



NORTHCHAPEL PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of a meeting held at the Village Hall on Thursday 5th March 2026 at 8pm

Present: Councillors Mr Alex Baker, Mrs Jules Fraser, Miss Laura Green, Mrs Sharon Holden (Chair), Mr Melvin Greet and Mr Russell Lane

In attendance: District Councillor Charles Toddhunter
Parish Clerk, Mrs Helen Cruikshank
Two SSE representatives

There was one member of the public in attendance.

The Chair thanked SSE for coming to talk about the recent works and power cuts in the parish.

Andy Griffiths, SSE Manager (SE Region) spoke about the recent fault in the village which was caused by a tree falling on a line on private land one evening. Given the lateness of the fault, it was decided to wait until the next day for repair due to safety reasons. Communication was good and the village WhatsApp group chat an invaluable tool getting the word out. The main problem in the past has been Pipers Lane down towards Mitchell Park Farm due to the number of trees. SSE liaised with Neil Humphries, the head forester at The Leconfield Estates and tree works were carried out with generators being used to provide household's electricity for a week.

Much has improved since the storms of 2013 with a lot of automation including larger trip type switches implemented. The network is now able to be broken up so the whole village is not always affected if a tree falls or a pheasant flies into a line at one end of the village. SSE are spending money on improving the network and responding better to call outs and issues. There has been a significant amount of investment in the area.

SSE Liaison Officer spoke about its Priority Services register and encouraged vulnerable and elderly residents to sign up. It offers free extra support during power cuts. Phone 0800 294 3259 04
www.ssen.co.uk/priorityservices to find out more. There is a Community Fund of £3m available for parishes to apply for money to help build resilience in villages.

Reminder the emergency number for power cuts is 105 or use the SSE Power Track mobile app.

The SSE representatives left the meeting at 8.15pm.

A member of the public raised concern about a number of cars illegally parked in Luffs Meadow and St Michaels Close and the state of the footpath leading from Luffs Meadow to the main road. The Clerk to report to the Police, Hyde and WSCC.

PARISH COUNCIL BUSINESS

13/26 Apologies for absence: Apologies were received and accepted from Parish Councillors Daphne Trussler and John Sochovsky. Also from District Councillor Gareth Evans and County Councillor Janet Duncton.

14/26 Declarations of Interest: Councillor Green declared an interest in agenda item 19/26 Working Party Reports/MUGA as secretary of the Sports Club.

15/26 Co-option of Councillor: There was no Co-option. A reminder to be submitted about the vacancy in the next edition of the Parish Magazine.

16/26 Minutes: The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 16th January 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed.

17/26 Reports from the Chichester District and West Sussex County Councillors

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

At the moment it gets difficult to give lots of news. Yes, of course everything we should be doing as a County is continuing but the uncertainty over our future still sits in the background. That said we will continue to deliver our services as always. WSCC Highways are working 24/7 because of the terrible weather that has caused many problems, not only on the roads and drains but on some of the rights of way as well. They are, I can assure you, working flat out. So here are just a few things that have been happening.

I'll start with Trading Standards. I do give up dates as to the happenings in this department and believe me they do their best to keep us safe from unscrupulous trades people, food outlets and scams etc. Their biggest success recently was the prosecution at Portsmouth Crown Court of a retailer in Bognor who was supplying illegal tobacco and vapes and can you believe storing them in orange juice cartons. I believe this is not a first event and he was found guilty and charged £105,000. Let's hope it's taught him a lesson and perhaps others who may be trying the same scam pause to think about what they are doing.

A new length of the King Charles III Coastal Path is being carried out by West Sussex in agreement with the other local authorities from Southampton. This will be a national long-distance trail and with more walking in the open air it should make for a lovely walk and on a sunny day what could be nicer than walking along the coast.

The budget will be finalised at this month's County Council meeting and it has been agreed by the Cabinet. No surprise to most of you that it is likely to be 4.99% again and this does give us a balanced budget without cutting our services. All in all we spend somewhere in the region of £2.3billion so it's no mean sum.

You may have heard that Councils are looking at closing libraries in parts of the country. Well West Sussex isn't and long may this be so. You will all know that although we don't want libraries closed, most do have other activities in them as shared space. For instance in Petworth Library there is not only small groups for several age groups but Petworth Town Council has all its business run from the library so the Clerk also gets his office there and a small space for anyone wanting a private chat. It's working well, all the books are on movable shelving so when it's Council meetings they just have to be rolled away and the tables and chairs put in their place.

