, Committee Services Manager, in this regard.

She said that the email provided details of the agreed increases with effect from 1 April 2024 to District Councillors' Basic Allowances, and confirmation that the Parish Basic Allowance, which was able to be paid by Town and Parish Councils, remained at 10% of the District Basic Allowance, with no changes being made to Travel and Subsistence Payments.

The Council NOTED this information.

**21/25 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL - ELECTORAL REVIEW BRIEFING -
DECEMBER 2024**

The Clerk said that she had previously circulated an email received from Lauren Fairs-Browning, Electoral Services Manager, together with associated information in this regard.

She advised the Council that the Councillors Mrs Cooper, Cooper and Mrs Partridge, in their capacity as District Councillors, together with the Deputy Clerk and herself had attended the Briefing, which had been most informative.

The Council NOTED this information.

**22/25 WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL - WEST SUSEX ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY
PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The Clerk said that she had previously circulated an email received from Chris Stark, Road Safety Group Manager, together with Councillor Warren's suggested response in this regard.

She said that the County Council was currently consulting on a new Road Safety Strategy for the County and was seeking responses from road users and community groups. She said that the Consultation was due to close on 2 February 2025.

Following a brief discussion, the Council RESOLVED that Councillor Warren's response should be submitted as the Council's formal response. The Chairman thanked Councillor Warren for his hard work and efforts in this regard.

**23/25 WEST SUSSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS - NALC - OPEN LETTER
TO PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS**

The Council NOTED a letter received from Councillor Keith Stevens, Chair, as follows:-

My sincere thanks go to everyone working in and with parish and town councils for your hard work, dedication and commitment to continuing to rise to the challenge of improving communities.

As I enter the final year of my term of office as chair of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), it is my privilege to reflect on a year of many significant outcomes and set out some priorities and challenges for the year ahead.

The past 12 months have been extraordinary. It was the biggest global election year in history, as over half the world's population went to the polls. Closer to home, earlier than expected, the UK general election has highlighted the critical role of community democracy and action in addressing the challenges we face.

Ahead of the general election, I called attention to this potential in my open letter to political party leaders, presenting NALC's manifesto for building stronger communities. This sets out our priorities for the incoming government, including strengthening local leadership by empowering local councils and building their capacity and capability. We also urged the adoption of higher standards in public life in support of our campaign to promote civility and respect.

Our engagement with the previous and now new parliament and government has already yielded success. During the passage of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, we secured cross-party support for allowing parish and town councils to meet remotely, clarified funding for places of worship, and significantly raised the sector's profile. Another notable success was extending the Community Ownership Fund to allow direct applications from parish and town councils, who secured £7.6 million. We have also continued to ensure council tax referendum principles are not extended to parish and town councils.

We currently face a pivotal moment as we work with the new government. The challenges confronting us - economic uncertainty, environmental imperatives, and societal inequalities - demand that we seek to strengthen this relationship and partnership.

That is why I have welcomed the recent English Devolution White Paper, which recognises our call for devolution to go beyond mayors and strategic authorities to communities and neighbourhoods. This is where I believe parish and town councils can play a key and bigger role. This devolution revolution, coupled with local government reorganisation in some areas, presents a huge opportunity to nurture neighbourhood governance to ensure its success.

Crucially, the white paper contains a range of proposals for which NALC and our network of county associations have lobbied. These include resetting relations between central and local government and rewiring relationships with principal authorities. Financial reforms such as multi-year settlements and more straightforward, less competitive grant funding. And strengthening the standards regime with sanctions to suspend or disqualify councillors, remote attendance at council meetings, uplifting audit thresholds, and improving support and development for councillors.

I firmly believe this is a real opportunity for us to stake our claim as the community tier of local government, but we must be ready to rise to the challenge.

Parish and town councils and county associations should be on the front foot and engage with principal authorities to ensure your voice and ambitions are heard, particularly in any local proposals for local government reorganisation.

We are already actively engaging with ministers, civil servants, parliamentarians, and others to advocate for greater recognition, respect and support for our sector, particularly to help parish and town councils deliver for their communities.

Ministers have written to me and spoken in parliament about their commitment to working together on the devolution white paper, an offer I am already taking up.

We are also continuing to engage heavily with parliament and the government on the planned National Insurance Contributions (NICs) increase, which will take effect in April. We are working hard to voice your concerns in Westminster and ensure that parish and town councils are fairly compensated for the planned increase, bringing you into line with larger councils and other public sector organisations such as the NHS.

