

1. Introduction from the chair

Mitch Peacock, chair of MCA, welcomed everyone to the meeting. A total of 107 were in attendance.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from 13 members.

3. Approval of 2025 AGM minutes

The minutes of the 2025 AGM were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Treasurer's report

The MCA accounts were circulated at the meeting and Treasurer, James Sneath, presented his report on finances. James reported a surplus of £5,543.50 for the year ending 31 December 2025, compared with a loss of £1,803.76 the previous year. This improvement reflects the absence of major community project donations in 2025 (e.g., the £5,000 contribution to the Meads Hall project in 2024); Income remains strong due to healthy membership numbers at the new £15 household rate and steady advertising revenue. Expenditure continues to be low, leaving the association well-insulated from wider cost-of-living pressures. The balance sheet remains healthy.

James announced the Committee proposed a pilot community grants scheme for the remainder of the financial year. A total fund of £2,500; Maximum £500 per grant; Open to Meads-based groups or individuals; Decisions to be made by a sub-committee of the Executive. Members approved the proposal by a show of hands.

Thanks were recorded to Martin Connolly, the association's auditor, for his diligent work and his agreement to continue for another year.

It was agreed to accept the report and to continue the appointment of Martin Connolly as auditor.

6. Activities report

The chair gave a summary of what the MCA had been up to in the last year, including:

Regular meetings with Eastbourne Borough Council senior officers and ward councillors to discuss a wide range of issues affecting Meads.

Meeting with the Balfour Beatty road warden, the ESCC Head of Highways, and Meads Ward county councillor to explore problems affecting our roads and pavements.

Lobbying on rushed demolition plans for parts of the Bandstand, which changed the council's approach for this much loved heritage asset.

Supporting residents of Wilmington Square when the central garden was to be carved up to create a cycle path.

Lobbying to extend the Public Spaces Protection Order, helping to tackle anti-social driving, especially on the seafront and up to Beachy Head.

Fighting for better toilet provision after the introduction of the community toilet scheme, and work toward funding for renovations to the Helen Garden toilets in the future.

Considering Community Governance as part of the switch to a unitary authority, recommending resistance to a parish or town council model due to costs and continued confusion for residents over service providers.

Resisting the whole scale change to gravel escarpments in place of the promenade rockeries.

Responding to the Eastbourne Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation, resisting any rush to deliver over six hundred new homes within the twenty year period covered.

6.1. Planning & Conservation

Dennis Scard reported on significant planning and conservation issues the MCA were involved in since last year:

● Eastbourne Bandstand

A planning application under an innocuous title was in fact proposed demolition of that part of the bandstand covered by blue hoarding, about one third of the complex. The MCA, and significant others, were not included on the list of consultees, and insufficient time given to Historic England to comment. The MCA rallied members to put in objections and attend the relevant Planning Committee meeting at which the decision was deferred. We followed up with a formal complaint to the council about the way the application had been pursued, which after a long delay was partly upheld. Following further structural investigations recommended by Historic England the application has been withdrawn and the Bandstand will open this year.

● Former Claremont Hotel

The Claremont in Eastbourne was destroyed by a fire in November 2019 and torn down the following year after its structural damage worsened during a storm. Last year EBC said the site's owner had put together a

proposal to redevelop and "breathe new life" into the site and a consultation took place to build 65 new apartments, while respecting the character and heritage of the area. We still await this planning application.

- **Former Moira House School**

Work is progressing on the former Moira House School site to convert it into new homes and it is now called Compton Place. A disastrous fire at the former schoolhouse last year, has caused a major delay to the continuing development of the site and unfortunately the need for a new planning application which we understand is progressing.

- **The Helen Garden Pavilion & Toilets**

Following the introduction of a Community Toilet scheme the kiosk operator, Cadence, was granted an extension of their facilities provided they took over the toilets. Regretfully this meant that the gents toilet was closed and the ladies toilet became a unisex toilet. Cadence have put in a ramp for wheelchairs to get better access to the kiosk. The MCA are in intensive discussions along with the FMPG the bowls club, Cadence and EBC to get the gents toilet reopened, as we have concerns about the unisex toilet on safety grounds for women and children and the reduced toilet facilities at this well used park.

- **Electricity Sub Station, Meads Road**

For some time, we have raised the poor visual appearance of this site with EBC. We have been told that UK Power Networks lease the buildings, but the site is owned by EBC who tell us discussions with UKPN are ongoing about renewing the lease.

Recently UKPN applied to EBC Planning to fell a large tree on the site that is damaging the fabric of the building. The MCA did not object to the felling of the tree but wished to meet UKPN representatives to discuss the progress on the lease including improving the visual amenity of the site and its continuing upkeep. After a positive response from UKPN we understand that our initiative has reinvigorated lease discussions.

