

Annual Parish Meeting – 22nd April 2026

Chairman's Report

Good evening everyone, and thank you all for coming.

It's genuinely encouraging to see so many people here tonight. The Annual Parish Meeting is an important moment for us—not just to report back, but to listen, reflect, and ensure that what we're doing as a council truly reflects the needs and priorities of our community.

Because ultimately, the Parish Council exists for one reason: to serve this village and the people who live here.

Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to recognise two councillors who have recently stepped down.

Robin Gyede, after eight years of dedicated service—particularly his work on flood defence—and Jacqueline Humphreys, who has contributed greatly over the past year.

On behalf of the council and the community, thank you both. Your time, effort, and commitment have made a real difference.

We currently have two vacancies on the council. Notices have been published, and if sufficient requests for an election are received, a by-election will be held. If not, we will move to co-option.

I want to emphasise—this is your council. If you've ever considered getting involved, now is a very real opportunity to help shape the future of the village.

Last year, we reintroduced the Parish Council Hub, and we'll continue this again this year on a quarterly basis.

These sessions alternate between Saturdays and Wednesdays to make them as accessible as possible.

They're informal, open, and designed for conversation—not just updates. We strongly encourage you to attend, ask questions, and share your thoughts. These sessions help us ensure that decisions are not made in isolation, but are shaped by the people they affect.

Flooding remains a key concern for our community.

The Stantec report has now been completed and is available on our website. It identifies priority areas, including the weir near the viaduct, which requires urgent attention.

We have been working closely with the Environment Agency to explore repair options that balance long-term resilience with environmental sensitivity.

As a Parish Council, our powers to fund such works are limited, so we have applied for a CIL grant through the South Downs National Park. We expect an update in the summer, and if successful, we are aiming for works to begin in Spring 2027.

This is a good example of how we work on your behalf—bringing together expertise, funding opportunities, and long-term planning to address issues that matter to the village.

Road safety continues to be a priority raised by many residents.

We requested Hampshire Highways to review the A32, particularly the crossing near the butcher's and the one-way section.

While a crossing mirror was not permitted due to safety concerns, they are considering additional signage to warn motorists. We will continue to follow this up.

We are also exploring the feasibility of installing two new flashing speed awareness signs. These would be owned and maintained by the Parish Council, so we are carefully assessing cost and impact.

Once we have more information, we will bring this back to you—because decisions like this should reflect community opinion, not just council judgement.

Our recreation spaces are at the heart of village life, and maintaining them is a key responsibility.

You may have already noticed the new swings—part of ongoing improvements to play equipment. We have also commissioned an “end of life” assessment for older equipment to help us plan future investment responsibly.

The sports and grass areas will continue to be maintained by Mac—thank you for the many years of consistent work.

We are also reviewing how other areas are managed, with a focus on balancing usability with biodiversity—ensuring spaces are safe, functional, and environmentally responsible.

Importantly, we are working with the school to ensure these spaces meet their needs too—supporting both education and community use.

Following the necessary felling of ash trees, we are pleased to confirm they will be replaced with disease-resistant English Elm trees, supporting long-term biodiversity and resilience.

Many of you will be aware of the situation with the Holm Oak at The Cross.

An independent arboricultural survey concluded that the tree has outgrown its location and is causing structural damage to the surrounding area. Unfortunately, pruning is not a viable solution.

An application has been submitted to the South Downs National Park for its removal.

We recognise this is a sensitive issue. If approved, we will replace it with a more suitable tree, guided by professional advice—but we welcome your suggestions.

All reports are available, and we are here to help anyone who wishes to view or comment.

This is another example of how we aim to operate—openly, transparently, and with community involvement.

The Neighbourhood Plan was previously paused while the South Downs National Park developed their Local Plan.

Now that it has been released, we are reviewing whether to proceed and what that might look like.

This is not something we will decide in isolation—it will depend on what is right for the village, and we will involve you as we move forward.

In addition to what's already been mentioned, our plans for the coming year include:

A full tree survey and a five-year maintenance plan

Repairs to the flint wall at The Cross

Progressing lease agreements for key village assets, including the village hall, sports pavilion, and rifle club—ensuring transparency and collaboration with all parties

Continuing to assess village needs, manage reserves responsibly, and invest where it matters most—whether that's play equipment, biodiversity, or safety initiatives

Everything we do is about planning not just for today, but for the future of the village.

The Parish Council is here to represent you, to listen to you, and to act in the best interests of the community.

We are not separate from the village—we are part of it. And the more we hear from you, the better we can do our job.

So please, share your ideas, your concerns, and your suggestions.

Finally, I would like to extend our thanks to the Village Hall Committee for the use of the hall this evening, to the Sports Club for running the bar, and to all the volunteers who give up their time throughout the year to support the village and organise such fantastic events. Your efforts are a vital part of what makes this community so special.

Thank you.