



**AGREED Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at 7pm on  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

<p><b>Present:</b> Cllr Deborah Harwood (Chairman) (DH); Cllr Mark Rawlings-Smith (Vice Chairman) (MRS); Cllr Karen Nash (KN); Jasmine Hathaway (JMH); Cllr Alan Higginson (AH); Cllr Philip Maber (PM) 9 members of the public also attended.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 1 – Apologies for Absence –</b> No absentees.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 2 – Co-Option of Three New Councillors –</b> Richard Arnold, Sarah Arnold Pain and Emily Lerwill have applied to join the parish council. Each applicant prepared a short presentation about themselves, their interests and what they feel they can bring to the council. This was circulated prior to this meeting. It was proposed by DH that all three applicants be co-opted onto the council. The proposal was agreed by all councillors and all three were co-opted onto the council immediately.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 3 – Declaration of Interests/ Dispensation Requests -</b> There were no declarations of interest or dispensation requests.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 4 - Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting –</b> to approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025. JH requested a minor correction about the source of a £500,000 funding allocation for affordable homes, he clarified it was coming from the district council’s reserves rather than the county council. It was Resolved that that the minutes were correct, with the correction above. All councillors agreed, DH signed the minutes. MRS asked JH for an update on the dead grass around The Leys Parking Area. JH reported that there had been a meeting and it was confirmed that the grass cutting gangs do not carry weed killer and are not licenced to spray areas. He suggested we contact the environment agency or the Hyde Group. It’s a mystery, JH will ask again what dates the grass cutting team visited the Leys to see if it coincided with the incident. DH will contact Hyde.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 5 – Chairmans Report –</b> DH wished everyone a Happy New Year. With regard to the hedge trimming along Charlton Road from Charlton to the end of Bankside, DH spoke to Goodwood and a parishioner also contacted Highways. The hedge cutting has now started, however it is not complete as Darren Norris has to inspect the job to ensure it is at the correct height. Work will then presumably continue. It appears that they will not be pollarding the hedge as previously suggested. DH reported that there would be a date set to discuss councillor responsibilities in light of the three new councillors being co-opted on to the council today.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 6 - County Councillor Report –</b> Mr Jeremy Hunt, Chichester North Division WSCC <b>Reshaping local government in West Sussex - West Sussex County Council states its preference for a one unitary authority</b> West Sussex County Council is stating its preference for a single unitary authority for the whole of the county as its preferred option for local government reorganisation. The council maintains that a single authority is best for providing high-quality and financial sustainable services to residents. A business case for local government reorganisation in West Sussex was developed and agreed by all 8 councils in the county. Each council is taking its own decision on its preferred option.</p>	

The joint business case and each authority's preference were submitted to the government by the deadline of 26th September. The business case shows that creating a singly unitary authority will save £50m per year, which is £30m a year greater than the savings that would be generated by moving to two unitary authorities, and pays back the cost of change in just over two. This unlocks millions which can invest in crucial public services while minimising disruption to those services, especially those that protect vulnerable people.

Creating two unitary councils in West Sussex will mean having to split essential services that keep our most vulnerable people safe and that are currently delivered countywide, notably children's and adults' social care. We are very conscious in reaching this conclusion that the unavoidable disruption if a two unitary model is adopted will create further challenges in these sectors, both of which are already under significant pressure, and impact on the significant improvements we've made as a council over the last few years.

Councils in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove City Council have also produced their own proposals. The business case for West Sussex draws on feedback from the views of 9,000 residents who took part in engagement work over the summer. What came across very strongly in the responses was a desire for local councils be focused on the differing needs of the places they are responsible for, and for an effective local voice in shaping decisions. This will be a key requirement to build into the new council or councils when they are created.

[Read the joint West Sussex business case for local government reorganisation](#)

The government are currently running a public consultation on the options which closes at midnight this Sunday - 11th January. To access the survey please go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-east-sussex-and-brighton-and-hove-and-west-sussex>

The government is expected to announce its final decision on whether West Sussex will become a single unitary, or be split into two unitaries, in February/March.