- **Proposed Cycle path Wilmington Square**

The MCA and local residents opposed ESCC plans to put a 3-metre-wide tarmac two-way cycle path on the grass through the square, as it was unnecessary and a waste of money. We all said that rather than dig up the square it would be easier and cheaper to designate the roads on the left and right of the square as one way. It seems we have been listened to.

- **Former University of Brighton sites:**

- The Welkin site

56 new homes proposed. Planning consent is expected to be approved by the EBC subject to a number of conditions to meet some objections. The listed buildings on the site will be retained and refurbished.

The residential development to take place on the southern section of the site includes a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bed homes, with priority given to 3-bed houses. The MCA has supported the development.

- Hillbrow site

10 apartments are proposed in this former university building. The flat roof extensions adjacent to the existing sports centre would be demolished and replaced by 5 houses making a total of 15 new homes on this site. The MCA has supported this planning application.

- Aldro site

The project aims to provide up to 150 homes comprising a mix of houses and flats, but which prioritises the delivery of 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom houses. Following consultations between the developer, the MCA and local residents, we are broadly supportive of the developments proposed for this site.

- Queenwood site

50 new homes proposed, possibly for retirement living. The Town Plan states that "The original Queenwood building, located at the front of the site off Darley Road, is considered to make a positive contribution towards the character of the Conservation Area and should be retained and converted to residential use. There is a problem with the position of the main building as its backs straight onto Baslow Road which is the same height as the Queenwood building and makes the rear of the building very dark. With these observations in mind the MCA committee may look favourably on development as long as it is sympathetic to the Conservation Area and similar in height and scale.

- **Meads End**

This large Edwardian style seafront property at the corner of Meads Road and Dukes Drive is the former boarding accommodation for Bedes School. It is up for sale and has been advertised as a development site. We will be keeping a very close watch on proposals for this important property.

- **West Cliff Mansions, 6 St Johns Road**

This planning application is for the demolition of 11 single storey garages at the rear of this large block of flats to be replaced with four, three storey, town houses under the guise of mews houses and is a second attempt to develop this area.

There are a large number of local objections, supported by the MCA. We have a concern that an amended proposal will be put forward. However, we have an assurance that this or any revised application will go to a Planning committee meeting if recommended for approval.

- **Whinfell, 25 Upper Carlisle Road**

The original main house had three bedrooms with a one bedroom annexe next door, and at the end of the garden a separate entrance in Salisbury Road with a garage and workshop. The developer has already obtained consent to enlarge the original property to a five bedroomed house and to build a two bedroomed property in the rear garden where the former garage and workshop were situated. The two bedroom property has now been built and sold.

As soon as planning consent was obtained for these two projects, the developer submitted a planning application to build on the site of the one bedroomed annexe a house with seven bedrooms. This meant that on this former site of a four bedroom property there would be three houses with a total of fourteen bedrooms. The MCA and the Eastbourne Society, along with local residents, objected to the proposal and as a result the number of bedrooms in the additional application was reduced to six. We considered that this was still an over development but regretfully the Planning Committee gave approval to the application.

- **4 Denton Road**

The Meads Community Association is opposing this fourth planning application, this time for the erection of a single storey studio dwelling on the site of the existing garage and former workshop. We are hopeful that the application will be refused.

- **20 Granville Road Front Boundary Wall**

This wall was built without planning consent and replaced a former, lower brick and flint wall. Eventually the owner put in a retrospective planning application and we reported in our Spring magazine that the application was refused. The owner has submitted an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

- **26 Jevington Gardens**

A further application was made for a two-storey house in the rear yard to this property. EBC have recently refused this application on the grounds that the proposed dwelling would severely impact nearby houses and that there was a large degree of overlooking. The MCA opposed this application, but it may go to appeal.

6.2. Environment

Don Foster reported on Meads environment issues.

- **Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme**

The Phase 1 roll-out (2025-2027) is proceeding well and is on time. For the Eastbourne seafront this involves importing and distributing shingle on the beach and improvements to groyne support in selected areas. During this period the beach will constantly be monitored before and after storm events in order to optimise the beach height and gradient.

Recently, Storm Goretti gave us a moderately significant event which did indeed shift shingle around. While shingle is still a very effective absorber of wave energy and prevents erosion of the beach, eventually storm events will encroach on the bandstand. Already, shingle is being thrown around and over the base of it.

The funding of the coastal protection project is determined by the number of properties and people that need to be protected. Heritage assets do not have this priority. However there does now appear to be a funding stream proposed that could be of benefit to the Bandstand.

- **Meads Community Association Downs Group**

Together with a brief history of its formation, Don explained that the MCADG is a group of some 45 volunteers who tend to a growing plantation of trees in Paradise Grove and who collaborate with the Eastbourne Borough Council ranger, Alex Jarvis, to restore chalk grassland, clear pathways, remove invasive plants and promote the flourishing of wildlife. This is a working example of how a volunteer group can work successfully with the Eastbourne Borough Council to enhance the environment. Don described the role of the Eastbourne Downland Group (EDG - established in 2017) in creating the Paradise Grove plantation and in initiating projects and partnerships that raise awareness of activities that take place on the Downs.

Don displayed the area of downland above Meads to give an appreciation of how much Downland and

farmland is part of Meads and pointed out the working area of the MCADG. He then gave examples for the work being done by the MCADG and showed a detailed map of the projects underway in the working area. The next steps were to:

- Interact more frequently with other volunteer groups all over the Downland above Meads, and benefit from some great social occasions.
- Apply for funds from the SDNP to provide further tools for clearing and tending to the land.
- Have events on the Downs which will invite young people to enjoy the area.

The work scope has grown from tending to the trees in Paradise Grove to working on the restoration of chalk grassland and general Downland care. The EBC ranger will be training and instructing volunteers on Downland management, what sorts of wildlife exist on the Downs - how to identify it and provide optimal environments for it to thrive. Not only is this work having a real effect on the environment, it brings people together with a shared mission to enhance the South Downs.

6.3. Place-making

Terrie Rintoul reported on place-making issues.

Chapman Wine Merchants had closed since the last AGM, and the unit has been let and is currently being refurbished, although the identity of the new trader is not known.

Longleaf Health & Wellbeing has also recently closed and we have been told that another business is moving in. New estate agents, Meads Property Services, have told us that they are moving into Meads Street.

6.4. Membership & Recruitment

The chair commended Kirstie Commins for a splendid job administering subscriptions and contact data.

The MCA currently has approximately 750 member households, representing a growth of some five percent over last year, continuing a medium term trend of a similar rate. Growing membership is crucial to remaining a significant lobbying voice within a unitary authority, and all members were encouraged to spread the word.

6.5. Communications

The chair reported that since the last AGM we have continued to provide members with a quarterly magazine, the first line of communication from us to members and used email for more urgent communication to members, and asked that members ensure we hold correct email addresses for those wishing to receive these notifications. Together with a Facebook page and website, we have kept members, and others, informed of all important Meads issues during the last year.

7. Election of Officers and Executive Committee

The chair noted that committee members need to be proposed and seconded by other MCA members at least two weeks before an AGM, and that nominations were invited from members in the Spring magazine and elsewhere.

We had nominations for: Nat Barnardiston, Catherine Butcher, Kirstie Commins, Don Foster, Mark Morgan, Sam Morgan, Chris Neighbour, Mitch Peacock, Dennis Scard, James Sneath, John Swingland, and Anne McWilliams.

The chair proposed a motion to elect all the nominees to the committee, which received a second from the floor, and the motion was passed by a show of hands.

The opportunity within the MCA constitution to co-opt members to the committee was noted and those interested were invited to get in touch.

8. Contributions from invited guests

The meeting received interesting contributions from a number of invited guests:

8.1. Meads Ward councillors:

Cllr Jane Lamb, of Eastbourne Borough Council,
Cllr Robert Smart, of Eastbourne Borough Council,
and Cllr Brett Wright, of East Sussex County Council.

The importance of constituents making representations to councils and being represented by such as the MCA, and the burdens of debt on both EBC and ESCC were the main topics.

8.2. Meads Hall

Annalisa Bicknell, treasurer of MECC, gave a brief update on Meads Hall, noting a successful first year since completion of refurbishment works. Fundraising continues and further acoustic doors are planned. Trustees, staff and volunteers were praised, and a call for more volunteers made.



8.3. Meads Magic

Terrie Rintoul reported on a successful 2025 Meads Magic, and announced plans were underway for the 2026 event (Friday 27 November from 2.00pm) for which a new volunteer organiser, Karey Whitmore had been recruited.

The chair thanked Terrie for the work she had done to continue this popular event in recent years.

8.4. Meads Neighbourhood Panel (MNP)

James Sneath, chair of MNP reported on its activities:

The first meeting of 2026 took place in March at the new regular venue, with thanks extended to the Hall Trustees and Kirstie Commins. Further meetings are scheduled for June, September and December.

Key issues discussed:

- Speeding and noisy vehicles across Eastbourne and the Beachy Head area remain a major concern. The seasonal Public Space Protection Order (April–October) is now active, giving police and council officers additional powers, though both face resource constraints.
- Condition of roads, pavements and verges in Meads continues to generate significant resident concern. Attendees were encouraged to report issues directly rather than assume others have done so, given the high demand on limited repair resources.

Acknowledgements were given to:

- PCSO Dan Russell, recognised for his visibility, long experience and regular crime updates, reminding residents to remain vigilant despite low local crime levels.
- Meads councillors (three Borough, one County) for their ongoing contributions and commitment to residents.
- Panel contributors, including MCA chair and former chair, and former MNP chair Roy Peacock for his continued advice.

