



NORTHCHAPEL PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting

held at Northchapel Village Hall

On Thursday 22nd May 2025 at 8pm

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

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

Public Question time

There were seven members of the public present. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and handed the floor over to the District Councillors to update the meeting on the situation at the field on Blind Lane where unauthorised engineering works had taken place over the Bank Holiday weekend.

District Councillor Toddhunter stated that they were made aware by several residents on Friday 2nd May of unauthorised works that started on a rural paddock on Blind Lane in Lurgashall (also known as Screehouse Copse) within the parish of Northchapel. District Council officers worked quickly to issue a Temporary Stop Notice which was in place by Friday 2nd May 2025 and should have put a stop to all unauthorised engineering operations. However, over the bank holiday it became clear that this notice had been breached as works continued and the matter required escalation to seek an injunction from the High Court in London. This was successfully obtained and served prohibiting any further unauthorised works or vehicles and caravans entering the site. This form of injunction means that if a person fails to comply with the Injunction this could result in a custodial sentence. District Council has also issued an Enforcement Notice. This requires the relevant parties to return the land to agricultural land and to remove any unauthorised structures, items, vehicles and caravans, and to cease unauthorised use of the land.

Members of the public and Councillors asked questions regarding the notices, delay with the injunction being served, legal implications and procedures. Concern was also raised with another bank holiday weekend approaching and the possibility of further works taking place on the site. District Councillor Toddhunter said that off the back of this, there will be CDC Officers to speak to over the weekend. Going forward, there will be a much better and quicker access to Officers out of hours and a raft of new protocols will be put in place. He assured the community that CDC is doing everything in its power to deal with this and will not be inhibited by budget however there is a legal process to follow.

Chichester District Council has produced a series of frequently asked questions and answers for local residents who want to find out more about the action that has been taken: www.chichester.gov.uk/latestnews

The stop notice and enforcement notice are displayed on the following public access link:
www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-applications/enforcement-report-a-breach/planning-enforcement/planning-enforcement-register/partner-authority-notices/

Six parishioners left the meeting at 8.15pm

ANNUAL MEETING BUSINESS AGENDA

1. **Election of Chair:** Nominations for Chair were invited for the ensuing year. Councillor Sharon Holden was proposed and duly seconded. There being no other nominations, it was **RESOLVED** that **Councillor Holden** be elected Chair of Northchapel Parish Council for 2025/26
2. **Election of Vice-Chair:** The Chair invited nominations for Vice Chair and Councillor Laura Green was proposed and duly seconded. There being no other nominations it was **RESOLVED** that **Councillor Green** be elected Vice Chair for the ensuing year.

3. **Election of Lead Members of Working Parties and Committees:**

Village Green – Laura Green
Play Area – Jules Fraser
Planning – Alex Baker
Highways – John Sochovsky
Footpaths and Rights of Way – Daphne Trussler
Housing – Sharon Holden
Village Hall – Sharon Holden
Northchapel Youth Club – Laura Green
Website – Parish Clerk
Winter Plan – Robert Moss (non-Councillor)
Allotments – Willie Poste (non-Councillor)

Planning Committee: Alex Baker (Chairman), Melvin Greet, Sharon Holden, John Sochovsky and Daphne Trussler

Finance Committee: Laura Green and Sharon Holden

Housing Working Party: Sharon Holden, Laura Green and Daphne Trussler

4. **To fix the dates of future meetings 2025/26**

Thursday 17th July 2025
Thursday 4th September 2025
Thursday 13th November 2025
Thursday 4th December 2025 (precept/finance only meeting)
Thursday 15th January 2026
Thursday 5th March 2026
Thursday 7th May 2026 (Annual meeting)

All meetings are held at 8pm at Northchapel Village Hall. Planning meetings are held as and when necessary. Please contact the Clerk for details.

PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS

28/25 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Parish Councillor Daphne Trussler and PCSO Matt Isles.

29/25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Green declared an interest in agenda item 32/25: Working Party Reports: MUGA as secretary of the Sports Club.

