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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Mannings Heath Village Hall on Wednesday 18th March 2026 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Cllrs D Cotton (Chairman), Cllr C Kenny (Vice Chairman), Cllr V Court, Cllr Rymarz, Cllr W Bayley, Cllr J Harris.

County Councillor Nigel Jupp

District Councillor Dennis Livingstone

Apologies: Cllr S Catterall, Cllr S Newell

Clerk: Lisa Wilcock.

There were 14 members of public.

Meeting commenced 1930hrs

0096-25/26 Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Councillors S Catterall and S Newell.

0097-25/26 Declarations of Interest

Cllr V Court declared an interest in item 16 as she volunteers at Copsale Hall.

0098-25/26 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced about the number of meetings both councillors and the Clerk were attending in the last month. These included updates meetings with HDC, HALC, WSALC as well as Carbon Busters, road reopening, community assets, potholes, bridleways, and footpaths.

The Chair noted to the Councillors that HDC will be conducting a Governance Review in the next few months that will give an opportunity for us and the public to voice how we are governed along with boundaries etc.

0099-25/26 Public Session

Before the public session the Chair addressed the fact that items in the public session can only be on items on the agenda. If a member of the public has something to raise, then they should contact the Clerk before the agenda is published to request an inclusion. This will then give councillors time to prepare for agenda items. Public should also note that this is a Parish Council meeting held in public and not a public meeting.

A member of the public raised concerns about unacceptable levels of flooding in Monks Gate, particularly on Brighton Road A281 near Bowood during periods of rain. It was reported that gullies and pipes are blocked, contributing to the issue. Frustration was expressed regarding the lack of response and guidance from WSCC, who were said to be denying responsibility.

Additional concerns included a sinkhole on Nuthurst Road and water shedding down the footpath by the pond.

Public expressed the ongoing issue of sewerage from manholes in properties along Pound Lane Mannings Heath. This was particularly worsened with the heavy rainfall.

The Clerk consulted with George Fort, WSCC Highways during the meeting and relevant points were raised and addressed. The Clerk will issue further follow up after the meeting.

A member of the public express their thanks in pushing to get the bus survey published and out to the Parish. They however expressed concern over whether it goes to every household and if it was inclusive in being able to be completed by the blind and parishioners that don't speak English. It was answered by the Council that the survey was being conducted by an external company, and any concerns should be dealt with by them, this is important for the integrity and impartiality of the survey.

A separate point was raised regarding the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) process, with concern that it may be lost if combined with Southwater's NP, despite being the first to reach the public referendum stage. It was also noted that volunteers are encouraged to come forward to assist the Parish Council.

0100-25/26 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The **minutes** of the Parish Council Meeting held on 18 February 2026 were **approved** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

0101-25/26 Finance

- a) The bank reconciliation for February 2026 was **approved**.
- b) Bank transactions for February 2026 were **approved**.
- c) The Budget monthly statement (Year-to-Date) was **noted**.
- d) The EMR report was **noted**.
- e) The schedule of payments for March 2026 was **approved**.
- f) It was **resolved** to instruct Mulberry to conduct Interim and Year-End Internal Audits for 2026/27.
- g) It was **noted** that a licence has been issued to the Millennium Group for use of the open space at Mannings Heath for an event.

0102-25/26 Reports from Other Authorities

- a) County Councillor Nigel Jupp provided a report.

The recent Southwater Parish Council annual budget meeting confirmed a proposed increase of 5% for FY 2026/27. This rise reflects 3% inflationary pressures alongside an additional 2% to meet growing demands within adult social care services.

A further £2.5 million grant has been secured to support increased expenditure on road maintenance for FY 2026/27. This funding is particularly important given the sustained pressures on the highways network, exacerbated by adverse weather conditions throughout the year.

Social Services continue to account for a significant proportion of council expenditure. Children's services operate on a 24/7 basis and involve increasingly complex cases, contributing to rising costs. A detailed report outlining these pressures is available online.

In response to local concerns, including those raised regarding Goldings Lane, additional inspections have been requested and are being carried out. Highway repairs have increased substantially, with approximately 46,000 issues currently being addressed compared to 38,000 in previous years. Additional repair crews have been deployed to manage this higher workload.

Pothole repairs remain a key issue. While a high volume of repairs is being completed—around 1,000 per week—there are ongoing concerns about durability, as some potholes reappear after initial repair. Quality control and monitoring processes are therefore under review. The average repair time is currently 16 days, with more complex cases on faster roads typically taking between 14 and 20 days.

In education, secondary school allocations have been successfully completed, with all children offered places within the local area. Notably, The Forest School (formerly an all-girls school) will transition to co-educational status from September. Across the county, there are 1,050 secondary school places available for new students, including approximately 140 surplus places, providing a reasonable level of capacity.

It is worth noting that traditional planning assumptions—such as one school place per year group for every 1,000 new homes—are becoming less reliable due to a declining birth rate, which is beginning to affect future demand projections.

b) District Councillor Dennis Livingstone provided a report.

Work on the Local Plan is progressing, with a meeting led by Jonathan Bore scheduled to take place at Albury House Council Offices. It is widely recognised that moving forward and finalising the Local Plan is essential to provide clarity and direction for future development across the district.

Council Tax for FY 2026/27 will see an increase of 2.94% for a Band D property. This remains within government thresholds while helping to sustain key local services.

Residents are reminded that the County Council elections will commence from 30 March, with polling day on 7 May 2026. All residents are encouraged to participate in the democratic process. It is also important that all candidates are treated with respect throughout the campaign period. Following this election cycle, there is an expectation of further elections in May next year, with members serving in position for a shorter interim period.