I remain immensely proud of our wider activity and achievements over the last year. We have continued to work in partnership with our network of fantastic county associations and a growing range of partners and other organisations to support parish and town councils. Please read our Annual Report 2023/24, which sets this out in more detail, including how we are improving and extending our services as well as modernising how we work to support parish and town councils and county associations.

In particular, I wanted to highlight the launch of our new website, which is at the heart of our ongoing transformation and reflects our commitment to supporting parish and town councils and county associations with the tools and information they need. Our new website offers a platform that is not only visually modern but also highly functional, making it easier for councillors, clerks and council staff to access resources and stay informed.

I strongly encourage all councillors, clerks and council staff members of a parish or town council in membership to create their account, unlocking access to a range of exclusive member benefits such as advice notes, publications, support information, and campaign resources. To learn more about our work, including events such as June's in-person Power Shift 2025 conference, initiatives we support, and the help and advice we can provide, please visit our new website.

As we embrace these opportunities, we will continue our transformation and modernisation journey over the coming year. We will streamline our operations, enhance our digital services, publish an updated edition of Local Councils Explained, gather and use more data, and improve our engagement with parish and town councils, county associations, and partners.

But these changes are not just about keeping pace with the times. They are about future-proofing NALC to ensure we can provide the best possible support for years to come.

Central to our efforts are the partnerships we continue to forge and strengthen. Our collaboration with the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) remains vital in driving professional development for clerks and council staff and embodying high standards of conduct. We are working with organisations across the public, private, and voluntary sectors to bring innovative solutions to local challenges. Bodies such as the Local Government Association, Association of Democratic Services and Lawyers in Local Government will be increasingly important to our work over the coming years. These partnerships amplify our impact and reinforce the idea that we are a sector stronger together and more effective by working together.

However, none of this is possible without people - dedicated councillors who serve their communities. I cannot stress enough the importance of encouraging more people to stand for election. Parish and town councils need representatives from all walks of life to ensure diversity of thought, experience, and perspective. I urge you to reach out to neighbours, colleagues, and friends who might not yet have considered becoming a councillor. This role is an opportunity to make a real difference, to shape the future of your community, and leave a lasting legacy.

But NALC and county associations also need councillors to get involved in our work. We want the best and most talented people possible to step up and provide the necessary leadership to run successful, effective county and national associations. NALC's will hold its elections for leadership roles and committees this December, with the process starting in the summer. I hope councillors from county associations will grasp the opportunity to drive forward the next phase of NALC and our fantastic sector.

As we move forward, I am filled with optimism. The strength of parish and town councils lies in their connection to the communities they serve.

With your continued dedication, the unwavering support of NALC and county associations, and a renewed spirit of collaboration with the new government and the rest of local government, I am confident we can rise to the challenges we face and achieve great things together for our communities and the country.

Thank you once again for everything you do.

**24/25 WEST SUSSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS - NALC SECTOR
STANDARDS SURVEY**

The Clerk reminded Members that she had previously circulated an email received from Emily Simpson, Assistant CEO, WSALC, advising that following the issue of a Local Government Standards Consultation by MHCLG, NALC had produced and published a Standards Survey which it was asking local Councils to complete by 2 February 2025.

Following a further discussion, the Council RESOLVED to take no further action in this regard at the present time.

25/25 SAFETY OF LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES AND E-BIKES AND SCOOTERS

The Council NOTED further email correspondence received from Ron Bailey, Researcher for Lord Foster, House of Lords, together with associated documentation in this regard.

26/25 **CPRE SUSSEX - SEWERAGE SURVEY**

The Council NOTED an email received from Paul Steedman, Director, together with the final results of the Survey of local Parish and Town Councils, which had been undertaken as part of the CPRE Sussex Campaign for “Sewerage Before Development” as at 28 October 2024. The results had confirmed the widespread extent of sewerage deficiencies in Sussex.

27/25 **SOUTHERN WATER - CHANGES TO SOUTHERN WATER’S SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Council NOTED an email received from Mike Russell, Stakeholder Engagement Manager Sussex, together with the Management Policy Document. In his email, Mr Russell advised the full details of the changes to Southern Water’s Water Management Policy were contained within the Policy Document, but the significant change was how surface water discharge into the ‘foul only’ and combined public sewers was assessed.

(Prior to consideration of the following item Councillor Mrs Cooper had declared a personal interest, in her capacity as a West Sussex County Councillor)

28/25 **COMMUNITY HIGHWAY SCHEME APPLICATION - THE STREET (FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH NORTH LANE TO ITS JUNCTION WITH SEA LANE)**

The Clerk reminded Members that she had previously circulated an email request for the Council to support an application received in the above regard, together with associated documentation. She said that a further email, with the draft application to West Sussex County Council under the Community Highway Scheme, had also subsequently been circulated to all Members.

