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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at Mannings Heath Village Hall on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> 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 they volunteer at Copsale Hall.

#### **0098-25/26 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made several announcements, including updates on meetings with HDC, WSALC, and Carbon Busters, as well as the road reopening, boundary changes, community assets, potholes, bridleways, and foot-paths. Both the Chairman and the Clerk have been extremely busy.

#### **0099-25/26 Public Session**

A member of the public raised concerns about unacceptable levels of flooding in Monks Gate and Mannings Heath, particularly on Brighton Road near Bowood during periods of rain. It was reported that gullies and pipes are blocked, contributing to the issue. Additional concerns included a sinkhole on Nuthurst Road and flooding in Masons Field. Accessibility issues were also highlighted, with the view that no system is ever 100% effective. Frustration was expressed regarding the lack of response and guidance from WSCC, who were said to be denying responsibility. Further issues were noted at Bowood, Monks Common, and Baines Field, where water run-off leads to flooding near Nuthurst Road off the A281, draining poorly.

A separate point was raised regarding the Neighbourhood Plan 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.

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.

#### **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 schedule of payments for March 2026 was **approved**.
- e) It was **resolved** to instruct Mulberry to conduct Interim and Year-End Internal Audits for 2026/27.
- f) 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 West Sussex County Council has confirmed a 4.99% increase in its element of Council Tax for FY 2026/27, reflecting 3% inflationary pressures and an additional 2% to support rising demand in adult social care.

A £2.5 million grant has been secured for road maintenance, addressing ongoing pressures on the highways network following adverse weather conditions. Highway repair activity has increased significantly, with around 46,000 issues currently in progress compared to 38,000 previously. Additional crews have been deployed, and further inspections are being carried out in response to local concerns, including those at Goldings Lane.

Pothole repairs remain a priority, with approximately 1,000 completed each week. However, concerns about repair durability persist, and quality control processes are under review. The average repair time is 16 days, with more complex cases on faster roads typically taking 14–20 days.

Social Services continue to represent a major area of expenditure, particularly within children's services, which operate on a 24/7 basis and are managing increasingly complex cases.

For September 2026, all secondary school applicants have been offered local places. Mallais School will become co-educational for the Year 7 intake. Across the county, 1,050 places are available, including around 140 surplus places.

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 the majority of 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.

### **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 and encouraged all residents to complete the survey.

#### Official Clarification Regarding Survey Administration and Communication

*For the avoidance of doubt, Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) has been formally appointed to design, administer, and manage this survey process. Accordingly: AiRS is the sole authorised point of contact for all enquiries, correspondence, or matters relating to this survey. Parish Council members are not responsible for responding to individual queries regarding the survey however clarification can be sought via the Clerk of the Council. Furthermore: All survey responses will be independently collected, analysed, and verified by AiRS to ensure objectivity and integrity. The verified results will then be formally reported to and published by the Parish Council in due course. This approach is intended to ensure a transparent, impartial, and professionally managed process.*

**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**

- a) Broadwater Lane – An update was provided by the Clerk from WSCC Highways.
- b) Swallowfield Close – Update noted regarding resurfacing in FY27/28.
- c) 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)** – Reviewed. An email has been sent to Mr Funnell at West Sussex County Council requesting more specific data.

**Parish Caretaker** – Ongoing discussions continue.

**Grit Bins** – Update noted regarding submission to Highways. Item to be carried forward.

**Deer Signs** – Item carried forward.

**Nuthurst Bus Shelter** – Item carried forward.

**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 the slight 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 applications received were considered as published on the Parish Council website.

### **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 the Parish Council representatives recommend a resolution to proceed. Meeting is set for 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 District Councillor 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 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 is facing a significant structural issue, with the front roof pulling away from the veranda. An engineer has inspected the problem and advised that underpinning works are required. The estimated cost of the repairs is £27,000. A grant application of £12,000 from the Parish Council was discussed. Insurance cover was queried, and it was noted that a long lease is in place, which commits those responsible for the building. The possibility of applying for additional funding through the National Lottery was also raised.

**Resolved:** Councillors to continue discussions regarding the grant application and to report back to Council.

### **0112-25/26 Items for the Next Agenda**

Items were noted for inclusion on the next agenda.

Copsale Hall Grant

### **0113-25/26 Date of the Next Meeting**

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 April 2026.

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

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