Something you have already been told about is that the District and Borough Councils are starting to collect food waste and that is because we now have the special facility to accept it. Chichester, I believe starts in May. When collected county take it to an anaerobic digestion plant near Horsham where it is turned into fertilizer for crops and energy for power.

The normal plea. We still need retained Fire and Rescue recruits and a desperate need for Foster Parents. If you know anyone that would be interested in either of those, please ask them to look on the WSCC website. The Cabinet member for Children and Education is taking part in a 10K run with other members of the Fostering team to try and raise awareness of the need.

There is nothing I can say about the future of devolved Government except to say that the Government have confirmed the new strategic authority for East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove and our Cabinet have approved the recommendation from Government. WSCC elections are now going ahead in May.

OFSTED have sent in their report and quite honestly, it's too good not to let you all know. Orchard House has received an outstanding qualification from OFSTED. Children there thrive in the environment, The Staff

demonstrate exceptional skill, compassion and commitment, and safeguarding. Leadership is dynamic and forward thinking.

As ever my email is janet.duncion@westsussex.gov.uk or mobile 07979 152898

District Councillor Charles Toddhunter reported on the following:

Local Updates

Wisborough Green / Loxwood Solar Farm – Following referral of this application to the Secretary of State, after the CDC Planning Committee had resolved to approve it, the Secretary of State has declined to call the application in and make the decision himself. Officers are now considering whether there has been a ‘material change of circumstances’ since the Committee considered the application and whether it can be referred back to them under the Council’s constitution.

Foxbridge Golf Club – The application for the wellbeing and leisure development at the former Foxbridge Golf Club is still expected to be considered by the Planning Committee in April at the earliest. This is due to the length of time that the application has been live, and the fact that several consultation responses could have been considered to be out of date. We continue to support the Parish Councils in opposing this application, which is not suitable for the area and our infrastructure, and in our opinion does not meet the exceptional circumstances tests.

Registered Provider Tenants – We continue to regularly support tenants of CDC’s registered providers (Hyde Housing, Stonewater, Clarion etc.) with issues that have not been solved by tenants contacting the provider directly. If you have difficulties that you have been struggling to resolve, please get in touch and we will try to help.

Local Government Reorganisation – Following the reversal of the Government’s decision to postpone the West Sussex County Council elections in May, due to Local Government Reorganisation, these elections will now be going ahead. We expect to hear the outcome of whether West Sussex will be split into one or two unitary authorities in mid-March and will report this in our next update.

CDC Wide Updates

Leisure Facilities Upgrades - CDC have recently awarded the contract for our leisure centres (in Midhurst, Chichester & Southbourne) to More Leisure Community Trust, who will take over from Everyone Active on 1st May. This transition includes £8 million worth of investment to extensively upgrade all three centres.

Petworth Pump Track – Planning permission has been granted for a new Pump Track in Petworth, with the project being led by Petworth Town Council. Pump tracks are purpose built for cycling, with banked turns and features allowing riders to ‘pump’ instead of pedalling. We look forward to reporting when the track opens!

Business Insight Survey – CDC have launched a survey that asks businesses about the local economic conditions they operate in, the opportunities for growth and development, and the challenges they face. It also seeks to understand premises demand, future growth, ambitions, and explores the impacts of climate change on businesses and their journey towards achieving net zero. The survey can be completed here:

<https://app.snapsea.io/p/c/chichester/business-survey/participate>

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 from 12pm-2pm:

- Saturday 7th March: Wisborough Green (Old Mill Café)

If these dates and times do not suit it is also possible to arrange home visits, telephone calls or zoom meetings.

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 Councillor Charles Todhunter will get a status update on the site on Blind Lane.

18/26 Police report

PCSO Matt Isles had sent through the following statistics following the last meeting. Since 1st September 2025 and 4th February 2026, there have been 35 incidents. 6 of those were reports of ASB, 2 of criminal damage, 2 are theft and 25 are 'other'. This can include welfare concerns, road related matters or domestics for example. Comparing this to the same period a year ago, that's +3 reports.

PCSO Isles is now running monthly drop-in sessions at the Village Hall for residents to pop in and ask questions. Unfortunately February's session had to be cancelled due to an injury but March's will go ahead on Monday 23rd March at the Village Hall between 11am and midday.

