

Mid Sussex District Association of Local Councils (MSALC)

Chair: Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock (West Hoathly Parish Council)
Clerk: Anna Beams
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Minutes of a meeting of Mid Sussex District Association of Local Councils held at 5.00pm on Thursday 18th April 2024 at Village Hall, Hurstpierpoint, BN6 9UY and by Zoom.

Present:

IN PERSON:

Cllr Margaret Meldrum	Ardingly Parish Council
Cllr Annabel Moir	Bolney Parish Council
Cllr Nicky Hanley	Bolney Parish Council
Cllr Kristian Berggreen	Hassocks Parish Council
Cllr Rodney Jackson	Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council
Cllr Douglas Denham St Pinnock	West Hoathly Parish Council (Chairman)
Trevor Leggo	West Sussex Association of Local Councils, CEO
Anna Beams	Secretary

BY ZOOM:

Cllr John Orchard	Burgess Hill Town Council
Cllr Martin Sheldon	Cuckfield Parish Council
Cllr Linda Grace	Lindfield Parish Council
Cllr Ian Gibson	Turners Hill Parish Council
Cllr Martin Robinson	West Hoathly Parish Council
Cllr Trevor Hodson	Worth Parish Council
Kevin Toogood	Mid Sussex District Council

1. **Welcome & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed those present and those joining by Zoom. Apologies were received and accepted from Slaugham Parish Council and Cllr Julie Mockford (East Grinstead Parish Council), Cllr Matt Goldsmith (Burgess Hill Parish Council), Cllr Duncan Pascoe (Haywards Heath Parish Council) and Cllr Barry Theobald (Turners Hill Parish Council).

2. **Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th November 2024**

The Minutes were approved as a true and correct record.

3. **Chairs report to include an update following a meeting between the Chair, Trevor Leggo and Mid Sussex District Council**

A meeting was held with Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) to discuss a proposal agreed at a meeting of the MSALC Working Group to improve engagement with town and parish councils. The Chair will issue each member a copy of the proposal for record. It was agreed that a senior MSDC Officer will attend all future MSALC meetings, either

hosted by MSALC or MSDC. The Chair introduced Kevin Toogood, Assistant Director, Governance & Monitoring Officer and welcomed him to the meeting.

4. Update from Mid Sussex District Council

Kevin Toogood explained that he is responsible for governance and democratic services. There are currently three main priorities, election activity, support for councillors and standards.

Election activity: three councillor bi-elections will take place in May along with the Police and Crime Commissioner election.

Support for Councillors: Safety of councillors is a major concern. Kevin explained that Operation Bridger is a nationwide Police programme to offer councillors extra security in their offices and homes. Any concerns should be reported directly to the Police although MSDC should also be advised.

Standards: MSDC and most town and parish councils have adopted the revised model Code of Conduct. Kevin reminded those present that gifts and hospitality must be declared and significant gifts must be declared even if declined. Comments posted on social media come under the Code of Conduct if they are made in the capacity of an elected member and it is important to remain civil and not be drawn into debate.

The Chair thanked Kevin for attending and invited him to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

At the request of Cllr Linda Grace and at the Chair's discretion, item 8 was brought forward.

8. To consider any other items raised by member councils.

- **Weald to Waves initiative and Local Nature Recovery Strategies – raised by Lindfield Parish Council**

Cllr Linda Grace (Lindfield Parish Council) explained the Weald to Waves initiative and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. ([Appendix A](#)) and attached powerpoint presentation.

She proposed that a representative is invited to address a future meeting and discuss how MSALC can support the initiative.

The Chair suggested that it may be more appropriate for the County Association (WSALC) to support the initiative as it is countywide. He will raise the matter at the next WSALC meeting, and the Board will establish how they can work with the initiative on a countywide basis.

5. Mid Sussex Partnership Update

Trevor Leggo reported that he has attended two recent meetings of the Mid Sussex Partnership along with the Chair and all stakeholders.