[Find out more about the future of local government in Sussex](#)

**A loan that could save your life** - High blood pressure (or hypertension) is a leading cause of heart attacks, strokes and other diseases, but it is a treatable condition and early detection is key. The easy-to-use blood pressure monitoring kits can be borrowed for up to three weeks by local library members and used at home to check blood pressure daily. The kits come with a guide on how to measure blood pressure, interpret the results, and a diary to log them. For low and high blood pressure readings, people are encouraged to contact their GP for further advice and treatment. Further information to support being healthy is also provided in the kit. The initiative is a partnership between West Sussex County Council's public health and library services and NHS Sussex, with the aim of increasing the detection of undiagnosed hypertension. Being aware of your blood pressure and checking it regularly is an important way that you can take charge of your own health and wellbeing. This is another superb example of how our libraries support health and wellbeing in our communities and WSCC is delighted to be able to offer this valuable service, which we are sure will benefit many people. **Contact your local library for more information.**

**WSCC Adults Services have been rated 'good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC)** - Following its assessment of the council earlier this year, the regulator found strong leadership within adult social care teams and effective support that enables people to live healthier lives. While further improvements to address gaps in service are needed, the findings evidence the progress made and the council's effectiveness at making a real difference to people's lives. Key strengths include: Leadership, improvement, and innovation

Preventative services having a real impact on people's wellbeing, helping them to remain independent for longer  
A culture of learning, providing positive feedback and career development for staff  
Clear governance and risk management  
Relationships with stakeholders and partners  
A well-established multi-agency Safeguarding Adults Board with clearly defined roles and responsibilities  
Proactive engagement with minority groups and a good understanding of culture, diversity and advocacy  
Strong focus on population and health and preventative care

[Find out more about social care support in West Sussex.](#)

**An exclusive first look at the new Riparian Responsibilities guidance leaflet** - Introducing the new Riparian Responsibilities guidance leaflet from West Sussex County Council. This leaflet provides up-to-date, compliant guidance on Riparian Ownership, clearly defining ownership boundaries and offering best practices for ongoing maintenance. It is designed to complement the County's existing flood risk management information, which can be accessed here: [Managing flood risk - West Sussex County Council](#)

[Download the new Riparian Responsibilities leaflet](#)

JH reported that WSCC have managed to balance their budget for 2026/7 and unlike many other councils WSCC are in a good stable position. Our challenge is as ever social care and special educational needs. Our draft budget is in the process of going through our scrutiny committees and then the cabinet and it will come to for approval to County Council in the middle of February. It's a revenue budget of about just under 900 million pounds and a gross budget of around 2.2 billion pounds because that includes all the schools, grants etc. DH asked about the future of County Hall. JH responded that any decisions on disposal of assets is on hold until the decision is taken on the local government reform.

DH asked JH if he would look into the requested for a bus shelter outside Lavant Road Surgery as it would appear the rules have changed. JH reported that he has already started a discussion with the cabinet minister for highways and will report back on the outcome. VN asked if there were going to be local elections in May. JH reported that this was unknown, councils had to write to the government by the 15<sup>th</sup> January if they wanted to defer elections until 2027. There has been no feedback yet from the government. JH will find out about parish council elections and report back.

**Agenda Item 7 – District Councillor Report – Henry Potter, Goodwood Ward**

Henry Potter was unable to attend as he is still recovering from breaking his hip. His report is below.

I noted today as I drove by, the gates and fencing to the property in Grove Road have been reduced in height resulting in less of an impact on the street scene. I received notice of a decision by the SDNPA of the Appeal against their refusal to allow a change of use of Matchbox Stables from permitted tourist accommodation to household use. This is attached to Old Cottage at the junction of Grove Road and the A 286. The Park Authority are very protective of tourist accommodation inviting visitors to the NP.

The government have just published the draft Financial Settlement for local Authorities and it isn't very good reading! Urban settlements will see a 41% per head of population increase in funding whilst Rural communities will suffer a 20% reduction in funding. This can only result in Rural settlements (supposedly wealthier folk) seeing rises in Council Taxes. This is something I've been forecasting as a result of Local Government Reorganisation. Less funding from Central Government, your residents can pay more! It is already becoming apparent.

The Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government has written to our Local Authorities

asking if they wish elections to proceed on May 7th this year. You may recall that County Elections were cancelled last year because they may interfere with the progress of LGR. This in addition to deferring a Mayoral Election for the whole of the County until 2028. However, District Elections aren't due until 2027 so why the MHCLG is asking CDC if they wish to bring forward this local election beggars belief. Probably another example of a government that really doesn't know what it's doing! I will add that should WSCC opt for County elections this year, our Returning Officer and the Electoral Office at CDC are prepared

**Agenda Item 8 – Public Open Forum**

An MOP asked if the SID would be included on the list of councillor responsibilities. DH confirmed that it has always been on the list, however it will be re-allocated when the responsibilities are discussed at an upcoming meeting. The same MOP asked if the parish council are going to follow best practice with regard to the Deed of Gift for the Village Hall by registering the hall with land registry. The clerk confirmed that she has the original Deed of Gift passed to her by the chairman of the village hall. The forms for this process are quite complex and the clerk will need to get assistance with this process. A further question from the same MOP enquiring about the funds received from the **dormant** youth club, could here be a consultation as to whether something like a table tennis table could be provided for the village hall. DH reported that this money has been ring fenced and can only be spent on **youth activities**. AH is researching events for the Glebe Field, also one of our new councillors is very interested in getting involved with facilities for children. Please email the clerk if you have any suggestions.

**Agenda Item 9 - Council Matters**

**Budget** – The budget has been circulated to all councillors, DH asked if any of the councillors has any comments/questions. There were no comments or questions. The 2026/27 budget was unanimously agreed by all councillors.

**Precept** – DH reported that this financial year we have done very well with keeping our costs down and are likely to be able to carry over approximately £9,500, providing there are no unexpected expenses before the end of March. It was therefore unanimously agreed to request a precept increase of only 5%.

**Agenda Item 10 – Village Matters**

**Charlton Gates** – KN has taken over the responsibility for these gates. It was agreed that the gates should be the same design as the Singleton gates as Charlton is in the same parish. Prices need to be obtained from Vinyl Fencing. It was agreed to contact highways to visit Charlton and agree how many gates are viable. It is currently proposed that there are two gates to be positioned where East Dean joins Charlton and potentially one gate at the bottom of Knights Hill, depending if there is room, possibly two gates. KN will contact the highways person responsible for making these decisions, VN will forward his email address. KN will also contact the two businesses in Charlton who offered to contribute to the cost of the gates.

**Parking in The Leys** – There is a problem in The Leys with the number of cars and not enough parking spaces. There was a discussion about the situation and JH agreed to contact Hyde regarding large vehicles obstructing the pavement and also to establish who is responsible for the parking places and if there are any rules relating to them. It was agreed to put this issue on the agenda for the March meeting.

**Agenda Item 11 – Finance**

**Finance Report**

Balance in Current Account (31/12/25) - £20,268.39

Balance in Savings Account (31/12/25) - £7,272.78

2025/26 Reserves to date:

Playground Maintenance – £2,392.68, General Maintenance £1576.01.

Funds from Youth Club - £1,156.87

Total Reserves £5,125.56

Anticipated Useable Funds at End March'25 (Balance less expected expenditure -Reserves) - £9,542.00

£1,500 is included in this figure for pruning of the trees in the Jubilee Garden.

VAT not claimed - £1,324.09

Suggested 2026-27 Budget

Allowing for 5% increase in the precept and expenditure as detailed, the figure for Income minus expenditure at the end of 2026/27 would be £8,352.00. With potential funds in current account carried over from 2025/26 this figure would rise to £17,894.00.

It is proposed to move the funds in the savings account to a higher interest account.

**Meeting Closed – 20.00**

**Confirmed that these minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting.**

Signed: DEBORAH HARWOOD

Name & Position: CHAIRMAN

Date: