Horsham Association of Local Councils (HALC)

**Chair:** Cllr Graham Watkins (Southwater Parish Council)

**Secretary:** Mandy Jameson (temporary) dalc@wsalc.co.uk

**Minutes of a meeting of the Horsham Association of Local Councils held on Thursday 16 January 2025 at 7:00pm remotely by Zoom.**

## Present:

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| Cllr Sandy DuckGreg Burt, clerk | Billingshurst PCBillingshurst PC |
|  Cllr Ann Blakelock | Bramber PC |
| Cllr Terry Oliver | Broadbridge Heath PC |
| Cllr Geoff Clark | Broadbridge Heath PC |
| Cllr Stephen DaviesCllr Ian Botting | Colgate PCDenne NC |
|  Cllr Elaine GoodyearCllr David CottonCllr Val CourtCllr Sharon CurdCllr Paul ThompsonCllr Paul KornyckyLisa Wilcock, clerkCllr Ritchie GattCllr Fenella Maitland SmithCllr Graham Watkins (Chair)Cllr Joanna NorcrossCllr Morag Warrack | Henfield PCNuthurst PCNuthurst PCPulborough PCRudgwick PCRudgwick PCRusper PC / Nuthurst PCRusper PCRusper PCSouthwater PCSteyning PCTrafalgar NC |
|  Cllr Sally Pavey  Louise Shaw, clerk Cllr Derrick Frost Cllr Viv Gibson  Cllr Roger Noel  Trevor Leggo  Mandy Jameson  | Warnham PCWarnham PCWest Chiltington PCWest Chiltington PCWoodmancote PCCEO, WSALCSecretary (temporary) |
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1. **Welcome and apologies**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Elisabeth Tooms (Amberley PC), Terry Kearney and Tony Moss (Ashington PC) as well as from Shermanbury and Ashurst PCs.

1. **Minutes of last meeting**

Pending the removal of one item, the minutes were approved as a correct record to be e-signed by the Chair.

1. **Chair’s Report**

The Chair undertook to circulate a report detailing his recent activities (appendix A) but in the meantime mentioned he has attended the following:

* The joint ESALC/WSALC conference at the Amex in November, where he was elected Vice Chair of WSALC;
* The Horsham District Community Safety Partnership in December;
* A meeting of the DALC chairs in Southwater the previous week, where the main topic of conversation was the Government’s proposal for devolution (see agenda item 6).
* Graham noted that the Horsham Local Plan is paused, awaiting further information.

1. **WSALC report**
* Trevor Leggo explained how recent changes in WSALC mean that Emily Simpson (who has dealt with ESALC administration for the past three years) will deal with WSALC admin in place of Anna Beams. Emily now holds the role of Assistant Chief Executive, as Trevor’s deputy. Mandy Jameson is temporarily covering the secretariat of the West Sussex DALCs until a permanent replacement is found.
* For future meetings of HALC, Trevor explained that the local neighbourhood policing inspector would be invited to attend two out of the three meetings planned for this year. It had not been possible to secure the inspector’s attendance for this meeting.
* Re community resilience: Trevor encouraged all parishes to have their own emergency plan in case of flooding, power outages etc. Nearly 50 parishes in West Sussex have purchased the emergency planning template by WSALC associate Dee Thornton (cost around £100) and he encouraged parishes which have not yet taken this up to do so.
1. **Community governance review for Horsham Town**

Trevor detailed how Horsham town has resolved to become a Town Council. A Steering Group meeting will be held on 27 January, to be attended by Trevor and Graham Watkins. HDC has received the petition asking for the town council to be set up and now has 12 months to determine it, after which time a shadow council will be established and elections held. At this point Denne, Forest & Trafalgar Neighbourhood Councils will be absorbed into the new town council. Trevor has an upcoming meeting to discuss the whole matter with Jane Eaton of HDC.

