

MINUTES OF THE NORTHCHAPEL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held on Thursday 21st May 2026 At Northchapel Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present from the Parish Council: Mr Alex Baker, Mrs Jules Fraser, Mrs Sharon Holden, Mr Russell Lane and Mrs Daphne Trussler.

Also present: One member of the public
Mrs Helen Cruikshank (Clerk)

The Chairman welcomed all to the 2026 Annual Parish Meeting (APM).

1. Apologies for absence: Parish Councillors Laura Green (also as Sports Club secretary) and Melvin Greet. Clifford Bell (Churchyard), Jane Dadswell (Village Hall), Simon & Karen Arnold (Parish News), Deborah Coggin (Head teacher, Northchapel Primary School)

2. Minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting: The minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 22nd May were approved and signed as a correct record.

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

The Parish Council continues to support many local organisations giving grants or donations to Northchapel Primary School, Village Hall, Village Lunch Club, Petworth Cottage Hospital, Royal British Legion, Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance, Chiddingfold Surgery, 4Sight, Chichester Food Bank 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. Although we welcomed Russell to our team, we still 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. 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

The youth club continues to provide an important safe and welcoming space for local young people to meet socially, build confidence and develop positive friendships.

Our current cohort brings together children attending a range of different secondary schools, helping to maintain friendships and strengthen connections within the village community. Regular sessions help reduce isolation in our rural area and encourage teamwork, communication and community involvement. We are grateful to the new volunteers who have recently become involved with the youth club. With the lighter evenings, the young people are enjoying spending more time outdoors and are particularly enjoying organised games on the MUGA. The continued funding of the village hall hire enables us to offer consistent activities that support young people's wellbeing, confidence and sense of belonging.

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

The parochial church council is very grateful for the sustained support of the Parish in keeping the churchyard regularly mown. This has maintained access and enabled use of the lower part of the land for interments. The help from volunteers with clearance of areas of overgrown land has also been beneficial. We hope this partnership can be continued.

6. School report – Head teacher, Deborah Coggin

I am pleased to provide an update on recent developments at Northchapel Primary School

Pupil Numbers and Future Growth

Our pupil numbers have remained steady and continue to show encouraging growth.

In **September 2025**, we began the academic year with **51 pupils**. As of today, we have **57 pupils** on roll. Based on confirmed interest and projected admissions, we expect to reach approximately **67 pupils by September 2026**. This increase is excellent news for the long-term sustainability of the school and reflects growing confidence in the provision we offer. However, this anticipated growth also requires careful planning, particularly with our **limited funding and small-school budget constraints**. We will continue to review staffing, space, and resources to ensure we maintain high-quality provision as numbers rise.

Outcomes and Curriculum Focus

Last year's **Year 6 outcomes** showed **excellent progress** overall and represented a **significant improvement on the previous year**. As a small school, our data can vary depending on the cohort, and these results reflected the strengths and hard work of that group of pupils.

However, our **Year 1 Phonics outcomes took a substantial dip** last year. In response, **phonics has been a whole-school priority** this year. Staff training, additional interventions, and focused teaching strategies have been put in place to ensure that our current **Year 1 and Year 2 pupils make stronger progress** and are well-positioned to meet the expected standard.

Enriched learning

The children have continued to enjoy an amazing enhanced offer of learning through termly Forest School; Working with the Sussex Arts Council; Author visits; Athlete visits and workshops; Book week and books for breakfasts with parents invited; School trips – Residential to Oxford last summer – it's a school designed trip and the children and staff love the experience it brings. We have continued our whole school once a year trip to London to broaden cultural capital with our village children. We have run clubs for Gymnastics, performing Arts, football, Karate and our Dance club performed at Midhurst Rother College for our Rother Valley Arts Festival.

Staffing & Leadership Updates

SENCo Role

There have been important changes in our Special Educational Needs Coordination (SENCo) team:

Mrs Edwards, our long-standing SENCo, **retired at Christmas**. Since January, **Ms Coggin** has overseen the SENCo responsibilities on an interim basis and has provided valuable continuity for families and staff. This term, we are delighted to welcome **Mrs Fox**, an experienced and highly capable SENCo, who is now taking on the role permanently. We are confident that Mrs Fox's expertise will strengthen our provision for pupils with additional needs.

Dragonfly Class

In **Dragonfly Class**, we have also experienced a staffing change:

We said farewell to **Ms Cousens at Easter**, and we thank her for her hard work and commitment to the children. A supply teacher is currently in place to ensure stability for the class. **Miss Ranger** will take up the permanent teaching post in **June**, bringing enthusiasm and expertise to the team. As from the summer term, Mrs Lynda Bell steps up as Chair of Governors and is deputized by Mrs Vicky Dickins. Mr Andy James steps down from CoG role, but will still help lead the finance and facilities committee, we thank him for taking on the reigns for the last few years.

Premises and Drainage Works

Further works have been carried out on the school site this year to address ongoing drainage issues.

Unfortunately, we experienced another period of **severe flooding**, which once again affected our **Scola**

block. Following this, significant repairs and improvements were undertaken, including fixing a **broken drain** and enhancing the overall drainage system on that part of the site. All works have now been completed, and we are optimistic that these improvements will provide a much more effective defence against the increasingly **torrential rainfall** we are experiencing. We will continue to monitor the situation closely during adverse weather, but early indications are promising. Our next phase also includes looking to secure the school site following a spate of break-ins over the winter period. We are currently seeking quotes for new fencing and electronic gate release for out of hours security.