Following a further discussion, the Council AGREED to wholeheartedly support this application.

29/25 **STAGECOACH SOUTH - DRAFT PLAN FOR THE LITTLEHAMPTON AND WORTHING NETWORKS - CONSULTATION**

The Clerk reminded the Council that she had previously sent an email, together with Stagecoach’s Consultation Leaflet, in respect of its draft plan for the Littlehampton and Worthing Networks. She said that she had subsequently received an email from the Business Development Manager, advising that the main alterations being planned were centred around avoiding level crossings and the associated delays. Stagecoach was hoping that the proposed changes would deliver a more reliable service between Littlehampton, Rustington and Worthing as well as providing a direct link to Worthing Hospital. The Number 9 Service would be remaining the same for the time being, as more time was needed to review the impact of the changes elsewhere and to liaise further with West Sussex County Council.

The Clerk said that Stagecoach was keen to receive the public’s views on the proposals, and the leaflet was being distributed on buses, explaining the changes and offering the opportunity for feedback to be provided. She said that the closing date for comments was 7 February 2025.

Following a brief discussion, it was AGREED that no further action should be taken by the Council in this regard, but that Members should respond to the Consultation on an individual basis.

30/25 **SOUTHERN WATER - YOUR WATER MATTERS**

The Clerk reported that she had previously circulated an Invitation received from Southern Water for its next Drop-In Event which was being held on 12 February 2025 from 12.30 pm to 6.30 pm at St Mary’s Centre, Grassmere Close, Felpham, PO22 7NU.

She said that Senior Leaders and Teams from Southern Water would be present to answer any questions and provide updates on the improvements and investments being made in the area.

The Council NOTED this information.

**31/25 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL - DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
RE-ORGANISATION**

The Clerk reported that she had previously circulated an email received from Dawn Hudd, Chief Executive of Arun District Council, which had been sent to all Arun District Town and Parish Councils.

In her email, Ms Hudd advised that she was conscious that, as information was emerging, there had been a lack of central communication with Town and Parish Councils on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. She went on to state that a newsletter had recently been produced for District Council members and she felt it might be helpful to share it. A copy of the Newsletter is attached and forms a part of these Minutes.

32/25 COVID-19 - DAY OF REFLECTION

The Clerk reported that the Government had recently announced that the Annual National Day of Reflection to mark the fifth Anniversary of the Covid-19 Pandemic would be taking place on Sunday 9 March 2025. She said that this would be the second year that the Day of Reflection had been set.

The Council NOTED this information.

33/25 HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Councillor Ms Lloyd reminded the Council that it was Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January 2025).

The Council NOTED, with much sadness, that this was the day for the Nation to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust.

34/25 DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS CIRCULATED

The Council NOTED the following Documents and Publications previously circulated for Members' information:-

- (a) Blind Veterans UK - Your December Update
- (b) CAGNE - Tonight Online Talk
- (c) CAGNE - Wishing you Silent Nights
- (d) CAGNE - 12 Days of Christmas
- (e) CAGNE - January Newsletter
- (f) Carers Support West Sussex - Latest News x2
- (g) Chestnut Tree House - Nothing is too much to ask or too small to matter
- (h) Chestnut Tree House - You can still make a difference this Christmas
- (i) Chestnut Tree House - Lace up for a good cause in 2025!
- (j) Chestnut Tree House - The importance of social work in children's hospice care
- (k) CPRE - Campaigns Update - December 2024 and January 2025
- (l) CPRE - A message from CPRE's Campaigning Lead
- (m) CPRE - Rooftop Solar is finally coming to Parliament in 2025
- (n) CPRE - Thank you for taking action
- (o) East Preston Parish Council News - 21 November 2024, 28 November 2024, 5 December 2024, 31 December 2024 and 23 January 2025
- (p) National Association of Local Councils - Chief Executive's Bulletin - 28 November 2024, 5 December 2024 x2, 19 December 2024, 9 January 2025 and 16 January 2025
- (q) National Association of Local Councils - Events Newsletter
- (r) National Association of Local Councils - Chief Executive's Bulletin - 23 January 2025
- (s) RHS Communities - Fundraising advice for Community Growers
- (t) RHS Communities - Chance to win gift vouchers for your Community Garden
- (u) Rustington Residents Association - January 2025 Newsletter
- (v) South East Employers (SEE) - Chairing Skills for Parish and Town Councils

Devolution

and local government reorganisation

January 2025

A message from the Leader

The announcement made by the government is incredibly complex with many unknowns and any changes are likely to take some time to implement.



