



NORTHCHAPEL PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of a meeting held at the Village Hall on Thursday 6th March 2025 at 8pm

Present: Councillors Mr Alex Baker, Mrs Jules Fraser, Miss Laura Green, Mrs Sharon Holden (Chair), Mr Melvin Greet, Mrs Samantha Jones, Mr John Sochovsky and Mrs Daphne Trussler

In attendance: District Councillor Gareth Evans
District Councillor Charles Toddhunter
Mrs Helen Cruikshank, Parish Clerk

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There was one member of the public in attendance.

PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS

13/25 Apologies for absence: Apologies were received from County Councillor Janet Duncton. The Chair announced that Ed Warren had resigned so there is now a vacancy for a Parish Councillor. Members thanked him for all his hard work on the Parish Council.

14/25 Declarations of Interest: Councillor Green declared an interest in agenda item 18/25 Working Party Reports: MUGA as secretary of the Sports Club. Councillor Baker declared an interest in agenda item 19/25 SDNP Local Plan Review Consultation as owner of a potential development site in Northchapel.

15/25 Minutes: The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 16th January 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed.

16/25 Reports from the Chichester District and West Sussex County Councillors

In her absence, County Councillor Janet Duncton had sent through the following report:

- Secondary School admissions: this year we had 9,050 Secondary Education requests. Slightly down on last year. Every child has been offered a place and 7,882 have been offered their first choice. The rest were offered second and third choices.
- It is no smoking day on the 12th March if anyone would like to take part.
- You will all know by now that the Budget meeting set the budget at 4.99% which again was 2.99% for Council and 2% specifically for adult Services.
- A lot of time is being spent on the Devolution issue. I think I did give an explanation last month but just to be clear this is how I see it so far. There will be one Strategic authority for the whole of Sussex, East and West Sussex and including Brighton and Hove. Strategic authorities have to be at least 1.1/2 million residents and this option is about 1.7 million residents. The election for the Mayor and the authority will be in 2026 and it is likely that there will be two others elected from each of the 3 authorities making the Authority 7. I know that the Leader of County and the Leaders and Chief Executives are working to try and produce a make up for the Unitary Authorities. These have to be at least half a million residents and we could end up with 2 or 3 or even 4 which is unlikely but you never know for the whole of Sussex. This election will be in 2027. For the final year to 2028 the new authorities will shadow the County's and I guess the Districts and Boroughs and then those 3 disappear in May 2028. This is the story as we know it so far and as you are aware things do alter but I don't think they will alter much. To be clear. County did not cancel elections, that was the Governments

decision and they had to do so because the period of Government consultation on this issue goes into the purdah time before the May election so it isn't appropriate to have elections. We don't as yet know if it's for one, two or two and a half years so it's watch this space. I will let you know when we know.

In the meantime, I assure you that I will carry on my work for the division as I always have and try to do my best for the parishes I represent and indeed the whole of West Sussex so, of course still pass on queries to me. janet.dunton@westsussex.gov.uk or mobile 07979152898.

District Councillor Charles Toddhunter and Gareth Evans spoke about the following:

Local Updates

Land at Loxwood House, Loxwood – We were contacted by residents with concerns that the landowner was clearing vegetation from this site. Gareth contacted the CDC Enforcement Team to report this as a possible breach, but they unfortunately advised that no breach of planning control had taken place as no planning application has been submitted yet and the landowner can manage the land as they wish. Rest assured that the new Biodiversity Net Gain regulations mean that if a planning application is submitted, the condition of the site in 2020 will be taken into account (using aerial mapping etc.) to determine the gain required.

Lagoon 3, Crouchlands Farm – We have been in touch with officers following to refusal of the planning applications at Crouchlands Farm to request an update on the plan to clear the lagoon. Officers are continuing to work on the plan and we will communicate the next steps as soon as we can.

