

# Charity Committee Agenda

**Monday, 18 March 2024 at 6.00 pm**

Council Chamber - Muriel Matters House, Breeds Place, Hastings TN34 3UY.  
Please enter the building through the Contact Centre entrance via the seafront.

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# Agenda Annex

**Coastal Users' Group  
6pm, Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
Muriel Matters House  
Minutes**

**Present:**

Christine Boulton-Lane – Chair and WHBUA  
Chris Richards – Hastings Adventure Golf  
James Cook – Protector (Foreshore Trust)  
Steve Peak – Friends of Hastings County Park  
Di Cook – Hastings Voluntary Lifeguards  
Cllr Tony Collins – HBC ward councillor  
Cllr Karl Beaney – HBC ward councillor  
Cllr Claire Carr – HBC ward councillor  
John Bownas – Love Hastings  
Abbie Williams, Aaron Woods, Sarah Crosby (notes) HBC

## **1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Christine welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting was not quorate due to the number attending. Christine asked if those attending wanted to continue with the meeting, all agreed.

\*\* Noted that in December 2023 meeting, Di Cooke did give apologies and minutes need amendment to remove “(online)” as this has caused confusion.

**Apologies were received from:**

Yasmin Ornsby – Stade Partnership  
Peter Wheeler – Hastings Canoe Club  
Nick Fawcett – 1066 Board Riders

Nick had sent Christine a letter about CUG which she read out – he felt that he would like to see the group flourish and would like to attend but feels that CUG should disassociate itself from advisory group function to the Trust. He thought the current audited account situation is a fiasco, that the group needs to be more proactive and need to set out what they want to achieve. He felt that the group could set up a WhatsApp group to communicate separately.

Steve agreed with most of the letter sentiment but was against withdrawal from advisory group function due to our legal obligation. He felt that instead a formal list needed to be drawn up of what CUG wants FST to do to enable the function to continue.

Chris agreed and explained that there have been many ongoing discussions about moving forwards. He thought that many of the members had lost interest in CUG for a number of reasons, including the issues raised before, and if this was not achieved, they would then look at disbanding the group.

*Extract from December minutes state requirements:*

- 1 – Publishing of the signed off audited accounts*
- 2 – Proper time to review the published charity committee agenda moving forwards, as one week with a CUG in the middle is not sufficient, there should be a minimum of 2 weeks*
- 3 – That relevant officers attend in the future to discuss the items relevant to them – Most common items relate to Estates, Legal & Finance*

***The group agreed unanimously***

The group felt that they were ignored by the trust and would like to produce a requirement list to meet moving forwards, which they feel all members need to contribute with. For instance, the list should include quarterly management accounts.

The group suggested they could disband at the end of April, which will cause the trust problems, so assume grants etc would be frozen until the matter got resolved.

They asked again for legal and accountancy representatives from Hastings Borough Council to assist with answering questions.

The ward Cllrs attending were asked questions about how to progress.

Cllr Clare Carr shared the group concerns and highlighted that three FST grant applications that had been received recently were given only 10 days to submit their paperwork (during a holiday period), and subsequently these were not agreed. There was no oversight on how this was decided and there needed to be some balance.

Chris felt that the group could be very useful to the council if used correctly to offer income ideas and sharing information. The group formed in 2002 and worked very well, but recently the lack of accounts, and relevant council representatives to explain certain items was causing major problems.

Cllr Clare Carr mentioned that unfortunately even they are not in a position to make income suggestions, that Cllr idea forms had been withdrawn due to the capacity within the council to consider opinions on how to save money.

Aaron explained that the group needs to be clear on what its Terms of Reference are for this group and with the FST, explaining it is the management of FST land and consultation aspect. In response to a query from Steve he added that FST are not involved in coastal protection work as an example, this is an HBC only function. It was also reiterated that the GAP would be the consultee body for the grants, not the CUG.

It was suggested that an annual plan from FST would be beneficial, to help the group understand work planned for the year and to contribute ideas.

James explained it was in every one's interest to find as much common ground to work together so the community will benefit and that it was sad hearing about the step backwards.

Christine explained that not moving forward is what has disheartened the committee, that she was happy to chair the group, but wants to see results, and continues to be disappointed that there are no legal or accounts representatives at the meeting following the last request.