Roofing on the Main School Building

Our attention now turns to the **roofing on the main school building**, where previous repairs have now reached the end of their effectiveness. Unfortunately, **water ingress has begun to impact the school once again**, creating both disruption and concern as we move into wetter months. We are currently reviewing the extent of the deterioration and exploring the most cost-effective options for repair or replacement. Given ongoing budget constraints, this will require careful planning and may involve seeking external support or phased work to manage costs while ensuring the building remains safe and functional.

Community

Our School Council has taken on the Sustainability role this year and have been raising awareness about our school environment. This year it is led by our sustainability lead Mrs Nikki Moore. The community have been working hard to clean up the pool ready for another summer of swimming and we have a new swim teacher in place to support years R-6 in swimming. This is an amazing aspect to still be able to offer all of our pupils year on year. We hope the community enjoys the benefits from using it over the summer holidays for pleasure and swimming lesson, via our swim teacher Rebecca Batten. We have been supported by many community events over the last year, fun runs, fairs, cake sales and the children continue to support village lunches, including Northchapel at Christmas time. Mrs James is timetabled to take her performing Arts Club down to a village lunch again this month.

Playground Resources and Community Support

We are delighted to share that our new playground resources are now installed and being enjoyed daily by the children. The **next phase is a new climaround begins on the 18th May**, to replace the old damaged and degraded one. Together with grants, community funds raised by our PTA. Thank you to the Parish for their support earlier in the year with the fencing to the Church glebe area. It has really helped with safeguarding our children and school environment.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to **Northchapel Parish Council** for their generous support in helping us provide a maths app to help the children consolidate learning. Their contribution has made a meaningful difference to the children's learning experience.

7. Village Hall report: Jane Dadswell

The Hall has had quite a good year, with the lottery, lunch club, Pilates and Quiz evening {which was a huge success} continuing to provide excellent sources of revenue. General hire (bookings & functions) also did very well. The financial results for the year 2025/2026 show a deficit of £2,112. This is due to the purchase of a new floor cleaner at a cost of £2,608. We continue to keep on top of repairs and maintenance, including repairs to the car park costing £1,482 to which the Parish Council made a most generous donation. This however was booked in the previous year's accounts. We were also very grateful to receive donations from the, Village Fayre and the Bonfire committee which are included in the current year's accounts. Repairs and maintenance are our main ongoing issue and we are always looking for the most cost-effective options. The Car Park continues to be a problem with yet more potholes appearing due to the very wet winter. We may need to consider additional drainage in the future.

8. Sports Club: Laura Green (Secretary)

The Sports Club successfully secured funding for and delivered the new MUGA over the last year and is now working towards the next phase of the project — raising approximately £20–25k for floodlighting. We are also awaiting installation of the tennis net, funded through two generous recent donations. It has been encouraging to see a strong uptake in both monthly and annual MUGA memberships from village families, alongside regular use from people outside the village. During the winter, three youth football teams from neighbouring villages hired the MUGA for matches and training when their own grounds became unplayable due to the weather. If floodlighting can be secured, several teams have indicated they would commit to regular winter training bookings, creating valuable ongoing income for the Sports Club. Although the village senior football team sadly had to disband this season due to fixture backlogs caused by poor weather, discussions are now underway with Petworth Football Club regarding the use of Northchapel as a home ground for one or two of their older junior teams next season, which would generate further income for the club. There is also potential interest in winter MUGA hire should the floodlighting project proceed. We are also looking forward to stoolball returning to the Green in the coming weeks.

Thank you to the Parish Council for its continued support of the MUGA project. It is already proving to be a fantastic facility for the village and wider community.

9. Parish News – Simon Arnold

The Northchapel Parish Magazine serves as a vital monthly publication, reflecting the rich tapestry of life in our village and highlighting upcoming events. Each edition provides residents with important insights into local activities, announcements, and opportunities for engagement. Every month, we print 470 copies of the magazine, which are distributed free of charge throughout the villages of Northchapel and Ebernoe. This initiative helps ensure that all members of our community stay informed and fosters a strong sense of togetherness.

Our advertising base remains relatively stable; while we occasionally lose some advertisers, we are continually successful in attracting new businesses. The editor, Simon, actively engages with a variety of companies and small businesses in the broader local area, promoting the benefits of advertising in our magazine. To enhance the richness of our content, we wholeheartedly welcome more submissions from community members. Our diverse community is filled with interesting stories and activities, and we believe that contributions from various residents could significantly broaden the appeal of the magazine. The more we receive, the merrier! By showcasing a wider range of perspectives and experiences, we can create a more engaging and dynamic publication for our readers every month.

While many contributors consistently meet their submission deadlines, thank you, it would be greatly beneficial for all to adhere to these timelines. Late submissions, especially those received late on a Sunday evening as we finalise the magazine, can present challenges for the editorial team. It is essential for contributors to understand the magazine's production constraints. Once the magazine is ready for print, adding additional content can be quite difficult due to the nature of magazine printing. If only one page side needs to be included, a minimum of four additional page sides must be added, as we cannot simply insert a single page side. Conversely, if a single page side needs to be removed, four pages must be discarded, which impacts the publication's layout and overall content.

In conclusion, the Northchapel Parish Magazine plays an essential role in connecting our community and conveying important information. By encouraging timely submissions and a broader array of contributions from residents, we can continue to deliver a more engaging and well-rounded magazine each month. We look forward to celebrating the diverse voices and activities that make our community so special! Thank You!

10. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

Village Speed Project update – Laura Green

The Community speedwatch group have been very committed in holding sessions over the last year. As a parish council we should make every effort we can to submit an application before the 31st July deadline for a TRO to be considered in the 27/28 budget. If we don't do this then we won't be considered for another whole year. It would be great if a few of us could commit to the work needed for that to get something in. I definitely won't have capacity to do this on my own.

The meeting was closed at 7.47pm

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