At the last meeting, a main topic of conversation was the Brookleigh Development in Burgess Hill. Medical facilities are provided as part of the development however, this is at the cost of another part of Burgess Hill where facilities are being closed and patients relocated to the new development.

Other topics of conversation were the Police and their efforts to reduce drug and alcohol addiction and a proposal to form sub-groups as part of the Mid Sussex Partnership in health, community safety and community development.

The Chair added that he intends to invite representatives from the Mid Sussex Partnership to attend a future MSALC meeting and provide an update.

6. WSALC Update

Trevor Leggo reported on the following:

Councillor behaviour – the behaviour of councillors is becoming increasingly poor resulting in clerks leaving. Trevor is aware of three current cases of bullying by individual councillors and there appears to be indifference from other members within the councils. Any one councillor can put the council in a tribunal situation and can cause several months of disruption. Trevor encourages councils to challenge poor behaviour.

WSALC Board – a meeting of the Board takes place on 26th April and there is currently a full complement of Directors.

WSALC Clerks and Chairs Forums – forums take place by Zoom on 22nd April (Clerks) and 23rd April (Chairs). The Chair encourages clerk and Chairs to attend the forums.

7. To discuss and agree offer extended by the WSALC Board to incorporate and centralise DALC bank accounts within WSALC

Trevor Leggo explained that each of the four district associations (DALCs) has experienced difficulties in the past with recruiting and maintaining bank account signatories and continuous access to the accounts resulting in them being unable to progress the associations and that, in some cases, WSALC has subsidised the DALCs. He explained that, following discussions, the WSALC Board proposed that in order to support the DALCs, the accounts and administration are incorporated into WSALC, with the individual DALC funds being issued their own cost centre.

It was confirmed that funds held within WSALC will remain protected by the FSCS (Financial Services Compensation Scheme) and that a Memorandum of Understanding will be drafted.

The Chair proposed that MSALC funds are centralised within WSALC – AGREED, ALL IN FAVOUR

9. To agree date of next meeting

TBC

Meeting closed at 18:01

Signed:

Date:

Creating a Corridor for Nature (presented by Councillor Grace, Lindfield Parish Council 18 April 2024)

Weald to Waves Nature Recovery Network

The **Weald to Waves** network is a nature recovery corridor running across Sussex, strengthening biodiversity by improving connectivity but also supporting sustainable local food production and helping rural communities to thrive.

It has three goals – notably to

1. create a nationally significant wildlife corridor of 100 miles in length with over 20,000 hectares of largely contiguous natural habitat so that wildlife can travel through the landscape more easily.
2. promote nature as a provider of vital ecosystem services - clean water, fertile soils, pollination, carbon capture and flood control.
3. create new opportunities for people to understand, enjoy and protect nature along the corridor and to meet socio-economic and environmental objectives so that communities can thrive.

Initiated by several land owners and managers, the corridor currently runs from the Ashdown Forest in the High Weald and then follows the Arun, Adur and Ouse rivers to the sea at Climping, Shoreham and Newhaven. The project has recently added community green spaces such as allotments and village greens along with private gardens to its network. Pledging is completely non-binding with no legal tie or obligation - it is a purely notional scheme.

While Lindfield is outside the current corridor, setting up a network is still worthwhile as the main corridor is likely to evolve and change over time.

Lindfield has pledged Wilderness Field, which is managed by the Parish Council. We are working with community groups through the climate change working group to encourage residents to participate.

In July 2023, West Sussex and East Sussex County Councils were appointed as the 'Responsible Authorities' for the production of Local Nature Recovery Strategies for their respective counties over the next 18 months. While a Lindfield network would not only fulfil the primary goal of improving connectivity for wildlife, an available, online map of pledged lands could be extremely useful if and when the County Councils begin looking for stakeholders. It could also be used as a selling point to further engage with the public and other local district and parish councils.

Website: <https://www.wealdtowaves.co.uk>

Based on information provided by Councillor Podmore, Cuckfield Parish Council

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