

# **MINUTES OF THE NORTHCHAPEL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

## **Held on Thursday 22nd May 2025 At Northchapel Village Hall at 7.30pm**

**Present from the Parish Council:** Mr Alex Baker, Mrs Jules Fraser, Miss Laura Green, Mr Melvin Greet, Mrs Sharon Holden, Mrs Samantha Jones and Mr John Sochovsky.

**Also present:** Six members of the public  
Mrs Helen Cruikshank (Clerk)

The Chairman welcomed all to the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting (APM). As previously agreed, written reports from the various organisations were read out by the Parish Clerk.

**1. Apologies for absence:** Parish Councillor Mrs Daphne Trussler

**2. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting:** The minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May were approved and signed as a correct record.

### **3. Parish Council's Chairman's report: Sharon Holden**

Welcome. The Parish Council continues to support many local organisations giving grants or donations to Northchapel Primary School, Little Oaks Pre-School, Village Hall, Petworth Cottage Hospital, Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance, Chiddingfold Surgery, 4Sight and Tylers Trust. We continue to maintain the village and in particular the village green with fortnightly grass cutting from April to October. My thanks go to all my fellow councillors who work tirelessly with me to do the best for our Parish. Sadly, we lost Ed this year so have a vacancy, if you or anyone you know is interested in joining do contact Helen who can give you more details. Thanks to our District and County Councillors who attend as many meetings as they can and who are always at the end of an email ready to help. Thank you to Willie who continues to oversee the allotments. Special thanks to Laura for all her hard work with the Youth Club and getting the MUGA project up and running. Huge thanks must go to our hardworking and efficient Clerk, Helen who continues to be a great asset not only to myself as chair but to all council members.

### **4. Youth Club report: Laura Green**

Northchapel Youth Club is back with one more session until half-term and then six sessions until the summer holidays. There are 15-20 children who attend every week and it is a much-needed facility in the village. We still need more regular volunteers. We look forward to making use of the MUGA.

### **5. Churchyard report: Clifford Bell on behalf of the PCC**

The church is grateful for the support of the parish council in assisting with the maintenance of the churchyard. Regular grass cutting by the contractor has been effective and it is noted that his team take care to protect the various flower colonies that emerge in the spring. Without the support of the Parish Council maintaining the site would be difficult so a sincere thanks from the church community.

### **6. School report – Head teacher, Deborah Coggin**

- Last year's data results proved a need for improving the outcomes in maths for year 6 children. This has meant that the focus for school improvement has been centred around maths and the professional development of our current teachers and the progress of our children. There has been targeted work with children in developing their fluency and understanding of basic maths and developing speed in calculations. We have continued this year to work alongside The Sussex Maths Hub to develop our leader and the curriculum and the way that we teach number across the school from early years to

year 6. This has also been supported by the generous donation from the parish council, to facilitate an online challenge for children to learn their times tables. We have also targeted some pupils through a TT Rockstars Café style club, where they can play and learn whilst having a snack and drink.

- We continue to develop a strong ethos of enjoyment for reading and our achievement in reading outcomes meets National standards. Our Book Week focus this year was based enjoying stories and books through a multitude of sensory experiences, art, music, listening and a reading café. We had a fabulous dress up day for characters for World Book Day and held a book fair in school to promote the love of Reading. Our new English lead has been attending a course all year long on the promotion of a love of reading. As a result, the school are set to be accredited with the title of... With the parish council backing the library subscription we can make great use of the reading for pleasure books being updated regularly throughout the year to enhance children's reading.
- We continue the focus on high quality presentation of English work through handwriting and spelling alongside creativity inspired by lovely books. During Book Week we welcomed the author David Fuller, who shared in workshops with the children about how he gets started with writing and what inspires him to write.
- We have worked hard in supporting all children in developing positive behaviour and learning attitudes, as well as focusing on kindness and respect. Our school ethos continues with the three words – Kind Safe Ready. These words sum up how the whole school community, both adults and children, wish to behave and be treated, how we keep each other and ourselves safe and how we are ready and prepared for learning.
- At school, we value a wide and varied range of opportunities for our children alongside the core subjects and so this year the children have performed at Village lunches, our dance group took part in the Rother Valley Arts Festival, we hosted two music concert and we have continued to offer a wide range of high-quality clubs and sporting opportunities for children. We work with a fantastic gymnastics coach who has over 20 children a week taking part in high level gymnastics in school. We have also added a dance club and Karate club to wake and shake the children before school. For such as small school, we offer a lot.
- Our wrap around care offer has been extended to accommodate parents' wishes. We now operate a 7:30am start to our breakfast club and Assure Coaching after school have extended childcare hours up until 6pm every day.
- Following the devastating flood that hit the school during the summer school holidays, we have since had extensive repairs and refurbishment to the Scola block which houses, Little Oaks, Caterpillar Class (R/1) and Grasshopper Class (2/3). They rooms are now warm, bright, modern and more engaging for the children to learn and welcoming families to the school is a pleasure to show them off! There has been further work to bring the Scola Block up to date with electrical wiring and there are plans underway to rewire the main school over the summer of 2025. All drainage works to avoid the Scola Block flooding once again have been completed over the Easter period. We now are waiting for further advice on the Early Years Outdoor Area. The school has seen significant investment in the improvement and refurbishment of the school over the year and we continue to hope that further works will be carried out over the next academic year.
- The PTA have extensively refurbished the swimming pool enclosure for the whole community to benefit from and despite the rewiring works, County have assured us that power will continue to the pool to ensure the children can swim over the summer holidays.
- Despite all these successes, we have continued to face financial pressures as a school, with diminishing budgets and increasing staff costs. West Sussex County Council continue to encourage all schools to look at ways to collaborate and form into federations/academies. Our locality has spent

a lot of time investigating the idea of us all forming an multi academy trust, but with far too few pupils in our Rother Valley Schools, this has not been deemed viable. We aim to continue to futureproof the school to maintain its presence in the village, whilst facing a falling roll due to lack of new housing and families in the area and increasing costs and workload for staff. We have spent time promoting the school in the local press and via social media. We missed out on the chance of an Open Day, but plans are out to leaflet and target this early in the Autumn Term 2025.

#### **7. Village Hall report: Jane Dadswell**

It is a pleasure to report that the Hall has had a much better year than anticipated. General hire was up considerably on last year, although this was in part due to the hire of the Hall by the school which was a one-off, this together with a very successfully quiz night, the lottery, donations from the Parish Council, PTA bonfire night and summer fair, resulted in a surplus for the financial year.

We haven't had any major maintenance issues/expenditure this year, although we are well aware that the car park is in need of repair and we received a much-appreciated donation from the Parish Council towards this. However, it was decided that we would wait until work on the MUGA had been completed. We also made the decision to let our second cleaner go on the basis of cost and revert to one-off deep cleans when required.

Unfortunately, quite a few key members of the lunch club team are standing down in June, so we are looking for cooks/helpers to join the team...it would be such a shame to lose something that is enjoyed by so many.

I'm delighted to report that Nicola Hunt has joined the committee.

#### **8. Sports Club: Laura Green (Secretary)**

After 5 years, Laura was pleased to announce that the MUGA is now installed and the contractors are just finishing work on the disabled ramp. It will make the area accessible for all by the end of June. She thanked John Sochovsky and Gary Fish for their recent help. Due to extra costs involved, the project is £22,000 in deficit however the next task is to get this re-paid and the MUGA open for use. The community is very excited by the new facility.

#### **9. Parish News**

There was no report

#### **10. Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

*The meeting was closed at 7.45pm*

Signed..... Dated.....