Cllr Tony Collins was surprised that the Cllr's responsible for FST were not attending the meeting. Christine said she did meet with Cllr Cannon last year, but the group were not made aware of the recent changes within the council and that Cllr Ali Roark is now Chair. It was noted that she is not standing again in the next May elections, so there would be further change, which was unlikely to help.

It was felt that the group do want to make this work, and that disbanding causes FST problems as it would likely freeze all their capabilities. However, if CUG have no success with their requests, they can disband from the advisory role to lobby as a separate group and issue press releases etc to get their points raised. FST needs to be made clear the work CUG do and the importance of the advisory function.

Noted that Charity Committee AGM is next Monday (18<sup>th</sup>) evening. A list of requirement needs to be submitted from CUG for that meeting. Christine and Chris are both happy to attend the meeting next week.

The group also queried how the Charity Committee can operate with no audited accounts being produced, and little detailed information available.

James explained that the charity committee have an overall picture of finances from the statutory accounts, but the auditing is running three years late, and steps are in place to change this.

Cllr Clare Carr explained that although this group were waiting for audited accounts, HBC are in same situation, and it is a national audit problem.

James explained that they had detailed accounts for 2021 but other than that it has been just a summary.

Steve asked if there was no agreement, and the group were disbanded, what would happen to the Trust charity status? James explained it would not affect the Trust itself, as HBC are trustees.

Cllr Tony Collins advised that he would liaise with the Deputy Leader, Cllr Glenn Haffenden to make him aware of discussions this evening, as he is also one of the charity committee.

John asked the area that CUG covers, and noted it is FST land only, and suggested putting together a short/medium/long term lists of requirements.

Next CUG is due 17<sup>th</sup> June, and the group reiterated that they need more time for Charity papers so they can be discussed with their own group and provide comment, but recognise the distribution of papers is a legal issue/timescale.

The group welcomed that the style of minutes has changed in the recent meetings, and they felt there was now more accurate information contained in them.

The venue for future meetings was discussed, and it was suggested perhaps a venue with a lighter atmosphere and social aspect may be better – it worked well at EHSAA before.

## **18:55 – MAIN AGENDA**

### **2 ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED**

#### Letter from the Chair

Felt this was covered in the discussion above.

#### Southern Water update

It was felt around the room that Southern Water are keen to communicate but do not follow up with action.

Christine has worked with them from the beginning following a burst at West of Haven but feels let down as they do not always follow through with what they say they are going to do.

The Group asked about the SW works at Pelham. John advised the site has a licence until the end of March. Aaron added that commitment was in place for the pumps to remain as long as needed, and this may be extended until the summer season. They have to replace a tidal flap valve under the promenade which would take time. Hydraulic modelling is also underway with the ESCC flood risk team which would inform future actions.

Asked if the outfall pipe needed to be extended, Aaron explained that due to Climate change we need to ensure any outfall is fit for purpose for many years to come, and this is part of the hydraulic modelling etc.

John advised that pumps are activated during rainstorms (albeit running 24 hours a day), but there is still surface water around town centre area especially when we have a high tide. It is being monitored every week.

Aaron explained that Southern Water were hit with a cyber-attack recently, so a recent phase of work to refurbish the St Leonards sewer main has been completed, but the news was not relayed at the time. However, they still need to follow through on their other work.

#### HBC Management of SW Accountability

Comments were also made about the lack of standard following repair/replace work to be like for like. Where paving stones were, there is now tarmac. It was suggested there should be greater scope for discussion around reinstatement work, where alternatives may be better than like for like.

#### CUG Future in relation to the FST

Was discussed at the beginning of the meeting

#### FST Finances

Mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, but Aaron also highlighted to the group that the budget and finance report for Charity Committee does contain the FST Business Plan. Essentially this is a building and maintenance plan, it is coming towards the end of its original lifetime, the plan needs to be refreshed. Aaron advised that the group could contribute ideas, e.g. pay on exit car parks as suggested before, maintenance allocations for Rock a Nore etc.

The plan needs to be set for the next five years but will need to include improvements such as inflation is not included in these costs currently. Aaron said ideas can be sent in at any time and appreciates that at this time the group is not quorate.