19/26 Working Party Reports

- **Allotments:** The Clerk will be meeting with the allotment manager to organise this season's invoices.
- **Village Green:** Councillor Green confirmed the pitch had been scarified by the Sports Club. All members agreed the current grass contractor continue for 2026/27.
- **Highways including parking issues:** Councillors reported first hand the dangerous parking of the Seaford College coach in the mornings, pulling up right on the junction of Pipers Lane and the main road. The Clerk to contact the school transport services manager. The problem with the drain cover outside Hillgrove Stud Farm needs attention again. Clerk to report to WSCC Highways and to County Councillor Janet Duncton to escalate.
- **Village Road Safety Project including speed reduction proposals and Speedwatch:** Councillors Green, Lane and Sochovsky had met to discuss the Village Gateway signs. Councillors Lane and Sochovsky are going to decide on locations along with a parishioner who has kindly offered to help. They are looking at getting costs for a better design. It is hoped an application for a speed reduction will be submitted via the Community Highway Scheme this year. The Clerk to write to MP Andrew Griffith and ask whether WSCC are going to follow Surrey CC and install average speed cameras on the A283 between the County border and Petworth. Speedwatch sessions will start again shortly.
- **Play Area:** Councillor Fraser said the OXO play panel needs replacing. She will contact Sam Lee at CDC for funding and liaise with the Clerk to ascertain how much money the Parish Council has in its budget to match fund.
- **Footpaths, Hedges and Rights of Ways:** The Clerk to report the state of the footpath between Luffs Meadow and Valentines Lea to Hyde and WSCC.
- **Planning:** Councillor Baker reported all was up to date. The following planning applications have been discussed since January's meeting:

SDNP/26/00534/TCA

Mulberry House A283 Luffs Meadow To Pipers Lane Northchapel West Sussex GU28 9HP

Notification of intention to fell 1 no. Horse Chestnut tree. Pollard approx. 4m on 1 no. Maple tree.

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

SDNP/26/00180/CEP

Broadlands Cottage Cripplecrouch Hill Northchapel West Sussex GU8 4SU

Consultation on Environmental Permit Application - EPR/YP3522LK/A001

Decision: EA Consultation on Env Permit Response

SDNP/25/03431/HOUS and SDNP/25/0342/LIS

Gastons Farm Shillinglee Road Shillinglee Northchapel West Sussex GU8 4SX

Internal and external alterations including replacement porches, rear extension and enhancements to fenestration.

Decision: Approved

- **Village Hall:** Councillor Holden said there was nothing to report although the key was missing from the key safe!
- **Housing:** Councillor Holden said there was nothing to currently report. The Clerk to ask Hyde for an update on the plans for the green space in Valentines Lea and the rules regarding the selling of cars on the highway.
- **Winter Plan:** There was nothing to report.
- **Northchapel Youth Club:** Councillor Green said Youth Club was quiet but once the lighter evenings arrive, numbers will increase. There are two lovely new volunteers which is a huge help.
- **Multi Use Games Arena (MUGA):** Councillor Green reported that the online booking system is work in progress. She is currently looking after bookings herself and the MUGA is being used by clubs and families. Children parties are utilising the arena alongside the hire of the Village Hall which is great news. The next stage is to get a tennis net and somewhere to store this when not in use. Lighting will then follow with a discussion on electricity needed with the Village Hall Management Committee.

20/26 Parish Plan/Action Plan update

The Clerk had distributed Councillor Fraser's updated documents as at Appendix 2a and 2b. Councillors thanked Councillor Fraser for all her hard work updating the Parish Plan and Action Plan. It is a useful and thorough document. The Clerk to upload onto the website updating the Road Safety items.

21/26 Annual Parish Meeting (APM) 2026

It was agreed to have the APM at 7.30pm prior to the Annual Parish Council meeting on Thursday 21st May. The Clerk to invite local organisations along to give annual updates.

22/26 Financial Matters

- The Council's current financial position @ £27,544 was noted.
- The Bank reconciliation as at 25th February 2026 (Appendix 3) was noted.
- The schedule of accounts submitted for payment at Appendix 4 was noted and payments were approved for Core Synergy (Website hosting) @ £36 and WSCC (Clerk's January 2026 Salary) @ £664.
- The Budget Monitoring sheet as at 25th February 2026 (Appendix 5) was noted.

23/26 Reports back from meetings attended by Councillors

Councillors had not attended any external meetings since the last meeting.

24/26 Clerks Report including correspondence

The Clerk had attended the recent All Parishes meeting. She will add the latest information onto the Village Notices WhatsApp group chat regarding Food Waste collections, SSE priority services, PCSO sessions and other important matters.

25/26 Items to be included on the next agenda

Please inform the Clerk of any items to go on the agenda by Thursday 14th May 2026

26/26 Date of next meeting

Thursday 21st May 2026 at 8pm.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45pm