CDC Wide Updates

Budget Meeting – At the Full Council Budget meeting on Tuesday 25th February the budget was agreed for the forthcoming year. A 2.99% Council Tax rise was agreed for 2025 to 2026 to protect vital services across the District, but we continue to be one of the lowest charging authorities in the area. We are pleased to continue funding our vital Supporting You service to assist those who are experiencing cost of living related issues. We're also continuing to support discretionary housing payments for those who need our help the most. We'll also be receiving just over £327,000 from the government as part of an extension to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. We have committed to using £263,000 of this to continue projects that have already started, including Choose Work, the Culture Spark initiative, and supporting events and the night-time economy, which are all important in supporting our communities.

Cllr Adrian Moss, leader of the council ended his budget speech by saying "This council remains financially stable, we are debt-free, and our financial resources are strong. Our aim is to improve our district and the lives of the people that live here."

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation – The government has announced that the bid submitted by West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove Council, to create a new strategic authority covering Sussex, has been approved. The area has now been placed on the government's fast-track devolution programme. This means that shadow elections for the new unitary authorities will take place in May 2027 and all existing councils will transfer to the new unitary authorities on 1 April 2028, whilst the mayoral elections will take place in 2026.

The Government has also launched a devolution consultation to create a new Strategic Combined Authority and a mayor for the wider region of West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton. This runs for eight weeks, until 11:59pm on 13 April 2025 and can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sussex-and-brighton-devolution.

Surgeries

Cllr. Gareth Evans is available to meet residents face to face via one of his regular surgeries. Gareth will be available at the advertised venues:

Saturday 8th March, Onslow Arms 12-2pm

Saturday 15th March, Northchapel Working Men's Club 1-3pm

Should the suggested dates not be suitable for you or there are any other reasons preventing you from attending then it is possible to arrange home visits, telephone calls or zoom meetings.

District Councillor Evans added that he had red-carded the planning application SDNP/24/04563/FUL due to a high level of public interest with 48 letters of support. Chichester District Council's Planning Committee will make a decision on this application at a future meeting.

Contact details are:

Cllr. Gareth Evans, email gbevans@chichester.gov.uk or telephone 07958918056

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GarethEvansLoxwood>

Cllr. Charles Todhunter, email ctodhunter@chichester.gov.uk or telephone 07500 577 777

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Charles4Loxwood>

17/25 Police report: There was no Police report.

18/25 Working Party Reports

- **Allotments:** There was nothing to report. The Clerk will be meeting with the Allotment Manager to discuss the new season invoicing.
- **Village Green:** All is good on the Village Green. Councillor Green to check the leaves have been cleared by the contractors.
- **Highways including parking issues:** There has been an improvement with inconsiderate parking in the village. It was agreed a village general tidy would be organised in April/May to sort the Manorial Waste patch and litter pick.
- **Village Road Safety Project and Speedwatch:** Councillor Green reported that more Speedwatch sessions had been carried out with more dates planned. During a recent session, nine drivers were caught going over 30mph. There was no update with the 20mph speed reduction on Pipers Lane.
- **Play Area:** Councillor Fraser said she had carried out a visual check today the baby swings were splitting so this will be something that needs addressing after the ROSPA annual inspection in June.
- **Footpaths, Hedges and Rights of Ways:** Councillor Trussler reported she had no issues raised.
- **Planning:** Councillor Baker reported there were no outstanding planning applications in the parish and none had been discussed since the last meeting. The agent for SDNP/24/04563/FUL (Single storey residential dwelling at Grove End Farm) had sent an email to the Parish Council (Appendix 2) requesting it consider supporting the application rather than simply not objecting. It was agreed to support the planning application given the amount of public backing and the need for more housing in the village.