We know that this is unsettling, and we want to reassure you that we will continue working with other councils across Sussex to achieve the best possible outcome for our residents, businesses, staff and councillors.

This process has only just begun and, naturally, we have many questions that we still do not have the answers to. However, I want to assure you that as we progress through the next few weeks and months, we will keep you updated.

We hope you find this newsletter useful and that it helps answer some of the questions you may have.

Best Wishes,

Cllr Martin Lury
Leader of Arun District Council

Dawn Hudd

Overview

As you are aware, the government published a paper the week before Christmas to outline plans for both devolution and the reorganisation of local government.



At the time, we were waiting for more information and guidance from the government and I promised that I would provide you with more detail once I had this. Since then, I have been on various calls and read various updates, and so I wanted to share with you what we know so far.

As this process develops, we will continue to make sure that you are provided with the very latest information. We are also looking to create a Frequently Asked Questions document that will be updated with your common questions and held on SharePoint. We have some work to do to action that so please bear with us.

As Cllr Lury mentioned, this is complex and it's important to explain that devolution and the reorganisation of local government are two different things.

Devolution

The government wants to introduce Strategic Authorities with an elected mayor, across England, so that it can hand more powers down from Whitehall. Streamlining local government is being presented as a way to enable the creation of more powerful local mayors, in an attempt to unblock infrastructure and attract greater investment. Continued...

Elected mayors would then oversee areas representing two or more current county council geographical areas, and will be handed more power over things such as strategic planning and public transport.

Existing elected metro mayors are already set to gain new powers over planning, in a bid to speed up delivery of new housing and infrastructure.

There are three types of Strategic Authorities: Foundation Strategic Authorities, Mayoral Strategic Authorities, and Established Mayoral Authorities.

The government's ambition is that all areas will ultimately have an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority. The Secretary of State will be given the power to create a Strategic Authority by ministerial directive where local consensus cannot be achieved on devolution proposals.

Some areas in the country have Strategic Authorities already and others are in the process of applying to the government to create them. There are a number of Strategic Authorities in England, some of which have a directly elected 'metro mayor' (mayoral combined authorities or MCAs).

Since July, the government has announced four more devolution deals: Greater Lincolnshire, Hull and East Yorkshire, Devon and Torbay, and Lancashire.

The government wants to move away from the current system of devolution where it negotiates a bespoke 'devolution deal' with local government, to a standard devolution framework which will set out a standard set of powers and funding to be given to the Mayoral Combined Authorities.

Mayors will be given new powers and priorities including:

Housing and Planning

Mayors will receive development management powers to call in applications, in the same way as the Mayor of London. Mayors will also control grant funding for regeneration and housing delivery. All areas – whether or not they have a Strategic Authority – will have to produce a Spatial Development Strategy for strategic planning.

Transport

Mayors will have a statutory role in governing, managing and developing the rail network to deliver a more integrated network. They will also gain powers to coordinate their road network. Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will have the right to request rail devolution.

Environment

Established Strategic Authorities will help deliver Great British Energy Local Power Plans to support small-medium renewable energy projects locally.

Support businesses and research

Growth Hub funding will be rolled into the Strategic Authority. The new Office for Investment will work with mayors to develop and market strategic investment propositions.

Public safety

Police and Crime Commissioners and Fire and Rescue authorities will fall to mayors where geographies align and there is a long term ambition to align public sector boundaries, including police, fire, job centres, probation and health services with Strategic Authorities. It is expected that the mayor will chair the Integrated Care Partnership.

Those upper tier authorities (county councils and existing unitaries) that wish to join the fast track process to become a Mayoral Strategic Authority have to apply to the government by 10 January. If accepted on the programme the May 2025 county elections will be delayed. It is unclear when all other proposals - from those not on the fast track programme - will be expected to be submitted for devolution.

Local government reorganisation

This is separate to devolution, but links with the government's overall aims. The government wants all areas to have unitary councils across the country, with each serving a minimum of 500,000 residents.

To give you an idea, West Sussex covers a total population of 900,000. Therefore this could support one or two unitary authorities. This would mean all of the existing councils merging into the new unitary council or councils.

The government will take a phased approach, giving priority to areas where reorganisation can unlock devolution. However, the White Paper also says that reorganisation should not delay devolution and any reorganisation proposals must complement devolution.