Residents were invited to join the Panel circulation list via the email address published in Meads Matters. James announced the Panel had established a new sub-group, the Meads Wellbeing Working Group, and introduced its chair, Oliver Sterno.

Oliver Sterno gave a brief introduction to the **Meads Wellbeing Working Group**:

The mission statement is “to improve the environmental and social health of Meads”. Just three meetings so far and currently nine members. Anyone wishing to find out more or join can email wwgmeads@emaildodo.com. The group hopes to hold public workshops soon and campaign to achieve safer streets, cycle paths, improved biodiversity, mental well being, flood risk reduction and other ideas with public support.

8.5. Friends of Meads Parks and Gardens (FMPG)

Anne McWilliams, the new chair of FMPG, thanked the outgoing chair, Terrie Rintoul, praised the volunteer gardeners, explained that the group continues to play an active role in Friends Together, and outlined plans for work in the future:

- All Saints Park: replacing lost trees; urging removal of self-seeded sycamores; beginning work on a new information board.
- Helen Garden: collaborating with MCA and St John’s Bowls Club on refurbishing and reopening the toilets.
- Italian Gardens: pressing the Council to remove self-seeded trees and undergrowth to protect the sea view.
- Peace Garden: working with the Council to replace corroded lanterns on lamp posts.

8.6. Meads Village Allotments (MVA)

Dennis Scard, chair of MVA, reminded members that the Meads Village Allotments were purchased by the community in 2019 to protect them from development and continue to preserve the historic character of this part of Meads. The 24 plots, originally created for estate workers in The Village Square, remain actively tended. The annual Open Day, this year 13 June between 10.30am and 3.30pm, invites visitors to explore the plots, enjoy stalls, and sample homemade cakes and other treats. Funds raised last year supported the refurbishment of the surrounding flint walls and contributed to Meads Hall running costs.

8.7. Dennis Scard former MCA Chair congratulated the chairman on his first year in office on all the work he had done on behalf of the MCA during the year and the way in which he had run the meeting. This was greeted by a large round of applause.



9. Members Open Forum

The chair opened the meeting up for questions and comments from members:

- What is the MCA view of and what can be done about camper vans parked on streets?
The MCA recognised the problem and will continue to lobby for action.
Cllr Lamb noted the residents need to lobby Neighbourhood First and Environment First in large numbers for any council action to be taken.
- What could be done about speeding in Meads?
Terrie Rintoul noted a request for speed camera and signage have been made, so far with no effect.
Roy Peacock noted how the 30mph sign approaching the town on Beachy Head Road from Warren Hill had been moved down the hill towards the first lamppost some years ago.
Brett Wright noted a petition taken to council to reduce speed limit on Beachy Head Road was thrown out, and that more time needs to be spent on this.
- Could a community speed watch be set up?
James Sneath noted there were two in operation however they do require volunteers, training, etc.
- Could the MCA resist any plan to only provide retirement accommodation on the Queenwood site?
Mitch Peacock said the MCA can certainly encourage the developer to provide a range of accommodation across the site.
- What can be done about the damage to pavements caused by street trees?
Mitch Peacock explained the poor choice of species which resulted in much of the problems; the loss of street trees due to disease, and a local pilot project to improve the look of tree stumps during the years they take to rot. The MCA had highlighted issues of pavement problems due to tree roots to Highways recently, and they have committed to take action where there is a sufficiently serious issue.
- What projects could receive MCA grant funding?
James Sneath explained it would be open to any ideas in Meads, and gave examples of street benches, water fountains, and Scouting events.
- What can be done about microlite anti-social behaviour?
Mitch Peacock recognised the problem and suggested complaints to the Police and Civil Aviation Authority, as well as engagement with the MNP at their meetings.

10. Any Other Business

There was no further business

11. Closing Remarks

The chair made the following closing remarks:

"My first year as chair has been quite the eye-opener. I've made a few mistakes, giving out the wrong time for the Mulled Wine and Mince Pies in Meads Matters for example, but just as with that one, my colleagues on the committee have had my back. We are all volunteers, and I would like to thank them all for their hard work and support.

The MCA is only as strong as its membership, and with a unitary authority around the corner I ask you to always be aware of opportunities of spreading the word of what we do and the benefits of becoming a member.

And finally, from myself and the whole committee, a huge thank you for your continued support, for your attendance today, and for any volunteers to tidy the chairs away."

There followed a thank you from the chair to committee members Terrie and Alasdair Rintoul and Barbara Robinson, all having given long and valued service on the committee and now leaving. This was received with a huge round of applause.

Signed 
Mitch Peacock
Chair of MCA

Date 18 April 2026