30/25 Minutes

The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 6th March 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed.

31/25 Reports from the Chichester District and West Sussex County Councillors

County Councillor Duncton had sent through a written report as follows:

It is going to be difficult over the coming months not to give you overload on the subject of devolution because as you can imagine it is taking quite a lot of work and discussion. We have had a short amount of time to sort things out and of course it's not all sorted yet. Except of course, we know the Government has accepted a pan Sussex Mayoral strategic authority so all the discussion at the moment is regarding what sort of Unitary local Government there will be. I know many meetings are taking place to sort this out and to confirm both County District and Borough Councils disappear at the end of April 2028. Regarding elections it's also an unknown except of course for by-elections. So far as you all know this May's County elections are cancelled so we await to see what Government will do in 2026 when the Mayoral elections will take place. Of course, then there will be the Unitary elections in 2027 when County/Borough/Districts will not be the shadow authorities but for the final year up to May 2028 we will become the shadow authorities. What all this will mean I will let you know in later months when we have a clearer idea.

Back to County work which of course carries on as normal with all our responsibilities being taken care of. First of all, I am happy to announce that the County is still supporting funding for the funding of Community food hubs in West Sussex. For those of you who don't know about them UK Harvest collects from such sources as Supermarkets that produce that they waste and for £5 anyone can attend their sessions and have their pick of the food on offer which consists of good fresh quality products. Your nearest hub is the Sylvia Beaufoy Centre on the Midhurst Road in Petworth. You will need to check what date they are there and as I said anyone can use this service just turn up and for £5 get your choice from what's on offer. I recommend using them.

The adult learning team have had success helping people with their numeracy skills which must be an advantage.

A recent contract has been signed with the Service that enables residents to live independently for long in their own homes. This helps the elderly and includes those with learning disabilities or mental health needs as well as older people.

Finally in the past I have assured you all that our Children's Services have improved out of all recognition in the last few years including the improvements to our Children's homes. Our initiative 'Children's Homes Collaborative Partnerships' at the MJ Achievements Awards 2025 has been shortlisted as a finalist

Contact details: janet.duncton@westsussex.gov.uk or mobile 07979 152898

The Clerk asked Janet about the procedure for erecting a concealed entrance sign by Chidfield Barns. She said she would look into it.

County Councillor Janet Duncton left the meeting at 8.20pm

District Councillors Evans and Toddhunter had sent through a written report as follows:

Local Updates

Lagoon 3 Crouchlands Farm – Gareth and I were recently alerted to a potential leak of the digestate lagoon at Crouchlands Farm. We are able to confirm that there was no leak at the lagoon on this occasion and that attendees from Chichester District Council, the Environment Agency and West Sussex Fire and Rescue were on site as part of the routine multi-agency monitoring visits. CDC Planning Enforcement continues to take steps to ensure the landowner complies with the Enforcement Notice to empty and remove the lagoon. At this stage we can share that test results on the contents are awaited before the Environment Agency can safely assess the landowner's request to spread it to land. CDC retains the right to take further legal action or seek prosecution against the landowner should this not be forthcoming.

Unauthorised works in Northchapel / Lurgashall – this was discussed earlier in public question time.

CDC Wide Updates

Local Plan - The Local Plan process is continuing and the 'main modifications' following the Inspectors' examination are now out for public consultation until 29th May. More details can be found here:

<https://www.chichester.gov.uk/main-modifications-consultation>

Chichester District Council Grants Programme - The council was pleased to be able to increase the amount of funding available through the discretionary grants programme for this financial year and agreed three new funding priorities. A pot of £350,000 is available for this year. The first closing date for applications over £2,000 will be Friday 16 May (there will be three further rounds during the year). Applications must be from organisations delivering projects or services meeting one of the Council's priorities (Economy, Improving Places & Spaces, Stronger Communities). Details of eligibility can be found here:

<https://www.chichester.gov.uk/grantprogramme>

Full Council Meeting – The next Full Council meeting will be on Tuesday 20th May. Members of the Public are welcome to attend or the livestream / recording can be watched via the Council's website.