1. **Devolution proposals**

Trevor Leggo gave a summary of the current situation as follows:

* On 16 December ’24, the government announced that bids were invited for strategic authorities to be set up and run by a directly elected Mayor. The deadline was 10 January. West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove have submitted a joint bid to become unitary authorities and create one strategic district which falls very much within the government’s initial remit (ie. combined population of over 1.5m, and substantially rural).
* Keith Stevens, NALC Chair and East Sussex councillor, has indicated that the government is keen to forge ahead with plans for devolution which will essentially mean the end of district and borough councils. Apparently there are ‘financial sweeteners’ for those councils who go down this route early in the process.
* If this were to happen in Sussex, it could give towns and parishes the opportunity to take on extra responsibilities – eg. working together as in the case of Haywards Heath TC and Burgess Hill TC who worked together some years ago to maintain road surfaces (under an SLA with WSCC) until the new contractor objected.
* Trevor confirmed that County Council elections for May 2025 have not yet been cancelled. If given the go-ahead, the process of reorganization is expected to take 2-3 years.
* The issue of ‘asset-stripping’ has not been clarified in terms of financially astute councils being at risk from those currently in large amounts of debt.
* Many aspects are as yet unclear but very small parishes could end up being amalgamated in the shake-up. In terms of planning, the new unitary authorities would probably adopt existing local plans as laid down by the district councils.
* At this stage the public is not being consulted on devolution plans but WSALC/ESALC are keeping a very close eye on things and will keep members updated. A decision is expected from the government by the end of January.
1. **Planning**

Trevor Leggo explained that planning consultant Steve Tilbury has put together a paper about changes to the National Planning Policy framework and at this point it appears the role of Neighbourhood Plans is unaffected. However, there will be reforms to come.

In the meantime Steve Tilbury is the most reliable source of information for WSALC and ESALC, so members will be kept fully updated.

Graham Watkins mentioned that a briefing from HDC is taking place on 28 January to which all parishes are invited.

1. **Matters affecting local parishes**
* Terry Oliver asked if the new Horsham MP should be invited to the next HALC meeting. Graham Watkins said it was the intention to invite him along with Andrew Griffith MP although, as Trevor pointed out, timing of meetings may have to be carefully chosen to ensure the MPs’ availability.
* There was a long discussion about difficulties being encountered around gipsy traveller sites, especially where planning applications are being made under this guise but in reality low cost mobile homes are being rented out. Warnham PC raised the issue and said planning enforcement is not being helpful or supportive. Other councils then backed this up with their ongoing experiences, including Rudgwick, Henfield, Edburton, Rusper, West Chiltington. Graham Watkins suggested clerks should directly approach Madeline Hartley at WSCC;

Trevor Leggo said he would raise the issue with Jane Eaton of HDC and would request that planning enforcement liaise directly with the above councils.

1. **Date of next meeting -** to be confirmed.

Derrick Frost proposed a vote of thanks to Trevor Leggo and Graham Watkins for their ongoing involvement and advice which is so helpful to councils.

*Meeting closed at 20:00*

SignedDate

Appendix A

CHAIR’S REPORT JAN 2025

Welcome

Firstly, can I thank all in attendance and wish you all a Happy New Year, although a lot has gone on since the year started.

Since our last meeting on the 15th October 2024 I have attended the following

* ESALC/WSALC meeting at the AMEX stadium on 4th November 2024, where a number of you attended. I have now been asked to take the position of WSALC Vice Chairman at the next meeting, which I have accepted.
* On the 12th of December I attended a Horsham & District Community Safety Partnership meeting with Trevor and was appointed as a HALC Member.
* I attended the HDC Local plan meeting in December which has now been suspended with no date for commencement - This is due to insufficient information but is now expected to involve Devolution; however, on 14th January 2025 HDC circulated a note about the use of a Grampian Condition to deal with water neutrality and allow development to be approved subject to proof that water neutrality can be achieved during the life of the approval but works cannot commence.
* I attended a DALC meeting in Southwater on 7th January 2025, most of which revolved around Devolution which Trevor will be commenting on later

Future

**CONFIDENTIAL Parish & Neighbourhood Council Local Plan Briefing 28th January 2025**