**However, the main comment from the group was that they could not make comment when the financial report is not available or detailed.**

Cllr Clare Carr asked why within the business plan the public toilets had a budget of £0 moving forward. This needs explaining as it is very concerning that there could be the assumption no maintenance is happening, or that there could be future charging for use to cover costs.

Fees and Charges are also discussed at charity committee, but no report comes to CUG to enable their comment.

There was collective feeling that facts and figures are often not available to the group.

Cllr Clare Carr noted that Stade Hall also had a no internal maintenance budget moving forwards, Aaron advised that this is likely because an operator is in place to run the venue so will cover those costs.

The group asked who the lead officer is for the Foreshore Trust, and it was confirmed as Victoria Conheady, Deputy Chief Executive.

### **3 Member Updates**

John asked if CUG as a group was consulted on the recent Town Centre regenerations plans as some areas involved the seafront. The group were not specifically, but several members have made comments.

John also asked that the Pelham public toilets were available during bonfire night, but also that if needed, Love Hastings could also look at additional portaloos. The situation on the evening is very challenging for local businesses.

Steve reported from the Country Park as the group remain angry and upset at the blocking of longshore drift by the harbour arm, as this would not protect the cliffs.

Steve also reported on behalf of the Fishermen Museum who are worried about the ongoing maintenance of net shops. Would it be possible for an FST grant to be made available to assist with this, and what is the procedure. Aaron advised these are not FST assets, but the group could for instance ask for annual contributions in the next business plan, which may or may not be agreed.

On a separate note, Steve has made a video/film about historic works and the link will be made available via Abbie as soon as it is online.

Aaron updated the group on the coastal protection works starting tomorrow. Equipment has arrived on site today and they will be looking to recycle approx. 25,000 tonnes of shingle westwards. He explained it will also include a small phase 'onward cycling' eastward for the corner closest to harbour arm and at Rock a Nore, to target areas which have been affected by winter storms. There has been no need to adjust the sluice boards as the beach levels are good. The crews will also be tidying up and reprofiling east side of the pier, the lower promenade in St Leonards, clearing the lower plinth for the seasonal beach huts, and tidying the area by the West Marina beach huts. All works should be completed by Easter.

Aaron also explained that this work is paid for by HBC from the FDGIA (Flood Defence Grant in Aid), the money is ringfenced for coastal defence works. To access funding you have to have a business plan and science.

Steve asked for an update on the HMBYC at Rock a Nore. Aaron advised that they had significant rock fall recently, but no update was available on the long-term status of the club.

Steve also noted the role of heavy rainfall in erosion of the cliffs at Rock a Nore.

Di was pleased to hear about the shingle work was taking place as this will now make launching their boat much easier. They appreciate the work of the EHSAA in moving shingle, but it is still a challenge.

They are running a beach lifeguard course at Easter, and the candidates will be employed by the RNLI. The course in February had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers.

The beach is always a challenge, and they do have a number of events in the calendar to provide safety cover for.

Continuing to raise funds for member trainer accessor courses, this covers boat handling and pool work. Funding overall remains a real challenge with overheads going up, and still not

managed to raise enough for new boat which is needed so can carry on with operational ability status.

Chris reported that the Crazy Golf had not had a good start to the summer due to the weather. Low visitor numbers in January and February so holding lots of hope for Easter and Summer.

John asked about the Stick of Rock lighting along the seafront. It has been on hold for nearly a year. He is liaising with ESCC. Cllr Tony Collins has also been liaising with an engineer. John and Cllr Collins to share details. It was suggested this was an example of an issue that CUG could help push through.

Christine thanked the group for coming along this evening and for the Cllr support shown tonight. Looking forward and hoping to be back on board with the members we have had before, as this group exists to help them and their activities. It is their chance to have their say and disappointed not enough members came along, she believes everyone needs to be in it together.

Di asked that the right groups and representatives attend the meeting to help share the news/details for CUG, noting that if members don't feed back to their respective groups, it's a problem.

It was asked that Christine send an email to CUG following their attendance at Charity Committee next week to update members.

Noted that from 26<sup>th</sup> March the council will be in their pre-election period due to the elections in May.

#### **4 Feedback from issues arising since last meeting**

Already discussed

#### **5 Date of Next Meeting – TBD**

Provisionally Monday June 17<sup>th</sup> 2024 – dependant on outcome of requested changes.

The meeting closed at 19:55