Surgeries

Cllr. Gareth Evans runs regular surgeries across Loxwood Ward which are available for all residents to attend. If the suggested dates do not work then home visits and telephone/video calls are also available:

Saturday 24th May 12 – 2pm The Onslow, Loxwood

Saturday 7th June 12-2pm Kirdford Stores, Kirdford

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>

District Councillors Gareth Evans and Charles Todhunter left the meeting at 8.25pm

32/25 Working Party Reports

- **Allotments:** The Clerk reported all rents had been paid and there were now only two vacant half plots. A new gate post is required which Councillor Holden is kindly organising.
- **Village Green:** Councillor Green reported that School Sports Day is tomorrow and Stoolball starts on Monday 2nd June with a condensed season. The grounds contractors are now cutting around the pavilion as they no longer need to cut where the MUGA has been installed. It was suggested that wild flowers be planted where the bonfire goes after the event this year.
- **Highways including parking issues:** There was nothing to report.
- **Village Road Safety Project including speed reduction proposals and Speedwatch:** A parishioner enquired after the Road Safety Project and what was happening on the roads outside the village itself. Councillor Green explained that the Parish Council had employed a Traffic Consultant to help with this and he had advised not only on a 20mph zone in the Village Centre but speed reductions on the A283, Pipers Lane, Streels Lane and Hillgrove Lane. It is a case of getting more data to support any application and more help is required. The parishioner offered to help with A283 traffic monitoring and data collection to aid the project. The application for 20mph speed reduction on Pipers Lane has been passed to the WSCC TRO team to arrange the consultation. Once dates are released, the Clerk will inform Councillors.

Update: The Public Consultation dates are 12th June – 3rd July 2025

[Chichester - Live TRO consultations - West Sussex County Council](#)

- **Play Area:** Councillor Fraser continues to check the play area equipment and stated it needs a spruce up. She will look into applying for the CDC grant for funding. The annual ROSPA inspection is due to take place next month.
- **Footpaths, Hedges and Rights of Way:** The Clerk had finally found a contractor to empty the dog litter bin on the footpath leading from Valentines Lea to the main road. Thanks were given to Councillor Holden for doing the collection in the interim.
- **Planning:** Councillor Baker said there were no outstanding planning applications to be discussed tonight. An appeal had been made to the Secretary of State against the refusal to grant planning consent SDNP/24/04778/HOUS and SDNP/24/04779/LIS. There had been no planning applications discussed since March's meeting. Since the last meeting, Chichester District Council/South Downs National Park has made the following decisions on/given advice on:

SDNP/25/00910/DCOND

Land East of Northchapel Village Hall Pipers Lane Northchapel West Sussex

Discharge of conditions 3 (Surface) 4 (Surface Water Drainage) 5 (DDA) 6 (Fencing) 13 (CEMP) 14 (Bird Box) and 15 (Bat Box) to planning permission SDNP/23/01113/FUL

Decision: Approved

SDNP/25/01432/DCOND

The Coach House Fisher Street Northchapel West Sussex GU28 9EJ

Discharge of conditions 2 (materials) 3 (windows) 7 (bird box) and 8 (hedgehogs) from planning permission SDNP/24/03483/CND

Decision: Approved

- **Village Hall:** Councillor Holden said there was nothing to report. Councillor Green enquired whether the MUGA could use the Village Hall's electricity for the floodlighting but isolate its usage with a separate meter. It was suggested that an electronic booking system be set up for both the MUGA and Village Hall hire/rental to reduce administration for individuals.
- **Housing:** Councillor Holden reported there are currently three vacant properties, two 1-bed flats in St Michaels Close and one in Valentines Lea.
- **Winter Plan:** There was nothing to report.
- **Northchapel Youth Club:** See the APM minutes for an update.
- **Multi-use Games Arena (MUGA) project:** Councillor Green said the MUGA had now been installed but explained there had been an additional £28,000 of extra costs for groundworks. Some of this will be covered from claiming back gift aid and the rest will be paid for by donations or membership costs.

