



MINUTES OF A PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

held on Wednesday, 26th March, 2025 in Stedham Memorial Hall, commencing at 18:00 hrs

Members present: Dave Dawtrey Dominic Ferguson, Kathryn MacKellar, Max Maharajh, Neil Ryder

Also attending: Tim O’Kelly (CDC), Veronica Carter

1. Apologies: Simon Southern

2. Disclosure of Interests: None

3. Public input: None

4. Reports from district and county councillors: copies attached to minutes on website.

TO’K gave an update on CDC thinking about unitary authorities but various ideas are still under discussion.

5. Previous minutes: items arising were all on the agenda and the minutes from 22nd January were approved.

6. Community association charity

- a. The “Trotton Area Support Community association” (TASC) had been set up temporarily as an unregulated charity. A bank account and card-reader account had been opened and a website was under development, but the public launch had been delayed by unexpected resistance from the local joint church council¹ (JCC) . . .
- b. Following a letter from the JCC in January, there has been ongoing correspondence and a meeting involving the JCC, the parish council, and the co-chairs of the events committee regarding the organisation of the fete and its proceeds. This led to concerns across the board. However, a more recent discussion was encouraging, and a further meeting is planned for early April, with hopes that this will help ensure the fete can go ahead as planned

7. Finance

a. Current year: Based on updated budget reports and bank statements, members agreed:

- CIL spending: The previously-agreed purchase of 5 grit bins for up to £2,000 from CIL funds should be delayed until the Autumn, when WSCC would deliver the grit and make them harder to remove.
- Churchyard maintenance: work had been delayed and the agreed money not spent, so it was agreed that the remaining £585 should be transferred to TASC before 31st March (PC year-end) to be available for the work to be caught up.
- Community fund: The unspent £1,000 from the current year’s budget was to be transferred to TASC
- VE80 grant: As agreed, 2 remembrance “Tommys” had been bought and would be reimbursed by CDC

b. Revised budget for 2025 – 26: The suggested budget was approved with the following notes:

- Wages: As he does not wish to be paid for his work as clerk, NR had always urged the PC to set aside a notional amount, which had then been used to pay for churchyard maintenance. However, he felt the amount had become out of date so he had looked up what local councils were paying their clerks, and he shared the figures shown in the adjacent table. Based on the per-capita rate paid by the two smallest PC – ie £12.03 – it was agreed that the rate should increase to £2,000 p.a. and that this should be donated to TASC.

	Staff costs	Population	Per person	Average
Rogate	£18,995.00	832	£22.83	£23.43
Harting	£19,036.00	792	£24.04	
Milland	£7,353.00	524	£14.03	£12.80
Stedham	£5,323.00	460	£11.57	
Elsted	£2,316.00	186	£12.45	£12.03
Bpton	£1,868.00	161	£11.60	
Average	£9,148.50	493	£18.58	£18.58
Trotton	£1,984.46	165 (at lowest average - ie £12.03)		

Note 1: staff costs (inc pension, NI, etc) are from annual returns
Note 2: Populations are from Chichester DC tax base

- Dues & subs: Members agreed that the Stedham Hall was highly suitable for PC meetings and that NR should book the hall for the rest of the year at £25 per meeting.

- Reserves: on the assumptions that the whole CIL fund is spent during the year and that the Op Watershed money is repaid to WSCC or used for another project, the PC’s reserves at the year-end (31st March 2026) should be £ 6,460.73

¹ The Joint Council for the church parishes of Rogate with Terwick and Trotton with Chithurst

8. PC membership / responsibilities
 - a. Vacancies: Whilst there had been a number of informal suggestions, there had been no formal nominations for the vacant positions on the parish council. It was agreed that potential members would be approached once the issues around the fete and the community association – and therefore PC workload - had been resolved.
 - b. Clerk role / workload: NR had warned members that he felt he was receiving insufficient response and support from other members and was being expected to organise too much and take too many decisions on his own. Members agreed to respond to all emails within 3 days if possible and to urgent messages within 24 hours, and to take a more active role in organising affairs within the own areas and to help more with decisions.
9. Devolution and local government reorganisation plans
 - a. Devolution: The government had launched a public consultation on the proposal to create a mayor-led strategic authority for the whole of Sussex. Members agreed that the PC had no specific stance on this but that NR should urge residents to have a say.
 - b. Local government reorganisation: Members agreed that the government proposals to merge district and county councils into unitary authorities could create a “democratic gap” between these higher authorities and the smaller rural parish councils. TO’K said some strategic authorities (eg S Yorkshire) had established local communities but members felt these could still be too remote from local parishes. It was agreed that NR should approach our neighbouring parishes to explore proposals such as creating a federation of our local group of rural parishes, which might share clerks and set up some joint committees, aiming to reduce duplicated work and increase our influence with the unitary body, but without losing local accountability.

Priority action team updates

10. Action team 1: Local environment
 - a. Litter: MM said he needed to recruit a few more members to his team but he said he would ask Carola Brown to organise a litter pick day asap
 - b. Conservation areas: MM agreed to approach someone (Fiona Robb?) to explore the suggestion of new conservation areas surrounding Chithurst bridge/church/manor/farm and Terwick Mill.
11. Action team 2: Community facilities / infrastructure
 - a. NR reported that his team meeting had been postponed to 7th April
 - b. WSCC was willing to consider an Op Watershed grant for the drain between Rother and Rectory Lanes (stage 1 of revised walkway project) but had referred NR to their contractor (Landbuild) for advice. NR to follow up.
 - c. Stagecoach Bus had said they were prepared at least to consider moving the bus stops from the bridge to the entrance of Trotton Farm
12. Action team 3: Community events & activities
 - a. Bonfire: Members reported that the meeting with local horse owners had been a success and that DD and Matt Ayling were looking into quieter fireworks – but were also still discussing sites with the Ball family
 - b. Fete: see para 6b above
 - c. Parish annual meeting: Members agreed this should replace the May First Friday on 2nd May and that the events committee should approach Aylings about a buffet in (and outside) their café. This could be paid for by TASC if bookings were taken in advance.
13. Action team 4: Community support
 - a. Midhurst Community Hub: NR had attended their bi-annual forum session and agreed to debrief DF
 - b. Grit bins: DD, DF and NR agreed to meet to discuss agreeing sites with neighbours and preparing the sites.
14. Action team 5: Housing and planning
 - a. Housing: NR felt there was little point pursuing the potential Aylings site until the government’s planning bill was passed / amended.
 - b. Planning applications:
 - SDNP/24/04914/LDP* (rooflights and shed at Nursery Cottages, Chithurst Lane) approved
 - SDNP/25/00046/LIS* (conversion of barn at Chithurst Farm) approved
15. Action team 6: sustainability & biodiversity
 - a. Himalayan Balsam: VC reported that she and NR had agreed to visit the Old Rectory with local rangers to assess the work required to clear the riverside
 - b. Sewage spills: NR had received an unsatisfactory reply from Southern Water regarding sewage spills and high phosphate readings from the Harting works. VC agreed to prepare a draft follow-up letter.
16. Information for councillors that are considered urgent or to be included on future agenda: None
17. Date of next meeting: 28th May 2025 (regular PC meeting)

Reference	Who	Action	By when
20240925-7e & f	MM	Discuss with team 1: popular paths, new conservation areas, identifying landowners	ASAP
20250326-6b	NR	Arrange meeting with Joint Church Council	8/9 April
20250326-7a	NR	Transfer funds to TASC	31 March
20250326-7b	NR	Book Stedham Hall for 2025-6 PC meetings	ASAP
20250326-9b	NR	Approach neighbour PCs re federating	ASAP
20250326-10a	MM	Arrange litter pick with Carola Brown	ASAP
20250326-10b	MM	Recruit team member to research new conservation areas	ASAP
20250326-11b & c	NR	Follow up with Landbuild and Stagecoach	ASAP
20250326-12a	DD	Follow up on quite fireworks / bonfire sites	ASAP
20250326-12c	SS	Arrange annual parish meeting at Aylings	ASAP
20250326-13b	DD, DF, NR	Meet to discuss grit bins	ASAP
20250326-13b	VC	Prepare draft letter to Southern Water / regulator	ASAP