The government's ambition is for the first wave of these new authorities to be established before the end of this parliament, starting in April 2027.

Our commitment to you

We know how unsettling this news may be to you. However, we want to reassure you that we will keep you informed every step of the way.

We will continue with business as usual. Once the footprint for new unitary authorities is agreed with government, Arun will form part of a new unitary authority. When this happens, there will inevitably be changes to how we work, with the benefit that we are likely to see improved career prospects and new opportunities. We know how hard you work to deliver quality services to our residents, businesses and visitors and through any changes that lay ahead, this will continue to be our focus.

We will continue to update you and answer your questions and this will be a regular part of our monthly staff meetings.

Staff can also ask questions by emailing dawn.hudd@arun.gov.uk

Please also refer to the timeline on page 4.

Best Wishes
Dawn Hudd
Chief Executive

Your questions

How long will this take?

It is not clear yet, but the government's ambition is for local government to reorganise over this parliament and the next. The first wave of the new unitary authorities are expected to be established before the end of this parliament, starting in April 2027. It is also worth you reading the section in this newsletter which refers to the timeline.

Is my job at risk?

Our work will continue as normal moving forward. When any new unitary is formed that we become part of, our staff will transfer across under TUPE regulations (<https://www.gov.uk/transfers-takeovers>). This could open up new opportunities for career progression.

How will councillors be affected?

If local government reorganisation takes place then Arun District Council will no longer be an entity once the new unitary is established. However, members will be able to put themselves forward as candidates for the new authority.

Will this prevent the council from making decisions?

No. As far as we are concerned, it is business as usual and we will continue to support our communities to the high standards that they expect. We will just need to carefully consider any long term decisions that may impact on any future reorganisation.

Timeline

The government's devolution and reorganisation plans have separate timescales. New legislation will be needed for some of the proposed changes and will be included in the Devolution Bil. Some of the proposed changes are already in current legislation.

The various information and letters that we have received provide different timescales and some of this is still very unclear. However, the government expects all areas of England to have an Elected Mayor within this Parliament and all two-tier areas (county and districts) will be expected to reorganise over this Parliament and the next.

We have included the government's timetable for the proposed changes, but this is subject to further clarification.

Devolution

10 January 2025

County and unitary councils to apply for the fast track devolution route known as the Devolution Priority Place (DPP) and request to have elections postponed.

January - March 2025

Government to consult on the geography for the new Strategic Authority.

September 2025

Government to reach agreement with county and unitary councils on the new Strategic Authority.

March 2026

New Strategic Authority established.

May 2026

Mayoral Elections.

Local government reorganisation

January 2025

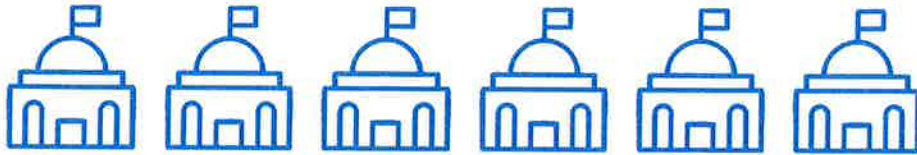
Government to write to all councils in two-tier areas asking for interim plans for local government reorganisation. The deadline for formal proposals will be:

- **May 2025** for areas that need to reorganise before devolution can take place .
- **autumn 2025** for all other areas, including those who have applied for the Devolution Priority Place (fast track scheme).
- new unitary councils in the Devolution Priority Place (fast track scheme) will go live in **April 2027** or **April 2028**. This will depend on capacity and timelines for devolution in each area.

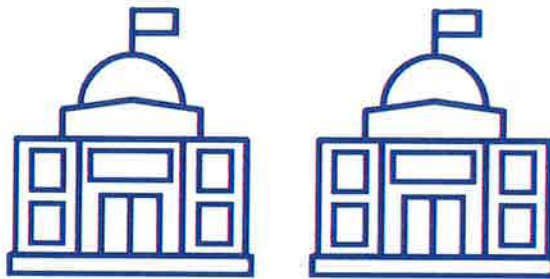
The government is also open to discussing the timeline further with those councils who are interested in reorganising.

We realise that the timeline seems quite confusing at the moment. This will become much clearer when we are written to in the near future. At this point we will provide a more detailed timeline.

The government's vision



County, district and borough councils will be replaced by new unitary authorities



New unitary authorities to serve at least 500,000 residents



Elected mayors would then oversee areas representing two or more unitary councils and handed more powers over housing, transport, education and employment to drive economic growth.