33/25 Land North of Blind Lane (SDNP/25/00168/OPDEV)

This was discussed under public question time at the very beginning of the meeting.

34/25 Seaford College Community Day

It was agreed that the Pavilion and the School could both utilise help with general tidying, weeding, strimming and painting. The Clerk to feed back so the organisers can do risk assessments for the students involved.

35/25 Financial Matters

- The Council's current financial position @ £35,746 was noted.
- The Bank reconciliation as at 15th May 2025 (Appendix 4) was noted.
- The schedule of accounts submitted for payment at Appendix 5 was noted. The following payments were authorised for payment; WSCC (Clerk's April Salary) @ £643, Mrs Jean Huggett (Internal Audit 2024/25) @ £100, Mrs Helen Cruikshank (Clerk's General Exps plus share of new laptop) @ £491.34, Business Stream (Allotment water) @ £45 and Zurich Municipal (Annual Insurance renewal 2025/26) @ £806.
- The Budget Monitoring sheet as at 15th May 2025 (Appendix 6) was noted.

- The Clerk had previously distributed the following documents:

- The Internal Audit report 2024/25
- Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25
- Explanation of Variances
- Bank Reconciliation as at y/e 31st March 2025
- Income & Expenditure sheet 2024/25
- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights

All these documents will be uploaded onto the website. All legal information will be displayed on the notice board.

The Parish Council's 2024/25 financial year started with an opening balance of £32,495. During the year, the Parish Council received an income of £153,146. This consisted of the precept at £30,000, allotment rents, grants, bank interest, the VAT return and the donation from the Sports Club for the MUGA. The Parish Council spent £173,398 during the past financial year. This consisted of costs to maintain the Village Green plus tree-works around the village, grass cutting at the Churchyard, hedge cutting at the Allotments, bin emptying around the village, Clerk's Salary, Insurance, General Admin plus grants and donations of £6,502 for the year.

This leaves a closing balance as at 31st March 2025 of £12,243 which is low but at that point, we were still awaiting a VAT which we received at the beginning of April (£16,384) which added to the balance shows the Parish Council accounts are in a healthy but not excessive state at year end which with an explanation should keep the external auditors happy. The internal audit has been carried out by Mrs Jean Huggett and she agreed that all internal control objectives have been carried out throughout the year raising no concerns.

Swimming pool loan stands at £1,000 as at 31st March 2025 and the o/s PWLB is £19,030. The original was £40,000 over 25 years in 2008 for the Village Hall refurbishment.

Councillors considered the Accounts for 2024/25, the AGAR 2024/25 including section 1: The Annual Governance Statement questions and section 2: The Accounting Statement figures.

35/25 sub item 1 Section 1: Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 were duly proposed, seconded and approved, then signed by the Chair.

35/25 sub item 2 Section 2: Accounting Statements 2024/25 were duly proposed, seconded and approved, then signed by the Chair.

36/25 Reports back from meetings attended by Councillors

There had been no external meetings or training attended by Councillors since the last meeting.

Village Event dates:

Songs of Praise – Sunday 1st June

Northchapel 5K – Saturday 14th June at 11am

Celebrating Love & Community– Thursday 19th June at 6.30pm at St Michaels Church

Northchapel Village Fair - Saturday 5th July at 2pm

37/25 Clerks Report including correspondence

The Clerk reported that there are Parish Planning training sessions at East Pallant House Wednesday 18th or 23rd June, 5-7pm.

The Clerk had received a call from a Hyde Housing officer who during his inspections thought the grass areas in Valentines Lea and Luffs Meadow needed some attention. Wooden posts are being erected around the

grassed area in Valentines Lea and the grass is being redone on the corner. Hyde's Project and Neighbourhood team want to get involved as part of their community-based work. Councillor Holden to liaise and discuss plans with Hyde.

38/25 Items to be included on the next agenda

Please inform the Clerk of any items to go on the agenda by Thursday 10th July 2025

39/25 Date of next meeting

Thursday 17th July 2025 at 8pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.15pm

Signed

Date