



## WEST HOATHLY PARISH COUNCIL

representing Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne, Tyes Cross and West Hoathly

### A Guide to Attending and Speaking at Meetings

West Hoathly Parish Council hopes that this short guide will encourage members of the public to attend its meetings and will be particularly helpful for those unfamiliar with their meetings procedure.

#### **Why are meetings held?**

Aside from the fact that there is a statutory obligation for the Council to meet at least four times a year, meetings are the Council's principal means by which to discuss issues, formulate policies and make decisions on matters affecting the parish of West Hoathly.

#### **Who can attend?**

Anyone can attend to observe. However, if the Council needs to consider certain matters in confidence (e.g. employee issues, negotiating contracts or pursuing/defending a legal action) Councillors may vote to exclude the public and press.

#### **When are meetings held?**

Meetings of the Parish Council and its committees are held at West Hoathly Village Hall normally on a Monday, starting at 7:30pm.

A timetable of meetings can be found on the Parish Council website [www.westhoathly.gov.uk](http://www.westhoathly.gov.uk) as can minutes of previous meetings and other useful information about the Council.

Agendas for meetings (published the Tuesday before a meeting) appear on the website and the noticeboards beside the West Hoathly Village Hall and Sharpthorne Café.

#### **What meetings are held?**

**Full Council** - scheduled meetings are held every month (except August) usually on the last Monday of the month and all Councillors are required to attend.

The council operates 4 committees

**Planning Committee** – this meets prior to the Parish Council meetings starting at 7:15pm. It reviews and submits comments on planning applications within the parish to the Local Planning Authority (Mid Sussex District Council).

**The West Hoathly Village Hall Management Committee** – this committee meets 3 times a year. The first part of the meeting considers issues related to the management of West Hoathly Village Hall for which the Parish Council is sole trustee.

**Asset & Highways Committee** – this committee meets 5 times a year and considers the assets that the parish council has responsibility for: Finche Field and the allotments, North Lane Recreation Ground, Sharpthorne Old Playground, the public toilets and

Selsfield Common. It also considers highways & transport issues within the parish and lobbies West Sussex County Council who is the Highways authority.

### **Why should I attend?**

- To raise an issue or concern
- To become better informed about topical issues and matters impacting on the wellbeing of the parish and its inhabitants
- To observe Councillors' participation in decision-making

### **When can I speak?**

Members of the public have no automatic right to speak during a meeting unless they believe a Councillor has made a prejudicial interest statement (a councillor has a prejudicial interest if they cannot fairly and objectively consider a topic due to such interests). However, at the beginning of a Council or Committee meeting the chairman allows up to 15 minutes for the public to ask questions or express concerns. The Councillors and Clerk present will endeavour to address the issue you have raised but please be aware that the Council may make decisions only if the matter has been included on the published agenda. You may be advised that the Council requires more time in order to investigate your concern before you receive a full response.

Comments from members of the public should be addressed through the chairman. It is the chairman who determines who shall speak, in which order and for how long.

If the chairman of a meeting considers that a member of the public present may have information which would help councillors or committee members make an informed decision, s/he may – with the permission of the meeting – invite that member of the public to speak during the actual meeting.

*Note: Other opportunities exist to raise concerns with the Council – including: contacting councillors directly or contacting the Parish Office.*

### **What happens at meetings?**

Meetings are relatively informal: Councillors will often address each other by their first name and usually continue to sit whilst speaking.

The order of business at every meeting will be as set out on that meeting's agenda and the Council asks that everyone attending respects the office of the chairman who is responsible for the conduct of the meeting and for ensuring that the business specified on the agenda is carried out.

The Parish Clerk will normally be present and is responsible for preparing agendas, taking minutes and helping Councillors make decisions that are informed, procedurally correct and lawful.

### **Still unsure about attending?**

The Council appreciates that some people may find the prospect of attending a meeting for the first time a little intimidating. If you have any concerns at all about attending a meeting please do contact Helen Schofield at the Parish Office for help and guidance.

**How to contact us**

The Parish Office is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00 am - 12:00pm.

West Hoathly Parish Council  
Parish Office  
West Hoathly Village Hall  
North Lane  
West Hoathly  
RH19 4QG

**Telephone:** 01342 811301

**E-mail:** [clerk@westhoathly.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@westhoathly.gov.uk)

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