

# West Saint Leonards Neighbourhood Forum

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Tuesday July 22 2025

### Welcome and introductions

Members were welcomed and invited to introduce themselves.

### Present

Anna Sabin (chair), William Ackroyd (treasurer) Jim Boot (consultant) Stephen Hardy (guest speaker) Danny Head, Donna Head, Stephen Hobson, Nasser Khoja, Shabnam Khoja, Alan McMurtie, Bill Montgomery, Eve Montgomery, Evelyn Murray, Jolene Pont, Marcia Whitehall Smith

### Apologies

Nicole Collomb, Tony Collins, Helena Dollimore MP, Julia Edwards, Edward and Gaynor Humphreys, Patricia Walton

### Minutes of the AGM July 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

The minutes were unanimously accepted.

#### 1) Report of the WSLF's activities over the year.

Anna Sabin outlined the work which had been done during the year, with the support of AECOM and Jim Boot to translate the interests and concerns of local inhabitants into feasible projects for the area. The topics examined so far include Connectivity, Housing, Environment, Historic sites and buildings and Green Spaces, with more work to be done on finalising the draft. Although the plan attracted a grant from Locality to enable us to have professional advice in the last financial year, the balance of the grant due to help with further work this financial year has been stopped by the Government, and the future of assistance to local groups working on a neighbourhood plan is uncertain.

Plans for development of the Old Bathing Pool site by private developers has caused serious concern and a Protestival about it was held on July 13. Anna showed this proposal, and compared it to an alternative plan. This would favour smaller housing more suitable to the profile of the local population, a co-mobility hub, emphasis on foot and bike paths, a playground, cafe, and tidal pool to attract visitors and wider pavements and street trees for shops and their customers. Anna reported she'd met the leader and CEO of HBC who made two promises: they would contact the MOD and discuss with them the imperative to bring forward their sale of their Cinque Ports Way site to make development of the two sites, HL11 and HL9 coherent and that they would allocate a planning 'draftsman' to make the WSLNF's suggested compromise plan for the OBP more presentable and useable.

We have had meetings with Hastings Borough Council planners and Council members, and we are approaching the regulation 14 stage in the planning process which involves consultations with residents in the neighbourhood area as well as local businesses and people working in the NA as well as local councils and other service providers. Anna answered questions about the technical aspects of the plan.

## 2) Report and presentation of the last year's accounts

William Ackroyd explained that the accounts were done for last temporal year – 2024; and the current year will come under the CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

The first slide showed Income received – from events and the Locality Grant

2<sup>nd</sup> slide – Expenditure – a small amount of the grant has been spent, but most was carried over to current year

3<sup>rd</sup> slide Balance sheet – HVA received the Locality Grant, for us because we were not yet registered as CIO. It was transferred to us in March 2025 and disbursed on administrative costs, equipment and consultancies. The balance of about £800 was returned to Locality.

The other debtor is the Community group who have separated from the forum and they have repaid about two thirds of the money owed this year and will repay the balance later in the year.

William stressed that the problem for the future is that the Government has stopped grants for Neighbourhood Forums, so we have no guarantee of funding for our next stages

Accounts have been checked by Stephen Hobson

Approval of the report proposed by Eve Montgomery seconded by Jolene Pont: Passed unanimously

## 3) Resolution:

Following the registration of WSLNF as a CIO it is resolved that

a) all the assets of the association WSLNF shall be transferred to the WSLNF CIO

proposed by Anna Sabin

seconded by Nasser Khoja : Passed unanimously

b) all the members of the association WSLNF shall be registered as members of the WSLNF CIO

proposed by Bill Montgomery

seconded by Alan Mc Murtie : Passed unanimously

c) the Association of WSLNF shall be dissolved as soon as the above resolutions have been effected

proposed by Evelyn Murray

seconded by Stephen Hobson : Passed unanimously

4) Closure of the first stage meeting and opening of the inaugural meeting of WSLNF CIO

## 5) The Inaugural Meeting of the WSLNF CIO

a) The work of the Trustees and Members - The volunteer form which has been circulated, in broad terms:

•**Neighbourhood plan: Reading, commenting on and drafting documents**

the work around the preparation of the NC

collecting evidence etc

publicising the plan

• **Planning applications and the local plan**

We are now being sent all planning and pre planning applications which are within our area – for us to comment It is part of the on going work of the Forum: so far not contentious but it is an important role for us

Also dealing with the draft local plan due in September

• **Administration**

Secretarial work - arranging meetings – minutes etc

Website – other social media perhaps?

Accounts

• **Publicity – leafleting, door knocking etc**

Making contact with residents – going to be very important as part of our consultation on our draft plan

**b) Election of trustees for the CIO.**

The association ended with four committee members who are also founding trustees of the CIO. It had been agreed all four will stand down and 3 are willing to stand again

William Ackroyd

Anna Sabin

Julia Edwards plus Nicole Collomb, neither of whom were unable to attend

There was discussion about the role of the trustees, and it was agreed that this part of the meeting would be adjourned until after our guest speaker and a chance for informal discussions.

**c) Timetable at this point**

The proposed timetable has already slipped and there will be delays because of the lack of financial support. Hopefully the regulation 14 consultation can start in the Autumn and if all goes well we will reach referendum stage by the summer of 2026

6) **The guest Speaker, Stephen Hardy** was introduced to talk about his experience of developing, establishing and monitoring the Neighbourhood Plan for Robertsbridge.

Robertsbridge started work on their plan in early 2015, and it was “Made” (final stage) in July 2015. Stephen emphasised the difference between the area of Robertsbridge, which is largely rural and took the area of the Parish Council for their boundary, and the WSF which is urban and had to define its own area. The population in WSL (approximately 6,000 compared to 3,000 for Robertsbridge) is also larger, and we do not have the services of the Parish clerk, who contributed greatly to the Robertsbridge planning development.

He emphasised the uncertainty created by the national Government's intention of re-organising local government, which does not address local planning initiatives.

Robertsbridge had set up a steering group of 17 people to address the detailed surveys and discussion in the different areas, divided by the character and the interests of the inhabitants, eg horse-riding. They engaged local councillors and a senior planning officer in their discussions and took care to conform with the local plan produced by the authority.

A particular concern was enabling young people and retired people to find suitable housing without having to leave the area. This resulted in proposal to redevelop the site of an old mill and to query planning applications designed to add extra rooms to smaller properties, resulting in unaffordable housing for young people and no options for older people who want to move to a smaller property.

Stephen's advice to us was to be comfortable borrowing other people's ideas, to put as much into the plan as we want, and to make radical suggestions, provided they were not unrealistic. We discussed the importance of designation to protect important sites and spaces, and some other initiatives eg Community Land Trusts.

After thanking Stephen Hardy for a very interesting and useful talk, we moved on to the informal part of the meeting, with refreshments.

**7) Refreshments and informal discussion.**

a) During the refreshment break Marcia Whitehall-Smith and Alan McMurtie signed proposal forms to be trustees, others are considering their contribution

b) It was decided that the meeting would be adjourned and a further meeting held towards the end of August or in September, when everyone who attended the meeting would be invited to discuss and agree who would be trustees and arrange roles as well as the immediate timetable for the work of the forum

Evelyn Murray and William Ackroyd

28 July 2025