Since the last meeting, Chichester District Council/South Downs National Park has made the following decision on:

SDNP/22/05771/FUL

Gastons Farm Shillinglee Road Shillinglee Northchapel West Sussex GU8 4SX

Erection of replacement timber gates to site entrance (retrospective)

Decision: Finally Disposed of

- **Village Hall:** Councillor Holden said there was not much to report. Bookings are good.
- **Housing:** Councillor Holden asked the Clerk to enquire after an empty property in Valentines Lea with Hyde. There is an eviction order on one of the flats in Luffs Meadow.
- **Winter Plan:** There was nothing to report.
- **Northchapel Youth Club:** Youth Club has re-started and everyone is looking forward to the lighter evenings. Councillor Green to now be the contact in the Parish News.

- **Multi Use Games Arena (MUGA):** Councillor Green reported that the MUGA works are due to start on 24th March. She and Councillor Sochovsky have a phone call with the contractor tomorrow and a site visit on Tuesday. The £20,000 CDC grant will expire if not claimed by the end of the month. Councillor Green will send a schedule for works to the Village Hall Committee and will flier Pipers Lane properties fore-warning them of the forthcoming works. It should take no longer than two weeks. Disabled ramp and floodlights will follow in stage two.

19/25 SDNP Local Plan Review Consultation

The award-winning South Downs Local Plan is being reviewed to ensure it is up-to-date and addresses important issues such as nature recovery, climate change, affordable housing and helping local communities thrive. This is the main opportunity for people to help shape the final Plan, so SDNPA are inviting comments. The deadline for responses is midnight on Monday 17th March.

As part of the Local Plan review, SDNPA undertook a Land Availability Assessment (LAA). Several sites were put forward in Northchapel but only one was identified as a potential site for development. The proposed new site allocation is to develop 25 dwellings on Land West of Valentines Lea, Northchapel identified in the South Downs National Park Local Plan Review 2024-2042 under reference CH074. The potential site was discussed and although the Parish Council acknowledges there is a housing need for more properties in the parish, it does not agree this is a suitable location due to flooding and access issues.

The Parish Council agreed that site CH266 Land South of Northchapel and East of A283 is a more sympathetic location which although rejected at this stage could be far more suitable if the reasons for refusal raised by SDNP could be addressed. The Clerk to feed back these comments to SDNP.

20/25 Northchapel Action Plan

Councillor Fraser said the plan is now 16 years old and needs a review. She is happy to progress this.

21/25 Annual Parish Meeting 2025

It was agreed to have the APM before the Annual Parish Council Meeting on Thursday 22nd May at 7.30pm. Written reports from local organisations will be read out by the Parish Clerk.

22/25 VE and VJ 80 Commemoration

The Clerk to submit an application for the VE/VJ80 grant for a commemoration bench to be located by the MUGA.

23/25 Financial Matters

- The Council's current financial position @ £16,592 was noted.
- The Bank reconciliation as at 28th February 2025 (Appendix 3) was noted.
- The schedule of accounts submitted for payment at Appendix 4 was noted and payments were approved for West Sussex County Council (Clerk's February Salary) @ £620.25, Northchapel Village Hall (Youth Club sessions) @ £820 and Consulting Engineer Quantum Ltd (MUGA Engineering drawings) @ £900.
- The Budget Monitoring sheet as at 28th February 2025 (Appendix 4) was noted.
- The Clerk had submitted a VAT refund claim @ £9,400.

24/25 Reports back from meetings attended by Councillors

Councillors Baker and Greet attended the SDNP Local plan review meeting with the Clerk. Councillor Fraser attended a Councillor training session and an insurance update/information session, both of which she found very useful.

25/25 Clerks Report including correspondence

The Clerk said there is the SDNP Parishes online meeting on Wednesday 19th March at 6.30pm and the WSALC Chair Forum on Tuesday 18th March at 7pm.

26/25 Items to be included on the next agenda

Please inform the Clerk of any items to go on the agenda by Thursday 15th May 2025

27/25 Date of next meeting

Thursday 22nd May 2025 at 8pm. The APM would precede this at 7.30pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9pm

Signed

Date