The rollout of the new food waste collection service is now underway in line with government legislation. While the service is live in many areas, Nuthurst has not yet received full implementation. Collection vehicles have been testing routes, and it is anticipated that most households will be covered by 31 March.

Concerns continue regarding storm water discharge in the Mannings Heath area. Reports indicate that sewage is being released under pressure during periods of heavy rainfall. Engagement with the district's stakeholder manager at Southern Water is ongoing to seek clarity, accountability, and improved communication. Residents have expressed frustration at the perceived lack of community engagement from Southern Water.

Correspondence from Southern Water has attributed recent discharges to high levels of rainfall and ground saturation. However, this explanation has not fully addressed local concerns, and further dialogue is being pursued to ensure that environmental standards are upheld and that residents receive timely and transparent updates.

It was noted again, as the Chair had already announced, about the Governance Review being undertaken by HDC.

0103-25/26 Bus Survey

It was noted that the survey will be distributed both online and via *Link Magazine* in April 2026. The results will be compiled by AiRS and subsequently reported back to Full Council. The Chair expressed thanks to *Link Magazine* for their support, confirmed that the magazine is delivered to every household in the Parish and encouraged all residents to complete the survey.

Resolved: That this item be carried forward until the survey process is complete and the results have been received.

0104-25/26 Roads, Footpaths and Open Spaces

a) Highways Issues

- Broadwater Lane – An update was provided by the Clerk from WSCC Highways.
- Swallowfield Close – Update noted regarding resurfacing in FY27/28.

Speedwatch – An update was received on the next monitoring action. Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) have been shown to reduce vehicle speeds to the limit by approximately 95%. However, since monitoring ceased along Pound Lane, there has been a noticeable increase in speeding, indicating that current measures are inconsistent in their effectiveness.

It was therefore resolved to fund the installation of rubber strips halfway along Pound Lane, at a maximum cost of £500. In addition, a feasibility study is to be undertaken for Nuthurst Road to explore further traffic calming measures. The Clerk has been instructed to proceed with placing the necessary order.

3 MOP left the meeting.

b) Outstanding Items

- Emergency and Resilience Audit (OS0031–25/26) – Going through it and one outstanding feature but in the main very generalised. Emailed Mr Funnell email to WSCC to get more specific data.
- Parish Caretaker – Ongoing discussion.
- Grit Bins – Update noted regarding submission to Highways. Carry.
- Deer Signs – Item carried forward. Carry.
- Nuthurst Bus Shelter – Item carried forward. Carry.
- Tree Wardens – Agreed to invite interested parties to the May meeting.

0105-25/26 Planning Applications (Planning Tracker)

a) DC/25/0740 Cricket Club

Resolved: The Clerk to write to the Cricket Club regarding Planning Condition 3, noting that tree relocation for the cricket nets' hardstanding requires Parish Council approval under the licence agreement as the Parish Council are landlords.

0106-25/26 Planning Applications Received Since Publication of the Agenda

No additional planning applications to consider

0107-25/26 Joint Neighbourhood Plan Area for Southwater and Adjoining Parishes

The Clerk provided an update following the meeting on 4 March 2026.

Councillors will review the latest correspondence from Southwater Parish Council ahead of the April deadline. It was noted that Southwater has a significantly larger population than Nuthurst, which

could place a disproportionate amount of influence on a single vote. In light of this, having both a vote and a veto was considered a reasonable approach, though concerns remain about potential imbalance within the joint arrangement.

The proposal for an independent Neighbourhood Plan, while still sharing expertise and costs between Southwater and the other parish, was discussed. Members also raised concerns about the voting process—specifically where votes take place and what decisions they apply to—and questioned whether voting is merely procedural.

It was **resolved** to contact Southwater again to raise further relevant questions. These questions will be submitted in advance, and an extraordinary meeting may be arranged afterwards to review responses if representatives recommend a resolution to proceed.

Resolved: Councillors to review the latest correspondence from Southwater Parish Council and arrange a meeting ahead of the April deadline.

Meeting is set on 23rd April with Southwater Parish Council.

0108-25/26 HDC Community Asset Transfer

The Clerk reported feedback following the meeting with HDC, which was **noted**. Clerk emphasised caution against an asset that would like cost the parish council money to maintain.

0109-25/26 Sewage Discharge at Mannings Heath Treatment Works

Concerns regarding discharge into the River Arun were discussed.

Resolved: The Council to contact Southern Water for clarification.

0110-25/26 Playground

a) The Playground Report was **received** and **accepted**.

b) Proposed improvements, including replacement fencing and the installation of new sensory boards, were discussed. It was **agreed** that further investigation with Cllr Harris and Cllr Rymarz and detailed costings are required. Two companies have provided initial ideas, and the matter will be carried forward to the next meeting for further consideration.

0111-25/26 Copsale Hall

Improvements to the hall were discussed. Copsale Village Hall major problem the front roof is pulling away from the veranda and an engineer has looked at it and it needs to be underpinned and want a grant from the Parish Council the costs is estimated is £27,000. The grant requested is for £12,000. Insurance was queried. Long lease is in place which ties them. Has a grant application been looked at. Resolved: More information is required to formulate a decision, Chair to contact the Copsale Hall Committee for answers.

0112-25/26 Items for the Next Agenda

No other items were noted for inclusion on the next agenda.

0113-25/26 Date of the Next Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 22 April 2026.

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place on 29 May 2026 at Mannings Heath Village Hall.

Signed: **Date:**.....